



Boston Irish HONORS

12TH ANNUAL LUNCHEON

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2022
Seaport Boston Hotel
Boston, Massachusetts

2022 Boston Irish Honorees



Jon Cronin



Mary Swanton



Jerry York

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 - by telling the stories of their special achievements in public service, business, philanthropy and community leadership.

Welcome to the 12th Annual Boston Irish Honors



**Boston Irish Award symbol
by Vincent Crotty**

From its origins, this event has been a celebration of our shared Irish heritage with an emphasis on men and women— past and present— who have excelled and inspired us with their personal and professional achievements, generous spirit, wisdom and wit. Over the last dozen years, some of Irish America's best-known and beloved people and families have graced the Seaport ballroom stage. This year's cohort of honorees continues that proud tradition.

Jon Cronin, Mary Swanton and Jerry York have distinguished themselves in their lives and careers and causes— each in their own distinct way. But the common denominator— as it's been for all

those we've highlighted since 2010's inaugural event— is not just their roots in Ireland. It's the way these special people have stay connected to those roots and honored their forebears by exhibiting compassion, respect and generosity to people of all backgrounds who have followed their lead in carving out a life in a new land.

Boston has always been a city of immigrants. The Irish are central to that story, of course. And we hope that in telling our stories we might propel and inspire our fellow Bostonians, no matter their place of birth or station in life.

As we gather here today, we remember in a special way dear friends who can no longer take their seat beside us, but who still bring a smile to our face. Last month, we lost Jack Thomas, the longtime Boston Globe reporter and dear friend to the Boston Irish and Reporter team, after a brave battle with pancreatic cancer. Jack, a Dorchester native who profiled many of our past honorees in past editions of this publication, moved us with his words, but even more so with his bravery.

And, of course, we lovingly recall Mary Casey Forry, who co-founded the Reporter newspapers in 1983. This event and the community journalism it supports, is a tribute to her life and passion for writing and the best qualities of our people.

We are grateful for the leadership



Maureen Forry-Sorrell, Ed Forry, and Bill Forry.

Seth Daniel photo

of our event chairman, the indefatigable Joseph R. Nolan, Jr., whose enthusiasm, energy, kindness and connections have conspired to make this 2022 luncheon the most successful on record. Joe is the CEO of Eversource, which is the lead sponsor of today's event. Joe, thank you for your leadership and friendship. And thanks to all of our sponsors who have made this event possible.

May we offer a word of gratitude to Tom Tinlin, our dear friend from South Boston who serves as today's Master of Ceremonies. Tom survived

a near-fatal brain aneurysm in 2016 and is a fierce advocate in the fight to bring awareness and funds to the cause of detecting the threat of aneurysms in Massachusetts and worldwide. Tommy, we salute you and support you in this work.

Finally, thanks to all of you who are here to support this event. We are so pleased to be back together in this ballroom to enjoy each other's company. Sláinte!

– Ed Forry
Bill Forry
and Maureen Forry-Sorrell

Today's Program

Boston Irish 32nd Anniversary

Welcome and Introductions

Tom Tinlin, Master of Ceremonies

Blessing and Invocation

Rev. Tom Kennedy

Committee Remarks

Joseph R. Nolan, Jr., Event Chair

Custom Luncheon

Pre-Set on Table: Basket of Warm Freshly Baked Breads

Served with Butter and Garlic and Herb Spread

Appetizer: Baby Lettuce, Grape Tomatoes, English Cucumbers,
Radish Champagne Vinaigrette (GF,V)

Entree: Grilled Sirloin with Chef's Selection of Market Vegetables
and Starch, Chef's Selection of Sauce

Vegetarian Option Upon Request

Dessert: Seaport Cheesecake, Whipped Cream & Cranberry Orange Sauce (Veg)

Presentation of Honors

Mary Swanton - Native of Limerick, County Limerick, Ireland

Jon Cronin - Native of Ballinhassig, County Cork, Ireland

Jerry York - Native of Watertown, Massachusetts, USA

Acknowledgements

A salute to: Nancy Coan and staff at the Seaport Hotel; Dusty Rhodes and Rachael Patten at Conventures; Margaret Brett Hastings, Bill Brett and Ireland on the Move's Tom Clifford & Ted Lewis, whose photos and video images will record today's event; and the chef, cooks, wait staff and support staff for their service to us. And to our sponsors, committee members and guests at today's luncheon, go raibh maith agat- Thank you!

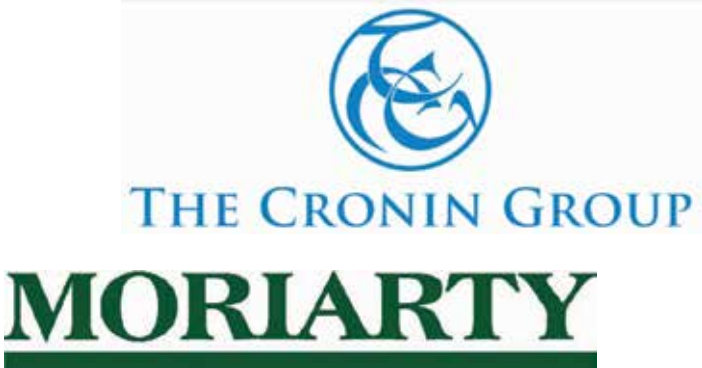


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The Boston Irish Honors 2022 for Sports and Education



Jerry York in a most familiar place and posture: Behind his players, urging them on.

John Quackenbos photo

Jerry York: Master Coach, and Mr. Nice Guy

BY ELIZABETH CLEMENTE

Long before he became the winningest coach in college hockey history, Jerry York was the eighth of ten children growing up in a crowded home in Watertown, where clergy members often wandered through and strangers seeking medical care sometimes rang the doorbell at 3 a.m. Jerry's father, the late Dr. Robert Stack York, was a physician at Saint Elizabeth's Medical Center in Brighton who also treated the Jesuits at their facilities in Weston.

"It was interesting because his practice was on the first floor of the house," Jerry said in a recent interview, "so we'd be out in the backyard playing hoops or street hockey or something, and all of a sudden he'd bang on the window and say 'I can't hear the stethoscope.'"

The York family was a blended one, though, says Jerry, it never felt that way. Dr. York had six children, Ann, Sara, Pauline, Eileen, Robert, and Peter, with his first wife, Catherine, before she passed away from cancer. He later met Jerry's

mother, Mary York, (née Conlon), while she was working as a nurse at St. Elizabeth's. The pair married and had four more children together, John, Jeremiah, Mary Ellen, and William.

Dr. York was a stickler for having all 12 family members sitting down for meals together — a fun challenge considering the nearly 20-year age gap between the oldest and youngest siblings. Navigating that loving chaos early on might have helped prepare Jerry to face the high-stakes world of college hockey with his signature resilience. "I had the chance to look to my left and see two younger siblings, but for the most part, everyone was older than I was," he said. "You learn a lot from that. It was kind of like a team growing up."

Jerry's legendary Division I coaching career spanned 50 years at three universities: Clarkson, in Potsdam, NY, Bowling Green State, in Ohio. And, of course, his alma mater, Boston College, from which position he retired in April of this year after 28 years of coaching the Eagles and posting

an astonishing 1,123 wins and five national championship titles under his name. No other coach in the history of college hockey has won 1,000 games.

Jerry led his players to the NCAA tournament 18 times, won 12 Hockey East regular-season titles, 9 Hockey East Tournament titles, and 9 Beanpot titles. He has coached four Hobey Baker Award winners, and 58 of his former players have gone on to play in more than 50 NHL games. He was also named the Hockey East Coach of the Year five times, and has been inducted into both the Hockey Hall of Fame and the US Hockey Hall of Fame.

Considering all of that, it is interesting that he is as well known in Boston for his kindness and humility as for his long list of record-shattering accomplishments. He announced his retirement from BC, which inspired dozens of articles and tributes from national news outlets, with a simple press release. It was a gesture characteristic of the lack of fanfare that he preferred over the years.

"Jerry is as humble and as

giving as you can be," said his younger brother Bill, who today lives down the street from Jerry in the house they grew up in. His ability to communicate with people, Bill added, is unmatched, and largely driven by his down-to-earth personality. "Jerry is not only a brother in a big Irish family but he's my best friend and he has been forever," he said. "He's a special guy, and a lot of it in my mind has to do with his simplicity and boundless enthusiasm and optimism."

Like in many Boston families of that era, the Irish Catholic influence in the York house was strong. Both sets of Jerry's grandparents immigrated to the United States from Ireland. Dr. York's parents, who passed away before Jerry could meet them, came from County Cork, while Mary's parents hailed from County Mayo.

According to Bill, the York family's roots in Watertown date back to the nineteenth century, when a relative of his father came to the area and acted as a principal developer of St. Patrick's Church

(Continued next page)



The Boston Irish Honors 2022



Concentration Central: Dr. Robert Stack York, a nurse at his shoulder, checks out a patient.

All photos on this page are courtesy of the York Family.



The York Ten: From top, Ann, with Billy, Sara, Pauline, Eileen, Peter, Bob. The little guys going up: John, Jerry, and Mary Ellen sitting down.

on Main Street. "It was one of the big Irish enclaves in Watertown and in the Boston area," Bill said. "He came here and became very much involved with the community."

Mary's side of the family settled in Clinton, Mass., where many of them found work in the mills and where their descendants live today. That influence instilled a strong work ethic in the York children. "If Jerry scored a hat trick, the first question he got when he got home was, 'How did you do on your Latin homework?'" Bill said. "There was a strong sense of discipline, but at the same time the Irish know how to celebrate, too. There was a strong sense of love."

Hockey, on the other hand, was not a focus of the York family during Jerry's childhood. Dr. York had run track while studying at Georgetown, but did not push any of his children to become athletes. Jerry first learned to skate from Jesuits on a pond in Weston while visiting his father at work. Unlike in South Boston and Dorchester at that time, Jerry said there was no youth hockey culture in Watertown — a flooded tennis court served as his practice rink. The first organized team he ever tried out for was the freshman squad at BC High, where he was coached by the late Rev. Leo Pollard. But Jerry's high school hockey career gave little inkling of the greatness to come.



Mary (Conlon) York with Jeremiah, the second of her four children with Dr. York, John, Mary Ellen, and William being the others.

Peter Capobianco was two years behind him at BC High and later at BC, and played hockey at both schools. Jerry didn't make the varsity team at BC High until his junior year, Capobianco said, and he wasn't as widely recognized as players who came from nearby hockey factories like Arlington, Melrose, Walpole, or Norwood. Instead, he worked to become what Capobianco called a self-made hockey player.

Mark Mulvoy, the editor-in-chief of Sports Illustrated, with a stint in the middle as publisher, from 1984 to 1996 and a life-long

assessor of hockey talent, graduated from BC High four years before Jerry. He remembers watching him play for what were then called the Eaglets. His talent as a hockey player, Mulvoy said, was evident right off the bat. "For a little kid he was tough, with good balance and hard to knock off the puck. He knew how to move the puck forward, he didn't get stuck places."

Said Capobianco: "He went from somebody coming out of BC High with some recognition, but not really widespread, to a walk-on at BC. And then through all of his hard work and dedication he became captain of the BC team and an All-America hockey player."

Jerry still ranks among BC's all-time leaders in points, goals, and assists, posting 134 points for the Eagles during his college career. He credits his college coach, John "Snooks" Kelley, as being a major influence who helped inspire his future coaching insights.

For all his success at hockey, Jerry also experienced two pivotal life transitions while studying at BC. First, his father died suddenly during his freshman year. Bill, who was 15 and a student at BC High at the time, remembers it as being a difficult year for the entire family. Jerry had also begun dating his wife of 52 years, Bobbie York (née O'Brien), when they were both Eagles. The couple met when they

(Continued next page)



The Boston Irish Honors 2022

were still in high school, as both of their families had summer cottages in Green Harbor, and reconnected at The Heights.

Bill eventually joined Jerry at BC and played hockey for part of his college career. The brothers remain close. "When you're a younger brother and your older brother is very successful at a sport, it's tough to match," Bill said, "but it was never tough to match for me because Jerry was always more interested in how I was doing than how he was doing."

After graduating from BC in 1967, Jerry was invited to join the 1968 US Olympic team. He was cut late in the process due to an injury. "I know that was a big disappointment," Bill said, "but Jerry, in his usual way, just kept going with his tremendous optimism."

Jerry also spent six months in the US Army reserve post-graduation, and then returned to BC to obtain his master's in counseling psychology and work as a graduate assistant for the freshman hockey team. Then came his tenure at Clarkson, which began with a role as an assistant coach, followed by his becoming the youngest head coach in the nation at the age

of 26. Coincidentally, the opportunity arose because Clarkson's head coach, Lenny Ceglarski, was leaving to coach at BC.

Several of Jerry's players at Clarkson were only a couple of years younger than him. He refers to that time as a "baptism of fire. I cut my teeth on hockey skills at Clarkson," he said. "That was where I probably made a lot of mistakes that made me a better coach and a better leader."

He was named NCAA Division I Coach of the Year while there in 1977. He and Bobbie also welcomed both of their children, Laura and Brendan, while living in Potsdam. Next came Bowling Green, where Jerry won his first NCAA title in 1984. Ten years later, he achieved his longtime dream of becoming the head coach at BC. In 2001 he led the Eagles to their first NCAA win in more than 50 years, and repeated the feat again in 2008, 2010, and 2012.

Mark Mulvoy, who had traveled around the world as a sportswriter and editor following hockey, says his favorite memory of his longtime friend's work behind the bench was seen from the comfort of his couch at home as BC



Jerry, who first played organized hockey as a freshman at Boston College High School, managed to get a good seat at this team dinner in the early 1960s. To his left sat BC High's longtime hockey coach, the Rev. Leo Pollard, S.J.
York family photo

defeated the University of North Dakota for the NCAA championship in April 2001.

"I remember when Jerry was hoisting that little trophy they give you for the championship, watching it on television," Mark said. "You could see that the seven years he had put in before that game, restoring a program, rebuilding a program, bringing class, and style, and integrity back into a

program, it hit him - there it was. The smile on his face - you couldn't put a price on it."

Pat Mullane played for the Eagles during their 2010 and 2012 NCAA wins, and later became team captain. While he was growing up, he said, Jerry was a "mythological figure" that he idolized. Jerry pushed Pat and his teammates to become better hockey players, he said, but also

better people. "He never had a bad day in his life. That type of personality and excitement and positivity is contagious," Mullane said.

Adds John Flaherty, head hockey coach at BC High since 2011, "When Jerry thinks about his career, I think he's going to be just as proud of his accomplishments molding young men." Flaherty said that Jerry has been a consistent coaching mentor

(Continued next page)



Jerry, captain of the Boston College hockey team in the mid-1960s and an All-America selection, beside his coach, the legendary John A. "Snooks" Kelley, himself the winner of 501 games behind the Eagles bench.
Boston College photo



Mutual Admiration Society

Over 50 years, Jerry York (Watertown) and Jack Parker (West Roxbury) played against each other in high school (BC High vs. Catholic Memorial) and in college (BC vs. BU) and they coached against each other for 40 of them, with Jack at BU throughout, and Jerry at Clarkson, Bowling Green, and BC. Jerry won 1,123 games and 5 national titles in his career, and Jack won 897 games and 3 national championships in his. Superstar coaches, fierce competitors, and gracious men who readily and regularly acknowledged the other's high competence.
Gil Talbot Photography



Paralysis by Analysis

By MARK MULVOY

Herewith a typical day in the golfing life of Jerry York as he continues his dogged, life-long search for a repeatable golf swing:

"Hey, guy," Jerry says to the parking attendant as he pulls into the lot at his Oakley Club golf course in Watertown for another round of golf with his good friends from BC.

"Morning, coach Ooops, former coach," the valet says. "Take a look, will you, at my grip," Jerry says. "Do you think my left hand's too weak, that the V ought to be aimed more to the right?" The valet, never having hit a golf ball in his 50-plus years, nods. "Could be," he says. "Thought so," Jerry says and walks away with his hands furiously mimicking a grip.

Now in the locker room, Jerry meets up with best-pal Art Byrne. "Think my swing's too long?" he asks Art. "How would I know," says Art, whose backswing barely gets above his knees. "But you do wrap the club around your head and wave it around up there in no-man's land, like you want to hit a slap shot. Or take out the lights."

Jerry goes over to the mirror and studies his swing as the locker room manager stops by. "What's up, Coach?" he says. "Is my backswing too long?" Jerry asks in response.

"Never seen you swing," the manager says, "but I've heard you talk about your swing to the whole world ... and you must have a problem. I mean, you ask everyone you see for their advice. Heard



Jerry York extends himself with his driver.

you ask someone the other day if it's true that all putts break to the ocean. What ocean were you talking about."

Joe Norberg comes by and tells Jerry that his stance while addressing the ball is too narrow, that his shoulders should be inside the width of his feet, and that his head should be slightly cocked and set behind the ball.

Jerry nods, says he read something about that in a Scottish golf pamphlet, and heads back to the mirror so he can simulate his new very-wide stance.

Swing film by Scott Johnson

"Remember to keep your weight back at address with the driver," Norberg says. "And point that left toe out," Byrne adds. "You've got to make a better turn ... and get your left shoulder under your chin."

Poor Yorkie seems baffled. His pals are deep into his head well before they reach the first tee.

At this point, Paul (the rolly polly Ol' Goalie from BC High) Fulchino, just in from D.C., pipes up: "And your hands are always too high at address, which is one of a thousand reasons why your swing speed is so slow. But the biggest problem is that

you shot the puck from the left side and you hit the golf ball from the right. You have no power, no speed through the ball."

Jerry shrugs his head. "I need a new putter," he says to Jimmy Logue. "I tried a Cameron, then a Taylor-Made, and last week an Odyssey. The other day

I found a Bulls-Eye from like 1970 in my garage and tried it, but nothing went in. Today I think I'll try a Ping. Not a blade, though. Maybe try a mallet type? Or should I think about using one of those long broomstick putters like you do. Very confusing."

Jerry heads to the pro shop to check out the putter rack and to review all of the above advice with club pro Scott Johnson, but he's somewhere out on the back nine, teaching 24-handicappers how to get out of bunkers. So, Jerry again shakes his head and heads to the range to exchange swing thoughts with his caddie.

But Scott — York-ie calls his "My Swing Guru" — has left this message for Jerry: "Remember what we worked on yesterday — Softer, quieter hands at address and throughout the swing. Don't strangle the club. That's another reason why you don't get much power. Today try holding it with tender, loving care."

So, Jerry again shakes his head and heads to the range to exchange swing thoughts with his 13-year-old caddie.

His day has only just begun.

Jerry York: Master Coach, and Mr. Nice Guy

to him over the years and also has remained involved with the BC High hockey program, often offering to host John's players at BC to watch practices.

"He was a gentleman and treated his players with respect and demanded that his players respect the game and play the game the right way," Flaherty said. "I don't know of any coach who wouldn't want to emulate that."

Jerry notes that it was always important to him when choosing a career path to not just focus on the fundamentals of the job. Team bonding and how his players fit into the school were just as important to

him as hockey skills. He credits his strong Catholic upbringing for that mindset. "What kind of husbands they were going to be down the road, and what kind of people they were going to be, was important to me," he said.

In his first six months of retirement, Jerry has enjoyed time golfing at Oakley Country Club in Watertown, reading, and spending time with his family. He spent a week in July with seven fellow BC alumni on a golf trip in Ireland, and he hopes to travel more with Bobbi, especially to Pennsylvania where their grandchildren live.

This is his first autumn away

from a college campus in some 54 years, but Jerry's excitement for life remains the same. "I was on the phone with him this morning and he was talking about the joy in playing golf and doing different things," Bill said. "Every day is a great day for Jerry."

Mark Mulvoy has done his best to advise Jerry on life in retirement, including on what type of car to buy, how to improve his golf game, and the best way to switch his sartorial style upscale now that he can't wear Boston College gear 24/7.

"He's a kid of style, a kid of class, a kid of integrity," said the 81-year-

old Mulvoy about his 77-year-old "kid" golfing protégé. "He's managed his life that way, but now we gotta get him into the real world."

...

Elizabeth Clemente is the staff writer at Boston College Magazine. Prior to joining the team at BC, she lived and worked as a newspaper reporter in Portland, Maine, and Nantucket for publications including *The Portland Phoenix* and *The Inquirer and Mirror*. A native of Salem, N.H., she is a 2017 graduate of the University of New Hampshire who currently lives in East Boston.

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The Boston Irish Honors 2022 for Community Service

Mary Swanton: Irish evangelist in all things

By CHRIS LOVETT

When she was growing up in Ireland, the first thing Mary Swanton remembered hearing about from American tourists was something called a three-decker. "My Dad was a tour driver and Dad and Mom often had us play our musical instruments for the Americans when they were there," she said. "I remember that I was six years old listening to Americans who were talking about Boston, and they said they lived in a three-decker. It's one of my first memories, and I wondered, 'What in the name of God is a three-decker?'"

With an entry level and room to move up, a three-decker was, for many immigrants, the dream of a future. It was quite unlike a tourist's dream of the past, such as Bunratty Castle, the 15th century stone tower house in County Clare that was a favorite landmark shown off to visitors by Swanton's father. A musically talented driver and cultural ambassador for the transport company CIE Tours, he took visitors all over Ireland. And, during the summer, Mary's Mom piled the kids into the car and they followed their Dad's coach bus.

"I took it for granted, but I literally was in every county in the republic of Ireland as part of my childhood," said Swanton. "It was lovely. It was a great thing to experience." It was also a beginner's lesson about the power of music—as self-expression, but also as a connection between different people and parts of the world because, as Swanton could boast, "Dad sang his way through every county in Ireland."

One of five children of John and Teresa Delaney, Swanton grew up in Limerick City, the birthplace of Bill Whelan, later famed as the composer and visionary for the Irish theatrical show *Riverdance*. Like Whelan, Swanton attended the Limerick School of Music, close to where she lived. She also had a sister who played the harp and guitar, another sister who played piano, a brother Ger (RIP), who was the artist, and a younger brother Joe who played bagpipes. Later, during his time in the Boston area, Joe was the Instructor for the IBEW pipe band, and performed on the first album by the local Celtic punk band, the Dropkick Murphys.

Swanton started on the violin when she was six. When she was ten, she was tall enough to be recruited for double bass. That filled a need in the school's orchestra, resulting in a chance for her to play with the Irish National Youth Orchestra. She also learned there was more to being a musician than following a score.

"Although a musical composition is someone else's style and you are directed to play as written," she said, "you'll often find your own style within your adaptation of it, which can be more meaningful." Joining the orchestra allowed her to meet more than two hundred young musicians from all around Ireland, and to perform anything from classical symphonies to arrange-



Mary (Delaney) Swanton, the executive director of the Irish Pastoral Centre.
IPC photo.
Below, Mary, who grew up in Limerick City, with her parents, John and Teresa Delaney.
Delaney/Swanton family photo.



ments of traditional music.

In 1983, at age 14, Swanton was selected to go on tour in the United States with Ireland's National Senior Irish Youth Orchestra. During a stopover at Shannon Airport to clear customs, she called home from a pay phone and told her father she had been interviewed by a reporter and would be on television. "And he said, 'That's great,'" she remembered. "'Mind yourself. Have a great time.'"

Once she checked into a hotel in Boston, that's exactly what Swanton planned. She did not plan a conversation with a Boston area priest she saw approaching her, and whom she recognized from her father's tours. "I was in America," she said. "I was going to see a three-decker. Remember that? And I said, 'I'll talk to you in

a minute.'"

The priest couldn't wait. He broke the news and told her she had to go right back to the airport. "So, while I was on the plane," she explained, "Dad left work and ran to get to his car to see me on television and got a massive heart attack and died. We were all shattered."

For the time being, there would be no three-deckers and no debut at Symphony Hall.

Back in Boston for good

It took another four years before Swanton came back to America, this time as an immigrant and entry-level worker. She got her first job by falsely claiming she knew how to make pizza, which she had only seen watching "Sesame Street."

Within a couple of weeks, her boss caught on and reassigned her as a waitress. A few months later, she was working at a retail pharmacy. She became certified and worked at area hospitals for 10 years.

When a music teacher left St. Brigid's School in South Boston, that led to another entry-level opportunity, but this time in a field she knew well. Swanton also formed a choir at Saint Vincent's Parish, which included children from the West Broadway public housing development. There was also a grant from Eversource to pay for some instruments, which, she said, was greatly appreciated. From that came a "side gig," singing and playing at weddings and funerals.

During her time in South Boston, Swanton met her husband, Albert Swanton. Among the "many great people" she met in South Boston was a certain regular at the Galley Diner, a breakfast-and-lunch spot on P Street, near Castle Island, with four tables and twelve counter stools. "On Sunday mornings," she said, "I often met a kind soul named Joe, and he was very much an 'ordinary Joe.' He was the nicest, most unassuming man. He'd ask me about Ireland, and how am I getting on in Boston, and things like that."

It was only later, looking at a TV screen, that she realized the man at the diner was Congressman Joe Moakley. Her take-away: "One thing I learned about America, about Boston, that still impresses me to this day is how unassuming people are. And they don't live in their titles, and they don't elevate themselves because they have a title. What a great lesson!"

After Moakley's passing in the spring of 2001, Swanton's choir was asked to sing for the funeral at St. Brigid's Church, which drew an overflow crowd, including the-then president, George W. Bush, his predecessor, Bill Clinton, and US Sen. Ted Kennedy.

Swanton's work at St. Brigid's led her to the music program at St. Mark's School in Dorchester and, later, to work for the consortium of schools brought together as Pope John Paul II

(Continued next page)



The Boston Irish Honors 2022

Catholic Academy. That put her into the orbit of Father Dan Finn, whom she had known since 1988. The pastor of St. Mark's parish for 22 years, he was a founder of the Irish Pastoral Centre Boston (IPC), which he still serves as chaplain.

Among Swanton's music students at St. Mark's were two children of IPC's operations and programs assistant, Jennifer Molloy. She credits Swanton with approaching students in a way that made them receptive. "They wanted to do a good job for her, and they would practice, and they would play for all of us. And you wouldn't hear a pin drop," said Molloy. "They were all in unison, and they all played so well. And they were all so proud of themselves."

The students even got to experience what Swanton missed when she was 14: a trip to Symphony Hall. And Molloy said the lesson from that went beyond the music. "I think it's the experiences of going to Symphony Hall," she said, "and just never being in an environment like that and walking in and just seeing that there's a whole other world out there."

At St. Mark's, Swanton also encountered a whole other world, with students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. "You're meeting people from all over the world and everybody brings something different to the table, and it's great," said Swanton. "I mean, what an education! It couldn't be learned in a school. It couldn't be learned in a classroom."

And it was at St. Mark's that she met Bill Whelan of *Riverdance* fame.

"We grew up in the same neighborhood, and it was a personal highlight when Bill visited the school where I was teaching music," said Swanton. "He conducted our students' performance of Jingle Bells at Christmas time. What a moment!"

A 'parish without boundaries'

A nonprofit organization funded in part by the Irish government and donations from the Irish American community, the IPC was founded in 1987, just as Swanton was settling in Boston.

Partly due to immigration reforms by the federal



Above: The IPC staff greeted former Irish Ambassador Daniel Mulhall when he dropped by their offices in Adams Corner in July of this year. Back row, from left: Vice Consul Shane Caffrey, Neil Hurley; middle row: Peggy Conneely, Anne Finn, Mark Porter, Jennifer Molloy Audrey Larkin, Patsy Conneely, Mary Gorman, Mary Swanton; front row IPC Board Chair Maryellen Brett, Consul General Laoise Moore, Ambassador Mulhall, and Rev. Dan Finn. Below, hurling enthusiasts Father Finn (Cork) and Mary Swanton (Limnrick) display their allegiance colors. *IPC photos.*

government in 1965, the channels to legal status and citizenship for Irish immigrants were drying up. But, with a sluggish economy in Ireland during the 1980s, its immigrants were still heading for the US, often staying, illegally, past the time limits on their visas. Even when a special visa program was created in 1990, with key support from Congressman Brian Donnelly, legal immigrants still had less access than their predecessors to help from relatives and social networks in the community.

"A lot of them were on their own, and they fell through the cracks. And in many ways the American dream became a nightmare," said Fr. Finn. "So we were the next best thing to being family for them in those services and programs that we provide. When the person came, we brought them in to this kitchen table, made the tea and the coffee and had the talk."

The IPC offered job training, counselling, and help with housing and the legal process around immigration. For immigrants without legal status, the organization that Fr. Finn described as a "parish without boundaries" was also a place where they could freely discuss their needs. "Having



a place of trust and confidence where you would know that the story would go no further was so totally important to them," he said, "And so that's still ongoing in so many ways."

While teaching at St. Mark's, Swanton started going to IPC events and bringing her son Seán to its mother and toddlers program. "It helped us stay within our

(Continued next page)



The Boston Irish Honors 2022



Bill Whelan, the Grammy Award winning composer and producer of *Riverdance*, visited the Columbia Campus of Pope John Paul II Catholic Academy on Nov. 30, 2010, where he was entertained with songs by members of the Academy's music program. *Ed Forry photo*

heritage in a broader community," she explained. But she also stressed the value of networks developed by the IPC, including employers and landlords who could provide jobs and housing, legal and immigration issues, and reduce isolation and loneliness for those living alone. The IPC is a comprehensive community resource organization.

Before joining the IPC as a staff member, Swanton expanded her range of contacts through work as content manager and editor for the weekly paper *The Boston Irish Emigrant*. In that role, said the IPC's director of operations, Audrey Larkin, Swanton was "very open" to giving the organization more recognition.

"She was always very welcoming and including us in the newspaper weekly," said Larkin, "which spread out what we were all doing in a way that we hadn't been able to do previously, because *The Boston Irish Emigrant* was very important to many people beyond Boston in the wider area."

After the paper ceased publication in 2019, Swanton joined the IPC as a staff member and expanded the content and reach of its newsletter.

"I learned that community news is an essential conduit for blending culture and heritage with identity and a sense of belonging," she said. "It's a vital connection which proved essential at the Pastoral Centre during lockdown, when we created and mailed a monthly

32-page magazine to seniors in our community. We now print almost a thousand copies of the newsletter per month."

And that led to her being named the executive director in January of last year. "She was the right person for the job," said IPC board member Della Costello. "Mary is an organizer. She has the background of all things Irish, in a way. She's also able to reach out to people. She has a great sense of community spirit in helping people." Added to that is what Costello called a "welcoming attitude."

"Walking into the center, the first thing you're always offered is a cup of tea—and some brown bread," she said. "It was like walking into a very nice Irish home."

And Swanton's organizing skills led to Costello being asked to head a weekly knitting group that donates some of its creations to homeless children. A native of Loughrea in Galway, Costello grew up in a family active in local politics and business. Before coming to the US, she lived in London for a time, working in the accounting department for Lloyd's of London. She became acquainted with the IPC through Fr. Finn, while helping with accounting and serving as a lector at St. Mark's.

To serve aging members of its population, the IPC has a growing number of groups meeting at locations in the Boston area.

"People come together for coffee, for bingo, for trivia, for talk, just

to, for support system and music," said Fr. Finn. "Many of them are all alone in their homes. And we'd probably be the only family that they'd have. And so those get-togethers every week can mean so much to them. And many who cannot come to those groups every Tuesday, we have a group of volunteers who make calls to them on their phone, at home."

Among the other regular IPC activities are meetings of sobriety groups and immigration legal clinics, 4 weekly Senior Café's in Brighton, West Roxbury, Dorchester, and Weymouth. There's the Irish Senior Network where weekly calls are placed by volunteers to keep in touch with older members in our community.

On Monday evenings, a clinical social worker is available for appointments and there is a weekly card game on Thursdays. There is also a weekly Mother and Toddler group and knitting club. Monthly get-togethers include an Irish language conversation night and a First Friday gathering with music and fish and chips ordered from the Adams Fish Market.

In March of this year, the IPC helped find temporary accommodations for the family of Oisín Traynor, a four-year-old boy from Co. Armagh who needed specialized medical treatment in the Boston area for quadriplegic cerebral palsy. Costello said the IPC helped with outreach to Irish and British consulates, and noted

that, because the boy was unable to eat solid food, Swanton tracked down a restaurant-grade blender for the family to use while state side. After just four weeks of treatment in Boston, the boy and his family came by for a meal at the IPC. "And," Costello said, "I saw that little boy with a chicken nugget, actually chewing it."

The IPC also made itself more accessible with its recent move to a new location, at 540 Gallivan Boulevard, near Dorchester's Adams Village. In contrast with the previous location, visitors can enter without using a stairway, and there's more convenient parking.

"This place that we are in needed a whole lot of work that would cost thousands, hundreds of thousands of dollars," said Fr. Finn. "But, because of Mary reaching out to local construction workers who volunteered to give their time and work, for this place to be up and running for us August first was amazing. Without her reaching out and, and getting so many companies to donate things, it would not have happened."

"It was the Irish community who stepped up huge, whether it was monetary donations or donations of labor and materials," said Swanton. "We still had quite an expense, but it was nothing, nothing in comparison, to what it should have been."

For board president Maryellen Brett, the person-to-person
(Continued next page)



Mary Swanton the wife, mother – and unifier

Mary Swanton currently lives in Milton with her husband, Albert. A union carpenter in Boston and a native of Skibbereen in West Cork, he was a member of the world famous Skibbereen Rowing Club. Their oldest son, Seán, 28, served in the United States Marine Corps and lives in Wakefield with his wife Sonia. Their two younger sons—Kevin, 21, and Michael, 19, both play college rugby. Swanton adds that Michael has inherited her Dad's tenor voice which, she says, "is very meaningful."

"They grew up without cousins, without that immigrant connection to family. However, the continued presence of Ireland in Boston exposed them to their own heritage," said Swanton. "Those who came before us worked hard to keep strong the ties that bind us to home"

"It bothers me that there is a distinction between Irish-born parents like Albert and I and the fact that our children are Irish American," she added. "I think we need to just turn the phrase a little bit and realize that we are all Boston Irish, regardless as to our connection. We are not an Irish and Irish American family."

Swanton says she loves to travel with Albert for her sons' rugby games and to spend time with



Mary Swanton's family: Sons Michael and Kevin, husband Albert, Mary, daughter-in-law Sonia, and son Seán. *Swanton family photo*

her "Mother Teresa" in Limerick, where she notes a kind of separation that can only be bridged by memory.

"It takes going home to Limerick to realize that you can't go back because that Ireland doesn't exist anymore," she said. "You're going to the house, your childhood home, but everything else around it has changed. Your connections have faded and you realize that time passes on both sides of the ocean. I am always so proud to be Irish but, more importantly, I'm privileged to be Irish in Boston."

If a homeland can be a place without boundaries, that was the case in January of this year, with response to the murder of Ashling

Murphy in Ireland's Co. Offaly. The 23-year-old music teacher was killed near her hometown, Tullamore, while out for a jog along a canal. It happened around four in the afternoon—before dark. She was on a path named after Fiona Pender, a woman from the same town who had vanished without a trace in 1996. What happened to Murphy was quickly seized upon as a reminder of the persistent threat of violence against women.

Murphy was also a traditional Irish musician, playing fiddle and tin whistle, even starting to learn uilleann pipes, and she toured Ireland and the UK with the national folk

orchestra from Comhaltas Ceoltóirí. Along with the teaching and music, Swanton knew of one other connection: Murphy's sister Amy, with the aid of a J-1 visa, had spent a summer working at Greenhills Bakery in Adams Village. "Amy stood out because of her musical background," Swanton recalled. "We got the word out on social media."

Two days after the murder, a locally organized candlelight vigil took place in Tullamore Town Park, within view of the crime scene. Murphy's father, Ray Murphy, sang his daughter's favorite song, "When You Were Sweet Sixteen." It was a vaudeville hit from 1898,

re-popularized in a 1981 recording by The Fureys, a band in which Murphy's father had played.

The same day, a vigil with traditional music took place outside the parliament buildings in Dublin, starting a little after at 4 p.m., when the candle lights were still noticeably faint. Slow traditional music could also be heard in Limerick City, where Murphy had graduated from college just a few months earlier, and "When You Were Sweet Sixteen" would re-echo at a vigil in London.

There were more vigils, from Kerry to Belfast, from Sligo to Waterford, Cardiff, Liverpool, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Brisbane, Vancouver, San Francisco, Yonkers, even somewhere by the water in Dubai. And, on a cold Sunday in Dorchester, about two hundred people gathered in a parking lot behind Greenhills bakery, with music by the Boston chapter of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and a song about Murphy's hometown, sung by a man from Tullamore known as Blackie Quinn.

"It was a proud night," said Swanton. "It's what we do." It wasn't all the work of the IPC, but it reminded her of the adage: "Ní neart go cur le chéile" / There's no strength without unity."

– CHRIS LOVETT

An organizer 'who has the background of all things Irish'

character typifies the IPC method and mission – and Swanton's role.

"There has to be someone who is exposed to both sides, and Mary is out there in the community. She's been part of the Irish community here in the Boston area for a really long time," said Brett. "She has strong ties back home. She's really sort of perfectly positioned to do that. And her personality suits it as well."

For Audrey Larkin, the person-to-person cycle went from getting free

help from the IPC to volunteering. She came to the US from Dublin at age 40, working as a personal care attendant for the elderly. Having previously worked in the buying office for a major Irish wholesaler, she later found administrative work in Boston. After taking charge of the IPC's employment and housing support program, she would later become its business manager.

Fr. Finn came to the US when he was 18 years old. He was from County Cork, and his mother was

from Clonakilty, the birthplace of Michael Collins. When he finished high school in the Boston area, he decided that he wanted to become priest, but he had no knowledge of Latin. The remedy: parlay his skills in hurling to get a night job and housing, along with summer school to learn enough Latin for getting into St. John's Seminary. After his tenure at St. Mark's, he ministers to a wider territory.

"Our mission is very much like the corporal works of mercy – feed

the hungry, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, visit the prisoner, bury the dead, and help the poor and comfort the afflicted," he said. "That's very much the spirit of a parish, when we are a parish without boundaries. And I go in so many places to do funerals. I did five last week, and there are funerals at home in Ireland, and some of the family members can't go home because, if they do, they can't come back."

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Keegan Werlin LLP congratulates the **2022 honorees**
and thanks **Jon, Mary, and Jerry** for their dedication
to this community.





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Bob and Jean Sheridan,
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When we listen to stories of how

Jon Cronin,

Mary Swanton and

Jerry York

have contributed to the Greater Boston Irish community, we hear the many ways that their giving spirit has reached beyond the borders of Boston and beyond those we call Irish to change the lives of so many.

We are privileged to be part of this community.

Well done Jon, Mary and Jerry

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The Boston Irish Honors 2021 for Business and Philanthropy

The Cronin way: Relationships make things happen

By SETH DANIEL

Jon Cronin is universally described as a calming presence, as generous financially as he is unflappable in temperament and not afraid to “show up” and work in the trenches for the many causes he supports.

A Cork man who came to Boston in the late 1980s, Cronin, 56, saw the opportunity here very quickly and catapulted hard work and acumen into a successful restaurant and real estate career. Now living in South Boston with his wife, Nicole, and three children, Vivienne, Alanna and Stone, he talked about his success in life with humility.

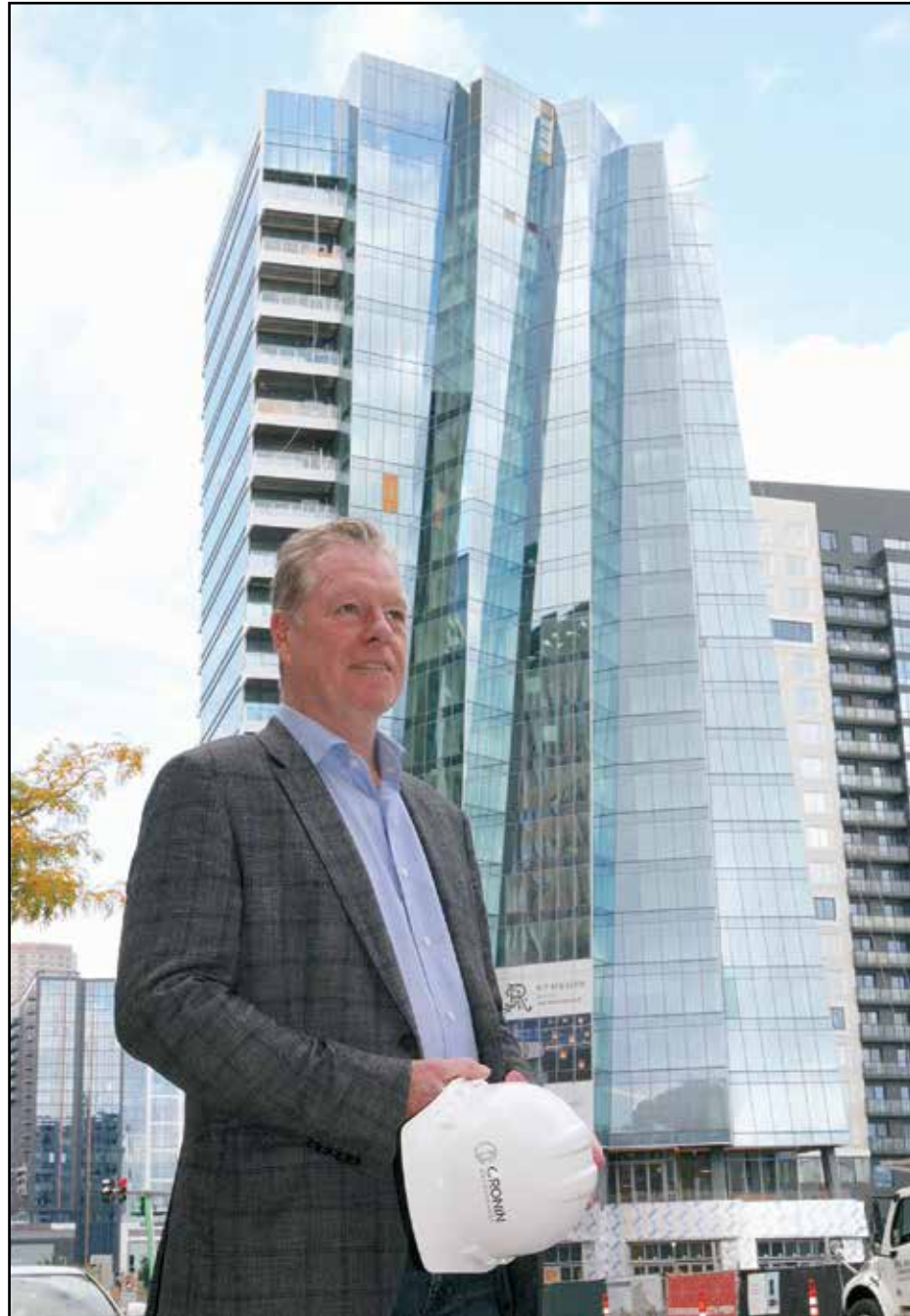
“I realize how lucky I am and how lucky my kids are,” he said. “As long as we’re healthy, nothing else matters. So many people have so many needs and have been dealt a terrible hand in life. Our family travels around the world and sees the poverty and suffering out there. There are 25 percent of kids in Massachusetts who go to bed hungry. What do we have to worry about? People arguing over \$1,000 or \$1 million; we’re lucky to be in that situation. People would kill for that. You can’t lose sight of that.”

Cronin’s story is one rooted heavily in County Cork, the Irish sport of hurling, and the patience of a man starting over in a new country who found success in demanding industries. But that’s only a slice of the Cronin story. His quiet generosity over many years is heralded not only for the financial gifts, but also for his time.

“He shows up at everything,” said Kathy Lafferty, director of the South Boston Neighborhood House, one of Jon’s many causes. “We’ll have a staff get-together, and not only will he show up, but he’ll also offer to host it. Everyone here knows him. They’ve met him. He’s not just a board member whose name is on our letterhead.”

Michael Kineavy, chief operating officer of the Cronin Group, described him as the calm amidst the storm.

“John is always even-keeled, even when the rest of us are not,” he said. “We’re all on berserk and he’s telling us to put the facts on



Jon Cronin in front of his St. Regis development at the Seaport. Seth Daniel photo

the table. ‘Let’s relax,’ he’ll tell us. It’s a good trait to have and he’s like that every day.”

Added Steve O’Neill, general counsel for the Cronin Group: “He’s very optimistic and kind, but he’s also very intelligent. I worked with Bill Weld for a long time, and he is very well known for being a man of great intellect. I would put Jon up there with Bill Weld in that sense.”

Attorney Bill Kennedy, a member of the Irish Honors Award Committee, said that Cronin is just the type of person the committee seeks to celebrate.

“He’s a good businessman and has a keen eye for business, and at the same time, he uses that success to benefit the community,” said Kennedy. “As a member of the

Committee and as a recipient, I think he is the kind of person the Irish Honors award is intended to recognize for his journey from Ireland to Boston to make for himself a successful life. I think that’s something we can all admire and respect. We are grateful to have him as part of our Irish community.”

Cork man heads West

Jon is the son of John and Angela Cronin, natives of Ballinhassig, County Cork – a place known as “rebel country.” But it was in England, in Derby, that he spent his early years when, as many Irish did in the 1960s, his father found employment there as an ironworker, and his mother as a teacher. While there was economic

stability, the Cronins endured their share of difficulties abroad.

“It was tough in those times because of the Troubles in Ireland and having an Irish accent,” he said. “There were times when my mother was refused service at a supermarket because of the accent. My parents had grown up with a country life and wanted that for us as well.”

In 1974, when he was 7, the family moved back to Ballinhassig. His father, relying on his ironworking skills, quickly found work, and that led him to start his own steel fabrication business.

At the same time, young Jon was showing a talent for hurling, joining with friends like his schoolmate Seanie McCarthy on the local pitch.

“We were really fortunate,” said McCarthy. “We had a great sport team at the time. Jon slotted in seamlessly at our school and our GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) club and became an integral part of our team.”

“He was a smart player and an intelligent player and used the ball well,” he added. “Because we were in the country, getting someone of Jon’s ability and skill was huge in those days.”

Cronin, McCarthy, and their fellow hurlers continued on to secondary school and the team only got better and more celebrated in the GAA.

“It was just a lot of laughs growing up for us,” recalled McCarthy. “We were your typical teen-agers up to a little mischief without doing any harm. It was innocent fun, and we had great memories and we still talk about it today.”

For his part, Cronin laughed about his days on the celebrated Cork team, noting he was only a defender because he “wasn’t skilled enough” for offense.

“The people I met on that team I continue to be friends with,” Cronin said. “I suppose I just grew up kicking a ball. I never stayed inside. I was always outside with a soccer ball or a hurley in hand. I think it’s the friendships you make that drove the enjoyment of it for me.”

McCarthy and Cronin went to college in Cork, with Cronin



The Boston Irish Honors 2022

achieving an associate degree in engineering and continuing to maintain the close friendships he had from primary and secondary school. After college, he joined his father in his work full-time. He carries great memories of those days:

"I loved it; they were probably some of the best days of my life and came with a lot of freedom," he noted.

Even so, the Irish economy in the 1980s was bleak and the pull for young men and women to leave for Europe, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States was strong. Many left, including Cronin and McCarthy's closest friend Derry O'Regan - who had played sport with them. O'Regan headed for Boston while McCarthy elected to chase his athletic pursuits at home.

"There was a choice; I chose sport, and they chose travel," said McCarthy, who went on to have a marvelous career in the GAA as a hurler, playing at the senior level for Cork and being a key member of the 1990 All-Ireland Medal team.

He was active from 1986 to 1997 and translated his success in sport to a successful restaurant business in Cork - a business where Cronin and O'Regan are also key partners and "idea men," said McCarthy.

Cronin's sister had earned an engineering degree and moved to Australia. He booked a flight there to see her, with a 10-day layover in Boston so he could catch up with O'Regan. It was a visit that changed Jon Cronin's life.

"Derry and Jon lived in Boston over five years and Derry came back, and Jon stayed in Boston and became the person he is today," said McCarthy.

"We maintain Jon has 34 or 35 years in Boston now...He's spent a majority of his life in Boston, but we still track him as a native to our area and Cork and Ireland as well."

Added Cronin, who frequently travels over to Ballinhassig: "Cork is always home...Once a Cork man, always a Cork man."

Landing in Boston

It was during the fateful layover in Boston in 1989 that a friend asked Cronin if he would paint his house in Winthrop. Jon agreed, and says today that he had a great time on the coast painting a New



Cronin Photo Gallery

Top: Jon, his wife Nicole, and their children Vivienne, Alanna, and Stone. Middle: The Cronins at a wedding gathering: Father John Cronin, son Jon, Mother Angela, who died in 2014, Sister Anna (Cronin) Murphy, Brother Richard Cronin. At right, Jon's paternal grandparents, Peter and Anna Cronin on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary.

Photos courtesy the Cronin family.

England home. But it was the pay afterward that opened his eyes.

"At the end he gave me \$100 cash," said Cronin. "At the time in Ireland, I was making 40 pounds a week. That was like two week's pay made in one day. I ended up staying in Boston and saw there was a lot of opportunity...It's a big

city, but a small town."

The Boston attorney Aidan Browne, a partner at Sullivan and Worcester and a long-time friend of Cronin's, said the 1980s is regarded as the time of the largest migration of the Irish to the United States since the famine of the 1840s.

"We all came without any relationships or relatives in the Boston area," said Browne, who moved here in 1986. "Most of us had been to the states in our college summers. When I look at my Irish peers - Jon being one of them - it was an adventure to come to the states. It was an exciting time and there was a lot to offer."

Browne's Dublin father jokingly described Cork people as "Kerry men with shoes." But, Browne says, it was the Cork spirit that likely helped Cronin find success in a new land.

"He has a great eye for opportunity, a deep sense of entrepreneurship, and a very strong Cork competitive streak that all combined to form his success," said Browne.

In his early days in Boston, Cronin worked construction as a laborer. He quickly realized that he needed to turn his associate degree into a bachelor's and began going to school while bartending on the side. He said his parents "scrimped" to help him pay for college - a gesture he remains grateful for.

Afterward, with a degree from UMass Lowell in hand, Cronin worked on the Deer Island Harbor project by day and bartended four nights a week. He purchased a single-family home on East Fourth Street in South Boston. Piece-by-piece in his spare time, he began to re-assemble the four-story brick home into its former self. That home would later become a key to funding his next enterprise: he and several friends joined forces to buy a commercial building on Broadway in Southie that included what was then a derelict bar.

Cronin also tapped his brother and sister for what turned into a life-changing investment, he said. As they gutted the newly purchased business to re-build it as a bar, he made a dramatic move: "I was able to sell the home and I was able to fund the first restaurant, the Boston Beer Garden," he said. It opened in 1995.





The Boston Irish Honors 2022

An engineer in the hospitality world

Cronin's restaurant empire is now centered in the Seaport, with the Lawn on D, Tony C's Sports Bar & Grill, and Temazcal Tequila Cantina among his holdings.

In 1995, though, there was no thought to branching out beyond Broadway. The Beer Garden broke the mold of the dingy, windowless cottage bars that dominated old-school South Boston. Cronin installed large glass windows in the front and offered an expansive wine list to welcome female customers. The idea came from a girlfriend at the time.

"She was always saying she had to go downtown to go out because there was nowhere in South Boston for a lady to get a glass of wine," he said. "That was true. We felt there was a market for it and wanted to open things up and make it like Sonsie on Newbury Street. We wanted to make it safe and secure and make sure women felt welcome.

"It was a stretch at the time and there was pushback, to say the least, but we had a lot of support in the community," said Cronin.

The Boston Beer Garden also became a center for activity and fundraisers in the neighborhood.

"I knew him first as a reputable business owner, and someone who runs good restaurants," said Lafferty. "He always hired local kids and was quick to respond to neighborhood concerns. He's a really great businessman and community person. As someone that lives in South Boston, where there are a lot of bars and restaurants, it's important to have someone responsible like Jon running the show."

That reputation for hospitality soon transferred over to real estate development, where Cronin now focuses much of his energy.

"The next opportunity [after the Beer Garden] was a three-family being sold that we converted to condos," he said. "You keep getting bigger if you can and you keep going. What it's all about, really, is getting the right people around you. If you build a three-family, you aren't going to also be able to build a 22-story building, but there are a lot of people that can."

Noting that his background in engineering and construction made



Jon Cronin, flanked by Ireland's Minister of Sport Brendan Griffin, left, of Kerry, and Paul Flynn, a six-time All-Ireland champion for Dublin and former CEO of the Gaelic Players Association (GPA), are shown at a Boston event to support the GPA hosted by Jon and Aidan Browne.

Bill Forry photo.

the transition to development easier, he said the real estate world in Boston is not easy. Right now, his team is about six weeks away from finishing their largest project yet, the St. Regis Residences at 150 Seaport Blvd. That development required a lot of unique engineering, years of permitting, and a great deal of goodwill in the community.

"For 27 years we've been involved in the community," he said. "It's building that relationship with the community and political leaders and the organizations. When you say you'll do something, you do it, and follow through and don't deviate from that path. If you have that relationship...it smooths the path."

Cronin and the Cronin Group are already head-on into their next project, a \$1 billion development in South Boston to save the shipyard and dry dock via the construction of three new buildings containing lab space. The 12-acre shipyard and its 200 union jobs could not remain solvent without development on the land, but with Cronin's project, the jobs and the work will remain.

Cronin said he envisions a very symbiotic relationship over time. "You'll have the shipyard on the ground floor full of welders and workers and the top floors full of

PhDs," he said. "They'll all one day have a beer together after work hopefully."

A Quiet Generosity

It wasn't just hurling that Cronin learned in Ireland, but also a sense of generosity picked up directly from his parents.

"Growing up here, he would have seen people pulling together and it was always people helping each other," said McCarthy. "The 1980s were recessionary and times were tough. All this he would have learned from his mother and father. They were dedicated people and country people and extremely hard-working people. His father would have helped a lot of people. 'No' was not in his vocabulary. Jon would have learned his humility and work ethic completely from his mother and father and his immediate family."

Cronin said his parents were generous, sometimes to a fault. He recalls his mother and father being very charitable to the African missions and the poverty agencies in Ireland. Though they had little to give, he saw them often giving more than they could afford.

"My mother used to say, 'There's no pocket in a shroud,'" he said. "You can't take it with you, so you better do something while you're

here. I grew up that way with my mother and my father."

Early in Jon's career, people around South Boston began to note his involvement. Kineavy, who was a chief aide to Mayor Tom Menino, recalled meeting Cronin when there was an uptick in snortable heroin in South Boston. With the problem festering in the Old Colony development, the South Boston Collaborative set up a drop-in center at one of the public housing units. Cronin was very involved and became even more involved when the drug problem morphed into a suicide cluster, Kineavy said. He would provide food and help wherever possible. Kineavy recalled seeing the non-profit's rickety old van replaced with a brand-new vehicle.

"There was a new van suddenly," said Kineavy. "I asked them if they wanted to tell me about it. They said they couldn't, and I asked why. They said the person who gave it to them made them promise not to say anything to anyone. It ended up being Jon."

Paul Burton, executive vice president of the Ron Burton Training Village (RBTv), said that Cronin joined their board and is part of a group that gives at least \$22,000 to the organization each year. With a mission to train



The Boston Irish Honors 2022

HONOREES OVER THE YEARS

This unique event celebrates the heritage of Boston's Irish people and their families by honoring remarkable families and persons who share our Boston Irish heritage. Whether emigrants themselves of the descendants of Irish immigrants, Boston Irish Honorees are admirable for their exemplary endeavors in public service, business and community leadership.

Today's honorees join a storied list of individuals and families whose personal and family stories we have told; including US Labor Secretary Martin J. Walsh, Senator Ed Markey, Senator Paul Kirk, former Boston Globe publisher Mike Sheehan, the Irish American Partnership's Mary Sugrue, Jim and Mary Judge, Jim Brett and the Brett family, the Corcoran family and many more. The 2022 Host Committee is chaired by Joseph R. Nolan Jr., CEO of Eversource and himself a 2021 honoree.

Today's honorees- Irish Pastoral Center director Mary Swanton, Legendary Boston College hockey coach Jerry York and Irish-born developer Jon Cronin- represent the best qualities of the Irish:-devotion to families and friends; a sense of compassion for all people no matter their place of birth or station in life; and a deep connection to our common ancestral Irish homeland. In their personal and



The Nolan Family (2021)



The Sugrue Family (2021)

professional lives, Boston Irish Honorees inspire us and our fellow citizens with their

dedication to our community and our country.

2021

Mary Sugrue, Joseph R. Nolan Jr., Ed Forry

2019

Jim Carmody, Kathleen & John Drew, Grace Cotter Regan

2018

Rev. Richard "Doc" Conway; Mary & Bob Scannell; Dr. Trevor McGill, MD

2017

Nora, Annmarie & 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

For Jon Cronin, relationships are what make things happen



Sean McCarthy, a childhood friend of Jon Cronin, in front of one of his restaurants - Tequila Jack's in Cork. Sean and Jon maintain a business partnership.
Photo courtesy Sean McCarthy.

challenged youth on the core values of love, peace, patience, and humility, Cronin has become heavily invested.

"To me, Jon Cronin is a lifesaver and a wonderful, angelic type of person who doesn't want an accolade, but just wants to help others and expects nothing in return," Burton said.

"That's an extraordinary way to live life. He really has a passion to make sure those that fall through the cracks get a hand up."

"He genuinely cares about other human beings and that drives him," added Lafferty. "His passion is just really about people."

Cronin said his dedication is about having seen the suffering and poverty locally and around the world. Nicole and their children are often part of the effort as well. However, when compared to the folks who run these causes, he feels his effort is minimal.

"It's enjoyable to help in that way," he said. "I don't golf, and I don't sail...The people who do this work do it 60 hours a week. I do it two hours a week. I don't see it the way others might...You make a tiny, tiny difference and it makes your day."

Cronin's friends and acquaintances on both sides of the

Atlantic describe him as someone admirable for his success and his quiet generosity. With an eye for opportunity and the patience to carry things out, he is seen as much a success in Boston as in Cork.

Perhaps it all is best described by his childhood friend and business partner, Seanie McCarthy.

"What people don't see is the amount of work Jon does behind the scenes for the ordinary person and that he has a big heart and a very big heart for Irish people," said McCarthy. "Our loss in Cork has been Boston's gain. That's the way we put it."

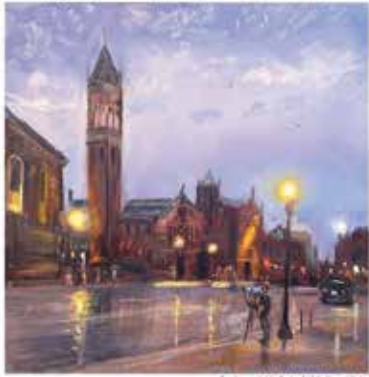
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Boston Common at Christmastime.

Original painting by Vincent Crotty

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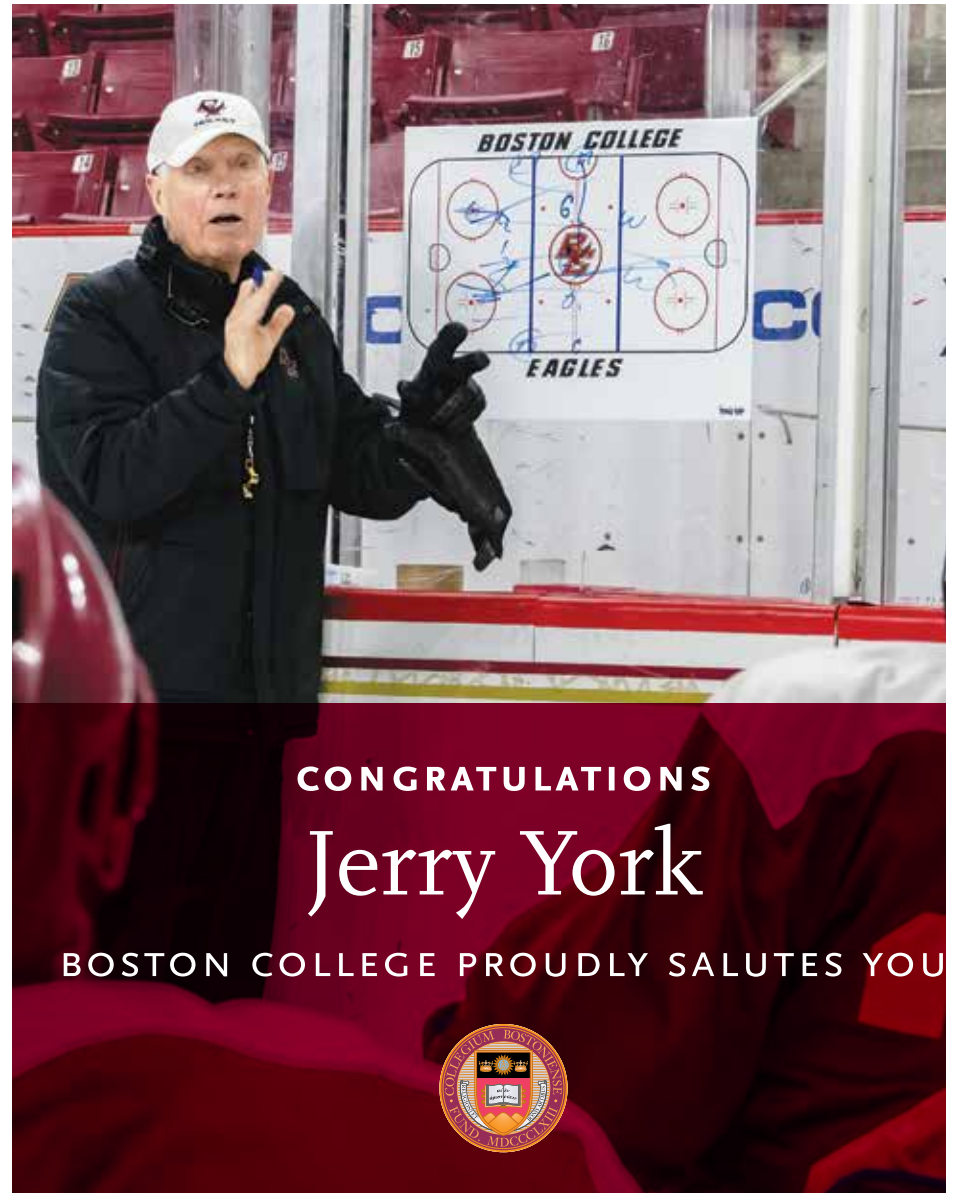
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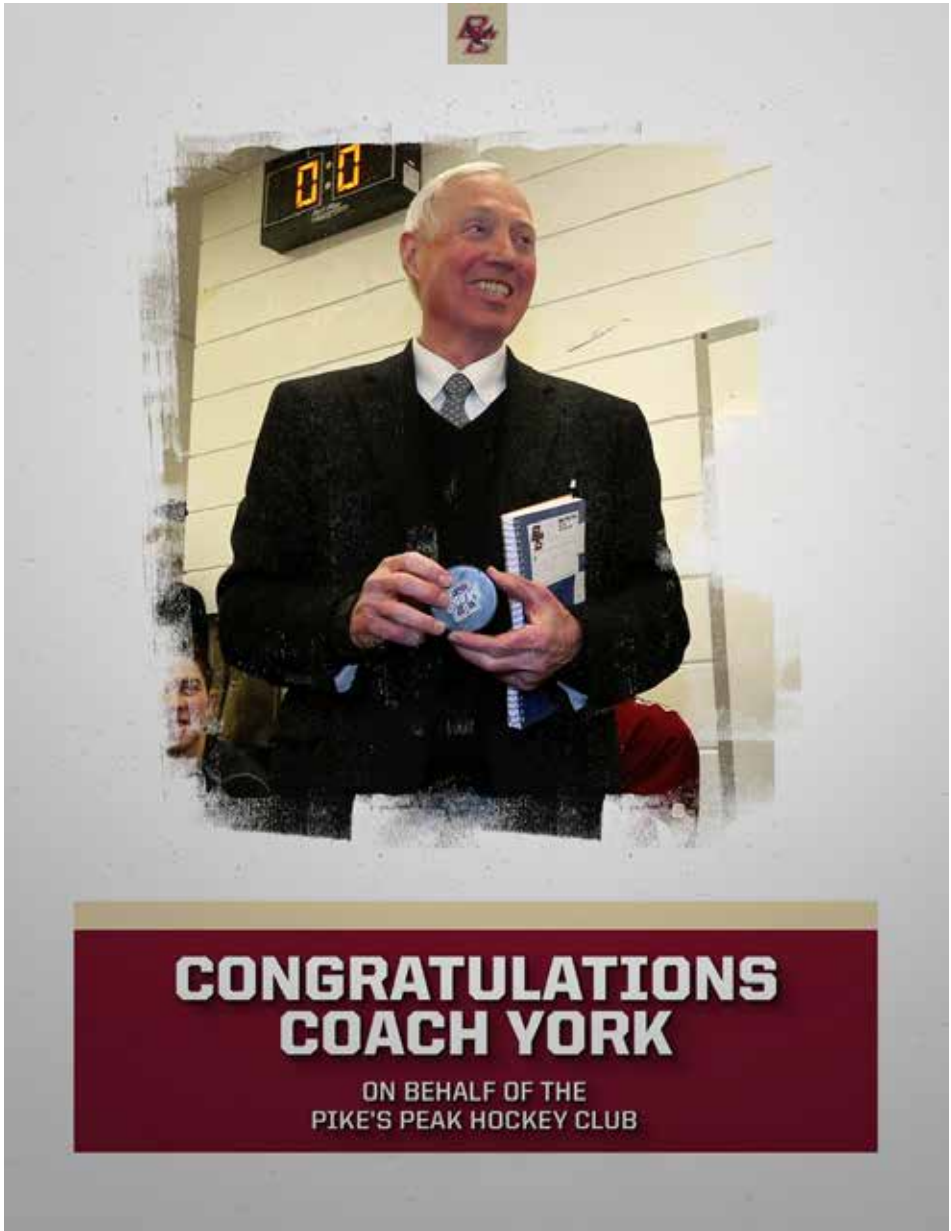
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