

## Casey Doherty to Crown the 2024 Parade Queen January 14th

See Page 2



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## View From Ireland

By Maurice Fitzpatrick



from members of the European Parliament—the parliament to which she is accountable—some of whom are livid with her for doing ‘irrevocable damage’ to the EU. When the Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza was attacked and destroyed, 842 Commission staff

members signed a letter accusing her of giving ‘a free hand to the acceleration and the legitimacy of a war crime in the Gaza Strip’. The IDF targeting of hospitals, including children’s hospitals, continues.

### The Fog of War

The fog of war is a term derived from military analyst Carl von Clausewitz’s seminal book, On War. It means the confusion that arises in the field of battle and the difficulty military commanders have in discerning the best tactical approaches. Yet the fog of war experienced in the battlefield is as nothing compared to the fog of lies and propaganda that attends the politics of waging, supporting or justifying a war. Witness, for example, the commentary of political leaders in response to ‘Black Saturday’, the horrific massacre of Israeli civilians on October 7th by Hamas, and the war that has ensued. Many have staked out positions, but few have been made to take responsibility for the full moral and legal import of those stances.

Speaking in the Dáil on October 18th, Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou McDonald said that the ‘destruction of hospitals is a direct violation of international law, a war crime’. Finally, Sinn Féin recognises a war crime when it sees one. Does this open the way for the party to reject the war crimes perpetrated by the IRA during the Troubles and participate in an Oireachtas (governmental) hearing on the same?

Consider the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. After the attacks, she authorised the projection of the Israeli flag against the headquarters of the European Commission in Brussels. She maintained that Israel has the right to defend itself even as it prepared a ground offensive in Gaza and ordered over a million people to evacuate their homes (with nowhere to go). She then travelled to Israel to reinforce her message of unconditional support for Israel. Von der Leyen also failed to condemn the announcement from an errant commissioner that the Commission would cut off humanitarian funding for Gaza. As Tacitus put it: ‘Desolationem faccunt, pacem appellat’ / ‘they make desolation and call it peace’.

In the UK, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak made clear that no body count in Gaza could ever sway his ‘unequivocal’ support for Israel: ‘There are not two sides to these events. There is no question of balance...The United Kingdom stands with Israel’. As with von der Leyen, the UK government has lined up with the august company of George W. Bush. Bush’s response to the war: ‘My thoughts were that we need to support Israel. No ands, ifs or buts’.

When European leaders and ministers for foreign affairs from EU member states assembled, they rapidly reversed the Commission’s decision (it had no right to make it in the first place) on humanitarian aid and condemned the attacks on Gaza that von der Leyen had conspicuously failed to. Now, surely, she must be asked to comment on the humanitarian crisis she was so apt to ignore. As Joyce Msuya of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs put it, one million displaced people in Gaza ‘have nowhere to go—nowhere to escape the bombs and missiles, and nowhere to find water or food, or to escape the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe’. Is cutting off aid from people who are enduring this hell compatible with the values of the EU and, if not, why has the Commission failed to apologise to Palestinians?


October 7th has been termed ‘Israel’s 9/11’. During his visit to Israel, President Biden said: ‘After 9/11, we were enraged in the United States. When we sought justice and got justice, we also made mistakes’. Mistakes? If the current leaders of the UK and the US learned anything at all from their countries’ policies post-9/11 they would forcefully remind Israel about the abject failure of the strategic response to the Al-Qaeda attacks in 2001. After twenty futile years of attempting to administer Afghanistan and install an alternative government, the US withdrew in 2021 and the Taliban returned to power. As for the ‘mistakes’ in Iraq, according to the Watson Institute at Brown University, between 280,771 and 315,190 people were killed by the US forces during the invasion. The Bush Administration knowingly based the invasion on propaganda. In a declassified document held in the US National Security Archive, ‘Talking points for the Rumsfeld-Franks meeting on November 27, 2001’, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld and his colleagues acknowledged that they needed to procure ‘real evidence’ to justify invading Iraq (redolent of Trump’s demand of Georgia Secretary of State, Brad Raffensperger, to ‘find 11,780 votes’ to enable him to win Georgia). In the absence of evidence, there was ‘Administration determination to exploit the perceived propaganda value of intercepted aluminum [sic] tubes - falsely identified as nuclear related’. Absent any evidence of ‘weapons of mass destruction’ this propaganda was used to support the criminal invasion. So, where is the article in the New York Times reminding its readership that the newspaper’s coverage, which upheld the propaganda about ‘weapons of mass destruction’ based on bogus sources, facilitated political leaders to invade; and urging that this is a cautionary example against unconditional support for Israel’s invasion of Gaza?

Even as late as ten days after Hamas’ attack, von der Leyen said in an address to the European Parliament that ‘only if we acknowledge Israel’s pain and its right to defend itself will we have the credibility to say that Israel should react as a democracy in line with international humanitarian law’. Is Tony Blair writing von der Leyen’s speeches? The only conditions in which Israel and its supporters can have credibility is when they insist that Israel should react as a democracy in line with international humanitarian law in all circumstances. After this further evidence of her ineptitude, von der Leyen ran off and avoided questions

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**COLUMNS AND REVIEWS**

Be A Sport . . .	David McDonnell
Books in Review	Michael Corrigan
Books in Review	Sabina Clarke
Catholic Charities	
Connemara Daly	Bill Daly
Counties of Ireland	Tom Butler
Gallagher's Advice	Caroleann Gallagher
Game On!	Chris Wheaton
Generation Next	Conor O'Connor
Getting to Know Irish	Tina Butler
Good Grief	Josephine Coleman
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Home is Where the Heart Is	Aishling Kelly
Immigration Nation	

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Irish Rover	Jim McClure
Master Your Money	Mike Corrigan
Universal Language	Christine Lawless
Picture Perfect	James T. Bartlett
Roaming the Gloaming	Estelle Shanley
Starts With A Song	Joe McShane
Swimming Upstream	Charles Brady
Terry From Derry	Terrence Boyle
Thought for Food	Jim August
View from Ireland	Maurice Fitzpatrick
We've Always Been Green	

Anne Marie McIntyre



As the eldest in my family I grew up saturated with the notion the eldest girl in an Irish family is in charge of the house and the people in it. The theory was not always accepted, actually I'm lying, it was never accepted but did not deter my determination to develop into a bossy but cultivated older sister and daughter.

As I recall Christmas in Ireland was a lovely time filled with excitement since we all believed in Daddy Christmas, as we called Santa. No we didn't go down the town to a big furniture store to sit on his lap and whisper into his ear the name of the game, or the doll, or the book we hoped to receive from him on Christmas morning. We actually took pen to paper and wrote Santa a letter, hand carrying it down to the Dundalk Post Office on Clanbrassil Street where the snooty Miss McCann sent all our letters to Santa's address way up in the North Pole. My letters always welcomed him down our chimney and the reindeer remained on our roof until Santa left our presents and my father swept out the fireplace so soot would not dirty Santa's clothes and he could finished eating the home made biscuits our aunt made specially just for him.

on our street. The morning it went up it was fresh, just cut in a field up the road a bit and we decorated it with ribbons and tied bows and someone suggested we purchase little candles, the kind the churches charge a penny for if you light one. It was all a marvel! The word spread and neighbors and children flocked to our front window to see the spectacle of a real ChristmasTree decorated and lit by candles in our home. We were not worried that the tree would catch fire because it was soaking wet when it was brought into the house. What we did'nt expect was we'd be the talk of the town and even the Dundalk Democrat sent a photographer to photograph it from the outside. The photo man asked to enter the house and we all sat around the tree. That picture appeared in the next issue of the Democrat and to this day, decades later, I take that framed picture out and hang it up for Christmas. It's yellowed from age but never

fails to bring me back to the memory of that particular Irish Christmas.

As most of the Irish American Readers know, in an Irish household the preparation for Christmas begins in earnest with the preparation of the traditional bill of fare of puddings, fruit cakes, with marzipan and white icing, and of course the preparation for the traditional Plum Pudding, all of which herald the yuletide season. Somewhere along

dog, or a wolf chasing them and the porter spilled as they ran for their life. If the seniors in the house noticed the boys were reeking of Guinness, Stout, or Ale, nothing was ever said.

Back then unlike current times there were few if any shortcuts in cooking. Almonds were brown and had to be blanched in hot water which took time. The marzipan icing was hand-made with sugar and crushed almonds. The also had to be chopped. The raisins were washed, dried and checked for size and the butter for the cake was whipped tirelessly by hand in a large bowl up close to the fire. The fire's heat was a great asset to soften the butter that required non stop whipping until it turned a lovely white color. The plum pudding as I recall took hours to cook its ingredients held together in a large ball tied in a white cloth and boiled for hours in our biggest saucepan. On Christmas day the pudding was heated and brought at the right time to the table, doused with warm brandy and set on fire to wild applause. Only the adults were allowed to taste and eat. The rest of us waited for a week or more 'till the brandy and other liquors died down.



the line, several weeks prior to Christmas and the last Sunday before Advent, time is dedicated to stirring up all the plum pudding ingredients and all those present take a turn stirring and making a wish. All of us young and old participated in what we believed was an outstanding ritual in our lives.

The role my brother and our same age cousin were assigned for years was to take the large glass jug from the kitchen cupboard and a few shillings and walk to the Windsor Bar down the Dublin Road to purchase a jug full of Irish porter. That was a necessary ingredient for the plum pudding. Every single year they returned with a half full jug and a made up story about a wild

I am astounded and almost embarrassed to write that once in the US year after year I made fruit cakes to give as gifts to friends and colleagues. Those fruit cakes were treated weekly with splashes of Irish whiskey to add luster and deeper taste. Sometimes in dispensing the cakes I got feedback but often silence. How well I recall a neighbor phoning and explaining that since I'm Irish I obviously was not aware that people in the

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united states use fruit cakes as door stops! I bet you guessed she's long off my friend list! The fruit cakes actually lasted a long time. Now and again it would be uncovered from its alcohol soaked cloth and tissue paper slices would be served.

By the way. Plum Pudding keeps on giving into the new year since the recipe yields twenty-four servings! Its basic ingredient is suet, the white fat that clings to the butchered flesh of cows and sheep. Most if not all beef today arrives in butcher shops free of that fat. The other ingredients include raisons, citron, brown sugar, eggs, brandy or sherry and molasses. The pudding is served with Hard Sauce, a combination of rum, whiskey, brandy, lemon, whipped cream and orange juice. The latter provides a sparkling example of how our eating habits have changed over these past years in America!

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Hi, I'm **Annie Nestor**. I was born in Ireland and have family from Galway, Mayo and Kerry. I'm a locally owned Home Care Agency founded in 2015.

After 50 yrs in early childhood education and owning several child care centers, I decided to pass the baton. Our children are the third generation in our family to start schools and after seeing their success & passion I decided to venture into another area of caregiving, **seniors!** I thought, I'm not going to retire I'm going to RE-FIRE!

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### Book on Kerry Chef Who Served 3 US Presidents is launched in Listowel

*"Were she alive today, the odds are that Kathy Buckley would be as well-known as celebrity chefs Jamie Oliver and Nigella Lawson"* -

Sharon Ní Chonchúir.

A new book called 'Kathy White House

and Rural Development Jimmy Deenihan said:

'At today's launch of 'Kathy White House - Her Culinary Odyssey' here at St. John's Theatre, Listowel it was appropriate that historian Vincent Carmody should launch this very important and historical book at the 2023 Listowel Food Fair, where literature and food rhyme. This is a beautifully written and presented book and I would like to congratulate Vincent Carmody on his extensive research and publication of 'Kathy White House - Her Culinary Odyssey'



**Local Historian and Author of 'Kathy White House – Her Culinary Odyssey' By Kerry historian Vincent Carmody and Festival Chairman Jimmy Deenihan at the 2023 Listowel Food Fair. Image by Noel Sweeney Photography**

'Her Culinary Odyssey' by Kerry historian Vincent Carmody has been launched at the 2023 Listowel Food Fair by RTE Presenter and Kerry Person of the Year Katie Hannon at St. John's Theatre, Listowel. 'Kathy White House -Her Culinary Odyssey' documents the life of Listowel woman Kathy Buckley who was Head Cook for three past American presidents.

Kathy Buckley was born in Upper William Street in Listowel, Co. Kerry. She was the eldest of seven. Her father worked as a cooper in a workshop at the rear of their house, and her mother came from a long-established family of grocers and shoemakers. When Kathy was in her early teens she left school to take a job in the kitchen of the Butler Arms Hotel in Waterville. She showed a talent for cooking, and eventually that flair would take her all the way to the White House. Kathy was appointed Head Cook for the duration of the term of office of President Calvin Coolidge (1923 - 1929) and for the presidential terms of both Herbert Hoover and Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

She would look back upon this time with fondness when she eventually retired to Listowel in the early 1950s. By that stage, she had earned the nickname "Kathy White House" in the town and she often regaled her family and friends with tales of her time among the powerful and famous. She brought mementos of her time in the White House back with her to Listowel when she retired. They remain there to this day. Kathy broke her hip in 1969 and spent some time in a nursing home in Listowel before she died.

Vincent Carmody has included recipe books and menu cards that Kathy collected on her travels. There are also letters Kathy received from Herbert Hoover's wife Lou Henry, as well as the key that President Coolidge received when he was given the freedom of Fort Worth in Texas. He gave this to Kathy as a gift when he returned from that city.

Speaking about the special presentation Listowel Food Fair Chairman, Former Minister of State in the Department of Agriculture, Food



**Kathy Buckley outside the White House. Image Courtesy of Vincent Carmody**

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### The Voice of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese



By Marie Jochum  
Associate Vice President of Community Impact

How Catholic Charities is helping the city's migrant housing crisis

While you may be seeing stories in the news about asylum seekers in Chicago needing shelter for the winter, you may not be aware that Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago has assumed a critical role in the response this housing crisis.

Jesus calls us to serve anyone in need, regardless of their faith, gender, race, ethnicity, and—particularly now—citizenship. When the buses of migrants began arriving from Texas late last summer, our teams were there to greet them and connect them with on-the-ground resources. We also provided reunification support for arrivals who did not want to stay in Chicago, connecting them to friends and relatives in other parts of the country. To date, we have helped over 2,000 reunite with their loved ones.

But for those families that had decided to stay in Chicago, the city was grappling with where they would live. So, in late 2022, our government partners approached us to help with case management of families to transition them out of an increasingly overstretched shelter system.

“Resettlement” refers to the process of helping displaced people from other countries find a safe place to live and assistance meeting their basic needs. For many of the migrants who are coming to the U.S., they are fleeing extreme poverty and unsafe conditions.

We studied the situation and decided that, drawing on our deep experience in homelessness prevention and refugee resettlement, we were prepared to step up to address what was quickly turning into a crisis.

We deployed a small team to undertake this work, which we have expanded as our experience (and the need) has grown. With funding from the State of Illinois, we now have 60 people who have joined us just for this response. Most are bilingual and are themselves either immigrants to Chicago or have close

family and friends who are. The team is persistent, focused, and committed.

We are proud to report that at the time of publication, we have connected approximately 7,400 individuals (representing roughly 2,900 households) to leased housing in Chicago and nearby suburbs. We are currently on pace to sign 500 leases a month.

The availability of apartments has been the biggest, and an ongoing, surprise for our team. Landlords, many of whom are increasingly reaching out to us, are some of the unsung heroes of this crisis. They are opening their



units to migrants.

Our success continues to depend on a robust network of community partners who help with move-in support, furniture and household items, and with the ongoing partnership and collaboration of our city and state leaders and agencies, who provide critical emergency funding.

It is important to note that this work has not impacted our longstanding homelessness prevention programs for neighbors in need who have encountered setbacks. We continue to serve thousands of residents in Cook and Lake counties daily - touching the lives of over 375,000 people each year. Some we serve only once, others we see weekly.

Our teams are (and will remain) focused on addressing the many critical needs of the communities, families, and individuals we are called to serve and accompany. That is our mission - to be there for people in need, the vulnerable, the hungry, the lonely.

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Christmas day swims take place all over Ireland on Christmas morning but probably most famously at the Forty Foot Rock, just south of Dublin. On Christmas Day hundreds of people can be seen jumping off the rock into the Irish Sea wearing only their bathing suits.





Friends of 98 year old Michael Glynn, on a recent visit at his beautiful home, enjoying a great singsong with Paddy Homan.

Back row, left to right: Mike and Cathie Boyle, Margaret Kennedy, Ann French (singer), Frances Fitzgerald, Mary and Mike Cremins. Front row: Mary Keleghan(singer), Mike Glynn ( singer extraordinaire) and Paddy Homan (professional singer) and in great form.

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## Indoor Play Facilities - Should You Sign A Waiver on Behalf of Your Child?

With the approaching winter weather and upcoming holidays, we will all be seeking out ways to keep our children entertained. On a cold snowy Chicago day, there is nothing better than bringing your bundle of energy child to an indoor play place so that they can burn off some steam and you can get a much needed five minutes to yourself. But did you know that if your child is injured in an indoor play place, you may, unbeknownst to yourself, have agreed that they cannot sue the facility for any injuries they sustain while playing at the facility, no matter how serious those injuries might be.

I recently learned of a court ruling which everyone should be aware of when agreeing to enter in to these play areas/facilities. In a written opinion a few weeks ago a U.S. District Judge Franklin U. Valderrama of the Northern District of Illinois granted a motion by Chicago Urban Air, LLC, doing businesses as Urban Air Trampoline and Adventure, to force the case to arbitration and a parents lawsuit on behalf of their child was stayed/postponed while the arbitration is heard.

On April 1, 2022, Kirstin Headlee, and her daughter,



K.H., a minor, visited Urban Air, which operates an indoor trampoline and adventure park. Before K.H. was permitted to participate in any of the park's attractions, an Urban Air employee informed Headlee that she had to sign a pre-drafted "release" on a kiosk display. Her mother signed the release and indemnification agreement, which included an arbitration clause, on her own behalf and on behalf of K.H.

The "Wipeout" attraction, according to the park's website, includes a cushioned bar that swings around an enclosed area. It consists of two machine-operated bars that require participants to hop or duck under the bars as the bars rotate in a circle. The challenge of the attraction is to avoid being struck by the bar. While playing at the "Wipeout" attraction, K.H. was hit by one of its rotating bars, allegedly causing severe injuries. The exact nature of her injuries was not indicated.

K.H., by and through her parents and legal guardians, Headlee, and her husband Tyson, sued Urban Air in state court for compensation for her injuries, asserting common law claims of negligence and premises liability,

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Gallagher's Advice

By Caroleann Gallagher



as well as a claim under the Illinois Family Expense Act.

Urban Air filed a motion to stay proceedings in the courts and demanded that the case be settled by arbitration (which would not be before a jury) because the child's parent had signed a release and waiver on admission to the facility. The family countered that the release's arbitration clause was not enforceable and therefore Urban Air's motion to compel arbitration must be denied for several reasons.

They first argued that the circumstances in which the arbitration clause was signed and formed were procedurally unconscionable. Under Illinois law, procedural unconscionability refers to a contract "where a term is so difficult to find, read, or understand that the plaintiff cannot fairly be said to have been aware he was agreeing to it, and also takes into account a lack of bargaining power".

The Headlees argued the release was offered on a "take it or leave basis" and that Urban Air never explained the rights they would give up by signing it. They argued the text of the release was too small – with no option to enlarge it – and edits to the text were not allowed. The Headlees further reasoned that they possessed no bargaining power and were pressured by an Urban Air employee to "hurry up" and sign the release. They allegedly did not know that agreeing to the arbitration clause would bar them from bringing a law suit.

Urban Air contended that it had no obligation to explain the release and the court agreed as under Illinois law, one who signs a contract is presumed to have read it and understood it.

The Court agreed and stated, "As Urban Air points out, Kirstin could have walked away, but instead she signed the Release, thereby allowing her and K.H. to access the premises."

The Headlees also argued enforcement of the arbitration clause would violate K.H.'s constitutional right to a trial by jury.

In his reasoning, the Judge noted that the parties do not cite, nor is the court aware of, any Illinois decision that addresses the precise issue of whether a parent or guardian may waive a child's right to a jury trial in favor of arbitration clauses found in recreational releases.

The Headlee's cited out-of-state case law finding that a parent cannot bind a minor child to an arbitration clause. Urban Air disagreed, arguing that the out of state case law not only is outdated, but also has been rejected as "reflecting an outmoded hostility to arbitration."

The Court, in its ruling, did not address these unsettled question of whether a parent can bind their child to a release or waiver but instead ruled that because the child was an intended beneficiary of the contract, the child was therefore bound to the arbitration provision in the contract and the case could not proceed to a jury trial. The case in the law courts will now be stayed pending arbitration.

Most facilities now require you to sign such waivers, releases, and indemnifications on entering any indoor play facility. In doing so please read what you are signing and if possible, ask for a hard copy of the release so you can go over it in greater detail. You can strike through those paragraphs you don't agree with and initial the strike through as an indication you are not agreeable to this particular aspect of the agreement but be warned a facility may refuse entry if you do so. And they would be within their rights to do so.

If your child or children have been injured in an indoor or outdoor play park or area, you will need the advice of an attorney with knowledge of the law surrounding injuries in these circumstances. My colleagues and I have litigated these types of cases in the past and are familiar with all the pertinent aspects of the law. As always all of our consultations are free so, please do not hesitate to reach out if we can be of assistance.

\*Caroleann Gallagher is an Irish born Attorney now licensed in Illinois and practicing all types of Personal Injury Law, Medical Malpractice, Nursing Home Abuse and Neglect Cases and Workers Compensation. She has offices in Park Ridge, Palos Heights, and the City of Chicago. Caroleann can be contacted at cgallagher@cgtrial.com or at (312) 782-7482

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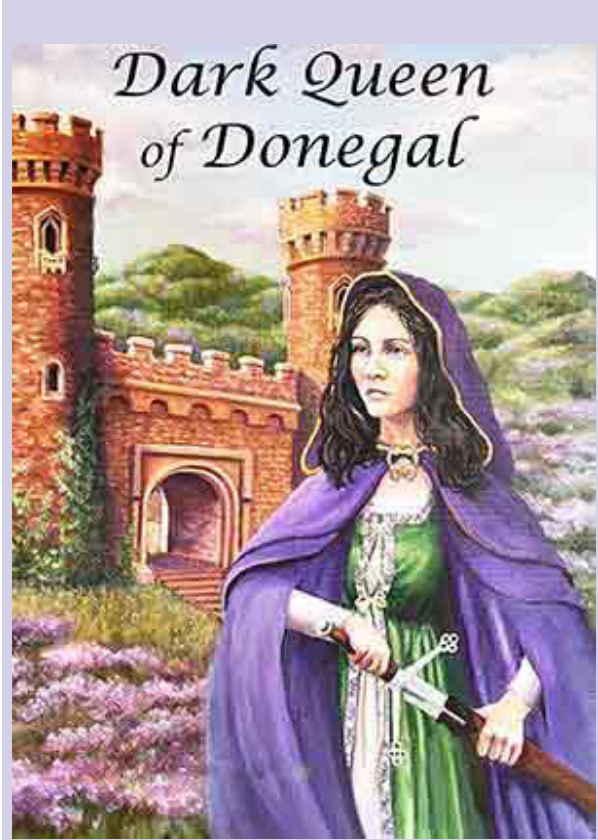
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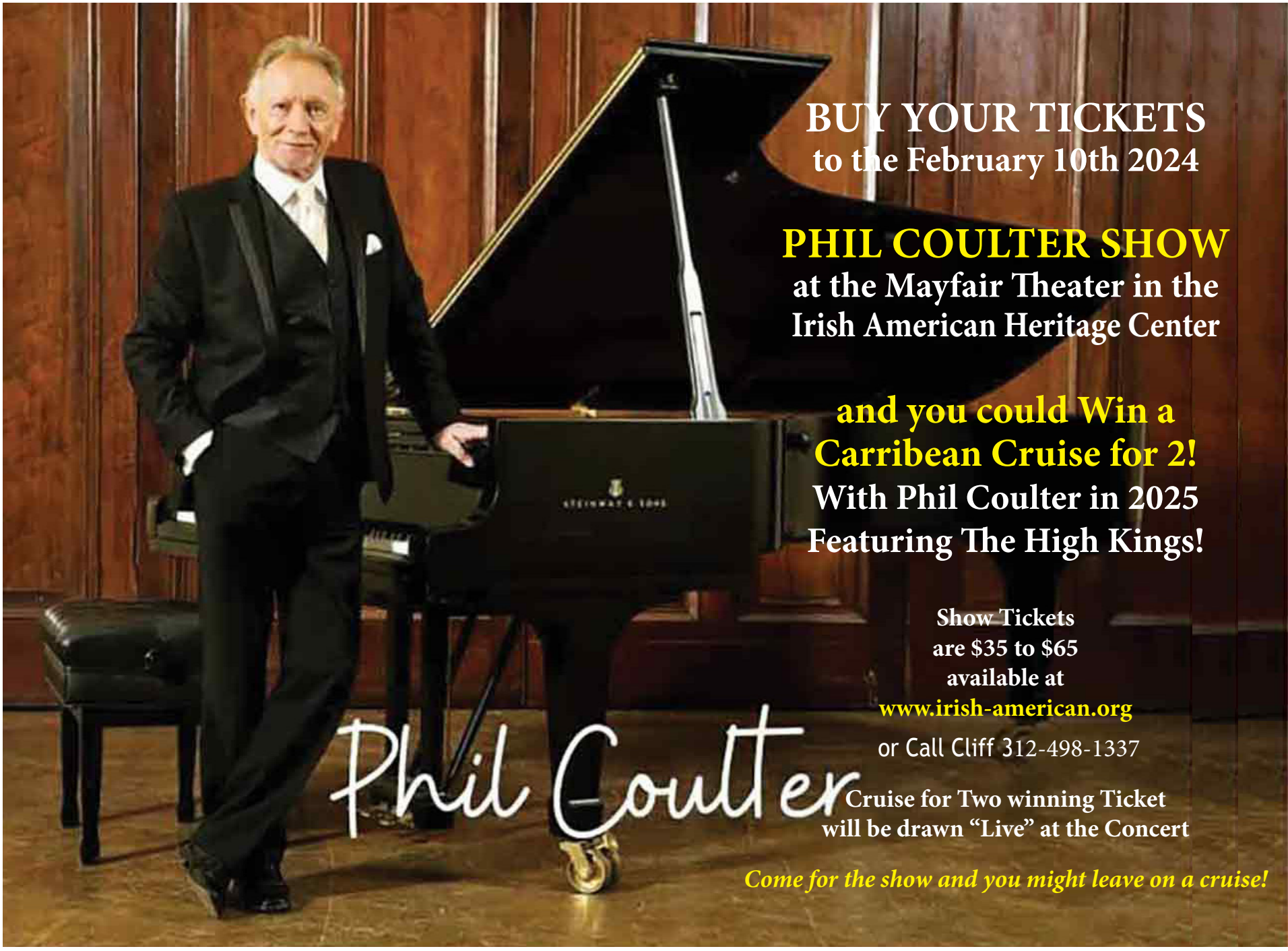


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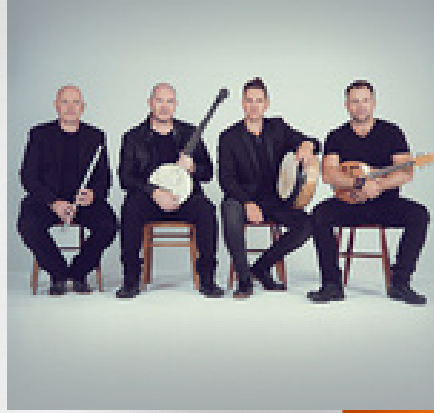
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### 6th Annual Hibernian Hooligan Ball

Hibernian Media Chairman Mike "Houli" Houlihan announces "our only fundraiser of the year" will be on Saturday Dec. 16th from 4-8PM at Barney Callaghan's Irish Pub, 10618 South Western Avenue.

Houli says, "It's also my 75th birthday, so what better night to celebrate our public charity dedicated to Irish and Irish American culture than with our very own hooley."

Hibernian Media was founded in 2013 and each year presents an annual film festival, a pair of weekly Irish radio programs, annual pilgrimage to Ireland, and a variety of Irish films, TV shows, and concerts.

Once again Tullamore DEW Irish Whiskey will join in the celebration with a free raffle of whiskey and swag

for the event.

Also scheduled to entertain that day are Beverly's own Irish balladeer Liam Durkin, international Irish fiddling sensation Cathryn Cowell, Irish dancers Tadhg Spillane, Jack Bullington, Michalene Donnelly, and Maggie Olk, and a special performance by the pipes and drums of the Emerald Society as well as surprise guests and shenanigans throughout the evening. The event includes a cash bar, pizza from Fox's Pizza in Orland Park, and suggested ticket price of \$50, but "we will take whatever we can get".

Hibernian Media is a 501c3 public charity dedicated to Irish and Irish American culture and all donations are tax deductible.

More info at <https://www.hiberniantransmedia.org/donate/>



Bridget Theresa Kelly has passed to her Heavenly Life. Beloved wife of Ambrose; loving mother of Mary (Edward) Breen, Elizabeth (Keith) Miniscalco, Ambrose (Angela) and Gerard (Gina); proud and cherished Granny to Caitlin, Catherine (Brian) Bodnar, Brenna, Jaclyn, Margaret, Theresa, Kelly, Christina and Vincent.

Preceded in death by her nine brothers and sisters; fond aunt and dear friend of many. Native of Tavneena Charlestown, Co. Mayo, Ireland.

She was laid to rest at Queen of All Saints Basilica on Saturday November 25, 2023.

In lieu of flowers, donations to The

Mercy Home for Boys and Girls at 1140 W. Jackson Blvd Chicago, IL 60607 Info 847-685-1002 [www.cooneyfuneralhome.com](http://www.cooneyfuneralhome.com).



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### Irish Dystopian Novel Profit Song is the 2023 Winner of the Booker Prize

Winner of the 2023 Booker Prize, Paul Lynch's highly original PROPHET SONG spins a terrifying, suspenseful vision of an Ireland careening towards authoritarianism.

On a dark, wet evening in Dublin, scientist and



surprisingly intimate, PROPHET SONG offers a shocking vision of a country at war and a deeply human portrait of a mother's fight to hold her family together.

Paul Lynch is the author of the novels Red Sky in Morning, The Black Snow,

Grace, and Beyond the Sea. Grace won the 2018 Kerry Group Irish Novel of the Year and was shortlisted for the 2018 Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction and the William Saroyan International Prize for Writing. The Black Snow won France's Prix Libr'à Nous for Best Foreign Novel and was a finalist for the Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger (Best Foreign Book Prize). He lives in Dublin with his wife and two children. His website is www.paullynchwriter.com

Each year, the BOOKER Prize is awarded to what is, in the opinion of the judges, the best sustained work of fiction written in English and published in the UK and Ireland. It is a prize that transforms the winner's career.

"Paul Lynch's harrowing and dystopian PROPHET SONG vividly renders a mother's determination to protect her family as Ireland's liberal democracy slides inexorably and terrifyingly into totalitarianism. Readers will find it timely and unforgettable. It's a remarkable accomplishment for a novelist to capture the

social and political anxieties of our moment so compellingly. —The Booker Prize 2023 Judges



Paul Lynch

mother-of-four Eilish Stack answers her front door to find two officers from Ireland's newly formed secret police on her step. They have arrived to interrogate her husband, a trade unionist.

Ireland is falling apart, caught in the grip of a government turning towards tyranny. As the life she knows and the ones she loves disappear before her eyes, Eilish must contend with the dystopian logic of her new, unraveling country. How far will she go to save her family? And what—or who—is she willing to leave behind?

Exhilarating, terrifying and



Did Santa babysit the baby Jesus? Why were the Three Wise Men so lost? The answers to these and other goofy questions are answered in the hit holiday

The show was selected as one of 10 holiday shows highlighted by Chris Jones, the Chicago Tribune's theater critic.

In this interactive comedy, audience members play bingo while also answering questions about Christmas traditions, the origin of St. Nick, where do candy canes come from, miracles in the Bible, and a clever re-creation of the Annunciation, complete with audience members in angel wings and halos.

Today's Fan, an online review site, calls Christmas Bingo, "delightful." "You will be engaged by the show's uniquely interactive approach that involves a bingo game with real prizes. Its entertaining aspect comes from the hilarity that ensues as Quade tackles off-beat myths and outrageous facts about Christmas."

The show will run 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, and 2 p.m. Sundays.

Late Nite Catechism stays on the schedule at 5 p.m. Saturdays.

Tickets for both shows are \$35.

For tickets or more information, call the box office at 773-404-7336, or visit https://www.greenhousetheater.org.



comedy CHRISTMAS BINGO: IT'S A HO-HO-HOLY NIGHT.

CHRISTMAS BINGO reopens for the holiday season for six weeks only, Nov. 24 through Dec. 30, 2023, at the Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago.

Written by Vicki Quade, one of the

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## Irish Times Wins Instagram @Chicagopubs Best Irish Pub

**By RYANNE GALLAGHER JOHNSON**  
 Since the pandemic, a lot of restaurants, bars, and other service establishments have struggled to thrive or even survive. Many long-standing community staples have shut down over the last four years, and even more have found difficulty in keeping up with low patronage and rapidly rising inflation. The challenges increase with the onset of cold winter months in areas like Chicago, where people prefer to stay in the warmth of their homes, rather than venture out into freezing temperatures and snow.

Enter Nick Hnatusko and Conor Yerkes. Two Irish descendants born and raised in Chicago, these guys have a love for Irish beer and Irish pubs that they come by honestly. Hnatusko's grandmother emigrated from County Cork to the Southside of Chicago, and Yerkes's grandparents hail from the Counties of Cork and Kerry. And for the last two years, they have helped reinvigorate the community surrounding the Chicago pub scene, encouraging people to once again venture out and experience the wide variety of establishments the city has to offer.

"December, January, February in Chicago, there's kind of a lull in going out and doing a lot of the things. Everyone's stuck inside," explains Conor. "So we started going to the bars and taking pictures, [which developed into] taking a minute long video outside of the pub, telling what we

thought of it. . . What do we think about the pour? What do we think about the bartender? The staff?"

With these informative videos, Conor and Nick spawned their very own Instagram account, @chicagopubs. Each establishment they review on their page is rated with a score of one through five, on ten different metrics: Price for a pint of Guinness, Guinness pour, Bartender, Ambiance, Games, Music, Food, Deals, TVs, and the "X-Factor" for the place. Then they each receive a final overall rating.

One reason for starting this project was to get themselves out of the routine of visiting the same places over and over again.

"There's a lot of really cool Mom & Pop pubs and general bars all throughout Chicago that need the support and are awesome spots," says Nick. "The community is already here, but if you can get more community built online, that can really amplify some of these places. That really helps the bar owners and the bar patrons."

Although the account was started under the assumption that only friends and family would be interested, it's grown to have a current following of 11.8k.

"People like to chime in on their local spots!" Says Conor.

The popularity of the account has also led to an uptick in business for a lot of Chicago pub owners.

"Out of the blue, this breath of fresh air comes in and starts reinvigorating the Irish bars, creating interest in them [again]," says Martin Lynch, owner and operator of Irish Times Pub & Restaurant, which received an unexpected bonus bump from

Posting a picture showing social distancing made it seem like the place was empty. Posting a picture showing a full house led to claims that people could get sick. Labor shortages came on fast, followed by skyrocketing prices. Running a pub the last few years has been difficult for everybody.

"But the guys were onto something," Martin continues.



Nick Hnatusko, Martin Lynch & Conor Yerkes

life-bread of the actual business of the pub. It's not just getting a beer at the bar. The people working at all these spots are ten out of ten, the clientele is ten out of ten, the whole experience is ten out of ten.

"There's so many good spots. Every spot is unique and every spot has its own quirks and every spot has its own cool owner, and has its own cool patrons. There's no two that are similar, which I think is a really beneficial thing [for these places], and it's something that I think the community should see and should be out there trying to get involved with."

The notoriety of the Instagram account has even crossed the ocean. "We've gotten a lot of people from Ireland that have messaged us," says Conor. "One guy has come over from Belfast, [and] he messaged us when he got here, 'Where should I go?', 'Where's a good pour?'. So, it's a huge connection with a lot of these folks."

Martin adds that bar owners in Ireland have asked him to reach out if Nick and Conor are ever in town. "They know what's gonna come after them. They're gonna create a spotlight – a very positive, good spotlight on the bars. It's been brilliant."

In communities that have a large Irish population, like Chicago, Irish pubs hold a special importance. Often, when people emigrate from Ireland, that's the first place they'll visit.

"That's where they'll get a job, meet connections, get a place to live. It's all through the pub. It's the cornerstone of the community, and it has been for generations. We'll continue to do that. If you land [in the U.S.], you come straight to an Irish pub, you talk to somebody, and you'll get help."

Irish pubs have a unique atmosphere and vibe, and we'd like to encourage everybody to get out and experience the wide variety of them that the city has to offer.

For the best and most honest reviews on Chicagoland pubs, you can visit Conor and Nick's Instagram account @chicagopubs. For more information on Irish Times, please visit their website at [irishtimespub.com](http://irishtimespub.com)

the @chicagopubs account when it held a contest for Best Chicago Pub back in September of this year.

The competition was held via @chicagopubs Instagram stories over the course of two weeks, and had thirty-two pubs participating. It garnered 100,000 votes from people, who ultimately decided that Irish Times is the best pub in the city.

"[Irish pubs] have always been a cornerstone of the community, a meeting place, a level playing field. We consider ourselves, here at Irish Times, to be the pulse of Ireland. Whatever is going on at home, we kind of amplify here," says Martin.

But not even his establishment was insulated from the hurt caused by the pandemic.

"We started having people show up here, saying 'We've seen you on @irishpubs!'. New customers. I talked to other bar owners, and they were saying the same thing. The guys really went out of their way to get to know the owners, get to know the place. They didn't just post a thing on their page. . . They actually went out there, they met people before they posted it, so they knew what they were sending people into. Everyone gets the authenticity of the page."

Conor and Nick say that meeting the people who work there and run each place is an important part of their reviews.

"We go in and meet the owners because I think that's the whole part of it," says Nick. "These people are the ones who are the

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# 2024 CHICAGO ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE



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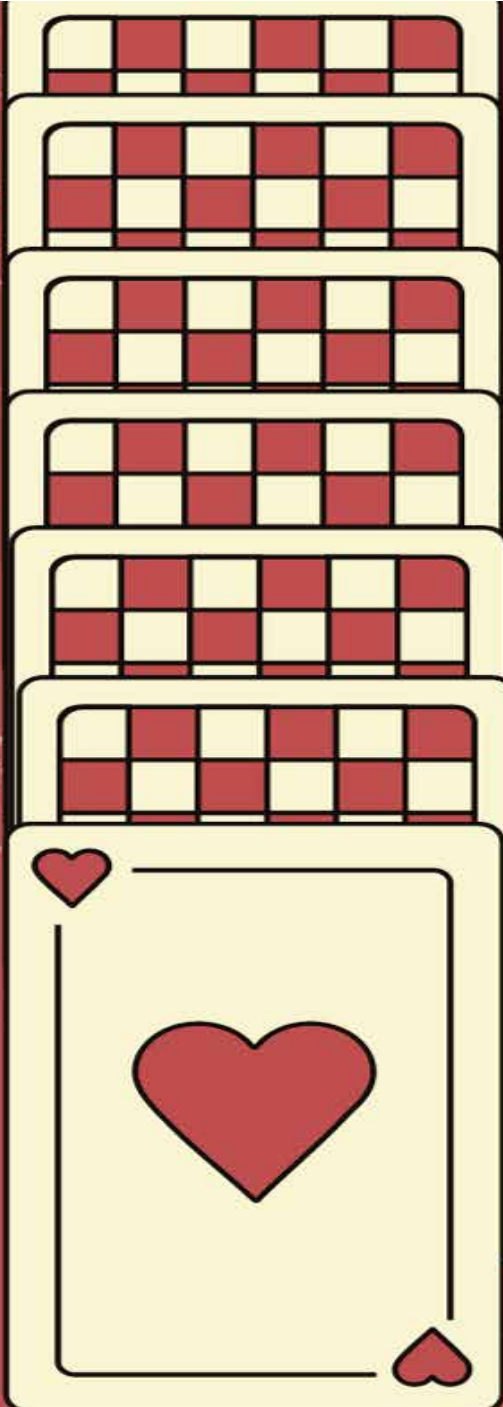
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# CHICAGO GAELIC PARK

Serving the social and cultural needs of the Irish community throughout Chicagoland



Dear Chicago Irish Community,

As we approach this joyous holiday season, we wanted to take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude and warmest wishes to each and every one of you. Christmas is a time of togetherness, reflection, and the celebration of our shared traditions.

At Chicago Gaelic Park, we are proud to be a part of this vibrant community that values its Irish heritage and culture. We've seen the strength and resilience of our community over the years, and it fills us with pride. Our shared love for music, dance, sports, and storytelling is what keeps our Irish spirit alive, and we are committed to continuing to be a home for these traditions.

This year has had its challenges, and the world has been through a lot. However, in the true spirit of the season, we find hope and renewal. We want to thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to preserving and promoting our Irish heritage. Your enthusiasm and commitment to Gaelic Park and all the events we host make it a special place for our community.

As we gather with our loved ones, whether in person or in spirit, let us remember the importance of family, friendship, and community. May your Christmas be filled with warmth, laughter, and the joy of shared traditions.

In the coming year, we look forward to many more opportunities to come together, celebrate, and continue our journey to keep Irish culture alive in Chicago.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

With warmest regards,

Michael L. Bennett - General Manager - Chicago Gaelic Park



## Spotlight on Heritage and Culture

Chicago Gaelic Park board members John Conroy and Mark Flynn recently made their television debut on WGN's Spotlight Chicago to share the news of our exciting **Win a Chicago Home Raffle**. Hosts Sarah Jindra and Ji Suk Yi learned about CGP's founding by forward thinkers who envisioned a new home for Irish culture and sport and its evolution into a premier Irish center. Viewers heard how this unique fundraiser was inspired by successful house raffles in Ireland, including in Conroy's home county of Roscommon.

*Beverly Review*, *Daily Southtown News*, and *Oak Forest Patch* articles, a Palos Heights TV4 segment with John Devitt, and inclusion in Alderman O'Shea's 19th Ward newsletter illustrate our strong ties with the local communities. We are also heartened by the support of the Irish and Irish-American media—*Hagerty Irish Hour*, *O'Connor Irish Radio Show* and *Tom Flannery's Good Morning Ireland* welcomed us into their studios, and our story has graced the pages of *GAA.ie* and *Irish Star*.

**The Win a Chicago Home Raffle** proceeds will benefit Gaelic Park Charities, our 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Irish culture and heritage through such popular events as Heritage & Harvest Fest, Irish Fest, Ireland on Parade, and Kids' Cultural Camp, as well as high-quality music dance, and theater productions. We hope to ensure future generations can share in Ireland's cultural heritage at CGP, including its national games—through an upgrade of the pitches and adjacent parking facilities. In addition to benefiting the Chicago GAA's home, we want to strengthen our cultural heritage programs.

This special multi-dimensional nature of Chicago Gaelic Park was captured by Flynn: "I've gained a great network of friends that share the same history and value our heritage in a place where Irish culture, sports, music, dance and theatre are highlighted." We hope to see you at one of our sports, heritage, or cultural events soon. And we hope you try your luck at winning a new home or \$450,000 so CGP can continue to provide wonderful experiences for the community. To those who have already purchased a ticket or are helping the sales efforts, thank you!

-Noreen Lennon Hegarty and Maureen Gill O'Reagan



Mark Flynn, Sarah Jindra, John Conroy, and Ji Suk Yi

**Win a Chicago Home**  
**Or \$450,000**  
Support Gaelic Park Charities



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### GAELIC PARK CHARITIES WIN A CHICAGO HOME RAFFLE

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Ticket purchase benefits Gaelic Park Charities, a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit, and constitutes acceptance of the Raffle's Terms & Conditions found at [chicagogaelicparkhouseraffle.com](http://chicagogaelicparkhouseraffle.com). Either prize selected by the winner subject to all taxes and fees.

Scan to enter OR cut out this raffle ticket and mail it in with your check for your chance to win!





# CHICAGO GAELIC PARK

Serving the social and cultural needs of the Irish community throughout Chicagoland



## Upcoming Events

Visit [chicagogaelicpark.com](http://chicagogaelicpark.com) and follow us on social media for more information on upcoming events.

- December 3rd - A VERY VERY CASSIE AND MAGGIE CHRISTMAS
- December 3rd - BOOK CLUB
- December 6th - MONTHLY MUSICAL LUNCHEON
- December 7th - CELTIC ANGELS CHRISTMAS
- December 10th - MASS AND IRISH BREAKFAST
- December 13th - ANNUAL SENIOR CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON  
IRISH COMMUNITY SERVICES' GATHERING
- December 14th - MINGLE & JINGLE
- December 16th - HOLIDAY HIGH TEA
- December 17th - CHICAGO IRISH SINGERS CLUB

Chicago Gaelic Park  
6119 W. 147th St. Oak Forest, IL (708)687-9323

## Music at The Carraig

Visit [carraigirishpub.com](http://carraigirishpub.com) for more up to date information.

- December 1st - GERRY HAUGHEY
- December 2nd - MULLIGAN STEW
- December 7th - TRAD THURSDAYS
- December 8th - NICKY G
- December 9th - LIAM DURKIN
- December 15th - RAY GAVIN
- December 16th - KIERAN BYRNE
- December 21st - TRAD THURSDAYS
- December 22nd - BERNIE GLIM
- December 29th - 3 MEN IN KILTS
- December 31st - WHISKEY & HARMONY



## The Carraig Pub SPECIALS

### SUNDAY SUPPER

The Sunday Supper is a much-cherished Irish custom bringing family and friends together to share a hearty meal, traditionally featuring roasted meat, potatoes and vegetables. The Carraig Pub refines this classic meal to serve up the best Sunday roasts in the south suburbs. Call to check which roast we feature this week.



### TUESDAYS FOR TWO

Tables of 2 can select 1 appetizer, 2 entrees, 1 dessert, and 1 beer, wine, or pop per person for \$40.

#### Appetizers

Curry Chips - Garlic Cheese Chips - Mozzarella Sticks  
Chicken Wings - Reuben Tots - Guinness Cheese Crock

#### Entrees

Shepherd's Pie  
Chicken Curry  
Beef Stew  
Burgers/Sandwiches Section Item

#### Dessert

Orange Bailey's Cheesecake  
Raspberry Rum Cheesecake  
White Chocolate Brownie  
Apple Crumble  
Guinness Chocolate Cake



### WEDNESDAY RIB DAY

As always, join us for our delicious BBQ ribs on Wednesdays!

### THURSDAY PIZZA

Build your own 14" pizza for \$10!

## Holiday High Tea

Saturday, December 16th @ 1:00pm

Our annual Holiday High Tea is the perfect chance to step away from the hectic holiday season and create new festive memories. Invite your loved ones and friends to enjoy tasty teas, savory bites, and decadent desserts. Our Emerald Room will be filled with holiday music, good cheer, and beautiful decorations.



\$40/Ticket.

Tickets for high tea include a glass of sparkling wine. Purchase tickets at [chicagogaelicpark.com](http://chicagogaelicpark.com).

## 'Tis the Season!

- ENGAGEMENT SEASON -

The holidays are a time when all you love gather near and sharing life's special moments with those you love is extra cause for celebration!

Chicago Gaelic Park offers many excellent spaces for indoor and outdoor wedding ceremonies and receptions. Our beautiful surroundings make the perfect backdrops for portraits with your spouse and wedding party!

End the best day ever dancing the night away and top the night off at The Carraig for afters.

Visit for a venue tour! A few prime 2024 dates remain for your perfect day.



Email [banquet@chicagogaelicpark.org](mailto:banquet@chicagogaelicpark.org) or call (708)687-9323 to inquire.



Photo by Aly Jo Photography



**Be A Sport!**

By David Mc'Donnell



**Barney Gave Back**

It was 20 years ago when the Irish government introduced the penalty points system, where once a motorist accumulated 12 points, they were put off the road by the courts.

The story goes that this young man took out a car loan worth a grand and put a bet on his native Waterford to have the first disqualified driver at 10-1. He then promptly clocked up the required points in a single day to become the first person convicted under the new motoring laws.

He also got his money, with bookmaker Paddy Power stating, "We've been well and truly caught with our pants down."

This incident left the Department of Transport, who brought in the measures to curb speeding, more than a little red-faced, and it was rumored that the young fella flew off to Australia with his winnings and only returned when his driving ban had elapsed.

I remember thinking at the time what a bold and clever ploy to pull off, and this week, it got me thinking about the most famous betting coup in Irish history: The Legend of



Yellow Sam.

This happened back in 1975, and the punter in question was Barney Curley, who grew up in a modest family in Fermanagh as the eldest of six kids. Life was tough in mid-20th-century Ireland, and there were days when Barney walked to school barefoot. Breakfast consisted of porridge, while meat was an occasional Sunday bonus.

Barney's father trained

greyhounds, and in 1956 he tried a betting stroke of his own when he bet big on a doped-up greyhound, which tumbled out of the race on the first bend and broke his back. It was a significant moment in Barney's life, as the next day his father took him out to school and the pair of them emigrated to work in a petrochemical factory in Manchester.

For the next 18 months, almost everything the then-16-



year-old Barney and his father made was sent back to pay off his father's gambling debts, and what little was left went to the family.

When Barney returned to Ireland, he failed to make it as a Jesuit priest at Mungret College, and by 1962, he had a career managing showbands, which brought him to almost every town and village in Ireland. He supplemented this income with some part-time smuggling, with his big earner being Michelin tires. One night, after being caught in a cross-border shootout between British soldiers and the IRA, he decided to pack in the showbands and make his profession as a full-time gambler. His father wasn't happy with his decision, telling Barney, "Are you mad? The bookies have skint the whole of Ireland, and you are not going to be any different."

"Back in 1975, everything I

tried was going down the tube. I owed the bookmakers about £12,000, which was a lot of money at the time. It was my business betting horses and owing bookmakers meant you couldn't go to the races. So I came up with this plan, and that was to win big."

Perhaps while slogging in the factories of England, he must have thought how different his life would have turned out had his father's dog come in.

Barney owned a few horses and approached a trainer by the name of Liam Brennan to ask him if he had a horse who could pull off a job. "He said you only have one horse. He's no world beater but he's well handicapped and he'll probably win. That's how we came to pick Yellow Sam." The horse was named after Barney's father, whose nickname was Yellow Sam, and had ran nine times and never finished better than eighth.

In handicap racing, each horse is given a different weight to equalize their chances, so a horse with poor form would get a lighter weight thus increasing its chances of winning.

Barney was well known in racing circles so he needed people not connected to him to place bets so he started his plotting by drawing up a map of Ireland and placing pins of every person he knew around the country.

For the caper Barney had scraped together £15,000 and the idea was to hit 300 betting shops in the minutes before the race started. Bands of people across Ireland had envelopes full of small denominations of cash and nobody knew which horse was picked until a half an hour before the race started.

In the 1970's, the starting

price given at the racetrack was the price for all bookies in Ireland and a key part of Curley's strategy was to stop any betting information making its way back to the track and affect the starting price.

For this reason the race course in Bellewstown, County Meath had been chosen because a public phone box was the sole line in and out of the racetrack at the time. Barney needed to block this telephone and he had the man for the job; Benny O'Hanlon.

Benny was a big man who took up his station in the phone box about 20 minutes before the race started.

As a queue formed outside the phone box, Benny opened the door to let everybody know that: 'My aunt is at Drogheda Hospital and she is gravely ill. I'm just waiting for the news.'

Ten minutes later, he opened the door again, updating everyone that 'it's not looking good' but at three o'clock, once the starter's white flag went up, Benny left the phone box with a big smile on his face: 'I think she's going to make it.'

Yellow Sam's starting price was 20-1 and jockey Michael Furlong brought her safely around the two-and-a-half mile race over jumps. He even passed the favorite Silver Road, ridden by the now-famous trainer Willie Mullins, in his wake as he sauntered clear to the finish.

Barney's major coup brought in £300,000, which would be the equivalent of two million in today's money. Such was the disgust of the bookmakers that they paid Barney his winnings in single-pound notes.

Curley proceeded to buy himself a Georgian mansion in Castletown-Geoghegan in County Westmeath and almost 10 years later, came to national attention again when he decided to raffle off this house.

He sold 9,000 tickets at 200 quid a pop, which netted him a cool £1.8 million. He was arrested by the authorities in 1985 and threatened with jail for running an illegal lottery. But when the judge fined Curley £5000, Barney countered with 'I'll pay 10,000.'

In 1995, after his son died in a road traffic accident, Barney's life went in a different direction after a priest brought him to Zambia, which was in the midst of an AIDS epidemic. The plight of the Zambian people had a huge effect on him and Curley spent the rest of his life raising millions of dollars, with help from his contacts in the racing fraternity, to build schools, clinics and hospitals through his charity Direct Aid for Africa (DAFA).

In the years preceding his death in 2021, Barney once said: "I wouldn't like my tombstone to read 'He was a great gambler.' I would rather it said 'He tried to give a little back.'"

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# Game On!

By Chris Wheaton



As we move into the festive Christmas season it's important to seek happiness, get together with friends, reflect on the year that was, and enjoy this joyous season. With everything that is going on in the world; the war in the Middle East, mass shootings on our own soil, a government that can't seem to do anything right (on either side of the aisle), it's hard to put aside the time to do the things that are important to us.

The other night I was fortunate enough to get together with 3 great friends at Quigley's Irish Pub in downtown Naperville, to catch up, reflect, have a few pints and more than a few laughs. It took weeks of scheduling snafus, but the schedules finally aligned and me, John Haran (a fine County Sligo man), Bryan Delaney, the pride of County Laois, and Kevin Pearson hailing from Naperville convened on a warm Monday night at our favorite pub. The four of us used to drink and break bread together on a regular basis when we were running the Naperville Hurling Club. Those days are gone now, having turned the reigns over to a new crew but the bonds we built on the hurling pitch and serving on the board together are as strong as ever.

We talked a bit about Naperville Hurling and are going to oversee the Club's social league which will be starting in January (we are always on the lookout for anyone who has ANY interest in learning/playing). However, our get together was much more than just the discussions on how to make our club better. It was the rekindling of long friendships that never fade but can get stale with the passage of time if the effort is not put forward. Work and "life" sometimes get in the way of those things, but it was so much fun to hear about Bryan's travails having their first baby turn one a few weeks ago. Young Sloane is as cute as a button and the proud papa beams when he talks about her.

It was also interesting to hear about

John and Kevin's recent trip to Ireland and specifically John's home of Sligo. I have never been to Sligo, but I have heard from many an Irishman that it is one of the most beautiful places on the planet. To visit with a "local" was a riot for Kevin, and John certainly enjoyed taking him around to all his old haunts and meeting his friends and family.

The important thing was not necessarily what each of us was saying but that we put the time aside to catch up. That's the message I am trying to get across here. We all have things to share but if we don't make time for each other our lives become very mundane, and the months and years pass and blend into each other without the social stimulation that our minds crave. It is time to get out of the Covid funk and start living again. Don't be deterred by the snow or the cold weather, that's a part of our winter existence here. We need to embrace it and enjoy life while we can. I have said it a million times in this column, and I will continue to repeat it; find something you enjoy and do it! Find something that stimulates you and challenges you; read a great book, join a hurling or Gaelic football club, learn a foreign language, take guitar or piano lessons, join the board of a local organization, master the tin whistle, or simply get on the phone with your best pals and go have a few pints together. Trust me, it's important.

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Singer Chloë Agnew, an original member of the internationally acclaimed music group “Celtic Woman,” brings her live Christmas show “A Chloë Christmas” to the Mayfair Theatre. A wonderful blend of the old and new, her show features classic Holiday songs, traditional Irish carols, beloved standards, and original compositions by Chloë herself.



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**VIP MEET-AND-GREET:**

**\$55 IAHC MEMBERS | \$65 NON-MEMBERS (+FEES)**

Call the office at 773-282-7035 x10 for member discount codes



## PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Dear Members and Friends of the Irish American Heritage Center,

This time of year at the Irish American Heritage Center is so busy it's hard to fit everything onto one short page. The Christmas Bazaar, Christmas Tea, the beautiful and warm atmosphere in the Fifth Province Pub, our annual

Christmas Concert, this year featuring Chöe Agnew. It truly is a festive time!

It's always the time of year that we should think of the Center's volunteer family, past and present. The people that purchased and built the IAHC, the people that help to maintain it and make sure that all of the events and programs can continue, as well as volunteering for on-going services such as the Gift Shop and the Library so they can continue to stay open and available for our members and community.

This is also the time of year we remind people to **join or to renew their membership** in the Irish American Heritage Center. We add benefits for our members. Discounts on our concerts, a free subscription to

the IAN, discounts in the Gift Shop and the Fifth Province Pub. But the real benefit is being a part of something that has meant so much to the Irish and Irish American communities over the last four decades. The Irish American Heritage Center thrives and will continue to thrive into the future for all of our families, yours and mine, because of the community spirit and the appreciation of belonging that we feel as members.

We put so much meaning behind it when we say **This is Your Center**, because it is. It belongs to all of us.

If you are already a member, thank you! If you need to renew, welcome back! Or join and be a part of our future – and invite a friend to join, too! Go to [irish-american.org](http://irish-american.org) and join online, or use the membership form in this month's IAN.

Warm Regards,

Tom Chambers

## IRELAND 2024 RAFFLE



Thinking of booking that trip to Ireland? Planning to head home in 2024? The Irish American Heritage Center and Aer Lingus want to help you get there! Enter the "Ireland 2024 Raffle" to benefit the IAHC and your chance to win **2 Round Trip Tickets on Aer Lingus to Dublin, Ireland.**

Winner picked on Oíche Nollaig na mBan on January 6, 2024. For tickets, fill out this form and mail it, along your check or visit [www.irish-american.org](http://www.irish-american.org) to purchase tickets online.

**THE RAFFLE CLOSSES JANUARY 6, 2024  
BUY YOUR RAFFLE TICKETS NOW!**

\_\_\_\_\_ Single ticket \$20 each      Total amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 3 tickets \$50 bundle      \_\_\_\_\_

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4626 N. Knox Ave., Chicago, IL 60630  
Or visit [irish-american.org](http://irish-american.org), to purchase tickets or donate online

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# IRISH AMERICAN HERITAGE CENTER IS YOUR CENTER

Your Center for Music. Your Center for Dance. Your Center for Culture.  
Your Center to gather with Family and Friends.

**STAY A PART OF IT BY JOINING OR RENEWING YOUR  
MEMBERSHIP TODAY!**

“My family has always loved the Center, and when I had children of my own they learned to love it through their involvement with the Academy of Irish Music. It’s like our home.”

–Tom Chambers, IAHC President



## ENHANCED MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS INCLUDE:

### INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY

♣ 1 Year \$30 Individual/\$50 Family

♣ 2 Years \$50 Individual/\$75 Family

- 10% off in the IAHC Gift Shop on non-sale and non-food items, and food in the Fifth Province
- Member only discounted tickets for concerts and shows
- The right to vote for IAHC Board of Directors
- Members in good standing for three out of five consecutive years can run for IAHC Board of Directors
- *Irish American News* subscription

### HARPER ♣ 3 Years \$250

- 10% off in the IAHC Gift Shop on non-sale and non-food items, and food in the Fifth Province
- Member only discounted tickets for concerts and shows
- The right to vote for IAHC Board of Directors
- Members in good standing for three out of five consecutive years can run for IAHC Board of Directors
- *Irish American News* subscription
- 1 Exclusive IAHC Member T-Shirt

### BARD ♣ 5 Years \$500

- 10% off in the IAHC Gift Shop on non-sale and non-food items, and food in the Fifth Province
- Member only discounted tickets for concerts and shows
- The right to vote for IAHC Board of Directors
- Members in good standing for three out of five consecutive years can run for IAHC Board of Directors
- Private Tour of the IAHC
- 2 Tickets to the IAHC Christmas Bazaar Breakfast
- *Irish American News* subscription
- 1 Exclusive IAHC Member T-Shirt

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Or visit [irish-american.org](http://irish-american.org), to purchase online



# IRISH AMERICAN HERITAGE CENTER

# ANNUAL APPEAL

Time is marching on, and we at the Irish American Heritage Center find we're at the beginning of another Annual Appeal.

Throughout our history, and particularly over the last several years, the dedication and generosity of our members and contributors has seen the IAHC through some challenging times. Thanks to the 2022 Annual Appeal, which was one of the most successful in memory, we were able to invest in building maintenance and upgrades, and to increase our overall cultural programming. There were more concerts in the building and in the Mayfair Theatre than ever before!

This year, we're asking for help with a higher goal than last year to help us raise additional funds for a specific need. **The Irish American Heritage Center will be replacing both the north and south parking lots in 2024.** Anyone who has been to the Center over the last few years knows how important this project is for the long-term health of the organization. The costs for this project will be approximately \$400,000. While we have successfully raised most of the funds, there are additional needs and unforeseen expenses. Can you help us fund this vital improvement? Your contribution can help us reach 100% funding to replace the lots!

As President of the Irish American Heritage Center, it is my honor to thank our benefactors, Peggy and Pat Burke. As always, their generosity in matching the first \$25,000 in donations makes the Annual Appeal more successful every year. The support of the Burkes is one of our great traditions.

We understand that there are many deserving causes, and we appreciate your consideration of the Irish American Heritage center when making your charitable contributions.

To make a donation please visit our website at [irish-american.org](http://irish-american.org), use the mail-in form attached, or call our office at 773-282-7035, extension 10.

Best regards,

Tom Chambers

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It's that time of the year again, otherwise known as the Christmas Season. Time for putting up holiday decorations, sending out Christmas cards, trimming the tree, shopping for that special gift even if it's at the last minute, getting together with family and friends and if you are like me cooking Christmas dinner for the entire clan. This Christmas will be a little different than the how I have spent them for the last 32 years. Typically my time would be spent working long hours at The Irish Shop. The period between Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve was always the busiest time of the year for us. Checking on special orders, stocking the shelves, and

helping our customers find that perfect gift was all in a day's work. Extended store hours left little time for anything else, and you were back at it again the next day. When Christmas Eve finally arrived, you were more than ready for a day off unless you were expecting 25 for dinner the next day.

Ever since my mom passed away in 1984 I have been cooking Christmas dinner for my family. One year it was 31 adults and kids. I cook a separate meal for the kids and a seven course meal for the adults. Dinner lasts about two and a half hours with plenty of wine consumed. I try not to repeat any courses from previous Christmas dinners. I also print menus so

everybody knows what they are eating which saves me explaining what all the dishes are. It can get a bit hectic especially the clean-up, and dish washing. 20 adults times seven plates, bowls, dishes, glasses and silverware. When you do the math it's a hell of a lot of washing up. Thank God that my wife, and daughters help out. Still the dishwasher can only fit so many plates. It takes a couple of loads to do them all, and by the time everyone goes home I still have a counter full of glasses that need to be hand washed. In the end it's worth it. Dinner is part of my gift to my family, and I enjoy doing it. I'm really going to enjoy not having to be at work on Boxing Day. I'm still getting used to being retired. I always think that there is something I should be doing.

I'm thinking of making Sticky Toffee pudding for dessert this year. Sticky toffee pudding is basically a sponge cake made with dates, brown sugar, eggs and corn syrup, that's baked and smothered in a toffee sauce. Super decadent but fairly easy to do. To make it all you need is a blender to puree the dates and a hand or stand mixer to beat everything else together. This recipe will make enough puddings to fill a twelve hole muffin tin. You can always freeze any extra puddings and reheat at a later time. Serve with ice cream,



custard, or whipped cream for a truly satisfying treat. Whatever you choose to make have a wonderful Christmas with you family and friends.

- Sticky Toffee Pudding makes 10 servings
- 3 cups flour
- 1tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp baking soda
- 8oz dates
- 1cup water
- ½ cup (1stick) plus 1tbls unsalted butter
- 2 cups dark brown sugar packed
- 3 eggs lightly beaten
- Toffee sauce
- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter
- 1 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 2 tablespoon milk
- 2 T corn syrup
- 2T heavy whipping cream
- Pinch of salt
- (Optional) 2 tablespoons bourbon, or Irish whiskey
- Combine all ingredients except the whiskey in a small

saucepan. Bring to a boil stirring to dissolve the sugar. Boil three minutes remove from heat and stir in the whiskey. Cool slightly. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Butter the muffin pan with the extra tablespoon of butter. Mix together flour, baking powder, and baking soda in a medium bowl. In a small saucepan cover dates with water and simmer for 5 minutes, until most of the water has evaporated. Transfer dates to a blender and puree until smooth. In another bowl or the bowl of a stand mixer beat butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Scrape down the sides and add the flour mixture. Mix until combined. With the mixer running add the dates a little at a time until everything is combined and you have a smooth batter. Pour equal amounts in to the muffin pan. Bake 20-30minutes or until a skewer inserted in the center of the pudding comes out clean. Cool to room temperature and slice of top. Make holes in the pudding with the skewer and pour about a table spoon of the toffee sauce over the pudding. Reheat the pudding until warm and invert on a plate or dish. Pour the remainder of the toffee sauce equally over the puddings. Top with ice cream, custard or whipped cream. Serve immediately, and watch the happy faces.

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**Devon Bruce, Mike O'Halleran, Matt Moore, Ambassador Byrne Nason at the Ireland Funds Dinner**

# Wallcoverings of Ireland

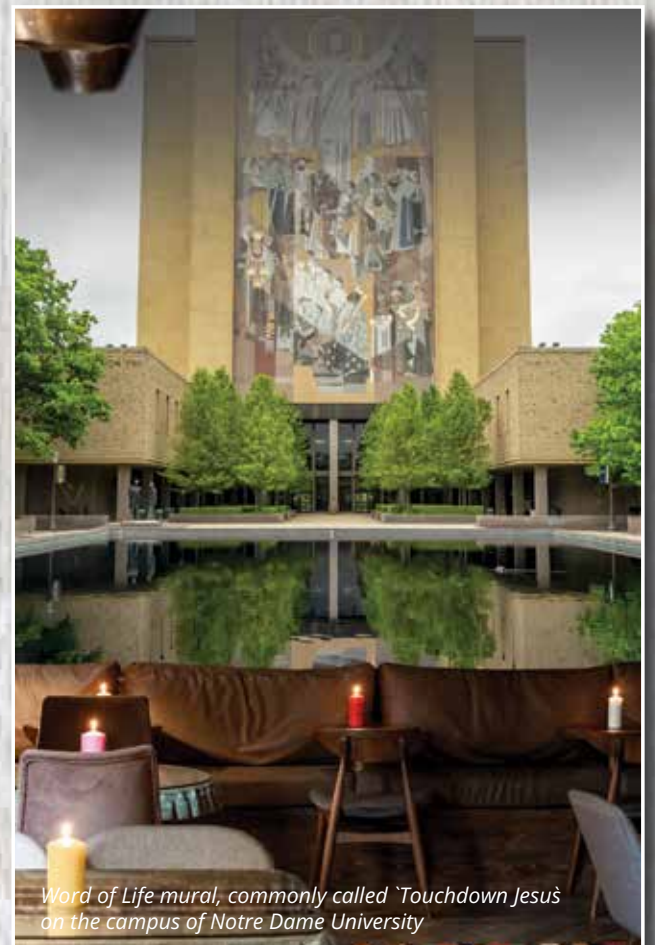
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### John Plunkett Adds a New Chapter to Family Furniture Dynasty

In 2009, Plunkett Furniture officially ceased operations, closing its six remaining stores and serving as another casualty of the Great Recession. For its customers, it represented the end of an era for this recognizable and well-respected furniture chain in the Chicago area. For John Plunkett, it meant the end of the only place of



John and Valerie Plunkett

business he had ever known. He and his wife Valerie were forced to consider where they could get health insurance and how to remain financially secure, no small tasks given that their four children were all in school at the time.

Fast forward to 2023, and John and Valerie have completely reinvented their business with John Plunkett Interiors, a Wilmette-based luxury design firm offering both concierge interior design services for projects of all sizes, and direct access to renowned home furnishing brands.

How were they able to rise from the depths of the Great Recession to find success in adding another chapter to the Plunkett Furniture story? To answer this question, we must first go back a century ago to Chicago's west side, where John's grandfather, Hugh Plunkett, faced a challenge not altogether different from the one facing John in 2009.

Hugh had emigrated from County Cavan in Ireland in the 1920s, and while studying law at Loyola University, he joined OW Richardson, a retail furniture and large carpet distribution company, first as a stockboy and then as a salesman. Around the time that he graduated from law school, the Great Depression hit, and the company went out of business. Hugh and two of his colleagues bought the remaining inventory, then Hugh bought out his partners and started his own firm in the early 1930s.

Enlisting the help of his new wife Rose, whom he had met in Ireland, as the office manager, Hugh built this new firm - Plunkett Furniture - and got to work and grew the business. As active members of the now-shuttered Our Lady of Help Christians parish, they got to know the pastor and ended up furnishing rectories, convents, and churches all over the area. Years later, their oldest son - John Plunkett's father - would end up taking over operations of the company and furnishing the Cardinal's Mansion for Cardinal Joseph Bernardin.

Growing up in the northern suburbs, John and his siblings - the third generation of the Plunkett family in America - became involved in the business and witnessed first-hand how the company expanded its reach across the Chicago area.

"The first store I remember was on Madison Avenue in Oak Park," John recalled. "Every few years we'd

open up a new location, and my dad was involved in everything that went into that: working on the construction site, the architecture and design of the new building, and getting it built. I learned a lot of from the tradespeople working on site and loved the business."

At its peak, Plunkett Furniture ran ten stores, nine of them in the Chicago area, and one in St. Louis. They employed hundreds of associates and developed a brand name as a provider of high-quality furniture with excellent customer service.

"We always appreciated the business, and never took it for granted," said John, who served as the leader of the company. By the 2000s, however, John had noticed other high-end furniture stores closing, and the 2008 financial crisis forced him and his family members to make the difficult decision to shutter operations.

"We tried to fight it," John admitted, "but couldn't stop it."

Drawing on many of the same values that propelled Hugh and Rose to build Plunkett Furniture nearly a century before, John and Valerie got to work, beginning by calling past customers to thank them for their business and letting them know they still had access to furniture, carpet, bedding, and other items through their accounts with major home furnishing brands. Before John knew it, he was filling up his calendar with appointments with former customers, providing interior design consultations and helping people pick out the furniture that would work best for them.

"I'd go to an appointment with a client to talk about one specific furniture question, and through the course of the conversation, more things would come up, and I'd spend hours going through people's homes and talking about what could be done," said John.

Sensing this demand, John and Valerie opened John Plunkett Interiors, a luxury design firm offering both concierge interior design services for projects of all sizes, and direct access to renowned home furnishing brands, at competitive prices. The firm is based out of Wilmette, where ten years ago it opened a beautiful studio / showroom that serves as a one-stop, state-of-the-art resource and design center.

Anyone visiting the firm's showroom will see the reinvention of the furniture company first-hand. Visitors can browse couches, chairs, dressers, and bed sets among many other furnishings from world-renowned furniture makers, as well as enjoy one-on-one design consultations in the design center. John, Valerie, and five other team members also provide in-person visits to clients' homes for design consultations, where they can see the space, talk through preferences, and take measurements as appropriate. They also offer services to help clients with remodeling or home additions, often working directly with contractors to ensure their client needs are satisfied.

"In some ways, everything that we've went through has been a blessing, because we've learned we can still give people the full customer service and education about what goes into creating a beautiful space within their home. We can offer full service interior design and direct access to major brands. People recognize our name and service," John mentioned, pointing to successful advertisement campaigns in the Chicago Tribune and the Irish American News during the COVID-19 pandemic that led to several client referrals.

John Plunkett Interiors serves clients in many different stages of their lives, from younger people moving into their first homes in the suburbs to retirees who are moving out of the family home and looking to downside. John and his team focus on educating clients on design best practices in a low-pressure environment, occasionally spending six months going through a consultation to ensure they are satisfied.

"We want to educate our clients so they are the hero of the story of their home. We make their vision happen behind the scenes," John posited.

While times have certainly changed since Irish immigrant Hugh Plunkett opened his furniture store nearly a century ago, John and Valerie have ensured that the Plunkett name continues to stand tall as a pillar of high-quality interior design and home furnishings in the Chicago area.



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BOOKS by Irish Authors or About Irish Subjects!

Our Irish Heritage

- *A Kid's Guide to the Irish Diaspora and Irish National Anthem*

Why are so many people of Irish descent living in the United States? It might be a question a child or grandchild will ask. There is now a book that explains in gentle terms about the origins of the Irish diaspora, the reasons why so many left Ireland to make their home in America and



explains a little of the history of Ireland, its emblems and saints, to instill curiosity in

children of Irish Heritage.

"Our Irish Heritage - A Kid's Guide to the Irish Diaspora and Irish National Anthem" is the perfect Christmas gift. It not only teaches children about Ireland and its culture, it's also the only book that teaches the Irish National anthem by including the phonetic easy-to-pronounce (as well as the Irish / Gaelic and English) version of 'Amhrán na bhFiann' (The Soldier's Song).

This allows children who do not speak Gaelic to learn the song and be proud to sing it amongst their Irish-American family and peers.

Irish Americans have so much to be proud of, and while children of Irish descent might be aware of their Irish culture - they most likely cannot sing the Irish national anthem. This is a keepsake gift that can be given for St. Patrick's Day, Christmas, their communion, as well as a birthday gift.

Along with teaching the National Anthem, this book contains fun historical facts and tells children of the Irish diaspora all about the Irish national emblems, the GAA

(Gaelic Athletic Association) Irish Dancing, and the origins of Halloween to name but a few! Children can even pin point on the map provided where their relatives came from.

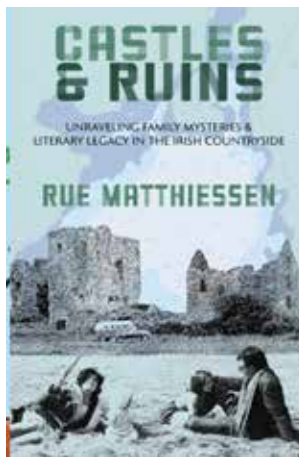
"Our Irish Heritage - A Kid's Guide to the Irish Diaspora and Irish National Anthem" is available from amazon.com for \$9.99

Castles & Ruins

In the memoir *Castles & Ruins*, author Rue Matthiessen rediscovers Annaghkeen Castle, where she spent a memorable summer in 1965 with her famed author parents Peter Matthiessen and Deborah Love.

That summer, the Matthiessens were enjoying a brief period of peace in their

rocky relationship and were taking time off as a family to enjoy the natural wonders of Ireland, living at a rented house on a small island near a castle called Annaghkeen, on Lough Corrib. Many years later, with a child and family of her own, Rue sought to return to the location of that idyllic summer. But with only her dog-eared



copy of her late mother's book *Annaghkeen* and some rusty recollections as her guide, the trip turned out to be more difficult than she anticipated. Did the castle she remembered as a child still stand, or was it left to ruin? What would she find on this pilgrimage back to her youth—a greater connection to nature, to herself, to her own family, or to her parents, as enigmatic and often unapproachable as they often were throughout Rue's life?

A Return to Ireland: A Culinary Journey from America to Ireland includes over 100 recipes



With *A Return to Ireland: A Culinary Journey from America to Ireland*, renowned chef Judith McLoughlin has captured the soul of Irish cooking—from hearty Irish staples to classic comfort foods

and so much more. Featuring over 100 recipes, including two favorites below perfect for the holidays, *A Return to Ireland* will bring you on a culinary journey from the Irish-American immigrant recipes to the flavors of modern Ireland.

Minutes To Memories: Growing Up With Sports In The 1970's

In many ways the 1970's was a forgotten era, as America took time to breathe a sigh of relief from

the previous decade of war, assassination, and rebellion. For a child growing up in Chicago, however, the '70's were paramount in shaping and polishing a journey from boyhood to adulthood. Central to this development were the sports heroes and events that captivated and enthralled a young mind and, in the process, formed a man. *Minutes To Memories:*



*Growing Up With Sports In The 1970's* is a memoir telling the story of how sports icons like Muhammad Ali, Reggie Jackson, Adrian Dantley, and many others, left indelible marks on a child who idolized their feats and longed to imitate their greatness. In the vein of Steve Rushin's *Sting-Ray Afternoons*, and Derek Tait's *A 1970's Childhood: From Glam Rock To Happy Days*, *Minutes To Memories* takes the reader on an emotional journey of a young boy's fascination with a decade of sports figures and legends who became steadfast and inspirational companions. Filled with personal stories and remembrances of Chicago life in the 1970's, *Minutes To Memories* returns us to a simpler time when children could be left on their own to dream.

Austin Nicholl is a writer and musician. A lifelong Chicago resident, and an Irish citizen, Austin is a graduate of Loyola University's Undergraduate School of Business. His books can be found on Amazon, Goodreads, and thriftbooks.com

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In Ireland, Christmas lasts from Christmas Eve to the feast of the Epiphany on January 6th, which is referred to as "Little Christmas." "Little Christmas" marks the official end of the Christmas season. Traditionally, the men of the house take over for the day, preparing meals and allowing the women to have a rest.



**Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis: A Life**

By Donald Spoto

With almost 29 biographies of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis extant, this one by the American biographer and theologian Donald Spoto may be the best. Spoto gives a more nuanced portrait of this complex woman.

When time stood still in 1963 on that fateful day in Dallas, Texas--- Jacqueline Kennedy at 34 showed the world how to mourn.

Then with meticulous detail she planned a simple but majestic funeral the likes of which have never been witnessed in this country before or since.

With one bold stroke, this brilliant young woman with her precocious sense of history ensured forever her husband's legacy. Singlehandedly in a time of grave national crisis she rescued a nation.

Spoto's research is impeccable; gleaned from documents at schools she attended; and interviews with those who knew her best; and her colleagues at Doubleday where she worked as an editor; and from the archives of the John F. Kennedy Library and from her own words.

Spoto captures a strong sense of place and a vanishing way of life at Lasata, the Bouvier's ancestral estate in East Hampton where Jackie's grandfather Major Bouvier presided. This was a place Jackie loved as a child as evidenced in a letter to her step-brother Yusha---"I always loved it at Merrywood so peaceful with the river and the dogs and listening to the Victrola..."

Her parents' divorce had a shattering effect on her and put a permanent strain on her relationship with her mother who tried to put a distance between

her daughters and their father. When there was a brief but abortive attempt at reconciliation between her parents, Jackie describes how she felt: "I will never forget the night my mother and father both came into my bedroom all dressed up to go out. I can still smell the scent my mother wore and feel the softness of her fur coat as she leaned over to kiss me goodnight...."

Spoto's treatment of Jackie's mother Janet Auchincloss and her mother-in-law Rose Kennedy is cold and unyielding--- quite in contrast to his sympathetic portrayal of Jackie's father 'Black Jack' which is particularly touching.

Always an observer, Jackie recalls her 'Grandpapa' Bouvier's funeral: "I was sitting beside my grandfather's coffin. Looking at him as he lay in his dark blue suit with his hands folded. I had never seen death before and was ashamed it made no more of an impression on me. I was glad he couldn't see how his children behaved once he was dead." Then when a gardener from Lasata offered the family a simple bunch of violets---an aunt rudely grabbed them and tucked them into a larger bunch of flowers. With her unerring sense of the right thing to do---even at her young age---Jackie retrieved the violets and placed them

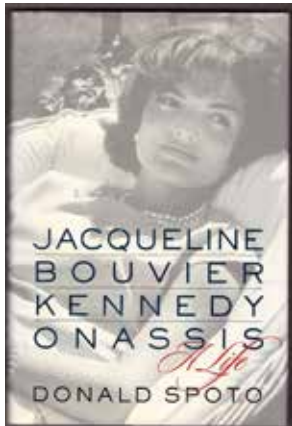
beneath her grandfather's elbow where no one could see them.

Spoto does a masterful job in evoking the young Jackie and the adolescent Jackie. He seems less comfortable with the adult Jackie. He interprets Jackie's constant shopping as an attempt to fill a "terrible emptiness in her inner life" and he equates her strong desire to restore the White House with a need to get "all the loving attention that might otherwise have been reciprocated by her husband."

Most revealing and not often touched upon by her other biographers is her amazing political acumen and her significant contribution to her husband's intellectual life. She advised JFK during the Berlin Wall, the Cuban Missile and the Bay of Pigs crises. She urged him to join with Britain and Russia to sign the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. And in 1956, she drafted a statement which her husband read at the Democratic National Convention supporting the presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson. And it was she who suggested the topic for his 1956 Pulitzer Prize winning book Profiles in Courage.

Other than her ability to address a certain crowd in several languages when called upon, Jacqueline Kennedy was a serious intellectual who read Talleyrand, Voltaire, Rousseau, Ronald Niebhur, Edna St. Vincent Millay -among others.

Upon meeting John Fitzgerald Kennedy at a dinner party, she said that she knew he would have a "profound, perhaps disturbing influence" on her life and yet she just as swiftly determined that "the heartbreak would be worth the pain."



touching.

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## The Value of Being a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNAs)

In the ever-evolving landscape of healthcare, the role of Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) stands out as an invaluable and essential profession. CNAs play a crucial part in the healthcare system, providing direct care to patients, offering emotional support, and assisting with daily activities. This article explores the significance of CNA careers and why they are a useful and rewarding choice.

### Vital Link in Patient Care

CNAs are often the first point of contact between patients and healthcare facilities. They play a pivotal role in assessing patient needs, monitoring vital signs, and providing critical assistance in daily activities, such as bathing, dressing, and feeding. Their dedication ensures that patients receive the care and attention they require, ultimately contributing to the overall well-being and recovery of patients.

### Bridging the Gap in a

### Shortage of Healthcare Workers

The healthcare industry is grappling with a growing shortage of skilled professionals, particularly nurses and caregivers. CNAs step in to fill this void, providing much-needed support to both patients and healthcare teams. With the aging population and increased demand for healthcare services, the role of CNAs has become even more critical in addressing this shortage.



### Personal Fulfillment and Job Satisfaction

A career as a CNA offers personal and professional fulfillment. CNAs often report high levels of job satisfaction because they witness the direct impact of their work on patients' lives. The sense of accomplishment and making a real difference in the lives of others is a driving force that keeps CNAs motivated in their roles.

### Entry Point into Healthcare

Becoming a CNA is a relatively accessible path to

## Home is Where the Heart Is

By Aishling Kelly



enter the healthcare industry. Most CNA programs have a shorter duration than other healthcare education paths, making it a great choice for those who want to start their careers sooner. It can also serve as a stepping stone for those who aspire to become registered nurses (RNs) or pursue other healthcare professions.

### Diverse Career Opportunities

CNAs have a wide range of career opportunities in various healthcare settings. They can work in hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, home healthcare, and more. This diversity allows CNAs to explore different facets of healthcare and find the environment that best suits their skills and preferences.

### Competitive Compensation and Benefits

The demand for CNAs has led to competitive compensation and comprehensive benefit packages in many healthcare facilities. Additionally, CNAs often have flexible work schedules, making it easier for individuals to balance their personal and professional lives.

### Lifelong Learning and Growth

The field of healthcare is constantly evolving, and CNAs have opportunities for ongoing learning and professional growth. They can pursue further education, gain specialized certifications, and move into supervisory roles, broadening their career horizons.

In a world where the healthcare industry is continually expanding, Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) stand as an indispensable part of the workforce. Their dedication, compassion, and essential contributions to patient care make them invaluable members of healthcare teams. Choosing a career as a CNA not only offers job security and competitive compensation but also provides an opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of patients. For those seeking a rewarding and meaningful career, becoming a CNA is an excellent choice.

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*In 'Heart and Soul' Irish Herald columnist Dr. Colman Ryan recounts the story of his life, from his roots in Borris, County Carlow, in rural Ireland in the 1940s and 50s through his stellar career as one of the world's top cardiologists, including his part in the development in some of the most important advances in medical science—advances which have helped literally millions of people worldwide. This fascinating insight into a wonderful life is told with a hilarious sense of humor and a good deal of poignancy. A wonderful gift idea for the Holidays.*

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**Heart and Soul**  
How an Irish imp became a renowned San Francisco Bay Area cardiologist

by Dr. Colman Ryan

In Heart and Soul, Dr. Colman Ryan regales us with the story of his own 'life well lived.'

The narrative runs from his early childhood in the rural setting of Borris, County Carlow, through his medical training at St. Vincent's Hospital in Dublin and in San Francisco, to his more than fifty-year career as one of the world's leading cardiologists.

Heart and Soul is a study in human nature, revealing profound insights into the customs and cultures which form the backdrop to Dr. Ryan's life.

As with the seanachai (storytellers) of old Ireland, Dr. Ryan entertains and informs through the generous use of vignettes and anecdotes, both hilarious and, sometimes, poignant.

The narrative beautifully reveals his devotion to his faith, as well as his passion for healing, teaching, and research, disciplines which he considers of equal importance in his work.

Heart and Soul is the delightfully-written and thought-provoking account of how, and why, Dr. Ryan was able to rise from the obscurity and poverty of post-war Ireland to the pinnacle of the medical profession.

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Colman Ryan's memoir tells the story of a varied, extraordinary and fulfilled life. From childhood in a small Irish town, to a distinguished career as one of the leading medical figures on the West Coast of the United States, this is a narrative of striving, learning, achievement, humanity and wisdom. Honesty, passion, spirituality, humor and brilliant insights into the human condition are all combined here in a biography that flows with the ease of a novel.

—Conor Brady, writer and former editor of The Irish Times.

He captures it all: the small Irish village set between Mount Leinster and the Barrow, overseen by the parish church on one hand and the Big House on the other. It was a child's dream—playing in Borris House Demesne, fishing and swimming in the river, finding adventures on the old railway and sixteen bridge viaduct. Colman Ryan's journey takes him from Borris to his job as a top heart specialist in San Francisco with a few months as a monk along the way. All told with humor and a writer's eye for detail, this is a story of a life well lived.

—Olivia O'Leary, Irish journalist, writer, current affairs presenter.

Dr. Ryan's account of his life from his childhood, through his formative years, and his highly successful and influential career as one of the pre-eminent cardiologists of our time, is a tale wonderfully told. His heartfelt 'warts and all' style leaves the reader feeling as if they were by his side through all of it.

—Anthony Bucher, President of the Irish Literary and Historical Society, San Francisco.

**WB Yeats' Nobel Prize Centennial 1923-2023**

Do you know the thunderous Bronze Age landscape of wild Sligo? Ben Bulben, the sweeping mountainous playground of the Ancient Celt and the like. Ancient Irish geography carved out before human history.

You almost have to know the terrain, the sheer rock face or the flat snow cap plateau, to appreciate the conception and growth of the 20th century Irish Literary Revival. That lyrical, poetic, geography on which Ireland's most dynamic and historical events were brought to life. WB Yeats, himself, in his poem "Under Ben Bulben," describes the superhuman Irish, there, the De Dannan, and their living on the landscape there.

*Swear by what the Sages spoke  
Round the Mareotic Lake  
That the Witch of Atlas knew,  
Spoke and set the cocks a-crow.  
Swear by those horsemen, by  
those women,  
Complexion and form prove  
superhuman,  
That pale, long visaged  
company  
That airs an immortality  
Completeness of their passions  
won;  
Now they ride the wintry dawn  
Where Ben Bulben sets the  
scene.*

We must recollect in that familiar landscape the "revivalist literature" reborn in the writing created by 20th century Irish women and men of broad learning and stellar intelligence.

How else do you think real nationhood comes about? For the Irish it's not just the aim of the gun or the trajectory of a bullet. Or an ambush in a glen or a barrack. But the understanding that we share a common thread with our ancient ancestors. A mystical people from before the start of measured time.

The details and minutia of Irish nationhood also churned out a vocabulary and syntax of dynamic literary achievement. A poetry of modern, wide imagining. The literature of legend and history brought back to life for us. The drama and romance of the past unfolding on theatrical stage, living again before our eyes. Or leaping up from the printed page. All of which re-kindled the reach of the Irish beyond history. Beyond the poetic. And revival of saga, tribal lore and primordial tale. Yeats, himself, now, is buried in its midst. Hence the reference to his final earthly geography in the opening lines of his poem "Under Ben Bulben.

*Under bare Ben Bulben's head  
In Drumcliff churchyard Yeats  
is laid,*

*An ancestor was rector there  
Long years ago; a church stands  
near,*

*By the road an ancient Cross.*

This then was the mixing bowl of the Irish Literary Revival brought about by people more comfortable with pen and ink than the calibre of a gun.

You know them. Lady Augusta Gregory (1852-1932), the aging widow of famed Coole Park, the country estate she turned into a

literary center for provocative political dramas.

Young promise-filled playwright John Millington Synge (1871-1909) had a theatrical ear for the culture and custom of contemporary rural Ireland. He sought to lift the purity of the rural voice to high levels of artistic expression. His early death broke literary hearts.

And William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), poet and playwright, dramatist, writer, and politician. His refined understanding of ancient Ireland rewound her historic expression of tradition. His efforts sought to "reinvent" Ireland's national self-worth. He sought to lift up a new, wide nobility at a critical juncture in Ireland's contemporary present. The task, at last, of political independence.

These poets and playwrights believed that when the 20th century Irish could experience their own story in the drama of historic literature or poetry, they would believe more fully in the struggle for political independence for themselves.

These artists hoped that seeing the cultural woundedness of men and women like themselves, they could bring the nation's people up to speed. And be empowered to act with renewed patriotism for a new independent Irish state.

These writers committed themselves to institutions like the Irish Literary Theater, precursor to the Abbey Theater, they founded in 1899. In Dublin. They remained confident that they could offer people heart-stopping and soul-stirring encounters with bold ideas and challenging political ideals worth dying for.

Literature was for them a radical display of the possible. The catalyst for change. The reawakening of millennia of alternative possibilities for being free of British tyranny.

This is the focus of Yeats' literary world. It's the harmony that he sees bringing all intelligent reason together. Poetry for him is not the disorder of the senses but, the wise synthesis of unfolding life. From what he sees from his artistic vantage point, he reaches out to warn his fellow contemporary Irish poets. He challenges their abilities to make sense of this world. His poetic strength attempts to offer passage from typical romantic Victorian ideals to a fresh sense of the urgently modern. A new modern poetic intuition. A fresh modern expression of drama for the lecture hall, classroom or the theatrical stage. He unfolds his challenge in "Under Ben Bulben."

*Irish poets learn your trade  
Sing whatever is well made,  
Scorn the sort now growing up  
All out of shape from toe to  
top,  
Their un-remembering hearts  
and heads  
Base-born products of base  
beds.*

*Sing the peasantry, and then  
Hard-riding country  
gentlemen,  
The holiness of monks, and*

after  
Porter-drinkers' randy laughter;  
Sing the lords and ladies gay  
That were beaten into the clay  
Through seven heroic centuries;  
Cast your mind on other days  
That we in coming days may be  
Still the indomitable Irishry.

No one worked more gallantly or nobly on behalf of these literary traditions than the poet William Butler Yeats. Who 100 years ago received the Nobel Prize for Literature for his gifted words and poetic imagination. 1923 was a grand year for the Irish. Echoing a huge change in Irish political life as an independent state at last. But 1916 had been lashed down in tears and death with armed rebellion against Britain. Independent nationhood, at last, was the goal after centuries of struggle. Warfare and sacrifice became a deep part of Irish life. Yeats' poetry catalogued the cost of rebellion in his poem "Easter, 1916."

*Too long a sacrifice  
Can make a stone of the heart.  
O when may it suffice?  
That is Heaven's part, our part  
To murmur name upon name,  
As a mother names her child  
When sleep at last has come  
On limbs that had run wild.  
What is it but nightfall?  
No, no, not night but death;  
Was it needless death after all?  
For England may keep faith  
For all that is done and said.  
We know their dream; enough  
To know they dreamed and are  
dead;  
And what if excess of love  
Bewildered them till they died?  
I write it out in a verse—  
MacDonagh and MacBride  
And Connolly and Pearse  
Now and in time to be,  
Wherever green is worn,  
Are changed, changed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.*

Yeats was an etherial poet in the cultural ethos of his Protestant ascendancy traditions. The son of a successful portrait painter whose family roots in Ireland unfolded in the lifetime commercial shipping life of Sligo's seaport traditions. WB Yeats sought to share his discoveries of Irish cultural awareness in his literary expressions in poetry.

Poetry was his dynamic sense of self-projection. And sense of obsession. His long romantic pursuit of Sligo Protestant beauty,



turned Catholic revolutionary, Maud Gonne, is the gooey cement of his early literary output. He proposed to her four times. And four times did she reject him.

Ireland as a cause, a literary devotion, a free verse political conundrum finds wide expression in his maturing literary output. His 1899 poem, "He wishes for the Cloths of Heaven," demonstrates his personal emotional complexity regarding this life-long unrequited love. Maud Gonne did walk on his dreams.

*Had I the heavens' embroidered  
cloths,  
Enwrought with golden and  
silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the  
dark cloths  
Of night and light and the half  
light,  
I would spread the cloths under  
your feet:  
But I, being poor, have only my  
dreams;  
I have spread my dreams under  
your feet;  
Tread softly because you tread  
on my dreams.*

Yeats offered the literary world and the complex world of politics a curious blend of emotions. Well-known and deeply respected, he had a life-time of literary publications when the Swedish

Academy awarded him the Nobel Prize For Literature in 1923. He was remarkably frank, and unusually self effacing when it was announced that he was to be so honored. He looked at the gesture as a larger one of friendship and European courtesy toward Ireland itself. The nation was recovering from the brutal Civil War that followed receiving independence from Britain. Yeats suggested that while he was grateful for the honor, he was deeply touched to see the Irish Free State welcomed so resolutely to Europe.

"I consider that this honour has come to me less as an individual than as a representative of Irish literature, it is part of Europe's welcome to the Free State."

WB Yeats was, of course, a product of his time and place. His Ireland was also an Ireland of its time and place. The dawn of the age of invention and inventiveness. A world evolving into a modern age.

His contribution to the literary character of Ireland is almost without measure. Without equal. His personal understanding of the turmoil and disharmony within Irish life found dynamic remedy in his poetry. A re-awakening of

*continued on pg 33*

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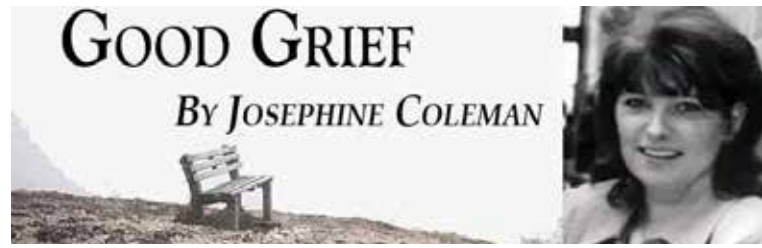



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as I heard they could shatter.

The roads were like an ice skating rink but we are lucky here

Hello everyone. . I love this time of the year except for the freezing rain which is so dangerous. I remember the first time I experienced it, my whole car was totally iced over and I couldn't even get the doors open. I did get some tepid water and splashed it around the locks so I could start the car and put heater on to thaw out windows. I was afraid to put any water on the windows

as the salt trucks keep spreading night and day. I don't mind the snow, as little kids love it when they're out of school for the Christmas holidays .

I have great memories of my children on Christmas break especially when it started to snow, suddenly they'd go crazy screaming It's snowing it's snowing! They'd have to get on their snow suits and snow boots to be

the first one to build a snowman. I remember it snowing growing up. No fancy snow suits or padded trousers for us as our mothers would give us socks for our freezing wee hands as our gloves were kept good for school. We would periodically bring the socks back to her dripping wet, and she'd hang them on the big black Stanley range door and make us drink hot tea and a bit of mince pie while we waited impatiently for them to dry.

Living in the country snow boots were your rubber wellies, and boy they were cold as they had zero insulation. They were good in the rain, but not for little feet in the snow. Within minutes your feet would freeze up; it didn't matter how many pairs of socks you had on!

We Are Blessed here living in a park as our park district would make a huge ice skating rink. Our kids used it the most as it's just outside our back gate.

They're all grown up now but still come home for the holidays and love the snow as much as ever.

A friend of mine gave me a Daniel O Donnell CD of gospel and Christmas hymns. My mum liked him. I think it's because he was from Donegal too. I put in in my car but forgot about it until I was stuck outside Menards waiting for my other half to run in and exchange something. He was taking forever as menards sell tools, so he was probably having a good old time browsing like we do when we go into our favorite store. So I popped the Daniel Cd in. Very nice I thought but it actually made me feel quite homesick. I was surprised when in the middle of it he started chatting in an American accent and said, "have you ever heard about the traveling preacher, a wonderful, wonderful man?" He walked the entire States on foot saving souls. He was feeling lonely and needed to talk to

someone. He was traveling between two towns when at a distance he saw someone. He seemed to be on his own as well but he was taking one step forward, two steps, back one or two steps to the side, he noticed beside him, Johnny Walker and Jack Daniels.

This preacher could take anything but hated the demon drink. He hated it with a passion. When he got up close to this man he derided him. when he had finished giving out. He asked him have you ever been baptized? The man said, "no, sir, I have not." There happened to be a river close by so the preacher caught him by the neck and pushed him under the water and kept him down for 15 seconds. When he brought him up, he said, "did you see Jesus?" the man said "no sir, I did not." So the preacher put his head back down in the water - this time for 30 seconds. When he pulled him up again, he asked, "did you see Jesus?" The man said, "no sir, I did not." So the preacher plunged him back in the water - this time for a minute, and then he pulled him up again, and asked him "did you see Jesus?" The man looked back and said, "sir, are you sure this is where he fell in?" Nice one Daniel, (haha).

My mother would have liked that one as mom and dad didn't drink. They were hard working people raising us twelve kids out in the country with pigs and chickens, and ducks, and cutting the turf every year. You haven't lived if you haven't been to the turf bog (ha), but that's another story.

Wishing you all lots of blessings and good wishes for Christmas.

Stop in and support the Irish import stores. They have lots of Christmas stockings, cakes and sweets and gifts for all.

Until the next time wrap up warm, and be careful in the snow!



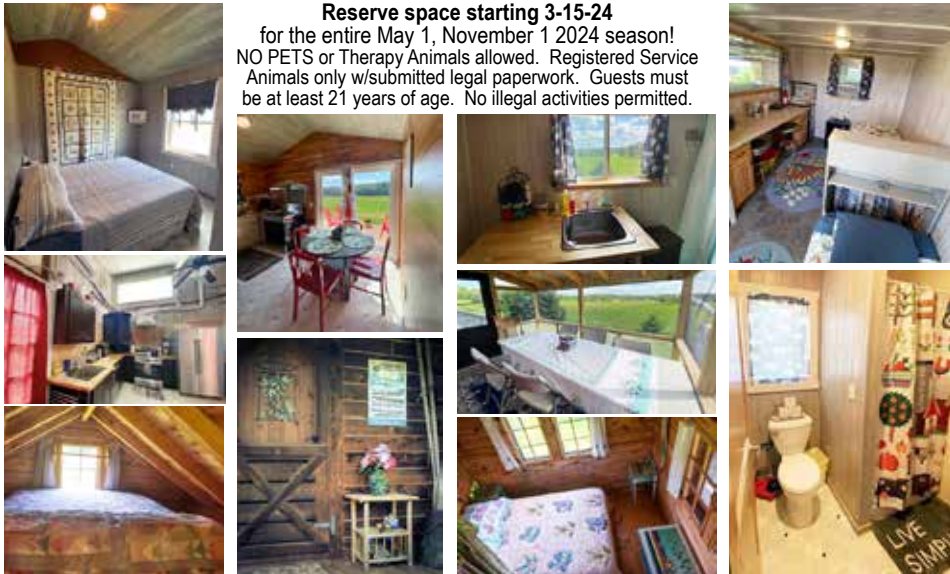
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**Yeats** *continued from pg 31*  
the understanding of what it means to be Irish.

His ability to bring fresh light to the experience permits personal self-discovery. And over the past century Ireland's conscious self-awareness has helped it discover new roles of leadership in Europe. The Irish are trusted and admired by their European colleagues who relish their work ethic and humor. And the smooth creamy flavor of Dublin brewed Guinness. The Irish have brought reason and intelligence with them to pan-European projects and peace keeping around the globe. They offer alternatives to the judgments and grudges of the past.

The grandeur of Yeats' poetic intuition is a feast of civility. Long traditions enjoyed by the Bronze Age Celts whose nobility and wisdom walked before them.

So the centennial year of Yeats' Nobel Prize for Literature is worth our collaborative celebration. Worth the measure of our willingness to embrace our Irish cultural identity to mirror the ancient ones, the superhuman De Dannin or the "The Wanderings of Oisín" based as it is on the lyrics of the Fenian Cycle of Irish mythology. Bringing all of us to a worthy, holy Christmas.


A Nativity where -  
The darkness drops again; but now I know  
That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,  
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?  
"The Second Coming"

Thomas O'Gorman is a Chicago writer, a columnist at Skyline publishing. A 20 year veteran speech writer at Chicago City Hall. A former Managing Editor at Hibernia

magazine, and an editor at Town&Country magazine. The author of some dozen books on Chicago, as well as a biography of Frank Lloyd Wright, and End Of Watch, Chicago Police Killed in the Line of Duty 1853-2006. He is also a fine arts painter, a self declared Irish Impressionist with Fauvist tendencies. Nollaig Shona duit

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66						67					68					

Across

- 1. College that Jackie Robinson went to
- 5. Bric-a-\_\_\_
- 9. It flows into the Caspian
- 13. Antler point
- 15. Corporate emblem
- 16. Collection pit
- 17. Logical prefix
- 18. On the summit
- 19. Friends in French
- 20. Irish UFC former champion, 2 words
- 23. Half a Vegas pair
- 24. Lumberjacks
- 25. "The Tempest" king
- 29. Teaspoon, abbr.
- 30. Key \_\_\_ pie...
- 31. "Star Wars" knight
- 34. Arm joint
- 39. "You can't be serious!"- 4 words
- 42. Licorice-flavored seed
- 43. "Have You \_\_\_ Really Loved A Woman?" Bryan Adams
- 44. Archipelago member
- 45. Equine animal
- 47. Shun
- 49. Irish soccer player who is a former Manchester United star, Roy \_\_\_
- 52. N.C. State is in it, abbr.
- 53. Peace group, 2 words
- 59. Sistine Chapel subject
- 60. Bridge-game complement
- 61. Common refrigerant
- 63. Sotto \_\_\_ (under one's breath)

- 64. Prefix with China
- 65. Country that borders France
- 66. Cornerstone abbr.
- 67. Adult-to-be
- 68. Work detail
- Down
- 1. Package deliverer
- 2. Gator cousin, abbr.
- 3. Prefix for motion
- 4. Has \_\_\_ with, 2 words
- 5. Hold responsible
- 6. Army training group, abbr.
- 7. Keyed up
- 8. Dried coconut meats
- 9. Grammarian's concern
- 10. Hearsay
- 11. Middle Eastern princes
- 12. CD predecessors
- 14. Merchant's inventory
- 21. Table wine
- 22. Remove forcibly
- 25. "The West Wing" actor
- 26. Animal with a mane
- 27. US hotel chain
- 28. Butterfly catchers
- 29. Use a stop clock on
- 32. Gets with great effort
- 33. Biz \_\_\_
- 35. Secular
- 36. Kate or Laura
- 37. Stare at amorously
- 38. "That was close!"
- 40. Had in mind
- 41. Set up
- 46. Deem appropriate, 2 words
- 48. Trekkies' genre, 2 words
- 49. "Great job!"
- 50. Enforce
- 51. Intended
- 52. Big home run hitter
- 54. Fully cooked
- 55. Art class model
- 56. Meal scraps
- 57. Lowest tide
- 58. Seafood serving
- 59. "\_\_\_ Maria"
- 62. Wall Street locale, abbr.

November Answers

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**MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM  
THE IRISH FELLOWSHIP CLUB**

The Irish Fellowship Club of Chicago celebrated the start of the Christmas season with the Annual President’s Luncheon on December 1 at the Chicago Hilton. The event begins the Christmas season for the members and guests of the Irish Fellowship Club and serves as the Annual Meeting of the Club. Said Luncheon Chair Bob Reiter, President of the Chicago Federation of Labor, “A big thank you to all of our sponsors and table buyers for their support of this year’s Christmas Luncheon. It was a festive afternoon and I am grateful to all who attended for making it such a success. The luncheon is a long-standing tradition in Chicago and a wonderful kick-off to the Christmas season.”

As it is the President’s Luncheon, the Club honored Bob Flood who has served the Club for the past year as President. Executive Director Kathy Taylor commented, “It has been a pleasure to work with Bob this year and I am grateful to him for his commitment to the Club and Foundation, particularly to our Student Scholars. Our Scholar event last month was a great success thanks to Bob’s efforts.”

The Annual Meeting also saw the election of new officers for 2024 and new members. First Vice-President, Jim Coyne, Business Manager of Plumbers Local 130 UA and General Chairman of the St. Patrick’s Day Parade, was elected IFC President for 2024. Said Nominating Chair and former IFC President, Chris Kozicki, “It was my honor to nominate Jim Coyne for President and elect the other officers and new Directors of the Irish Fellowship Club. As a past President and Chair of the Nominating Committee, I am grateful for the leadership Bob Flood has provided and excited to work with Jim Coyne next year. Thank you to our Nominating Committee and the membership for their engagement in our election process.”

In accepting, Jim Coyne stated, “I am delighted to accept the nomination to be President of the Irish Fellowship Club for 2024. The Club serves an important purpose in Chicago sharing the fellowship of the Irish community and serving the educational and cultural mission of our Foundation. I look forward to working with the other officers, directors and members of the Club to continue our success.”

The support of sponsors, donors and guests contributed directly to the Irish Fellowship Club Education and Cultural Foundation which provides scholarship funds to students in Catholic High Schools across Chicagoland and grants to Irish cultural organizations. Said Bob Flood, “The Christmas Luncheon was a great success thanks to our Chairman, Bob Reiter and all those who attended. It has been my pleasure to serve the Irish community of Chicago as President of the Club this year and thank our membership for their continued support of our mission of fellowship across the City. I congratulate Jim Coyne as the Club’s new President.”



**JIM COYNE ELECTED PRESIDENT  
OF THE IRISH FELLOWSHIP CLUB**

James F. Coyne is the Business Manager of Plumbers Local Union 130 UA. Jim is a 46-year member of the Union and in his first 25 years of his plumbing career, he worked on many commercial buildings and high rises in downtown Chicago. He has served the Union since 1987.

In 2012, Jim was elected as the Business Manager in the largest plumbing local within the United Association and has a jurisdiction of 17 counties in northern Illinois. In 2021, Jim was re-elected to a fourth term as Business Manager.

Jim also serves as the General Chairman of the Chicago St. Patrick’s Day Parade Committee which produces the annual downtown parade.

For more than six decades, the Plumbers Local 130, UA kicks off the Chicago St. Patrick’s Day celebrations by dyeing the Chicago River a beautiful shade of green. This annual tradition has attracted hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world. The Plumbers Local 130, UA has proudly sponsored the parade for 68 years.

Jim was born and raised in Chicago by his parents Geraldine and James J. who was a 74-year Local 130 member at the time of his passing in 2022. Jim and his wife Michele have one son and three daughters, and are the extremely proud grandparents of 11 grandchildren.

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*Sue and Bob Flood*

**Patrick Kielty**

Who is Patrick Kielty? He has been the new host of the Late-Late Show since the end of May. He replaced Ryan Tubridy. Tubridy hosted for 14 years. The

first Late Late show presenter was Gay Byrne. He was from Dublin; it began in 1962. Byrne passed away in 2019.

Before I give details about Kielty I'd like to share where Tubridy is today. At times

Tubridy was in hot water with the press but what celebrity isn't? Heck, I find myself in hot water a lot, I could say the wrong remark or forget an important date or lose a credit card.



**Dan Casey, Gerry Gainer, Nik Quaife and Dolores Connolly enjoying the Ireland Fund Gala, November 7, 2023**



**GETTING TO KNOW THE IRISH!**

BY TINA BUTLER



Tubridy landed a new gig along with other stars to raise awareness for pensions awareness week.

I've heard that late shows are on the decline, they're definitely not as popular as years ago in the Johnny Carson era. But I think chat shows are still around because we like to see celebrities and entertainers, discussing casually about their lives. A host and celebrity talking as friends brings an intimacy & shows an authentic side of the artist. (or at least we think)



So, the new host Patrick Kielty is a comedian, presenter and actor from Co. Down. He has been apart of, The Last Chance Lottery, English version of Love Island, Patrick Kielty almost live, and This Morning. Kielty appeared in several documentaries, a few include, My dad, the peace deal and me, (about the Good Friday agreement), 100 years of Union and Ballywalter. Kielty hosted the Opening Ceremony of the Special Olympics in Croke Park, Dublin

Kielty is one of three sons, tragically his father John "Jack" Kielty was murdered by the UFF/UDA. A loyalist, protestant group in Northern Ireland. The killers thought Jack was in the IRA. One of the tragic deaths/ losses Northern Ireland has endured. And as we all know Northern Ireland has lost many

innocent lives. It's hard to even type I'm conflicted to give more details. I will move on with the life of Patrick, his brilliant son. He was a talented Gaelic footballer and a member of the Co. Down GAA football team.

He began performing in school and did impersonations of local politicians. He did an impersonation of Martin McGuinness. McGuinness was from Co. Derry, a former deputy in Sinn Fein, RIP. He entered comedy contests and became a finalist in the national comedy search.

Kielty has hosted, presented, starred in, performed in a variety of shows, stand up, TV and theatre. I think he is more than qualified to be the new host & I look

forward to watching. In his first week as host his guests included former president Mary McAleese and comedian Tommy Tiernan.

"Happiness is a house without a telephone" Gay Byrne

"It's been a fantastic carousel. I've enjoyed every minute of it. Thank you and good night." Gay Byrne

Smidin Gaeilge Talk show-clar cainte, Comedian-fear grin, Television-teilifis

For anyone who uses Alexa (virtual assistant, started 2014) she has acquired an Irish accent as of last year.

I wish everyone a very Happy Christmas! I hope each of you finds the most important things under the tree: health, peace of mind, and love.

If you have any questions, please email:

Molanive@yahoo.com

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Irish-born, Canadian-based folk band Michael Darcy & The Atlantic Tramps will make their return to the US in early October

with shows planned in Detroit & Chicago. Michael, who hails from county Clare originally but now based in Toronto, is about to embark on his 3<sup>rd</sup> tour to the US this year where he will be joined by fellow Atlantic Tramps John Murphy from county Mayo on tenor banjo and Dan MacDonald from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia on fiddle. From Left, John Murphy, Kevin O, Michael Darcy, Dan MacDonald

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The More Things Change... and the Devils We Don't Really Know

You can be sure that there's a blue moon in the heavens when I find myself in accord with Leo Varadkar; but I'm really steeling myself for a sighting of winged pigs flying overhead when I nod in agreement at something that the dreaded Hillary Clinton has just said. Strange times make for strange bedfellows and no mistake.

With Varadkar I'm agreeing with him in denouncing the evolving strategy by which Sinn Féin are not only suing all round them at any perceived slight, but have taken to suing individual journalists. Boot-boy politicians that they are, they know damned well that a journalist on the losing side of a court case is likely to find himself not only out of a job but out of his home. It's always nice to shut up any opposition you have.

As several politicians and commentators have pointed out, suing should always be a last resort. With SF, sensitive

little souls that they are, it's close to the first. Hello Mary Lou - it's off with the masks and on with the brimstone boots. Doesn't the future look ever-so-bright?

Up until now I've been of the view that - although I wouldn't be voting for them - the Sinners should possibly get a shot at running the country. After all, the rest are terrible and why not try someone new? Well, after their emerging love of going to court and their hosting and lauding of Hamas this past month I've changed my mind on that. Big time. I don't care who gets in now as long as it's not that shower.

Talking of Hamas and the tens of thousands of 'useful idiots' here who are lining the streets to show their compassion credentials by spewing hate at Israel whilst calling for a ceasefire against Palestine, none other than Hillary Clinton correctly pointed out that it's Hamas that BROKE the ceasefire - and not for the first time.

Following last month's column, I didn't need to be

# Swimming Upstream

By Charles Brady



a Cassandra to know that openly declaring myself for Israel (despite giving equal time to a pro-Palestine activist) wouldn't make me any friends. It didn't, but that's OK. If I was interested in making friends, I'd be out there shaking my little Palestine flag and screaming for the removal of the Israeli ambassador with the rest of the lemmings.

It's puzzling, though. I was speaking with a young gay couple that I like during the past week -- and they are rabidly anti-Israel whilst supporting Palestine. And it seemed not to bother them in the slightest that in Israel they could behave as any other couple, whilst in Palestine... No. I just don't get it. If they were turkeys they'd vote for Christmas.

Moving on... and something unexpected last week brought to my attention a piece I wrote for another publication around ten years ago, this to do with refugees. I had forgotten I had written it, but as it seems at this point in time to be rather relevant, here it is in part.

Years ago, I expressed doubts on how great it was that we were witnessing 'a wonderful Arab Spring.' Now there's a nonsense term that you don't hear much of these days: 'Arab Spring.' The desert nations were going to rise up and 'take control of their own Destiny.' Well, let's see: how did that work? With the likes of Gaddafi booted out, the Genie was well and truly out of the bottle. And yet because of the raw power of a single photograph, well-meaning people have been acting as if the refugee crisis only happened last week.

In Ireland politicians are falling over themselves to show how compassionate they are. It's a nice distraction for the peasants, after all. Take a thousand refugees? We can do better than that. Let's take five thousand - show Frau Merkel that we're on her side as she says: 'Let's throw open the

borders and let everyone in.'

And here in the West of Ireland Senator Healy Eames is saying 'We should be taking 10,000'. For heaven's sake, let's go all out and make it 20,000. We can always send for the extended families later on. [Little did I know what was coming!]

I'm not heartless. I'm as upset by photographs of dead children on a beach as anyone, although in the case of the photo that has become iconic, people might do well to remember that the father had been living in Turkey for the past year. That would be the same Turkey that is next up to join the EU. So: an economic migrant then, not a refugee.

And here's a mad idea: why don't we start first --since we're limited by resources in what we can reasonably expect to do - with taking in Coptic Christians? Wouldn't there be a better chance of them assimilating?

And that's the problem: in our haste to show our Compassion Credentials to the world we're not really differentiating between genuine refugees and economic migrants who are bypassing non-war-torn countries in order to get to the countries that they've taken a fancy to. At the very least we should be processing the women and children first. Even on the Titanic, to use an unfortunate if not inaccurate analogy, they did that.

Yet when you look at any random sample of photographs or videos then you'll see groups of healthy-looking young men of military age. What are they doing - going to send back for the family when they're nice and safe themselves? I was bemused at film last week of one group spilling out onto the beach and setting up a selfie-stick in order to take snapshots of their happy day, all posing in their nice comfy lifejackets. Cameras and selfies; but we forgot to bring the women.

Yes, we should be doing our best to help. But we are a small country where we haven't even gotten to grips with our own homeless situation and a bit of help from the insanely rich Gulf States wouldn't go astray - at least a bit more than we're seeing so far. After all, shouldn't they be the natural 'cultural' refuge of those fleeing? Shouldn't they be welcoming their fellow Muslims with open arms? Well, don't hold your breath.

Jane Kinninmont, Deputy Head of the Middle East and North Africa program at Chatham House in London, says:

"There are some Syrians who have found refuge in the Gulf, especially in Qatar, but they would all generally be on some kind of temporary visas. The Gulf countries are not signatories to the international conventions on refugee rights that Western countries and indeed most world countries have signed up to..."

"Their position would be that if they started recognizing political asylum it could potentially open the doors for a multitude of their temporary workers to stay permanently. And that would raise a lot of quite complex issues."

Well, that was then and this is now. I reprint it only to show how little has changed. Then, they were fleeing a different war. Since that time, we've had Ukraine and now we have Israel-Palestine. Yemen and several others drag on also, but we don't talk about them in case the Ministry of Bad Thoughts accuse us of wrong-speak.

Very little changes; even with clear evidence that aid sent to Palestine has been used to build underground tunnels the size of a city, very little changes.

Here's a crazy, crazy wish for the first column I write in 2024. It's a wish that - supposing I'm still on the twig - we see some kind of peace. Not complete peace, that would be asking for too much, given how much we are FOR war and how much money a small amount of people make out of our bloodlust...but some kind of peace. Just a small slice.

And on that note... Merry Christmas. charleybrady@gmail.com

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**The Biggest Issue in 2024 Will Still Be Abortion Rights**

Off-year elections rarely get the attention afforded to midterm and presidential elections. This is often for good reason. Many states and municipalities don't hold elections on off-years in the first place, and the ones that do typically only apply to state and local level issues. This year, however, was different-and abortion rights are to blame.

Earlier this year, Janet Protasiewicz won a huge election to become the newest justice on the Wisconsin State Supreme Court. Protasiewicz, who is liberal but was legally required to campaign in a nonpartisan fashion, campaigned on protecting abortion access in Wisconsin.

When Roe v. Wade was overturned in 2022, a law banning abortion that had been on the books since before Roe was initially decided technically became law once more. While Wisconsin has yet to enforce the law, Republicans in the state made it clear that they wanted

to start criminalizing abortion again if they retained control of the Supreme Court.

The election was held on April 4th, and resulted in a 55%-44% win for Protasiewicz. Her victory effectively flipped control of Wisconsin's State Supreme Court from Republican to Democrat. This will likely have implications that go beyond abortion access, especially with regard to Wisconsin's extreme partisan gerrymanders.

Then, last week, in Ohio, another victory for reproductive rights advocates occurred. Earlier this year, Ohioans worked tirelessly to get an initiative on the ballot to enshrine abortion rights in the state's constitution. Despite panicked Republican efforts to raise the voting threshold needed for ballot initiatives to pass, voters in Ohio put a stop to their shenanigans and passed the amendment by a 13-point margin.

That same night, in Kentucky, Governor Andy Beshear, a Democrat, won re-election by a wider margin than when he was first elected in 2018. In as deeply conservative a state as Kentucky, that's nothing short of a miracle. Beshear is a pro-choice politician.

Lastly, in Virginia, Democrats won control of both chambers of the state legislature, all but ensuring that Republican Governor Glenn Youngkin's proposed 15 week abortion ban would not become law.

The common thread that ties these elections together is clear: abortion access is popular. Last

year, an unelected body of mostly white men took away the right for women to make choices about their own body. That right had been enshrined in legal precedent for almost 50 years.

And while the overturning of Roe v. Wade was a huge victory for Republicans, political reactionaries want to go even

further. If Donald Trump becomes President, and if Republicans win back control of Congress, it is all but certain that they will attempt to pass a federal abortion ban. Democrats need to campaign and act on this pivotal issue if they want to have the opportunity to enact their agenda-when they do, they win.

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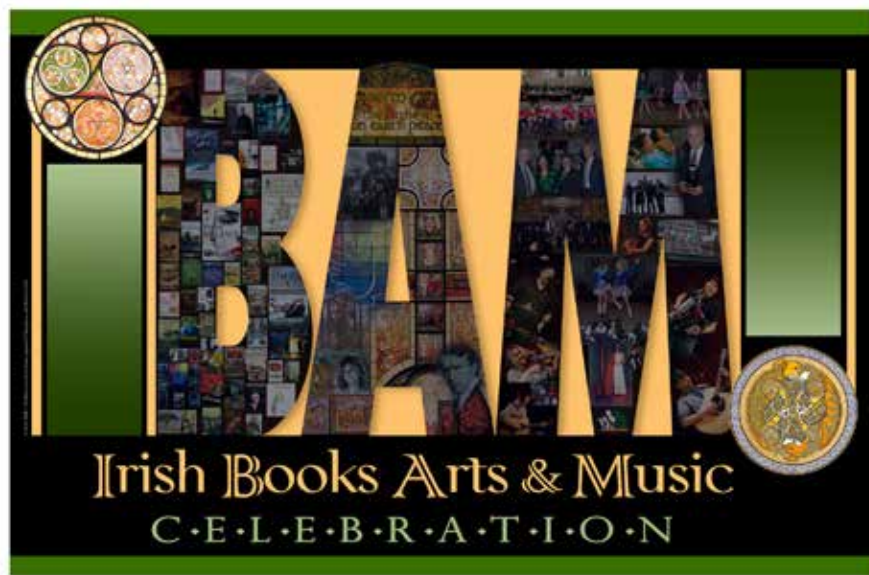
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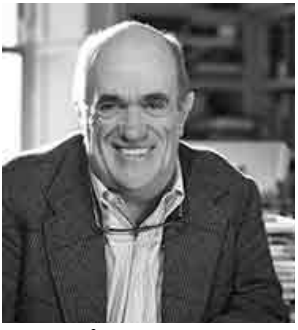
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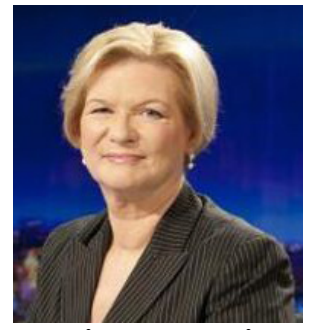
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# Fill your heart with Ireland

Ireland's heart and soul are shaped by the sea. These crystal clear waters have sculpted the coast of the lunar-like Burren, the stepping stones of the Giant's Causeway and the quiet coves of Connemara. Its shores are framed by a clifftop temple, lighthouses and the balmy beauty of coastal villages.

Discover captivating tales at Titanic Belfast in the city that built the Ship of Dreams, or dive into the adventures of a pirate queen in County Mayo. But most of all, leave the world behind as the wind greets your face, your lips taste of salt from the sea and you realize you're home.

So come on, fill your heart with Ireland...



From IAN: We would like to thank Bill Daly for the six years of thoughtful columns he has written about life in Ireland

**Frosty Christmas Mornings and Warm Hearts**

Thanks for reading my articles during the year, and I thought I might finish off with something a little easier that you can read at your leisure over the Christmas period. I have written a short Christmas story that is set in an Irish Village during the 1950's. The people didn't have much, but they did have a wonderful spirit and a strong faith to celebrate Christmas as it should be celebrated.

Once upon a time, in a small Irish village in the 1950s, there was a sense of magic that filled the air every Christmas. The village of Oughterard was nestled between rolling hills, where cosy cottages with thatched roofs lined the winding cobblestone streets. Families in this close-knit community looked forward to celebrating the end of the year with great anticipation, and one particular Christmas stands out in the memories of the village folk.

At the heart of the village, there stood a centuries-old oak tree, known as the "Christmas

Oak." Legend had it that every Christmas Eve, this tree would mysteriously come to life, its branches adorned with radiant lights that could not be seen anywhere else. It was said that these lights possessed the power to make one's deepest Christmas wish come true.

In the weeks leading up to Christmas, families would gather around the Christmas Oak, admiring the rustic nativity scene beneath its branches. The village children sang carols, and the adults shared stories of Christmases past. The anticipation was palpable, and every villager had a special wish in their heart.

Eileen, a young girl of about ten, had a dream of reuniting her parents. They had been estranged for years, and she longed for them to come together and celebrate Christmas as a family once again. She had heard the stories of the Christmas Oak's magical

lights and decided to make it her mission to witness this wonder on Christmas Eve.

On Christmas Eve, as the sun dipped below the horizon and the stars began to twinkle in the clear Connemara sky, Eileen sneaked out of her home, wrapped in her warmest shawl. She made her way to the Christmas Oak, clutching a small sprig of mistletoe in her hand, as tradition dictated.

As she stood beneath the tree, the clock struck midnight, and something truly magical happened. The Christmas Oak began to shimmer with a warm, inviting light that bathed Eileen

Oak, embraced each other, tears of joy glistening in their eyes. The Christmas Oak's magical lights still danced in the early morning light, a testament to the power of love, forgiveness, and the spirit of Christmas.

From that day on, Eileen's family celebrated Christmas together, their love rekindled and their hearts full of gratitude. The village of Oughterard continued to share the story of Eileen's Christmas wish, reminding everyone of the magic of the Christmas season and the enduring power of love, hope, and the Christmas Oak of the 1950s.

through the village.

One frosty evening, as Sean was helping his mother, Maureen, make the traditional mince pies, they heard a knock at the door. When they opened it, they were greeted by a weary travelling man named Liam, who had got lost on his way to visit his own family for Christmas. Sean's family welcomed him inside, sharing their warmth and a bowl of hot stew.

Liam's arrival added an extra layer of joy to their celebrations. He played his fiddle, filling the cottage with the melodious tunes of Christmas carols and

traditional Irish music. It wasn't long before the entire village heard the music and gathered around the cottage to join in the impromptu celebration.

The community had come together, sharing stories, laughter, and the simple pleasures of life. They exchanged handcrafted gifts, and everyone felt a sense of togetherness that only Christmas could bring.

On Christmas Eve, the village church held a midnight mass, and the villagers walked there through the



in a soft, golden glow. The branches of the tree came to life, and ornaments made of sparkling dewdrops adorned its limbs. Eileen held up her mistletoe sprig and made her wish with all her heart: "I wish for my parents to be together, to share the love and joy of Christmas once more."

A soft voice, like the whisper of the wind, spoke to Eileen. "Your wish is heard, dear child. It is now up to you to make it come true."

With a sense of determination and newfound hope, Eileen made her way back home. She found her parents, who had once loved each other deeply but had grown apart over the years. Eileen told them of her Christmas wish and of the magical Christmas Oak. Touched by her sincerity and the spirit of the season, they decided to put aside their differences and come together for the sake of their daughter.

As Christmas morning dawned over Oughterard, a heart warming sight greeted the villagers. Eileen's parents, standing beneath the Christmas

and close to the edges of the magnificent Lough Corrib, there lived a boy named Sean, and the magic of Christmas was in the air here also. Sean's family lived in a cosy thatched cottage that had been in their family for generations. The entire village was bustling with anticipation for the Christmas season.

In the weeks leading up to Christmas, Sean helped his mother and father prepare for the big day. They cut down a small, perfectly-shaped pine tree from the nearby forest, which Sean's father, Patrick, lovingly decorated with ornaments and tinsel. The glow of the candles and the smell of the pine filled their home with warmth and cheer.

The village itself was a charming sight during the holiday season. The main square was adorned with twinkling lights, and the sound of the carol singers singing traditional Irish songs filled the air. Every household worked hard to prepare a festive feast, with the tantalizing aroma of roast goose and plum pudding wafting

snow-covered fields, carrying lanterns and singing hymns. The church was aglow with candlelight, and the sound of the choir filled the hearts of all with peace and joy.

Christmas morning arrived, and the children excitedly rushed to the tree to find their presents. Sean received a handmade toy truck from his father and a beautifully knitted sweater from his mother. But the most cherished gift of all was the bond they shared as a family and the love that enveloped their home.

The 1950s Christmas in rural Ireland was truly magical, a time when the simple pleasures of life and the warmth of community were the greatest gifts of all. It was a reminder that, no matter the circumstances, the spirit of Christmas could always be found in the hearts of those who celebrated it with love, kindness, and togetherness.

Wishing everybody a very happy and peaceful Christmas and may you wear happiness, prosperity and good health as a warm cloak during 2024. Nollaig Shona Daoibh go leir.



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**Irish-themed Christmas in Chicago**

Craving an Irish-themed musical Christmas in Chicago? Whether you wish to be entertained by polished professionals, or prefer to make your own music, Chicago offers a wide variety of events that are guaranteed to satisfy any taste for Celtic-flavored sounds of the season.

Gaelic Park in Oak Forest is serving up a couple of events that are sure to quench one's appetite for an Irish-themed Christmas, starting with "A Very Very Cassie and Maggie Christmas" on Sunday Dec 3rd 6-830pm, where sisters Cassie and Maggie MacDonald will perform selections from their album of the same name, utilizing fiddle, piano, guitar, and tight sibling harmonies. Later in the week at Gaelic Park, the Celtic Angels stop in Thursday Dec 7th 8-10pm for "Celtic Angels Christmas," featuring the vocals of Louise Barry, Searlaidh Ní Caiside, Olivia Bradley, Michaela Groth and Katie Sweeney, accompanied by the powerful Celtic Knight Dancers and the music of the Trinity Ensemble. Tickets for both events are available on the Gaelic Park website. <https://chicagogaelpark.com/>

On Friday Dec 8th 4:00 PM and 7:30 PM at the Edlis Neeson Theater, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 220 E Chicago Avenue, Chicago IL, Apollo's Fire presents "WASSAIL! An Irish-Appalachian Christmas." Named for the classical god of music

and the sun, Apollo's Fire was founded in 1992 by Grammy award winning conductor Jeannette Sorrell. WASSAIL is set in 1849, Christmas night in Ireland. Families and friends gather for a night of music, singing, storytelling, and farewells, as many will depart for America the next day. Irish Singer Fiona Gillespie, is joined by fiddles, hammered dulcimer, Celtic harp, bagpipes, and harpsichord, as the narrative moves from Dublin to Virginia. Given Sorrell's passion for Baroque and Classical music, I suspect her interpretation of the Irish and Appalachian tunes will be a departure from Traditional Irish; but one never knows and will simply have to check it out. Purchase tickets at <https://apollosfire.org/>

Community chorus, Park Ridge Chorale, under the direction of Edward Zelnis, accompanied by Jane Kenas-Heller, presents "A Celtic Christmas," on Saturday Dec 9th at 700pm at St Luke's Church, 205 N Prospect Ave in Park Ridge IL. The organizer tells me this chorus is composed of about 40 members, both men and women, who will perform Irish Christmas songs as well as classic Christmas carols. See [parkridgechorale.com](http://parkridgechorale.com) for tickets.

Rendezvous Arts sponsors "Christmas O'Carolan" (which gets my vote for most ingenious name for an Irish Christmas event), featuring Katie Grennan, fiddle, John Williams, accordion, Lauren Hayes, harp, Nora Byrd, vocals, Liam Kantor, vocals & guitar. These talented folks will gather to perform traditional and contemporary Irish tunes and Christmas classics, as well as compositions by titular Turlough O'Carolan (the blind Irish harper from the late 1600s). The program will be presented in 3 locations: Wednesday Dec 13th 730pm Dixon IL, Friday Dec 15th 700pm Lake Forest IL, and Sunday Dec 17th 230pm Chicago IL. Tickets are available at Rendezvous Arts website, <https://www.rendezvousarts.org/>

Probably the most recognizable artist performing in Chicago for Christmas is Chloe Agnew, who will bring "A Chloë Christmas" to the Irish American Heritage Center 4626 N Knox Ave, Chicago, IL on Thursday Dec 21st 7-10pm. Chloë Agnew is a singer, songwriter and actress from Dublin, Ireland, who, from the age of 14, gained fame as one of the original (and youngest) members of the internationally acclaimed music group Celtic Woman. After performing with Celtic



Woman for almost a decade, Chloe left the group in 2013 to pursue a solo career. For tickets, go to <https://irish-american.org/>.

If, after all those fine shows, you have not had your fill and are looking for a way to pass the time on Dec 24th waiting for Santa, head over to Chief O'Neills 3417 N Elston, Chicago starting 400pm, where Bohola (Jimmy Keane and Pat Broaders ) will be presenting its annual Celtic Christmas Concert, featuring song, spoken word, and instrumental pieces from Ireland, America, Scotland, Wales, England, Brittany and the other Celtic nations. No doubt you will hear plenty of jigs, reels, hornpipes, polkas and marches, mixed with some nice vocals and songs.

Now, some readers might be looking for an experience where they can make their own Christmas music. Newly formed Chicago Irish Singers Club burst onto the Chicago Irish music scene this fall, launching highly successful singing sessions in two locations. These singing circles are modeled after the famous ones scattered throughout Ireland, in places like Wexford, Sligo, and Derry. Chicago Irish Singers Club is offering special Christmas themed Irish singing sessions with sing-alongs on Monday Dec 11th from 7-900pm at Mystic Rogue 6070 N Northwest Highway in Chicago, and Sunday Dec 17th from 1-300pm at Gaelic Park 6119 147th St, Oak Forest, IL. You are sure to hear classic favorites "Wexford Carol," "Kerry Carol," "Silent Night" in Irish language, and "Christmas in Killarney," alongside traditional Christmas carols, and the groups usual blend of Irish and English language songs and liltng. Chicago Irish Singers Club sessions welcome anyone with a desire to sing, both soloists and those who prefer group singing. So, if you seek a very different kind of caroling session, join the Chicago Irish Singers Club on one of these dates. Session is free.

Contact me at [Christine.lawless@yahoo.com](mailto:Christine.lawless@yahoo.com)



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The gladness of the season, which is hope,  
And the heart of the season, which is love.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays from all of us here on the  
island of Ireland. We look forward to welcoming you home in 2024!

[Ireland.com](https://ireland.com)

# Enjoy A Winter Break On The Island Of Ireland

by Liam Cassin



The Winterval Christmas Festival in County Waterford.



Fairy River glamping in Newry, County Down.



Winter waves near Easkey Cliffs, County Sligo.



Belfast Christmas Market, County Antrim.

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON IN Ireland is a glorious time of the year, and a perfect time to visit. Put simply, Ireland does Christmas better than anywhere else I have ever been. It helps that most Irish people enjoy a full two week vacation, starting before Christmas Eve and ending a day or two after New Year's Day. So there is an almost ubiquitous sense of bonhomie throughout town and country and people are even more relaxed and fun-seeking than usual.

All the major towns and cities across the island are transformed for the better part of December. Downtown areas are festooned with fabulous light displays—Grafton Street in Dublin and Victoria Square in Belfast are particularly fine examples. In recent years a new Christmas tradition has merged on Grafton Street, celebrity busking. The area—well known for the quality of its buskers, some of which have videos on social media with views numbering in the millions—plays host on Christmas Eve to some of Ireland's biggest musical talents, all in an effort to raise money for worthy causes. Recent performers include Bono, Glen Hansard, Lozier, Damien Rice, Imelda Staunton, Damien Dempsey, and the band Kodaline. Its free and open to all, just remember to put a few euro in the bucket at the front!

Music is also a big part of Christmas in traditional Irish pubs. Fairy lights, crackling fires and creamy pints are perfect scene-setters for a 'trad session,' where local musicians gather to play Irish music, unplugged and often impromptu. And there are plenty of other treats to be found in pubs this time of year. Try a whiskey punch or an Irish coffee. According to Esquire magazine, "There are few drinks as instantly delightful as hot Irish whiskey punch." Made with whiskey, lemon, cloves

and a touch of brown sugar (if you need it), it warms you up from the inside out. And there is nothing like the scent of cloves to get you in the Christmas mood.

Perhaps the most iconic features of Christmas in Ireland are its fabulous Christmas Markets. These markets epitomize the 'Céad Míle Fáilte (hundred thousand welcomes)' spirit for which Ireland is famous, and they are the perfect places to stock up on holiday goodies, find the perfect gift, or take the kids for a sleigh ride or a visit to Santa. The Belfast Continental Christmas Market outside Belfast City Hall, the Dublin Castle Christmas Market, the Galway Continental Christmas Market in Eyre Square and the Waterford Winterval Christmas Market in Waterford City are all fine examples.

Nothing symbolizes the uniqueness of an Irish Christmas more than the tradition of 'The Christmas Swim.' All around the island of Ireland on Christmas morning, thousands of brave and hardy souls make their way down to the coast and hurl themselves into the icy cold sea. Naturally, this causes plenty of amusement among the fleece-wrapped onlookers, but it has become one of the island's biggest traditions, with many of the swimmers participating to raise money for charity. Irish journalist Fergal Keane once said of his Christmas swim: "It was worth every second of Arctic misery for the sense of achievement that followed."

New Year's Festival Dublin is the biggest celebration across the island in December. A great way to ring in 2024 it will be filled with fantastic music and dazzling light shows. The festival is held over four fun-filled days, with events taking place across the city. Iconic attractions like the Guinness Storehouse, Trinity College Dublin and EPIC—The Irish Emigration

Museum are illuminated with fabulous light displays. Highlights include two spectacular midnight moment countdown events on New Year's Eve—a family-friendly matinee performance and an evening event at Dublin Castle.

#### Planning for early 2024?

There are plenty of good reasons to visit Ireland in the early months of the year too, even though they are generally considered 'off-season.' As a matter of fact, the decrease in visitors at the start of the year offers many advantages to those who do travel. Big ticket expenses such as flights, accommodation and car rental can often be found at bargain prices. To be sure this is a time of year when days are shorter and temperatures are cooler, but in reality it never really gets that cold in Ireland. These 'drawbacks' are more than compensated for by the warmth inside almost every pub and restaurant. Think of the comfort factor of sipping a hot toddy or a creamy pint of stout and savoring a steaming bowl of Irish Stew in front of a real peat fire.

The weather doesn't stop the day to day activities of the visitor any more than it does those of the people that live in Ireland. Golf is still played. Trails are still hiked. Museums, art galleries and other attractions are still enjoyed. In fact nearly everything you can do in Ireland in the summer months you can do also in January and February. The big differences are that there probably won't be a line and you certainly won't be tripping over other visitors while you're doing them.

The winter days can often have the effect of making the famed Irish scenery even more dramatic and starkly beautiful. The Burren, the Cliffs of Moher and the Lakes of Killarney for examples all offer completely different experiences at this time of year.

Ireland's greatest asset for the visitor is the warm welcome of its people. This is on display during the winter months more than any other time. Gathered together in pubs, listening to a traditional Irish session, locals and visitors sit side by side. And why not? Aren't we all making the most of the long nights and keeping the cold from the door just the same?

#### City Adventures

The Winter months are perfect for a city adventure. Explore one, or even both, of the island of Ireland's capital cities.

Dublin, a UNESCO City of Literature, is famed for its culture, creativity and craic (fun). With a history going back 1,200 years to the time of the Viking invasion, Dublin is replete with museums and architecture which tell the city's story through the centuries. Visit Trinity College to see the magnificent early Christian masterpiece, the Book of Kells. Enjoy the panoramic views of Dublin's skyline from the Gravity Bar atop the Guinness Storehouse. Explore the National Gallery, or any of Dublins dozens of free museums. Discover the stories of Ireland's diaspora at one of the city's newest and most popular attractions: Epic—The Irish Emigration Museum.

Just a couple of hours north is Belfast, the capital city of Northern Ireland, where the Ship of Dreams is remembered at Titanic Belfast, named the World's Leading Tourist Attraction at the World Travel Awards. Belfast, too, is a place rich in history. Take a tour of the Baroque-styled City Hall or a trip to the Ulster Museum, both are free! Or take a Black Taxi Tour and learn about Belfast's recent past, and see the many murals which are an intrinsic part of the city's character. For a unique experience, enjoy artisanal foods and hand-made crafts at the 19th century St George's market.

#### Ireland's Wellness Havens

If you want to start 2024 off with a bit of old fashioned self-nurturing and decompression you will find just what you are looking for in Ireland, which is home to some of the finest spas and retreats in the world. Here are a few examples, just to give a flavor of what's on offer.

The Elements Spa at Finn Lough in County Fermanagh is the perfect wilderness getaway. Just picture yourself on the edge of Lough Erne immersed in a salt bath, lakeside sauna, or even soaking up nature in the tranquil waters of Lough Erne itself ... Bliss.

The Tibetan Buddhist centre Dzogchen Beara in County Cork welcomes visitors of all faiths. Perched in an astoundingly beautiful edge of the peninsula, its meditation garden is famous for its incredible views.

The Macalla Farm, located above County Mayo's stunning Clew Bay, runs retreats combining yoga with vegetarian cooking, meditations of the mind, body, and spirit, and horse riding.

Or you could soak your troubles away with that most Irish of self-care traditions, a seaweed bath. VOYA seaweed bath in Strandhill, County Sligo offers facials, seaweed body-wraps and more. Other seaweed bath hotspots include Ballybunion in County Kerry, the Connemara Seaweed Baths in County Galway and the SOAK Seaweed Baths in Newcastle, County Down.

The winter months in Ireland show the country off in a completely different light compared to the rest of the year. If you don't mind the shorter days and a bit of inclement weather, the advantages are huge. As always, for the best and most up-to-date information on vacationing on the island of Ireland at any time of year please visit [www.ireland.com](http://www.ireland.com)



Just in time for Thanksgiving, the dispute between the movie studios and SAG-AFTRA, the actors union, has been resolved. The strike had lasted nearly 120 days and saw the Writers' Guild of America going back to work just a couple of weeks ago, and so this is good news for the industry, though the after-effects will be felt for a while.

The SAG-AFTRA deal sees improved benefits, greater streaming royalties and an as yet not fully-explained agreement on the limits on the use of AI (which is already happening in the acting world).

The agreement is only for three years though, and I wonder by then if we'll be seeing classic Irish actors like Maureen O'Hara, Peter O'Toole and Richard Harris coming back on screen? I suspect not, but who knows?

Either way, with the Holidays now upon us, it's unlikely that movies and even some television will really get back fully into production until the new year. So, things are still pretty quiet here in Hollywood, though Irish movies are still out there - and winning awards.

The Deepest Breath, directed by Laura McGann and produced by Jamie D'Alton and available to watch now on Netflix, just won two gongs at the Critics' Choice Awards: Best Sports

Documentary and Best Cinematography.

It follows free-diving champion Alessia Zecchini and expert safety diver Stephen Keenan, their meeting at the pinnacle of the free-diving world, and experiences of the extreme sports' rewards and risks - it's fascinating, nerve-tingling stuff, so give it a watch.

Also, though the Oscars are many months away, there's good news for Belfast-based production company Cyprus Avenue Films, which has had their documentary In the Shadow of Beirut selected as Ireland's entry for Best International Film.

Already a winner of Best International Film at the Doc Edge Festival in New Zealand, it's

directed by Stephen Gerard Kelly and Garry Keane, and Executive Produced by a couple of famous names we don't often associate with the movie world: Hillary Rodham Clinton and Chelsea Clinton.

In The Shadow of Beirut is a searing portrait of four families struggling to survive in two impoverished



neighborhoods during an evolving economic crisis and the recent global pandemic.

Tough viewing perhaps, though producer Brendan J. Byrne noted that "it's both a relief and a huge reward that after all the hard work and dedication by a huge number of talented people who are passionate about their art, these works are being recognized at the highest level on the

The story is based around an international heist crew, led by Cyrus Whitaker (Hart), who are in a race to steal \$100 million in gold - and not from a bank, but from a 777-airplane flying at 40,000 feet.

Filming locations included Ulster University, Titanic Hotel, Crown Liquor Saloon, Riddel Warehouse, Castleward Estate, Shackleton Barracks, Ballykelly, Ward Park, Bangor, Whitehead Railway Station, and Ardglass Harbour.

Finally, Irish-American actress Saoirse Ronan (who is now 29, which is hard to believe, even if she has been making movies for years already), has joined the cast of Bad Apples, a new movie that has been described as a "biting satirical comedy with thriller elements."

Ronan will play Maria, a primary school teacher doing her best to inspire a class of 10-year-olds, but unable to succeed because of one unruly

and chaotic student. With her career in question and the child's behavior getting more and more out of control spiraling, she makes a series of bad decisions that lead to her accidentally taking and locking this "bad apple" in her home.

Maria tries to backtrack what has happened, but when she finds that the students are flourishing and the staff and parents are thrilled with the improvements, she finds herself in a very difficult place about what to do next...

It sounds like an interesting idea, that's for sure, and the adaptation of Rasmus Lindgren's debut novel De Oönskade will be by screenwriter Jess O'Kane, and filming is due to start in fall next year, so we probably won't see in until 2025.

That's such a long way off - or so it seems - but of course we're already at the end of 2023, so Happy Holidays and a Healthy and Prosperous New Year to you all.

international stage."


The first nominee for the 18th Oscar Wilde Awards has been announced too, well in advance of the March 2024 event, which is held by the US-Ireland Alliance; it's Dublin-born Richard Baneham, a VFX Supervisor who has won two of the "other" Oscars (Best Achievement in Visual Effects for Avatar in 2010, and again for Avatar: The Way of Water earlier this year.

Baneham studied at Ballyfermot College of Art & Design, and after graduation he moved to Los Angeles in 1994 to work in traditional animation, transitioning to CG while working on The Iron Giant, with other major credits including Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers and Return of the King, and The Chronicles of Narnia, and The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe.

Back on Netflix, the trailer for action-comedy Lift starring Kevin Hart, which was partly filmed in the North of Ireland and is due to premiere on January 12 next year, has just been released.

While there are many Christmas traditions in Ireland, few are as unique as Wren Day.

Also referred to as 'Lá an Dreoilín' in Irish, Wren Day is a very old celebration. Taking place on December 26th, it's one of many similar celebrations that takes place across Europe, the most similar of which is the 'Hunting of the Wren' on the Isle of Man. There are many different takes on where Wren Day originated. Some believe it's related to mid-winter celebrations, others say it's a celebration of the 'king of the birds' and some say it comes from a time when Vikings were invading. On Wren Day, a wren is captured (in modern times a fake wren is used), placed upon a decorated pole and then paraded around a town/village by 'Wren Boys' who, while singing and/or playing music, go from house to house collecting donations for local charities or causes.





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# Counties of Ireland

by Tom Butler



This month we will go to Co. Cork, the largest county. (the rebel county) A nickname given by King Henry 8th of England for it's support, in an attempt at an uprising in the 15century. Cork and Kilkenny are great hurling rivals and very enjoyable to watch.

As the Dubliners sang, "we set sail



from the sweet Cobh of Cork."

Cork borders Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford. Cork is the European headquarters for Apple (multinational technology company) & Dairy gold. (dairy processor).

The three rivers in Cork are Bandon, Blackwater and Lee. There is a song, The banks of my own lovely Lee. There are eight islands off the coast of Cork, seven are inhabited. Sherkin Island has about 100 residents and Bere Island has about 200 residents. Cork borders the Celtic Sea. The Sea separates Ireland and England. In Irish mythology, the God of the Sea, Lir lives in the Celtic Sea.

In 1601 the Battle of Kinsale took place in Cork which was to lead to English domination of Ireland for centuries.

James Barry, founder of Barry's Tea was born in Cork. There is a common debate which is better tea, Barry's or Lyons? Members of the Barry family are representatives for Fine Gael.

Michael Collins (soldier/politician, Sinn Fein) was born in Cork, he was assassinated during the civil war in Beal

na Blath. A famous tourist attraction is the Blarney Stone at Blarney Castle. The legend says if you kiss the stone, you will get the gift of the gab. (a trait a lot of Irish people already possess)

One of the saddest most famous points or places in Cork is The port of Cobh it was the point of embarkation for so many of us emigrants travelling to Australia, Canada, and The States. Another notable person from Cork is athlete Sonia O'Sullivan, the gold medal winner in track and field.

### An Irish Friendship Toast

There are good ships and there are wood ships, The ships that sail the sea, But the best ships are friendships, and may they always be. Raise your glass in celebration, Of the friends who stand so near, For in their hearts

and in their minds, their love for us is clear. So here's to friends both old and new, to bonds that time can't sever, In fair or stormy weather, may we sail on together.

I'd like to include friends I have in

Kilkenny, The Maher's. Tom, Margaret and family, dedicated & generous friends all these years. They keep me updated on what's happening in our area and around the parish.

Questions? (708) 425-7021

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*Merry Christmas*