

irish american news
iran

January • 2009



irish american news



The Seafarer

by **Conor McPherson**
directed by ensemble member
Randall Arney

featuring ensemble members **Francis Guinan, Tom Irwin,
John Mahoney and Alan Wilder** with **Randall Newsome**

It's Christmas Eve in Dublin. In the rundown house where Sharkey cares for his blind brother, old acquaintances gather for a card game—joined by an ominous stranger. As the booze flows and the game intensifies, Sharkey discovers he is playing for his soul. In this eerie, darkly humorous tale, celebrated playwright Conor McPherson examines how we face the demons of our past as we struggle to find redemption.

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Is 2009 Your "Break Out" Year?

As we get to the end of the year, many of us develop our list of New Year's resolutions. Things like: I am going to stop smoking. I am going to start a rigorous exercise program. I am going to call my parents more often. I am going to spend more time in a spiritual mode. And the famous, I am going to spend more time with my family. We would all agree that such resolutions are well intended, desirable, and also likely to drop off our radar screens by February 1st. We find that there are so many pressure points in our lives that the resolutions simply drift away.

I propose instead that you adopt the current motto of the US Navy, "fulfill your destiny"—by envisioning greatness for yourself. For many of us who grew up in modest circumstances, we probably weren't encouraged to ENVISION much of anything. Instead, we were encouraged, or told, we would be lucky to follow Dad into the family business, or the precinct house, or some other modest job. We were not encouraged to think of expanding beyond our parent's footprint. Thank God that some of us were fortunate enough

to have parents who did support and encourage us to set our goals higher and to achieve bigger and better things than they had.

What are the things that you always wanted to do in life? Have you acquired the status in life that you envisioned as a child? Are you in a career that gets you fired up every morning? Regardless of your age, go back into the layered over parts of your memory and try to resurface those things that ignited your excitement and enthusiasm when you were a child. As the writer, Goethe, said "Whatever you can do or dream that you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it". Life frequently presents challenges to our belief in magic at a very early age.

I am suggesting that as you move into the New Year, you take a more thorough look at how your life will play out in 2009. Is 2009 the beginning of a profound change in your life? Are you willing to step out beyond the parochial and pedestrian resolutions that you have made year after year? Or are you simply going to continue coasting through your life bereft of any achievements of note? By the way, you get to decide what an achievement is!

Regardless of your opinion on the

outcome of the recent presidential race, clearly it says that a person of drive and persistence can achieve greatness and dazzling heights. Whether you are a "blue" or a "red", or something in between, don't you agree that two years before the election, very few people would have given Mr. Obama any significant chance of victory. On the other hand, Mr. Obama apparently saw himself as a viable presidential candidate. Otherwise why would he have subjected himself and his family to the rigors of a presidential campaign? Clearly the President-elect was convinced that he had some chance of winning. Mr. Obama's election is an incredible and historical feat that speaks to his courage and the greatness of the American people. One needs only to remember that the famous march on Washington by Reverend Martin Luther King was just 45 years ago

The purpose of this column is not related to matters of politics, other than how those lessons might be valuable in your career and life. What can you learn from the presidential race that you can apply to your everyday life and job? Should your focus be on higher goals rather than "incidental" New Year resolutions? Why isn't the focus in your career on the achievement of what others would call unattainable goals? How will your 2009 be different than 2008?

Are you ready to change your life in a significant way? Will you alter your spiritual life, your family life or your

career? In my experience, many of us simply live our life today like we did yesterday. We become very complacent at a very early age. Yes, we frequently admire people who outdistance us, but all too often we are much too willing to just hold the coat of the activist. Wouldn't you instead like to be someone that serves as the inspiration for others?

You might ask yourself similar questions about your work life. When was the last time you made or implemented an important decision in your job? If the opportunity presents itself will you be willing to risk perceived failure to make a significant point with your organization?

Should you be reflecting on your potential greatness? Consider taking some time to contemplate the array of possibilities that are actually available to you. And if you find that you are not happy with some important parts of your life, decide what to do about it. A lack of action will "kill" your soul

I suggest that you would make far more significant progress with your career and company if you sat in a quiet library for an hour every week. But you need to focus that time on solving substantial problems. Our busy lives steal "thinking" time from our days and weeks. After a while, we don't even consider "wasting" our time by dwelling on the major issues at our job. Even if you are in your 40s or 50s, most actuaries would say that you can probably anticipate another 30 or 40 years of life ahead. It's never too late to begin something new.

I am convinced that many of us never make decisions about these matters at all; we simply glide through our life. We don't control our world; instead we allow the world to control us. I have done career counseling and consulting for more than 30 years. Unfortunately this experience tells me that there are a good number of people in their 50s and 60s who look back at their careers with regrets. Will you be one of those people?

Is 2009 your break out year? Are you ready to achieve greatness? Will you take the time early in the year to THINK about the steps you need to begin your journey to Greatness? Put a note on your calendar for July 1st to recalibrate your efforts. Engage a fellow traveler to make the journey with you. Carpe Diem.

Personal note: I wish to thank my three unpaid editors: my wife, Sandee Wask Fitzgerald; my brother, Joseph; and my son, Neal Anthony.

James is president of James F. Fitzgerald & Associates, Inc, an Oak Brook, IL-based senior executive coaching and senior executive career transition firm. 630-684-2204. Email: jamesffitz@sbcglobal.net.

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Chicago Gaelic News

Pat Hennessy



Siochain I Mbliann Nua (Peace in New Year)

Christmas in the Chicago-Irish community, both at Gaelic Park on the southwest side and the Irish American Heritage Center on the northwest side, were again spectacular affairs, well befitting the traditional Irish Christmas of the past. Both Centers enhanced the proud reputation by again celebrating the beautiful feast of the Coming of the Christ Child in their own inimitable ways, more than enough to make us proud Irish Americans.

And so as we greet the New Year, 2009, and wish one another continued good health and success, we cannot but feel very proud of the many fine Gaels, officers, members and volunteers, who contributed so much precious time and money so that we all can enjoy the many fine facilities at both Centers, including the playing of Ireland's national pastimes, hurling, gaelic football, men and women, Camogie (ladies' hurling) and Juveniles (both codes) throughout the summer months at Chicago Gaelic Park, whose facilities are the best in U.S. gaeldom.

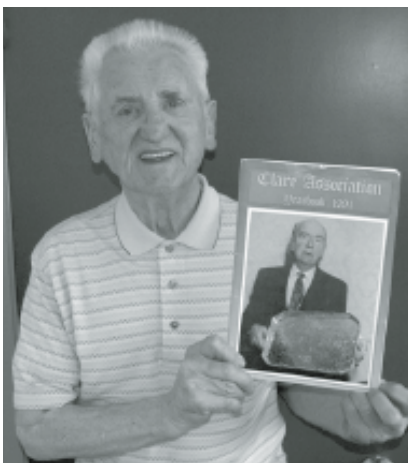
The influx of Irish emigrants who made Chicago their homes in the late 1940's with the lifting of the restrictive U.S. immigration laws, lit the fire and laid a sound foundation for the reactivation of the GAA in Chicago after an absence of over 20 years. Their goal was to establish "a green sod of their own," a Gaelic Park. The start was made in 1950, followed closely by the establishing of the Chicago-Irish Musicians, and the herculean work on the Heritage Center by two never to be forgotten gaels, Hugh O'Hara and his charming wife, Josephine, as well as Maureen O'Looney, Breege Looney and others.

And so over the years, led by different officers, the three organizations took up the torch and added their own bit to goals until "the dream became a reality" in the early 1960's. And few could argue that officers and officials down through the years did a remarkable job, and today Chicago is one of the few big cities in the U.S. with so many fine facilities to display the games, heritage, song, dance and music of the gaels. We can never forget such great gaels, men and women, who made all this possible, and the of-

our brave men and women fighting for our freedom in Iraq and other places and, of course, let's say a prayer that peace with justice and reunification will come for the Irish people. Because in the words of the great Irish patriot, Padraig Pearse, "Ireland unfree will never be at peace."

Officers and members of both boards who continue to make the Centers so attractive and financially sound. They deserve not only our praise, but our wholehearted support.

January 6th is the last day of the 12 days of Christmas, and in some parts of Ireland, particularly in rural areas, an old custom called "Deoch Altuithe" or "Thanksgiving Drink" is still observed. After supper, the father of the house takes three sips of water, thanking God for His



P.J. O'Dea honored by GAA

goodness to the family for the past year and asking for a repeat for the coming year. In doing so, he invokes the Trinity, as does the mother and every member of the family. After that day, the Christmas tree and decorations are taken down as the people of Ireland look forward to the coming year and wish one another "Siochain ath Bhillian" (A Peaceful New Year.)

Let's all hope and pray that the coming year will be a peaceful one for the world, with continued good health and success. Let's remember

P.J. O'Dea Honored by California GAA and Legislature Assembly

Our congratulations to our own P.J. O'Dea (the Man from Clare) who was recently honored by the San Francisco GAA by being inducted into their Hall of Fame as a member of the senior hurlers who won the first-ever Senior Hurling Championship in 1959, under the auspices of the North American GAA Board. The California Legislature Assembly also honored him for his "skills and dedication through exemplary leadership and sportsmanship within the sport of hurling."

P.J. is more often mentioned as a star football player for his native Clare in the early 50's and also for his Interprovincial fame with Munster. In those days it was very difficult to get a place on the Munster football team if you were not a Kerry or Cork player. But he could take his place and hold his own with the best of them, such as Gerry O'Malley (Roscommon), Mick Tynan (Limerick) or Jim Wall (Waterford). No one could deprive him of his rightful place in those days.

But as outstanding as they were, they could never achieve the recognition they deserved as our own great sports columnist Sean O'Ceallachain tells us in his "must read" recently released book, *Giants of Gaelic Football*. In hurling and football, the same unfairness is to be found, and the remedy is there, if only the

respective County Boards would implement it. The simple answer is, take care of your minors and under 21's; try and keep them together and they in turn will win provincial titles in time, and overtime, become good enough to take on the "Big One."

P.J.'s excellence in football is forgotten in his desire to play the old camman game. Here again, he could hold his own with the best, as he did in New York, San Francisco and Chicago. He starred at the game in all three cities but could never make the senior grade in his own country, unfortunately. Nevertheless, the honor conferred by the San Francisco GAA and the Legislature is well-deserved. He is indeed a great ambassador for the GAA and we again offer our sincere congratulations.

Immigration Reform Not Likely Soon

"Immigration Reform" is on shaky ground, according to a fine story in *The Irish Echo* written by its dynamic editor, Dublin man, Ray O'Hanlon. Ray was quoting the *New York Times* which said, in effect, that immigration reform had receded from the candidates' radar long before the result of the race, and that

is was not likely to return for some time to come, because of the many more important issues including the economy, and global financial problems. The story goes on to say that nothing can be expected for at least a year, depending on financial matters at home and abroad.

Doris Meissner, Commissioner of the Immigration Service under President Bill Clinton, says, "the reforms we need to put in place are so sweeping and the political environment is so hostile to consensus, this will be in a phase of long-term building of public understanding,"

The problem seems to be not in the White House, but in the House and Senate, which would confirm what I have been saying for some time, namely that marching around streets waving flags etc. does more harm than good. What we have to do is work hard on our senators and congressman and women. That's the way we got the bill passed in 1970 and that's the only way to succeed. Organize on a national scale, as we did in 1966 and get a letter writing campaign started within each congressional district, House and Senate. If we work hard enough we can succeed.

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Harry Truman once said, "My choices earlier in life were either to be a piano player in a whorehouse or a politician, and, to tell you the truth, there is hardly any difference."
Senate Seat For Sale

I'm afraid the Democrats all got splashed with some of the mud. There is a public debate as to whether or not Governor Blagojevich is a narcissist or a sociopath. The Democratic leadership must have seen this coming—did Emil Jones know campaign contributions were the key to success if you wanted to curry favor with the governor.

No matter how many scandals hit City Hall, Cook County, or the State of Illinois, they are all only hiccups, and then it's back to business as usual.

The rationalization that the Senate seat should be filled by an African-American is fading

fast. The Democrats don't favor a special election as they could lose to a Republican candidate. If Governor Blagojevich steps down the question is who would Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn appoint. Jesse Jackson, Jr.'s hopes have faded. My gut instinct tells me that this chapter of his book will get a rewrite. With the Citizens of Illinois for Better Government picketing Jesse Jr.'s office chanting, "Ho! Ho! Ho! Jesse Jr.'s got to go." Why did Jesse Jr. lawyer up? Who is Raguhveer Nyak? What did this Indian businessman expect in return for the one million dollar campaign contribution to Blagojevich? What favors would he seek from Jesse Jackson, Jr.? Mr. Nyak owns several medical centers.

President-Elect Obama

The glow of victory is fading as the corruption in Illinois government continues to unravel.

Senator Durbin

Pardon me if I'm not sentimental over Governor Ryan. Let him serve his sentence. Why is it politicians go to the country club prisons, and then get pardoned?

Sense and Sensibility

Don't forget President-Elect Obama and Senator Durbin both endorsed Todd Stroger. What does that tell you?

Chicago is For Sale

Skyway, parking meters, Midway Airport... what's next? How about the water filtration plant, or McCormick Place, maybe Oak Street Beach? They could charge you for sun bathing.

Ford, Chrysler, GM and the UAW

I know this won't be popular with some of my friends in organized labor, but there are limits. Let me preface my remarks by saying we need strong labor unions. The apprentice training programs give us skilled and competent tradesmen. The unions provide their members with a host of benefits, and make sure that their employers play fair with their employees—the very founda-

tion of collective bargaining.

The most offensive UAW benefit is the job's bank which is 95% of the weekly after-tax pay, minus \$30 for work related expense. The sub-benefit was also offset by the state unemployment compensation. This benefit can last up to two years.

This is part of the cradle-to-grave mentality. You don't have to be a sociologist to figure out where it leads. You can look at GM benefits on the internet. You would be astounded by the intricate financial arrangements, and the links to the value of the company's stock.

These benefits are built into the cost of consumer goods making them non-competitive with foreign imports. Why did the UAW refuse to make wage concessions in order to secure a bailout? They have finally agreed to eliminating the job's bank program.

There are also many excesses on the part of management across the entire spectrum, namely salaries, and bonuses, private jets. Is the chairman of General Motors worth \$30 million a year? Nobody is worth \$30 million a year. At the same time, a pitcher just signed with the New York Yankees for \$161 million. Is he worth it? No way! Greed is the common denominator.

Heads Up

As of this writing the state legislature voted 87% for Governor Blagojevich's immediate removal, 85% for impeachment, and 65% wanted a special election to fill the Senate seat, which is the way I think it should be filled. This was on the news. Now we are hearing no special election, but rather the appointment of an interim Senator by Lt. Gov. Quinn if he becomes Governor.

Hold on to your hats, the breaking news is Gov. Blagojevich has hired an attorney to represent him, and is not resigning. The dogfight continues... Rahm Emanuel has lawyered up. The Illinois Supreme Court refused to hear the complaint filed by Attorney General Lisa Madigan. The landscape changes almost minute-to-minute. There are a lot of other people, some of them prominent attorneys, who may be in trouble and haven't surfaced yet. This is definitely watch and wait...

Out of Ireland


Wondering what happened to Out of Ireland on WYCC Channel 20? It was moved to 4pm on Wednesdays. We were used to seeing it at 6:30pm. There was a shake-up at WYCC; Maria Moore, GM, is no longer with WYCC. Maria was a good friend. The Sun Times TV listings were still showing the show at 6:30pm on Wednesdays for over a month—as a result I missed about three shows in a row. WYCC is the PBS station for Chicago City Colleges.

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Authors Marketing Group Meeting January 6th

"The next meeting of the Authors Marketing Group will be held on Tuesday night, January 6th, 2009, at the Woodridge Public Library. The meeting will be held in the Community Room on the Second Floor and begin at 7 (pm). The library is within the Woodridge Village Centre located near the police station and village hall.

The guest speaker will be Johnny Campbell. He is a motivational speaker and will share the

importance of the use of blogs when marketing a book.

Attend and bring a friend to our future meetings on February 24th and March 10th.

If you have any questions about the Authors Marketing Group, please contact Jim Durkin. He can be reached via e-mail at jamestdurkin@hotmail.com or at (630) 921-0118. Additional information can be seen by visiting our website at <http://www.authorsmarketinggroup.org>."

DePaul Irish Society

Welcomes Bloody Sunday activist John Kelly

On Wednesday, January 21, 2009, John Kelly, brother of Bloody Sunday victim Michael Kelly, will travel to Chicago for a speaking engagement at DePaul University, hosted by the DePaul Irish Society and the DePaul Irish Studies Program. Mr. Kelly is a co-founder of the Bloody Sunday Trust, was made chairman of the Bloody Sunday Justice Campaign in 1992, and is currently employed as the Education and Outreach Officer for the Museum of Free Derry. The event will begin

at 5:00 p.m. at DePaul University's Cortelyou Commons, located at 2324 North Fremont Street on the Lincoln Park campus. For more information on this event, the DePaul Irish Society or Irish Studies Program, please contact Lauren DeBueriis via e-mail at laurendeueriis@yahoo.com.



Commissioner Terrence J. O'Brien, President of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago addressed the membership of the Plumbing Contractors Association at their most recent meeting. Pictured with MWRD President O'Brien (right) is Mike DiFoggio, Plumbing Contractors Association Board Member.

The Scattering Resumes in the February Issue

Due to space considerations this issue, the 12-part 'The Scattering' sequel will resume in the February edition. Part 1 and Part 2 appeared in the November, and December issues of Irish American News.

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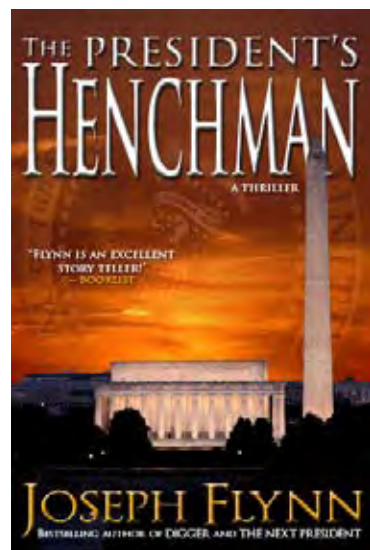
Frank West



Literature for an Irish American Year

Books, and other publications, are low cost—especially important in this economy when we want value for our money—and they provide hours of reading pleasure. Plus, the books listed here and in my reviews are ways to explore our beautiful and rich Irish heritage.

In *The President's Henchman*,



Joseph Flynn tells a fascinating, and thrilling story.

A woman is finally elected Presi-

dent, and her husband, former policeman Jim McGill, must protect her ability to govern. Because of this, he quickly earns a license to be a private investigator. That license also permits him to carry a gun.

The story line of the book is about his investigations and adventures in stopping the stalker of a person on the White House staff. He then get an even more urgent case to investigate. A female colonel, who works at the Pentagon, is accused of adultery. This explosive accusation has the potential to stop the new President's plans for her administration.

Her husband, Jim McGill, must prevent these cases from exploding. *The President's Henchman* by Joseph Flynn. Variance Publishing, Arkansas, 2008. 410 pages; \$25.95. www.variancepublishing.com.

Finding Your Chicago Irish

Finding Your Chicago Irish is a superb and unique book. There is something here for any Irish person's interest.

There are many topic divisions—but the ones my interests brought to

my attention are: theater, music, organizations, restaurants, St. Patrick's Day festivities, and media.

Author Sharon Shea Bossard, carefully researched this book and then, with her husband, visited many of the places included to make double sure the information was accurate.

A fun and enjoyable book that you will like reading.

Finding Your Chicago Irish by Sharon Shea Bossard. Lake Claremont Press, Chicago, IL, 2008. 205 pages; \$12.00. www.findingyourirish.com.

Irish American News

I've heard the Irish American News described as the New York Times of the Irish community. I think it is even more important than that—but my opinion may be biased—so I'll quote from *Finding Your Chicago Irish*. This newspaper keeps you "up to date on all things Irish in Chicago and throughout the world. With a distribution of 25,000 monthly... [it] covers music, festivals, events, book reviews, theater, legal questions, sports, trivia, investments, and much more... This entertaining, informative newspaper will become a household fixture."

See the lively, new videos on our website: www.irishamericannews.com.

Irish American News, 7115 W. North Ave., #327, Oak Park, IL 60302. Ph.: 708-445-0700.

Dancing With Demons:
A Mystery of Ancient Ireland

Sister Fidelma is on the trail of a criminal. She is relentless and very smart. Evil doers should have great fear when she is after them.

The Chief Brehon of Ireland asks her to investigate the murder of Ireland's High King. The king's guards arrested a suspect, but he maintains he's innocent, and there is no motive.

The mystery is set in medieval Ireland. To be exact, the time is 669 A.D.

Morgan Llyweilyn describes her: "Fidelma is a vibrant creation,

a woman of wit and courage who would be outstanding in any era, but brings a special sparkle to the wild beauty of medieval Ireland."

Author Peter Tremayne (penname of Peter Berresford Ellis,) writes powerfully and authoritatively of this medieval period. He is a renowned scholar of ancient Ireland. But his scholarly work definitely does not dampen the beauty and exuberance of his writing style.

You'll enjoy reading about Fidelma. And if you like a mystery set in



this period—you'll also like reading about Mara. This fictional creation of Cora Harrison is the Chief Brehon of the Burren, in Galway. I recently reviewed her *A Secret and Unlawful Killing*. I immensely enjoyed that book too.

Dancing With Demons: A Mystery of Ancient Ireland by Peter Tremayne. St. Martin's Minotaur, New York, NY, 2008. 274 pages; \$24.95. www.minotaurbooks.com.

Once Were Cops

When a new book by Ken Bruen is published, I look forward to the pleasure of reading it. He is Ireland's master of noir crime fiction and fortunately he is greatly prolific, having published 27 books!

Several are set in Galway City, in America's west, Greece, Dublin and New York City. For these masterful and provocative books, he has won two Shamus Awards and

many others.

Bruen writes in new areas—both geographic and in the area of human behavior. He uses a pared down to essentials writing style to explore them.

Why do humans have irrational needs, even sometimes unspeakable obsessions? Why do bizarre things happen in life that don't have any cause and effect explanation? There is no explanation for these questions that can be objectively proven—neither psychological theories or religious beliefs.

Trying to understand the dilemma of those questions, is a constant theme in contemporary Irish literature. Crime writers—Declan Hughes and Brian McGuilloway wonder about that puzzle, as do playwrights—Conor McPherson and Martin McDonagh. Irish writers are bold and confident enough to look at these undeniable and unanswerable questions.

The main character in the book is Michael O'Shea. He is a member of Ireland's national police, the Guards. Through an exchange program, he is sent for a year to work with the police force in New York City. He is assigned to work with a tough and unpredictable policeman. He is brutal, but effective, and carries a metal club, known as a kebar, concealed in his sleeve. Hence his nickname, Kebar.

The mental development of Kebar's sister stopped at a child's level. This tough cop, seemingly immune to human kindness, is protective of her. However, her institutional care is very expensive. The criminal mob uses this to subvert Kebar.

Shay, the charming Irish cop, has a dark and secret psychological obsession. He is barely able to conceal this. That, and the compromised position of his partner make this a situation waiting to explode.

Bruen's *Once Were Cops* tells this amazing story using noir prose, ironic humor and powerful insight.

Once Were Cops by Ken Bruen. St. Martin's Minotaur, New York, NY, 2008. 294 pages; \$22.95. www.minotaurbooks.com.

BEFORE SUNDAY
The Life Stories of the Bloody Sunday Victims

"They were alive you know. Before he was murdered, my brother lived. Do you think you could write about that time?"
This was the request from a family member that author Jennifer Faus fulfills brilliantly in this poignant book of character sketches.
-*Verbal Magazine*

"Extraordinary. Reaching into the heart of this violent and controversial event, Jennifer Faus allows us to hear, as if for the first time, the innocent voices of those who died and those who were left behind."
-*Paul Greengrass, Director, Bloody Sunday, United St*

"This book conveys a very touching insight into the personalities who were taken from us on Bloody Sunday. Jennifer Faus, in this book, has personalized our loss. Her commitment to the relatives of those who died has been unflinching."
-*Ivan Cooper, former MP and Civil Rights Activist*

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Gaelic Park Events

Sunday Celtic Suppers

Gaelic Park hosts weekly Celtic Suppers, every Sunday, from 4-9pm, a great way to spend a Sunday afternoon with friends and family, and perfect for family celebrations for the holidays. For \$16 music, dancing and a delicious, hot, all you can eat buffet meal is provided.

Entertainment includes: Sean O'Donnell-January 4, Gerard Haughey-January 11, John Dillon-January 18 and Joe Cullen-January 25. Children are welcome, ages 4-12 are \$9 and children under 3 are free. Please call Gaelic Park for more information or to reserve tickets.

Musical Luncheon

Chicago Gaelic Park will host their Monthly Musical Luncheon on Wednesday, January 7, 2009 beginning at noon. The Musical Luncheon is a great way to enjoy a winter day with an afternoon of music by Joe Cullen, dancing and a delicious sit down lunch. Tickets are \$13 and reservations are required.

Carraig Pub

Gaelic Park is home to the Carraig Pub, the place for a great night out with music and delicious, mouth-watering food. The Carraig offers many daily specials including: soup and salad, panini and soup, a reuben sandwich, BBQ ribs, beef stew, a fish and chicken special and many other entrees and appetizers. The Carraig serves food Monday through Thursday 5-9pm and Friday and Saturday 5-10pm.

Music is also big at the Carraig with free entertainment every Friday and Saturday night with the best local performers beginning at 9:30pm. This month's entertainment includes: Gerard Haughey on Friday, January 2; Bernie Glim & Country Roads on Friday, January 9; Ray Gavigan on Saturday, January 10; Jerry Eadie on Friday, January 16; Johnny & Coax on Saturday, January 17; Sean & Charlie on Friday, January 23; The Larkin Brothers on Saturday, January 24; and Week Back on Friday, January 30. Entertainment for Saturday, January 3 and Saturday, January 31 are to be announced.

Thursday evenings, come to the Carraig for the traditional Irish music session given by Pat Finnegan, Sean Cleland and the students of the Irish Music School of Chicago beginning at 7:30pm.

Mass & Breakfast

Chicago Gaelic Park will hold their Monthly Mass and Breakfast on Sunday, January 11th with Mass

beginning at 10am. A delicious traditional Irish breakfast including bacon, eggs, sausage, black and white pudding and more will be served following the Mass for \$8.

The Merry Ploughboys Gaelic Park will host The Merry Ploughboys on Saturday, January 31, 2009 with the doors opening at 7:30pm. Tickets to this party are \$20.

The Merry Ploughboys, from Dublin, have been performing for

over seventeen years. Their act includes performances of old Irish rebel songs, ballads and more. The Merry Ploughboys are Irish enthusiasts and enjoy classical as well as contemporary approaches to music making. With the sounds of the fiddle, bluegrass banjo, bodhran, bass guitar, piano accordion and the distinct sounds of a mandolin, The Merry Ploughboys will

rouse the crowd with their music.

Please call Gaelic Park at (708) 687-9323 to reserve your tickets or for more information and also visit Gaelic Park's website at www.chicagogaelicpark.org for a full calendar of upcoming events, special performances, information on Gaelic Park's cultural activities, and much more.

Gaelic Park is located at 6119 West 147th Street in Oak Forest.

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Piping It In

Jack Baker



Well, I hope everyone had a happy and safe holiday season and that all my Scots brothers have recovered from Hogmanay. I hope all your first-footers were tall dark men carrying gifts of salt, bread and coal and I hope that all your lums continue to reek, preferably with someone else's coal.

Want to start out talking up a new solo bagpipe recording that I was informed about by Mike Cole,

a great friend, superb drummer, and music enthusiast extraordinaire. He clued me in that he'd been working with a piper from Seattle named Jori Chisholm on a CD called Bagpipe Revolution that was really worth listening to, especially the drum parts. So I contacted Jori Chisholm, he sent me a stack of CDs, and I found that Mr. Cole was right on the money. This is the best solo effort I have heard in quite awhile. Jori

Chisholm plays Highland pipes and Scottish small pipes and he is joined by Ed Littlefield, Jr. on pedal steel guitar, Gerry O'Beirne on guitar and ukulele, Orville Johnson on guitar and dobro, Igor Abuladze on guitar and bass, Andrew Boscardin on guitar, Suzanne Taylor on piano, Duncan Millar on drums and, oh yeah, Mike Cole on drums. There's a bunch of really fine new tunes to wrap your ear around, recorded and mixed with skill. Jori himself was the producer and he certainly turned out a CD to be proud of. I think my favorite piece on the CD is the last cut, a piobaireachd called "Too Long in This Condition." Jori arranged it with harmony for two pipers and plays both parts himself. It is a beautiful mesmerizing piece of music. For all you pipers who appreciate good music, Jori will be at the Winter Storm gathering in Kansas City where, I understand, he'll be teaching. For all you folks who appreciate good music and want to see the scope and range of the bagpipe expanded and developed, get a copy of Bagpipe Revolution and see for yourself what a great solo pipe recording sounds like.

Burning Bridget Cleary Rides Again

One of the most exciting bands I've seen in the last couple years is a trio out of the Philadelphia area called Burning Bridget Cleary. Named after the "last witch burned in Ireland," this group features Genna Gillespie on fiddle, Rose Baldino on fiddle and Lou Baldino on guitar, keyboards and bass. All three sing and very well too. Their first CD was good but didn't capture the fire of their live performance but they've corrected that on their new CD called Everything is Alright. The new release grabs your attention and keeps you listening with blazing fiddle duets, great songs and a mix of music that's away from the ordinary and downright inspirational. This is trad music at it's best, alive, vibrant and lyrical. Don't miss seeing this band if you're given the chance and until you can, pick up a copy of their independently produced CDs and listen to the future of trad.

Ed Miller, Only the Best Voice

As I was sitting at the keyboard banging away on this edition, the mailman arrived (bless him on a cold miserable day like this) and brought me a box of CDs from the finest Scots singer there is. Just my humble opinion, but I'll put Ed Miller up against anyone for voice. I often joke that there's few performers I'd pay to listen to but Ed is one of them. The only thing I like better than listening to him sing, is listening to him talk about the songs.

Just in time for the anniversary of Robert Burns' birthday (January 25th), Ed has released the latest in a long list of great CDs. Lyrics of Gold is made up of songs written by or collected by Robert Burns. Some of the songs here are among my absolute favorites, "A Man's a Man," "My Love Is Like a Red Red Rose," "The De'il's Awa' Wi the Exciseman." I gotta tell you, I've been waiting a long time for Ed Miller to record a CD of Burns' songs and this one is worth the wait. Ed doesn't perform alone on here, oh no, he's assembled a collection of some of the finest talents in Scottish music to assist him, including Rich Brotherton, Brian McNeill, E.J. Jones, John Taylor and Karine Polwart, to name a few. Man, if that isn't a lineup of talent that any performer would want backing him up! I have occasionally been asked what was so special about Burns' songs, now all I have to do is let them listen to Ed Miller's Lyrics of Gold and they'll understand. Burns would buy this CD!

Off to Valley Forge

Time soon for us to head off to one of the finest music festivals anywhere, the 17th Annual Greater Philadelphia Mid-Winter Scottish & Irish Music Festival and Fair, Friday, February 13 thru Sunday, February 15, 2009 at the Valley Forge Convention Center in King of Prussia, PA. The name gets longer each year and so does the list of great performers that promoters Bill and Karen Reid put together. One of the best organized festivals featuring, literally, something for everyone. Last year some of our good customers from the Chicago area flew out to Philly for this show. They needed a good dose of music, you see, and boy did they get it. This year the list of performers is even longer, you can get the whole lineup at www.eohebrides.com. I will mention that a couple of my favorite bands, Screaming Orphans, The McDades, Tannahill Weavers, Searson and Hadrian's Wall will be performing

but I have to admit that I always look forward to seeing the kids from Ian MacLeod's fiddle school. Ian is the father of Ashley MacLeod, who's red hot fiddle graces Hadrian's Wall these days. He's also a dairy farmer who's taught kids in the front room of his home for a number of years now and is, in my book at least, one of the unsung heroes of Scottish traditional music. After putting in a rugged day of farming, this man works to share his love of the music and his talent with local kids thereby ensuring that another generation will know and cherish the music. This is a great festival, all indoors, of course, and great fun. Worth the trip.

Reenactor Fest

Another great festival coming up in February, and a wee bit closer to home, is the 5th Annual Reenactor Fest at the Westin Chicago North Shore in Wheeling, Illinois, February 5-8, 2009. My son does reenacting, Civil War, WWII, etc. and he took me to this show a couple years ago and it was great! "What is it?" you ask... It's a convention for people interested in military history as well as historical reenactors of all time periods, spanning from the Roman Empire to Vietnam. I walked around with my jaw hanging open, just gobsmacked at all the uniforms, costumes, antiques and other stuff I was seeing. This year I'll be there as a vendor, selling bagpipe music and other Scottish military cds and dvds. Check out their website at www.reenactorfest.com.

This is a great show to take the kids to. They'll have a blast seeing all the folks in period outfits and everyone loves to talk about their historical impression. How about that, a show where you can have fun and learn something? I've had fun there in the past and I'm really looking forward to this year. It will be the biggest and best yet.

Well, there's a couple of things to look forward to in February, this time of the year I find it helps to have things to look forward to. I expect this will be an interesting year. There's talk about a new book, music & art festival at the Irish American Heritage Center in the Fall plus all our usual festivals thru the year. Keep smiling, Spring will be here soon.

One more bit of news, I finally got an email address for the column. You can send your input to me at pipingitin@comcast.net slowly but surely edging into the 21st century. You can still reach me at Rampant Lion Celtic Traders, 47 South Villa Avenue, Villa Park, IL 60181 or call me at 630-834-8108. Slainte!

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Mike Morley



by the democratic symbolism of his candidacy. It was a stellar political performance, Machiavellian, perhaps a revolution. I would dub it "Operation Putsch".

But the inaugural fireworks began a bit early here. As the new emperor goes abroad, saluting from the coronation carriage, will the axle rod slip, due to over-liberal greasing? The Herald, David the Infallible, announced he was "mistaken" in declaring the emperor had an interest in anointing an heir. Before God, the truth is (as of writing) that neither he nor his vassals have ever spoken with the Baron Bagboybitch about granting of titles. And so shall the scribes amend. Amen.

And what now of Patrick the Confessor, Lord Fitzgerald, barrister of Brooklyn—will the new emperor keep to his promise not to banish Patrick from the court? With Count Cheney unchained, Lord Fitzgerald has now dared summon the Baron to the Tower to share quarters with the Silent Syrian, Duke Rezko the Rascal, Ex-Exchequer to the emperor-in waiting.

Will the emperor now be wont to complain: "Who shall rid me of this turbulent priest?"

Indeed it's of note that after Jesse the Younger showed up at Blago's home at 4pm, Dec. 8 for a meeting to discuss Obama's political succession, the next knock at the door was at 6am. The Summoner, aka the FBI, had

come. The wonder is why Fitzgerald decided to cut short his probe just at that moment. Had the weight of the fish become too heavy for the net... too close to the throne? Was it the leak, the "Trib exclusive: Feds taped Blagojevich" headline that ran Dec. 5th? Or was it, as Fitzgerald said, "to halt a political crime spree" lest the senate seat be sold?

Then we were informed Jesse Jr. had actually been a Blagoje-snitch, though apparently not snitching on the horse trading for BO's former seat. JJJ alleges BBB offered Mrs. JJJ a job as Illinois Lottery Director back in '03 for 25 large, but that he forgot to report it until '06 when, in an incident reminiscent of "The Manchurian Candidate," his "memory was "jogged" after Fitzgerald collared Rezko the Rascal, Graf of Graft. News stories were quoting the figure "twenty five thousand dollars" which "triggered" JJJ's memory of Baron B's offer, prompting him to beg an indulgence from Patrick the Confessor.

Another BIC barrister (Brooklyn Prep, Georgetown, Harvard Law) Robert S. Bennett, one of Washington's most prominent criminal defense lawyers (the Clinton/Lewinsky, Valerie Plame, Iran/Contra, Clark Clifford, Paul Wolfowitz cases) had this to say: "This town is full of people who call themselves ambassadors, and all they did was pay \$200,000 or \$300,000 to the Republican or Democratic Party."

That is to say, it would be perfectly legal for Blago to appoint someone

to the Senate and also accept their campaign contribution. The no-no is to be tape-recorded offering the job in exchange for the contribution. The subtle difference demonstrates the operating precept: "Mens sano, in corpore sano." Blessed are those clear of conscience, and clean of bugs. Meanwhile, as is his custom, the emperor waited out the storm, checking the winds for the best course to follow.

Perhaps in an effort to cheer up blue states, USA Today juggled statistics to label North Dakota the most corrupt state in the Union! The media biggie declared the Peace Garden State, with a record of 8.3 corruption cases per 100,000 people, rampantly degenerate. As Officer Marge might say, "By golly, with only 635,000 folks up here, one bad little fella goes a long way—Ya, you betcha!" The Times later divulged the non-PC news that half that state's corruption prosecutions occur on Native American reservations.

As you read this, change is coming to Washington and the nation. And already sludge is leaking in from the Chicago pipeline. I have seen only two in-depth stories in the national media on the corruption that has surrounded Obama and Co. during his years in this city. The first appeared in the Boston Globe June 27; the other, perhaps in response, appeared 10 days later in the Trib. Both were swept aside by campaign frenzy.

They tell the tale of a rich, privileged Afro-American upper class and

adesperately poor underclass brought together in the temple of liberal Democratic doctrine.

One dark chapter is Grove Parc Plaza, a trendy-sounding name for 504 newly rehabbed and federally subsidized apartments that have become a million dollar slum straddling the President-elect's former State Senate district.

Grove Parc Plaza is managed by Habitat Co. whose CEO from 2001 to 2007 is now Obama's senior White House adviser, Valerie Jarrett. Federal inspectors have rated the condition of the complex at an incredible 11 on a scale of 100. The buildings face demolition.

Jarrett also managed Stateside Gardens along with Allison Davis. That complex was seized by the federal government in 2006.

The Globe: "Grove Parc and several other prominent failures were developed and managed by Obama's close friends and political supporters. Those people profited from the subsidies even as many of Obama's constituents suffered. Tenants lost their homes; surrounding neighborhoods were blighted... The campaign did not respond to questions about whether Obama was aware of the problems with buildings in his district during his time as a state senator, nor did it comment on the roles played by people connected to the senator." Jarrett also declined to answer questions about Grove Parc, citing her "duty" to former colleagues at Habitat.

From 2004-07 Jarrett was chairman of the Chicago Stock Exchange. She is Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University of Chicago Medical Center, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University of Chicago, and a board member of US Gypsum Corp., the Chicago based building materials giant. She has also served as a board member for several organizations that provided funding and support for Chicago housing projects operated by Tony Rezko and Allison Davis, Obama's former boss at the law firm Davis, Miner, Barnhill & Gallard.

We must hope that the new president will leave the mud of the trenches behind as he enters the most responsible job in the world in the teeth of an epic economic crisis. We trust he will rise far above his roots to meet the challenge. We can already see the effect his candidacy has had on the African-American community which supported him almost to a man. And there is a subtle but distinct feeling of equality in the air, like an early spring. Can you dig it?

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Examining Irish Culture and Experience at IAHC

By Colin Moore, CEO,
Irish American Heritage Center

In October of this year, the Irish American Heritage Center rolled out a series of 8-week courses designed to foster knowledge of Irish history and culture, and to enrich participants from within our membership as well as the surrounding community. Drawing from a seasoned group of instructors, participants learned the basics of Irish baking, explored modern Irish poetry and studied the major themes and events in Ireland's history, to cite but a few examples.

Since its inception, the goal of the Irish American Heritage Center has been to instill in its members—and the community at large—a sense of cultural and historical awareness. Throughout the years, IAHC has prided itself on providing some of the best lecture series, concerts and cultural events in the city of Chicago, helping to preserve and celebrate the collective Irish identity. While it is inspiring to see how the Irish have assimilated and prospered in America—a far cry from the 19th century Irish emigrant experience—in many cases this assimilation has resulted in a watering down of cultural awareness or knowledge of one's roots and cultural traditions. While it seems every American is “a little bit Irish” on St. Patrick's Day, part of the IAHC's mission is to explore the deeper meaning of Irish identity and experience.

Our course offerings successfully diversify the IAHC's public offerings, in addition to serving the need of personal development. It is our hope that these classes not only serve to educate and enlighten the public at large, but also succeed in fostering increased involvement among our members. We see the IAHC as an important social hub where individual histories and experiences are shared and bonds created. And where people come to explore, discover and discuss cultural and historical trends in today's Ireland.

Our winter series of classes offer twice the offerings as our first session and feature Irish history, language, music and arts-related courses, programs for parents and very young children, teen theatre and a host of other subjects. Please help make our winter session an even greater success by signing up for a class that celebrates “Irishness” and brings a sense of personal enrichment as well. You can get a class brochure by calling 773-282-7035, ext 10. I look forward to seeing you at the Irish American Heritage Center. Cheers!

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Healy Law

Martin J. Healy, Jr.



This is the next of a series of columns on how the law can impact your life. Each month we will focus on various aspects of the law relating to personal injuries, those that happen both on-the-job and otherwise, including mishaps which occur in driving vehicles, using products and receiving medical care. The column will also respond to legal questions relating to personal injury that are sent to us.

The Healy Law Firm is comprised of eight trial attorneys, two of whom are from Ireland. We are located downtown at 111 West Washington Street, Suite 1425, Chicago, Illinois 60602 (800-922-4500 or 312-977-0100). www.HealyLawFirm.com. The firm concentrates in the representation of injured victims of all types of accidents. Readers are encouraged to call or write with questions concerning personal injury law.

The Dangers of Imported Drugs

In the past few years we have seen the risks resulting from the import of drugs from foreign countries. Although the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has the right to inspect foreign manufacturing plants, budget cuts, limited manpower and unfamiliarity with the foreign territories and their procedures have led to serious problems.

Recent Heparin Contamination is a Good Example of the Problem

This past year saw a massive recall of one of the oldest pharmaceutical drugs still on the market: Heparin. Following 4 deaths and over 350 other adverse reactions, the FDA ordered a recall of Heparin. Today, the death toll exceeds 80 people. The Heparin case highlights the problems with importing pharmaceuticals from overseas.

Heparin is a widely used anti-clotting medication. It is principally used following cardiac surgeries to prevent blood clots, which can embolize and

cause stroke or death if not prevented. It is sold by Baxter International, which has its headquarters in Deerfield, Illinois. Although there have always been side effects associated with Heparin, early last year the FDA began receiving increasingly high reports of adverse reactions to Heparin, culminating in a report of the deaths of four children in Missouri undergoing dialysis. The Heparin was found to be contaminated and was tracked back to a manufacturing plant in China.

FDA Inspections of Foreign Manufacturing Plants are Rare

Closer scrutiny revealed that the manufacturing plant had not been inspected by the FDA. Because of a paperwork error, the FDA believed the plant had been inspected, but in fact it was another plant with a similar name that had been inspected. Additionally, the Chinese equivalent of the FDA never inspected the plant, because it was not certified as a manufacturer of pharmaceuticals. According to a New York Times report, over 500 manufacturing plants in China export drugs to the United States, but only 13 were inspected by the FDA last year. U.S. Senator Richard Durbin was critical of the FDA's role in this incident, and other incidents involving products made

in China, characterizing the FDA's measures as "entirely inadequate and indicates not nearly enough is being done to inspect these imports."

Following the incident, U.S. inspectors were sent to the Chinese plant to conduct an investigation. Although they had traced the problem back to the plant, the source of the problem itself was, at first, unknown. An initial report highlighted several problems with plant, including a lack of specific procedures for removal of impurities, no documentation of the suppliers' source of the raw materials, and improperly cleaned and maintained equipment.

Further investigation revealed the contaminant was oversulfated chondroitin sulfate, a sugar compound that is molecularly similar to Heparin itself. Because of the similarities, the contaminant was missed during traditional screening methods. Many have alleged the similarity between the two substances suggests the contaminant may have intentionally been placed in the Heparin in an effort to cut costs.

Illinois Courts Can Provide Relief

Fortunately, although Chinese plants seem to be the origins of the problem, an injured party will not have to travel to China to seek relief. Under Illinois law, any corporation who sells a pharmaceutical drug in a defective condition is strictly liable for injuries that occur because of the defect. This is true even if the seller was unaware of the defect at the time of the sale and even if there is no negligence on the part of the seller. Strict products liability exists to make sure that the sellers and manufactures of defective products, which reap the financial benefits of their sales, also bear responsibility for the consequences of defective products.

As such, Illinois-based Baxter International, as a seller, will have to answer for the defective Heparin. Indeed, following the FDA recall,

several lawsuits have been filed in Cook County Circuit Court against Baxter International. Because Baxter International is headquartered in Illinois, even individuals injured in other states may pursue their claims in Illinois.

In addition to strict products liability claims against Baxter, many are accusing Baxter of having insufficient quality control in place to detect problems from its manufacturing plants. Baxter turns to Chinese manufacturing plants to try and keep production costs low. However, Baxter should keep in mind that allowing its drugs to be manufactured overseas means it loses control over the manufacture, and may allow the devastating results like we have seen with Heparin.

Notably, despite actions by the FDA and Baxter, contaminated Heparin may still be in circulation. As recently as last month, the FDA took the rare step of seizing contaminated Heparin from a small Cincinnati, Ohio manufacturer. The FDA alleged that the manufacturer was not taking necessary steps to detect and remove contaminated Heparin or to warn patients who may have been exposed to the Heparin.

Conclusion

As you read this article, a new federal administration is either preparing to take office or has recently taken office. One of the many tasks ahead of them is to fund and staff the FDA and to give the FDA a mandate to toughen inspections on foreign manufacturers and foreign or local pharmaceutical sellers. In the meantime, we all must ensure that sellers and manufacturers are held responsible when injuries occur because of defective products.

The Healy Law Firm has in the past represented injured victims in cases involving Heparin and other defective drugs. If there are any questions, feel free to call the firm.

By: Martin Healy, Jr. and Dennis M. Lynch



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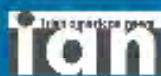


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Eugene (Gene) Moore was recently sworn into office for the third time as Cook County recorder of Deeds. Prior to his appointment as Recorder of Deeds, Moore served as a member of the Illinois House of Representatives for four terms. Pictured (L-R) is County Commissioner John Daley, who is Chairman of Finance, Eugene (Gene) Moore, Cook County Recorder of Deeds, and Todd Stroger, President of the Cook County Board of Commissioners.

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Author/Actor Denis Leary Hits Chi-Town

By Mike Houlihan

I had the unique opportunity to chat with actor/comedian/writer/producer/movie star Denis Leary last week as we discussed his new book, *Why We Suck*. Some of Leary's opinions have upset members of today's politically correct society. And Dr. Leary wouldn't want it any other way.

Audiences are familiar with Leary from his stand-up comedy act, his many roles as an actor in feature films, and most recently as the writer and star of his ground breaking TV series about New York City firefighters, *Rescue Me*.

Denis Leary is one of us. His parents emigrated to Worcester, Massachusetts from Ireland in the early fifties and he and his brothers and sisters grew up as part of a close knit Irish American family. I asked him what the reaction to his book has been in the Irish community and he tells me, "The Irish community that

I deal with most directly is my family. There were about seven thousand of them that were at my house for Thanksgiving."

Why We Suck is a free floating rant by Leary that covers everything from the Boston Red Sox to bringing up babies. The book is a call to arms to Americans to remove their heads from their collective asses and wake up and smell the coffee. It's a very funny, acerbic examination of what Dr. Leary calls "the common sense version of how things are really supposed to work and this American fantasy bubble that we live in."

Among the chapter titles in Leary's book are "Your Kids are Not Cute," "Self-Esteem This," "Testicle Colored Towels," and "We'd Hate You Even If You Weren't Black." The rest are probably not printable in a family newspaper, at least not an Irish one. They may not be politically correct but his riffs will make you laugh out loud.



Dennis Leary in Chicago with his copy of Irish American News!

But don't let Leary the provocateur fool you. Most of the advice he dispenses in *Why We Suck* is founded on the words of his Irish father. His parents "made it clear that-within reason—you can be whatever you want to be in America, but no one is going to hand you anything, you have to go out and get it. The harder you work, the luckier you get—that's one of the things my dad taught me. You learn more with your mouth shut and your ears open than you do the other way around—he said that too. Most people who are older than you are also a helluva lot smarter. That was another one of his faves."

For those who doubt Denis' credentials as a doctor, the book features a copy of the honorary degree bestowed on him by Emerson College, his alma mater. Leary rips through his targets with panache. Sacred cows like feminists and parents who think their kids are "special" get skewered in *Why We Suck*.

In a particularly amusing section, Dr. Leary takes legendary photographer Annie Liebowitz to task for "forgetting to have a family" and then undergoing artificial insemination as she hit middle age in pursuit of the ultimate status symbol, a baby. I could practically hear him frothing at the mouth over the phone as he told me, "We've become politically correct, and we take freedom of speech to the point where if you say it often enough, it becomes some sort of acceptable fact... ya' know that when you're 52 years old you can stick a turkey baster up your vagina or somebody else's ...and have a kid!"

He's funny enough, but when Leary pronounces vagina with his Boston accent that makes it sound like "vagner", he's even better.

Leary has a healthy perspective on his status in the entertainment industry. "I've worked in show business long enough to know that there are people in this business who think they are saving the world by virtue of making a box office hit. And you ain't! You're entertaining people, and if you don't have a sense of humor about yourself, good luck!"

"These are the same people that took the prom seriously when we were in high school."

Beneath the braggadocio and the comic rage in the book we discover Leary's childhood, his love and admiration for his parents and their struggles in the old country and raising their family in the US. The final chapter on his mother is funny, simple, and sweet.

Why We Suck is high hilarity for sure, but the humanity of this boyo with bite is what makes it a truly great book.

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"You're Alive Aren't You?"

By Frank West

These words of hope and possibility are said near the end of "The Seafarer." Written by Irish playwright, Conor McPherson, and this is an interview with him.

McPherson is only 37 years old, but he has written some of the most beautiful, powerful, and meaningful plays of modern time. He is a playwright for our age.

I have just seen his play, "The Seafarer." It is being produced at Chicago's outstanding Steppenwolf Theatre. It is a sparkling, colorful, humorous, and marvelously insightful production.

Chris Jones of the Chicago Tribune says: "Far and away the best Irish play since the glory days of Samuel Beckett."

McPherson lives with his wife near Dublin in Dun Loaghair, the former Kings Town. For thousands of Irish people Kings Town was the last view they had of Ireland when they emigrated. My own grandfather left from there in 1901. Most of those people never wanted to leave Ireland, but they had no choice.

Exile is a frequent theme in McPherson's plays. Exile can be from oneself, or physically from a geographic place.

Frank West: "Conor, why does your play take place just before Christmas?"

Conor McPherson: "The Solstice occurs during this time. The symbolism of the play - the sun coming up on the shortest day of the year - shows that if human beings can just get through the darkness there is light and hope."

FW: "Your plays reflect our feelings of apprehension and anxiety - despite being around people, we often feel lonely."

CM: "'The Seafarer' is really about the search by humans for hope and redemption. You have got to feel really low to feel the need for redemption."

FW: "Maybe that is why we feel human empathy for Sharky: the character who is almost hopeless. Another theme I see in your plays is how we explain the random, crazy, and emotional things that happen in life."

CM: "We live in a very necessary illusion. We paint ourselves as heroes. The reality thwarts our illusions and we just have to face the vagaries of life. There is no control as to how we are born. We are privileged to be here at all."

FW: "There is a very Catholic aspect to 'The Seafarer.' Catholicism has created much fear, shame, and guilt in people, but there is

much good that is created also. Encouragement of imagination is one example.

CM: "Christianity tells a very powerful story. God becomes human, and then dies. The stakes have to be high for drama. Guilt is very strong, especially among Irish people. This is sad, really."

CM: "I told a friend that my play, 'Dublin Carol,' was depressing. 'Who is going to want to see it?' He said, 'Everyone feels they can't cope with life sometimes.'"

FW: "Please speak to this Conor. What does it mean to be human, and be alive?"

CM: "A human is an animal that is conscious that he is alive, and will die. Being alive is a miracle. Life is a fascinating predicament."

Cliff Carlson: "How does it feel when some call you the greatest living Irish playwright?"

CM: "I don't feel that way at all. I want to deal with things in life. I often feel stuck in a mess with my work. I never quite get there, and then I move on."

CC: "What playwrights influenced you?"

CM: "The playwrights that strongly influenced me are Brian Friel, Tom Murphy, Eugene O'Neill, David Mamet, and Arthur Miller to name some."

CC: "Do movies influence you?"

CM: "They do. I especially like movies by Stanley Kubrick, and Woody Allen. Yes, I saw Martin McDonagh's 'In Bruges,' and liked it immensely."

This interview article began with the words "You're alive aren't you?" Mr. Lockhart, (the devil), asked Sharky, "You can't even deal with the thought that someone might love you..."

Conor McPherson's plays ask us what we are doing with life. His plays constantly tell us to live full lives.

I strongly suggest you see "The Seafarer." Through February, 4, at Steppenwolf Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted, 312-335-1650.



Beyond the Abbey

Sean Callan

E-mail: Irishquill@aol.com.



The Seafarer, a play by Dublin-born Conor McPherson currently playing at Steppenwolf, will continue through February 4. As is usual with Steppenwolf productions, the theater does a fine job with this play. Directed by Randall Arney, the play features John Mahoney as Richard a cantankerous old lush and Francis

Guinan as Sharky his recently on-the-wagon brother. Other actors Alan Wilder as Ivan, Randall Newsome as Nicky and Tom Irwin as Mr. Lockhart turn in fine performances as well. The topic is standard McPherson—the squalor and downside of heavy drinking in Dublin. Inevitably, this

leads to boozy bickering, compromised relationships and disrupted bodily functioning.

McPherson, a recovering alcoholic who grew up in Raheny, a Dublin suburb, does not stray far from his roots or his one time addiction in this play. He creates a litany of the many pubs within a 3 mile radius of the place and has something to say about what happened to his characters in or around each one. Mostly it is bad. For example, Sharky has had his nose broken in a brawl on his way home from a night on the town. That is the reason he has decided to take a break from the booze and become abstemious. Richard has his share of problems as well. He has become blind as a result of dumpster diving for wall paper presumably while intoxicated. Richard uses his infirmity to manipulate Sharky and the others.

In the play it is Christmas Eve and Richard and Ivan are celebrating the coming birth of the Christ child in much the same manner as they spend the other 364 days of the year: by becoming soused. Next day, Christmas, another couple shows up and joins them in their ramshackle house. These are Nicky, a local, and the mysterious and well-dressed. Mr. Lockhart. It turns out that Mr. Lockhart is the incarnation of the devil and he has arrived to play cards with Sharky for the latter's soul. This has come about because years previously Sharky had been arrested and placed in the Bridewell, a central Dublin jail, for killing a man in a drunken brawl.

While he was incarcerated, the devil appeared to Sharky in the cell and Sharky was able to cut a deal with devil so that he would be released and not punished. Now the devil has returned to collect his debt.

Because The Seafarer is a conven-

tional play with characters that interact and speak lines to one another, the work is unconventional at least for McPherson. McPherson is better known for lengthy monologues where characters go on at length and almost never interact. The only time in this play that McPherson succumbs to monomania is close to the end when the devil is talking about hell. Many in the audience found the play darkly humorous and laughed loudly at its comic lines. But this critic found too much tragedy to enjoy any laughs.



Conor McPherson

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Hooliganism

Mike Houlihan



I hit sixty last month. My kid told me "That's officially old."

I'm fine with that, as long as it's old and crazy.

Saw a cartoon of a guy sitting at a bar and he tells the bartender, "When they start saying, 'you've still got it'... You don't."

Au contraire, Mr. Cartoon guy!

I stand at 60 years on the brink of the next great adventure, a medicine show/book tour for Hooliganism, the most exalted piece of Irish American literature ever sprung from the loins of Chicago. The Hooliganism tour began November 6th at Fado Irish Pub. Manager Kieran Aherne put my poster up in the ladies room to promote the book signing.

He knew he'd find some of my fans among those fannies. Ah, there's a lovely thought.

My son Billy and I have been haunting pubs all over town promoting the book and 15th Anniversary DVD of Goin' East on Ashland. Our pal Joe Fitzgerald is filming our exploits for a documentary we hope to sell to MGM, HBO, or Svengoolie.

We're headed to Ireland in March to pay homage to the ancestral seat of the Hooligans. I'm not exactly sure where that is yet, but we will sniff it out.

My leading lady, the lovely Mary Carney, along with the Houlihan brothers Billy and Paddy, will join us on the trip to the Emerald Isle for our green transfusion. But before we go, we'll be barnstorming bars and parish halls, signing the book

and DVDs. We've filmed the faces along the way and found them fascinating and funny. Please join us if you have the opportunity, buy books for your thirteen sisters, and become part of our documentary film.

The cast so far is packed with Chicago Irish celebrities, including Maureen O'Looney, Shay Clarke, Mike "Pickle" Joyce, Tom Boyle, Cliff Carlson, P.J. O'Dea, Kevin & Billy Clancy, Brendan McKinney, Peig Reid, Frank West, John Spellman, Barney Farelly and Dan Igoe.

Speaking of Pickle Joyce, we ran into him in the Hilton lobby as we worked the room before the Irish Fellowship Christmas luncheon last month. My son Paddy and I were scheduled to meet actor/writer Denis Leary that night for a photo op for this great newspaper. Pickle offered us a lift and he picked us up with two of the boxers he trains, former Leo High and Loras college gridiron great, Marquis Ball, and Golden Gloves boxing champion, Lamar Fenner. Marquis was our wheelman driving the Lincoln Town Car and Lamar's dad is a Chicago firefighter.

Leary's PR guy meets us in Borders on Michigan Avenue that night and there are thousands of fans waiting to get their books signed. I watched them buying the books by the hundreds and drool ran down my chin. The PR guy leads Paddy, Pickle, Lamar, and me back to a tiny room where Leary is waiting. Okay guys, let's make this quick. He holds up the paper and I start flashing. Then Pickle gives him a shirt from the Celtic Boxing Club and says, "Hey, let us get a quick couple of pictures with me and Lamar."

I introduce everybody and tell Leary "This is Mike Joyce, this is Lamar Fenner." Leary says, "Hey that sounds like an Irish name, you must be black Irish!"

That joke always cracks me up. Black guys have no clue what we Irish guys mean but they always go along with it. As we leave Pickle tells the PR guy, "I'm not usually this big of a jock sniffer, but Leary is crazy." That means he likes him.

We filmed a radio appearance on Good Morning Ireland with Sean Ginelly and his lovely associate Bernie Markley. Apparently there are two Bernie's who work the show but Bernie II told me she's "the naughty one"! Bernie you will go far in show business!

At Gaelic Park we get there in time for the Christmas Mass and I consume about twenty pieces of bacon at breakfast. Then I remember what I heard the day before on the Irish radio. Evidently there was a brief contamination of pork in the old sod and they recalled all the bangers. I worried for about ten seconds and then gobbled up them oinks. I have enough trouble with my own Irish sausage without worrying about the rest of the country's.

If our tour sounds like fun, you're damn right it is, whether you're sixty or sixteen. So come on out, join us and say hello as we run up to our departure date for the pilgrimage to pratie land.

Send me an email and I'll put you on our list and alert you of upcoming stops on our medicine show tour when we're filming. When the movie is screening at Sundance some day and you tell your friends, "Yeah I could've been in that, but I stayed home that night to watch Dancing With The Stars." Nobody will believe you.

Chicago Irish email me at Houlihan@aol.com. We'll put you on the list and I'll make sure you know where and when the medicine show is going to be next. You can "get healed"! www.mikehoulihan.com.

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Swimming Upstream

By Charles Brady



Frank Carroll: A Lust for Life - Conclusion

[I hope you've enjoyed these pieces about 79-year old Dubliner Frank Carroll as much as I've enjoyed showing them to you. To let Frank continue...

My next job was again chasing a bigger wage packet due to the fact that my family was getting larger and so I worked for some car assemblers for three years and then onto Cavendish Furniture Company for 12 months.

While there I was introduced to Jimmy Whan by the late Jim Tunney who informed us that he was starting up a company called Fire Fighting Products. So after an interview I got the job and commenced work with them in 1968.

My first job was when Jimmy and myself had to go down Abbey Street to collect a drill and cable reel; then up to the Aishling Hotel in Pargate Street to fit up fire extinguishers. Then it was onto the Oil Refinery in Whitegate.

For the next 19 years I travelled every county in the 26 counties until I took early retirement in 1987.

As Finglas West was completed, people then set out to organise some type of community structures while others became involved in political parties. At the outset I got involved with the West Finglas Tenants Association, which had been set up, and as each area was organised they then helped with organising the next area.

There was many a row between the various areas and the executive because it became apparent that they did not want the area committee acting on their own although it was in the interest of the members of that area.

As a representative of the Deanstown area I had many a run in with the executive because my idea of a community was that you catered for all shades of opinion.

I subsequently came to represent the Council of Corporation Tenants and became Chairman of the group which organised one of the biggest marches ever seen in Dublin. This was in October of 1966 and was against the imposition of differential rent.

After untrue rumours were spread that I was a member of a political party I decided to resign—as did the Deanstown Committee in support of this—and we set up our own Committee.

During the rent strike we collected people's rent so that they would not fall into arrears. Then it was decided by the WFTA that Matt Larkin of the Corporation Tenants could not attend

public meetings and this was the death knell.

In these years, however, we had gotten together boys and girls who formed the Rising Raven Pipe Band, ran raffles to raise the money for uniforms and band equipment.

There were great band of people involved but in particular I cannot forget Sean Keane R.I.P. who, although mentally handicapped, was involved in many our activities.

When the Deanstown/Kilshane committee broke up I decided to enter politics and became secretary of the Colm Gallagher cumann.

After a while it became clear that there were members who were only interested in feathering their own careers [sound familiar, dear readers?] so in order to ensure that this would not happen it became necessary to vote them out and we then decided to start from scratch in order to become active on behalf of all the people in the area.

In 1985, during the convention to select candidates for the local elections it became apparent that the candidates had already been picked and when this turned out to be true I decided that this was not my type of democracy. At the next area meeting I blasted those who had participated in this charade and resigned.

After much discussion with the fellow members they felt that I should go forward as an Independent candidate and this I agreed to.

While there's been trouble and strife in my life, which is no different to what the majority of people feel, I can honestly say that I look back with few regrets

I always tried to take the stand that I took because I felt it was the right one, as my struggle through life did not allow me to become a "yes" man for anyone or any party and I always ensured that I owed no one any favours.

[At this point I'll interject to say that Frank is one of the most honourable and extraordinary men that I have ever met. Even though his politics are so at odds with my own. How many old geezers do you know who can put you to shame when it comes to computers, for example? Or whose grandchildren come to him when they have a problem with their homework? His curiosity about the world and where we're going shines through as much as does his love for his equally remarkable wife and family. But let me give Mr. Carroll, who I have been privileged to know, the last word.]

As I have reached the age of 79 I can say that while it was a struggle, the one thing that kept me going was my wife Pauline and the four wonderful children that we had: two boys, Francis and Leslie; two girls, Paula and Gwen, who have over fifty years given us more happiness than one could wish to have. We also have 5 grandsons, Daragh, Frank, Luke, Ben & Cian and one granddaughter Olwen, two daughters-in-law, Sharon & Aoife and one son-in-law, Oliver.

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This "Culture of Life" is at the very heart of Catholic Charities' mission. For 91 years, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago has dedicated itself to creating a "new culture of human life" for the millions of poor and vulnerable people we have served in Cook and Lake counties.

At Catholic Charities, "Respect Life" is far more than a slogan. It is a way of life. Since our founding in 1917, a belief in and reverence for every human life from the moment of conception to natural death has permeated every aspect of our service to people of all ages, races, religions and economic backgrounds.

Last year, Catholic Charities was privileged to serve 1,016,565 persons in our 159 programs at 156 locations with competence and compassion. Here is a sampling of our programs that helped to rebuild precious lives and restore human dignity and a better life to

our brothers and sisters in need.

Infants and Children: Nourishing Life
Catholic Charities nurtured the bodies, minds and spirits of more than 178,000 children from before birth through adolescence with dozens of child- and family-centered programs, including:

- Catholic Charities Adoption and Maternity services assisted 375 maternity clients and staffed a 24-hour hotline.

- Day care and after-school experiences benefited more than 1,800 infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school children. More than 500,000 meals were provided at our nine child development centers.

- 60,000 children received immunization and early vision screening throughout the region.

- Catholic Charities manages the 18 Women, Infants and Children Food and Nutrition Centers throughout the city of Chicago. Last year, 126,125 infants, toddlers and children through age five, as well as pregnant and nursing mothers and their infants, had access to the essential, healthy nourishment they needed.

Teen parents:

Through several of Catholic Charities' school-year and two-year programs, 1,956 pregnant and parenting teen mothers learned to care for their 1,500 children with love and skill, so that they can build stable, loving homes for their babies. They also participated in counseling sessions with the children's birth fathers and their families.

Our Elders: Living with Dignity

At the other end of the life spectrum, Catholic Charities is honored to care for our frail elders who are struggling to maintain their health, their homes and their dignity.

- More than 80,000 seniors received services from at least one of Catholic Charities' 27 programs offered at 43 sites in Cook and Lake Counties.

- Nearly 1,500 low-income seniors live in dignity in 18 beautiful low-income senior residences built and managed by Catholic Charities.

- Our Senior Centers welcomed more than 6,600 local seniors to a noon meal and social activities. Our Commodity Supplementary Food Program (CSFP) improved the nutrition of almost 15,000 low-income seniors with monthly food packages.

- Senior Services enabled seniors to stay in their own homes: home-delivered meals, homemaker services, Catholic Charities Home

Care; elder abuse, neglect and exploitation investigations; Respite Care services, adult day care centers, and case management.

Strengthening Families:

- Emergency food, clothing and shelter were provided to more than 25,000 family members and individuals in Cook County; and more than 12,000 people in Lake County.

- Almost 2 million meals were distributed to hungry families and individuals from 10 Emergency Food Pantries in Cook and Lake Counties.

- Our Family Self-Sufficiency Program in Lake County broke the cycle of poverty and homelessness for 696 low-income single parents and their children through housing, education and employment.

- Catholic Charities' 120 New Hope Apartments in Cook County suburbs house formerly homeless families comprised of nearly 583 family members who are achieving self-sufficiency.

- 166 homeless veterans found safety, dignity, job opportunities and the path to permanent housing and self-sufficiency at the St. Leo Residence for Veterans; 82 homeless veterans suffering from addiction received services and a new start in life at Cooke's Manor.

By living Christ's "Gospel of Life" daily, Catholic Charities is constantly creating the visible, viable "Culture of Life" that Pope John Paul II envisioned "for the building of an authentic civilization of truth and love," where all God's children can live in justice and charity:

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.

... Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."

For current information re: "Culture of Life" issues, visit: (www.usccb.org):

- November, 2008 statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops affirming the sanctity of and the respect due to human life from the moment of conception until natural death: "Respect for Human Life: The Church's Constant Teaching."

- December 12, 2008: "Dignitas Personae" (the Dignity of a Person): an Instruction from the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF).

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Celtic Kitchen —Pure and Simple



By Julianna Leber

Rooting Towards a Great New Year

Food traditions abound all over the world on New Year's Eve and Day. Whenever a culture celebrates the day that turns the page into the future, many traditions and superstitions are upheld and almost revered. However, when dealing with the future and all of its uncertainties, a little bit of old world hocus-pocus fun and centuries-old food traditions can help us look back on family ties and stories while looking forward with courage to an unsure, yet exciting future.

I grew up in an Irish/German/French household, so even though the traditions ran together, they were always wonderful to celebrate. For some of the traditions, we knew the reasons around wearing lots of gold and green. For others, they had a bit of a story. For New Year's Day we always

made pork and sauerkraut, a big tradition in the Midwest. Pork, in many forms such as chops or roast would be eaten because the pig 'roots' forward with his snout. As for the sauerkraut, it is traditionally made, jarred and stored in the root or storage cellars, and then 'brought up'. My favorite version of the combo is the sauerkraut balls! One should never eat chicken on New Year's, since they 'scratch back'. Another food that is widely seen as good luck is fish and some seafood. Any sort of fish like salmon swims forward and is therefore a charm for the table. The salmon is also seen as wise by the Irish folk teller, so there's a bit of brain food. But never crab, since they walk backwards! Other food traditions include an oyster stew and plates of mussels, because they 'open up'.

Next to the platters of pork roast or



poached salmon, the good luck vegetables found their place. Root vegetables are a given. Coming up from the ground and brushing off the dirt, veggies like carrots, parsnips, potatoes, sweet potatoes, turnip, and

the great and odoriferous onion, garlic, and shallot are all seen as good luck to eat. Other vegetables, green leafys like cabbage, kale, collard greens, and even broccoli leaves have the bright green color of prosperity, and will add charm to the feast. Combining the potatoes and steamed cabbage or kale into a colcannon, now there's a lucky table. And never mind that these veggies are great sources of vitamins and minerals!

In an Irish house on New Year's, the table



was always laden with an abundance of food. The family would eat, sing songs, dance and help bring in the New Year. Each person though left a little bit of food on their plate; just to be sure there was food in the house for that year. Then someone would take a loaf of Christmas bread or piece of cake and walk around the outside of the house, banging the bread on the doors and windows to wake up and get the old spirits out and help happiness find the doorway into their home.

The recipes below, pork tenderloin with cranberry and apricot cornbread stuffing and carnip, are both done in the rustic Irish tradition. Irish pork has been challenged as of late. American pork is safe and the recipe will do your table proud. The Carnip is an old recipe of carrot and parsnip mash. And I like the name.

Roast pork tenderloin with cranberry & apricot cornbread stuffing

Serves 6-8

2 c crumbled cornbread (any easy recipe)
1/2 c chicken broth 1/4 c dried cranberries
1/4 c chppd dried apricots (aprx. 6 pieces)
2 t. dried sage 2 t. dried thyme
1 t. salt 2 t. olive oil
1/4 t. ground pepper 1/2 c chopped celery
1/2 c chopped onion 1 3lb. pork tenderloin
1 T. olive oil Salt and pepper
Wooden or metal skewers

Preheat oven to 375°F. In small sauce pan, combine ingredients broth through pepper on a slow simmer for 2-3 minutes. Remove from heat. Pour 2 t. olive oil into small skillet over medium heat and put celery and onion into pan. Cook until transparent to slightly golden. Do not brown. Pour into cranberry mix. Put cornbread crumbles into bowl and add fruit/veg mix. Stir thoroughly and set aside. Put tenderloin on cutting board, fatty side up. Slice into the side of the loin, 1/3 the way down, making a horizontal pocket. Do not cut through. Turn the loin 180 degrees, so the cut is on other side. Cut another pocket 1/3 UP FROM BOTTOM. This is so it will unfold flat. Check your progress, because a wrong cut will give you an 'E' cut and not 'S' or cut though. Unfold meat flat, with fatty side down, press stuffing onto meat, leaving 1/2 edge at a short end, and carefully roll with

short end to other, ending with fatty side up. Skewer in 2 or 3 places at the end flap to keep closed. Drizzle olive oil over loin, then the salt and pepper. Place on grill rack and add 1/2 cup water to pan for drippings and sauce later.

Let cook for 1-1/2 hours, checking after first hour with meat thermometer. The temp should read 160F. Remove from oven, tent with foil for 10 minutes, and then slice.

For sauce, put pan on stove top and heat to medium-high, slowly sprinkle 1/4 c flour and whisk continuously.

Carnip Serves 4-6

2 lbs. parsnips 2 lbs. carrots 2 T. butter
2 T. olive oil 1 t. cardamom Salt and pepper Parsley

Peel, cut into 1 inch chunks and boil parsnips and carrots in separate pans. Drain and

mash separately with potato masher. (Both veggies can become stringy with a mixer, so using masher they don't get that way.) Add 1 T. butter and olive oil to each, along with salt and pepper to taste and stir. Add the cardamom to the carrots and mix. Spoon into two-sided server or carefully put carrots into one side of bowl, add parsnips alongside and swirl the centers. Sprinkle with parsley and serve hot.

Whatever your family traditions are, I hope you have a happy and blessed year. I want to thank all my readers for your input and support these past two years. It has been wonderful writing for you!

Julianna Leber is a graduate of the professional food and wine courses at Ballymaloe Cookery School in County Cork, Ireland. She occasionally serves as a personal chef while also continuing her studies toward a dietetics/nutrition degree at The University of Akron. During "The Green Season" at the Brown St. Hibernian Club, she prepares her favorite Irish dishes, to the delight of many. Julianna can be contacted at julileber@hotmail.com.

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Tradition In Review

Bill Margeson

Six for you this month!

As a heads up, there is a massive, major new album, *At Last*, from a brilliant singer from Derry, Maranna McCloskey. Full review next month—a little tip here—think Vocal Album of the Year for this stunning piece of work from a major and new force on the scene. Unbelievable. Brand, brand new. Okay, here we go. Brace yourself, Bridgie:

1. Heartstring Sessions by Maire ni Chathasaigh, Chris Newman, Artie McGlynn and Nollaig Casey

The truth is we'd buy an album of these particular musicians tuning up and playing the scale. Maire is the best Celtic harp player in the world. The same arguments can well be made about Chris and Artie on guitar and Nollaig



on fiddle. A joy. And, a lovely surprise in a guitar duet on a very American, "Saturday Night Shuffle." Maire's "Lament for Limerick" is the most beautiful piece on the album, and that is saying a lot. Maire and Nollaig are

sisters, Artie is married to Nollaig, while Chris and Maire are partners, as well. Keeping it all in the family is an inspiration, and produces one of the best albums of the year.

Rating: Four Harps.

2. Up and Coming by Oisín HERNON and CONAL HERNON with Carl Hession

Oisín and Conal are 16 and 13, respectively, as of the time of this recording. Oisín is on the button box, Conal on the banjo. Of course, it goes without saying they come from an incredibly talented musical family. The immediate family, including the brothers, has 17 All-Ireland titles to its credit. To hear two musicians this good, this mature and this young can get depressing. Stunning. Stunning. This much talent and their whole lives ahead of them. Who wins? All of us! Especially us. We get to hear them for years, God willing. Get up, 'ya boyos! It is on Clo lar-Chonnacta. Is this label capable of producing anything less than perfection from each of its artists? Rating: Four Harps.

3. Consider the Source by Brian Conway

We first heard Conway at a special concert for Andy McGann last year at the Irish-American Heritage Center in Chicago, along with Joe Burke on button box and Felix Dolan on piano. The resultant live album won a number of awards, and rightly so. This is a lively 14 tunes and a beautiful song, "Highland Mary" by Niamh Parsons. Guest musicians are sitting in, including Billy McComiskey on button box, Joanie Madden on flutes and whistles, and Felix's son, Brendan on piano. Terrific. We MIGHT have preferred one of the many pics not to be showing Brian displaying his great teeth through so many smiles, but we quibble.

The music is the thing here, and it is lovely. Rating: 3 and 1/2 Harps.

4. Unearthed by Paul McGlinchey

This superior Tyrone flute player offers a real treat in this all-instrumental album. Great. Great. And, he really is the definitive northern flute player, his phrasing and tones so redolent of the area. Lots of great side cats add a real sense of depth here, and really aid Paul in showcasing his sensational style and phrasing. A treat. A treat to be sure. Like lovely, real, pure Irish flute playing? Here it is.

Rating: Four Harps.

5. The New Shoes by Nuala Kennedy

A great flute player, Nuala's first album is a winner. We are late to the date here. This has been out for some months, and we need to tell you that she is a gift—BUT—while some of the tunes prove what she has to offer, some seem disjointed and out of sync with the rest

of the album. All in all, this is great stuff. She has wonderful musicians sitting in. Like a lot of young players, she needs to chart her line between trad and more modern sound the best way she can. She is a musician to watch—and to hear. Rating: Three Harps.

6. Far, Far From Ypres - Greentrax Music

There are only a few labels that can compete with Greentrax in producing wonderful music and magic, but none better at it. This double album is an exhaustive study of the songs, music and poems of WWI. It is a treasure for the Scottish historian, or anyone who loves history. This takes you there. It is the heart of the tragedy—from funny music hall songs of the day to poems that will rend your heart. This is the best of the best—a great, entertaining album that is also important. Very important. As usual, Greentrax comes up trumps. Rating: Four Harps, and wish we had more! *Ta!

Horoscopes

By Theresa Castro

ARIES: You will be thrust into the limelight in one way or another this new year in January 2009. You are not a stranger to controversy, however, and will have no trouble finding resources and allies to assist your efforts.

TAURUS: You are entering a new area of interest that will greatly enhance your future progress in learning and spiritual awareness. You can't help but ponder the events of the recent past and how they have shaped your current reality. You see that your life has true meaning and wonder.

GEMINI: You are advised this month to closely monitor your words and actions this month of January 2009 while you are highly visible from virtually all standpoints. You may also be called upon to act as an overseer of dependent elements within your professional life. Your public persona is exposed for better or worse.

CANCER: You will have to use every bit of strength and patience to resist outbursts that may detract from your constructive purpose personally and professionally. In efforts to control your world you could inadvertently undermine your best interests by attempting power plays that waste energy and do more damage to your own reputation.

LEO: You have come full circle as the fruits of your labors come into the light of day. Your climb to this point is not out of blind ambition but of a dream of truth and justice for those

who are in your care. You understand that you cannot succeed alone and have created a network of allies for positive action.

VIRGO: Saturn is in your sector for an extended stay and you are slowly but surely changing your life. Saturn will not allow you to take shortcuts to your success. You may have to concede defeat in some areas while having to defer gratification in others. Rest assured, you will reap the greatest of victories in the hardest of battles.

LIBRA: You will finally take a stand on that nagging relationship issue. Replacing the old with the new can never be easy. The old habit dies hard and clings like a burr in your britches. Your sense of moral obligation won't set you free either. Face the facts and proceed with your happiness.

SCORPIO: You have to always account for every little thing you do. If you do wrong by the universe, you'll pay. If you do the best that you can, you will reap the rewards slowly. You might as well work hard and try not to be cranky at the world. Others are not responsible for your happiness.

SAGITTARIUS: Your financial future will be very much affected by the way you conduct your affairs this January 2009. Your world will be completely changed and your family will also be a part of the equation. Do what is best for those that depend on you.

CAPRICORN: You, more than most, will be profoundly affected by the planetary weather this January 2009. The changes and life altering experiences are not confined to the new year either. Your journey actually started in mid December 2007 and will not be complete until after November of 2024! Wow!

AQUARIUS: Brace for Jupiter to rock your world! Yes, Jupiter does indeed enter and stay in Aquarius for a whole year starting this January 2009. Now is the time for you to reap what you have coming to you.

PISCES: You will be comforted. If you have been suffering in some way you will have solace. Jupiter will smile upon your sign in ways you may not even know. Pluto, just at the beginning of Capricorn, will work with you as well. Do not expect instant changes, however. Bit by bit things should improve by imperceptible increments.

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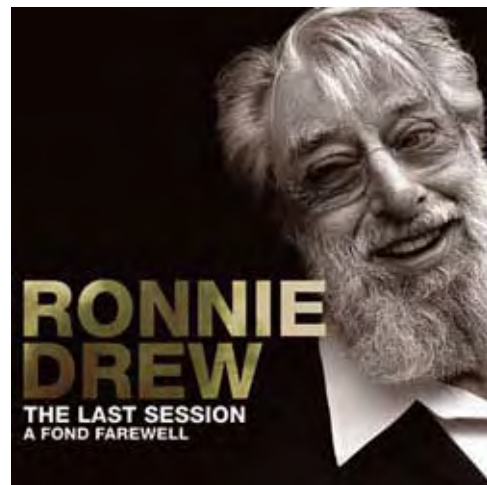
Shay Clarke



Ronnie Drew: The Last Session, A Fond Farewell

Ronnie Drew, the voice of the Dubliners for decades, died of cancer in August of 2008. We all knew that he was very ill but it was still a shock as he was a giant, an icon, who had entertained us with his unique gravelly voice since the 60's.

Apart from his great body of work with



the Dubliners, Ronnie had often worked solo and indeed collaborated with De Dannan and Donal Lunny among others, but to my delight, Ronnie spent his last seven months recording with some of his jazz pals and has left us with this absolute treasure of an album.

Gavin Ralston, who engineered the album, says "It was a session to remember: top class jazz musicians playing songs with a folk legend. Jazzed up folk songs, folk versions of jazz numbers. There was a lot of music and respect in the room. Everybody turned out to play on Ronnie's choice of songs and the magic just flowed."

Track 1: Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out. Beautiful stuff and alone worth the price of the album. Trumpet, guitar, piano and Ronnie weaving magic on this classic. I just love it.

Track 2; September Song: Kurt Weill's September Song is enhanced by Ronnie's powerful and emotional performance. Myles

Drennan's piano is perfect.

Track 3: Rainy Night in Soho: (duet with Damien Dempsey) It just gets better, two of my favorite Dubs singing one of my favorite songs. When Damien got the call to sing this song with Ronnie, he had just recorded it for his Rocky Road album that same afternoon with Ronnie's fellow Dubliners Barney McKenna and John Sheehan – it's a funny world.

Track 4: For Ronnie: This guitar solo by Hugh Buckley was played to honor Ronnie's Dubliner days and is loosely improvised around the melodies of Molly Malone and The Rare Old Times. Fabulous, I have never heard the like of it.

Track 5: The Last Wave: Written by Aengus Fanning and arranged by Hugh Buckley especially for this collection, has Ronnie in his element. It was Aengus that came up with the idea of this amazing album. Aengus is the editor of Ireland's Sunday Independent Newspaper.

Track 6: We Had it All: (duet with Mary Coughlan) Another gem, two voices who can tell the story better than any. This was another of Aengus Fannings inspired ideas.

Track 7: The Auld Triangle, Ronnie sings Brendan Behan's classic and the jazz follows. This one really knocks it out of the park. Ronnie must have sung this song thousands of times but never as well. It's special.

Track 8: Molly Malone, I can't believe it. It was the voice of Ronnie Drew that dragged me into Irish folk music way back in the 60's and now that same voice has me listening to and loving jazz.....what can I say, Molly sounds better than ever.

Track 9: Loves Own Sweet Song, (duet with Emmanuel Lawlor) Another classic, this time with Emmanuel Lawlor, a beautiful tenor voice, classically trained, meets the voice of Ronnie Drew, a voice that has been compared to the sound that coal makes being dragged under a door – but again – it works beautifully.

Track 10: Inspiration for the Bards, – Until Spring (poem) A recitation, a last few words from Ronnie on a subject, a beverage that he

was very familiar with, the legendary voice goes still, the music fades and what can you do but play the album over again. Brilliant.

This album is indeed Ronnie Drew's epitaph and although it is different, it stands tall and proud like he did himself. It's a wonderful album and I highly recommend it.

Happy New Year to you all.

IAHC January Events Winter Classes Resume at IAHC This January

Break up the winter doldrums and eradicate the winter blahs with classes at the Irish American Heritage Center in Chicago. Following the inaugural session of its fall courses, the Center invites residents of the greater Chicagoland area and Irish community to participate in its winter courses.

The classes, which begin the final week of January and run for eight weeks, will cover myriad topics for students of all ages. Study the plays of J.M. Synge, learn the secrets of baking the perfect Guinness cake, hone your step dance skills or uncover the intricacies of Irish history.

In addition to courses for adults, the winter lineup includes weekday morning classes for mothers and their children, as well as several theatre workshops specifically designed for teenagers. In all, more than twenty different classes will be offered to members of the Center and the general public, double the amount from the fall session.

They are in the process of finalizing the winter schedule. For more information on the offerings, contact classes@irishahc.org or call 773-282-7035.

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North American County Board 2008 Convention

By Eamonn Kelly, PRO-NACB

Boston born Joe Lydon was elected the new chairman of the North American County Board, replacing the popular Tom Dolan who's term came to an end after completing the maximum 5 year tenure as chairman. Lydon, who chaired the Boston Northeast Board in recent years, becomes the first non-Irish born Gael to serve at the helm in the 50 year history of the NACB.

Hosted by the Western Divisional Board and staged at the Fisherman's Wharf Holiday Inn Hotel, this year's convention involved the biggest attendance in several years. Highlight of the convention was the attendance of several GAA officials from Ireland who were in San Francisco for the Gaelic football All-stars exhibition game in conjunction with the grand opening of the new Pairc na Gael in Treasure Island. In addition to President Nickey Brennan and Secretary General Paraic Duffy, also in attendance were Sheamus Howlin (Overseas committee chairman), Tom Daly (Ulster Council Chairman), John McElroy (GAA Management), Albert Fallon (GAA Trustee), Lowery Quinn (Connacht Council), Gene Duffy (Chairman GAA Finance committee). In addressing the delegation, Nickey Brennan expressed his delight in getting the opportunity to speak at a NACB convention and saluted the board on the progress that has been made in the promotion of Gaelic Games

throughout North America. He especially cited the work being performed under the NACB Games Development program headed by Mike O'Connor and added that funding will continue to be made available from Croke Park for youth development under the existing successful structure. The president made reference to the restructured summer sanction rules



2009 NACB Officers (L-R): Eamonn Kelly, PRO (Chicago); Liam Moloney, Secretary (San Francisco); Tom Dolan, Youth Officer (Chicago); Joe Lydon, Chairman (Boston); Paul McCarthy, Vice-Chairman (Philadelphia); Bernie O'Reilly, Honorary President (Boston); Mike O'Connor, GAA Central Council Delegate (Boston); Malachy Higgins, Treasurer (San Francisco); Mary Prendiville, Registrar (Chicago). Photo taken by Eamonn Gormley (San Francisco).

that allows unlimited J1 visa players to play with NACB clubs but prohibits inter-county players from obtaining sanctions. He felt that the rule changes has been a success and in the best interest of the promotion of games in Ireland. However, he expressed concern that some clubs registered sanction players from Ireland above the quota allowed by rule.

Overseas Committee Chairman Sheamus

Howlin also addressed the convention with complimentary remarks about the progress that has been made in youth development during his tenure in office. In stating that his chairmanship will end next April he assured the delegates that the new administration under the presidency of Christy Cooney will commit to the same level of support to the overseas units as the current administration. Ray Bassett, from the Department of External Affairs,

was elected as chairman, two candidates, Liam Moloney (San Francisco) and Harry Costello (Chicago) remained on the ballot for secretary. With Costello declining the nomination Moloney became the new secretary. There was no opposition against the incumbents in the positions of Registrar and Treasurer so Mary Prendiville (Chicago) remains Registrar and Malachy Higgins retains the position of treasurer. For the first time in many years there

was competition for the position of Public Relations Officer with the nomination of Paddy McDewitt (Boston) against incumbent Eamonn Kelly (Chicago). Kelly retained the position with a vote of 92 to 71. Outgoing chairman Tom Dolan was elected Youth Officer after John O'Flynn (San Francisco) declined his nomination. Bernie O'Reilly (Boston) was elected to the position of Honorary President and Mike O'Connor (Boston) became the new NACB Central Council Delegate.

Following is the newly elected board of officers for 2009:

Chairman, Joe Lydon (Boston); Vice-chairman, Paul McCarthy (Philadelphia); Secretary, Liam Moloney (San Francisco); Treasurer, Malachy Higgins (San Francisco); Registrar, Mary Prendiville (Chicago); PRO, Eamonn Kelly (Chicago); Youth Development Officer, Tom Dolan (Chicago); Honorary President, Bernie O'Reilly (Boston); Central Council Delegate, Mike O'Connor (Boston).

With time becoming a constraint the new board dealt immediately with the 30 motions on the agenda. Of those submitted, 13 were either withdrawn, deemed out of order or were considered duplicates of other motions. The first motion on the agenda from the Boston Eire Og Camogie club requesting that the new J1 visa players not be counted towards sanction quotas for each team was withdrawn after clarification was issued by the board after direction from Nickey Brennan that all J Visas will be handled as inter-county transfers. The motion that generated the longest discussion was submitted by the San Francisco Fog City Harps club which was seeking the reduction of sanction players on the field at one time from 8 to 5 in senior camogie, which ended up being defeated. Most significant of the motions passed was one from the San Francisco Sean Treacy club requesting a deviation from the Official Guide rule that issues time suspensions for category 1 and 2 offences. The clubs' motion requests that the punishment in the NACB for such offences should be missed games rather than time suspensions because of the extremely short NACB playing season.

Before the convention came to a conclusion it was confirmed that the 2009 playoffs will be held in Boston with the 2010 playoffs scheduled for San Francisco. A motion from Philadelphia to host next years NACB convention, it being the 50th anniversary of the first NACB convention in Philadelphia, was defeated in favor of holding the convention in Chicago.

who was with the visiting officials, spoke briefly to the delegates. In acknowledging his department's contribution to the San Francisco Treasure Island project, he congratulated the local committee for the work and dedication to completing the initial phase of the project. Bassett indicated that he was confident that funding from the Irish Government for the development and promotion of Irish sports overseas will continue into the future despite the economic downturn. The visiting officials remained at the convention for two excellent Power Point presentations on the Games Development Program given by NACB Youth Officer, Mike O'Connor, and North American Games Development Coordinator, Mary Ruane. Before the officials departed the NACB presented appreciation awards to Nickey Brennan, Sheamus Howlin and Gene Duffy.

Former NACB officers, Chris Murray (Detroit) and John O'Brien (Cleveland) were elected convention chairman and secretary respectively to conduct the election of officers for the 2009 NACB board. It was the most competitive election in several years with nominations submitted for all positions with the exception of Treasurer. After the completion of a roll call it was determined that the total vote count would be 168, the largest in several years. Mike O'Connor (Boston), who completed 5 years as NACB Youth Officer, and Joe Lydon (Boston), outgoing secretary, were the only competitors for the position of chairman. Bernie Connaughton (Boston) was also nominated for the position but he declined the nomination. Lydon became the new chairman with a vote of 89 to 77. The most closely contested office was that of vice-chairman where 5 candidates were submitted for the position. After Tom Dolan (Chicago), Liam Moloney (San Francisco) and Mike O'Connor (Boston) declined the nominations it left for a runoff between Paul McCarthy (Philadelphia) and Gareth Fitzsimons (Chicago) with McCarthy edging out by 2 votes, 84 to 82. With incumbent Joe Lydon already

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Frank McCourt Makes West Michigan Appearance

By Neil Mullaly

A diminutive man of enormous stature captured 1,000 hearts last October 26.

Frank McCourt traveled to Muskegon to tell stories. He performed in the striking venue of Muskegon's historic Frauenthal Theater.

Recent past presenters at the Ah Fest have included poet laureate Billy Collins and humorist David Sedaris.

McCourt spun true yarns from his youth to his life today, ranging from hilarity to tragic comedy. McCourt reminded the audience of the words of William Butler Yeats: The thing about being Irish is that at times of great joy you are consoled by the thought that around the corner is great tragedy.

In likely deference to the audience's expectations formed from his now classic Angela's Ashes, published in thirty languages, McCourt told a fair share of anecdotes from his destitute developmental years in Limerick.

For example, he explained that he had put considerable effort into searching out a cross-town, hard-of-hearing, elderly priest for his obligatory confessions.

The strategy bore fruit for some time—uniform minimum penances despite varying amounts and degrees of transgressions.

But eventually the day of reckoning arrived. That day when the priest pushed open the confessional's screen slider, young McCourt was startled to see an unfamiliar large ear that was clearly not the ear of his regular, reliable confessor.

And when McCourt haltingly confessed that he had done some "dirty things," the priest inquired if McCourt had done these things alone, with another, or with some class of beast. McCourt had never heard of a sin involving "some class of beast," and left the confessional with more questions than answers.

Moving beyond his Limerick years, McCourt devoted much of his program to his 30 years of teaching English in New York's public schools. On his first day of teaching, his students started a food fight by tossing their sack lunches around his classroom. When an especially

appealing bologna sandwich landed near him, he looked it over and ate it on the spot. As he explained, if sandwiches had been flying around in Limerick, they would have been caught and consumed in mid-air.

McCourt supports wholeheartedly the teaching profession, which he describes as the "downstairs maid" of the professions.

He asked the audience, "Did you ever notice that in education the farther you are removed from the students, the more money you make?"

He observed, "Physicians do their job, but they don't get up and face teenagers every day. That's like facing Napoleon's army."



Frank McCourt at book signing with Dr. Brian Glynn, a local physician who is an Ireland native. (Photo Drew Barker.)

In contrasting the British and the Irish approaches to the use of language, McCourt said that an Englishman would ask, "Darling, I love you, will you marry me?"

An Irishman will ask, "Mary, how would you like to be buried with my people?"

McCourt ended his program with a question and answer session. Here are some of the topics that were His recently published children's book is based upon a story that his mother Angela told the children.

This writer asked him, "Of all the honors you have received, of all the famous people you have met and places you've been, what is the most gratifying thing you were able to do if all this had not happened to you?"

His instant response, "Meeting Gregory Peck!"

After the question and answer session, McCourt then sat down in the theater annex for a book signing with a line of readers a half-block long. He graciously chatted with everyone. It has been twelve years since Angela's Ashes was published, and

Frank McCourt is now 78 years old.

He is a national treasure and we should assure that our youth read his works.

Frank McCourt resurrected the memoir genre in modern literature, and brought our Irish heritage to life around the world. Our youth need to know these stories to pass on to still our next generations. As Frank McCourt says, "There is nothing wrong with 'once upon a time.'"

Bob and Terri Wright Named 2008

Persons of the Year

By Neil Mullaly

Bob and Terri Wright have been recognized as the 2008 Persons of the Year by the Muskegon Irish American Society, one of Michigan's largest Irish organizations.

This honor is announced every year in November, when the Society holds its Irish film night at the Muskegon Museum of Art. The award was presented by the society's president, Kevin Donovan. Bob and Terri's story is one of immigration and perseverance that is an inspiration to all who know them.

Bob and Terri were both born and raised in

Scotland, Bob in Dumfries and Terri in Kirkcudbright. After graduating from a technical school in Dumfries, Bob joined the Royal Marines in 1956 for nine years, serving in Aden, Cyprus, and North Africa.

While in the Marines, Bob excelled in motorcycle racing and was a member of the Motorcycle Demonstration Synchronized Team. He was also trained as a diesel mechanic.

In 1964 Bob and Terri married and Bob left the Marines the next year. Soon they had two children to support. Due to a lack of good job opportunities in Scotland, in 1969 Bob and Terri successfully immigrated to Chicago, where Bob had been recruited as a diesel mechanic with a large trucking company.

However, big city life did not fit them well, and in 1974 they moved to the small town of Brighton, Michigan. They were close to Detroit and Terri's brother, who had immigrated to Windsor, Canada, when she was eight years old.

In Brighton Bob opened and successfully operated his own diesel

service garage for twelve years. Bob and Terri also had their third child by then. However, during one of Michigan's perennial recessions, he closed his business and the family moved to Muskegon, Michigan, in 1986 where he returned to college and was accredited as a computer technician.

He later became a computer consultant until his recent retirement.

Bob also was president of the local amateur radio club and received many awards in that field.

Both Bob and Terri have long been active with the Power Squadron, which promotes boating safety among the public. However, it is in promoting Celtic culture where Bob and Terri have been especially dedicated since coming to Muskegon.

Bob has been responsible for the web pages for the Conklin Ceilidh Band, Switchback in the UK, Clan McIntyre, the Muskegon Irish American Society, and the Grand Rapids Scottish Society. They taught Ceilidh Dancing in Grand Rapids and Muskegon for over 15 years. Their Ceilidh dance workshops have taken them far and wide throughout Michigan, and to Montreal, Glengarry, Sarnia and other Canadian locations, Philadelphia, and Ohio. They served

on the boards for the Kalamazoo Scottish Festival and the Rockford (MI) Celtic Festival. They are in charge of dance instruction at the Michigan Irish Music Festival.

Bob is a valued board member of the Muskegon Irish American Society.

Bob is very knowledgeable in Scottish History, especially the Robert Burns era, and has been involved in the programming and presentation of many Burns Suppers.

Terri is a renowned preparer of the haggis, that Scottish meat concoction that is definitely an acquired taste. (In this writer's opinion, Scotch whiskey had to have been born as an antidote to the haggis!) Congratulations Bob and Terri Wright!



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An Immigrant's Musings

Fr. Michael Leonard



Immigration Reform

As you read this the nation prepares for the inauguration of president elect Barack Obama. I have been asked frequently, "What will Obama do for the immigration issue?"

The simple answer is I believe that our new president will keep the promise that he made to a huge rally in San Diego on the election trail. There he promised to make fixing the broken immigration system a top priority in his administration. Hispanic voters came out in large numbers supporting Obama and in fact overall he received 67% of the Latino vote. The leaders of the Hispanic community are going to push hard to have president Obama keep his promise.

We work very closely with the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights here in Chicago and their president Juan Salgado was quoted as saying: "We voted in large numbers for Obama, and if we're sitting here two and a half years from now and absolutely nothing's been done, people are going to start asking questions."

That said it is only realistic to acknowledge that while president Obama wants to pass comprehensive immigration reform the issue will probably take a back seat to more pressing issues. The economy of course will be the number one issue to dominate the early part of his term. On the other hand it could be argued that bringing the 12 million undocumented out of the shadows could also be a positive step for the economy. If the new legislation includes a fine for people to adjust their status then the new program would pay for itself. Also the new permanent residents would be paying taxes and social security which the government sorely

needs at this time. To begin, many expect Obama to halt big immigration raids and Janet Napolitano the new head of Homeland Security being a pragmatist knows that enforcement measures alone are not going to sort out our immigration woes.

On a personal level Obama more than any recent president, has a unique vantage point on immigration. He is the son of a former exchange student and the nephew of an illegal immigrant, both from Kenya. He is only the fourth known president—and the first since Woodrow Wilson—to have a foreign born parent. Obama wrote that the United States was creating the "hypocrisy of a servant class" by allowing illegal immigration to grow without a sensible plan to deal with it. Now is his opportunity to confront this hypocrisy head on and give undocumented immigrants the dignity and respect which they deserve.

AGM OF C.I.I.S.

Chicago Irish Immigrant Support held its annual general meeting at Vaughan's on Northwest Highway on Tuesday, 9th of December. A full report was given of our activities over the past year. The following is a breakdown of our contacts from November 07—November 08: November 2007 - November 2008

In Calls	1488
Out Calls	1133
In Emails	2569
Out Emails	1361
In Mail	502
Out Mail	742
In Fax	394
Out Fax	782
Appointments (Office)	56
Out of Office Calls	1076

Out of Hours Calls/ Appointments / Pastoral	160
Baptisms	21
Baptism Prep	14
Marriage Prep	63
Weddings	14
Prison Visits	25
Visits to Sick	27
Funerals	26

New Board

Four new members have joined our board: Dr. Steve Fox, Carol-Ann Gallagher, Alan Coyle and Sinead Gallagher. The new officers elected are as follows: Chairman Cyril Regan, Vice-Chair Dr. Steve Fox, Secretary Therese O'Sullivan, Assistant Sec. Fiona McEntee, Treasurer Mary Johnson, Assistant Treasurer Maureen O'Looney, Paul Treacy and Peter Dinneen.

Introduction of Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), January 2009

ESTA is an electronic registration system requiring travellers who are part of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) to register in advance of travelling to the USA. The ESTA program began on a voluntary basis on 1 August 2008. Mandatory registration will come into force as of 12 January 2009.

Visa Waiver travellers should register through the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection Agency website at the following address <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov>.

Registration is free and may be done by third parties e.g. travel agencies. ESTA applications may be submitted at any time prior to travel, and once approved, will be valid for up to two years or until the applicant's passport expires or in the event of a name change. Authorisations will be valid for multiple entries into the U.S.

The US Department of Homeland Security is recommending that ESTA applications be submitted as soon as an applicant begins making travel plans and at least 72 hours in advance of travel. An applicant who does not receive authorisation to travel will need to go to their nearest U.S. Diplomatic or Consular Mission and apply for a visa.

An ESTA approval does not determine admissibility into the United States. The final decision for entry to the United States rests with US Immigration authorities at the port of entry.

The ESTA program does not apply to Irish citizens who are holders of a visa for the United States.

Paradox of Our Time

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints; we spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less.

We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgement; more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry too quickly, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often. We've learned how to make a living, but not a life; we've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor. We've conquered outer

space, but not inner space; We've done larger things, but not better things.

We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul; we've split the atom, but not our prejudice. We write more, but learn less; we plan more, but accomplish less.

We've learned to rush, but not to wait; we have higher incomes, but lower morals.

We build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever, but have less communication; we've become long on quantity, but short on quality.

These are the days of two incomes, but more divorce; of fancier houses, but broken homes.

These are the days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throw away morality, one night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill. Where are we heading...?

If we die tomorrow, the company that we are working for could easily replace us in a matter of days. But the family we left behind will feel the loss for the rest of their lives.

And come to think of it, we pour ourselves more into work than to our family—an unwise investment indeed.

Please Note: Our office has moved. We are now located in: The Cardinal Meyer Center, 35th St. and Lake Park Ave. in Chicago.

As always, should you wish to contact me you can e-mail slabhanoir@yahoo.com or Tel. 312-534-8445

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The Irish Rover

By James McClure



Library Cards: Dann and Raymond Are a Dynamic Duo

Call me wild at heart, but one of the closest places to my heart is always the local public library. In fact the first thing I do when I move to a new town is get a library card. While I like to think my life has had more than a few adventures, I know that many of them began between the binders between the walls of the local emporium of books.

The Arlington Heights Memorial Public Library is no exception, a wonder-filled treasure trove of books, computers, music and movies. A wonderful facility in every aspect, from its cozy underground parking to its staffed drive through drop-off, it also has a remarkable collection of regular activities.

My personal favorite is Dann and Raymond's Movie Club, a truly remarkable pairing of two gentlemen who are both entertainers and enthusiasts, experts and storytellers. Every third Thursday of the month in Arlington Heights, and every first Thursday in Schaumburg, the pair of Dann Gire and Raymond Benson pick a topic and tickle your fancy with a two hour long review of the best films of that particular genre.

Gire, a film critic for suburban Chicagoland's Daily Herald for 30 years, and Benson, a James Bond novelist who just happens to live in Buffalo Grove, give you the chance to enjoy the vignettes of your favorite movies and get their insights as they share clips of moviemaking in exploring a topic.

As they present to a room full of northwest suburban movie buffs, you get a bit of comedy routine and community theater to boot. It's clear that both men enjoy the subject matter as well as playing off each other in the course of introducing the evening's collection of clips. You'll find yourself learning and laughing.

As men who write for a living there is just enough ham in each of them to serve up a considerable slice of wit and wisdom on what makes a movie a film worth remembering. The monthly topics run from politics to comedy, Spielberg to sports, and Hitchcock to sci-fi.

Bond, James Bond is the common link that drew Benson and

Gire together. The movie critic met the Bond novelist when both were invited to the downstate digs of Doug Redenius, a collector of all things from Her Majesty's secret servant. It didn't take long for the movie buffs to see a match made in suburbia.



Both reviewers have several decades of their own adventures beyond what they've written and talked about connected to the silver screen. Dan Gire has experienced the strange doings of Jerry Lewis showing him the handgun that he routinely carried on his person to the humbling experience of being lectured by Charlton Heston on how a newspaper movie reviewer should interview a movie star.

Gire says that in 30 years as the local movie critic he has learned two qualities that separate a good movie critic from a hack, especially in an era when blogs and critics are proliferating. "First of all a good critic gets people to think about what they see," says Gire, who feels strongly that movie punditry and newspaper journalism as a whole ain't what they used to be. Secondly? "A true reviewer helps you gauge the value of the film... that's a much deeper analysis than whether he simply likes it or not."

For Benson, whose Bond novels and short stories include novelizations

of three of the Pierce Brosnan-era films, his adventures have included playing piano in Europe alongside the legendary John Barry, composer of soundtracks for many a 007 film. Like Gire, he's met his share of movie stars along the way.

Both men teach college classes in addition to their day jobs when not meeting up for their movie magic moonlighting at the library.

Each evening at the movies starts with a thoughtfully annotated lineup of the dozen or so movies to be discussed. It ends invariably with an interesting discussion of the many movies left out but considered. They've been doing this routine for a little over a year. In Arlington Heights the two fifty-something movie experts reprise the role they played last year in Schaumburg in their debut year.

November brought a look at the presidency and December a jovial look at holiday classics.

If you see the two-man team in action you may forever associate the library with laughter. Along with audience participation, they offer up fun with perhaps a bit of family Irish wit. Bond author Benson is Irish on his mother's side and newspaper man Gire says "marrying an Irish American woman is the best thing that ever happened to me... she keeps me centered!"

I give both "Scholars with a Smirk" four stars, two thumbs up and a standing ovation for offering a great evening out that leaves the audience members with all smiles as they leave the auditorium.

E-mail Jim McClure at Irish-RoverJim@aol.com.

Irish iPod

by Cate Baker

Irish American News welcomes our next generation columnist, Cate Baker.

I'm Cate, a 14 year old freshman in high school and I've been living in the Celtic culture all my life. During the summer, I travel with my family from festival to festival, across the country, listening to and meeting many different musicians. My parents have owned an Irish and Scottish import store since 1986.

My family and I attend many of the festivals and I have the opportunity to see many different performers. From French-Canadian Celtic and Spanish Celtic to Celtic music from Wales, Brittany and other parts of the world, I have heard my fair share.

Speaking of French-Canadian music, I saw an amazing band, (at the request of my Dad), at the Dublin Irish Festival in August. They're called Vishten. With 4 members and 2 that don't speak a lot of English, they blew me away. The two girls are twins and they both sing, play many different instruments, but they also have a hidden talent. The girls use their feet as instruments. They each sit in front of a board and step with their feet to keep the beat. The band features accordion, whistles, bodhran, fiddle, guitar, and vocals in French. One of the songs that they performed was called "L'Esprit du Bon Vin." Translated, it means the spirit of good wine. I just love the way the music dances from start to end, it sound like something one of my friends would play at a house

party. I know I would!

While I was at Milwaukee Irish Fest, I saw a band called Bodega. They're a Scottish band that plays traditional music with a modern twist. Every member of the band is under the age of 25, yet they all had a very traditional music upbringing. The band members met at the National Centre of Excellence for Traditional Music, a secondary school specializing in Scottish traditional music education. My best friend and I got the opportunity to meet them and get their autographs. One of the members even drew a picture on my shirt. They all asked us questions like "What's your favorite song?" or "Did you have fun today?" They were really nice and I LOVE their accents.

My favorite part of a festival is the end of the last day. I can look back on the festival and think about all of the cool people I've met, all the great sets I've heard, all the autographs I've gotten and all the funniest food I ate. It's really, I think, the best part of a festival. It says, next year isn't so far off and the end of the season is near. Most people think it's over, but they don't remember that the music never stops.



6th Annual Ireland Network Black Tie Ball

For the 6th consecutive year the Ireland Network Chicago (www.theirelandnetwork.com) will hold its annual Black Tie Ball on Saturday, February 21st, 2009. This year's event, which will be held at The Drake Hotel on Michigan Avenue in downtown Chicago, will include a Silent Auction to benefit Concern and the Greater Chicago Food Depository.

Starting with a champagne reception, the evening includes dinner and dancing to the music of Orchestra 33 in the spectacular Grand Ballroom at The Drake. The Ball is their most popular event of the year, so don't miss out! Tickets cost \$150 each. www.theirelandnetwork.com.

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WHY IRELAND WILL BE FREE. Rarely is history's framework changed or clarified by one group or one event. "Paradigm shift" is what academia calls it; changes of context, of community understandings of itself and where they are historically. The new book, *Coolcrease*, is such a paradigm shifter, and Irish-America's current respect for the people of Ireland will skyrocket from what it is about to learn from it. It was written by ordinary people (of great talent) of Ireland who rose up in response to a fraudulent "documentary" aired in 2007 and 2008 by Ireland's State television company, Radio Telefis Eireann (hereinafter RTE). RTE had advertised it as "Hidden History; Ethnic Cleansing in the Midlands" thus advancing its deceptive purpose. The book's foreword states:

This is two stories in one. It deals with the actual facts of an execution during the War of Independence at Coolcrease in Co. Offaly and then describes how the story was dealt with by RTE before, during and after its "Hidden History" programme on the incident broadcast on 23rd October 2007 and again on 13th May 2008.

This incident in the War was not hidden in any sense. The facts were long known and well known in the locality. It was not so well known

nationally simply because it was not a national event. Paddy Heaney and others have written about it in detail over the years. Paddy has a close family connection. A relative of his died from shots fired at him by the Pearson brothers. That relative and his colleagues were defending the democratic and legitimate Irish government established by the 1918 election against which Britain had launched a war. The Irish government elected overwhelmingly in that election had made its position crystal clear: "We solemnly declare foreign government to be an invasion of our national rights which we will never tolerate, and we demand the evacuation of our country by the English Garrison" (Declaration of Independence, 21st January 1919). Instead, the Garrison was strengthened and went on the offensive against the newly elected government. The Pearsons chose to assist the Garrison in a paramilitary capacity.

The Cadamstown roadblock was part of the IRA's preparation for a major attack on Crown forces in Birr (where the Crinkle military base was located) and an Offaly-wide mobilization was planned for this action. It was a rehearsal for taking control of the county's roads and bringing the other side's mobility to a standstill. The Pearson brothers attacked those

preparing the roadblock. On the orders of the senior IRA command the brothers were executed directly as a result of this attack.

There is nothing at all unusual in this. It was a military event in a military conflict, but RTE twisted it into something else. They transformed this local event into a national issue and endorsed the claim that it was a sectarian killing. The Pearsons were members of the 'Cooneyites,' a minority Protestant community. The national broadcaster was in no way a neutral facilitator (as it claimed) of two sides of a validly contested historical argument. RTE was fully complicit in the programme's claim that the executions were murder, part of a sectarian land grab and ethnic cleansing. The programme tarred the people of Cadamstown area as sectarian land grabbers, implicated the army of Dáil Eireann in the alleged atrocity and even inferred that Irish Land Commission officials were complicit in it. The programme further insinuated strongly that sectarianism and ethnic cleansing were a general characteristic of the War of Independence itself and the legitimacy and morality of that war were thereby challenged. That challenge was taken up by Paddy Heaney, Pat Muldowney and others and this book records how they successfully met that challenge. They have proven conclusively the military nature of the incident, the absence of sectarianism in the war in Offaly and the absence of any land grab arising from it.

It is an extraordinary situation that the national broadcaster of a State

seeks to misinform its audience and discredit legitimate actions that were necessary to establish the very State it serves! Yet that is the situation confronting us here in Ireland. There is an ideological campaign against the legitimacy—and the basic facts—of the War of Independence, and that campaign has now been given official sanction by RTE. It is essential to counter this malicious campaign, thus this book is an attempt to remind ourselves again of the basic facts of that war; the why and the how of it, and hopefully it will help to set the record straight. Jack Lane, *Aubane Historical Society*.

COOLACREASE'S AUTHORS are Paddy Heaney, Pat Muldowney, Philip O'Connor and others, and they have written a classic. It is at once history, current events, a crackling detective story, an upholding of factual history, an expose of black propaganda spewed from treasonous gov't operatives against their own people to the benefit of a foreign monarchy. It is important to say here that this book doesn't impugn all of Ireland's bureaucrats, only the RTE ones involved in falsifying Ireland's history.

CORRECTING THE RECORD. RTE falsifications of history are exposed by official records (shown in the book) that prove the following: Dáil Eireann (not British imperialism as RTE claims) was the lawful government of Ireland at the time having been elected into power by landslide in 1918, and 1920 and 1921. It was NOT an "ethnic cleansing;" all other nearby Protestant families (named in the book) lived unmolested. Nor was it a "land grab;" the Irish Land Commission had acted exactly opposite to RTE's slurring depiction. Nor were the Pearson brothers "murdered;" they had sided with the Black & Tans and had shot and wounded three members of Ireland's armed forces, one dying later as a consequence. The Pearsons were "Cooneyites," a Loyalist sect rabidly condemnatory of Catholicism, Methodism, et al, the exact opposite of the "gentle, Amish-type farmers" depicted by RTE, Senator Harris and others. The Pearsons were not cheated out of their farm; they put it on the market and sold it to the Land Commission for twice what they paid for it a few years previously. They also scammed the Dominions Office for another £7,500 in "compensation." These are a small sampling of Coolcrease's corrections of RTE's vile "documentary." In toto it comprises a classic "case closed;" correcting a massive, official fabrication of history. Published by *Aubane Historical Society*, €20 at www.atholbooks.org or from Athol Books, C/O Shandon Street Post Office, Cork; or PO Box

6589, London N7 6SG; or PO Box 339, Belfast BT12 4GQ.

WHY? Why did RTE, Ireland's State TV agency, falsify such an event at the core of Ireland's founding? Why would any gov't attack its own legitimacy? Why attack the honor and integrity of its founding army, the people of Offaly, and Ireland itself? Why do it on behalf of the foreign kingdom that wiped out half of Ireland's population three separate times; Elizabeth I, Cromwell, and Victoria, and still occupies six of Ireland's counties by brute force and deception? The evidence allows but one answer; Ireland's gov't is riddled with traitors. Mary MacAleese, Ireland's President, is promoting the British Poppy for lapel wear in Ireland. The Poppy symbolizes Empire and commemorates those who died while imposing empire on others. Meanwhile Ireland's gov't actively suppresses the Easter Lily that symbolizes Irish nationhood and commemorates those who died for Ireland. Republican prisoners in Portlaoise are punished for wearing the Lily at Easter while gardai harass Lily distributors each Easter Saturday and Sunday. The funds donated by Easter Lily wearers comprise the sole funding for the monumenting and maintenance of the graves of those who died for Ireland; which is why the gov't opposes the Lily. Meanwhile, the same gov't's Public Works Dept., at Irish taxpayers' expense, maintains the Irish graves of British soldiers who died fighting against Irish freedom.

IRELAND'S CONSULS GENERAL argued in Springfield AGAINST Irish-America's ultimately successful enactment of the MacBride Principles for Fair Employment in Northern Ireland. They OPPOSED support for the tortured and framed Birmingham Six and Guildford Four. They OPPOSED justice for Joe Doherty. They managed to BAN support for Irish freedom on Chicago Irish radio. By letter to US Congressman Fish Irish Ambassador Seán Donlon smeared Msgr. Murray who had come to the US seeking justice for the then newly-framed Birmingham Six. It took 16.5 years to undo Donlon's deed and finally free them. Each of these deeds alone didn't fully expose the "Irish" gov't – but Coolcrease does. Every Irish-American family ought to celebrate the intellect and integrity of Ireland's ordinary people by studying this book and keeping it as a manual for restoration of our US republic.

WHO ARE THE TERRORISTS re Occupied Ireland? See terroris-mireland.org.

WHICH BRIT REG'T starved your relatives? See irishholocaust.org. Contact me at 312 664 7651 or fogartyc@att.net.



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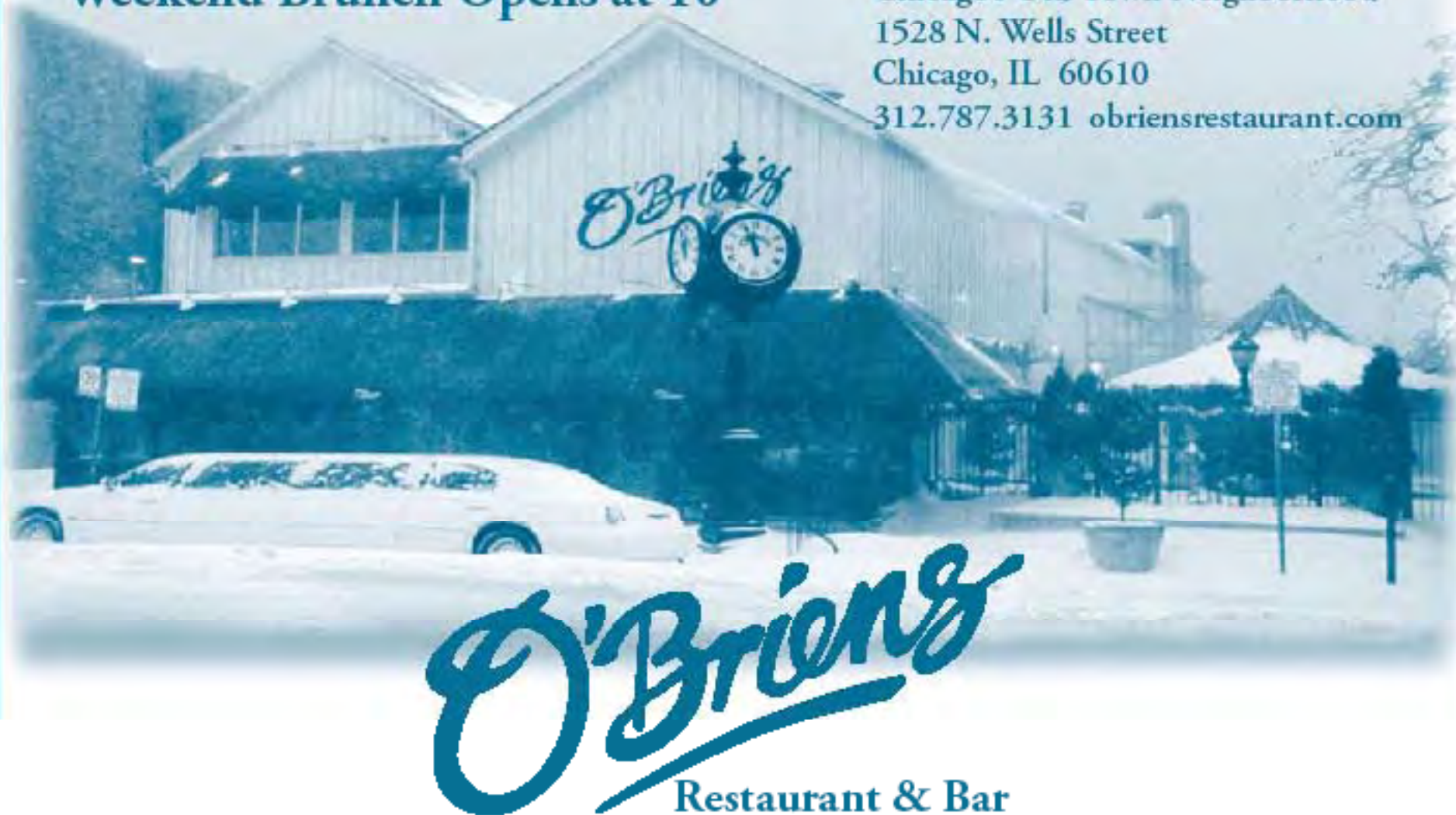
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