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‘Christmas Celtic Sojourn’ hits the 20-year mark, with a note of poignancy underscoring the script

BY SEAN SMITH

BOSTON IRISH CONTRIBUTOR

This is a year unlike any other for “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn.”

The 2022 edition marks the 20th anniversary of the popular holiday stage production, which features music, dance, and storytelling from Irish, Scottish, other Celtic – and occasionally non-Celtic – traditions. Irish singer-songwriter Karan Casey returns to the line-up as a featured performer for the first time in 15 years, while Seamus Egan (banjo, mandolin, whistle, guitar) and Maeve Gilchrist (harp) once again fill their valuable roles as co-music directors as well as members of the show’s instrumental ensemble.

“Christmas Celtic Sojourn” will be live in person at the Zeiterion Theatre in New Bedford (Dec. 10), Hanover Theatre in Worcester (Dec. 12), Shalin Liu Performance Center in Rockport (Dec. 13) and Boston’s Cutler Majestic Theatre (Dec. 16-18). In addition, the show will present live virtual performances from Dec. 20 to Dec. 25, with on-demand streams available from Dec. 26 to Jan. 2.

But there is also an unavoidable poignancy to “A Christmas



Despite serious health issues, Brian O'Donovan plans to be on stage (and in his accustomed chair) for “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn.”
Matthew Muise photo

Celtic Sojourn” this year: In October, the show’s creator and host, long-time WGBH broadcaster Brian O'Donovan, revealed he has glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer.

Interviewed recently, O'Donovan says he plans to be involved in as much of the show as possible, including on stage, where he introduces and interacts with various performers, reads holiday-themed poetry and prose, and encourages the audience to sing along and, generally, to get into the spirit of things.

Carrying on as if nothing were happening doesn't seem an appropriate course to follow for “Sojourn,” but neither does making his situation the focus of this year’s show, says O'Donovan.

“We’re looking at someplace in the middle. This is our 20th anniversary; that is a big deal and something very much worth celebrating. But ‘A Christmas Celtic Sojourn’ is very much a family show, one that brings us together during a special time of year and allows us to think on our lives – the joys and pleasures, certainly, and also the challenges we face.”

O'Donovan praises the team
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Saluting three Boston Irish 2022 Honorees:
Mary Swanton, Jon Cronin, and Jerry York

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Introducing TravelAbility: All about sharing what is needed to cope with disability needs

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Nearly killed by a stroke, 'Lucky' Tom Tinlin is spreading the gospel of aneurysm prevention

BY BILL FORRY
BOSTON IRISH EDITOR

Now that many families are once again celebrating the holidays together in person, there's an opportunity to swap stories, meet new arrivals, and share happy memories of those we've lost over the years.

It might seem morbid to some, but there's a topic that should be raised with loved ones when the time is right. What is our family history of sudden deaths caused by aneurysms?

Tom Tinlin had no idea that his mother's side of the family lost people to fatal ruptures that went undetected in his childhood years. So, when his own hidden "time bomb" exploded in April 2017, it came as a total shock.

Tinlin, who was the state's highway commissioner at the time, is one of the fortunate ones. About half of people who suffer the same sort of hemorrhagic stroke that he experienced will die in the first 24 hours. Thirty percent will die instantly.

Tommy — as his friends call him — was lucky. The persistent, painful headache that had beset him for about a week was initially misdiagnosed. As he soldiered through his role as the emcee of a benefit for a South Boston charity, he stepped off stage and told his wife Heather that he needed to get to a hospital — and fast.

Heather made it happen, and she and the doctors who treated him at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center saved his life.

Tinlin spent nearly two weeks in the hospital and then had to retire from his demanding job in state government. But he wasn't sidelined for long. Within a few months, he started a new job as an associate principal at Howard Stein Hudson, a Boston-based transportation consulting firm.

In his personal time, he has dedicated himself to raising awareness about the risks of brain aneurysm — and the urgent need to get more research



"People who know they have loved ones who've been stricken in the past should, with the doctor's guidance, get scanned with common methods like an MRI. I look at it like this: All aneurysms are treatable. But by not knowing, the decisions are taken away from you. You may very well be walking around with this time bomb. Then all of a sudden it pops and consider the devastation of that sudden death or the dramatic change in life."

— TOM TINLIN

done on how to save those in danger of strokes.

"I couldn't just lie around like 'woe is me,'" he said. "It makes me feel good to do something, so I decided to really get involved in fundraising with the Brain Aneurysm Foundation, which is the largest private funder of brain aneurysm research in the world."

What he learned in the process are facts that everyone should know and keep in mind.

"The best science available for brain aneurysms tells us that one out of fifty people on the face of the planet have one. In fact, it's one of the most prevalent diseases out there."

And for those who suffer a hemorrhagic stroke — like the one that almost killed him — "the vast majority die." That somber fact, Tom argues, is partly to blame for the relative lack of federal funding that gets devoted to research on brain aneurysms.

"It's been very difficult to get the federal government's attention on this at the NIH level, because most victims of the hemorrhagic event will die and can't advocate for themselves," he said. The other most common form of blood clot — an ischemic stroke — has a far higher rate of survival. Tinlin refers to those sorts of events as "Tedy Bruschi strokes," a reference to the former New England Patriot who survived a serious rupture.

"The ischemic is more like a blood clot and can create havoc for sure, but most people are survivors. It sucks

a lot of the funding away from the hemorrhagic research."

Tinlin and his family, which includes his two children, Grace and Thomas, have thrown themselves into the cause of changing that dynamic. They've mounted an annual golf tournament that has grown by leaps and bounds.

The one this past September drew hundreds of golfers and required three different courses, in Braintree, Dorchester, and Hyde Park — to accommodate the demand. Over its four years, the Tinlin Family Golf Tournament has raised some \$800,000.

"Last year we raised more than \$235,000 and next year we hope to top out at a million. People have really rallied around me and the cause. Secretary Marty Walsh, Gov. Charlie Baker are there each year. And Mayor Wu came to the tourney this year and shared her personal story of someone she lost. The more you talk to people, everybody has a story."

Tinlin is frequently called upon for advice and counsel to people who suddenly find themselves impacted by an aneurysm crisis, says Secretary Walsh.

"Watching him turn that fright for him and his family into the work he does has really been inspiring to see," says Walsh. "Tommy helped so many people in his personal and professional life. It's more common than you realize."

Tinlin is also a fierce advocate for

federal legislation that would require the National Institute of Health to spend \$10 million a year over five years to study the cause and the treatment of brain aneurysms. The bill — known as Ellie's Law — has been introduced several times without success. But Tinlin is determined to help get it through Congress and on the president's desk in the new session.

"Among the brain aneurysm demographic, the majority — female and women of color demographics are the most at risk," he says. "It's not much of an exaggeration to talk about equity here. If I were the prevailing demographic, I would feel that if it was affecting members [of Congress] who look like me, the bill might have a better chance."

If it becomes law, the funding requirement would have a sunset clause in five years, but Tinlin says that modest spending in the NIH budget "is what they need to make a difference."

In the meantime, he is urging people of all backgrounds to become familiar with their own risk factors, particularly the family history, which he only learned about after his near-death experience.

"I had an aunt and uncle on my mother's side who passed from aneurysms," says Tinlin. "Researchers strongly believe that there is a family history."

Tinlin says that people who know they have loved ones who've been stricken in the past should, with the doctor's guidance, get scanned with common methods like an MRI.

"I look at it like this: All aneurysms are treatable. But by not knowing, the decisions are taken away from you. You may very well be walking around with this time bomb. Then all of a sudden it pops and consider the devastation of that sudden death or the dramatic change in life."

On Nov. 1, Tinlin returned to the hospital for a procedure to deal with a second aneurysm in his brain that doctors found while treating his initial rupture in 2017. They had been monitoring it in the intervening years, but this summer his medical team decided it was time to intervene.

The minimally invasive angio procedure only required a single overnight stay, and Tinlin was back to work the next week.

"As people do get together for holidays, they should have these conversations," he says. "When I was growing up, no one was connecting the dots. You still have folks who don't know."

For more information on how you can assist in the cause of preventing death from a brain aneurysm — or to support lobbying efforts for federally-funded research — visit bafound.org.

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"It's not as important where we stand, as in what direction we are moving."
- Oliver Wendell Holmes

DUBLIN - Ireland's population was 2.8 million (4.3 with the North) in 1960 and is projected to pass 8 million (10 with the North) by 2050. All political parties accept that to continue to build an expanding Ireland, where people flourish, will require sustained public investment in housing, schools, hospitals, transportation infrastructure, clean energy, essentially everything, everywhere. No matter which party or coalition governs Ireland, that direction of travel is set.

Reagan's and Thatcher's governments set the direction of travel for the US and the UK during the '80s, relentlessly arguing that reducing the size of government, cutting taxes, and eliminating red tape and regulation would unleash innovation and free enterprise, and improve lives. These notions are still stubbornly popular in the two great Anglo-Saxon democracies because some people became wealthy in their mature economies, but the idea of reducing the size of Ireland's government has zero traction here, where there are no Irish Grover Norquists forever dreaming of drowning governments in bathtubs.

Here, there is a sense that while not everything is perfect, the country is on the right track, a feeling that is psychologically valuable to individuals, organizations, and societies. The government cannot do it all. Businesses will provide most of the livelihoods and taxes, but the government will continue to set the course. Companies think in shorter time increments - quarterly revenue targets, stock prices, and making payroll. As the instrument of the people, government is charged with fostering and harnessing the dynamism of free enterprise while making life as fair and safe as possible for the people. Massachusetts can look to Dublin for examples of how to improve morale by making progress in housing, transportation, and women's rights.

Housing for Ukrainians as a gift back later on?

To date, some 63,000 Ukrainians have arrived in Ireland since Russia's invasion. Ireland's motivation in accepting these refugees is principally humanitarian, but it must be said that as a member of the EU, Ireland is also legally obligated to receive a number of refugees proportional to its population. That adds urgency to the building of accommodations, an urgency that might ultimately be the refugees' gift back to Ireland.

The Irish have opened their hearts, homes, schools, and hospitals to the refugees, receiving commendation from Ukraine President Zelensky for their generosity. But the sheer number of refugees has exacerbated the housing shortage, which was already at crisis level. The government is building more



social housing and 'rapid-build' modular homes, streamlining approval processes for new construction, and offering 50k euro grants to refurbish vacant homes. These ambitious housing initiatives are long overdue and have been hampered by global supply chain problems, but they are starting to work.

There are signs that the war could be moving to a favorable conclusion. Ukraine's retaking of Kherson and the Democrats' strong performance in the US midterms will not encourage Putin to continue his war. The Republican establishment's blaming of Trump for the poor showing of his loyalists will dim Putin's hopes of having his friend return to power, and with a tiny majority in the House, Republican threats to reduce Joe Biden's aid to Ukraine are effectively off the table. If and when the war ends, the vast majority of Ukrainians may well return to their homeland and the accommodations built to serve them could be repurposed for other needy communities and new arrivals to Ireland. The increased supply should also bring the cost of housing down.

A commitment to excellence with public transportation

Dublin's public transportation system is not as sophisticated or comprehensive as those of other leading cities, but the Irish government is committed to creating a world-class operation. For example:

- The Dublin light rail 'Luas' (Irish for speed) system was launched in 2004 and has two lines of sleek trams that intersect at O'Connell Street.
- An extensive network of double-decker buses is constantly adding stops and new employees. An ongoing recruitment campaign for bus drivers uses the tagline "Get thanked for a living" because polite Dubliners (almost) always thank their drivers for delivering them safely.
- Fares across the system have been cut to encourage ridership and to reduce car traffic, and, like several European countries that have already implemented free public transport in some cities as part of their climate strategies, Ireland may do the same.
- More expansion plans for public transport in Dublin have been approved this year, including a \$15 billion plan for a 'proper' underground subway line that will link the northern suburbs, the

airport, the city center and the southern suburbs.

Compare this growing system to Boston's venerable first-in-the-nation subway in the US, and the first electrified subway in the entire world. Historically innovative, the T is still objectively more complete than Dublin's: more lines, stops, riders, underground subway lines, commuter rail, ferries, and linkages to Amtrak. That said, as a one-time daily user of the T, I became accustomed to frequent service failures and visitors referring to the system as "rickety." Observing the T from a distance for the last few years, I think it is obvious that the situation has deteriorated:

- Delays, collisions, derailments, fires on trolleys, buses, and trains have become so common as not to be newsworthy.
- A fire at Park Street, a black-out in Maverick Square, a fatal stairway collapse near JFK, a Red Line door at Broadway dragging a man to his death, a wrong way escalator at Copley maiming patrons. Orange Line riders forced to jump from a burning train and plunge 50 feet into the Mystic River.
- Adding insult to injury, fares have been hiked and services cut.

Outgoing Gov. Charlie Baker had 8 years to improve the T. He spent that time deploying his venture capital pals to slash MBTA spending, arguing it should be "run like a business" (hopefully not like Twitter). Baker's hatchet men blamed allegedly lazy unionized workers and absenteeism for the problems. This weird trip back to the Reagan years of blaming problems on government waste and organized labor has only served to destroy morale. But starving the T is consistent with right wing orthodoxy: Reagan cut food stamps, Clinton cut welfare, Trump defunded the USPS, Rick Scott wants to cut Social Security.

The core problem with the T is not wages or pensions, it is this austerity mindset. The T is not a business, it is a public service that should improve the city and the lives of its people. T workers should be honored as the essential workers that they are. Of course, the T should be run efficiently and cost effectively, but first and foremost, the people deserve a T that is reliable, affordable, safe, and, most importantly, improving.

Boston should look to Dublin's affirmative approach. Dublin's system

is not nearly as large as Boston's, but it is growing, and the Irish people are delighted and proud to have a functioning system. That feeling of optimism and the smiling drivers saying "God bless" to their thankful customers are daily reminders of the importance of morale in organizations and societies.

Women's rights, civil rights: Momentum is for expansion

Abortion rights were secured in the US in 1972, marriage equality in Massachusetts in 2004. In Ireland, the abortion rights and marriage equality referenda passed only recently, in 2018 and 2015, respectively. Even divorce only became legal in 1996. Commenting on these societal changes, the comic Tommy Tiernan remarked that "it was not that long ago that being left-handed was illegal."



The direction of change in Ireland is to expand rights and move forward, not to move backward and take away rights. We attended a Dublin march in October marking the death of Savita Halappanavar, a 31-year-old Indian-born dentist who was excited to be 17 weeks pregnant with her first child in 2012. Experiencing back pain, Savita went to a hospital, where doctors concluded that she had a 100 percent chance of miscarriage. She repeatedly requested an abortion to save her life, but because there was still a detectable fetal heartbeat, she was allowed to die of sepsis. Her death galvanized the referendum movement to repeal the 8th amendment, which banned abortion. Abortion rights were signed into law in December 2018.

Accessing the limited legal abortion services is still challenging in Ireland, (Continued on page 6)

Will immigration unrest fuel the rise of the right?

WICKLOW – The widespread successes of conservative, populist politicians – some of whom are aptly described as “far right” – at the ballot box has been the subject of much reportage and academic study, with plenty to consider on this front in the United States, the United Kingdom and across continental Europe. In Ireland, we have bucked the trend to date. Broadly speaking, the political centre, which most Americans would regard as left of centre, has held.

There are myriad factors behind this. Ireland has historically been a country of emigrants; this island is outward facing. Those who have endeavoured to exploit an emerging sentiment against immigrants they perceive among the citizenry have flopped. And in contrast to the US and the UK, technology and globalisation, the intertwined change agents, have actually benefitted workers from the top to the bottom of the income scale, mainly owing to foreign direct investment. Moreover, the platform of the avowedly nationalist party, Sinn Féin, is unapologetically leftist – even if many of the supporters of the former political branch of the IRA espouse right-wing views on certain contentious matters.

In short, the territory is not as fertile here as elsewhere. Still, though, the question has been put: Is Ireland immune to the rise of the right? Unfolding events may tell the tale. Ireland has accepted tens of thousands of Ukrainians fleeing their war-ravaged land. This is to its great credit, especially given a grave, pre-existing housing crisis that is the most pressing and vexing issue now. Finding homes for so many women and children of Ukraine has placed enormous strain on the system.

At the same time, pursuant to obligations of international law, numerous asylum seekers fleeing trouble spots, such as Afghanistan, Somalia, and Syria, have been taken in. Recently, approximately 380 single male asylum seekers were suddenly bused into East Wall, a north inner city Dublin neighbourhood. Many residents of the working class area, which is already ethnically and racially diverse, were outraged. Noisy, crowded protests have occurred in the vicinity of the building the men are staying in.

“My children can’t get a house where they were born and reared. Thousands of Irish are living on the streets of this city. And these foreigners are living in East Wall for free.”... “The government didn’t consult us.”... “This wouldn’t happen in Donnybrook or Blackrock (very affluent sections of Dublin); they think they can do it to us in East Wall and we won’t fight back.”... “Get them out!” These and other furious cries are featured in social media posts and on TV and radio reports.

The tiny band of fringe-dwelling, anti-immigration activists – “Ireland First” – sensed an opening in East Wall and swiftly arrived in an attempt to

capitalise. A clear majority of locals, thankfully, resented their presence and do not subscribe to their hateful ideology. As one protester said about the newcomers, “I don’t have any anger toward them...they’re just pawns in a game.” The issue is with a government they believe has failed them by granting no notice of impending disruption and not eliciting their input on the process.

East Wall is not the sole flash point. A quick stroll from my home in Wicklow Town is the Grand Hotel, which has for several years been a direct provision centre that accommodated asylum seekers, primarily families, without incident. Despite initial opposition, they were generally welcomed and assimilated seamlessly into schools, sports clubs, etc.

Yet in another instance in which it seemingly had to make a hasty, pressurised decision, the government replaced many of these families with hundreds of single males who were crammed into bunk beds with little to no privacy. It wasn’t long before tensions bubbled over and there was a violent melee on the main street. Women in town have reported being too nervous to walk by the premises after dark and suspicious activities are regularly recounted in the town’s hostelrys.

Sure enough, the “Ireland First” brigade descended upon us with megaphones and placards. It was heartening that the weather was horrendous that Saturday and only a few turned up to listen to them spew bile. On Sunday, however, a much larger group of Wicklow Town residents met and vented a collective sense of frustration at the government, the elected representatives from our constituency, and the owner of the hotel.

It all boils down to this. Those who summarily dismiss the fears and concerns in East Wall or Wicklow Town, some of which are entirely legitimate, and instead label them bigots or are condescending in their assessment of the situation, are playing into the hands of the far right. There are no easy answers to the questions that have been raised, but political leaders must engage constructively with affected communities. This is a crucial cog in the way forward on immigration and integration. And it is potentially vital to ensuring that the centre continues to hold in Ireland.

Every year, a dream about Thanksgiving

In response to annual queries from friends and family in the run-up to Thanksgiving, my mantra is that it’s the single day of the year I wish I were back in Boston. The whole Thanksgiving weekend is wonderful. In Ireland, while most are aware of this central element of Americana, and some even celebrate a feast they have become acquainted

(Continued on page 6)



Former Congressman Brian Donnelly (ctr) at the American Embassy Dublin, with family members (l-r): Nephew Larry Donnelly, his wife Eileen Whelan, and sons Larry Óg and Seán Whelan

Ambassador Cronin hosts Irish Embassy event honoring former US Rep. Donnelly

Marks 35 years since ‘Donnelly Visa’ legislation

DUBLIN – On Mon., Nov. 7, United States Ambassador to Ireland Claire Cronin hosted an event at her residence in honour of former US Congressman Brian Donnelly. The affair was timed to coincide with the 35th anniversary of the commencement of the “Donnelly Visa” legislation, which allowed approximately 26,000 young Irish women and men to obtain Green Cards and realize the American Dream.

Cronin, a native of Brockton, Massachusetts, recalled that she cast one of her first votes for Congressman Donnelly and reflected on the difference he made in the lives of so many people on both sides of the Atlantic. Her own family benefitted, she noted – a sister-in-law was a recipient of a Donnelly Visa.

In an interview with RTÉ news presenter Bryan Dobson, Donnelly talked about his very Irish childhood and upbringing in Dorchester, his first bid for the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1972 – one observer commented that the names of the two dozen strong field of candidates “looked like the Dublin phonebook” – and his successful 1978 run for Congress, where he became an influential behind the scenes player who was close to the Democratic leadership. He also discussed his time as Bill Clinton’s ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago.

But much of the conversation was dedicated to the political wrangling on Capitol Hill that ultimately produced the Donnelly Visa program. Donnelly

referenced a plot hatched by a group of Irish American members of the US in The Dubliner pub in Washington to vote against a package of proposed immigration reforms that stirred the ire of then House Speaker Tip O’Neill – in order to, as Donnelly he put it, “get a better deal for the Irish kids living in the shadows in my district and across the country.”

The plot succeeded, and Donnelly’s work on the immigration issue made him the “go to guy” in the US Congress for the Irish government throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. This extended to economic development and foreign direct investment and the troubles in Northern Ireland.

He regaled the packed crowd, which included Irish High Court judges, the former attorney general of Ireland, retired diplomats, high profile journalists, and several members of the Oireachtas (Irish parliament) with humorous stories of political intrigue and shenanigans in the two places that shaped him: Boston and Ireland.

Commenting afterward, the honoree acknowledged “a really special night. I am very grateful to Ambassador Cronin and her wonderful staff. Being recognized like this in front of my nephew Larry and his family, as well as our cousin John Murphy from north Galway – in the company of so many distinguished guests – is something I will never forget.”

– LARRY DONNELLY

Irish cancer research team talks collaboration in Boston

By ED FORRY
BOSTON IRISH PUBLISHER

Two members of a cross-border team working on creating an All-Island response to cancer research on the island visited Boston in November for meetings with their counterparts in America.

"It's a feel-good story about cross border cooperation and collaboration with the US, particularly Boston," said Tim Kirk, the *Boston Irish* columnist who supports the effort from his home in Dublin.

The visitors conducted a symposium on Nov. 28 at the Seaport offices of Halloran Consulting Group. The session paid tribute to the late Dr. Bob Mauro, the director of the Global Leadership Institute at Boston College who passed away from cancer last month.

The Boston Irish Magazine interviewed team leader Dr William Gallagher, professor of Cancer Biology at University College Dublin, during his visit. Following are excerpts from the exchange:

Q. How do you describe AICRI?

A. With the All-Island Cancer Research

Institute (AICRI), we're bringing people together, both in North Ireland and Ireland, to create a common, overarching framework for cancer research. So we have brought together 10 academic institutions across the island, two in North Ireland, and eight in the Republic, and a variety of other stakeholders to tackle one of our kind of leading public health related issues. Their laboratory scientists, clinicians, patients, cancer charities, etc, are working really to come up with a common approach in terms of tackling cancer. We've been doing this over the last two years, and have been quite successful in terms of bringing that community together and focus on a couple of areas.

Q. Can you give some examples?

A. For one, we're interested in coming up with better tools for cancer prevention and new diagnostics and therapeutics, but also, and importantly, programs to deal with people who have had a lived experience of cancer. So, in Ireland, we're talking about at least 250,000 people - or three times the number of people

who would fit into Croke Park on All Ireland final day - who have lived that experience. So again, a very significant portion of the population in Ireland.

This is the first time that all of these institutions have come together. Now, there is kind of precedence in terms of historical context - it's part of the Good Friday agreement, which is close to the 25 years' anniversary. A key spinoff of that was the focus on cancer research.

And there is a historical program of collaboration between Northern Ireland, Ireland, and also the US National Cancer Institute. That was quite a successful tripartite kind of program, but it didn't encompass all of the institutions. A critical part of what we're doing now is bringing all of the community together.

Q. What is the goal of this visit to Boston?

A. That was a critical part of coming here, a kind of engaging with the community. We're meeting with cancer researchers from Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Massachusetts General Hospital, and the Northeastern and Harvard Medical Schools. We also have a strong US/Ireland kind of interaction in cancer research with a number of people who are embedded within the cancer research system in Boston. So, for example, Professor Lydia Lynch, from Harvard Medical School, a world expert on

cancer immunology, was one of the panel members yesterday; and Laura MacConaill, who is from Ireland but has been in Boston for the last 20 years, is a world expert in precision cancer medicine. So, part of what we've been doing here is finalizing those interactions and then looking at ways that we can find to promote and enrich those interactions between us and Ireland.

Q. What do you want Bostonians to know about this effort?

A. And I think the key message for us is that we use the tagline Cancer Knows No Borders, so when we're talking about addressing cancer, we need to work better in a team-based approach across different institutions, across countries. And so that's part of what we're trying to do here. While the All-Island Cancer Research students focus on integrating and bringing together people within Ireland, they also want to make sure that we work internationally with our colleagues as well.

Anybody who wishes to help our mission to both integrate cancer research across the island of Ireland, as well as further US-Ireland collaborations in cancer research, contact us at aicriproject@gmail.com. We are always interested in philanthropic support. Our website is aicri.org.

BOSTON IRISH LETTERS FROM DUBLIN, Wicklow

It feels like Ireland is on the right track

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especially in rural communities. Many women are still forced to travel to Britain. Even so, Ireland is moving in the direction of more rights, not fewer. By comparison, women living in blue state Massachusetts have more reproductive health services available to them than their Irish counterparts have, but the overturning of Roe v. Wade by the US Supreme Court has taken rights away from women. The Democrats' midterm election results are a positive sign that American women, especially young women, and their allies are prepared to fight (and vote) to win back the rights that have been stolen.

Looking across the water to what's going on in the UK

"Quand je me regarde je m'inquiète, quand je me compare, je me rassure (When I study myself, I worry, but when I compare myself I am reassured).

- Prince Talleyrand

This maxim applies to countries as well

as to individuals. Compared to Britain's parade of five prime ministers in the six years since Brexit, the Irish government looks competent, stable, and visionary. The British Central Bank forecast calls for the deepest and longest recession in 100 years. Tax shortfalls, railway and health service strikes, labor shortages in some areas and high unemployment in others, are signs of the downward spiral caused by the combined impacts of Brexit. The Tories' latest PM, the billionaire Rishi Sunak, has announced "tough decisions" (aka austerity) to fill the hole in their budget. Slashing public services, including the treasured NHS (National Health Service) will accelerate England's decline and amplify discontent. The UK has the worst performing economy in the G20 except for that of heavily sanctioned Russia. A recent Yougov poll revealed that less than 30 percent of the British public now believe that Brexit was a good idea, and nearly 60 percent think it was a mistake. Britons may soon be jumping out of metaphorical Orange Line trains into the Mystic.

What is different and slightly hopeful in late 2022 is that the BBC and other British news outlets have *finally* started to name Brexit as a possible root cause of the UK's distress. Until now, 'the B word' was verboten.

Meanwhile, in Ireland ...

While the UK has blown a gaping hole in its budget, Ireland's Office of the Exchequer found another 2 billion euros of unanticipated tax receipts from multinationals hidden under a cabbage leaf in November's budget garden. The news was greeted by the customary frowning ministers with a warning that the windfalls cannot be counted on to reoccur and attention to the hundreds of layoffs from Twitter, Stripe, and Facebook and the brutal and likely illegal manner (by email) of the layoffs. Some worry that downsizing is the beginning of a larger tech swoon. Others wonder if the golden tax eggs laid by the multinationals are not just lucky breaks - not, like a sunny day in Ireland, to be trusted - but signs that Ireland's status as the only native

English-speaking country in Europe with a well-educated, highly skilled, youthful, and growing population might mean that the island's flourishing has really just begun.

Looking forward

As 2022 ends, Ireland is on the right path, always mindful that policy decisions taken today will determine Ireland's trajectory for the next 100 years of nationhood. For the USA, the challenges are both material and philosophical. After the wrong turn of MAGA, the US turned to Joe Biden to steady the ship with policies that have been proven to work in the past. The Rescue Bill and the CHIPS and the Inflation Reduction Acts make his economic legislative achievements the most impressive since FDR, and the midterm results indicate that this change in direction might endure.

A step backwards, after you have taken a wrong turn, is a step in the right direction.

- Kurt Vonnegut

Will immigration unrest fuel the rise of the right?

(Continued from page 5)

with, it passes largely unnoticed. It is an indistinguishable, relatively grim Thursday in a month people are willing to pass by ahead of a December filled with Christmas cheer.

In 2021, Galway East TD Ciarán Cannon was attacked for daring to suggest that an "Irish Thanksgiving" might be adopted. He was accused of embracing cultural imperialism and endorsing a holiday of dubious historical origin. I don't think it was a bad idea, but regrettably, it's never going to happen.

Try as my family does to recreate the magic, it's just not the same. We really do need to spend it stateside one of these years.

RIP, Dr. Mauro, a man for others

Boston and Ireland lost a great friend and tireless advocate when Dr. Robert "Bob" Mauro, Director of the Global Leadership Institute at Boston College, passed away after an extended illness on Oct. 31. He was 46. Under his stewardship, the institute was an impactful

force for good in both Northern Ireland and in the Republic, and beyond.

I was lucky to get to know Bob due to my involvement with the Kennedy Summer School, a festival of Irish and American culture, politics, and history held in New Ross, Co. Wexford, every September. He was instrumental in bringing BC on board as a sponsor of the summer school and generously agreed to serve as a KSS co-director. Bob was with us just weeks before he died. We knew he wasn't well, but as ever, he conducted a superb interview with Bertie Ahern and

was his good-natured self throughout. Bob was a terrific guy who will be hugely missed. The thoughts of all of us on the KSS organising committee are with Bob's wife, children, parents, sister, and close friends.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to Boston Irish readers!

Larry Donnelly is a Boston born and educated attorney, a Law Lecturer at the University of Galway, and a regular media contributor on politics, current affairs, and law in Ireland and the US.

J-1 Aiofe begins building a career in New York City

Aiofe O'Donohue, a current J-1, has found her time living in New York City to be an incredibly beneficial experience. There, she has found a perfect mix of good business experience alongside an enriching social life. According to her most recent update, she has switched jobs and has straightened out her career path while still gaining relevant experience.

Looking back, Aiofe said the process of obtaining her visa "couldn't have been easier." She contacted Rian with only six weeks left to secure her papers before finding herself outside of her year of eligibility. "Rian was fantastic in helping me get organized and get to my embassy interview in the quickest time possible," she said, "and she obtained the visa after all."

When she arrived in the States, she struggled a bit with the transition, saying that it was a big adjustment. However, within 2-3 months she had settled into her routine and started making her time worthwhile.

Aiofe didn't come to the US with a job in hand, but a contact in Ireland helped her obtain one only a week into the visa experience. She was very grateful for this opportunity, but found that the work didn't spark anything within her. Luckily, she found a new position at a company that she had wanted to work for since graduating.

Although switching jobs was a difficult process, Aiofe was able to lean on the team at Rian to help her through the transition by walking the employer



Aiofe O'Donohue
Finding the perfect mix

through the process of what it's like to employ a J-1 visa holder. Her job has allowed her to work in global markets in one of the largest financial markets in the world where she is with some of the best foreign exchange professionals in the world. The company has an office in Dublin, and she's hoping she'll have the opportunity to transfer.

Aiofe also has a healthy work life balance in the city. She loves the social scene and energy of the city where socially "you can be whatever you want it to be." She said New York City has clubs, and Irish bars on every corner. There are also plenty of wholesome things to do and see, such as going to see a Halloween Dog Parade in Tompkins Square Park. She wants to see Boston, but noted that "there is so much to do in New York that I almost feel like I don't need to leave!"

Aiofe shared a piece of advice that other J-1s frequently share with us. She wants future J-1s to step out of their comfort zones to get the most out of their experience. Applying for the visa is a big step, but she believes that it's the best way to immerse yourself in the culture.

Aiofe is an ambassador for the Rian J-1 program. To follow along with her J-1 year and check out her photos, visit @rianj_1 on Instagram.

The new Massachusetts Driver's License bill

Q. *Where do things stand now?*

A. On Nov. 8, Massachusetts voted to ensure that all individuals who reside in Massachusetts and are eligible to apply for driver's license can do so. Over 1.2 million voters demonstrated solidarity with the immigrant community to guarantee that this law will take effect on July 1, 2023.

Given this, we want to summarize the key aspects of this policy change and remind individuals that if you lack lawful status, you must wait until July 1, 2023 to begin the process to acquire a driver's license.

- In addition to the documents that the Massachusetts RMV previously accepted, the agency will allow individuals to present other documents to prove their identity and date of birth. A foreign passport or consular identification document along with a secondary document, e.g., a birth certificate or foreign

country ID, will be accepted. All documents not in English must be presented with a certified translation.

- All immigrant drivers will need to learn the rules and regulations and demonstrate that knowledge through a learner's permit exam and a road test. Individuals who lack lawful status will receive a Standard ID, not a REAL ID, which means it is not federally compliant and will not serve as sufficient proof for domestic air travel after May 3, 2023. The Standard ID, however, does permit Massachusetts residents to operate vehicles and demonstrate proof of identity for state or local purposes.

- The text of law specifically states that personal information, such as failure to provide proof of lawful status, cannot be shared by the RMV unless "required by federal law or as authorized by regulations promulgated by the attorney general." As a result of this language,

if you apply for a driver's license or learner's permit under the new law, you should not put yourself at risk of enforcement action by immigration officials.

- The law does not impact foreign visitors who intend to drive in Massachusetts. In those circumstances, the same set of regulations apply. Massachusetts allows foreign nationals to operate a motor vehicle in the state provided they possess a valid driver's license, are over the age of 16, drive the same type of vehicle that they are licensed to operate in their home country, carry an English translation of the license if the license is not in English, and not have a suspended or revoked license.

Disclaimer: These articles are published to inform the general public, not to advise in individual cases. All law, including immigration law, is always subject to change. If you need legal advice, you can contact Rian's immigration legal staff at 617-984-6542.



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Epiphany in a warm Sligo kitchen: My aunt's grace, my Mum's spirit bring closure to 18 years of regrets

By MAUREEN FORRY-SORRELL
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

In the weeks leading up to my most recent visit to Ireland, my thoughts kept drifting to my mother, who passed away in 2004. Mum's parents hailed from County Mayo and County Leitrim and had resided in the states for several years before starting a family.

Mum died when I was 25, not much older than she was when she lost her father. As with most deaths, my mother's and my grieving processes were fraught with complicated emotions that we had grappled with throughout our lives. While she was alive, her life and mine were intertwined in a way that was both comforting and infuriating in turn.

I had never been able to make peace with the loss of my mother, and in the years following her death, I struggled to regain my footing. I hated myself for not having been strong enough to have the hard discussions with her: the talks about the regrets that she and I both had; what life would be like for the family once she was gone; and minutiae like the stories behind the antiques she had collected with her own mother over the years. I was ashamed that I wasn't able to help give her closure at the end of her life. Although I was well into adulthood when she fell ill, I found myself wishing for an adult to tell me how to handle something as monumental as my mother's death.

(One of my greatest sadnesses is that Mum never got the opportunity to meet my husband and children – or, rather, that those three only know her through the stories I share with them, stories that usually end with the phrase, "She would have loved you so much." Whether that means much to them, I'm not sure. But it means a lot to me.)

As the family prepared for our trip, my mind wandered back to visits we made to Ireland when I was a child. I had found it funny that my mother's aunt, who had married Mum's youngest uncle, was only a few years older than my parents. They formed a bond almost immediately upon meeting, and subsequent visits by Aunt Claire Casey and our family cemented a wonderful kinship that tied our lives together despite the distance.

"Auntie" Claire made several trips to Boston, which were always eagerly awaited by Mum especially. She reminded Mum of her own mother, who passed away when I was a child. Claire's gentle demeanor and soft, lyrical way of speaking showcased a humorous and creative mind whose hands painted stunningly beautiful Irish landscapes, and whose words painted wonderful poems and stories in that particular way only the Irish can.

Some of Mum's most precious memories centered around trips to her favorite Cape Cod town, Brewster. She so enjoyed visiting the various shops filled with crafts made with seashells, sandglass, and lovingly carved music boxes. It was in one of those shops that she selected a memento to send to Claire in Sligo: a simple wooden music box that, when opened, plinked out the tones of "Old Cape Cod."

*Winding roads that seem to beckon you
Miles of green beneath the skies of blue
Church bells chimin' on a Sunday morn'
Remind you of the town where you were born*

The lyrics describing the beauty of Cape Cod can easily be mistaken for any of the endless songs and poetry written about Ireland. I can't know if the song was chosen by Mum specifically for that reason, or if, indeed, she even knew the words. But the similarities between the two lands, tied together through music, can't be denied.



In Aunt Claire's Sligo kitchen: Maureen Forry-Sorrell, middle, Grainne Hall left and Claire Stevenson Casey right.

As Mum progressed deep into the illness that would eventually take her from us, word reached us that Claire was planning a trip to Boston, a trip we knew was intended for saying "goodbye" to each other, though neither Mum nor any of our family acknowledged that. In the days leading up to her death, Mum softly spoke of her hope that she and Claire could once again make the trip back to Brewster. She slipped into near unconsciousness shortly afterwards, but when her Aunt arrived at her bedside, Mum smiled and let out a little whisper of joy.

A nurse by trade and spirit, Aunt Claire calmly, and in her best maternal way, helped usher Mum from this life into the next. She leaned over and lovingly whispered into Mum's ear, "It's okay to let go, Mary." She did so the following morning, surrounded by her husband and children. Claire's poise and understanding of the gravity and beauty of that moment filled me with gratitude, but also a sense of awe.

So, as we prepared to travel to Mum's ancestral homeland, my dearest hope was that Claire would indulge me by recalling that day with me. I hoped that connecting our hearts together through that bittersweet memory would help with my healing process, now 18 years in the making.

So it was that in early October of this year, I was delighted to find myself, my husband, and our children with Claire in her warm Sligo kitchen, along with my cousin Grainne, one of Claire's grown children. Conversation soon, as I'd hoped it would, turned to the time of Mum's death. Surreally, as we talked and recounted those hours, my eyes landed on Grainne, whose resemblance to my mother was suddenly so real – her humor, her smile, her gentle and graceful feminine features. The genetic similarities were stunning.

During our visit, Grainne recounted a funeral she had recently attended, where the eulogist spoke of the curious practice of documenting a life by noting the date of birth and the date of death. The part that matters, she said, was in the "dash" between the

numbers, where the living happened. Isn't it funny that those experiences, the love, the heartbreak, the joy, the grief, the healing, the music – are all crammed together into a simple, single dash.

Claire brought out the music box Mum had given her, and recounted the following story: After arriving home from her sad trip to Boston, the music box suddenly, without manipulation, began playing "Old Cape Cod" in her sitting room. Claire said that that she had debated telling me that story, worried that it would sadden me. Quite the contrary.

I held the box, turned the key, and listened to the tune while taking in the scene in front of me: There were my beloved aunt, her beautiful daughter who looked so like my mother, my husband, and our darling children. I sat engrossed in the spiritual musicality of the moment. Finally, after 18 years, I felt my mother's spirit, and she was there with us, happy and at peace.

This is my note of gratitude to Ireland, and my eulogy to you, Mum, Mary Casey Forry, 1944-2004.

When all the others were away at Mass
I was all hers as we peeled potatoes.
They broke the silence, let fall one by one
Like solder weeping off the soldering iron:
Cold comforts set between us, things to share
Gleaming in a bucket of clean water.
And again let fall. Little pleasant splashes
From each other's work would bring us to our senses.

So while the parish priest at her bedside
Went hammer and tongs at the prayers for the dying

And some were responding and some crying
I remembered her head bent towards my head,
Her breath in mine, our fluent dipping knives –
Never closer the whole rest of our lives.

Seamus Heaney

Coping while on the road with disability needs

Following is the first in a series entitled Boston Irish TravelAbility written by Boston Irish Associate Publisher Maureen Forry-Sorrell, who notes, "We are a family with two young kids, one with a disability. Families like ours struggle with travel due to all the "extras" that are needed to cope with disability needs. Instead of things we can't do, we will share all the things we can do while also forging some amazing memories.

BY MAUREEN FORRY-SORRELL
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Like most American families, the pandemic put a sudden, and eventually a long, pause on our family's lofty travel goals. Prior to Covid, the previous years had been taken up by a relocation, multiple home improvements, health complications, and the day-to-day grind, but it was the coronavirus that threw a wet blanket on our dreams of traveling abroad.

Always one to peruse travel sites and social media groups – not to mention my near-constant immersion in a love of all things Irish – I found myself one night this summer Googling airfare to Ireland. It was a fool's errand, of course, as news of soaring fuel prices dominated the headlines. Still, I was curious.

My jaw dropped when I saw that rates for one short week in the early fall on Aer Lingus and Delta were remarkably affordable. "Aaron!" I shouted. "It's \$300 one way to fly to Dublin!!" Without missing a beat, my husband shouted back "Well, book it!"

So I did, and then I started researching travel in Ireland in the autumn, the one time of year I had not visited the island. But then we remembered: Like most busy families, we aren't people who can just pick up and leave on a whim. We have a dog that needs boarding, jobs that require pre-planned vacation time, kids who attend school, and, most importantly, we have a special needs child.

Families of special needs kids have an entire separate list of things to consider, a mental checklist that needs to anticipate the expected and the unexpected. Who will manage her multiple medications? Will the airline gate-check her wheelchair? What about her leg braces and the device she uses to communicate with the world as a non-verbal child? How will we ensure her safety in a city should she become separated from us, unable to say her name or the names of her parents? Anxiety medications for me, the nervous mother, will also fall under this umbrella.

Not only that, but will the car we hire be large enough to hold her wheelchair, her refrigerated box of medications, entertainment for both kids – and luggage for four people planning to roam the country upon arrival?

So I set out to figure out how easy, or difficult, will it be for us to tool around Ireland while hauling all of our kiddo's accessories: wheelchair, hygiene products, medications, leg braces, and the communication device. It's not like castles and round towers have wheelchair ramps. Days hiking to view



Above: arriving at Logan Maureen, Lianna, Aaron and Nate.
Right: Safe Travels! Masks, like Lianna's, were worn throughout the trip.
Below: The boot of the rental car secured for us by Tourism Ireland: A Peugeot packed to the brim.

hidden waterfalls were certain to be a struggle, if not impossible.

But we were determined. Luckily, I had friends at Tourism Ireland who were there to lend a hand and readily answer the questions we had.

Part one: The preparation

The first thing to accept is that every family has a ridiculously long "To-Do" list when planning any sort of getaway. We had painted ourselves into a bit of a



sticky corner by booking our trip during school time, and for that I make a public apology to my kids' teachers. The flurry of emails that were sent to and from schools, making well intentioned, but ultimately doomed, attempts to keep up with school work while zooming around Ireland, now sit in my Gmail



inbox waiting to be deleted.

In reality, the only thing we could do was to make exhaustive lists of things that absolutely had to travel with us, such as medications and their schedules, hygiene products, handicap placards to use for accessible parking (which we accidentally left behind in our rental

car when we returned to the airport), wheelchair replacement parts, binders full of medical information in case of emergency.

These necessities, together with the standard luggage needed for four people on a 10-day trip overseas, had us worried that Ireland would not have vehicle large enough to contain everything. Luckily, our friends at Tourism Ireland came through and helped us find what we needed, although we stuffed it to the gills.

Despite all the planning, we still forgot a few things, but we filled the gaps by spending roughly the GDP of Ireland at Dunnes Stores in Dublin.

Part two: Logan Airport

The TSA at Boston Logan Airport runs a program called "TSA Cares" (tsa.gov/contact-center/form/cares) that provides additional support for travelers who have extra needs, be they sensory, mobility, a service animal, extra medications and the like. It is a great program, but when we requested assistance upon arrival, it never showed up. Luckily, our Delta Airlines flight to Dublin was scheduled to depart around 9 p.m., so the crowds had dwindled and we were able to make it from the ticket counter, to security, and to our gate in a reasonable amount of time. It was relatively quiet in the airport at that time, too, which was great for a child whose epilepsy is triggered by too much noise and activity.

One thing we noted: The lines leading up to security were in no way wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair. After too many bumps and K-turns, we opted to duck under the belted lines and go around the queues, jumping back into the line when we could. When we arrived there, the TSA staff at security was very accommodating, and also thorough, and I appreciated that they spoke directly and respectfully to Lianna, who is non-verbal, and asked her for permission before they touched her.

Her medications, which are mostly liquid, had to be inspected, and her wheelchair swabbed and patted down. She helpfully put her communication iPad on the belt, removed her shoes (a skill that I don't appreciate most of the time; she has left trails of socks and shoes like Hansel and Gretel on most outings), and the rest of us, Dad, brother Nate, and I, walked through the metal detectors.

Having left plenty of time to peruse the shops in Terminal A, my husband and I congratulated ourselves on our foresight to book an overnight flight. Surely our fellow travelers will be delighted that the children will fall asleep for the majority of the flight. We had just reached cruising altitude before both were snoozing; for our part, Aaron and I made do with occasional catnaps during the five-hour flight.

Next: Part 3 Dublin Airport

Follow BostonIrish_TravelAbility on Facebook.

FoodCloud has risen to the occasion to meet growing demand for food throughout Ireland

Using surpluses to combat hunger

BY SETH DANIEL
FOR BOSTON IRISH

When Iseult Ward and Aoibheann O'Brien started FoodCloud in Dublin 10 years ago the pitch was to environmentalism, frugality, and eliminating waste. But in today's Ireland, with steep cost of living increases and many still struggling to get on their feet post-Covid, the appeal of FoodCloud has become its use of surplus food to eliminate hunger among the working class and the poor.

FoodCloud existed long before the pandemic as an organization bent on convincing supermarkets, farmers, and restaurants that the preservation of their surplus food made both environmental sense and dollars and cents sense, given the cost of carting away excess food. Much of the food was edible, with some of it simply being mislabeled or misshapen, and fine for the supper table.

That appeal was successful on both approaches, Ward told Boston Irish in an interview in Boston last month, but the organization's role changed during coronavirus time. Now, more families than ever in Ireland rely on FoodCloud to stretch the family budget.

"The pandemic has entirely accelerated the problem of food access," she said. "A lot of families that were just managing before are now in situations where it's a lot more challenging. If one or two people lost their jobs, they aren't able to support themselves. The amount of food we've distributed since the pandemic has doubled. It's the largest increase in our history, and it's all demand focused. It has changed the way we work, and people really rely on our food more than ever."

Transitioning from a focus on environmental stewardship to a status as a critical food resource has had everything to do with not just the pandemic but dramatic cost of living increases, rising fuel costs, and the arrival in Ireland of some 60,000 Ukrainian refugees. Meanwhile, 75 percent of Irish non-profits cannot meet the demand for food, and 50 percent of Irish residents report they could not survive a 1,000-euro "shock bill."

"It is a situation where people are making decisions about fuel or food or skipping a meal to fill up their car," said Ward. "If we can take that one thing out of the equation - that being food - we feel that can help."

FoodCloud had its beginnings by reasoning that surplus food - though it might be imperfect in shape, mislabeled in a box or near the expiration date - could be re-directed to those who wanted it. Using some legal maneuvering, Ward and O'Brien created waivers that limited the

liability of companies donating old food. Then they made their economic case to supermarkets, restaurants, and farmers, many of which were already paying steep costs to have surplus food carted off to the rubbish. Soon, the duo was working closely with charities, consumers, and food stores, bringing them together to re-use surplus food.

Then came Covid-19.

Ward said they immediately received inquiries from large food operations that needed to deal with food already in the supply chain. They also got a donation from McDonald's at that time, a rarity in the food surplus world.

"Once they saw how easy and helpful it was, they continued working with FoodCloud. 'We've had more businesses donate this year than ever before,' said Ward in noting that they partner with more than 3,200 retail stores - and more than 600 charities - across the United Kingdom and Ireland.

They have even developed a FoodCloud software platform to connect local stores to local charities in the moment. Stores that have surplus food at the end of the day can register it on the platform, and charities can claim that food and pick it up right away. The platform has now spread to other countries entering the food re-directing space.

Development Manager Tara Clarke noted that "because we're a non-profit and a social enterprise and so dependent on the food industry, fundraising has been an essential part of our organization and helps us meet the new demand," she said.

Their work has been hailed as 2022 Charity of the Year by the Charity Institute of Ireland and, tellingly, become a case study at Harvard Business School for its MBA course on Social Enterprise and Systems Change.

Their efforts also grabbed the attention of World Trade Center Dublin (WTCD), which is headed up by Maureen (Drew) Pace, who has deep roots in Boston with the John Drew Company that runs WTCD.

WTCD provides business and trade organizations across Ireland with a gateway to new international trade opportunities, collaboration, and education. It also serves as a resource for companies around the world seeking opportunities in Ireland.

In the end, Ward and Clarke said, it's about building ties in the community to help others in need. "That connection is so valuable because it goes beyond food-sharing and we just love to see these relationships built within the local community that started with food-sharing," said Ward.



FoodCloud Development Director Tara Clarke, FoodCloud Co-Founder Iseult Ward, and Rie Sugihara of the Drew Company sat for the interview with Boston Irish last month as the firm's representatives were networking at the American Ireland Fund Gala and spreading their message of having "no good food go to waste" in Ireland.

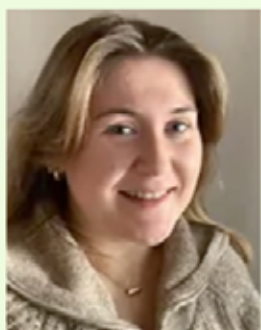
Seth Daniel photo



Photos courtesy FoodCloud



New Staff Join The Irish Pastoral Centre

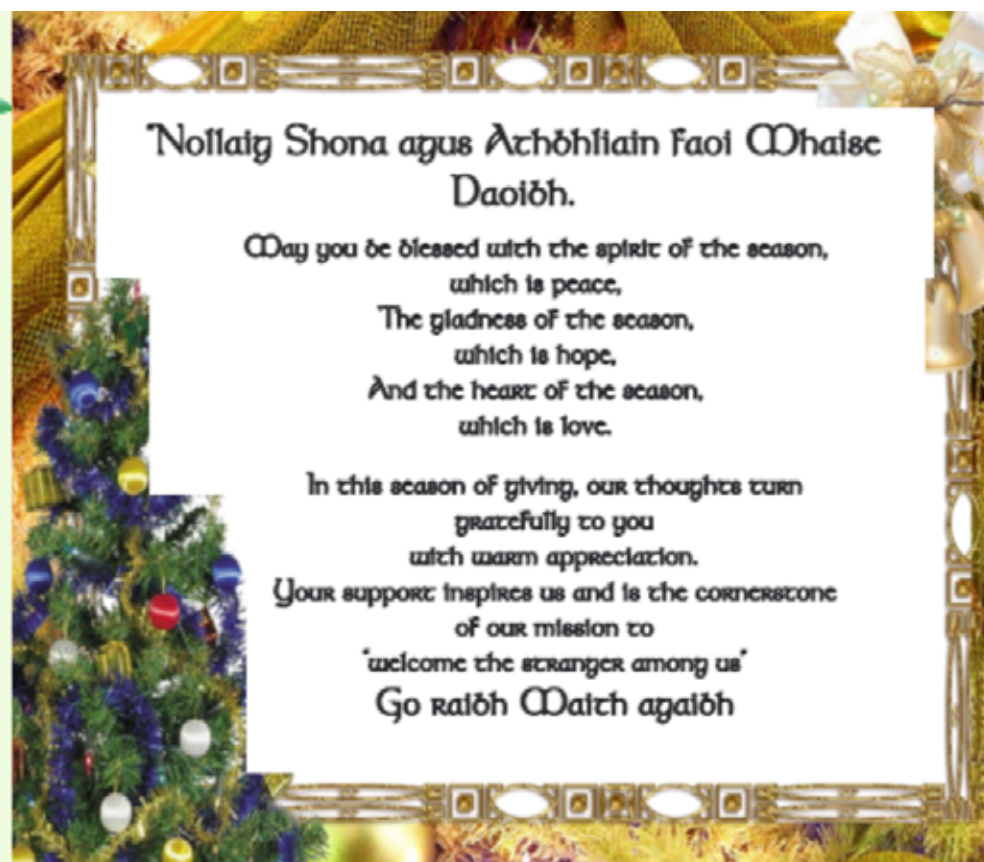


We welcomed three staff members onboard: **Amy O'Carroll** has joined as our Media and Community Outreach Co-Ordinator. **Gina Gallagher**, a behavioral health and addictions specialist, joined our team as a part-time counselor.

We are delighted to announce the return of **Fr. John McCarthety** who will be resuming his role as Chaplain at the Pastoral Centre alongside Fr. Dan!



Congratulations to our Bumblebee Knitting Club who held their first Annual Christmas Craft Fair on Saturday December 3rd. There was a fantastic crowd that brought festive cheer, quality crafts and exciting raffles! Special thanks to IPC board member Della Costello!



IPC Christmas Annual Giftcard Appeal

The Irish Pastor Centre has launched our Annual Christmas Gift Card Appeal.

If you can help by donating, or know a family or someone in need, please call the IPC at 617-265-5300 or email Fr. Dan Finn at danfinn@ipcboston.org

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Consulate General of Ireland | Boston

A time to enjoy holiday entertainment

By R. J. DONOVAN
SPECIAL TO BOSTON IRISH

With a crispness in the air and the anticipation of Santa's arrival, there's plenty of holiday entertainment onstage throughout Greater Boston this month. Keep in mind, theater tickets provide an excellent opportunity for an early Christmas gift.

We Three Kings: An Irish Tenors Christmas Dec. 7, Hanover Theatre

The Godfathers of Irish repertoire return with a celebration based on their best-selling holiday album of gems. Touring since 1998, the Tenors powerful vocal line-up includes Anthony Kearns, Ronan Tynan, and Declan Kelly. (thehanovertheatre.org/)



Photo by Kyle Flubacker, MSG Entertainment

“’Twas the Night Before...” from Cirque du Soleil Through Dec. 11, Wang Theatre

Cirque de Soleil offers an exuberant, acrobatic spin on the beloved Christmas classic. Join Isabella, a curious girljaded by the craze surrounding Christmas, as she's whisked away to an upside-down, inside-out world where she meets the colorful characters from Clement Moore's landmark poem. This marks Cirque's first-ever Christmas show. Discover what happened right before Santa came down the chimney! (bochcenter.org)

Christmastime 2022

Through Dec. 11, Reagle Music Theatre

Deck and halls and haul out the holly, 'cuz Reagle returns with its annual yuletide extravaganza of singing, dancing and jingle bell joy. (reaglemusictheatre.org)

Christmas with the Back Bay Ringers Through Dec. 11, multiple venues

Back Bay Ringers, an advanced community handbell ensemble founded in 2003, has developed a solid reputation for excellence. From Bach to “Blue Christmas,” this season's holiday concerts feature both classical and contemporary favorites brought to life on a sparkling array of handbells, chimes, percussion and of course, sleigh bells (...hear them ring?). (backbayringers.org)



Black Nativity

Through Dec. 18, Paramount Center

With glory to the newborn King, Black Nativity retells the Nativity story with jubilant music, dramatic dance, black vernacular, and Biblical narrative. Traditional Christmas carols are sung in gospel style, with a few

songs created just for the show. Written by Langston Hughes, the show was first presented off-Broadway in 1961 and has been joyously performed annually in Boston since 1970. (blacknativity.org)



Photo courtesy BGMC

Joyful & Triumphant & Gay, Boston Gay Men's Chorus Through Dec. 18, Jordan Hall

The BGMC returns with its first in-person holiday show since 2019. Founded in 1982, the 200+ voice ensemble is celebrated for its outstanding musicianship, creative programming, groundbreaking community outreach, and an innovative educational program. Having delighted audiences from Carnegie Hall to Johannesburg, South Africa, the BGMC offers a holiday show blending beloved Christmas carols and festive favorites with modern classics. It's the most wonderful time of the year! (bgmc.org)

“A Christmas Carol”

Through Dec. 23, North Shore Music Theatre

One of New England's brightest holiday traditions celebrates its 31st season. Based on the timeless Dickens tale, this musical ghost story is an original adaptation by former NSMT Artistic Director Jon Kimbell and his staff. We follow miserly Ebenezer Scrooge (played by David Coffee for his 28th season) through a series of strange and magical journeys, where he ultimately discovers the true spirit of the holiday season. Featuring dazzling special effects, colorful costumes, and both traditional and original songs, this award-winning production has been seen by more than one million people since its debut in 1989. God bless us, every one! (nsmt.org)



David Coffee as Ebenezer Scrooge in “A Christmas Carol”

Photo by Paul Lyden

Midwinter Revels

Dec. 16 – 28, Sanders Theatre

Every December, the Cambridge Revels community gathers in Harvard University's historic Sanders Theatre to celebrate the solstice through the traditional songs, dances, and stories of cultures from around the world. The show is different each year. For this production, the time is Christmas Eve in the 1920s. The setting is Ellis Island. A delay in the processing means that a number of immigrant families from Ireland, Russia, and Germany must spend some extended time together. The Irish and Old-World Jewish families have their differences, but through the curiosity of their children and the insights of the Mexican nurses charged with their care, they celebrate their rite of passage through music, song and story. Joyful, all ye nations, rise! (revels.org)

“Urban Nutcracker”

Dec. 17 – 23, Shubert Theatre

For a modern spin on “The Nutcracker,” let your heart be light with Tony Williams's inclusive

celebration of multi-cultural Boston. Strains of Duke Ellington dovetail with the buzz of neon driven by the heartbeat of Tchaikovsky. This is a fusion of modern, multicultural, and classical dance; an organic interpretation brought about by a unifying of cultures. Ballet, urban tap, hip hop, swing, flamenco, step, and jazz swirl into something special. (urbannutcracker.com)

WBUR's “A Christmas Carol”

Dec. 20, Omni Parker House

Charles Dickens began his first American reading tour of “A Christmas Carol” in Boston on Dec. 2, 1867. Since 2002, WBUR has hosted its own reading of the timeless holiday tale. WBUR hosts and reporters Meghna Chakrabarti, Tiziana Dearnig, Jack Lepiarz, Darryl Murphy, and Robin Young will bring the tale to life. This year's performance benefits Rosie's Place. With music from Syncopation, a mixed vocal jazz quartet, the evening will be merry and bright. (rosiesplace.org/WBURs-A-Christmas-Carol)



Photo by Winslow Townson

Holiday Pops

Through Dec. 24, Symphony Hall

Holiday Pops is one of Boston's most enduring Christmas traditions. The glittering 2022 season, under the direction of Keith Lockhart, offers 34 concerts featuring the Boston Pops Orchestra and Tanglewood Festival Chorus (led by James Burton). Expect holiday favorites, new arrangements of seasonal classics, and visit with Santa. From Leroy Anderson's “Sleigh Ride” to the annual presentation of “’Twas the Night Before Christmas,” it's Christmas time in the city. (bso.org)



Photo by Liza Voll, courtesy Boston Ballet

Boston Ballet's “The Nutcracker”

Through December 31, Boston Opera House

All is calm, all is bright as world-class Boston Ballet presents the return of Mikko Nissinen's “The Nutcracker.” The story follows the wondrous journey of young Clara, who receives a nutcracker as a gift at her family's Christmas Eve party. That night, her nutcracker is magically revealed as a handsome prince who leads her through an enchanted forest and on to the Nutcracker Prince's Kingdom. The majestic, critically acclaimed production is filled with dancing mice, tin soldiers, a gentle snowstorm, a visit to the delectable Land of Sweets and, yes, a magical Christmas tree that grows right before your eyes. (bostonballet.org)

(Covid safety precautions may vary by venue.)

See related story – A Christmas Celtic Sojourn – on Page One.

Twenty years later, 'Dead String Rhythm' lives on; Flynn Cohen relishes opportunity to showcase his first album

BY SEAN SMITH

BOSTONIRISH CONTRIBUTOR

Guitarist/mandolinist Flynn Cohen is taking the old better-late-than-never maxim to heart, and on the road – “late” as in 20 years late.

A longtime pillar of Greater Boston’s Irish/Celtic music scene now living in Vermont, Cohen marked the two-decade anniversary of his 2002 album “Dead String Rhythm” – 12 tracks of traditional Irish and original tunes arranged for flatpicked guitar and other instruments – via a series of concerts last fall in New England with frequent collaborator and fellow guitarist Matt Heaton, who has played as part of Cohen’s Deadstring Ensemble. The tour included a stop at the Burren Backroom series.

“Matt and I were supposed to tour in 2020, but the pandemic scuttled all that,” said Cohen in September, “This way, we’re celebrating an anniversary and looking back at the original inspiration for the Deadstring Ensemble. I haven’t played with Matt in quite some time, so I’m looking forward to playing tunes I haven’t done in a while with someone who’s very much like me in terms of guitar – even down to the same thickness of the guitar pick we use.”

While Cohen has a solid footing in the Irish/Celtic domain – he’s played with John Whelan, Aoife Clancy, Cathie Ryan, Joe Derrane and Frank Ferrel, among others – he has long been equally at home with old-time and bluegrass music. One of his foundational projects is the band Low Lily, which he and his wife, Liz Simmons, have fronted since its initial incarnation as Annalivia, dating back more than 15 years. While Annalivia started out interlacing Celtic and British Isles music traditions with those of America, its fascinating arc – and eventual transition to Low Lily – led to a sound grounded in Americana folk but hardly confined to it.

“Dead String Rhythm” represented both a personal milestone for Cohen as his first solo album and an important benchmark for considering the guitar’s station in Irish traditional music as a lead as well as a rhythm instrument. But his various commitments at the time, along with other factors, made it impossible for Cohen to mount any kind of tour to perform “Dead String Rhythm,” and after a while the album was superseded by his subsequent solo or band recordings.

The album also is a testament to a cherished friend and mentor of Cohen, the late John McGann, who served as producer, helped with some arrangements, and was among the guest musicians appearing on “Dead String Rhythm”; he also was part of the Deadstring Ensemble. Like Cohen, McGann – a talented guitarist and mandolinist and Berklee College of Music faculty member who died in 2012 – had ties to bluegrass/old-time and Celtic music alike; among other collaborations, McGann teamed with fiddler Seamus Connolly and legendary Boston-area Irish accordionist Joe Derrane on the album “The Boston Edge.” Cohen credits McGann not only



Flynn Cohen, right, and Matt Heaton performed at The Burren Backroom series in October.

for being a key influence in his flatpicking approach but for persuading him to move to Boston. In fact, the album title itself was inspired by McGann’s wisecrack to Cohen on the day of a recording session about the state of his guitar strings.

Other guests on the album include Boston-area musicians Tina Lech (fiddle) – whom Cohen cites as a major resource for his tune repertoire – and Frank Gibbons (flute), along with Rhode Island-based uilleann piper Patrick Hutchinson and David Cory on tenor banjo and bodhran.

While the music on “Dead String Rhythm” is largely from, or in the style of, Irish tradition, it’s tintured with an Americana feel – hardly surprising, since flatpicking is associated with Appalachia, and bluegrass in particular. Cohen, wisely, doesn’t belabor the Irish/Americana fusion, but rather lets it percolate through at well-chosen junctures.

On some tracks, the focus is squarely on Cohen, such as a set of reels (“The

Steampacket/Morning Star”) – with Cory’s bodhran adding some extra oomph to Cohen’s powerful rhythm guitar – and on his own composition, the tender “Planxty Catherine Hart”; Cory is also on hand for Cohen’s moody/modal jig “The Visitors.” The medley of “Monaghan Twig” and Charlie Lennon’s “Road to Cashel,” meanwhile, demonstrates a fine sensibility for arrangement, as Cohen plays (lead and rhythm) the first reel at moderate speed before turning on the jets; he switches to mandolin as the lead instrument for “Cashel” – sounding very much like a soloist in a bluegrass combo – with Lech joining him the second time through.

This talent for orchestration is in evidence elsewhere, as Cohen shares the spotlight with other musicians. He and Lech are a solid pairing on, for example, “Bonny Kate” – which transitions to “Jenny’s Chicken” and Cory on tenor banjo along with Cohen’s lead guitar and mandolin – and “Farrell O’Gara,” which segues into an all-Cohen “Good

Morning to Your Nightcap.” Two traditional jigs, “Hag’s Purse” and “Bryan O’Lynn” (Cory on bodhran again), set up a grand entrance by Lech and Hutchinson on a Cohen-Hutchinson original, “Miss McDevitt’s.” Easily one of the album’s highlights – and one of its most palpable Irish/Americana mashups – is a pair of hornpipes, “The Girl Who Broke My Heart” and “Murphy’s,” deliciously flatpicked by Cohen with McGann supplying an infectious oom-chuck backing on octave mandolin; then comes a shift, as Lech and Gibbons break into “The Honeymoon Reel” over Cohen’s rhythm guitar.

Guitars are ubiquitous in Irish music now, of course, but it took many years – even after the Irish folk revival of the 1960s and ’70s – for the instrument to gain acceptance (grudging at that) in some quarters of the Irish traditional music community. Even today, guitarists who drop in on an Irish music session sometimes talk of feeling wary eyes being cast upon them.

Which doesn’t mean there aren’t legendary, universally admired and respected guitarists in Irish music, and Cohen’s list includes Paul Brady, Arty McGlynn, Daithi Sproule, Micheál Ó Domhnaill and John Doyle.

Cohen, a Cleveland native, was 15 when he discovered the Bothy Band and he was intrigued by what Ó Domhnaill brought to the table: “He’s not virtuosic, but rhythmically in synch with the keyboard or the bouzouki. The music is alive in a way it wouldn’t be if not for him. His accompaniments for ‘Portland,’ meanwhile – his album with [fiddler] Kevin Burke – were sculpted, not experimental or ‘in the moment,’ and it’s just really stunning.”

For tickets and other information related to the Flynn Cohen and Matt Heaton concert, go to burren.com/music.html




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WRENTHAM

MASSACHUSETTS

‘Christmas Celtic Sojourn’ hits the 20-year mark, with a note of poignancy underscoring the script

(Continued from page 1)

behind “Sojourn,” including producer/director Jenna Worden as well as Egan and Gilchrist: “I am confident they will step up in whatever way is needed. As for me, I plan to be on stage similar to the way it’s always been – but with perhaps a certain extra meaningfulness.”

In any event, as always, O’Donovan prefers attention be given to the “Sojourn” performers, who this year also include newcomers Lily Henley (vocals, guitar, fiddle), Duncan Wickel (guitar, fiddle, cello) and Nadjé Noordhuis (trumpet), as well as veterans Chico Huff (bass), Yann Falquet (guitar), Owen Marshall (bouzouki, harmonium), Jenna Moynihan (fiddle) and Joey Abarta (uilleann pipes); in addition to serving as director of dance for the show, Ashley Smith-Wallace will be a featured dancer along with Joe Harrison.

Casey’s “Sojourn” homecoming is a welcome one indeed, says O’Donovan, offering an opportunity to appreciate the full flowering of her talent and creativity. Hailed as one of Ireland’s finest traditional singers at the time she appeared in the 2007 show, Casey has since gone on to become a multifaceted songwriter, whether mining deep emotions from life experiences or bringing long-neglected aspects of Irish history to the forefront. She has also explored new modes of performance through accompanying herself on piano and branching out into spoken word and theater – her play “I Walked Into My Head” was staged last year at the Kilkenny Arts Festival.

“Karan never stops growing, never stops communicating with the world in dynamic ways, whether through performing, researching, writing – we are so fortunate to have her with us,” says O’Donovan.

The addition of Henley and Wickel – who perform as a duo but have thrived in solo ventures and other collaborations as well – to the “Christmas Celtic Sojourn” roster, meanwhile, represents another broadening of the show’s cultural outlook, which during its history has gone beyond the usual concept of “Celtic” to incorporate music from Scandinavian and Quebecois traditions. Henley draws on the Sephardic as well as American and Celtic folk traditions for her compelling, passionate sound; Wickel’s fiddling stretches across classical, folk and thoroughly modern styles, which has led him to stints with an array of performers ranging from Karan Casey and John Doyle to Parliament Funkadelic and even the Stephen Colbert Show’s Stay Human Band.

“A lot of ‘Christmas Celtic Sojourn’ is emphasizing family values and customs, and gathering in festive times of the year. Lily, with her exploration of Sephardic music, takes this to a new dimension,” says O’Donovan. “She and Duncan – who really underscores



Karan Casey, above, will be back with “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn” this year. Also with the production will be Boston-area native Ashley Smith-Wallace, the featured dancer and dance director.

the link between traditional and contemporary – played at our Rockport Celtic Festival this past summer and made quite an impression. They’ll certainly do the same for ‘Christmas Celtic Sojourn.’”

Brass has a venerable history in holiday music, and that’s where Noordhuis – O’Donovan credits Gilchrist for bringing her into the “Sojourn” fold – will come in for this year’s show. The Australian-born, New York City-based Noordhuis, who teaches at Berklee College of Music, carries classical, jazz, and world music influences in her trumpet playing; a critic described her



as “one of the most compelling voices to emerge on her instrument in recent years.”

Throughout its history, “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn” has had numerous musicians who make regular, if not necessarily consecutive appearances on the show. The combination of Huff, Falquet, Marshall, Moynihan, and Abarta, says O’Donovan, constitutes a solid core that can play together in a variety of combinations, or as soloists.

“What’s great to see is how a musician finds his or her groove here,” says O’Donovan. “I think of Owen Marshall, for instance, and his ability to play solo as well as an accompanist, and the stage presence he has. Plus, he plays the harmonium, which has an old-fashioned, ‘churchy’ sound to it – that fits in perfectly for what we’re doing.”

O’Donovan, meanwhile, is pleased to see Smith-Wallace – a Boston-area native who first performed in “Sojourn” three years ago – settling comfortably into a leadership role as director of dance. He notes that Smith-Wallace has put together an impressive track record in musical theater, which enhances her credentials as a top-notch Irish dancer.

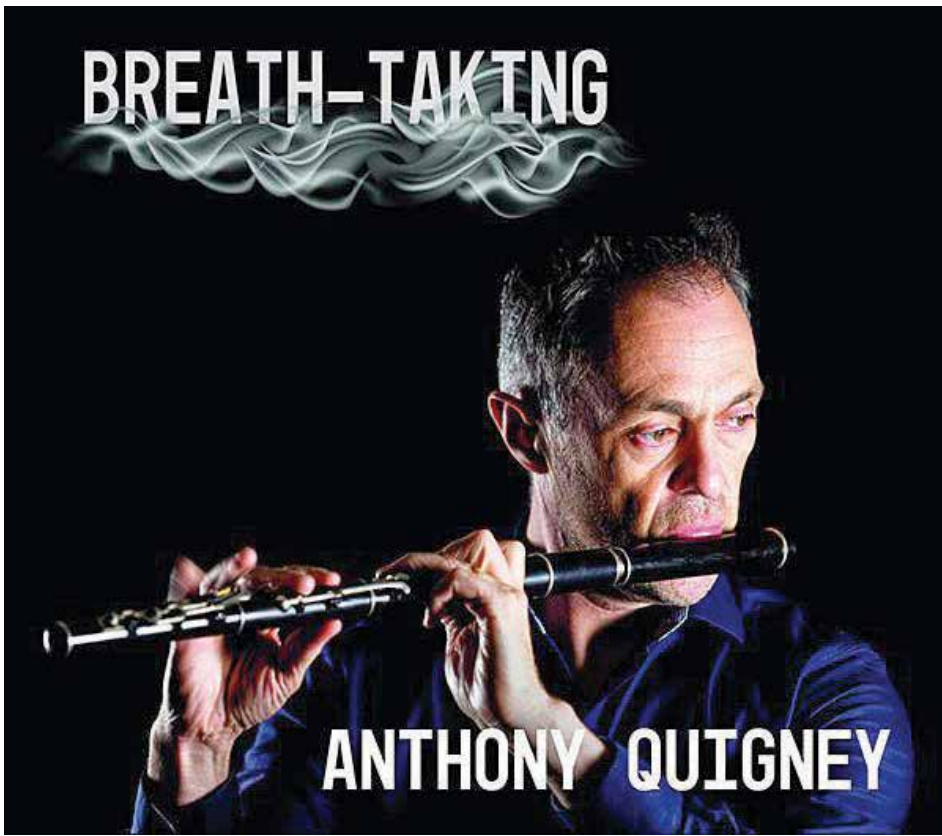
“Ashley has a great knowledge and insight into the dance world, Irish and beyond,” says O’Donovan, “and that is a tremendous asset to the show.”

O’Donovan hints at the possibility of cameo appearances by performers from past editions of “Christmas Celtic Sojourn” to recreate some much-treasured moments down through the years – and there have been quite a few of them, according to conversations and correspondence he has enjoyed with the show’s many fans.

“The community – and by now I think it’s fair to call it the ‘Christmas Celtic Sojourn community’ – has been extraordinarily supportive and positive, especially during the pandemic, when we had to go to a full virtual format,” he says. “It’s not just a show, but has become something of a public trust that people feel invested in. We feel not only a desire to put on ‘Sojourn,’ but as if it was a requirement.

“When we started, we expected to do just a single performance each year – for however many years it might go. But the emails and other feedback we got, with so many folks telling us that ‘Sojourn’ is ‘the family tradition’ for the holiday season, convinced us we couldn’t just do one staging; we had to do multiple performances, not only in the Boston area, but other venues in Massachusetts and even elsewhere. People have told us that, whatever new things we might try out, they also appreciate the consistency in the show; the poetry, for example, has become a familiar and much-loved feature. That’s all made us feel good about the work we do.”

For full details and tickets for “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn,” go to christmasceltic.com



Anthony Quigney, "Breath-Taking"; Draíocht (June McCormack & Michael Rooney), "Tobar an Cheoil"

• Apologies for the lack of attribution here, but somebody, somewhere, at some time once observed that the flute could be considered one of the more intimate of the instruments used in Irish music, since it's powered directly by the very breath of the person playing it (obviously, the same could be said for the tin whistle, but that's another story). That's as good as any explanation for why the Irish flute, in the right hands, can exert such a powerful hold over the listener: You could say the flutist is literally putting him/herself into the music, giving the flute a unique kind of soulfulness.

Boston-area flute/whistle player Shannon Heaton recently shared her thoughts on the flute's presence in Irish traditional music. "Whatever the instrument, Irish tunes are best when they are conveyed with care. With a clear presentation of the melody. With thoughtful phrasing. Flute players do this, in part, with where we breathe, and *how* we breathe, and pause, with the people we are playing with."

She added, "It's very exciting to hear strong and lively rhythmic flute playing. But no matter the speed, the deepest and most nourishing Irish flute playing features a rich straight tone, superb intonation, gorgeous rhythmic style, and clean mechanics with sensible and interesting phrasing."

Heaton's words are worth keeping in mind with the release of two albums in recent months that offer an opportunity to consider the essence and nature of the flute in Irish music. Clare native Anthony Quigney will be familiar to fans and friends of the venerable Kilfenora Ceili Band, which he joined in 1992; this is his first solo album – he and fiddler Aidan McMahon recorded "A Clare Conscience" in 2006, which suggests he has a thing for droll album titles. "Tobar and Cheoil" is the third release for June McCormack and

harpist Michael Rooney as Draíocht. McCormack, from Sligo, is a former senior All-Ireland flute champion and TG4 "Young Musician of the Year," while Monaghan's Rooney – the TG4 "Composer of the Year" for 2017 – has published suites for solo harp and harp with ensemble/orchestra.

On "Breath-Taking," Quigney's flute is featured in various combinations with guest musicians including his son Aidan and sister Marie (both on piano), fellow Kilfenora bandmates cellist Sharon Howley, and fiddler Eimear Howley, as well as guitarist Conal O'Kane, bassist Brian O'Grady, and Dermot Sheedy on bodhran. This makes for a pretty diverse range of textures throughout the course of the album, such as on the opening medley of jigs, with O'Kane's punchy backing undergirding "Banish Misfortune" while Marie Quigney adds some quiet chording, gradually building to a more constant rhythm when Anthony transitions into "Frawley's Jig," finishing up with Peadar O'Riada's gem "Spórt" – a showcase if ever there was one (the third part especially) for a flute player's control and phrasing, and Quigney is spot on.

Sheedy's bodhran brings a steady pulse beside Quigney's flute to another set of jigs, "The Snowy Path/Bean Pháidín," which gets a lift on the second of these from Howley's cello and Quigney's added whistle. A trio of reels – "A Parcel of Land" (Charlie Lennon)/The Maids in the Meadow/The Caucus Reel (Jean Duval) – is more on the spare side, primarily Quigney with O'Kane and Sheedy, and the flute-guitar combo is in especially splendid form on the middle tune. For a contrast, strings, piano, and a subtle bodhran form a gentle backdrop for Quigney's slow reel "Time Flew," led by both flute and whistle; he wrote it on the occasion of Aidan's finishing school, one of those milestones that typically inspire an emotive parental response.

Also deserving of notice is Quigney's excellent rendition of "Colonel Frazier" (sometimes cited as "Fraser" or "Frasier"), which he dedicates to his flute teacher Matt Molloy; it's historically been referred to as a piping tune, but in recent decades Molloy and others – including Quigney – have shown that flute has the musculature to handle the onslaught of triplets in the third part.

"Tobar an Cheoil," of course, is not a McCormack solo flute album, but very much a joint effort with Rooney, who composed many of the tunes they play on the recording. While flute-centric albums often feature rhythm instruments like guitar or bouzouki, or other melody instruments (fiddle, banjo, etc.), a harp can fulfill both roles, especially in the capable hands of someone like Rooney. What's more, the tonal qualities – the resonance of wood-and-strings alongside the flute's breathiness – are an acutely striking combination.

One particularly appealing track comprises a pair of jigs by another flute player of renown, John Brady, former leader of the Longridge Ceili Band, which won All-Ireland titles in the late 1970s and early '80s: McCormack is in the forefront on "Fr. John's Jubilee Jig," Rooney lending a brisk, snappy rhythm; Rooney joins in on the melody for "McIntyre's Fancy," and the way they both play through the accented phrase in the B part is a nifty bit of work. They also excel on a selection of robust reels, "Come West Along the Road" and "The Boys of Ballisodare" – not to be confused with the hop jig of the same name, which they do in a medley with Rooney's "The Devil's Chimney."

The pair are joined by guest musicians on assorted tracks, including guitarist Seamie O'Dowd on Rooney's "An Cruitire," and to great effect by cellist Aoife Burke and violinists Maria Ryan and Lucia MacPartlin on Rooney's sublime planxty "He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven" (inspired by the W.B. Yeats poem) and "Reconciliation Jig." There's a similarly elegant feel to Rooney's "Planxty Castle Leslie," and here McCormack really shows a considerable range and precision.

All told, both albums exhibit the virtues Heaton mentions, especially the one about tunes being conveyed with care whatever the instrument, be it flute, harp, fiddle, accordion, or tenor banjo – perhaps even Moog synthesizer.

[anthonyquigney.com]

[www.draiochtmusic.com]

Brighde Chaimbeul, Ross Ainslie, and Steven Byrnes, "LAS" • It's a pretty basic set-up: Chaimbeul and Ainslie play Scottish smallpipes in the key of C, in duet or harmony, with Byrnes lending support on guitar or mandola. But that doesn't even begin to describe how powerful and ambitious this album is in concept and execution, nor the high level of musicianship these three exhibit, individually and together.

Considering the pedigree of those involved, that's not exactly a surprise: Chaimbeul, from the Isle of Skye, has



won prestigious BBC Radio 2 awards, including Young Folk honors, on the strength of her first release, "The Reeling" (her sister Màiri, by the way, is an excellent harpist who studied and taught at Berklee College of Music for several years); Ainslie has been an innovative force on the Scottish folk music scene for some years now, whether on his own or playing with the likes of Dougie Maclean, the Treacherous Orchestra, Shoooglenifty, and Salsa Celtica; Byrnes, who also is a drummer (though not here), has collaborated and performed with numerous folk/trad artists including Kate Rusby.

Most of the tunes on "LAS" are of Scottish origin, whether traditional or contemporary, including originals by Ainslie and Chaimbeul. Ainslie's works make up three of the four tunes in the album's opening – and definitively tone-setting – track "The Green Light Set," which starts with the air "Green Light of the Lonely Souls," as devastatingly doleful as the title implies and offering an introduction to all matter of masterful piping techniques by Chaimbeul and Ainslie, especially their ability to slowly and unerringly slide from one note to another. Then the pace picks up with the first of three reels, "Bob the Banter," and the entry of Byrnes on mandola; he ratchets up the rhythm as the trio transitions to the minor-key "Peel Pier Fear" and then – as if emerging from a dark tunnel into the sunlight – they sprint into Damien O'Kane's ebullient "Castlerock Road."

Plenty more superb Scottish content follows (notably the "Strathspeys and Reels" and "John Patterson's Mare" tracks, and Chaimbeul's charming "The Badger and the Weasel") but "LAS" also encompasses other music traditions: a bracing medley of Irish reels; a spellbinding selection of Breton gavottes; a driving Asturian tune; and not one but two sets of Bulgarian dances – the first of these includes a jaw-dropping sequence in which Chaimbeul and Ainslie's pipes emit rapid-fire pulses that accentuate the characteristic Balkan polyrhythms.

However much well-deserved attention Ainslie and Chaimbeul get, don't overlook Byrnes's contributions: He provides the perfect complement of rhythm and harmony, his shrewd use of the guitar's or mandola's lower strings filling out the aural spectrum of "LAS" – a quite impressive one it is, too.

[brighdechaimbeul.bandcamp.com/album/las]

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CITY *of* BOSTON

Calendar of Irish/Celtic Events

December 2022

A sampling of the next three weeks of Irish/Celtic music-related events in, or slightly beyond, Greater Boston.

• Club Passim in Harvard Square will have holiday-themed shows on consecutive nights. First, on Dec. 22 (7 p.m.), will be Boston-based fiddle and cello group **Scottish Fish**. Starting out before they were even in high school, “the Fish” (Ava Montesi, Caroline Dressler, Julia Homa, Maggie MacPhail, and Giulia Haible) have become a highly experienced and assured ensemble, their performances of Scottish and Cape Breton reels, jigs, strathspeys, and the like fortified by years of fiddle camp and session music handed down from generations of the tradition’s finest players. Whether it’s traditional or contemporary tunes or their own material, the five play all with imaginative, engaging, and downright fun arrangements. They’ve experienced in Christmas music, too, having released the holiday-themed CD EP “Tidings” in 2019 (and they just put out their newest album “Upscale,” which will be covered on this site in very soon).

At 7 p.m. the next evening (Dec. 23), **Ainé Minogue** will offer her take on seasonal music. A native of Tipperary, Minogue is widely recognized as a premier Irish harpist and singer who conveys the lyricism and richness of Irish music, mythology, and poetry, and is attuned to the traditions, rituals, and celebrations associated with the ancient Celtic world. In addition to having released numerous holiday season albums, Minogue won a New England Emmy Best Producer nomination for the “A Winter’s Place” TV special. She will present music of the winter solstice and Christmas, with tunes and carols that have roots in ancient traditions of the British Isles.

Tickets, other information at passim.org.

• Having just released their first holiday album, Nova Scotian sisters **Cassie and Maggie MacDonald** trek down to the Boston States (Nova Scotian for “Massachusetts and vicinity”) to play at The Burren Backroom series on Dec. 11 at 4 p.m. Originally more of an instrumental act in presenting their home island’s distinctive fiddle and stepdance tradition, the pair went in a new direction for their 2016 album “The Willow Collection,” exploring various archives for both Celtic and American folk songs built around themes and symbolism of the willow. Among their honors are Live Ireland Radio Vocalists of the Year, multiple Canadian Folk Music Awards, and the *Chicago Irish-American* Emerging Artist Recording of the Year. Cassie (fiddle, vocals) and Maggie (guitar, piano, vocals) also will appear at the Old Sloop Presents in Rockport on Dec. 16 at 7:30 p.m. (oldsloopresents.org)

Lúnasa will make its by-now regular end-of-the-year pilgrimage to The Burren Backroom series on Dec. 14 at 6 and 8:30 p.m., joined by multi-instrumentalist, singer and dancer **Dave Curley**. Known for its enthralling, layered instrumental arrangements and sheer overall and individual ability, the band (Kevin Crawford, flute, whistle; Cillian Vallely, uilleann pipes, whistle; Colin Farrell, fiddle; Trevor Hutchinson, double bass; Patrick Doocey, guitar) has easily become one of the most influential and admired Irish music acts of the 21st century. Curley, from Corofin in Co. Galway, has drawn plaudits for his solo work and his stints with the bands Slide and RUNA. He’s also collaborated with Moya Brennan, vocalist and harpist with the legendary Clannad.

For tickets to these shows, go to burren.com/music.html.

• Genre-busting, Irish-world music fusion fiddler **Eileen Ivers** has come through the Boston/Eastern Massachusetts area pretty often over the years, but this time around she, too, will be in for the holidays: She and her band (Buddy Connolly, accordion, whistles, keyboard; Matt Mancuso, guitar, trumpet, fiddle, vocals; Dave Barckow, percussion, guitar, vocals;



Cassie and Maggie MacDonald will celebrate the holidays Nova Scotia-style at The Burren Backroom this month.

Lindsey Horner, double and electric bass, baritone sax) will present “Joyful Christmas” at the Shalin Liu Performance Center in Rockport on Dec. 16 at 8 p.m. The show promises to be a mix of “traditional, story-filled, age-old Wren Day songs, poems, and of course, foot stomping and hollerin’ roots music.” By now, most people know about Ivers, the original “Riverdance” fiddler and a co-founder of Cherish the

Ladies, who has played with the likes of Sting, Hall and Oates, rock-poet Patti Smith, and jazz guitarist Al Di Meola, and appeared on “Gangs of New York” and other movie soundtracks. But maybe you didn’t know that she holds a degree in mathematics – magna cum laude, in fact – from Iona College, whose school name is, appropriately enough, the Gaels.

Tickets, details at rockportmusic.org

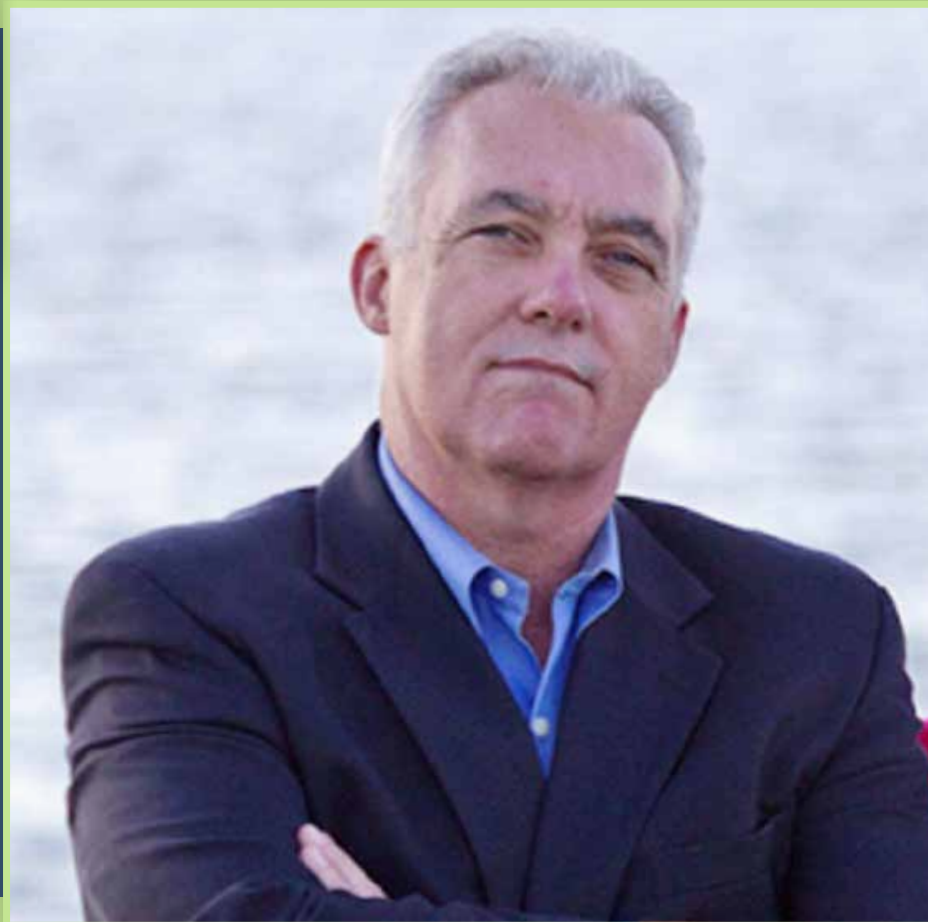
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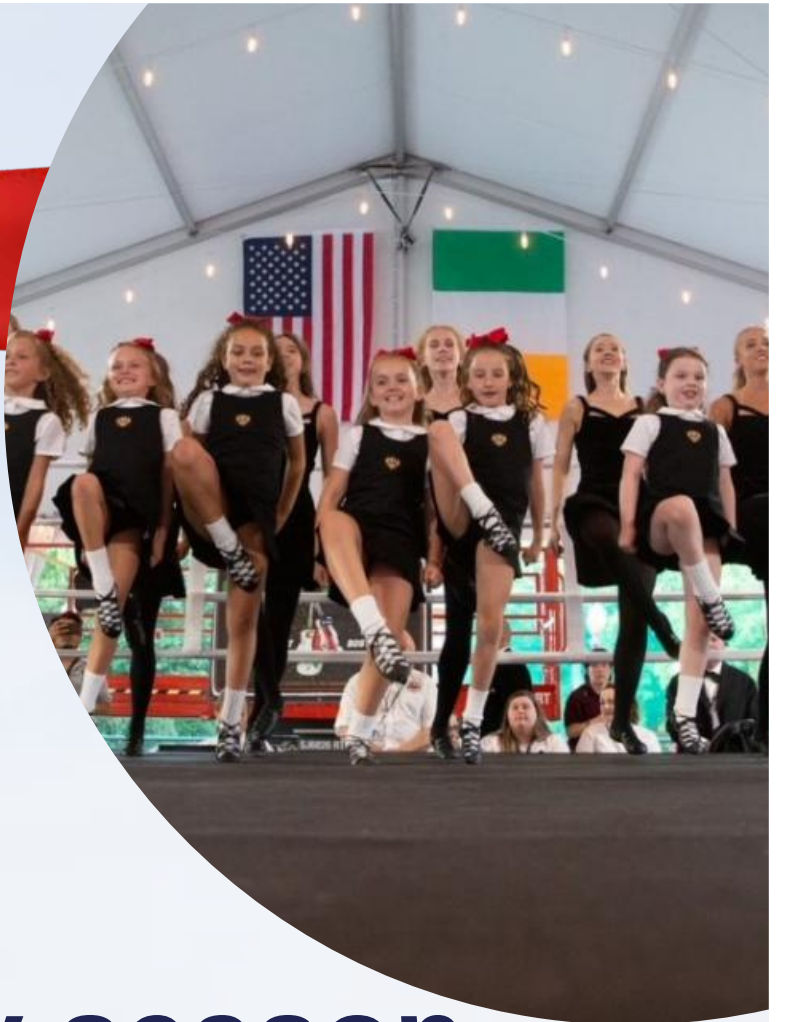
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Boston Irish Honors- Celebrating a Shared Heritage



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



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

Seth Daniel photo

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 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

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The Swanton-Delaney Family.



Ed Forry, Jerry York, Bill York, Maureen Forry-Sorrell



Eversource CEO Joseph Nolan, with Michael Kineavy, accepting for Jon Cronin.
Photos by Margaret Brett Hastings

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 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.

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



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.

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



Gil Talbot Photography

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.

Swing film by Scott Johnson

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.

"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.

Mark Mulvoy was the longtime editor-in-chief of Sports Illustrated.

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 his 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.



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.

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



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 (Limwrick) display their allegiance colors. *IPC photos*

reforms by the federal 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

(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*

its mother and toddlers program. "It helped us stay within our 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."

(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 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'

For board president Maryellen Brett, the person-to-person 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."



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.

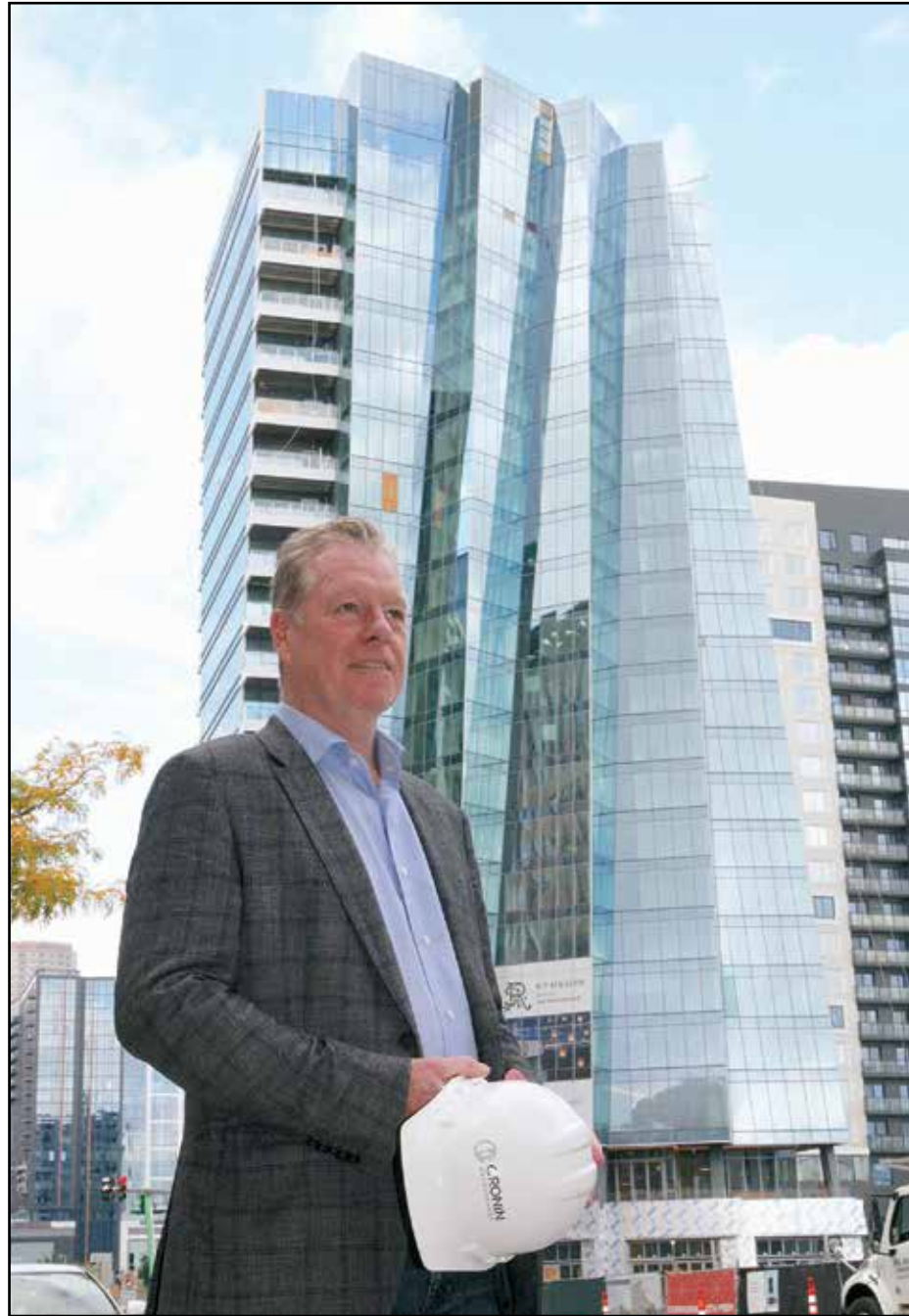
“I realize how lucky I am and how lucky my kids are,” he said. “As long as we’re healthy, nothing else matters. So many people have so many needs and have been dealt a terrible hand in life. Our family travels around the world and sees the poverty and suffering out there. There are 25 percent of kids 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



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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.



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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



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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."

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



Belfast Christmas Market

May you be blessed with the spirit of the season, which is peace,
The gladness of the season, which is hope,
And the heart of the season, which is love.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays from all of us here on the island
of Ireland. We look forward to welcoming you home in 2023.



Robert Mauro dies at 46; director of BC's Irish Institute

Robert M. Mauro of Weston, executive director of the Irish Institute and founding director of the Global Leadership Institute at Boston College, died on Oct. 31 after an extended illness. He was 46.

While his work took him all over the world,

Dr. Mauro's most significant contributions came in strengthening ties between people in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Boston.

He leaves his wife, Barbara Pyke; his beloved daughters, Dara and Tess; his parents, sister, and an

extended family in the United States and Ireland.

"I want to pay special tribute to Dr. Bob Mauro, a dear colleague of ours, and a great friend of Ireland," said Laoise Moore, Ireland Consul General in Boston. "We are deeply saddened by his passing, and extend our condolences to his

family, friends, and students. It was a privilege to know him and he will be very missed by all.

"The lasting impact of Bob's approach to scholarship, relationship building, and understanding complex issues will be felt for many years."

A trust has been es-

tablished for the benefit his children. Contributions can be made at gofundme.com/f/support-for-the-mauro-family or via check made out to Barbara Pyke (memo: for Dara and Tess) sent to Nolan & King at 510 Boston Post Road, Weston MA 02493.



Dr. Robert Mauro

Dr. Dennis Burke maps his road to BID Milton

The South Boston-born orthopedic surgeon Dr. Dennis Burke was honored by Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital-Milton (BID Milton) in October at a fundraising dinner at the JFK Library in Dorchester. The event raised \$550,000 for capital projects at the hospital.

In his remarks, Dr. Burke said, "I look out into this room tonight and see so many patients who have become my friends and so many friends who have become my patients. For all those who have trusted their care to me, I thank you for that honor and privilege.

"I see the men and woman in this room, who ignored great peril to their own safety, and toiled tirelessly over the long winter of Covid 19 so that patients always received the best care. I can feel the spirit of my friend Dr. John Mahoney in this room, a devoted neurologist, who was one of the first casualties of



Above, Dennis Burke, MD, at the podium at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. At right, the surgeon with his wife Martha. BID/Milton photos by John Gillooly

Covid 19. Look around the room, dim the lights, squint a little bit, you can see the halos above our many angels here. You are my heroes. I am

honored and humbled to work with each and every one of you. I accept the Charles Winchester award in your name."

The honoree used the opportunity to sketch out how his life had progressed to BID-Milton's surgical ward. Following are excerpts from that accounting.

"I look in front of me, and I see my family. My wife Martha who I first met over 50 years ago just a few blocks from this library. It was love at first sight and the luckiest day of my life. I see my 5 children who make me so proud. Forgive me for the many late dinners, missed birthdays, cancelled holidays and so many of my other foibles - and there were some doozies!

"The Kennedy Presidential Library is a special place for me. From its perch my entire life unfolds by line of sight. One and a half miles to the west is Saint Margaret's Hospital. That's where I was born as were my 4

sibs and my 5 children. After a 60-hour shift during my surgical internship, I finally arrived to see my newly born son. Martha burst into tears, exclaiming that the nurses thought that she was an unwed mother.

"One mile north, just across Dorchester Bay I see my boyhood home--my Irish grandmother and two aunts downstairs, the seven of us upstairs. It was a home full of happiness, love, and generosity. This is a scene repeated in every neighborhood of this great city today - people from foreign lands seeking opportunity in these United States.

"My dad was the proprietor of a neighborhood drug store. It was in a section of town called 'The Lower End.' To this day I see patients who tell me that whether they had the means to pay or not, they never left the store without their medicines. They would say that 'Mr. Burke put it on the cuff.' He and my mother, by

example, taught me the Golden Rule - treat others as you wish to be treated. In my opinion, that is the essence of the practice of medicine. ...

"I can see my neighborhood parish school from here, Saint Peter's. The kind nuns and priests had 3 main objectives in educating me; 1) Teach me the Palmer method of penmanship, 2) Have me memorize the Latin Mass so that I could become an altar boy, and 3) Learn the 10 Commandments. The first two I failed at utterly, the last is still a work in progress...

"Just across the Charles River I see MIT where I learned 2 important lessons. First, humility - It seemed everyone there was smarter than me. Second - average and hard work beats an uninspired genius every day of the week. Then it was off to Med School in the windy city and back to Boston where towers of the great Boston Teaching Hospitals cast a long shadow. -BID STAFF

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