

Boston Irish HONORS

10TH ANNUAL LUNCHEON

Friday, October 18, 2019
Seaport Boston Hotel
Boston, Massachusetts

2019 Boston Irish Honorees



James M. Carmody



John and Kathleen Drew



Grace Cotter Regan

Marking a special anniversary of this celebratory luncheon, **Boston Irish Honors** recognizes the leadership and accomplishments of individuals and families of Irish descent who exemplify the very best of our values, legacies and traditions.

Welcome to the 10th annual Boston Irish Honors



When we first gathered with a small group of advisors and friends to launch this annual luncheon, we had two central ideas in mind. First, we hoped to honor the remarkable people and families in our

community who truly exemplify the best qualities of the Boston Irish. In telling their stories, which speak to our heritage both here and in Ireland, we seek to reaffirm our immigrant roots and recall, with gratitude, the men and women who came here and made Boston *our* home. Boston is an exceptional city because of all the cultures that have joined together to make it their home. It's a team effort. But, we feel it is important for those of us with roots in Ireland to tell *our* story— for the benefit of our children, ourselves, and those who are coming next. The other notion behind this luncheon was to create an event that supports our brand of community journalism. Since 1990, the Boston Irish Reporter has been a key source of information for a constantly evolving, dynamic Irish American community

in this region. By necessity, and quite naturally, we have evolved, too, and we have survived in a media environment that has proven to be quite challenging. But we are still here, in part, because of your support. Thank you. Next year will begin a new chapter in our Boston Irish story. We are preparing to re-launch our website, BostonIrish.com. In the coming months, BostonIrish.com will become our primary vehicle for publishing our work. The print edition will continue in a seasonal form— but it will no longer be a monthly publication. This transition is an exciting one for our news organization, which continues to draw talented and dynamic reporters and editors to our newsroom. Today, we salute two women and two men who have inspired us with their vision, their hard work and their caring for others: Jim Carmody, Kathy



and John Drew, and Grace Cotter Regan. We invite you to read their stories in this edition, and when you do so, we're sure you will agree: They are remarkable people who have left their mark on this city we love so well. Enjoy the Boston Irish Honors. Thank you for joining us. – Ed Forry and Bill Forry

Today's Program

Boston Irish Reporter 29th Anniversary

Honorary Chairs
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator
Hon. Paul G. Kirk
United States Senator Ret.
Martin J. Walsh
Mayor of Boston
Laoise Moore
Consul General of Ireland

Event Chair
Ed Forry
Publisher & Founder

James T. Brett
Aidan Browne
William M. Bulger
John Burke
John T. Carroll

Welcome and Introductions
Dick Flavin, Master of Ceremonies
Ed Forry, Event Chair

Blessing and Invocation
Rev. Tom Kennedy

Custom Luncheon
Pre-Set on Table: Arugula Salad, Delicata Squash, Dubliner Cheddar, Local Apples, Pickled Red Onions, Maple Dressing

Entree: Char Grilled Chicken with Shrimp, Colcannon, Crispy Sprouts, Kerrygold Butter Sauce
VEGETARIAN OPTION UPON REQUEST: Vegetable Wellington
Pre-Set on Table: Bailey's Cheesecake with Melted Chocolate Sauce

Presentation of Honors
James M. Carmody
Kathleen and John Drew
Grace Cotter Regan

Della Costello
Steve Costello
Brendan Feeney
Dick Flavin
John Philip Foley
Bill Forry
Hon. Linda Dorcena Forry
Maureen Forry-Sorrell
Jim Hunt III
Edris Kelley
Bill Kennedy
Rev. Thomas B. Kennedy
Tom Lyons
Mike Sheehan
Bob Sheridan
Mary Sugrue
W. Paul White

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Acknowledgements

We extend our warm thanks to David O'Shaugnessy and Nancy Coan, World Trade Center/Seaport Hotel; Dusty Rhodes and her professional event staff including Rachael Patten at Conventures; Bill Brett, world class photographer; and Margaret Brett Hastings and Ireland on the Move's Tom Clifford, for their still and video images that is making a record of today's event; and the chef, cooks, wait staff and support staff who serve us so well today. And to all our sponsors, event committee members and guests at today's luncheon, go raibh maith agat- Thank you!



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Grace Cotter Regan



Kathleen and John Drew



The Boston Irish Honors 2019 for Distinguished Public Service

One man’s pilgrimage to the Seaport

Jim Carmody’s odyssey began a few miles away

By JACK THOMAS

Jim Carmody is manager of the elegant Seaport Hotel overlooking Boston Harbor, and from the Irish enclave in Dorchester, where he grew up in a lower middle-class two-decker as one of eight children in a family living paycheck to paycheck, the distance, geographically, is a 14-minute drive, but culturally, it’s about a million miles.

The pilgrimage began when he was a pupil at St. Ann’s grammar school, and then went on to Cathedral High School in the South End, and on for degrees from the Culinary Institute of America and Cornell University, followed by assignments in the food and beverage industry at the Four Seasons in Chicago and Dallas, the Omni International in Atlanta, the Boston Harbor Hotel, Tufts-New England Medical Center, where he was head of general services, and, finally, since 2004, Boston’s Seaport Hotel and Seaport World Trade Center.

It has been a long odyssey impossible to navigate without the moxie Jim has exhibited since boyhood.

“When Jim was five years old,” recalls his older brother, Charlie, “he was playing in the street near our house when a car came along. Jim ignored the car, kept playing in the street. The car slowed, and when the driver beeped, Jim turned and – remember, he was five years old – he glared at the driver and yelled, “Go around me!””

Audacious, to be sure, but as time would show, not out of character.

A few years later, at age 14, Jim was caddie at the old Wollaston Golf Club in North Quincy, and he bristled to hear Pecksniffian golfers address him patronizingly -- “Be quiet, *boy*.” One blistering day, he was assigned to caddie for a



The managerial touch: Jim Carmody, vice president and general manager at the Seaport Hotel & Seaport World Trade Center. *Bill Brett photo*

physician in a party of three playing for big money. The physician was a good golfer, but he was having a bad day. So was Jim.

“I lost his ball twice, once because I ducked to avoid getting hit, and the ball disappeared in deep grass. The physician was furious, and the amount he left for me was \$2. I told the caddie master I was classified as an “A” caddie, and the fee was \$2.50. He told me to get lost. Caddies were not allowed in the clubhouse, but I marched into the locker room, demanded to know where the physician was, then walked into the shower and told him he owed me 50 cents. I was suspended for two weeks, but I got my 50 cents.”

•••

The Carmody family of Dorchester is another colorful entry in the remarkable tale of the Irish in the United States, and one more narrative about immigrants who struggle to make it to America, and then to find a home in a strange land, adapt to a new culture, cope with prejudice, work at two or three menial jobs to stave off poverty, and then, often, raise large families and educate their children so that, eventually, in a generation or two,

they assimilate.

The Carmody Family’s chapter begins with a coincidence.

One day in 1929, the German steamship S.S. Karlsruhe glided into Boston Harbor and tied up at Commonwealth Pier, 500 yards from the site of today’s Seaport Hotel. Among those disembarking were a little girl, Mary O’Grady, who would become matriarch of the Carmody family, and her brother, John. She was ten, he was eight, and they made the crossing unchaperoned.

As they trudged down the plank to take their first steps on United States soil, she waved an American flag and he the Irish flag.

Mary was 22 when she married an Irish bus driver named Joe and moved to a modest house on Narragansett Street in Neponset, where they raised eight children in a setting so traditional it makes Norman Rockwell paintings seem heartless.

•••

Over a lunch of tuna *niçoise* at the Seaport Hotel, Jim, at age 66, is eager to describe his cheerful childhood. “When it came to parents, I hit the jackpot. My mother was a great cook and amazingly smart. She seemed to have an answer for ev-

erything, and my father could fix anything. He built a room in our house, fixed televisions, cars, appliances, and he worked hard.

If there was a code in the Carmody home beyond their Roman Catholic Church and Irish heritage, it was a work ethic personified by Jim’s father, who held three jobs, full-time as bus driver, and part-time in the repair of televisions and service in the National Guard.

One inducement to work was pervasive: a shortage of cash.

“One Saturday morning when I was 10,” recalls Jim, “my father took me grocery shopping. I asked for this and that, and he’d say no. At the register, he showed me the bill, about \$95. At home, he pulled out a pay stub that showed a take-home pay of \$85.

“How can that be?” I wanted to know. “You just paid \$95 for groceries. How are you going to pay the other bills?”

His message: Stop asking for things we can’t afford.

“Raising eight kids on a bus driver’s salary? A lot of men would have packed it,” says Jim. “My brother Joe says our father was “constructively oblivious.” He ignored mundane pressures, and led a happy life.

“I didn’t know we didn’t have any money. None of us did. We all went to St. Ann’s with ironed shirts, our shoes shined, and as altar boys, our cassocks were clean, our surplices wrinkle-free. With three boys clustered in age, my mother would sew colored thread into the toe of socks so we’d would know whose sock was whose. My color was purple.”

As Jim learned, older brothers like Joe can be a blessing. “When I was 10, I asked some construction guys for work. They told me to clean a crawl space under the building. I worked three days, six hours a day, and when I asked to get paid, they said to beat it.

“I went home in tears. Joe was in high school. My mother told him to



Home, sweet home for lots of Carmodys

Above, the house on Narragansett Street in Dorchester where Jim Carmody, his parents, and seven siblings lived upstairs and the children’s Nana and Pa, at right, lived on the first floor.



A family keepsake: A Boston newspaper was on hand in 1929 when ten-year-old Mary O’Grady, the future wife of Joe Carmody, and her brother John, 8, arrived in Boston after an unchaperoned voyage across the Atlantic from Co. Sligo. Mary is waving the American flag, and John the Irish banner.



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take care of it. So, Joe and I went to the site. He told me to stand back in case trouble broke out. He asked for my money, and they told him to beat it. ‘Suppose I go to the press and tell them you’re hiring under-age kids and not paying ‘em?’ Well, we got our money.”

Jim worked odd jobs to pay high school tuition, caddying from age nine and canvassing the neighborhood for bottles to redeem, sometimes in batches of 20 cases. At 14, he answered a newspaper ad and after assuring Howard Johnson’s in Dorchester that he was 16, he was hired to cook. To pay for courses at Boston State College, he cooked overnights shift at Hayes-Bickford, and when short for tuition, siblings May, Joe, and Charlie chipped in.

“A guest speaker at Cornell was Isadore Sharp, founder of Four Seasons Hotels, who talked about excellence and uncompromising quality. I was mesmerized, and I decided that was my career.”

Jim’s conversation is crowded with references to food, rhubarb pie, and soda bread, and his mom’s prune soufflé and working on menus at Tufts to keep a promise to Julia Child to improve hospital food.

A waiter approaches to ask if he wants to take home the remainder of his tuna niçoise. “No, thank you,” said the manager of the hotel, which enables him to head upstairs to a board meeting without a doggie bag.

...

Bostonians like to pick on Seaport District, dismissing it as a mobocracy of traffic, and a hodgepodge of architecture devoid of the traditional bricks of Back Bay and South End. Not Jim Carmody.

“The Seaport is a phoenix rising from a sea of old parking lots, where Pier 4, Jimmy’s, and the No Name were the only attractions,” he says. “The partnership of Fidelity and John Drew was a catalyst. Strategic investments by government have led to explosive development. Roger Berkowitz, Joe Fallon, and Barbara Lynch sent market signals that we were ready. The Boston Convention and Exhibition Center and Vertex Pharmaceuticals were so large the nation took notice. It’s an expensive place to live, work, and play, but reflective of the investment required in today’s market to develop.”

And who lives there? “The demographic is skewed to the young with fair representation of empty nesters,” he says. “The population is international, diverse, highly educated, socially active. Within a year 2,000 units of housing will come on line within a block of the hotel.

“Like every other neighborhood, Seaport has its challenges,” he concedes. “One battle is what retail survives, given high rents and online competition. Traffic is another conundrum, but I hope for a monorail, North to South Station, connecting through the Innovation and Design Center. Fidelity’s redevelopment of Commonwealth Pier will bring an iconic building and new vibe to old bones, and the water sheet will see more ferries and water taxis.”

...

When you arrive for lunch at Jim Carmody’s small home on a side street in Milton, you are not surprised to be told that he is in the yard, grilling chicken for lunch. But you are startled to see him rush into the kitchen, having burned himself on a side grille, and what’s pressed to his blistering finger for relief is a frozen pouch of green peas.

The home is where Jim and his wife, Theresa, raised their four children: Casey, 37, of San Jose, a speech therapist; Michael, 34, of Falmouth, a bartender at Bucatino Restaurant; Frances, 31, of South Boston, catering sales manager at Boston Harbor Hotel; and Mary, 29, of Germany, who is studying for her doctorate at the University of Freiburg.

After introductions to three of Jim’s siblings – Ellen Joyal, of Marshfield, Joe, of Oxford, and Charlie, of Middleborough – you settle down at the dining room table for lunch of an exquisitely grilled chicken marinated in tangy Dijon

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In 2006, the Carmodys of Milton smiled for the camera as they celebrating Jim’s Father of the Year citation. From left, Casey, Mike, Theresa, the honoree, Mary, and Frances.



Hail, Hail, The Gang’s All Here: At May’s wedding, from left, Dad Joe, John, Jim, May, Joe Jr., Charlie, Tom, Mom Mary, and, seated, Ann and Ellen.



Joe Jr., Ellen, Charlie, and Jim in recent days. Jack Thomas photo



The Boston Irish Honors 2019 Exemplary Boston Irish Family

COMMON GROUND

By dint of her position, Boston College High School President Grace Cotter Regan is always in the middle of things, and that's where she likes to be. Here, she is surrounded by the institution's most precious assets, its students, as they make their way across a labyrinth in the school's Common area. The artwork is meant as a metaphor for the reflective journey we all take through life, as well as the internal discovery of ourselves.

John Gillooly photos



'I grew up Jesuit,' says Grace Cotter Regan

BY TOM MULVOY

For some, the notice released by the Jesuit order on Aug. 24, 2017, came out of the blue; for others, it seemed appropriate by a certain measure: "Today, the board of trustees of Boston College High School announced the election of Grace Cotter Regan as the school's next president. Regan comes from Saint Mary's High School in Lynn, Mass., where she used her formidable skills to grow and develop the urban Catholic school.

"We are delighted to welcome Grace Regan as the individual who will lead Boston College High School. We look forward to our work together as we advance the BC High mission and our relevance as a preeminent and flagship Jesuit school for boys in the country," said Rev. Brian Conley, SJ, chair of the board of trustees.

"Grace's leadership and background in education, advancement, enrollment, brand management, and her understanding of and fidelity to the Society of Jesus and the Catholic school environment make her the ideal choice."

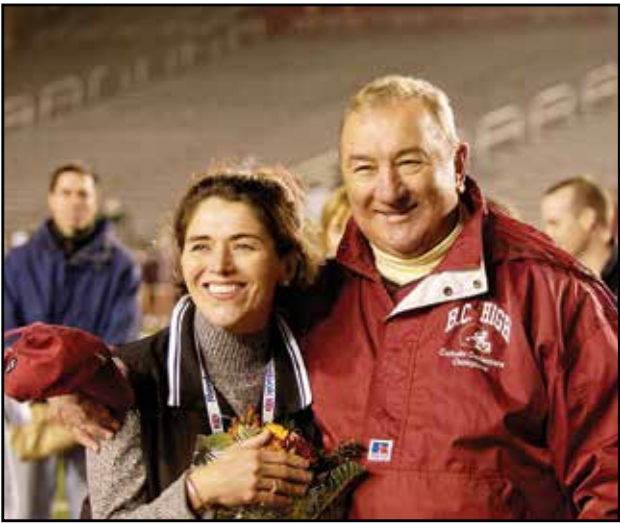
That sense of destiny becoming reality for some perhaps derived from what the school's press release did not say in those first few paragraphs: Grace was assuming the presidency as the first woman selected to head the 154-year-old Jesuit (and Boston) institution where, for just six weeks shy of 50 years, her father had forged a legendary status as teacher, counselor, coach, athletic director, and, in retirement, chief booster.

He began teaching at the school on Sept. 8, 1960, which was also the day that his first child, a daughter named Grace, was born into a family with deep roots in the sod of Co. Cork in Ireland's southwest, and a grand-maternal heritage drawn from the Polish terrain of Middle Europe.

She looks back at her Irish connections

"My mother's parents - her mother was a Lehane, her father was a Grace, emigrated from Cork through Ellis Island. My Nana, May (Grace) Lehane, was one of 18 children born on the family farm in the village of Clonakilty. Her brother Michael is my cousin Dennis Lehane's father, and my cousin PJ Lehane is running the farm today. The Graces hail from a farm in Drinagh/Dunmanway.

"When my Nana Grace came over, she found work as a domestic with a family in New York, on



GRACE AND JIM - Grace and her dad, Jim, a 41-year fixture in the classrooms, courts, and athletic fields of BC High who died in 2010 of ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease. Says one admirer of hers, "the devotion that she showed to her father while he battled ALS was nothing short of awe-inspiring. On a daily basis, she demonstrated her love and passion for her father, and did so in a way that inspired others with her strength and optimism. Grace shows up - not just in the good times, but also in the most difficult times."

Long Island. My grandfather was then working at odd jobs in the city. At one point, Nana's brother Jim made a friend of a young fellow named Tom Grace at a wedding that Nana also attended. The young man later found the nerve to ask Nana out on a date but when the day came, he was mugged on the way to her place. The assailants, the family story goes, ripped the clothes right off his back and he showed up in a very bedraggled state. Nana wasn't amused. She said she was done with him; this was before their first date! Then Jim explained what happened. Marriage followed, and they moved to Boston, to Savin Hill, where they raised four children, one of them Ann, my mother. I was named after mom; she was Ann Grace and I am Grace Ann.

"My dad's parents, George Leslie Cotter, known as Les, and Olga (Hubachek) Cotter, whose nickname was Dixie, also lived in Savin Hill, and were good friends with the Graces. Les was a stevedore who employed most of Savin Hill on the docks. He was also a very good athlete. He had a tryout with the old Boston Braves. He was a rugged guy who did some boxing. But he and I had this remarkable rapport from the time I was

little. He had these sparkling eyes and I would disarm him with a hug. He was tough as nails, but he'd melt when we would talk. Those were special times.

"Ah, the memories. My mother loved Savin Hill and was so happy to visit my grandparents and aunts. While we lived in South Weymouth when I was growing up, we spent an awful lot of time in Savin Hill, where, when we stayed there and were going to bed, Nana would whip out holy water and spread it all around as we said our night prayers. And, of course, our dad was teaching and coaching at the high school less than a mile away. It's wonderful to reflect back. You'd go there for a cup of tea, a piece of Irish bread, and just to sit with Nana and Papa. It was a warm, safe, and engaging place to be. And they just loved us all. It was special.

"I think all my Lehane aunts and uncles, grand aunts, and uncles came to my wedding. I was the first grandchild on that side. So, I kind of had it all. My brother Mike and sister Kel would say, 'Yes just another party for Gracie!'"

The next generation: Cotters and Regans

"My mother and my father met when they were pre-teens. St. William's parish, CYO, and the band played a big part in their lives and Dom Bianculli and Fr. Peter Hart were very big figures in their lives. Dad graduated from BC High in 1955 and BC in 1959, playing baseball and football, and I came along in September 1960, the first of three. I was followed by Kelly, now in Colorado, in 1963, and Michael, a Wrentham resident, in 1965.

"The BC High connection in my husband Bernie's family is strong as well. His father (Class of 1934) and two brothers are alumni, but he's a Catholic Memorial and BC grad who is now retired from his position as a produce broker with the firm Scott and Allen.

"Our boys split things up, too, in much the same way. Luke, now 28 and working with the Suffolk Construction Co. in Montana, went to St. Sebastian's and on to captain the baseball team at Bowdoin after that. Bartley, or "Moe," as he is known, graduated from BC High in 2012 where he was a three-sport athlete, most notably as captain and quarterback of the Super Bowl champions his senior year. He went to Stonehill, and later served as an assistant athletic director at Catholic



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Memorial. He now works for Shields Healthcare Solutions."

Sister Grace Regan, SND de Namur?

In the late 1970s, when Grace Cotter was thinking about her life after graduation from Notre Dame Academy in Hingham, where the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur were in charge, her mind was aswirl with questions: Is God calling me to become a Sister of Notre Dame? Is that the best way for me to serve others? While the answer long term was a "no," the question lingered as she moved on to Boston College.

"I was struggling with my vocation during those years," she said. "When I was in high school, we had this formidable group of sisters who involved us in helping the less fortunate, and we would go over to Columbia Point and help out in a soup kitchen and in other ways. I was always looking to pitch in with that sort of thing. When I moved on to Boston College, I kept up with service activities, and with graduation approaching, I was offered a placement with a Jesuit volunteer mission band, with the first option listed as San Quentin, the prison in California. That wasn't a big hit with the family, especially my dad.

"In the end, there were 17 of us who were sent out on missions; five, including me, went to Belize, a small country located south of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula; three went to Peru; and the rest set off for Jamaica. It was a special time for Belize, which used to be known as British Honduras; it was still celebrating its newly established independence. I taught at a high school for girls, among other positions. It was really amazing, a great experience. And I have gone back several times, one of which was with a troupe from Boston College in a service immersion experience. I so want to maintain my connection to the country where I have friends working and leading in St. Martin de Porres Parish and at St. John's, the Jesuit school there."

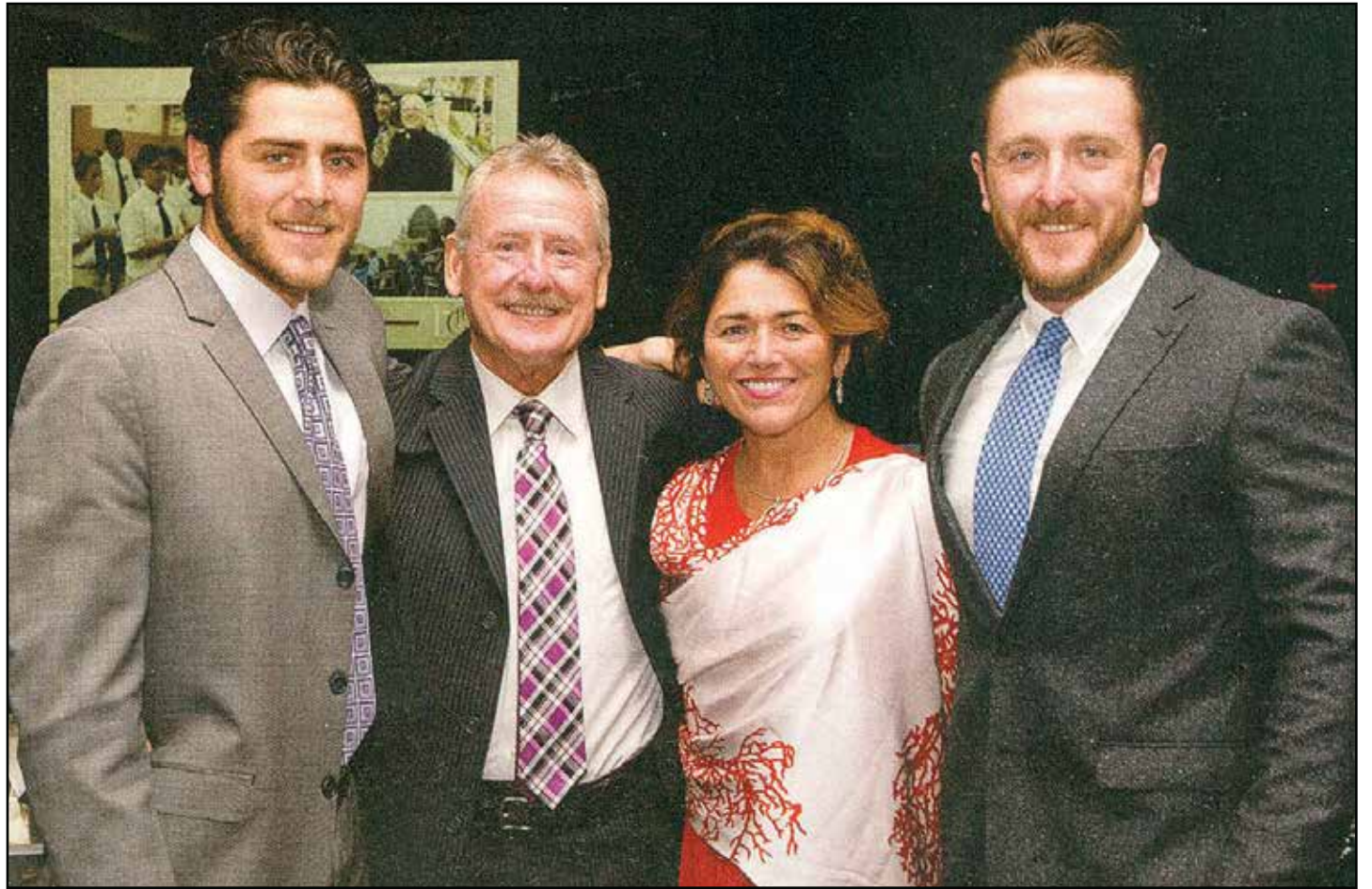
On to the task of making a difference

Under the heading "My Vocational Journey," the BC High Today magazine listed the following positions by way of introducing the new president to the student body and its alumni:

- Director of the Parent Fund, Special Events, and Donor Relations at the College of the Holy Cross.
- Vice President for Development, the Boston Public Library Foundation.
- Executive Director, Boston College Alumni Association.
- Executive Director of Advancement, New England Province of Jesuits.
- Head of School, St. Mary's High School, in Lynn.

While making her way through these offices, Grace found the time to go back to the classroom where she earned a master of arts degree in pastoral ministry and spirituality from Boston College and a master's in education from the University of Vermont.

This resume of accomplishment comes as no surprise to Grace Regan's relatives, friends, and



REPRESENTING WEST ROXBURY – Bartley "Moe" Regan (BC High '12), husband and dad Bernie Regan (Catholic Memorial), the president (Notre Dame Academy), and Luke (St. Sebastian's).

colleagues. She has an ardent and active fan club whose members are happy to say why they are sitting in her cheering section:

John Fish, president and CEO of Suffolk Construction, who attended first and second grade with her at St. Francis Xavier's parish school in Weymouth in the 1960s, calls her "a phenom, tireless and selfless in everything she takes on. Very much a family person, she has continued to grow with every new experience. And she's indefatigable in pursuit of her and her institutions' goals."

In a salute to Grace on the occasion of her selection to the BC High presidency, Rev. Tom Regan, SJ, who had worked with her in the order's New England offices, wrote, "When Grace came to work with us, she brought not only her considerable

knowledge, experience, and people skills, but also an inherent ability to bring people together."

Leo Smith, a senior executive with Shields Health Solutions, is a contemporary of Grace's who grew up a mile from the Cotter home in Weymouth and came to know the family well. He was a star athlete, especially in football, at BC High in the mid-1970s with Jim Cotter when Grace was also roaming the campus, and the sidelines as the BC High Eagle at practices and games. Both of them later attended Boston College

"I called her 'Slick,' after the Grace of Jefferson Airplane," said Smith. "When I heard of her appointment, I couldn't have been happier for her and the school. She's an extraordinary person, multi-talented, warm, engaging. For over

50 years now, I have watched with appreciation as Grace has served with distinction in so many positions of responsibility."

When asked to come up with one word to describe Grace, Timothy O'Donnell, Class of '83 at BC High, retired president and CEO of OmniClaim, Inc., and now vice chair of the school's board of trustees, offered "passionate," adding, "I see that on a daily basis, and it shows itself in many forms, most notably in her ubiquitous presence. Grace is present at events morning, noon, and night. At most any event - whether theatre or a sporting event, Grace will be there rooting for the boys. As a leader, she knows her presence sends an important message to the students, coaches, and parents of BC High.

"Grace also brings that same passion to her friends and family. The devotion that she showed to her father while he battled ALS was nothing short of awe-inspiring. On a daily basis, she demonstrated her love and passion for her father, and did so in a way that inspired others with her strength and optimism. Grace shows up - not just in the good times, but also in the most difficult times."

Chimed in Jack Connors, legendary Boston advertising executive, civic activist, and philanthropist: "Grace has always been very good at the many positions she has held. She's savvy and works hard. In all, she displays the best traits of her parents."

From the close friends and family fronts, Grace drew expressions of love and respect, even awe.

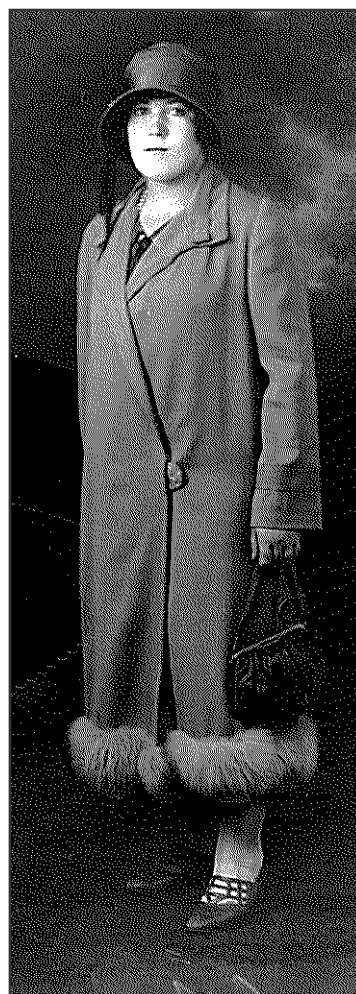
Gayle Corcoran, whom Grace calls a "bestie" friend of longstanding (they met in the '90s while prepping together at L Street to run in the Boston Marathon), said it's "impossible to describe her in a word. When it comes to morality and doing the right thing, she is a Jesuit, for all practical purposes ('I grew up Jesuit' is how Grace puts it). She has always

(Continued on page 11)

Family Album



Above, Mary and Patrick Lehane, circa 1956. They lived busy lives as parents of 18 children. Below, handholders Nana and Papa (Tom Lehane). At right, the young Mary Lehane Grace.





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John and Kathy Drew deal in relationships

BY PETER F. STEVENS

The adage “geography is destiny” holds true for John and Kathy Drew. From South Boston and Dorchester to today’s local waterfront, geography has very much helped to shape the couple’s lives.

Take a look at the soaring Boston Seaport district, and you’ll see the literal impact of John Drew, founder and CEO of the eponymous Drew Company. Not so long ago, many local power players did not believe that the rundown waterfront’s polyglot scene of grimy warehouses, dingy parking lots, and shabby buildings could even be renovated, let alone renewed. John Drew, however, viewed the Seaport differently. He saw the potential for a major redevelopment of the site and made it happen in a major way.

Today, the ongoing transformation of the Seaport into one of Boston’s commercial and residential gems stands as testimony to Drew’s vision and talent, not to leave out his tenacity.

How tangible is the Drew Company’s presence in the Seaport District? The Seaport Hotel and World Trade Center Boston, Seaport East and Seaport West—all are testament to Drew’s and his company’s innovative public and private partnerships. Far beyond his Boston turf are Drew’s national and international projects such as the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington and, in Ireland, the World Trade Center Dublin.

The Drew Company was also the proverbial guiding hand in the former Tweeter Center for the Performing Arts (today’s Xfinity Center), the Bayside Exposition Center, and Boston’s Constitution Plaza. Recently, Drew can point to the 2014 opening of the Seaport’s glittering Waterside Place.

For many who garner immense affluence, a frequent push to turn away from, or simply forget where



Development Maestro John Drew and Kathy (Morley) Drew agree: “We’ve never forgotten how fortunate we are.”

they came from, is all too common. John Drew and his wife Kathy have never fallen into that trap. To the contrary, they not only treasure their respective middle-class South Boston and Dorchester roots, but also prize their families’ immigrant Irish heritage. Most importantly, the Drews have always remained committed to giving back to the community. The developer’s success in business has offered the Drews the ideal conduit for helping others, which is exactly what the couple has done.

John Drew’s path to the Seaport’s renaissance began not so many blocks away from that very site. Born and raised in City Point, he was a member of St. Brigid parish and began his education at the parish grammar school. From there, he went on to graduate from BC High, earn his bachelor’s degree from Stonehill, and his master’s at Boston University.

Kathy Morley Drew grew up on Elm Street in Dorchester, a member of St. Ambrose Parish and was educated at the St. Ambrose parochial school and Gate of Heaven High School.

‘The other side of the world’

Early in his career some 50 years ago, John Drew worked as chief of policy for Massachusetts Gov. Francis W. Sargent, and it was then that his development and redevelopment portfolio began to bloom. “I was responsible to find re-use for closed military bases and related sites such as the Charlestown and Southie Navy Yards,” Drew says. “I loved it, and my career took off from there.”

“For Kevin White, I was involved in a lot of renovation projects, and to me, as I studied other cities’ urban-renewal projects, I came to see how the opportunity of so much neglected waterfront space in Boston

was unparalleled.”

Drew believes that “the waterfront is therapeutic, it’s in our genes. I’ve always felt that intuitively and professionally about the Boston waterfront. Even when the area was so rundown and considered so remote from the city – ‘the other side of the world,’ critics said – I saw it as such a great opportunity, even after some early projects failed.”

His early career in local and state renewal projects stoked Drew’s passion for real-estate development that would benefit commerce and the community alike. “I was involved in the Lafayette Place project and others,” he notes, “and when Joe Corcoran invited me to join his projects at Columbia Point, I jumped at the opportunity. Joe, Frank Sargent, Ned Johnson [long-time Fidelity CEO] Kevin White, and Joe Moakley have been such big influences in my life. They all

had such vision and such love for Boston.”

Drew adds: “In the early ‘80s, while I was working on the Bayside project, I wanted more and more to branch out on my own. That’s how and why the Drew Company came into being. It took about three years for my company to establish itself, and the Great Woods project was a huge one for me.

“One thing about the ‘80s was that many politicians and developers believed that Southie and the Seaport were two areas to steer clear of. I never saw it that way. Was there risk there? Sure, but, again, the opportunity I saw – the waterfront – always was in me. You have to be willing to take a risk you believe in.”

Discussing the many obstacles to redeveloping the Seaport, Drew says, “There’s always a ‘NIMBY’ (‘Not in My Backyard’) factor that can come with big projects. With the Seaport, I had grown up in the neighborhood. I understood the importance of building trust by living up to what we promised we would do. We held extensive neighborhood and community meetings, emphasizing the help we would provide to schools, and the employment opportunities. We promised and delivered parks, public spaces, as well as underground parking for the high-rise buildings going up.

“Fidelity was a huge partner for us. They stuck with us. That’s so key in our business. Things don’t always go your way, sometimes through no fault on your part. For example, in 2008, when the economy nearly went down, we had a massive project on Summer and Congress Streets, with all the major retail pieces – Stop & Shop, Nordstrom, and others – almost in place. The retailers pulled out, and it was a lost opportunity.”

Not so with the Seaport. During the interview,

The Drew family

with Cardinal O’Malley

From left, Michael Pace, Maureen (Drew) Pace, Joanne (Drew) Brown, John P. Drew and his wife, Helene, Cardinal Sean O’Malley, Kathy (Morley) Drew, John E. Drew, Carolyn (Drew) Jepsen, and Chris Jepsen.





The Boston Irish Honors 2019

Drew's mind continued to churn with ideas to make the waterfront an even more resident and visitor friendly area. "People would love a public library here," he said, "and I'd like that, as well as a new school. More than anything, we want to create even more reasons for people to come to the waterfront even if they don't live or work here. I think that a hockey and ice-skating rink could do well and be a magnet for high school and college tournaments. It's financially viable in hockey-mad Massachusetts and would open more doors to visitors."

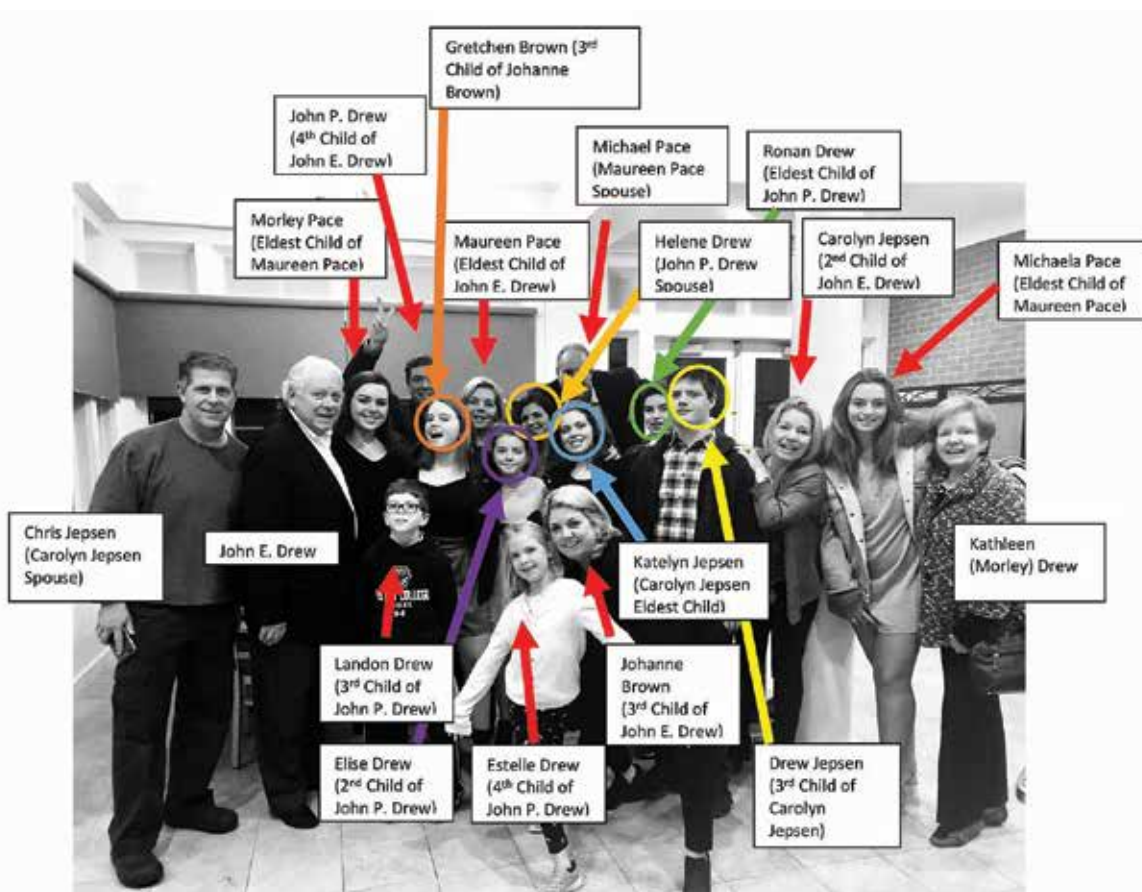
Opening doors to ventures funded through private and public partnerships is Drew's true stock in trade, his ability to understand and negotiate with politicians, fellow CEOs, and community leaders alike nearly unparalleled locally. He again cites Kevin White, Ned Johnson, and Joe Moakley as mentors who taught him how to navigate often treacherous development currents.

Drew speaks from deep experience when he describes what it's like to cultivate relationships among bottom-line business people, politicians with their varying agendas, and, from both realms, genuine visionaries and risk-takers. In many ways, Drew embodies the saying "no risk, no reward. You have to be able to work with both the private and public sides to get a project off the ground," he says. "You have to be able to get all the principals to buy in—not just financially. The thing is to get everyone on the same page with vision, trust, and, of course, a strong financial plan."

Stopping for a moment to reflect, Drew says, "Not long ago, Kathy and I came across an old article in which Tom Menino is talking about the Seaport and saying, 'Nothing happens.' Well, something's certainly happening here now, and we've had groups from China, Japan, and lots of other countries considering waterfront development projects and coming here to see how we've done it."

Family and Community Come First

The family histories of John Drew and Kathy Morley are classic "Southie" and "Dot" Irish. One of Edward and Theresa Drew's two sons (brother Paul is deceased), John learned early on that three of his grandparents hailed from the "old sod" of Galway and Cork. Kathy's parents both emigrated from Ireland, her father from Knock and her mother from Mayo. She was



A family gathering, complete with some antics, in 2009.

one of three children, with two brothers.

The couple look back with pride in their Irish roots and with fondness—actually, love—of their South Boston upbringing. "I had a great childhood in Southie," John says. "Our parents and our neighbors were middle-class, hard-working people. My dad was a printer, and my mom was an operator at City Hall. We had neighbors who were cops, firefighters, IRS workers, contractors, laborers—you name it."

"One thing that always stood out was how tight and supportive our community and parish were. It

sounds cliché, but people genuinely looked out for each other. If someone ran into financial or medical problems, the community helped. That's simply the way it was. When you're raised that way, the desire—the duty—to help those in need becomes ingrained. Our upbringing was very Catholic, and we're proud of the community values that the church, our parents, and our grandparents brought us."

For her part, Kathy says, "My upbringing was similar to John's. It was a happy one, a full one with family friends, and our close-knit

parish. John and I met the old-fashioned way—a friend of mine introduced us. We were both 17, and we got married in John's senior year of college."

John jokes, "For a city girl, Kathy had everything—a driveway and a backyard. I guess I married her for her driveway." Chuckling, Kathy teases, "I brought John over the bridge."

Four children—three girls, one boy—and twelve grandchildren, the rest is history, family history.

Three of John and Kathy's children have followed their father into the family business. John is deeply

involved in the operations of the Reagan Center and Maureen manages the Drew Company's business-to-business software platform and oversees the Dublin office. In Boston, Carolyn holds crucial roles with the company's marketing department and also the company's and family's charitable commitments.

"Johanne's the only one who escaped the family business," John jokes. "She's a pre-school teacher."

Charity begins at home and also in the office

Throughout their lives, John and Kathy Drew have devoted themselves to a wide array of charities and community aid. They have been unflagging in their support of Catholic Charities and, in a nod to their Irish heritage, the Ireland Fund. These are but a few of their civic and religious endeavors to help "the least among us." While John is not up to too much talk about the many business and civic awards he has won, he has no hesitation in elaborating about a charity that is especially meaningful to him.

"I'm deeply involved with the Adopt a Student Program, which supports Cathedral High School, right next to Holy Cross Cathedral. It pays deserving kids' tuition and gives them a chance to achieve a great education and a path toward a great life and career that might otherwise be blocked for them. I tell anyone that it's an example of how we can all help make things better one kid at a time."

Once again, both John and Kathy emphasize that their Irish-American, "Southie," and "Dot" upbringings instilled in them a determination to parley their success into community and charitable service.

"We've never forgotten where we came from and how fortunate we are," says Kathy. With another chuckle, she adds, "I'm not sure how many sermons John really listened to at church, but there's one I know he listened to."

"Best sermon ever," John responds. "The priest said that you help others not to be thanked, but because it's the right thing to do."

It seems altogether fitting that a developer who is a proud Boston-Irish son of Southie has so changed and renewed a once-moribund seaport space that lies so near to the streets of his youth. "Geography is destiny"—the words are apt for both John and Kathy Drew, whose charitable works stand as true testament to the values of their heritage.



John, Kathy, and grandchildren enjoy Christmastime at the beach in 2018.

One man’s pilgrimage to the Seaport

(Continued from page 5)

lemon-mustard sauce, a perfectly prepared Caesar salad, and several hours of conversation about the Irish experience, boyhood and girlhood in old Dorchester, Irish politics, Irish humor, Irish food, the Kennedys, the Roman Catholic Church, sibling rivalries, and how Neponset was populated by only Irish and Italians, and any Irish girl who married an Italian was considered to be in a mixed marriage.

Stories ranged across decades, some familiar, some heard for the first time.

- Joe recalls a divine intervention. “May was a sophomore, and tuition at Cathedral was \$75. We were at the table, and May said she needed \$35 for the January payment. My father said he didn’t have the money. May said she’d be kicked out of school. We didn’t know what to do. A few minutes later, the doorbell rang, and someone said my father had won the Knights of Columbus pool and he handed over \$100. My father counted out \$35, gave it to May and said, ‘Here’s your tuition.’”

- Once Joe arranged to have the house painted by young Irish men with brogues, and for their pleasure, he set up a radio in the window that blared out Irish music. He was astonished when they asked him to turn the station to country-western.

- Ellen was 17 when she arrived with her mother at John Hancock for her high school banquet. Her mother was annoyed that other girls were accompanied by boys. “Look,” she said “They have boyfriends. You should get a boyfriend, too.” She spotted a boy alone, and in the tradition of forceful Irish mothers, she used her umbrella to hook him by the arm, draw him close, and say, “This is my daughter, isn’t she nice?” Ellen shudders at the memory.

- When Christmas came,” says Joe, “our mother would make sure all the kids had the same number of gifts.” And, Jim adds, “Everyone got new underwear.”

For the Carmody children, the house was a commune, and with their grandmother downstairs, there was always a partner with whom to play checkers or old maid. But she



Living room in Dorchester, from left, standing, Charlie, and then father, Joe, in National Guard uniform, May, Joe Jr., Ellen, and on the floor, Johnnie, Tommy, and Jim.

also insisted on frequent recitations of the rosary, every night during Lent. “We knelt on the dining room floor while Cardinal Cushing recited the rosary on the radio,” recalls Ellen, “and God help you if you leaned back to sit on your heels.”

•••

Even intrepid investigative reporters would exhaust themselves finding anyone to speak ill of Carmody.

His wife, Theresa: “He deserves not only Father of the Year Award but also Husband of the Year. Through good and bad times, he’s very consistent. He enjoys good times with each of the kids, and he steps back and lets them enjoy themselves. But he’s also here for the tough times. And that’s what life’s about.”

John Drew, president of the John Drew Co.: “A great guy. I recruited him to work for me at Seaport Hotel and worked with him on the Boston Guild of Oenophiles. Our shared wine experience started when Jim was at Boston Harbor Hotel, and along with others, we ran Boston Wine Expo for 20 years, which has benefited more than two dozen local charities. Jim, by the way, knows good wine from not very good wine – not me.”

Larry Moulter, executive in residence, UMass Center for Collaborative Leadership: “When I’m asked what makes culture important, I

think of Jim’s view – it’s built person by person, each sharing values that aren’t slogans but can be put into action daily as people go about their roles. He good at raising dollars, but knows it’s not just about money. It’s about mentoring and giving folks skills they need to achieve.”

Cindy Brown, Boston Duck Tours: “I work with Jim on Greater Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau. He’s chairman. What I admire is his commitment to our industry. His integrity and honesty have led him to the success he’s earned, and I like that he doesn’t take himself seriously – he lightens stress with a self-deprecating joke. A good friend.”

Nicole Hand, of the New England Center and Home for Veterans remembers 2003, “when our shelter was in danger of closing. He raised money to save the Shelter. He helped organize the annual “Leave No One Behind” gala at Seaport, raising \$6 million for us. He partners with executive chef Richard Rayment and donates a world-class dinner for eight auctioned to a bidder. The meal is prepared in the winner’s home by Rayment, and guess who’s the waiter? Jim Carmody.”

Dr. Deeb N. Salem, physician-in-chief, Tufts Medical: “It’s been years since Jim was VP of facilities here, yet long-time employees still smile when

his name is mentioned. He continues to have a soft spot for the hospital, participates in many of our charitable events, and helps family, friends, and hotel guests who need medical care to connect with our physicians.”

Sister Mary Black, CSJ, Jim’s homeroom teacher at Cathedral High School: “I was attending a fundraiser at the Seaport Hotel, where Jim was then assistant to the general manager. He tapped me on the shoulder, and when I turned around, I said, ‘James Carmody, what are you doing here?’ He was surprised that I remembered him. Since then, he has been a remarkable help with the annual fundraising dinners I work on for Cathedral High School and for the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Boston.

“We could not do what we do without his help. He’s turned out to not only run a great hotel, but does so much for others – Cathedral kids, Sisters of Saint Joseph and many others that I have heard about from people in the fund-raising community.”

•••

As her mother lay dying, Jim’s sister, Ellen, learned a lesson about mothering. “She was bed-ridden with cancer for a year, and on her last week, I asked how she did it, eight kids, different personalities, and all the crises.

“She said that, first, the crises do not come at once, and so you handle them one at a time. And with children of different personalities, you treat each accordingly, respecting who they are, and letting them know that they’re special to you.”

Mary Carmody died in 1982, at age 64, and Joe in 1991, at 76. In going through his father’s papers, Jim discovered that at their wedding 50 years earlier, his mom and dad had danced to their favorite song, “Always.”

On the day of Joe Carmody Sr.’s funeral at St. Ann’s Church, Jim concluded the eulogy by asking the congregation to rise and join him in singing their song. With autumn sunlight slanting through stained glass windows, the congregation rose to sing a love song to his mom and dad: “*I’ll be loving you always ... not for just an hour, not for just a day, not for just a year, but always.*”



A Charitable Foundation in loving memory of the founding publisher of the Boston Irish Reporter

Mary Casey Forry Foundation

Mary Casey Forry, a spouse, a mom and a grandmother, was founding president of Boston Neighborhood News, Inc., publisher of the Dorchester Reporter, and a gifted writer whose “Urban Gardener” columns delighted thousands of readers. She was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in February 2003 and lived with the disease for 22 months. As the end of her life came near, she and our family found great comfort in the

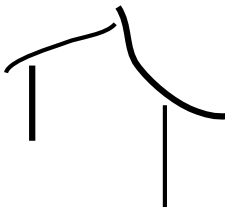
compassionate care provided by hospice. For Mary, hers was a peaceful death. For our family, we were privileged to welcome hospice into our own home. But in-home hospice care may not always be possible. A spouse may be unable to care for a partner, or there may be no family or friends nearby to ensure a death with such dignity. Our family has resolved to advocate for hospice care, and to support and promote facilities that can be shared by people in need

of palliative, end-of-life care- an environment where persons can receive the needed care with compassionate caregivers able to provide the necessary palliative care. Our foundation this year now sponsors “Mary’s Room” at the wonderful Sherrill House in Jamaica Plain, an independent, not-for-profit, skilled nursing and rehabilitation center. For more details, or to offer support, please visit marycaseyforry.org

- Maureen Forry-Sorrell, President

Mary Casey Forry Foundation, Inc.

150 Mt. Vernon Street, Dorchester, MA 02125
IRS #26 1193790





Grace with three of her family “besties” – her son “Moe,” in his hockey regalia, and, at right, her mother and father, Agnes and Jim Cotter. *LifeTouch Photography; John Gillooly*

‘I grew up Jesuit,’ says Grace Cotter Regan

(Continued from page 7)
lived their values whether people knew it or not. To me she is first a friend, then a mentor, and, thirdly, a fashionista; she’s a crazy shopper who is always very put together.”
Lastly, a really-close-to-the-scene view, from the Regan family home in West Roxbury. Her son Bartley, the aforementioned Moe,” wrote a column for the school magazine, BC High Today, as his mother was preparing to take the reins at the school:

“One thing about my mother is that she always has a plan, and when things get hectic, she keeps her cool and handles it. I remember my grandfather telling her, ‘Gracie, it’s not the crisis; it’s how you handle the crisis, with strength and resolve.’
“Her passion for others to succeed is something that my brother Luke and I have been on the receiving end for our whole lives.”

Looking at BC High in 2025
Change is always with us, and the institutions where today’s young men and women receive their instruction are not immune to shifts in cultural and civic affairs – and in family budget considerations – that in many places threaten the unraveling of long-held understandings as to the way things should proceed.
In remarks delivered to students during her inaugural Missioning Mass in May 2018, the new president

looked ahead a few years, beginning with a phrase that one alumnus described as the Grace Regan “calling card” – “God is good, all the time; all the time, God is good.” At the end of the Mass, some 1,500 students, faculty, staff, family, friends, and close to 40 Jesuits echoed the words back to her.
“Today,” she said, “we stand with the Jesuit province in positioning BC High as the flagship Jesuit, Catholic school for young men in the city of Boston and as a global leader and partner in the network and the world. ... In some ways, we have it easy because our mission is so simple and so pure – to serve others. Our work now is to ensure that this mission continues.
“So whether it’s a science class applying principles they’ve learned from textbooks to make the lives of people with disabilities easier, or an internship working on public policy at the State House, or a trip to Belize, Tanzania, Rwanda, or China that helps you see yourself as part of a universal body with a universal mission, or a trip to Downtown Crossing to minister to our homeless brothers and sisters, you will learn, as BC High students have since 1863, that care for the community in service to others is the greatest good that one can achieve in this life. That is when we acknowledge the great truth that we are the hands of God, and our talents are the gifts he has given us



Said Cardinal Sean O’Malley: “Grace’s history at BC High ... provides us confidence that the school’s mission will be sustained and strengthened for the future.”

to share with our neighbors.
“The BC High of 2025 is a school that, through a first-rate education and facilities, spiritual formation, and commitment to our alumni and the global Jesuit network is

devoted to helping you make the most of your God-given talents. Your lives are changed in these halls, and, through you, the world is changed, too.”

\$32M+

DONATED

500+

SCHOOLS + PROGRAMS SUPPORTED

30,000+

IRELAND’S FUTURE LEADERS SAY THANK YOU



The Partnership congratulates the 2019 Boston Irish Honorees, and our friends, **James Carmody, John & Kathleen Drew, and Grace Cotter Regan.**

Honor your heritage while empowering the children of Ireland. Directly support students, schools, and communities of your choice across the island, North and South.
Clearly see the impact of your philanthropy. Join us at www.irishap.org.



The Boston Irish Honors

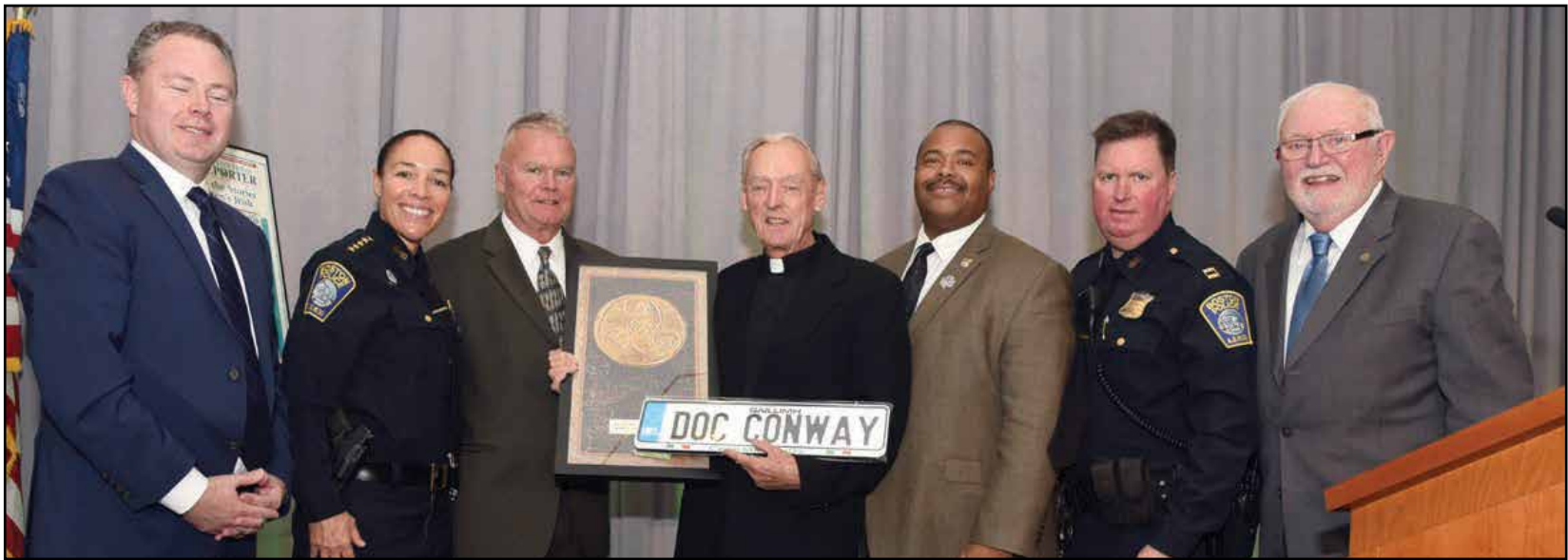
HONOREES OVER THE YEARS

The BIR is a family-owned news publication. In keeping with our own heritage, we tell the stories of exemplary Irish families and individuals who share our common roots in Boston and Ireland. Boston Irish Honors debuted in 2010 and has become an annual highlight on the fall calendar, with an appreciative audience of some 400 Boston business, civic, neighborhood and political leaders in recognition of Boston’s Irish heritage. The event, in support of Boston and New England’s own hometown Irish American newspaper & website, gives public recognition for achievements in public service, business and community leadership.

- 2018
- Rev. Richard “Doc” Conway; Mary and Bob Scannell; Dr. Trevor McGill, MD
- 2017
- Nora, Annmarie and Bill Kennedy; Tom Tinlin, Kevin Cullen
- 2016
- Jim & Mary (Cahill) Judge, Senator Paul G Kirk Jr, Kevin & Joe Leary & family
- 2015
- Margaret Stapleton, Mike Sheehan, BPD Commissioner William Evans family
- 2014
- Katherine Craven, Boston Mayor Marty

- Walsh, The Burke family of South Boston
- 2013
- Therese Murray, Gerry & Bob Mulligan family, John P. Driscoll Jr.(Posthumous)
- 2012
- Congressman Richard Neal, Brendan & Greg Feeney, Mary & Bob Muse & family
- 2011
- Kathleen O’Toole, State Senator Tom Kennedy, & families of Joseph Corcoran, James Hunt Jr., & Mark & Tom Mulvoy
- 2010
- Hon. Ed Markey, John Donohue, and Irish families of Peg Geraghty, Jim Brett & Mayor John B. Hynes

2018

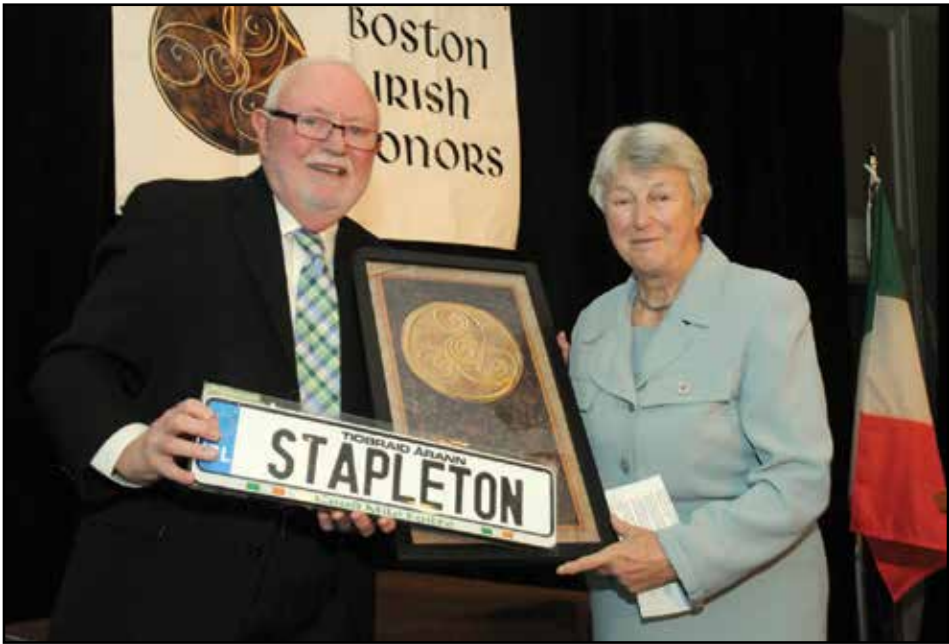




2016



2015



2014



2013



2012



2011

PHOTOS BY MARGARET BRETT HASTINGS



2010

PHOTOS BY MARGARET BRETT HASTINGS



‘Bill’ O’Donnell, Irish activist, 20-year columnist with the Boston Irish Reporter, dies at 84

Editor’s Note: Re-published from our May 2019 edition.

William T. “Bill” O’Donnell, whose words of wit and wisdom and praise and admonishment were featured monthly in the Boston Irish Reporter for 20 years, died in hospice care in Woonsocket, RI, on April 18.

The loving husband for 50 years of the former Jean McKenna, Mr. O’Donnell was born in Boston, and over the full measure of his long life he was an active member of the Irish community, traveling often for both business and pleasure to Ireland and joining numerous Irish-American charitable and cultural organizations. He was a past president and life member of the Eire Society of Boston, a member of the Irish Cultural Centre and the Charitable Irish Society. He also served as the treasurer and a board member of the Belfast (NI)

–based nonprofit corporation, Intercomm, USA.

Occasionally, Mr. O’Donnell stepped into the political arena. During the 1980 presidential campaign he was a senior press aide to the Independent presidential candidate, Congressman John B. Anderson.

He was a proud citizen of the United States and Ireland. As the editor of the Irish Echo weekly newspaper in Boston, he reported on the historic, tumultuous decade of the 1980s, covered local protests, hunger strikes in Ireland, and, later, the making of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. In the late ‘80s, he joined the Boston Redevelopment Authority as Community Relations Manager. In 1995 he retired from the BRA and later spent three years as an ADR case manager and arbitration analyst for John Hancock Financial Services.

For many years Mr.

O’Donnell was involved in organizing Boston-based job training programs benefiting young people from both traditions in Ireland, north and south. He served from 1995 to 1998 as president and CEO of Boston Ireland Ventures, a nonprofit corporation working to stimulate inward investment, development, and job creation in Ireland. Over the past two-and-half decades, he wrote a regular newspaper column for the Boston Irish community, and for the 20 years he contributed a monthly column “Here & There” to New England’s largest circulating newspaper serving an Irish American readership, the Boston Irish Reporter of Dorchester.

The son of the late William Sr. and Anne (Flaherty) O’Donnell, Mr. O’Donnell attended St. Clement schools in Medford and graduated from Somerville High School.



Jean (McKenna) O’Donnell and her beloved Bill share a moment.

He also attended Suffolk University and Boston State College. He was a US Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War.

In addition to his wife, he leaves a daughter, Erin Catherine, a son-in-law, Aaron Hoban, and a grandson, Aidan Araujo. He also leaves two brothers, Philip, of Mashpee, MA, and James, of Boston, (he was predeceased by his brother Steven), sisters-in-law Marilyn Gove O’Donnell and Carol Webster Blair, and nieces and nephews representing two generations.

Mr. O’Donnell’s funeral Mass was held on Tues., April 23, in St. Charles Borromeo Church in Woonsocket. In his hom-

ily during the service, the Rev. Gerald Finnegan, SJ, alluded to the Irishness that permeated Mr. O’Donnell’s life:

“When I visited Bill about a week or two before his death. I was struck by the Catholic tone of the conversation. Of course, Catholicism was never far from our conversations when I dined with Jean and Bill at their home here in Woonsocket. After all, I was their pastor, and, after all, Bill and I shared an upbringing in Boston when things were very influenced by the Catholics of the city. But even then, it seemed to be more prevalent at this, my final, time with Bill. Maybe we all turn to our roots when

we feel that our time here is limited, and, I suspect, Bill felt that that was his situation. ...

“On Holy Thursday, when Bill entered into a new existence, we can imagine him turning around and seeing someone standing there. Like Mary Magdalen, he may at first have imagined that it was a stranger. But then the stranger spoke his name and Bill recognized him. It was, and is, Jesus. I just hope that Jesus’s voice and accent sounded just a bit Irish, or, at least, Boston Irish. If not, Bill may not have had a positive reaction.”

An adieu to his BIR readers (2017)

Bill O’Donnell, the longtime columnist for the *Boston Irish Reporter* whose bonafides as a chronicler of all things Irish in the greater Boston area brook few comparisons, has put down his Reporter’s Notebook and called it a day, citing a need to take it easier. His final column appeared in the November 2017 edition of the BIR.

In a poignant note to BIR editors announcing his retirement, Bill thanked

them for providing the space each month to a “scraggety, aging, half-assed wannabe to use the freedom (not absolutely, thank God) to say the truth aloud in ink-driven form, truth without shame or reticence.”

He added: “I am moving along in time, having served in a wonderful enterprise with imaginative colleagues beside me as we stood in service to that one great imperative – truth.”

The O’Connells had a dream; many hands made it a reality

**By Ed Forry
BIR PUBLISHER**

Anyone involved in Boston Irish events over the last three decades knew Bill O’Connell. The Dorchester-born podiatrist, one of five children of Irish parents, and his wife Rita (Layden) were beloved volunteers in all things Irish, from the AOH Plymouth chapter, the Corkmen and Lady’s Association, the Knights and Ladies of St. Finbarr, the Eire Society of Boston, and the Charitable Irish. And they helped found the Irish Cultural Centre in Canton.

When he first learned of the famine-era Irish who had been buried in a mass grave in Boston Harbor, he began raising funds to build a Famine Memorial on Deer Island.

As the 150th anniversary of Black 47 approached, well-funded famine projects in Cambridge and downtown Boston took precedence, dimming the doctor’s hopes for a famine memorial.

Together with stalwarts like Aisling Gallery’s Maureen and John Connelly, Margaret Stapleton, and Catherine Shannon, AOH and County Cork club members, and others, the O’Connells held a series of small fundraisers that kept the dream alive. But after Rita died in late 2012 and Bill passed away in January 2014, the stalled plans seemed to have become moot.

That spring, then-Consul General Michael Lonergan encouraged several people, including attorney John Foley and me, to revive the memorial project. Few records were available – no data base or specific plans and only about \$12,000, which was placed in the custodial care of the non-profit Irish Cultural Centre.

At that point, John Foley and I set out to publicize the idea for a memorial, searching for anyone who could help make it happen. In 2017, Mike Carney, a Winthrop builder and contractor



Boston Mayor Marty Walsh spoke to a gathering of some 600 at the dedication of the Deer Island Irish Memorial.

Photo courtesy Bill Brett

The Memorial was the O’Connell’s dream



At right, Dr. William O’Connell with Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny in a 2012 Boston visit. Rita O’Connell.



with Donegal roots, called John and said “I will get this done.” Together with two friends, Mark Porter and John Flaherty, they reached out to friends in the construction and building trades, and with support from Boston Mayor Walsh and his staff, they found a way to indeed “get it done.”

On Sat., May 25, 2019, Rita and Dr. Bill O’Connell’s dream became a reality.

For the names of the Irish buried on Deer island, see bostonirish.com. Reprinted from the May 2019 edition.

Remembering Bill O'Donnell

By FRANCIS COSTELLO
SPECIAL TO THE BIR



A man of many talents.

To describe Bill O'Donnell as one of a kind is to short-change this estimable man's life and times. Honorable and decent to the end, he was deeply proud of the America he loved - and whose uniform he wore - and of the Irish heritage he embraced in all its aspects. A man of many talents, Bill was also modest. An Marine who served during the Korean War, he declined military honors for his funeral, telling his family: "Look, I never got shot at!"

But most of all, Bill O'Donnell loved his wife of 50 years, the former Jean McKenna. He never stopped gushing about "Jeanie" and her talent as a jazz singer. He was a devotee of her performances with the Veritones - the group she made music with - while she was managing to raise their daughter Erin with him and pursuing her career as a teacher. In many ways, it was clear that Jeanie helped to make Bill complete as his partner and soul mate right during their life together.

Bill was also loyal to his friends of many decades,

always to the hilt. He also had time for everybody and would simply make them feel good. In this writer's days many moons ago as a teacher at Boston College High School, my dad would relish the task on Monday mornings of filing my copy in person for the sports column I wrote for the *Boston Irish Echo* where Bill was the editor. My father knew a hot cup of coffee and a cigarette awaited him, along with a wide ranging chat with Bill, who, whether busy or not, would embark on a freewheeling exchange about the Red Sox and on matters more global.

While Bill cared and wrote about many issues, at his core, he cared even more about people as individuals, never letting politics get in the way of lifelong friendships. All the while, he did not suffer fools gladly. There was the side we saw in the Bill who could be quiet and unassuming but who could also unleash a boisterous laugh often accompanied by a wave of his hand in the air upon hearing good news. He relished other people's happiness and was never a begrudger. He also enjoyed a glass or two of chardonnay, especially with a meal of lamb that he would expertly barbecue at home.

I was privileged to have known Bill's loyalty and kindness in many ways. But I also benefited from his commitment to doing a job well. That was the case with his skillful management of several Boston Ireland Ventures World Trade Festivals at the World Trade Center in the 1980s and 1990s during a still very difficult time in the Northern Ireland conflict that he helped coordinate for Mayor Ray Flynn and John Hume. While he worked behind the scenes to

help showcase the products made in the West and Northeast of Ireland in the much neglected region between Galway Donegal and Derry to local Bostonians, he also knew the importance of showing the richness of the culture of the people of those areas, and, indeed, of all Irish traditions.

Bill also made a highly positive impact on young Irish immigrants like Ann Mullan from Derry, who came to Boston in 1985. She saw him as bridge between Irish America and the Ireland she came from: "I was truly amazed by his knowledge of Ireland and the complexities of our politics. Bill's example taught me as an Irish-born person to admire and respect Americans of Irish descent."

Likewise for Sister Lena Deevy "I will always be grateful to Bill for his steadfast support of the Irish Immigration Center during our early challenging years. He understood the importance of immigration being inclusive of diverse immigrants, including the Irish"

Bill O'Donnell was indeed a catalyst for making good things happen. From his days as youth in Somerville to his onward journey in life, he carried on with an understanding of the Irish proverb "Ar seath a cheile a mhaireann na daoine," which means that "under the shelter of each other, people survive." May we keep his spirit with us.

Dr. Francis Costello served as press secretary for Boston Mayor Raymond Flynn and chief of staff to US Rep Joseph P. Kennedy II. He now lives in Belfast where he has long been a university lecturer in history as well as a consultant and author.

Notes and comment from Bill O'Donnell in the BIR over the years

September 2011

"We Remember 9/11 - It has been a fast-moving, fraught decade since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on America. The recent Seals raid that removed Bin Laden from our midst did not solve America's political, financial, or social problems but it told a world too often doubtful of America's spine and resilience that we can still take care of business.

"I clearly remember that September day when the planes crashed into the two towers and the Pentagon and into that Pennsylvania field because we were in Ireland, outside Dundalk to be precise, following an overnight flight into Dublin. It was great fun to be back and along with favorite in-laws. The four of us, Jean and myself and my sister-in-law Pat and husband Will had left Logan the evening of Sept. 10 and arrived at the airport after a fast flight from Boston very early in the Irish morning of the 11th. "The five-hour time difference meant we were with our hosts at the Trainor family home well before the planes crashed in Manhattan. We saw the second plane, United Airline Flight 175, on live television crash into the South Tower of the World Trade Center at 9:03 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time; American Airlines Flight 11 had struck the North Tower of the Center 17 minutes earlier, which we did not see.

"We spent the next two weeks traveling through northeastern Ireland, to places like Waterford, Cork, Mayo, Galway, Clare, and Kerry. It was, after our scores of Irish visits over the years, the most unsettling and surreal but memorable of our trips there. The Kindness of the Irish, the reaching out, the understanding and, yes, the tears from strangers once they knew we were Yanks, was profound in its communion, the benchmark Irish oneness with America. The warmth of the Irish people in those wary, uncertain days is a fresh and recurring memory.

"After several frantic days trying to reach our daughter by phone we finally talked, uncertain if our return flight date or time could or would be honored. We learned that our daughter Erin, 28, had lost a friend from years earlier, a Girl Scout pal she hadn't seen in years. The news that Amy Jarret, the former scouting friend, had been a crew member among the 65 people on United Flight 175 brought the substance and sadness of the 9/11 loss into even more painful focus for her, for us ... and so it has remained."

July 2015

"NY Times Student Deaths Article 'A Disgrace' - What should have been a straight-ahead story of the accidental deaths of six young Irish students here on J-1 student work visas was badly botched by the New York Times last month. In the Times story of the collapse of an apartment balcony in California that killed the six students and badly hurt seven others, the Times focused on student partying and the "raucous life in a college town at night" before it moved onto the lead: the tragic loss of life of students who were celebrating a

twenty-first birthday party on a balcony possibly flawed in its construction. The possibility that there were faulty materials in the balcony that had been further weakened by weather and overcrowding is also being investigated.

"Not only did the story essentially and cruelly overpower the fact of the deaths of the young students by citing two incidents elsewhere with other students that zeroed in on wrecked apartments and visiting student misbehavior, but it also went on to call the J-1 visa program "a source of embarrassment for Ireland." This surely comes as news to the Irish government and program officials who have been fully supportive of the program links with Boston and other US cities.

"Back in the 1990s, I worked with scores of students on work-study programs that came to Boston from Irish venues, north and south, nationalist and unionist. They came from Belfast, Dublin, Derry, Letterkenny, and other places. The students were welcomed into the homes of Boston-area host families and split their duty schedules between relevant college courses and work that reflected their future work specialties. In all the time I ran these programs we had just one young man who was sent home early. He had come to the states from Ireland with a drug addiction problem and returned home for medical attention. In the main, these were great young people, eager, curious, hardworking, and a credit to Ireland and their respective programs. I loved working with those young people.

"The Times apologized for its misguided coverage of the balcony tragedy following a barrage of critical stories about the report. The article, however, remained for a time on the newspaper's website.

"I recall writing in a previous column about a San Francisco apartment that was wrecked by several J-1 visa student renters. What I recall well was a media follow-up to that San Francisco incident that detailed a number of students and other program participants showing up to work, volunteering and actively cleaning, repairing, and repainting the wrecked apartment, in essence apologizing for the bad behavior of program colleagues who did the damage and had returned to Ireland.

"That important "good news" aftermath of the San Francisco apartment assault was not mentioned in the Times article. A negligent omission! Ireland and the young people who come here representing Ireland north and south deserve far better at the hand of one of America's most prestigious journals.

March 2012

"Returning to Kerry - the Flahertys and the O'Donnells - My cousin Dan Flaherty died twenty years ago at age 53. As he left us, he was doing what he loved: tending his sheep atop the mountain overlooking the farm below that he shared with his wife Eileen and daughter Margaret. I love all the Flahertys, but I reserve a special place for Dan. He was a community leader,

a regular in the Castlemaine players group, and a much-loved performer in his neighborhood musicales. And from our first meeting almost 30 years ago, he was my friend. The following account of that first meeting with our Irish family members was published 29 years ago and I dedicate it now to Dan Flaherty and the cousins in County Kerry and beyond.

"Reaching back back into the past and confronting your beginnings has grown compulsively popular and very much the buffed personal journey to take in recent years. Much of the allure of the genealogical mania has rightly been attributed to Alex Haley and his book and TV series "Roots." But for Irish Americans who have found the excellent Irish Catholic Church records compelling, and the proximity of their native land a boon to ancestor-hunting, the roots of the old country have long held a potent fascination

"John F. Kennedy, as president, visited his forebears' homestead in June of 1963 and the photographs showing him with his Wexford cousins quickly became the focal point of his Irish pilgrimage - and front page, happy-time news around the world. Who can forget the beaming young world leader standing near the humble Dunganstown home of his grandfather surrounded by his equally delighted Irish relatives. That image contributed greatly, at least among the American Irish, to the upsurge of interest in Ireland and those who came before us.

"Yet despite all that and a personal, quiet longing to someday visit the birthplace of my mother's parents, Tadgh Flaherty and Annie Griffin Flaherty, I had resisted the temptation on many earlier Irish trips to "intrude" on ordered lives and separate worlds. The attempt to connect with ancestors in Ireland was simply something I would get to later. I had no idea, of course, if any Irish relatives were still alive and living in Ireland, and if so, what their reaction might be if a "Yank cousin" and his trailing family actually presented themselves at their front door.

"Just a kernel of family lore: I knew from early on that my maternal grandparents had come to this country from Ireland around the turn of the century. I could vividly recall the difficulty I had as a youngster trying to decipher my grandparents' brogues on our Sunday excursions to Dorchester from Somerville. But beyond that meager kernel of family history, I knew nothing further. But this year, 1983, I told myself on our annual visit to Ireland with my wife Jean and daughter Erin, it would be different.

"The trail began close to home in Dorchester, when my mother's brother Timmy handed me two long-forgotten Irish registry certificates. The papers confirmed that both grandparents were born and baptized in the district of Castlemaine, a small farming community over the Slieve Mish Mountains from Tralee in County Kerry.

"The next portion of the link was St. Gobnait Parish in Castlemaine. The church pastor, Father Casey, who, when we knocked on his door, didn't seem at

all surprised either at our visit or our request for information. After introductions and cold drinks for his three visitors, the priest produced from a nearby cabinet what looked to be a Dickensian ledger book, the official record of baptisms in the parish. Almost before the good Father could complete his apology about the parish's "poor record-keeping," he was tracing his finger along the neatly scripted entries of a century ago. It was all there: both my mother's parents' baptismal dates and godparents' names. All the godparents would show up later as sponsors of a succeeding generation of new births.

"All told the entire process, exclusive of the hospitality, at the parish office had consumed less than ten minutes. Our next stop, as directed, was at the "Keel Church" some two miles away on the main road where Tadgh and Annie were christened; Tadgh in 1875, Annie in 1878. I couldn't keep my eyes off a large, ornate crystal baptismal font where a century earlier both, as infants, had been christened. I had difficulty reconciling the two elderly Irish I knew from Lafield Street in Dorchester and the two babies that began their lives on St. Gobnait's altar here in Kerry in the late-19th century.

"But now, leaving the church, it was time (ready or not) to meet the cousins, who Father Casey told us were only minutes away. Our first stop was a small farm at the curve-end of a slim dirt road in the Shanachill section of Castlemaine. There a man pitching hay listened patiently to our story, nodded knowingly, and directed us to a farm building up the road where, he assured us we would find "your cousins, the Flahertys." And so we did.

"We wouldn't meet Dan, who was in Tralee, until later that evening, but his brother George, a bachelor who owned and worked a nearby farm - another second cousin (our grandfathers were brothers) welcomed us with conversation, tea, and open arms. George introduced his mother, Margaret Flaherty, widow of George's father Dan Sr. George explained that he had long expected cousins from the states would someday come calling, and there we were. During the following talk-filled hours as we sat in the farmhouse kitchen we discussed decades-old leavings and homecomings, births and deaths, and the sudden-new family history of both the stateside and Kerry Flahertys.

"Extended family" time - Photographs of Irish relatives I had never met nor would ever meet, were taken down from the mantle and the term "extended family" took on a new dimension. I would learn from George and Dan the adventurous lives of the peripatetic Flahertys of Ireland. I discovered that four brothers, Matt, Tom, Dan, and Tadgh (Tim) had emigrated to America in search of that better life. One brother, Dan, father of the Dan I was sitting across from, home-sick for the gentle, rolling farm country surrounding the River Maine, would return home after nine years in America. The other three brothers, including my grandfather Tadgh, would never return.



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