



ilrish

newsmagazine

DECEMBER 2024 | Volume 18 - Issue 12

SCAN
TO READ
ONLINE





Wrapping Paper

You hold the final issue of 2024 in your hands, or perhaps you are viewing it on our new irish.us website (don't forget the Merch store, loaded with perfect, warm, soft and one of a kind gifts now available in all sizes) or your cell.



This is gift number 216, covering our rich community people, places and impacts.

We can't say we are sad to see 2024 go, brutal as it has been, but enter our 18th year with

a great sense of hope for new plateaus, client partnerships and advertisers, followers, engagement across all areas, continued growth and of course, readers. Not too ambitious, is it?

Your support has carried us through our first seventeen years. We hope you will continue to encourage others to like, follow, opt-in and share our work, wherever they find it.

Within and online see *What's the Craic?* for the best things to do in Irish America this month; *Taking the Fields of Glory* as The Saints wrapped up a great 2024 season; the massive and historic election held for Ireland on November 29th; Christmas stories, tradition, and how important love (of self and of others) is to our health and well-being, plus other tips. History, illuminations, language, book and music reviews, all the details needed to end the year right, and lay the groundwork for a better 2025 too, are waiting for you.

So is the new *iIrish* Merch Store – with warm and soft hoodies, crew and VNeck sweatshirts, T-Shirts, books, poster, an *iIrish* Craictivist Tote to carry it all,

and so much more. Those fashion favorites and a one-, two- or three-year *iIrish* subscription are the perfect Christmas, birthday or travel to Ireland gifts, that last all year long.

There is so much more online. Of course, *iIrish.us* has every past print issue at irish.us. Those are all interactive issues.

We have a load of other content that we either couldn't fit in print, have more to the story and more

Continued on facing page



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Wishing you and your's a very Merry Christmas, from Keem Beach.

Photo by Cindy Reville, CelticGirl Travels Photography

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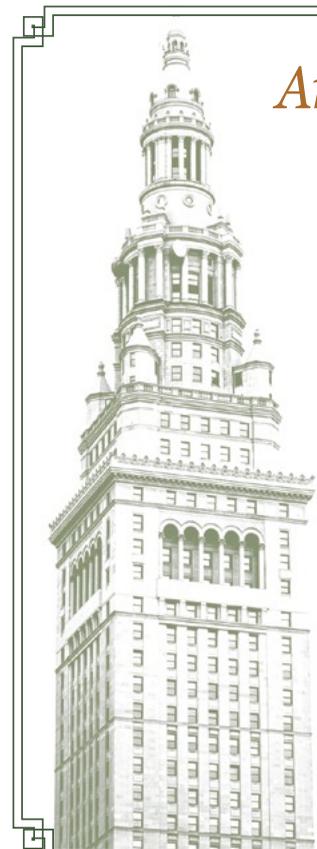
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pictures (and has videos) than is in print, or that we thought would be of interest to you as it came in. The website and our social media channels of Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, X, YouTube and LinkedIn are updated several times a week.

iIrish is made in America. We have always been green and are proudly Irish, all year long.

We wish you and yours a very **Merry Christmas**, **Happy Holiday**, **Blessed Hanukkah**, a bright and meaningful **Kwanzaa** and a **Happy New Year**.

...
Nuair a stapann an ceol, an damhsa déanann an amhlaidh
(When the music stops, so does the dance)
 John

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SUSAN MANGAN



A Christmas Confession

"On the night before Christmas we always go to find our tree. We bundle up so we're warm . . .

We drive through the bright Christmas streets to where the dark and quiet begin."

(*"Night Tree"* by Eve Bunting)

Readers, this year I wanted to create another tale for Christmas, set in my imaginary world of Rock Strand that I created seven years ago. It is a village inhabited with loving twins who create mayhem without guile and spaniels who wreak havoc with adorable innocence.



The reality is, I am not feeling festive. This year has been a tough one. As you know from my writings, I lost my father. He was 91 turning 92. We were going to celebrate his birthday with a boogie-woogie theme: big band music and all his favorite foods. In fact, I was going to serve his mother's homemade pumpkin pie, with a side of spaghetti and meat sauce.

Dad lived independently in his lovely little home on Crooked Lake. He and I would laugh at the geese and chase the bold swans from the pier. During the holidays I would beg him to stay with us in Cleveland.

I thought he would love the distraction of Christmas commotion at our home. It was his tradition to decline the invitation.

Dad enjoyed spending Christmas in his own company, thinking of days when he would skate on frozen ponds in the middle of Chicago. Mostly, he liked to think about my mother. He would toast his love, quietly, with a small drop of Baileys mixed into his instant coffee.

White Christmas

As Christmas morning turned into Christmas night, he would sit in his favorite chair. Old corduroy slippers resting on his cushioned stool, he would watch *Holiday Inn* and *White Christmas*.

Nodding off to thoughts wrapped in romance, Dad thought of the good old days when he and my mother would tap into their jam jar. Every so often they would dress to the nines and visit a dance club in Old Town Chicago and spend a paycheck.

Dad loved to regale me with his stories of swing music, skinny neckties, and my mother's pearls. Together we sat at his kitchen table to listen to music and talk about the heavy snow that fell on the streets of Chicago.

Not only did my father and I attend the same grade school, but we also lived on the same street, Monitor Avenue. Our lives, our laughter, our love of big band music is woven into the fabric of our stories, our journey as father and daughter.

When snow fell, my dad would flood the frozen yard with water and create an ice-skating pond. The kids on our block would skate like the children in the Charlie Brown specials. It is there, on that primitive ice, that Dad first gave me my wings to fly.

Dad and I have spent the last year reliving his favorite memories and mine at his kitchen table. Each season I would remind him of the now. I

introduced him to Spotify and brought him copies of *The New Yorker*.

Dad would humor me with feigned interest, then he would bring me back into his past. So many of his stories revolved around winter, not Christmas, but winter. In his younger years, he loved to speed skate, sled, and cross-country ski.

Long before Dad met mom, he enjoyed a busy social life. On one cold Saturday night, he and his best friend Ted asked a couple of neighborhood girls to go on a double date. The young men decided it would be fun to go sledding in the park.

Enjoying the snowy romance of this tale, I asked Dad if the girls were surprised. He said their dates were really surprised when he and Ted rang the girls' doorbell toting sleds and a pocket full of change for a bus ride to the park.

Dad told stories filled with nostalgia; stories that were always wrapped up in an ironic twist. I treasure those moments spent in his company.

And so dear readers, I have spent hours trying to recreate an old-fashioned snowy tale of nostalgia and humor when times were seemingly simple.

I had it all planned, but then I heard my father's voice gently reminding me that it is okay to be quiet. It is okay to feel lonely during a season emboldened with chiming brass bells. It is okay to find peace in the slow descent of a snowflake onto the bough of an old pine.

Initially, I wished to write a tale of Christkindl markets and sticky mince pies dusted with sugar. I wanted to write of long-eared spaniels and twinkly lights, but I was lost, until I opened a holiday catalogue. Oddly, my words finally returned to me.

The catalogue featured guest editors from Copenhagen and Amsterdam, Portugal and London. Each woman was more

beautiful than the next. Each woman seemed possessed of intelligence and grace, style and intrigue, but only one engaged my attention.

One woman, an artist and self-proclaimed bookworm, wrote that her favorite Christmas story was "Night Tree."

Next to Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," "Night Tree," by Eve Bunting, a Northern Irish-born American writer, is my favorite Christmas story. I read it countless times to my children, students, to the members of my Writer's Salon. I have savored this tale when I needed solitude.

Bunting's tale recalls a Christmas Eve tradition in which a mother, father, and their two young children set off to the woods to decorate a towering pine with bird seed and peanut butter, carrots and apples, a feast for the creatures of the forest.

The tale is simple and kind. It evokes the peace of nature and the goodness of humanity. The story reminds us of a place where we can retreat to in memory, in thought, when the festivity of Christmas becomes a bit much and the happy noise overwhelms.

Bunting's story reminds us that it is okay to sit alone and dream of snowflakes blanketing a bustling city with innocence. It is okay to find peace in the quiet solitude of nostalgia or in the darkness of the wood. It is okay to listen to the voices of our past whisper words of comfort while we cradle a cup of winter dreams. ●

Susan holds a Master's Degree in English from John Carroll University and a Master's Degree in Education from Baldwin-Wallace University. She may be contacted at suemangan@yahoo.com.

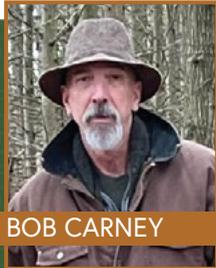
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BOB CARNEY



Merry Christmas

*I nicked six nicks on the door post
With my penknife's big blade
There was a big one for cutting tobacco.
And I was six Christmases of age.*

—Patrick Kavanagh



I'm decades beyond six Christmases, and my anticipation for the holidays has changed. It seems that Christmas music starts playing earlier and earlier each year, as merchandisers exploit our changing views of what Christmas is about.



The time with friends and family takes a backseat to the hustle and bustle of preparing for the holiday. People are stressed about what needs to be bought or houses that need to be cleaned for company.

As a child I looked forward to gifts under the tree, staying up with my grandfather while all the other adults were at Midnight Mass. We would watch old movies until everyone returned, and my mother would prepare coffee and cookies for everyone.

Christmas Day

My mother's siblings would start to arrive around noon, some with families of their own already, but all looking to my mother as the big sister she was and still is to all of them. My mother says she's had a child on her hip since she was six. I guess that's why our house was always the focal point of family.

I remember on even the coldest days, there would be so many people in the house that doors and windows would be opened. How so

many fit in that tiny house is still a mystery to me. It wasn't just the holidays, there were always family there, but on Christmas, everyone was there at the same time.

My mother's youngest sister is only three years older than I am, and my uncle Wayne and I have had a relationship closer to a younger and older brother than an uncle and nephew, that continues to this day.

Family is scattered now all across the states and getting together happens very rarely. All have families of their own and their own traditions and memories are being discovered.

When my brother and I talk on the phone, I remember the little details I shared with him when our own grandchildren were little, as he is now the proud "papa" of two little girls. My sister too is out of state; she and her husband try to connect with their own busy children at Christmas.

We'll still have a nice Christmas with my parents and our oldest son and his daughter and our younger son and his wife and two kids. Mary will still buy too much, clean too much and cook too much. But after all this time I know she's not going to change. Sometimes I'm just a little bit jealous that she looks forward to Christmas as I used to.

Don't misunderstand, I'm not a grinch, I just look forward to it differently.

I look forward to a brisk walk with the dogs early in the morning. The looks on our grandchildren's faces when they open the gifts Mary has found for them. Even the look on Mary's face when she finally sits back and watches. I look at my mom and dad and see how proud they are of this family and I take joy in that.

Once everyone is gone, and we have cleaned up the dishes and the dogs have been out for the last time, I'll pour a glass and watch my beautiful wife dose off on the couch and realize once more I have been given the greatest gift of all.

Merry Christmas! ●

Bob Carney is a student of Irish history and language and teaches the Speak Irish Cleveland class held every Tuesday at PJ McIntyre's. He is also involved in the Irish Wolfhound and Irish dogs organizations in and around Cleveland. Wife Mary and hounds Rian, Aisling and Draoi and terrier Doolin keep the house jumping. He can be reached at carneyspeakirish@gmail.com

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Crafting Heritage: Nicholas Mosse and Jerpoint Abbey

Just outside Kilkenny city in County Kilkenny, lies the town of Bennettsbridge, where we stopped for a visit and lunch at the renowned Nicholas Mosse Pottery.

Karen Relates:

Bennettsbridge's history is rich, with roots reaching back to the arrival of the Normans in the 12th century. This area's fertile lands made it ideal for farming, and its proximity to Kilkenny—a Norman stronghold at the time—added to its importance.

The village's seven-arch stone bridge, first constructed in 1285, became a vital crossing over the River Nore, facilitating trade and travel between Bennettsbridge and Kilkenny. Although the original bridge was destroyed by flooding in the late 1700s, it was soon rebuilt and remains in use today. Now, this picturesque bridge, framed by the lush countryside, is a favorite spot for photographs and quiet



Jerpoint Abbey

reflection.

Farming was Bennettsbridge's economic backbone in medieval times, but over the centuries, it also became a center for traditional crafts. In the 1970s, Nicholas Mosse Pottery established itself here, repurposing an old flour mill right on the riverbank. Inside the building you can learn more about the history of the mill.

Nicholas Mosse

At Nicholas Mosse Pottery, each piece is handmade, using techniques that date back to the 18th century. Watching artisans at work—carefully shaping and painting intricate patterns—helps visitors appreciate the time and skill poured into each creation. The showroom brims with unique pieces, from platters and baking dishes to vases, all crafted with



Jerpoint Abbey ceiling

distinctive designs that reflect the area's artistry and heritage.

A cozy café on the second floor offers visitors a chance to rest and enjoy light fare served directly on Nicholas Mosse pottery. We enjoyed a lunch of sandwiches, vegetable soup, fresh brown bread made from locally sourced flour, scones, and tea while taking in a view that felt like the essence of Ireland itself.

From our table, we gazed out over the River Nore, with the historic Bennettsbridge bridge framed perfectly in the distance. This scene from the window—a winding river, a lush green landscape, and a timeless stone bridge—was one to savor. These moments that slow you down, remind you to take a minute to appreciate the beauty around you.

Shannon Relates: Jerpoint Abbey

Visiting Ireland will put your American perspective of history in check. I suppose visiting a place that is from the 12th century will do that. Thanks to our driver Philip, we got to encounter a place that was not on our original itinerary, but should be on everyone's radar when visiting County Kilkenny.

Founded in the 12th century (around 1180) by Cistercian monks, Jerpoint Abbey was originally established by Donal MacGillpatrick, King of Osraige. The architectural styles within the church, constructed in the



River Nore-Bennettsbridge bridge

late twelfth century, reflect the transition from Romanesque to Gothic architecture. The tower and cloister date to the fifteenth century.

One does not have to be a medieval expert to appreciate the history that is palpable when visiting. The structure is a unique experience of open and closed spaces.

The Abbey itself is surrounded by countryside, leading to a more isolated feeling. There is a peace here.

Perhaps that makes sense, but there is a comforting thought of past monks bustling about with their daily tasks that started with rising at 2am every day and engaging in a strict regime of prayer, meditation and the manual labor.

This is a tough life, but one filled with purpose. A Cistercian monk in England, Ailred of Rievaulx, described the daily experience: "Our food is scanty, our garments rough; our drink is from the stream and our sleep often upon our book."

"Under our tired limbs there is but a hard mat; when sleep is sweetest, we must rise at bell's bidding. Self-will has no place; there is no moment for idleness or dissipation."

Jerpoint Abbey is a treasure trove of art, architecture, and history. Its 15th century cloister arcade stands as the main attraction, featuring a stunning sequence of intricately carved pillars.

These pillars depict a rich array of figures, from knights and





TERRY FROM DERRY

TERRY BOYLE



Storytelling

Part of my role as a hike leader is to impart some knowledge about the animal and plant life of the desert. When it comes to plants, it's quite easy.

Plants don't get up and move around. You can usually count on a plant being in the same place week after week unless something quite dramatic has happened to it.

Animals are different. The chances of seeing wildlife in the desert is almost impossible to

predict.

Most people who take this hike want to see big horn sheep. Those eager for a photo op. scour the desert sands in the hope of seeing a sheep. As a hike leader, you are always on the lookout hoping to satisfy this desire to glimpse one of these elusive animals, especially since you've spent time telling stories about them.

As part of my repertoire, I point to a barrel cactus and tell my fellow hikers that a big horn sheep will eat such a plant. It's hard to imagine that such a prickly plant would be edible.

The spines of the barrel cactus, apart from causing you serious damage should you get pricked by one, are hard and sharp. And, since I'd never seen a big horn sheep actually bite into one of these plants, I had to trust that what I was told by the experts was true. Those who studied the habits of these animals had to know what they were talking about, right?

Cactus

I'd been leading the hike along the Art Smith trail for about two years, and each time, I'd point to the largest barrel cactus I could see and tell my story about the sheep. There were times when we would see what looked like a cactus that had been savaged by something.

The plant was torn open. Was it a big horn sheep? Maybe.

It was difficult for me, and I'm sure it was for the others to imagine that anything could break through those formidable thorny spines and eat the very salty material inside. The experts told me that a big horn sheep could knock over the cactus, spit out the spines and eat that salty material. Again, I was solely reliant on what they had told me until I finally saw it for myself.

We'd finished our hike and were making our descent down the trail when we encountered eight or nine big horn sheep. The excitement in the group was palpable. Cameras were at the ready as we stealthily moved towards them.

Big horn sheep are not skittish, at least not with people. Dogs are a different matter.

As we began taking pictures, my attention was drawn towards two of the sheep. They were savaging a barrel cactus.

You can imagine my delight at finally seeing what others had said to be true. At last, I could, with conviction, tell the story about the big horn sheep and the cactus without the slightest doubt. I now even had video proof to back up my story.

In some ways, this experience served as a bit of a parable for me. I remember writing an article for the newspaper about a famous sociologist who predicted that democracies in the west, since the end of the second world war, were moving towards fascism. The trends, as he saw it, would culminate in a collapse of democracy as we know it.

When I read about his work, I refused to believe it. The optimist in me wanted to believe that such a theory was the work of an alarmist.

Sadly, however, I've come to understand that his ideas have more substance to them than my flimsy idealism. His speculations are more than fearmongering. They are rooted in keen observation of a growing disgruntlement with the limitations of democracy.

It doesn't take a genius to see how this move towards fascism is gaining in traction. In Europe, there are any number of countries where the extreme right is making itself known through racism and white supremacy.

The recent election in this country has proven how far we've moved from the ideals of democracy. When the majority of voters are willing to elect a man who espouses the ideals of a dictator, and who is as trustworthy as a conman, it proves that we're in trouble. Who would ever have thought American citizens would elect to the highest place in government a known felon?

For months, I have written any number of articles that have supported the sociologist's viewpoint that we were moving towards fascism, but in my heart, I didn't want to believe it was true. I, like so many others, wanted

to believe that this country was better than that. I wanted to believe that this country was capable of electing a woman president.

Election Results

I'd hoped that my fellow citizens were tired of the shameless rhetoric of the Orange Man; his lies, and obvious lack of conscience, but I was wrong. The results of the election proved me wrong and proved the sociologist right. His predictions are now a reality.

The American people have voted to end their democratic rights by electing an aspiring dictator. Over the next four years, we will watch this man disassemble the rights of minorities. The same minorities who voted for this nightmare will rue the day when they see their hard-won rights diminishing before their eyes.

Once in power, this man will execute his plan for revenge. His misuse of rule will go unchecked because he will bend the will of the people to his own need for absolute power.

When I finally saw with my own eyes the big horn sheep breaking open and eating the cactus, I was delighted. The experts were right, and my doubts were assuaged. My faith was not founded in theory but fact. The joy I felt then is such a contrast to how I feel about the last election.

We're on the path to realizing the worst of what it is to live under a dictatorship, but as one of my Irish friends said to me, 'perhaps it has to get worse, in order for it to get better.' I think he's right; we have not reached our rock bottom yet. •

Terry is a former professor of literature. Since his retirement from Loyola University, Chicago, Terry has written two books of poetry. He and his husband, Larry, live in the Coachella Valley, California.




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Understanding Genetic Links to Cancer Risk

By **Mita Patel, MD**

Genes are the fundamental building blocks of the human body, shaping not only our appearance, but also our predisposition to certain health conditions. Among these conditions, cancer is notably influenced by genetic factors, making the



study of genetics a crucial aspect of cancer risk assessment and prevention.

Cancer is caused by certain changes to our genes that alter the way our cells function, especially how cells grow and divide within our body. Because of this, family history is extremely important in assessing your risk of developing cancer. Inherited genetic mutations may play a role in as much as 10 percent of all cancer cases, and genetic tests for hereditary cancer syndromes can identify these mutations early to increase your chances of early detection and survival.

In certain cancers – breast, ovarian, pancreatic, colon, etc. – there can be a genetic component. Genetic mutations can significantly increase the likelihood of developing these cancers. Individuals with these genetic changes may qualify for enhanced monitoring and can have their family members tested for the same mutations.

Genetic counseling is conducted by a specialist to assess patients or family members at risk of certain cancers. Following the screening, patients are advised of the nature of the genetic mutations, probability of developing cancer, and screening options. This process can include:

Assessment of family and medical histories to determine the

chance of disease occurrence or recurrence.

Education about inheritance, testing, management, prevention, and resources.

Counseling to establish preventative care and treatment options related to the risk or condition.

Genetic testing and counseling can fill crucial gaps in knowledge, especially for individuals with limited family medical history. It enables individuals to take control of their health by understanding their genetic predispositions and taking preventive measures.

Genetic testing is straightforward, typically involving a saliva or blood sample. For those meeting specific criteria, it is free through Medicare and Medicaid, and costs around \$250 out of pocket for others. No referral is necessary to initiate the process.

The goal of genetic testing is to help patients be informed and take proactive steps. This approach not only informs treatment decisions but can also serve as a preventative measure for family members. By understanding genetic information, individuals can take control of their healthcare and prioritize critical screenings to help in cancer prevention or early detection.

Learn more about Mercy Health's oncology services at www.mercy.com.

Mita S Patel, MD, is a breast surgical oncologist and medical director of the Mercy Health - Breast Program. Dr. Patel treats patients from northeast Ohio at Mercy Health – Sheffield Breast Surgery, Mercy Health – Elyria Breast Surgery and Mercy Health - Oberlin Breast Surgery.

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On This day in Irish history DECEMBER

BY TERRENCE J. KENNEALLY

4 December 1971 - A bomb planted by the Ulster Volunteer Force exploded in the Tramore Bar, commonly known as McGuirk's in Belfast. Fifteen people were killed, all Catholics.

5 December 1640 - John Atherton, Anglican bishop of Waterford and Lismore, was publicly hanged in Dublin for the crime of sodomy. He and his steward, John Childe, were accused of being lovers. Childe was hanged the following year in Cork.

6 December 1922 - The Irish Free State, independent of the United Kingdom, was formally established, a year to the day after the Anglo-Irish Treaty by, among others, Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith.

7 December 1995 - Seamus Heaney accepted the Nobel Prize for literature at a ceremony in Stockholm.

10 December 1998 - John Hume and David Trimble received the Nobel Peace Prize.

19 December 1973 - The Supreme Court of Ireland ruled that a ban on importing or selling contraceptives was unconstitutional.

20 December 1909 - James Joyce established The Volta Theatre, the first regular cinema in Ireland.

22 December 1691 - The Flight of the Wild Geese took place. This was the mass exodus of the Irish Jacobite soldiers- around 12,000- to France after their defeat at the Battle of Aughrim.

27 December 1904 - The Abbey Theatre, which would become the permanent home of the Irish National Theatre Society, opened its doors in Dublin for the first time, with a double bill of Yeats' *On Baile's Strand* and Lady Gregory's *Spreading the News*.

29 December 1937 - The Constitution of Ireland came into force, having been approved by 56.52 percent of voters at a plebiscite on 1 July that year.



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IRISH TRIVIA

BY TERENCE J. KENNEALLY

1. Complete the Irish Proverb, "Live in my heart and pay no _____"
2. The youngest signer of the American Declaration of Independence was 26-year-old Thomas Lynch. His family came from what county in Ireland?
3. The Giant's Causeway is in what county in Ireland?
4. In 1944, Barry Fitzgerald won an Academy Award for his role as a priest in what movie
5. In two words, what does Banshee mean?
6. The Neolithic Passage tomb at Newgrange is in what county?
7. The initials FAI are the abbreviation for what?
8. Clan Na Gael was founded in 1867 in what U.S city
9. If viewing Hook Lighthouse, you would be in what county?
10. How many of the 32 counties have county capitals with the same name?

1. Rent
2. Galway
3. Antrim
4. Going My Way
5. Fairy woman
6. Co. Meath
7. Football Association of Ireland
8. New York
9. Co. Wexford
10. 14 (includes counties with more than one capital town)



Waiting for Inspiration Socks in the Frying Pan 10th Anniversary, New CD

Great music comes to us all year long, but this month's Mailbag is a special gift. Socks in the Frying Pan's new CD, *Waiting for Inspiration*, releases just in time for Christmas, for yourself, or your great-music loving fan.

Socks in the Frying Pan

Unforgettable skill and artistry in music is part of the tradition and legacy of Co. Clare, and of her sons, Shane Hayes, Aodán Coyne and Fiachra Hayes, well-known and well-acclaimed individually, and as Socks in the Frying Pan. The men were born and bloomed there, developing superb skill, interpretation and often hilarious audience engagement. Sharing their music, spiced with laughter and corroboration, on stage and off, is a joy to be a part of, live, or while listening to their music wherever you may roam.

Waiting for Inspiration, the Socks fifth album, is only the latest testament. With eleven new tracks of original tunes, songs, and arrangements, you cannot conceal the gifted skill, passion and dance-inducing performance that trademark Socks in the Frying Pan performances. Released November 15th, ahead of the band's Christmas tour of the U.S. from December 3-12, 2024, you too can check out [Socks in the Frying Pan](#), for Christmas Tour locations and information, and your chance to see them Live.

"I think this is my favorite album yet. We've infused all the energy, explosiveness, and drive that our audience has come to expect from our live shows into original tracks that we are very proud of. As we celebrate a decade together as a band, we dedicate this album to our



friends and fans that have stuck with us along the way - this one's for you and we can't wait to share it on the road this December!" - Shane Hayes.

Socks in the Frying Pan is: Aodán Coyne (guitar and lead vocals), Shane Hayes (accordion, keyboard, guitar and vocals), and Fiachra Hayes (fiddle, banjo, mandolin, guitar, bodhrán and vocals), w/ special guests "The Sockettes" (singers Lee Coyne, Nicole Daly, Willy Anne Wijnja); John Bridge (bass);

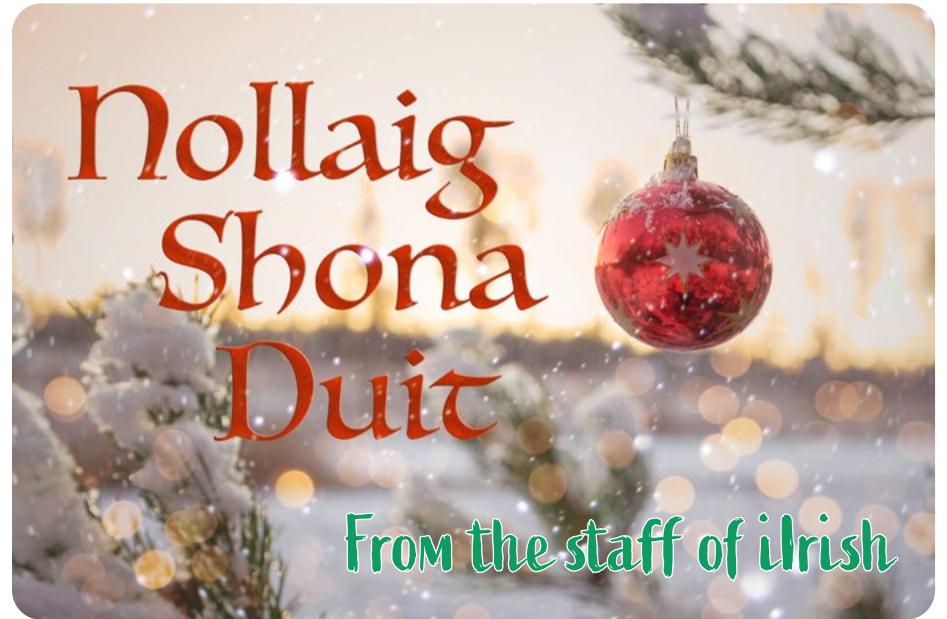
and Mike Shimmin (drums).

The blessings of the season, and of great music, any season, continue to arrive in our mailbag. I am especially grateful for this one. *Waiting for Inspiration* has taken up residence on **the** playlist, a top-shelf selection, and is Highly Recommended as a work of moxie, mastery and listening enjoyment.

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25 Card Game Results

By **Dick Lardie**

A wonderful day was spent playing cards and laughing with friends at the West Side Irish American Club's 25 Tournament. McDonough's Brigade provided a wonderful meal and the bakery brought by the players was fantastic. Our hard-working volunteers Kathleen Mangan, Kathleen Sheehan, Kathy Pettitt, Christine O'Donnell and Mary

Ellen Grealis performed admirably as expected.

Congratulations to the Fall 2024 25 Tournament Champions, Sally Curran and Mary Lowry. They beat out the other finalists, Ed Campbell/Mike Lavelle and John Lackey/Bill Rice/ Our next tournament will be in April 2025. Watch this space and join us for great games, laughs and friendship.

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DR. JEANNE COLLERAN



Listening to Claire Keegan

In September I went to Wexford to listen to Claire Keegan talk about writing. Her subject was “how dialogue works,” and over three mornings she led us – some forty Keegan enthusiasts—through short stories by Flannery O’Connor, Anton Chekhov, Raymond Carver, and John McGahern. Keegan interrogated the texts – and us. However unpretentious and unimposing she seemed --climbing up on a sill to adjust a noisy window, offering her sweater to a participant—Keegan is a fiercely exact reader and uncompromising in her opinions on how and what literature can do, and should do.

Claire Keegan holds a set of aesthetic values that are not universal -- no such thing exists in the world of art or literary criticism anymore – but are exactly suited to her place, time, and subject as an Irish woman in post-romantic, twenty-first century Ireland. If such a description sounds like a limitation, it treads the question of whether what is local can transcend that particularity.

Small Things Like These

As her novel, *Small Things Like These*, continues to win acclaim, its popularity bolstered by the recent film with Cillian Murphy, it pushes us to ask how the enormous atrocity it reveals can be depicted with such restraint. For a slim book, it is an incredible task, and it is one that Claire Keegan meets.

Because Keegan’s book upsets the national self-image, let alone the ecclesiastical one, *Small Things Like These* is very, very important. By interspersing her character’s painful, half-known

past with the willful blindness that his present-day family and friends need to preserve their happiness, Keegan’s novel enacts its harrowing judgment of complicity. Yet even this judgment is sympathetically qualified: can these relatively powerless entrants to barely secure economic circumstances rectify what nearly unassailable institutions have done?

Small Things Like These is a Christmas story. Not far from the convent where young women are malnourished and maltreated, a man simply wants to buy his wife the pair of shoes she admires.

But this is not the *Gift of the Magi*, O’Henry’s tale of how a husband pawns his watch to buy his wife a comb for the beautiful hair she has cut and sold to buy him a watch chain. Nor is it *A Christmas Carol*, where one stone-hearted malefactor can reverse a lifetime of miserliness when he sees the difficulties of a crippled child. Rather, *Small Things Like These* belongs on the shelf next to Joyce’s *The Dead* as a rival achievement in picturing a world of insularity and banter, albeit one where the consequences of obtuseness are infinitely more devastating.

First, a digression. Most every cab driver in Ireland is expectedly loquacious, but none of my drivers talked stout and football. Instead, I heard about why Leo Varadkar really stepped down from the driver whose daughter knew his mother, and what the Northern Irish really think about Brexit, courtesy of a driver’s second cousin.

Most interesting to me as a Galwegian descendent was a discussion of the controversy about what to do with the body of Bishop Eamon Casey, who is interred in a crypt in Saint Nicholas’s Cathedral in Galway. The story of Bishop Casey is infamous from the 1990s: he fathered a child with an American woman, never tried to meet his son, and when he was exposed, resigned his office.

He was permitted to serve as a missionary in Ecuador and at a parish in England. His story re-

emerged in 2006 and 2019, when he was subsequently accused of other sexual abuse, notably by his niece. Sadly, for observant Irish Catholics who once supported Casey’s progressive social agenda, his case deepened despair about their allegiance.

Now the point of my digression concerns our discussion about whether the Diocese of Galway should allow Bishop Casey’s body to remain buried in the Cathedral. I made a simplistic response: “why don’t you just dig him up and put him elsewhere?” “And where would he go?” said the driver, “who would take him?” and then, “Will we dig up every priest and nun who harmed a child?”

That silenced me. Just two months before my visit, barrister Mary O’Toole revealed the results of a government inquiry that identified over two thousand instances of historic abuse across some three hundred Catholic Schools.

In 2021, Catherine Corless published *Belonging: A Memoir of Place, Beginnings and One Woman’s Search for Truth and Justice for the Tuam Babies*. Tuam was the place in Galway where the remains of 796 babies had been discarded in an unused sewage tank, thrown out by the Bon Secours nuns who ran the mothers and babies home, a fact that Keegan cites in the book’s epilogue.

These babies were, as the euphemism went, “born on the other side of the blanket.” Enda Kenny did not mince words: the home was a “chamber of horrors.” How could every child be re-buried, every parent comforted, every dead perpetrator unearthed from holy ground?

“God’s help to those in need,” was the motto of the Bon Secours congregation. God help them, indeed, we might shrug, as some do in Keegan’s story, but not its protagonist, Bill Furlong. He knows his mother suffered and that somehow, he is the cause.

When similar suffering stands before him as he opens the door in the convent, he knows he must make the choice that will define him ever after. The novel ends without

disclosing what cost Bill will pay for his response, but he will pay. He won’t be lifted shoulder high.

Claire Keegan taught that a novel could tell a story of enormous complexity with accessibility and brevity. It can drop the horror of past actions into the living present. It can pass the burden onto one who never personally committed a single wrong. A novel can show how trauma and shame trail the present until the time when it rears itself and makes its demands.

Claire Keegan perplexed our class when she told us to follow where a character’s feet are pointed. What were they walking away from or towards? The body moves to what beckons it, she explained, and consequences follow. The conscience is charged to act. •

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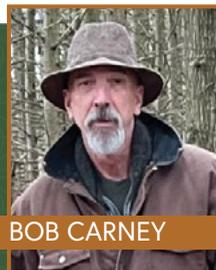
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SPEAK IRISH

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BOB CARNEY

Jean had a granddaughter in Irish dance and wanted to learn Irish and show her support. Her husband Don was not as excited as Jean about being there, but was a good sport about his wife's interest. I liked having Don in the class, he had a quick wit and a great sense of humor.

Scamallach!

In the Speak Irish Cleveland classes, I have certain things that I hope to accomplish in the ten week session when absolute beginners sign up for the class. The goal is to leave the first night with the ability



to use the language immediately in some manner.

We build upon that week after week, so that even if someone only plans on attending one ten week session, they will have a cúpla focal to use in their conversations.

Usually, around the fourth or fifth week, if all is going well, we'll have a class about the weather. We learn how to describe it and to ask what kind of day it was or what it will be.

A few years back, there was a couple that signed up for the class.

Anyway, it was the week after our first class on talking about the weather, when Don approached me before class and said, "Bob, I have learned everything I need to know about the Irish language." "Really?" I replied.

"Yes. I was out with some friends and we were having some drinks. I raised my glass and said, Scamallach! And all my friends said scamallach in return before downing their drinks."

I tried to interrupt, but Don wasn't finished. "Later in the week, I was at the coffee shop, sitting with a group of the guys. We were having a conversation about world events when my friend asked my opinion. I stroked my beard slowly and thoughtfully and answered, scamallach.

They all thought it was something very profound and didn't pursue the matter. So as you see, I don't really need to learn anything else."

Everyday Irish List

Don's use of the language, although totally off track, was the inspiration for my Everyday Irish list that I push in the class, in this column and in the various speaking events that I give. By the way, scamallach (*skom-uh lahk*) is the Irish word for cloudy. Don took a word that he enjoyed saying, remembered it and used it. I hope he's still using it and remembers what it really means.

The words that have comprised the Everyday Irish list haven't changed very much in the six or seven years since I put it together. This month, I'll give you the original list, but also some additions that I hope you will use as well. Hopefully, correctly!

As mentioned before, there is no singular word for yes or no in Irish. When responding to a question, you answer with the appropriate version of the verb that was used in posing the question. But, for our purpose here, using Irish words and phrases in our daily English conversations, I have included sea (*shah*) for yes and ní hea (*nee-hah*) for no.

Everyday Irish

Sea (*shah*) yes

Ní hea (*nee hah*) no

Dia duit (*dee-uh gwit*) hello

Dia's Muire duit (*dee-us morra gwit*) response to hello

Le do thoill (*led hull*) please
Go raibh maith agat (*gorra mah ah-gut*) thank you

Fáilte (*fahl-cha*) welcome
Tá fáilte romhat (*taw fahl-cha roe-it*) you're welcome

Maith thú (*mah who*) good job
Gabh mo leithscéal (*guh muh lesh-shkale*) excuse me

Go maith (*guh mah*) good
An mhaith (*ahn wah*) very good
Maidin mhaith (*moh-jin wah*)

good morning
Oíche mhaith (*ee-ha wah*) good night

Slán (*slawn*) goodbye
Tráthnóna maith (*trah-no-na mah*) good afternoon

Maith go leor (*mah guh lore*) good enough

Ceart go leor (*kyart guh lore*) right enough/ ok

Tá brón orm (*taw brahn or-um*) I'm sorry

An bhfuil sé ceart go leor? (*ahn will shay kyart guh lore*) Is it ok?

Ta sé sin go maith. (*taw shay shin guh mah*) It's good

Is maith liom é (*iss mah leh may*) I like it.

Tuigim (*tig-um*) I understand
Ní thuigim (*nee hig-um*) I don't understand

An dtuigeann tú? (*ahn dig-in too*) Do you understand?

I like to include the previous three examples, they are all based around the root word tuig, which means understand. In the second phrase, we see an example of lenition, a softening of the word caused by the placement of the letter h after the first consonant.

In the third example, we have eclipsis, causing a change to the beginning of the word. Both changes alter the pronunciation of the word.

Tá an ceart agat (*taw ahn kyart ah-gut*) That's right

Níl fhios agam (*neel iss ah-gum*) I don't know.

Conas atá tú? (*kunh-uss ah-taw too*) How are you?

Tá mé go maith. (*taw may guh mah*) I'm good.

Tá an lá go bréa. (*taw ahn law guh brah*) It's a fine day.

Dia linn (*dee-uh lynn*) used as a blessing whe someone sneezes

Cén scéal agat? (*kehn shkale ah-gut*) What's your story? What's up?

Tóg go bog é (*toeg guh bog ay*)



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Take it easy

New Irish Words and Phrases

Cinnté (*kin-ta*) certainly/ sure
Cíúin (*kue-in*) quiet
Bí cíúin (*bee kue-in*) be quiet
Amadán (*amah-dahn*) foolish person

An-álainn (*ahn ah-linn*) very beautiful

Anois (*ah-nesh*) now
Aontaím (*ayne-tame*) I agree
Beagáinín (*bee-gohning*) a little
Ceist (*kesht*) question
Tá ceist agam. (*taw kesht ah-gum*) I have a question

Cén fáth? (*kayne faw*) Why?
Dada (*dah-dah*) nothing
Foghlaim (*faw-lum*) to learn
Inis dom (*inish dum*) tell me
Réidh (*rayd*) ready

Rud éigin (*rud ay-ginn*) something
Tá sé mar atá sé (*taw shay mar*

ah-taw shay) it is what it is

Try to work some of these into your daily conversations. Remember “Is fearr Gaeilge briste, na Béarla cliste.” *“Broken Irish is better than clever English.”* •

Bob Carney is a student of Irish history and language and teaches the Speak Irish Cleveland class held every Tuesday at PJ McIntyre’s. He is also active in the Irish Wolfhound and Irish dogs organizations in and around Cleveland. Wife Mary, hounds Rian, Aisling and Draoi and terrier Doolin keep the house jumping. He can be reached at carneyspeakirish@gmail.com

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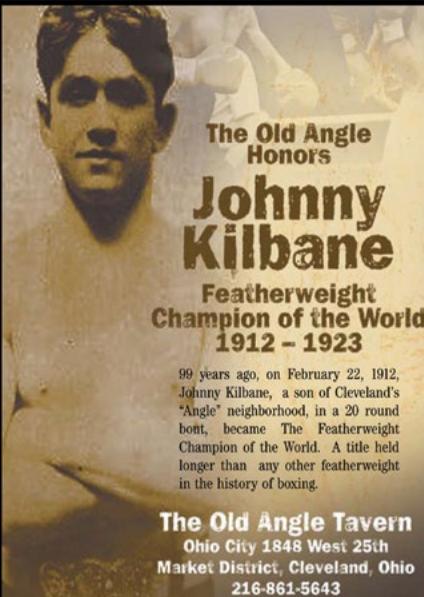
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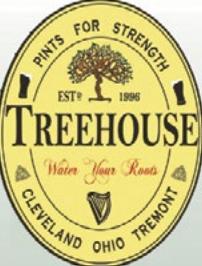
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Peace and Unity in Ireland Lift the “Special Relationship” Veil

“In the 2013 study, FATAL PATH, the attitude of Prime Minister Herbert Asquith and David Lloyd George during the Irish revolutionary decade, [was] much pre-occupied with how the Irish question would impact on their own party and British politics than on Ireland, with Ireland as a pawn in the game of their career advancement. That theme was to endure and there were serious consequences for Ireland as a result.”

“[Churchill] ... also saw the Irish as a people who needed to be managed and dealt with ‘according to the consciences’ and conviction of the English people.”

“Queen Elizabeth II stated at Dublin Castle ‘that it is impossible to ignore the weight of History ... with the benefit of historical hindsight we can all see things which we would wish had been done differently or not at all.’”

“...given the record of British imperialism in Ireland and other colonies, Britain’s romantic and selective historical view of itself was manifest in numerous other dishonest declarations during the Brexit campaign, including the Conservative MP Liam Fox’s risible assertion that ‘the UK is one of the few countries in the EU that does not need to bury it’s 20th century history.’”

“Despite the contemporary stridency and the willful ignorance displayed by some senior British figures in relation to the border in Ireland, Anglo-Irish relations need to be repaired and managed carefully to avoid what Irish diplomat Hugh McCann depicted as the momentum of disorder.”

Diarmaid Ferriter, *The weight of Anglo-Irish history—much more than an external affair.*”

Britain & Ireland: Lives Entwined

The historian Ferriter highlights distinctions worth noting during Anglo-Irish relations. The referenced Mr. Fox, a former Minister of Defense is particularly noteworthy because his was the responsibility for securing and burying the truth about British lawlessness in the Irish conflict. The Irish Parliament or Dail has sought for decades to secure British records regarding the 1974 no-warning bombing of Dublin and Monaghan towns just two years after the murder of 13 protestors on the streets of Derry. The only purpose of the attack was to kill as many people as possible. They succeeded. 34 civilians: shoppers, children, tourists - died. The British, to this day, fail to cooperate in any investigation or acknowledge liability. This was not unexpected. The bombs were crafted by MI-5 and the Army and delivered by loyalist lackeys. This ‘act of war’ by the British was as much about intimidating the Irish government lest they forget the lessons British soldiers taught 13 citizens on Bloody Sunday in 1972, as it was about the deep-state effort to destabilize NI, thus preserve Conservative Prime Minister Heath’s reign and to undermine British Labor leader Wilson, who dared to speak of ending Ireland’s partition.

The current Labor government seeks to continue the cover-up of 1,000 killings with the Northern Ireland Legacy (2023) and the SPYCOP (2021) laws. They will likely never release the full KENOVA report involving the murder, rape, and torture by British spies of an estimated 250 Irish citizens/British Subjects in NI.

Recently, the Conservative newspaper, the TELEGRAPH, editorialized, “our national security relies heavily on the protection afforded by our ‘special [US] relationship.’” This phrase has long been considered a reference to enjoying special favors from America for cooperating in conflicts. It is increasingly clear that this phrase likely also refers to securing American silence over Britain’s decades of discrimination, violence, lawlessness, and State sanctioned killings in Northern Ireland. It is time we lift that veil of silence and cover-up. Let the U. S. show the world what transparency about the conflict really means. America is the only country able to motivate Britain to restore the rule of law and, accordingly, act with justice.

If you think the Irish people have had quite enough of British deception and ‘democracy,’ please contact Rep. Richard E. Neal (MA) & Mike Kelly (PA), Co-Chair, Friends of Ireland Caucus, U. S. Congress, & Ireland’s Future: contact@irelandsfuture.com

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THE FITNESS DOCTOR

DR. FREDERICK PETERS

Five Minutes of Exercise Could Help Lower Blood Pressure

Just five minutes of vigorous exercise per day might help lower blood pressure; a new study suggests.

An analysis of data from nearly 15,000 people revealed that running, biking, climbing stairs or brisk walking for just those few minutes can have a positive effect on blood pressure. Increasing activity up to 20 minutes can reduce the risk of heart disease by a significant amount, according to the report published in *Circulation*.

Exercise is the most important factor favorably associated with blood pressure. People with high blood pressure have a higher risk for heart disease and stroke, the leading causes of death in the U.S. In 2022, high blood pressure was a primary or contributing cause of 685,875 deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Nearly half of all Americans have high blood pressure, which is defined as a systolic blood pressure (the upper number) of greater than 130 or a diastolic blood pressure (the lower number) greater than 80.

Adults should get 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week, most guidelines recommend.

To look at how much of an effect exercise might have on blood pressure, researchers combined

data from six earlier studies that required participants to wear movement trackers on their thighs 24 hours a day. The 14,761 participants had an average age of 54 and were almost evenly divided between male and female (53% women).

On average, participants spent seven hours a day sleeping, 10 hours in sedentary behaviors such as sitting, three hours standing, one hour slow-walking, one hour fast-walking and 16 minutes in vigorous exercise.

The researchers found that replacing any less active behavior with five minutes of exercise could lower systolic blood pressure by 0.68 points and diastolic blood pressure by 0.54 points. When exercise time was 15 minutes longer, the reduction was bigger.

Lower Blood Pressure

An estimated two-point improvement in systolic blood pressure was observed when 20 minutes of vigorous exercise replaced, for example, 21 minutes of sedentary time or 26 minutes of slow-walking. Previous research found that a decrease of two points in systolic blood pressure could result in a 7% to 10% reduction in heart disease and stroke death, the researchers note.

The new study adds more evidence supporting the idea that even a small amount of movement can have a meaningful effect on cardiovascular health. The idea of vigorous exercise can be daunting to some people. This study tells us that a starting point of five to 10 minutes a day can help!

One common excuse that I hear often is "I'm too busy." This study validates the premise that the health benefits of physical activity can be achieved in just a few minutes!

Dr. Peters is the founder of a personal training company called "The Fitness Doctor" (www.thefitnessdoctors.com). He can be reached at fred@thefitnessdoctors.com.

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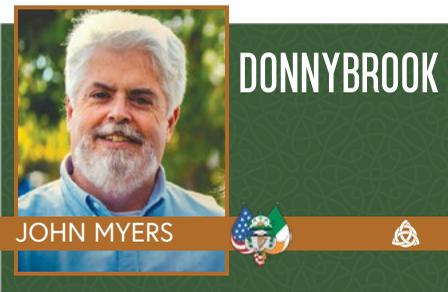
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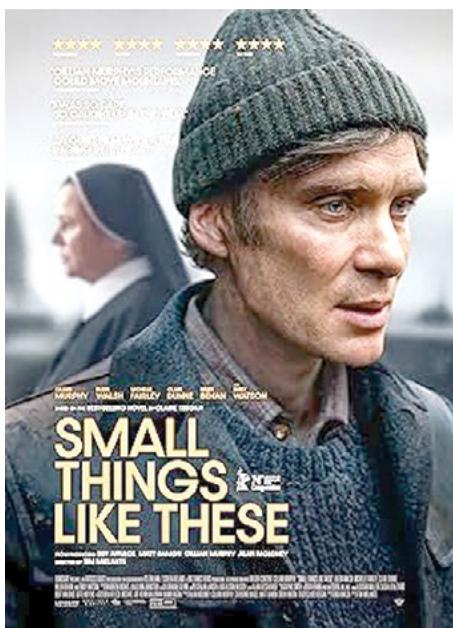
Big and Little Things

The last thing I really wanted to do was watch some Hollywood movie on the failings of the Catholic Church, especially in Ireland. The Church disgraces of recent times are a miserable and depressing chronicle.



I impulsively thought the release last month of *“Small Things Like These”* was just another opportunity for those on the squishy left and those on the Christian Nationalist right to join in on Catholic bashing, one of the few prejudices seemingly still sanctioned by both the far right and the far left. However, when I focused to remember that this film was based upon Ireland’s Claire Keegan’s book of the same name.

Keegan, the recipient of the *Irish Book Awards Author of the Year Award* (2023), and the writer for the basis of the beautiful movie, *“The Quiet Girl”* (nominated



for Academy Award for Best International Film 2023) as well as several other well received novellas, had me thinking of taking a look at this movie. And then to see that the film was produced by and starred the ever-watchable Cillian Murphy (*“Oppenheimer,” “Wind that Shakes the Barley,” “Dunkirk,” “Peaky Blinders. ...”*), I concluded it was worth checking out.

In addition to his acting skills, I still chuckle at the time Cillian was introduced to Prince Harry, who said to Murphy: “Your English. Murphy answered, no Irish. Harry kept pushing, and said Oh you mean British. Murphy said, “No, I am Irish, a big difference.”

Regardless, I am glad I did go to see the movie and I would

encourage you to give it a go. The cinematography is excellent, the acting is great, and the themes are universal.

Murphy plays coal man Bill Furlong, from New Ross, County Wexford (home of the JFK Kennedy Clan) and the site of one of the Magdalene laundries; brutal workhouses for young women who found themselves pregnant without the benefit of marriage. The newborns were taken from the young mothers and put up for adoption in Ireland and the U.S.A.

One of the lines, “Sometimes you have to ignore things to get ahead” sort of sums up the age-old, universal human quandary of choosing to speak out against injustice or to keep quiet to “get ahead.” The book and the film are less about bashing Church clergy, but rather, turning it around to our own, individual choices and how we respond to injustice put before one.

It hit home with me, as I was living in Ireland around the time this film was set. How did we not see any of this? As we enter uncertain times in our own beloved U.S. of A., I hope we will follow the lead of Bill Furlong, searching our own souls and choosing what is right and just.

Snap Election

One of my favorite local piano players was Tommy “Eighty-Eight” Stanton. Eighty-Eight was brilliant at working all 88 keys found on the piano, later in life a regular entertainer at Ferris’ Steak House.

88 will be the new magic number of seats, the majority threshold to control the new 34th Dáil. Taoiseach Simon Harris (Fine Gael) travelled

to Aras an Uachtaráin (translates to “House of the President”), the Irish “Whitehouse,” shortly after the American election.

The House was built in 1751 in the middle of Dublin’s Phoenix Park and became the official residence in 1938. (A side note for visitors to Dublin: tours are available most Saturday’s). The Taoiseach asked President Michael Higgins to dissolve the 33rd Dáil Eireánn (Irish Parliament) and called for a very quick or “snap” three-week election, with Polling Day set for Friday, November 29th, 2024. (This writing is prior to that date, so results will be in before this publication).

The new Dáil will have an increase in constituencies from 39 to 43, with an increase of 14 seats, from 160 to 174 seats, again with 88 being the goal of all parties. However, it is very unlikely any one party will win 88 seats.

Look to see Ireland to return to coalition government, a situation present for a couple of decades now. After the exact number of seats won by the parties is determined on November 29th, the real jockeying will take place as the parties haggle to form a coalition to get to the magic 88 votes.

Look for the unholy alliance of Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil to continue. While historic enemies, both have joined together to stop Sinn Féin party from entering government.

After historic gains to become the largest party in the Dáil, Sinn Féin stalled its forward progress in the last General Election and the last local elections. The pressure is on Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald to deliver enough seats to

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Sinn Féin Tested

After over 100 years of Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael or some combination of the two controlling the government of Ireland, it is a good opportunity to try something new. This will be the thrust of Sinn Féin's outreach to the voters in Ireland. With a severe housing crisis and a health care system failing to meet the nation's expectations, the opportunity is ripe to push Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael off their "Confidence and Supply Agreement" and their doubling down on the same failed policies that lead to the current crisis.'

And it is a great opportunity to advance the cause of a United Ireland. The current governing parties have been derelict in their duty to the Nation and have pathetically failed to even begin to lay a foundation for Unity. Time for a change. Time will tell.

SF President McDonald stated: "If Sinn Féin wins, you win, your family will win, your future will win. In this election, there is a clear choice. After a century of Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil it is now time to make that change, to give Sinn Féin the chance to lead and deliver.

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MEGAN LARDIE

kids CRAIC

Santa Claus is Coming to Town!

A long time ago, there was a kind man named Saint Nicholas. He lived in a place called Myra, which is now part of Turkey. Saint Nicholas was known for helping people, especially children and the poor. He would secretly give gifts to those in need, and many stories were told about his generosity.

One famous story is about how he helped three poor sisters. They didn't have enough money to get married, so Saint Nicholas secretly dropped bags of gold into their stockings, which were hanging by the fireplace to dry. This is why we hang stockings by the fireplace today!

As time went on, the stories of Saint Nicholas spread to different countries. In the Netherlands, he was called Sinterklaas. When Dutch people moved to America, they brought the stories of Sinterklaas with them. Over time, Sinterklaas became known as Santa Claus.

In the 1800s, a poem called, "A Visit from Saint Nicholas," was written by Clement Clarke Moore. This poem is also known as "Twas the Night Before Christmas." It described Santa Claus as a jolly man with a big belly, a white beard, and a red suit. He rode in a sleigh pulled

by eight reindeer and delivered presents to children on Christmas Eve.

An artist named Thomas Nast drew pictures of Santa Claus based on this poem. He

added details like Santa's

workshop at the North Pole and his elves who help make toys. These pictures helped create the image of Santa Claus that we know today.

So, every Christmas, Santa Claus travels around the world in his sleigh, delivering gifts

to children who have been good. He brings joy and happiness to everyone, just like Saint Nicholas did many years ago.

Irish Traditions

In Ireland, Santa Claus is known as **Daidí na Nollag**, which means "Father Christmas" in Irish. The history of Santa Claus in Ireland is a blend of local traditions and the broader story of Saint Nicholas.

In Ireland, Santa Claus, often called "Santy" by children, brings presents on Christmas Eve. Children leave out mince pies and a glass of milk or sometimes even a pint of Guinness for Santa, along with a carrot for his reindeer!



kids in the kitchen



Strawberry Santas

Ingredients:

Fresh strawberries
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Cut the strawberries near where you removed the stems, so they stand up on a plate. Slice the tip off each strawberry to make Santa's hat.

Add cool whip into a plastic bag and cut off tip to make a DIY piping bag.

Add cool whip on top of strawberry base for the face. Set the strawberry hat on top. Add a dot of whipped cream, using a toothpick, for the hat pom pom.

Pipe cool whip on top of strawberry base for the face. Set the strawberry hat on top.

Add 2 more dots for the buttons on Santa's coat. Place 2 sprinkles for the eyes.

Serve and enjoy these super cute strawberry Santas!

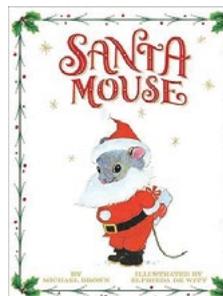
LITERATURE CORNER

Santa Mouse By Michael Brown

A kindhearted mouse becomes Santa's littlest helper in this heartfelt, joyful story that's a true Christmas classic.

Sometimes giving is the best gift of all. In this charming holiday story, meet a tiny mouse with no name who is blessed with a large imagination and a generous spirit.

He lives a very lonely life in a very big house. Yet he dearly loves Christmas and one Christmas Eve he surprises Santa Claus with a most unusual present.





A LEGAL LOOK

JUDGE MICHAEL MENDEL



The 2025 Irish Budget and Irish Unity Planning for the Inevitable Cannot Be Ignored

The prospect of Irish unification no longer lingers in the ether of aspiration. It has moved to the ambit of reality and must be addressed accordingly. Polling on the unification question bears this out.

In late March of this year, the European Movement Ireland (EMI), an organization operating in conjunction with the Irish Government and the European Union (EU), conducted a comprehensive poll throughout Ireland that included questions on Irish unification.

In the north, EMI's polling found that 47% of northern citizens felt that a united Ireland will happen, while 43% felt that unification will not occur. Ten percent of those surveyed did not have an opinion.

In the south, 55% felt that a united Ireland would not occur within the next ten years, while the remainder felt it would occur. The poll revealed that 28% of citizens in the north trust the EU as a governing body, 24% expressed trust in the Irish Government as a governing body, while only 8% trusted the British Government and the Northern Ireland Executive, respectively.

Irish Unity

The results of the EMI poll are not surprising. Dr. Brendan O'Leary, Political Science Professor

at the University of Pennsylvania, speaking at the Irish Unity Summit in New York earlier this year, opined that political support for unification is growing albeit such support would not exist today. To grow support planning and preparation is required.

Former Taoiseach and signatory to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, Bertie Ahern, speaking in Dublin earlier this year, stated that unification under the Good Friday Agreement is "the most desirable outcome for people and communities across Ireland." He added that, "[i]t is not a short-term goal. All of those who believe in change must be committed to putting in the hard yards to build a prospectus that reaches across traditional divides and demonstrates to our unionist [neighbors] that they will be respected, their traditions will be cherished [sic] and their children will be at home in the new Ireland we build together."

Declan Kearney, Sinn Féin MLA, and Chair of the Commission on the Future of Ireland, stated that, "the transition towards constitutional change and a new national, democratic, framework of governance in Ireland needs to be carefully planned and resourced ... We can do this together. But we need to prepare and plan."

As with any substantive

planning process, a budget must be established to make it functional. This is also true with unification. Without a budget, it becomes problematic to conduct the necessary planning in preparation for the reality that is on the horizon.

Taoiseach Simon Harris, leader of the Fine Gael party, stated earlier this year that Irish unification is not a priority. In his first interview as Fine Gael leader, Taoiseach Harris was clear that unification of Ireland is "a legitimate aspiration" however, it is not a priority he will seek as Taoiseach. "That's not where my focus and priority is right now and quite frankly, it's not where I believe our focus and priority should be ... The Good Friday Agreement provides that framework. You can [recognize] different political aspirations and a clear pathway for those to be achieved."

Unsurprisingly, when the final 2025 budget was released by the coalition Government in early October, no line item was included for anticipatory planning on Irish unification. Not so, however, in Sinn Féin's proposed 2025 budget. Included in Sinn Féin's proposal are line items directed specifically towards planning for Irish unification.

Sinn Féin declared that "[w]e need to expand and deepen the level of research on all areas related to Irish

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14th – Speak Irish Cleveland new 10-week session begins (see ad within for more).

16th – West Side Irish American Club (WSIA) Monthly Meeting\

20th – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

29th – LEAP year. February issue of ilrish hits the streets



Unity. For this reason, Sinn Féin would allocate an additional €8 million [euro] in [the 2025 budget].”

Also included in its proposed budget is a €3 million euro line item for establishment of Citizen’s Assemblies across Ireland to provide citizen input on relevant constitutional changes. Sinn Féin also proposes capital budgeting for cross-border projects and the establishment of a joint Oireachtas committee to evaluate recommendations on unification.

In April of this year, a contested report was published by the Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA) asserting that unification would cost the Irish Government €20 billion euro a year for twenty years.

The report was authored by Professor Edgar Morgenroth of Dublin City University and Professor John FitzGerald of Trinity College, Dublin. FitzGerald is the son of the late Taoiseach and Fine Gael leader, Garret FitzGerald.

The two Professors assert that unification costs, after losing British subsidies and factoring in other budgetary issues, would reach nearly €11 billion euro a year, and increase to €20.5 billion euro a year if pensions and public service pay were paired with those currently in force in the South.

They also assert that these costs could be cut if the north would immediately institute reforms in its educational system. The Professors contend however, that with immediate reforms it would take twenty years before reductions would be felt.

Rejecting the conclusions of the IIEA report, John Doyle of Dublin City University and Dr. Brendan O’Leary of the University of Pennsylvania found that the unification costs asserted in the report are “overblown.” Professors Doyle and O’Leary determined that the IIEA report had overestimated the costs of unification and

underestimated the gains achieved financially from Irish unification.

One example that Professor Doyle and Professor O’Leary point out in their critique of the IIEA report is that it incorrectly attributes British pension costs to the Irish Government. According to Doyle and O’Leary, if pensions accrue to citizens of the north before unification takes place, it is the responsibility of the British Government, not the Irish Government, to pay these pre-unification pension accruals.

“Doomsters should be free to dislike the prospect of a united Ireland, but, on current evidence, they are not right to suggest it is likely to lead to the mutual ruin of the North and South,” the two Professors said.

The reality of a unified Ireland cannot be obfuscated. The Dáil Éireann and the Seanad Éireann should consider amending the 2025 budget to include Sinn Féin’s budget proposals for Irish unification. Ignoring the inevitable does not preclude it from arriving.

Irish unification will arrive. Planning for it must begin now. •

Judge Michael C. Mentel is an appellate court judge on the Ohio Court of Appeals for the Tenth District. Notably, he participated in the round table discussion on the British Government’s then proposed Legacy Bill at the National Committee on American Foreign Policy in New York City. He has also presented at the New York City Bar Association on the 1981 hunger strike. Judge Mentel is an author and a columnist with iIrish newsmagazine. He also contributes to other publications addressing contemporary legal and political issues in Ireland.

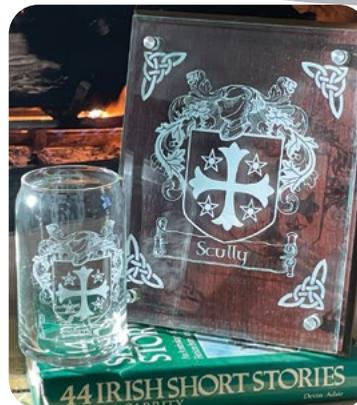
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Turning 65 - Don't Answer the Phone - "It's Fraud!"

By **Timothy F. Gibbons, M.Sc.**

Writing any type of advice for the baby boomer generation is like trying to explain the cure for stubbornness, or how to fly without buying an airline ticket. But this quick update is intended just to remind you that in the new digital world, in which you were the "Beta Boomers" who tested those little green screens, and every application created, on every kind of mobile phone and early software edition of a portable laptop, which now explains your intractably aching shoulders and cramping fingers, can hurt you, no matter your past experience.

The new game in town is how to rob the elderly, without passing through the exclusive posh gates at the front of your complex. No posh gates, or "Bob to open the front door," then keep reading, as the global criminal crowd is taking to the internet and to your phone, to pick your pockets and drain your bank accounts.

Robbery is a crime, but if you just take one step forward and *Don't Answer the Phone*, you can largely avoid the new fraud and the criminal endeavors. How? By understanding that the new crime wave is operating in your very own hands, through those high-tech mobiles that we all seem to be looking at way too much every day and reacting accordingly.

Malware

Honey, let it Roll Over is the new suggestion you can whisper into your sweetie's ear, or repeat to yourself in front of the mirror every morning 10 times, while brushing your teeth. Your phone is a digital platform that the global criminal gangs have access to, due to the various hacks, or Notifications of Data Breach letters that you receive weekly.

Most of you still reading this even fail to notice that all of your "personal data" is out there, circulating around the world, thanks to AT&T, UnitedHealth Care, Frontier, Facebook, X, eBay, Snowflake, Cricket, CrowdStrike,

and other internet businesses who have failed to invest in firewall or digital hardware to protect you from the malware and other bad digital bits infecting your phone every second.

Without legislative digital protection of your data here in the USA, your banking, your medical records, the pictures or links you just received and don't recognize, all these open the front door to your wallet or bank account in a split second. Do not tap on that screen like an unsuspecting sheep being herded by your phone. The digital criminal knows how Seniors (Yes, that is you still reading this if you are over 65!) are sitting there with that mobile phone wide open and ready to ring! Don't Answer the Phone, let it roll over!

American Seniors represent one of the wealthiest groups of people in the world, so the USA is a global favorite with criminals seeking to rob you of every penny they can! Think about all those cards in your pocket - Medicare, Car Insurance, Visa, Mastercard, AMEX, Driver's License, Social Security, Billy Bob Discount Barn, Gas, My Health, My Kids, My Frequent Flyer, My Front Door, Museums, and more ... all of them loaded with personal data and digital access points.

If taken together, for example, if you get your pocket picked or lose your wallet, these cards are a vast and detailed list of access points to your accounts that can be scammed, skimmed, and scanned. Protect yourself and protect those hard-earned cards!

So, before you take an incoming call, know who is calling you; certainly, it is not one of the dear friends listed above. When you don't recognize the number, don't answer the phone, let it roll over to voicemail. Whoever is calling with legitimate business will leave you a full and complete message that you can respond to, once you recognize who, what, where, when, and why they are calling you.

Here is the advice from [Experian*](#), the folks who track your

credit scores better than anyone are saying: "Many of the current scams targeting seniors fall under the broad "impersonator" scam category, where the scammer pretends to be someone to gain your trust or scare you into complying.

The Grandparent Scam

The grandparent scam happens when a scammer reaches out to someone and pretends to be their grandchild. The scammer will often make up a distressful situation - such as being stuck in jail, or behind on an important bill, and ask for financial assistance.

They might ask you to send money immediately using a wire transfer, or to buy gift cards and read off the card's information. To avoid raising suspicions from other family members, the scammer might ask you to keep everything a secret.

But the safest option is to verify the situation by calling a family member who knows where your grandkid is right now. You could also ask the caller a few questions that only your actual grandchild would know how to answer.

Medicare Scams

Medicare scams involve scamming Medicare beneficiaries by claiming to be a Medicare representative and asking for personal and medical information. The scammer might tell you that you need a new Medicare card or offer you discounted additional coverage. But they'll then use or sell your personal and medical information for identity theft and medical identity theft.

Alternatively, some Medicare scams advertise free or low-cost services or equipment to seniors. But the scammers deliver shoddy services or equipment and then bill Medicare for the full amount.

Online Romance Scams

Romance scams occur when someone builds a romantic or platonic relationship with you and then

[If needed, break here and add, "To read more scams aimed at

seniors, go to [iirish.us](#)], or just continue if room].

starts asking you for money. The scammers might create complete social media profiles and have sophisticated backstories for their fake identities. Also, while dating sites are a common starting point, some scammers will approach you on social media or through online games.

The FTC reports that people lost \$1.3 billion to romance scams in 2021 alone, more than in any other FTC fraud category. People of all ages fall victim to romance scams, but median losses for victims who are over 70 were \$9,000—that's compared with \$750 for those ages 18 to 29.

It may be a long con, with someone taking weeks or months getting to know you before asking for anything. Once they do, the scammers may ask you to invest in a business proposition or send them money.

Employment and Money Mule Scams

Seniors who want to stay active and earn money may be looking for a new job, and scammers can target this group in several ways. You may come across promises for easy work-from-home jobs and be told all you need to do is pay for training - you'll pay, but there isn't a real job available. Or, you might be asked for your personal information, which will then be used for illegal purposes.

Criminals will also look to recruit "money mules" through job ads and romance scams. As a money mule, you'll be asked to deposit funds into your bank account and transfer money to someone else. It may be legitimate in the sense that you'll be paid for the work. Though you may be laundering criminals' funds, and you could be personally liable even if you aren't aware that you're doing something illegal.

Online Shopping Scams

Scammers set up websites that seem like legitimate storefronts but only exist to collect your payment information or [sell you](#)



stolen goods. These sites can look surprisingly real, and you may come across them on social media or in websites' comments sections.

The FTC highlighted online shopping scams as the most frequent type of fraud that targets older adults in its annual report to Congress on protecting older adults for 2021. In some cases, these reports were for websites that sold them masks or other limited-supply items during the pandemic and then never delivered the products. You can look for red flags on websites you visit, such as surprisingly low prices and spelling errors.

Phone Scams

There are different types of phone scams targeting seniors, including robocalls that offer free medical supplements, devices or discounts. But if you respond, you may be tricked or pressured into sharing your address, personal information and a credit card account number. The scammers can then use these stolen credentials to commit credit card fraud.

Many other scams also start with a phone call, such as IRS imposter scams - when the scammer calls and claims that you owe taxes and could be sent to jail if you don't pay them right away. However, the IRS will never initiate contact by phone and won't ask for unusual payment methods, such as gift cards.

Home Repair Scams

Older adults may be more likely to own homes and be at home throughout the day, and scammers will knock on doors or make calls to offer home repair services. You might also be targeted if you live somewhere that was recently hit by a natural disaster. Or, the scammer might be selling home improvements, such as energy-efficient upgrades or solar panels that claim to save you money over time.

After accepting an initial deposit, the scammer may disappear or do subpar work that could lead to more trouble than help. Some scammers even try to get victims to apply for financing to cover the cost of the job.

Tech Support Scams

Tech support scams often

start with a popup or online advertisement warning you that your device is infected or vulnerable. You may be prompted to install an update or new software, which turns out to be malicious software that can take over your device or steal your information.

In a different twist, you might be prompted to call tech support for help - but the tech support person could trick you into giving them control of your computer. Or they may tell you that you need to pay for additional protection, support or an upgrade.

Sweepstakes and Lottery Scams

You might get a call, email, text or letter telling you that you've won a prize or can enter into a sweepstake - but it's all made up. The scammers will often tell you that you need to pay upfront, perhaps to buy sweepstake tickets or to cover a processing fee. They'll keep the payment, and you won't get anything in return. Additionally, they may also ask for your personal information, which they can then steal and use.

Charity Scams

A charity scam is when scammers persuade victims to send money to a fake charitable cause. They might pressure you to act quickly, and sometimes use a current event as a reason for why you need to send money right now.

But before giving money away, you can research charities on sites like Charity Navigator and CharityWatch. If you want to donate, visit the official website or call the organization using the information from search results.

Basic Steps to Avoid Senior Scams

While scammers often use different premises and tactics when targeting victims, a few basic practices can help keep you safe. Share these with friends and family members as well, as they can help protect people of all ages:

Be Wary of Anything that Seems too Good

A high-paying job that you can do from home, free medical care or a wealthy love interest can all seem great but if it feels like you just won the jackpot, you may want to step

back and reevaluate the situation. You can also always ask friends and family members for their opinions.

Watch Out for Incoming Communications

Scammers can make phone calls and emails that look like they're coming from legitimate companies and government organizations. But it's often best to ignore people that contact you, or, at a minimum, avoid sharing private information. Looking up the organization's contact information and initiating the exchange yourself is a safer option.

Add extra security to your accounts. Many online accounts let you turn on multifactor authentication. You may then need to enter a code that's sent to your phone or email, or that you generate with an app, before accessing your account. Enabling this extra security measure can keep scammers out of your accounts even if they get hold of your username and password.

Avoid odd payment types. Scammers will often ask you to send them money with a wire transfer, money order, cryptocurrency, payment app, or gift card. These can all be red flags that you're talking to a criminal.

If a scammer tricks you into sharing information or handing over money, you can report the fraud to the FTC on ReportFraud.ftc.gov. Depending on what happened, you may also want to file a police report or get a personalized recovery plan from the FTC using IdentityTheft.gov.*

In conclusion, Don't Answer the Phone; Let it roll over!

Timothy F. Gibbons, M.Sc. is a retired Healthcare Executive and Digital Dummy.

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ILLUMINATIONS

J. MICHAEL FINN



The Floating Prisons of Bermuda

*“The various horrors of these hulks to tell,
These Prison Ships where pain and horror dwell,
Where death in tenfold vengeance holds his reign,
And injur’d ghosts, yet unaveng’d, complain;”*

–Philip Morin Freneau

In England in 1823, prisons were overcrowded, and reformers and administrators were experimenting with new forms of punishment.

With the loss of the American colonies after the American Revolution, Britain looked elsewhere to send convicts, most notably Australia. By

1822, the Home Secretary, Robert Peel, suggested combining hard

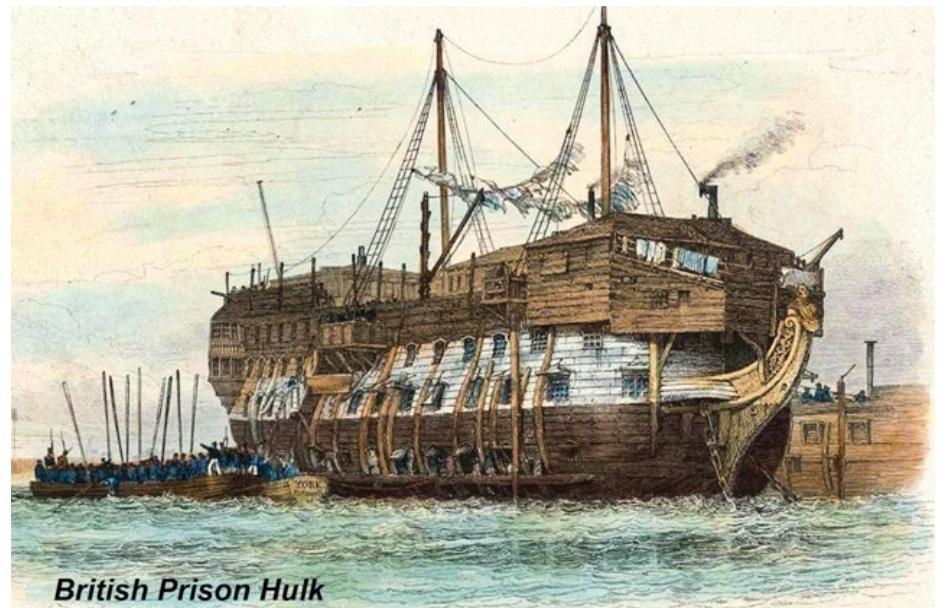
labor with the punishment known as transportation.

An Act was passed by the British Parliament, authorizing the transport of convicts to any of the British colonies, for the purpose of being utilized as laborers on any public works for the improvement of such colonies. The Act was passed on July 4, 1823, and formally entitled “An Act for Authorizing the Employment at Labor, in the Colonies, of Male Convicts under Sentence of Transportation.”

As a result of the “Male Convicts Act,” Bermuda became a British convict destination for the first time in 1824, principally for the purpose of building its Royal Naval Dockyard and naval engineering works.

After the Napoleonic Wars and War of 1812, the British Colony of Bermuda was given the status of an Imperial Fortress. To secure the Royal Navy’s strategic control of the Western North Atlantic, the British government invested heavily in a soundly defended naval base and dockyard at Bermuda, where squadrons could dock for repairs and supplies.

On January 5, 1824, the *HMS Antelope* set sail from Spithead, England, carrying a human cargo of convicts. Three hundred British and Irish men, selected for their youth and strength, were sent from England to Bermuda. The *Antelope* arrived in Bermuda on February 8 and the first convicts were put to work.



British Prison Hulk

Far from home, they were to provide the labor for one of the largest public works projects in Bermuda. Over the next 40 years, convicts quarried stone and constructed various structures including housing, ordnance depots, naval storehouses, workshops, administrative buildings, roads, and wharves.

The island was suffering from a labor shortage due to a yellow fever epidemic in 1818 and 1819. The convicts brought in from England to serve as manual laborers included many Irishmen, especially participants in the Young Ireland Rebellion of 1848.

John Mitchel

Notable among the Young Ireland convicts was journalist and

nationalist politician John Mitchel. As you might expect conditions for the convicts were terrible and discipline was most often applied by flogging.

When the first 300 men arrived in Bermuda, there were no barracks or prisons on the island large enough to house them. Instead, the *Antelope* was converted into a floating prison, commonly known as a hulk.

Cannons and guns were removed from the hulks, mess halls and sleeping quarters were built below decks, and often a roof covered the top deck. In addition, the masts were often removed. Moored close to the Dockyard on Ireland Island, it held around 230 convicts.

As the number of prisoners grew over the next forty years, the *Antelope* was joined by seven other decommissioned hulks. The prisoners were rowed to shore to work. They wore straw hats and white uniforms. Their prisoner numbers and the name of their assigned hulk were stamped on the fabric.

As you might expect, working in Bermuda was different from home; the sub-tropical climate, with its mild winters and warm summers, and hurricanes, were a stark contrast to England and Ireland. Sunstroke was a very common ailment.

Moon Blind

Working in the quarries, reflected glare from the white stone and sunlight made some men “moon blind.” A hospital ship was provided. Prisoners who died at the “hospital” often had their bodies sold to medical

17 YEARS

WRITING FOR



1822, the Home Secretary, Robert Peel, suggested combining hard

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schools for dissection.

Disciplinary action was carried out for offences such as drunkenness, refusing to work or gambling. Punishments included having rations reduced, being put into solitary confinement, or losing a pardon for release.

For more serious offences, such as attempting escape by stealing small boats or attempting to bribe their passage on a passing ship, men were often flogged. Tropical diseases were common among the prisoners, particularly malaria and tuberculosis.

During the famine years, a huge influx of Irish convicts were sent to the Island. During the years of the Great Hunger, thousands of men, women, and children, many driven to crime by poverty, were sentenced to be transported overseas.

For some Irish male convicts, their destination was Bermuda. Most crimes involved petty theft, with people stealing food or livestock to survive.

Vagrancy Act

The introduction of the Vagrancy Act in 1847 criminalized homelessness, meaning that many who had been evicted from

Prison Hulks at Grassy Bay, Bermuda



their homes became new targets of transportation. Many Irish arrivals already half-starved before transportation suffered from scurvy. Many did not survive the voyage.

In total, around 9,000 convicts were sent to Bermuda over the 40-year period from 1824 until 1864. In Sandy's Parish, across the road from the Naval Cemetery, is a quiet graveyard. Here, only nine gravestones represent approximately 2,000 convicts who are believed to have died on the Island during their incarceration. Bermuda's prisoners are part of a larger, global story of

incarceration and empire.

During the American Revolution, poet Philip Morin Freneau (1752-1832) documented his time aboard a British prison ship. While he was not in Bermuda, it does provide insight into the terrible conditions aboard

England's prison hulks.

Freneau offers this criticism of the British: "Ungenerous Britons, you conspire to murder those you can't subdue." The complete poem can be found at: <https://poets.org/poem/british-prison-ship> ●

J. Michael Finn is the Ohio State Historian for the Ancient Order of Hibernians and Division Historian for the Patrick Pearse Division in Columbus, Ohio. He is past Chairman of the Catholic Record Society for the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio. He writes on Irish and Irish-American history; Ohio history and Ohio Catholic history. You may contact him at FCoolavin@aol.com.

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Ten Years Gone

Ten years ago, I was standing at the Hibernian Club in Akron. For those who have never been, it is a little oasis, a local Cheers. It is a place that you'll nearly always find someone you know who has a few corny jokes to share. It is not the place that you would expect to launch a writing



practice, unless you're Brendan Behan.

How Did I Get Here? It was there that a life altering conversation occurred. My friend, Mike McKenzie, told me that he was tasked with finding someone in Akron who was "reasonably sober and literate." That is the literal quote. It wasn't an outrageous stretch for me. I matched those qualifications.

I was an English major, but that means that you like to read, not write. Nonetheless, that conversation led me to John O'Brien, Jr.. He is the Editor in Chief of this paper. If you never met him, when he wants

something, he talks too fast for you to get the "no" into the conversation.

So, here I am. Ten years gone, one hundred and twenty columns, come rain or shine.

I Need the Eggs I am often asked, amidst my rabid cursing around the 6th of the month, (the column is due on the 8th) why I do this to myself? It is a baffling question. The best answer I can come up with is Woody Allen. The scene that sticks is from the movie "Annie Hall."

Woody is sitting, pontificating as only he can, about the string of failed relationships that have been part of his life. So why does he keep trying? He refers to an old joke.

"This guy goes to a psychiatrist and says, 'Doc, my brother's crazy. He thinks he's a chicken.' And the doctor says, 'Well, why don't you turn him in?' And the guy says, 'I would, but I need the eggs

What Eggs?

This is a fair question, and I am not sure that I have the answer. One of the "eggs" is certainly writing itself. Nothing forces practice like a commitment and a deadline. There is no room for procrastination here.

As soon as I submit one of these darlings, I must start thinking about what to write about the next month. Every idea needs a few weeks of bouncing around. Failure to submit will certainly mean a meeting with John O'Brien, Jr.'s wooden spoon. Catholic school has given him a wicked swing.

But you do improve with practice. The ten thousand hours of practice at something won't make you a genius. But all that practice will surely make you improve.

Meeting Readers Another "egg" is connecting with the people who read this paper. A small number have written to me to tell me that I am full of *&^%, but in all honesty, most of the time I saw it coming. I stuck my neck out.

Every time an article has strayed into an area that can be perceived as political, I can just about hear the click of a keyboard somewhere, ready to tell me that I am an idiot. It's OK, at least they read it. The good news is that many more of the responses have been positive.

The strongest responses have sprung from topics that I am passionate about. Those emails always make me smile. You have shared stories with me about what those topics mean to you.

These moments highlight the kinship of shared interests and passions. And, I have made a friend or two. That is the cherry on top of it all.

Giving and Receiving

As an Akron woman, I speak with authority, the conversation that occurs between writer and reader is where the rubber meets the road. In an column, I can share a complete thought without interruption.

Culturally, we have probably never talked more and communicated less. It is tempting to think that this a modern phenomenon. I came across an anecdote from Jane Austen.

She is describing two women meeting as friends. As the two women began talking, she notes that each were "as far more ready to give than to receive ... and hearing little of what the other said." We all feel it. Writing lets you get it all out.

Are We Boors? I wish that I had a better response to this, but I think that the answer is yes. We were in England a few months back. Experience has made this a country we approach with trepidation. But it is hard to describe how relaxing our trip really was.

A good amount of that pleasure is in direct proportion to the manners we encountered. I am not talking about correct fork positioning.

What we felt the most was



courtesy. Far from cutting us off on roads, people pulled into the lay-by if they were closest on the narrow country roads. They were polite in conversation and on the street. We had real conversations with people who did not interrupt or become distracted.

That is how writing feels at the best of times, you get to finish the thought. In the best cases, someone shares a thought back.

Listen

I am sharing a picture that my sister-in-law took at the wedding we attended in England. My first reaction was to laugh. What's with those hands?

Something pulled me back to it. It is the man. It is the tilt of his head, his lean in, his focus. I realized how rare that is in this world of distraction.

When you write, you are that man. You are leaning in, focusing and communicating. My wish is to speak with you. In Irish, you never speak at, you speak with.

I hope that I do that. Plus, I need the eggs.

P.S. Just kidding John. ●

Lisa O'Rourke is an educator from Akron. She has a BA in English and a Master's in Reading/Elementary Education. Lisa is a student of everything Irish, primarily Gaeilge. She runs a Gaeilge study group through the AOH/Mark Heffernan Division. She is married to Dónal and has two sons, Danny and Liam. Lisa enjoys art, reading, music, and travel. She likes spending time with her dogs, cats and fish. Lisa can be contacted at olisa07@icloud.com

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Hibernian Society

It was June 2, 2000, and Pope John Paul II celebrated the Jubilee for Migrants and Refugees in St. Peter's Square. The U.S. Bishops called "upon all people of goodwill" to welcome refugees and newcomers.

It was two hundred and ten years before, on April 5, 1790, that the Hibernian Society for the Relief of Immigrants from Ireland was founded in Philadelphia. "To a benevolent mind, no object can be more grateful or more laudable than to relieve the distressed."

Hibernian Society Philadelphia

The society had its policies set and elected Thomas McKean its first president. Members went to the docks and met the newcomers to identify those in need.

There was the necessity for support as our brethren arrived along the east coast. It was throughout the entire Irish Diaspora that the Irish newcomers required assistance.

In New Zealand, another organization, The Hibernian Catholic Benefit Society was founded in 1869 to provide mutual aid and support to its members. Those Hibernians have 2,400 members in 21 branches in New Zealand today.

Hibernian Society Savannah

In 1812, 44 Irishmen founded The Hibernian Society of Savannah to tender aid to Irish immigrants. In 1824, these Hibernians, founded Savannah's St. Patrick's Day Parade. That year, Hibernian Society President James Hunter issued a public invitation to all local Irish to

attend Mass and join in a parade. It was a success.

Their 100th Anniversary Dinner had President William Howard Taft in attendance. Presidents Harry Truman (1962) and Jimmy Carter (1978) also attended Hibernian Society events.

Irish Society Boston

The Charitable Irish Society in Boston enrolled 173 members from its inception in 1737 to 1761. It was founded by Irish immigrants from Ulster. Boston was hostile to all Irish immigrants and all immigration at the time of its founding. The Broad Street Riots in June of 1837 and the 1834 burning of the Ursuline Convent in Charleston highlighted the hostility.

Engine 20, a Yankee fire company, and an Irish funeral procession met on Broad Street and the right of way was disputed. When 800 people are engaged in fisticuffs, it becomes a riot. In those years, up to 1760, members of the Society were restricted to only Protestant Irish. That restriction was removed in 1765.

The years that followed witnessed a unification of sorts. All of the "Irish Nation" was the official membership. Members pledged to assist those experiencing hardship, and any widows of the society.

Those united in charity and cause are united together for that charity or for that cause. The Boston Irish were united in fundraising for Famine relief.

Boston sent \$151,000 of the \$300,000 sent to Ireland during "Black '47." The Society was prudent and welcomed all potential members and endeavored to serve their cause.

Hibernian Society of Baltimore

This is the letter was published by the Hibernian Society of Baltimore in 1803.

Emigrants are daily arriving from Ireland; many of them are in a friendless and forlorn condition, deprived of health and an asylum. They have a claim upon those who have preceded them, to whom industry has proved propitious. There are many-very many of

our inhabitants who feel the influence of compassion, and who impatiently wait to be informed how they may make themselves useful to unprotected adventurers. A meeting of all those who are so disposed, whether foreigners or natives, is requested tomorrow evening, at five o'clock, at Mr. Bryden's tavern, Light Street, in order to devise a plan by which their benevolent designs may be carried into execution.

The Hibernian Society of Baltimore was founded that year and incorporated in 1818 for the purpose of affording charitable assistance to Irish immigrants arriving or residing in any part of the State of Maryland. That Hibernian Society meets annually on St. Patrick's Day. It is a scene, as Michael would say. Local, state, and national political figures unite to fund the mission of the society.

In 1823 John Oliver, a former President of the Society, died and bequeathed \$20,000 to the Society for the purpose of establishing a free school in Baltimore for the education of poor children of both sexes, one at least of whose parents must be Irish. However, should it ever happen that said school should not have enough scholars of Irish parentage as originally stipulated, it was the wish of John Oliver that children of all backgrounds who had financial need could attend. There was to be no distinction ever to be made in the school as to the religious beliefs of those that may apply for admission.

Hibernian Free School

In 1824, the Oliver Hibernian Free School opened. In 1827, the school moved into a larger building on North Street (US 1), which it occupied until 1904, when that property was sold.

The public school system and the development of parochial schools forced a decline in the student population, and in 1893, day classes were suspended. The school then became a Free Night School that taught work related skills, like bookkeeping and stenography.

In 1937, the Society changed its educational policy and created a scholarship program for local

students to attend colleges in the Baltimore area. This Scholarship Program continues to this day.

Bluestone Hibernian Charities

I am proud to be a member of the Hibernian Society of Baltimore. It was one of the inspirations for the creation of Bluestone Hibernian Charities. We were inspired by all the Hibernian societies and the mutual aid organizations that united as the "Irish Nation" to address the needs of immigrant populations. We were also impressed by how these groups grasped the importance of togetherness and a shared mission.

Like those Hibernian organizations, we also embrace our Irishness. We were welcome to serve as the point organization for the inaugural Irish Game Day at John Carroll University and as a co-sponsor for the Hibernian Mass Series. It is a vital part of our mission. Thank you to all the Cleveland Irish community for your continued support of these events.

John Oliver's wish to provide for the education of all students is a tenet Bluestone Hibernian Charities embraces. As a charity, and as a State of Ohio certified Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO), we humbly ask you to explore an annual donation to support Catholic education.

Many schools and the Diocese have SGO's to accept donations, which may also serve as a non-refundable tax credit. Donations are prioritized for students with financial need.

Please consider supporting the local education of those who need assistance, and please consult your tax professional in doing so. Stand with your Irish brethren, and the Hibernian organizations they created, to support those in need since 1737 in America.

Francis McGarry is the Director of the Food Rescue Program at the Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland.

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Generations Lead the Way

Cleveland's St Patrick's Day Parade has a long history of different generations of many families participating. Families that have taken on a more active role in the planning of the parade include the United Irish Societies of Greater Cleveland, was established in 1958, whose sole aim is the planning of Cleveland's St. Patrick's Day Parade.



The McManamon's

The Charter members were the Irish Civic Association, Sons and Daughters of Erie, the West Side Irish American Club, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Ladies Auxiliary to the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Gaelic Athletic Association, the Irish Cultural Gardens, the Cleveland Gaelic Society and the Pioneers. The United Irish Societies now consist of 28

organizations.

Tom McManamon Sr. was the first Executive Director, and his family is still involved today. His son, Tom McManamon, also served as Executive Director. The McManamon's have the distinction of being the first family to have two generations lead the Parade as Grand Marshal.

Oliver Murphy was Grand Marshal in 1980; Bernadette Murphy, Irish Mother 1970, their daughters Joan Cavanaugh, was honored as Irish Mother; and Sheila Crawford, also Grand Marshal. Sheila still serves as a delegate, along with Joan's daughter, Maureen.

Another family with a long-standing involvement is the Chambers. Bill served as the Executive Director and also had the privilege to lead the Units up the Avenue as Grand Marshal. His mother, Agnes Chambers, was Mother of the Year in 1965. The Chambers are still involved today, with Brian serving as a Deputy Director.

Al O'Leary was one of the founding members. He and his wife Celine still regularly attend the Parade Meetings. Two of their daughters, Maire Manning and Una O'Leary Escolas, also serve as delegates.

Al had the privilege of leading the Units up the Avenue in 1993 and his wife Celine was the Irish Mother in 1997. Both daughters were also recognized as Parade Co Chairs.

The Carneys and the Corcoran's have the distinction of having two generations serve as Executive Directors. Bill Carney and his daughter Linda, and Dan Corcoran and his daughter Shannon. This year Shannon will also be following in her father's footsteps in leading the Parade as the 2025 Grand Marshal.

These are just some of the families that have served the United Irish Societies. We have husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, and cousins. This demonstrates to me that the Cleveland Irish community here is a family dedicated to promoting our Irish Heritage. ●

Marilyn Madigan is the Immediate Past National President and National Organizer of the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians and a Deputy Director of the United Irish Societies of Cleveland. She received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from St. John College and retired from Nursing at University Hospitals of Cleveland.




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COOKING UP A HOOLEY

KATIE GAGNE

Sweet and Easy for the Holidays

Most of the things I love to eat are savory. The sweets I bake for my customers are custom and sometimes fancy. Yet, there is something so comforting and homey about a fruit cobbler. This one is simple, versatile, and makes the entire house smell heavenly. It is great for any party or event, or even as a dessert for a family Sunday dinner.

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Apple, Pear, and Blackberry Cobbler

Serves 8-10

Ingredients

Fruit Mixture

8 Medium - Large Granny Smith Apples

6 White Pears

3 pints Blackberries

3 teaspoons Cinnamon

1 teaspoon Kosher Salt

1 teaspoon Apple Pie Spice
(optional)
1/2 teaspoon Nutmeg
2/3 cup packed Brown Sugar
Juice from 1/2 lemon
1 Tablespoon Cornstarch

Batter

1 1/2 cups All Purpose Flour
1 cup White Sugar
1 cup Buttermilk
1 stick melted Unsalted Butter
1/2 teaspoon Kosher Salt
2 teaspoons Cinnamon
2 teaspoons Baking Powder

Topping

1/2 cup White sugar
1/2 cup Brown Sugar
1 teaspoon Cinnamon

Instructions

Peel, core, and slice apples and pears.

Place in large bowl and sprinkle with juice of 1/2 lemon

Add in cinnamon, brown sugar, salt, cornstarch, nutmeg, and apple pie spice.

Toss until well coated.

Place in a saucepan and warm over medium heat for 5-7 minutes until soft.

Remove from heat and set aside.

In a mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar, salt, cinnamon, and baking powder with a whisk.

Add in the melted butter and buttermilk.

Whisk until combined and most of the lumps are out.

In a 9x13 pan spread the apple and pear mixture in an even layer.

Toss in the blackberries.

Spoon batter over top of the fruit.

Mix the topping together and



sprinkle generously over the top of the batter.

Bake in a pre-heated 350* oven for approximately 40-45 minutes or until knife inserted in dough comes out clean.

If the top looks like it is browning too much before done, place a sheet of foil over the top until finished baking.

Let stand for 5-10 minutes before serving.

Serve alone or with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream.

Tastes great warm or room temperature.

You can easily substitute cooked

whole cranberries or cherries for the blackberries.

You can use canned pears in water or light syrup instead of fresh ones if you wish.

This recipe easily doubles if making more for a crowd.●

Katie Gagne teaches English at Trinity High School in Garfield Heights. She is also the owner of her in-home bakery Sassy's Sweets and Oh So Much More. You can contact her at (440) 773-4459 or at mkbbluebows@aol.com, or find her on Facebook at @sassyssweetsandmore.



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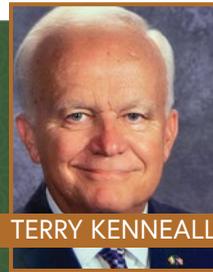
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OFF THE SHELF

TERRY KENNEALLY

Frankie

By Graham Norton
ISBN 978 15 29 391 442 304 pp
2024 Hodder & Stoughton Ltd.

This is a story of a woman looking back on her life, having never been at the center of it. The main character is Frankie, who has never been sure of herself to take center stage. All her life she found herself on the wrong side of

being judged harshly.

Ireland in 1950 was the year that Frankie Howe's life changed forever, setting on a trajectory that she could never have imagined possible. A very tragic accident places Frankie in a traumatic situation as a very young girl, one that pulled the rug out from under her life and resulted in her having to be more self-sufficient and mature than most girls her age.

At the age of 84, she finally finds someone who listens to her. Enter Damian, a young Irish caretaker who arrives at her London flat, there to keep an eye on her as she recovers from a fall. A memory is sparked and the past crackles to life as Damian listened to the story Frankie has kept stored away all these years.

It is hard not to like Frankie as a character and feel so much empathy for her as a young girl married off to an older man, a man of the church, but most

definitely not showing caring Christian ways. The failure of the marriage, not Frankie's failure, led her to live in London and then on to New York.

Frankie had a very sheltered but cold upbringing. She was quite naïve and cloistered about the world around her. As her journey took her from London to 1960s New York, Frankie always followed in the shadow of others, but unbeknownst to herself, Frankie was carving her own unique path.

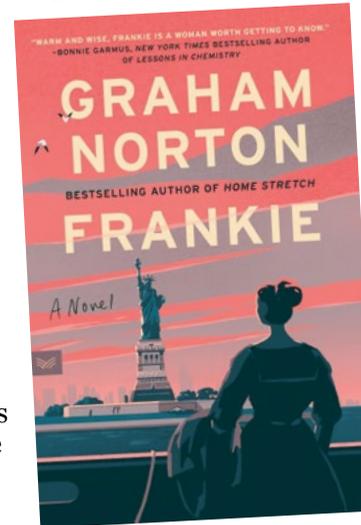
As the days roll by, Frankie slowly reveals her story of how she came to live in a flat in London surrounded by an eclectic collection of artwork and furniture. Frankie's life is long and there are many eras she lived through, but the one that made the impact on the telling, at least for me, was

the Aids epidemic in New York in the 1980s. Norton writes of this period with such finesse, the impact of it upon his characters and his readers.

Wrapping carefully researched historical elements with fiction, Graham Norton transports the reader to another time and place, conjuring up the smells and sounds of a different era.

Graham Norton has written four other novels, all bestsellers in the UK and Ireland. His fiction writing has won him critical acclaim from across all media and the literary community. *Frankie* is a TOP SHELF read. ●

Terry Kenneally is an attorney and owner of Kenneally Law Firm in Rocky River, Ohio. He received his Masters Degree from John Carroll University and has taught Irish Literature and History.



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WISE
CRAICS

JOE MCDONOUGH



Courageous, Valiant, Brave, Vallant, Fearless

A man died and went to Heaven. St Peter says to him "Before you meet with God, I should tell you, we've

looked over your life, and to be honest you really didn't do anything particularly good or bad. We're not really sure what to do with you.

Can you tell us anything you did that can help us make a decision?"

The newly arrived soul thought for a moment and replied, "Yeah, once I was driving along and came upon a little old lady who was being harassed by a group of thugs. So, I pulled over and went up to the leader of the thugs. He was a big, muscular guy with a ring pierced through his lip. Well, I tore the ring out of his lip and told him he and his gang had better stop bothering this lady or they would have to deal with me!"

"Wow that's impressive, "When did this happen?" asked St. Peter"

"About three minutes ago," came the reply.

Lost Sheep

Two gents are out hunting, and as they're walking along, they come upon a huge hole in the ground. They approach it and are amazed by the size of it.

The first hunter says, "Wow,

that's some hole. I can't even see the bottom. I wonder how deep it is?"

The second hunter says, "I don't know, let's throw something down and listen and see how long it takes to hit bottom."

The first hunter says, "There's an old gearbox over there, give me a hand and we'll throw it in and see".

So, they pick it up and carry it over, and count one, and two and three, and throw it in the hole.

They are standing there listening and looking over the edge and they hear a rustling in the brush behind them. As they turn around, they see a sheep come crashing through the brush, run up to the hole with no hesitation, and jump in headfirst.

While they are standing there looking at each other, then gazing into the hole, and trying to figure out what that was all about, an old farmer walks up.

"Say there", says the farmer, "You fellas didn't happen to see my sheep around here anywhere, did you?"

The first hunter says, "Funny you should ask, but we were just standing here a minute ago and a sheep came running out of the bushes doin' about a hunert miles an hour and jumped headfirst into this hole here!"

And the old farmer said... "Why that's impossible, I had him chained to an old gearbox!"

Trouble at the Ponsonby-Smythe House

Mr. Ponsonby-Smythe got a phone call from his wife, who was in a state of panic. "George!" she sobbed. "There's a gorilla in the apple tree in the front garden!"

"A gorilla?" Mr. Ponsonby-Smythe echoed. "Nonsense, woman. Have you been at the gin again?"

"No, George," she replied. "It's a real gorilla - it must have escaped from the zoo or a circus or something. It's sitting in the apple tree growling at everyone who walks past. It's just thrown an apple at Mrs. Bell from No. 23!"

"Did it hit her?" Mr. Ponsonby-Smythe asked, then said, "No, never mind that. I'll come home straight away."

He drove home and, sure enough, as he pulled into the driveway, he saw a huge, fierce gorilla in the apple tree. It spotted him and growled, then threw an apple at him - he just ducked in time.

He went into the house, where his wife was nervously looking out the window from behind the net curtain. "George, what are we going to do?" she asked.

Mr. Ponsonby-Smythe picked up the Yellow Pages. "It's simple, Miriam - there are bound to be professional people who can deal with this sort of thing."

He looked up 'Gorilla Catchers' but there was only one firm listed. He dialed the number and after a few rings the phone was answered. "Bloggs and Wilson, Gorilla Catchers. Bloggs speaking!"

"Good afternoon - my name is Ponsonby-Smythe. There is a gorilla in the apple tree in my garden, and I need you to come and catch it!"

"I'm very sorry, sir," replied Bloggs. "I'm afraid Wilson is off sick at the moment, so we're unable to take on any jobs."

"But this is urgent!" said Mr. Ponsonby-Smythe. "It's in the tree, causing a scene - I'm sure the property values are reducing even as we speak! There must be something you can do!"

"Well ..." said Bloggs. "Catching a gorilla is a two-man job, but if you're willing to fill Wilson's role then we should be able to pull it off."

"I'll do whatever it takes," promised Mr. Ponsonby-Smythe, and gave Bloggs his address.

Twenty minutes later, a battered Transit van bearing the sign "BLOGGS AND WILSON - GORILLA CATCHERS" pulls up outside. The driver got out, went round to the back of the van, opened the doors, and brought out a large rifle, a set of manacles, and a vicious-looking Rottweiler dog which barked and snarled. The man came up to the front door and rang the bell.

"Good afternoon, sir. I'm Bloggs," said the man when Mr. Ponsonby-Smythe answered. "I can see the gorilla in your tree - he's a big 'un, isn't he? We'd best get started right away."

"That's fine," said Mr. Ponsonby-Smythe. "What do I have to do?"

"Well," replied Bloggs. "You stand there with the manacles while I climb the tree. I will wrestle with the gorilla and push him out of the tree. The instant he hits the ground, the dog is trained to leap forward and bite the gorilla's testicles. This will distract him long enough for you to put the manacles on him. Then I can load him into the back of the van and take him away."

"I understand," said Mr. Ponsonby-Smythe. "But what is the rifle for?"

"That is actually the most important part of the whole operation," replied Bloggs. "If by any chance the gorilla should happen to push me out of the tree, you must instantly shoot the dog!"

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