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Welcome to the latest edition of the IACI e-news.

Founded in 1962, the IACI is the leading Irish American cultural organization. The IACI is a federally recognized 501(c)(3) not-for-profit national organization devoted to promoting an intelligent appreciation of Ireland and the role and contributions of the Irish in America.

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Irish American Romance

by

Raymond D. Aumack

Being the hometown heroine and the eldest granddaughter of the founding family was, at least at this moment, an embarrassing blessing. In their 19th century Irish world that June's grandparents escaped from a century and a half ago, she would have been the crown princess.

She is Black, her fiancé is White, and they share the same Irish heritage. Her great grandfather was a heroic Irish battlefield Colonel who became wealthy with the spoils of war. His comrade in arms, another Irishman, John Connor, who survived from the threshold of death on the battlefield with only the heroic help of a Black battlefield nurse, who ducked under cannon shot to save his life and drag him to safety. He was the first of the two to marry.

Colonel Gilliam came upon a group of drunken White Union soldiers about to gang-rape a Black woman. He threatened to castrate the lot of them with a single sweep of his sword and they ran in terror from the tall, muscular officer. Gilliam did spectacularly well financially from the spoils of war, legitimate for the time, and set about to build the town of Gettysburg. He fell in love with the woman he saved, and they were married in a nearby Catholic church. His partner in the work of building Gettysburg was John Connor. They grew up together in the town of Skibbereen, County Cork, Ireland. Their families knew each other, the basis of a life-long friendship. Connor and his wife, Maureen Flynn, also of mixed race, named by the family in which she grew up as a slave, were married in the same church the year before. Connor's daughter eventually married Gilliam's son.

Once the town was built, they set out to establish a number of businesses necessary to sustain the town. There was need for a farmer's market, a butcher shop, a general store, an apothecary shop, a medical clinic, a coffee shop, a notions store since almost all clothing was hand-made, a Pub, and various other small shops. All of those who helped him in the building process had an opportunity to take over a store or shop to earn themselves a living. With a portion of the income they received from the small businesses, they supported the town. Gilliam, his son, and his partner, John Connor, built the local Catholic Church, an accompanying school, and rectory. The scions of the Gilliam and Connor families by mutual agreement, before their death, turned the businesses over to be totally owned by the families who ran them. Many of those families and stores still thrive in Gettysburg. June Gilliam's father was President of the local Savings and Loan. He also holds a Ph.D. in Economics and teaches at nearby Mount St. Mary's University, the oldest Catholic College in America, predating the Civil War. The blacksmith shop is now an automotive garage and gas station. A bookstore and a Free Public Library subsequently appeared on the scene with considerable help from Andrew Carnegie, who provided the funding and the building plans. Worship, love, and learning became the unspoken motto of the town. Gilliam and Connor socially engineered the town they built to be a community of respect and love.

June Gilliam became a heroine in the town as she grew. She was a rare blue-eyed Black beauty, with a personality bigger than the whole state of Pennsylvania. She was a brilliant student, an athlete who led tiny Gettysburg High School to four Pennsylvania State Girls Basketball Championships. She was named All-State two years in a row, in the very large state of Pennsylvania. She was inducted to Phi Beta Kappa at Immaculata University, an Academic All-American basketball player, in all four years and first-string Small College All-American in her junior and senior years. She earned master's and Ph.D. degrees at the University of Pennsylvania.

She is the author of a soon to be published book on the life experience of a Black Woman in 20th century Pennsylvania based on 100 personal interviews and 300 responses to a questionnaire for her doctoral dissertation. The challenging part of the study was designing the questionnaire that alone consumed a half year of work. She is currently, Executive Director of the Jesuit Urban Mission. On her frequent trips to visit her parents, she also visited her many friends and the families of the original Gettysburg inhabitants.

Gilliam and Connor never wanted a monument to themselves. They felt that it would diminish the lives and deaths of the warriors of the Battle of Gettysburg. June and her family are super popular in Gettysburg, and though she and many others in town are mixed race, they were never intimidated or otherwise threatened by the neo Nazis and the Klansmen of the neighboring communities. It was always felt that they were protected by the founding Gilliam and the castration potential of his sword, even a century later.

Brian Garvey, the man she will marry the next day is formidable in his own way. He, also, was a high school and college athlete. His athletic life has appropriately ended with age, and in his mid-thirties, because of an erratic heartbeat now controlled by a pacemaker. He is a noted defense attorney and considered the best, in a city filled with great attorneys. His father is the founder and president of his own law firm, the largest in Philadelphia. His brother, Michael, his best man, has a law firm for corporate and general practice. His sister Maeve and his brother, John, are also attorneys but limit their practice to other areas of business, John managing the family's Country Club and Maeve is the CEO of a booming public and corporate relations firm. Maeve does pro bono legal work for the Jesuit Urban Mission. Brian got to know June's parents, Dave and Margaret, when he hosted them and June's sisters for her graduation ceremonies when she received her Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, as well as his proposal of marriage. Brian is a relatively low-key guy, but he is also filled with good humor. The mark of a good trial lawyer is to listen before speaking. Brian is the soul of discernment and analyzes every piece of evidence for or against his client until he wrings out the truth. Yet he is very entertaining with casual conversation. Also has a unique ability to decompress tense situations. Before Fr. Foley came to St. Margaret's, the previous pastor was a genuine racist. When they first met, June, who interacts daily with nine Jesuit priests and scholastics, slipped and called the pastor by his first name. The pastor insisted that he preferred to be addressed as Father or Reverend. June responded that he could address her as doctor. Before the confrontation got too hot, it was Brian who decompressed the situation.

When Brian and June were picnicking and making out a little on the mountain near Camp David, the Secret Service swooped down on them. Brian was amused that June personally knew one of the Secret Service Agents. Ten years of personal history was shared. Introductions were made. When they left, June's friend said they could stay in the area and enjoy their picnic but cautioned them that they were on streaming video. Good to know laughed Brian.

June introduced Brian to her Gettysburg friends, one of whom runs a soup kitchen in the next town. When they were leaving that encounter, Brian slipped a hundred-dollar bill in her pocket warning her to not say a word. They have asked their wedding guests to make a donation to that soup kitchen in lieu of a gift. That was a note that went out with the invitations.

Friday seemed endless. June thought she had a myriad of little things to do in preparation for tomorrow but couldn't remember any of them. She was totally unaware of all the other activity that surrounded her. She, Maeve, Theresa, and Maria will be giving the senior class a three-day workshop on human relations in February. Given her status as a member of the first family of Gettysburg, her amazing basketball skills, responsible for four girl's state basketball championships, in fact the only state titles ever achieved by any team of her high school, her All State and All-America basketball accomplishments, valedictorian of her high

school class and her academic accomplishments at Immaculata and UPenn, June was considered to be a legend by the entire town. Yet, she remained one of them, as if she had no special accomplishments.

When she and Brian left with her parents and sisters to walk the two blocks to the Church for the rehearsal, they were totally shocked. Strung across the street was a huge banner reading, "Congratulations June and Brian."

The high school band was there to lead the procession followed by about a hundred citizens of Gettysburg, every one of them personally known to June. When the parish volunteered the school auditorium for a rehearsal dinner, little did they know that it was a town wide feast for their favorite daughter. June became flustered, "Mom." Brian put his arm around her squeezing her shoulder. "June, they love you. Just go with it, be humble and be grateful."

The rehearsal was chaotic but eventually everyone in the wedding party knew their place on the altar. June's sister, a high school senior was the maid of honor. Father Jim Keenan, President of the Jesuit Urban Mission, would be the principle celebrant of the Mass and the officiant at the wedding. Six other Jesuit priests and Father Fred would concelebrate. The pastor, Fr. Tom Foley, will welcome the visitors as well as the wedding party, and concelebrate as well. June's younger sister would be a flower girl. Maeve, Dierdre, Susan, Grace, Theresa, Rosellen and Maria were bridesmaids. The groomsmen included John Garvey, Patrick Malone, Tommy Farrell, Michael Garvey was the best man, Charlie Colombo, Grace O'Malley's boyfriend, and Desmond Boyd. Father Tom was conducting the rehearsal. It was going to be spiritual, casual, appropriately solemn, and fun. Once everyone knew where they were going, Fr. Tom recommended the rehearsal dinner in the school auditorium next door.

Bedlam broke out as soon as they walked into the auditorium. The band started playing a Sousa march popular with all high school bands. The festival foods were a miracle in and of themselves. A line started to form of all the friends of June's community life who wanted to meet Brian, as well as greet June.

It was a good thing the wedding was scheduled for 2:00 PM the next day. The revelers would feel their exhaustion in the morning.

The wedding was beautiful. The bridesmaids wore whatever they had in their closet at June's recommendation, to save on expenses. The procession was led by the concelebrating priests. The organist played a Mozart wedding march, the beautiful, Susan Gilliam, following the bridesmaids, led the radiant bride on the arm of her father. At the front of the Church, Dave Gilliam kissed his daughter, shook hands with Brian, and gently placed her hand in his. The pastor, Fr. Tom Foley, welcomed the congregation mostly out of towners, close friends of both their families and members of Brian's staff as well as members of June's staff. The entire church was filled. He congratulated June and Brian. He talked about the community-wide celebration of the previous evening and wished that their marriage continue to be blessed by so many friends who loved them. He encouraged all the guests to participate in the liturgy and to follow the Mass in the booklets provided by Susan Garvey.

Fr. Jim started the Mass. Emma Gilliam, June's youngest sister, beautifully read St. Paul's panegyric on love. Father Jim read the Gospel from John's description of love during the Last Supper. After the beautiful sermon on the adventure of loving, June and Brian exchanged their vows to the raucous applause of the congregation. Bobby Byrne led the singing of the hymn, the Irish wedding version of Leonard Cohen's, Alleluia, rewritten and recorded by an Irish priest. The congregation chimed in with the Alleluias. After the Eucharist was distributed. June and Brian stood before the prie-dieu. Fr. Jim blessed their rings each telling the other to accept the ring

as a symbol of eternal love. They then went to a large unlighted candle bracketed by smaller lighted candles on each side. They each took one of the lighted candles and together lighted the large candle, the single flame symbolizing that the two have become one in love. Fr. Jim read the final prayer and blessed the couple and the congregation. "Over My Head," the recessional was the classic spiritual "Over My Head." The congregation sang it with gusto and clapping and swaying in time with the African-American rhythms. Jim and Bobby Byrne used their microphones to blend their harmonies with the congregation. When the hymn ended Brian and June led the assembly of priests to Handel's Hallelujah Chorus with all the stops on the organ pulled out. Outside the Church a great crowd of townspeople gathered to hail and cheer their princess, "ooing and ahing" over her beauty in her wedding dress, arm in arm with her gallant sir knight. The applause rang through the town as the church bells started to peal. It was an unrehearsed moment, but Brian and June waved to everyone and June stood poised with her bouquet of flowers and threw it into the crowd. A teenager caught it and gave a petal to each of the people around her. While it wasn't in their plan, June and Brian indeed had a royal wedding. A convertible limo pulled up and June and Brian were swept up into it to tour the town behind a parade of cars with horns blaring. June spoke into Brian's ear. "This is way over the top. I'm embarrassed but I love it." Brian kissed her and said, "few people are more loved in their hometown." It was only then that June noted that the driver was her Secret Service friend and realized that the car was a presidential touring car, no longer in service for security reasons. They waved to the crowds that lined the streets as they slowly passed by. After touring past the entrance to the battlefield, as they passed the Irish Shoppe, they stood in the car and bowed to the people gathered in front of it. John Montague, their driver, telephoned the lead car and they made their way to the Marriott. Without having a chance to even take a breath, they were swept up by the photographers.

They saw Fr. Jim for an instant before going into the studio. June practically shouted, "Jim, I'm sorry. We wanted to be with you after Mass, but we were kidnapped." Jim laughed, "You were kidnapped in the President's limousine. You are going to have to tell me your back story because this spontaneous celebration of the entire town is amazing. I didn't know you were this kind of a celebrity. Now they are telling me you were an All-American basketball player. Four times Academic All American and twice Athletic All American. I'll talk to you later, hopefully."

The reception was an amazing collection of song and story, music and dancing, laughter and joy. Theresa and John reprised their Irish solos with Mo Guila Mar and the Voyage Through Life. Theresa led the huge crowd dancing through a series of Irish reels. The music and dancing were almost frenetic. Few enjoyed it more than Rosellen Dowd and Tom McNally. Many just enjoyed watching the ecstatic joy of the young lovers, none more than her parents, Maria and Desmond. Maria, technically her stepmother, is her best friend and role model. Charlie Colombo and Grace O'Malley also enhanced the scene of lovers. The music was provided by The Byrne Brothers Band that developed a huge following in the Philadelphia area as a result of their work at the Garvey weddings and the Jesuit Mission Gala. Brian and June wove their way through the dinner tables to greet their guests. When they got to the Jesuit's table, Maria apologized to Fr. Jim. She just never felt that part of her life was of any interest to anyone. Female basketball players just don't generate the notice that male players often generate. Michael, as best man, told a few hilarious Brian stories before offering a heart-filled toast to the bride and groom. June's sister, Susan, gave a touchingly beautiful description of the experience of being a sister to June and her wonderful husband, Brian. Brian's parents, David and Brigid came to her later in the evening to thank her for such a beautiful tribute. June was Maeve's college roommate and had adopted Brigid and Dave as her Philadelphia parents. The Garvey's were bursting with pride. About a month previously they had hosted the Gilliam's for a weekend that included Mass and the afternoon brunch.

The next morning, June and Brian, exhausted from two days of celebration had breakfast with her parents and sisters before flying from nearby Harrisburg to California for a Napa Valley honeymoon.

The next evening, after a leisurely drive home, John and Theresa were sitting on the couch in John's comfortable apartment at the country club, dining on the marvelous leftovers from a wedding at the club. They continued the romance of the weekend by watching a Hallmark movie. Theresa loves Hallmark movies. They were talking about the beauty of Brian and June's wedding and how it became a town wide celebration. "I can't believe that our own wedding is less than three months from now. It has been a long wait, but it went so fast. Did you ever try to look five years into the future to imagine what our lives will be like?"

"I'm not sure I can do that," said John. "There are so many rapid changes in our world with new technologies, new attitudes. I tried to do that for the club. I presented it to the board, and they were astonished but the more I thought about the five year plan the more shallow it seemed to be. I try to keep the club on the leading edge but with the alarming speed of life, my plans for the future seem to be insignificant. I told the board that I would revise them each year. One of the things I would like to do is build a meditation grove that can also be used for wedding ceremonies."

"I don't think Catholics are allowed to do that," said Theresa.

"We have had some weddings here, replied John, and I worked something out with Fr. Fred. They had a private wedding service at St. Paul's that will be the sacramental wedding. In the afternoon, we had a public declaration of their vows. Fr. Fred requires at least six hours of counseling."

"Six hours! We had six months and many of those sessions were three hours."

"I'm encouraging Fr. Fred to do that. It won't work for everyone. Some just want to please their parents. They don't give a twit about the spiritual dimensions of marriage."

"I loved what we did," said Theresa." John responded enthusiastically, "as did I."

"Where do you think we will be in five years?"

John mused a bit. "I think we'll be living in one of those houses on the course near to my parents. I think we'll have at least two children by then. In fact, Maeve will probably want to build an employee nursery by then. Our lives will be built around two toddlers and we'll prepare for more."

"What do you think about five years ahead." Theresa responded, "the same more or less. I hadn't thought about the homes on the fairway here, but I like them. I will hate to give up our little love nest here. I like the idea of a nursery at work. I don't want our children raised by a nanny. The nursery idea works. All those babies will be cousins. I don't have any other creative thoughts other than that I signed on to go with the flow when I said 'yes'. I'm glad we are on the same page. One more thing, John. I love you like I have never loved another human being. I preserve my personal integrity by being totally committed to you with an intensity you have to share only with God. I know I am giddy and irreverent sometimes but that is because you have made me such a happy person."

"I know, and I feel the same way about you. Loving you has opened my life to infinite possibilities. If this is what we experience now, think about our lives 50 years from now. When I invited Tom McNally to be a groomsman at our wedding, I told him that every minute of loving you is a life adventure."

"And we had better get to sleep or you'll experience my grouchy side in the morning. Oh right....you get to sleep two more hours," said Theresa as, she gently punched his shoulder."

“Oh by the way, did you notice that we have a new couple in the pantheon of lovers.”

“Help me,” said John, “We are surrounded by lovers.”

“Tom Mc Nally, whom you just mentioned, and Rosellen Dowd have been dating for a couple of weeks and he was her plus one at Brian and June’s wedding.”

“I did notice that. Good for them. Both of them deserve a break.”

“Also, Grace and Charlie are an official couple.”

“They aren’t engaged. It is too soon for that. But they are committed, and they will be starting pre-Cana with Fr. Kelly at the Jesuit Mission. They figure that after several months of pre-Cana work, they’ll know each other well enough to get engaged.”

“I’m sure they will. I hope it is as great a benefit to them as our experience was.”

Dierdre O’Rourke is the Associate Director of Security for Garvey Legal Associates. In addition she is the volunteer Emergency Medical Technician for the Jesuit Urban Mission two nights a week. She was a certified EMT through her Marine Corps training and further certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. As a Marine she was highly decorated for her accomplishments as the leader of a crack search and rescue team in Afghanistan. She participated in over fifty search and rescues that included more than twenty experiences of intense combat. Neither she nor her two teammates were ever wounded but they did have to patch up many wounded soldiers in the field and saved many lives. She was awarded the Silver Star by the U.S. Government and the Croix de Guerre by the French Government for a daring and spectacular rescue of a French soldier. Not only did she drag him out of harm’s way, but she had to treat several wounds before returning to the base camp. She also saved the Garvey family twice. Most of her corporate work is strictly security, but she relentlessly trains her team of six security personnel to cover any eventuality.

After her basic training, Dierdre was assigned to office work. She picked up on the computer programs so rapidly, she caught the attention of the base commanders. They offered her a scholarship to study computer science at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Part of her curriculum was training in search and rescue procedures if she reupped for another tour of duty. As time went on, she reupped three more times. Her initial responsibility was training other search and rescue teams. She then asked if she could lead her own team and train her teammates. At this point no one was aware of her personal courage. When a squad was trapped in the heat of battle, one of the soldiers, a Frenchman, on loan to the US Army, was severely wounded in an open area. An enemy machine gunner made it his business to make sure that no rescuers would survive.

Dierdre positioned her two teammates behind the enemy bunker and they fired diagonally into the bunker. That distracted and rattled the enemy. Dierdre, having made a study of weaponry knew that the machine gun had a clearance of 14 inches, and she crawled out of bunker in the face of the withering fire she hoped wouldn’t reach down to her. Crawling, she dragged the wounded soldier about twenty feet back into the bunker. One of her teammates was able to take out the machine gunner. Dierdre was feverishly working to keep the wounded soldier alive. She called for a medivac. As her new friend healed, she visited led him at the base hospital until his transfer to Germany for physical therapy. She subsequently had many such rescues, many of them quite dangerous. By now her team knew that the quality of her training would keep them alive. Dierdre kept her promise that she would not ask them to do anything that she wouldn’t. She also never demanded that they had to do everything that she did. Dierdre had spectacular saves on the battlefield. But it was her spectacularly trained team that made them possible. Dierdre always praised them and emphasized

their role in her reports. Command was always aware of the significance of Dierdre's heroics even though she played them down.

Maeve Garvey's annual Thanksgiving feast was celebrated on the evening before Thanksgiving day. This was planned so that so that her guests could visit with their families on Thanksgiving Day. She had planned a great surprise for her friends. She had purchased the apartment adjacent to hers and knocked down the wall. She actually took the sledge hammer and slammed the wall until she punched a hole in it. The additional apartment was not yet decorated or furnished. "Patrick needed a work room," she said. and she casually added, "we also will need additional space for the baby."

"You are having a baby!" Everyone screamed with joy. "Yes, I am pregnant, and the baby is due late in May." Hugs and handshakes were the order of the next hour. Maeve had arranged for the entire feast to be catered. She and Patrick thoroughly enjoyed proudly walking through the room chatting amiably while everyone sipped pre-dinner cocktails.

Fr. Fred led grace and Dave offered a toast, "To Maeve and Patrick. Brigid and I offer a special toast of Thanksgiving for our first grandchild."

After the toast, June and Brian opened a big bag with red and white bottles of California wine appropriately decorated for everyone. June then announced that even though her accomplishment is hardly significant compared with Maria's, at least the gestation period was significantly longer. She had another box filled with books, already signed for each couple there and one for Fr. Fred. She did check first with Maeve because she didn't want to upstage her pregnancy.

"Hah, yours's came out before mine," said Maria. "It looks beautiful."

It was a long but joyful evening of excellent food, great conversation, enriching celebration, laughter, and song.

On Thanksgiving Day, John and Theresa, Maeve and Patrick, Susan and Michael, Maria and Desmond, Dierdre and Tommy, and Susan's Mom, Peg, will celebrate again with John and Maeve's parents. Peg Boyd will join them when dinner was over at the club.

On Thanksgiving day, Rosellen and Tom will serve dinners at St. Paul's soup kitchen and finally have dinner with Sarah McNally and the rest of the family. This will be a meet the parent's event for Rosellen. June and Brian, fresh from their honeymoon will join her parents for dinner and the rest of the weekend. Grace will dine with Charlie's big Italian family combined with meeting his parents and family for the first time. Fr. Fred said he would arrive in time for dessert.

Maeve and Patrick, Desmond, Maria and Rosellen, John and Theresa will join Maeve on her practice of celebrating Mass on Thanksgiving morning. The joy of the Spirit provided gratitude in a lot of lives.

ALL HALLOWS EVE
By Leon O'Chruadhlaich

On entering the "Eve of All Hallows" Irish Pub and Restaurant one rainy, dark, dreary chill of a slowly dying day one late October evening, I was surprised to hear the Proprietor sing out in his usual whimsical baritone the words "Oyez! Oyez! This inaugural meeting of the Anglo-Irish Diabolical Dublin Debating Society is duly called to order on this Halloween night" and he was immediately upstaged by an Aston Villa soccer fan imitating Deon Dublin (flying the flag of St. George) and a resident from the hamlet of Afton Villa near Neon Dublin (and flying the flag of St. Patrick), both of them in a surreal, and dancing wispy cloud of disintegrating cigarette and cigar smoke which was made even more dense, diabolical and intimidating by an unknown cloud of a suddenly inwardly downdraft of disfiguring, wafting and decaying fog-like shroud of an evening mist, partially mixing with the inevitable post-combustible motor car exhausts wafting inwards from the street, and which could be silently heard, sensed and smelt, but not seen. What was even more unexplainable was the way in which the nearest regular and usual crowd of customers of the Inn suddenly disappeared into this "cloud of unknowing" and to this date, have never been seen again. What happened next was beyond the belief of even my own supernatural imagination and ameliorating awareness.

I was suddenly alerted by what appeared to be the ghost of a long-dead English magistrate, who silently floated upwards from his crimson pleated armchair, and in a hollow, monotonous drone, and speaking directly to an unknown and newly assembled transparent crowd of a very boisterous, bawdy and bellowing assemblage of the tavern's now seemingly new but outdated collection of a quaint semi- and fully inebriated clientele, who were causing a clattering, clanking and rattling cacophony of noise, he began reading the British Riot Act of 1714. He precisely commenced with "you are all charged and commandeth to disperse yourselves, and peacefully depart to your habitations or lawful businesses, upon the pains contained in the Act made in the year 1714 for preventing tumults and riotous assemblies, God save the King!" Not to be outdone, a long dead Irish magistrate got up from his emerald pleated armchair and started reading the Irish Code Duello of 1777. He loosely commenced with "the first offence requires the first apology, and hopefully the retort is more offensive than the insult, the aggressor to pardon in express terms. All blows are strictly prohibited between Gentlemen as no verbal apology can be received for such an insult, especially after the parties have taken their ground. Any insult to a lady under a Gentleman's care or protection is to be considered, as by one degree, a greater offense than if given to the Gentleman personally, and to be regulated accordingly. Challenges are not to be rendered after dark, unless the party to be challenged intends leaving the place of offense before morning. Seconders are bound to attempt a reconciliation before the meeting takes place, whereas any conflict to agitate the nerves and make the hands shake will end the business for the day." Without further ado, there developed a second noisy rush of speeding footsteps and hastily appropriated overcoats, with the remaining terrified closeted and regulars and the smaller cluster of romantics snogging in The Snug, ran screaming, swearing and slandering their way out through the nearest windows, doors and staircases of this said abode, and never, to this day, have not been similarly witnessed or known to frequent the "Eve of All Hallows" Pub ever again.

Approaching the now long-dead magistrates, in what now seemed to be the now empty bar and restaurant, I was visibly shaken by a sudden sensation of being surrounded by the risibility, jocundity and blitheness from the newly arrived ghostly presences, which decompressed into a suddenly demystifying crowd of what I took to be a much smaller eclectic group of ethereal but very articulate minority gathering of Anglo-Irish ghosts of aristocratic Lords and Ladies of a Presbyterian influence; and an unequally giggling, snickering, sniggering,

tittering, guffawing, chortling, chuckling, cackling, cachinnating, roaring and shrieking of a much larger dyslectic gathering of an inarticulate majority of Irish-Anglo ghostly characters of a sinful Catholic persuasion, themselves similarly dispensed into a similar decaying mist of confessional ambience. At this point the proprietor re-appeared and newly-declared that the “spokesman for the English descendency in Ireland would be Malcolm S. Forbes” which was immediately followed by intermittent, disinterested, impolite skeletal applause from the few apparitions dressed in the sartorial elegance of yester-year, “and whose notables shall include John Millington Synge, Samuel Beckett, Oliver Goldsmith, Jonathan Swift, and William Butler Yeats, to name just a many of the few” he concluded. Not to be outdone or overcome, our humble proprietor droned on in his continuous baritone that “the spokesman for the Irish Ascendency in England will be James Joyce,” and he was met by a sudden, spontaneous, skeletal, evaporating and tumultuous welcome which erupted in the very midst of a seemingly-standing ovation, with righteous shrieking and deafening applause by the assemblage of poorly clad, sockless, and semi-barefoot laborers of the agricultural classes, “and whose quotables shall include Flan O’Brien, Patrick Kavanagh, Brendan Behan, Sean O’Casey, Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw, to name a few of the many.”

Now here is where the very strange part of my evening really began. All of a sudden, what appeared to be the ghost of Malcolm S. Forbes then appeared, and in a deep, resounding, hollow voice announced that “for more decades than London politicians like to remember, Ireland’s literary might has been making and unmasking British parliaments and masking and unmaking British Prime Ministers,” continued the Scottish Forbes, instantaneously turning the Catholic Irish-Anglos apparitions into a threatening group of very disagreeable paddy’s. “Them’s fightin’ words.....” mumbles the newly arrived ghost of Finn McCool, now suddenly appearing to be the ghostly pale-faced rider of the Irish-Anglo group, as the clamorous, clandestine, and smaller Cameron Clan of Anglo-Irish notables rattled their way selectively backwards. “A Priest in the house and a pump in the yard is no measure of Irish success,” continues the newly arrived ghost of great Sean O’Casey, “and who is going to speak for our forgotten dead and forever departed, many of them lying dead by the side of the road with slivers of grass sticking out of the sides of their mouths, and their native lands summarily confiscated, disposed, deprived, divested and trodden underfoot by the boots of British oppression, their human souls grist for the mill and flotsam for the tide, their pedestrian soles, their equestrian foals, their trimester roles, their molester bowls, and their sequester souls occupied by the debris, detritus, dregs, degradation, delinquency, disembowelment, despair, detritus, disaster, drunkenness, molested and detested by the prostitutes and destitutes of a dying Colonial Empire” instantaneously turning the Protestant Anglo-Irish apparitions into a threatening group of very disagreeable fellows. “Them’s fightin’ words.....” mumbles the ghost of Oliver Cromwell, now suddenly appearing to be the ghostly face-paled rider of the Anglo-Irish group, as the much larger dyslectic gathering of the inarticulate majority of Irish-Anglo ghostly characters of a sinful Catholic persuasion rattled their way selectively backwards.

In the meantime, I had this sudden strange feeling that I was on the banks of the River Liffy in Ye Olde Dublin Towne, and it was June 16th, 1904, and on that Bloomsday, that fun day, that Sunday, the very appearance of an ethereal James Joyce himself evolved from the dank, damp, disintegrating and dissolving banks of the opposite side of the River Liffy and declared to all the Heavens and to all the Earth why “nobody in the World understands me.” He was visibly shaken, and I could hear the clinking rattle of the startle of his skeleton when I yelled back “well, I do.” “And I’m in a prison without healing, with a very strange feeling, and the mice in me cell is all squealing,” mumbles the ghost of Brendan Behan, suddenly appearing on the banks of London’s Royal Canal, and now happily accompanied by a ghostly spirit of his own imagination, the ‘Quare Fella himself. “And I wouldn’t doubt it, or clout it, or boxing-bout worry about it” continues the ghost of James Joyce, now wrapped in a flowing black robe of a dark, Sun-less day and a stark Moon-less night, with the blood-green words ‘The

Scholastic Irishman' scorched into his forehead, and spontaneously screaming at the top of his ghostly chatter that was really the matter of "Ireland, Ireland, this lovely land that always sent, her writers and artists to banishment; and in the spirit of Irish fun, betrayed her leaders, one by one"

Suddenly, next to follow, speaking in a text-book voice of noise-less silence, now appeared the ghost of Conor Cruise O'Brien, and in a hollow, squeaking in a vexed-look choice of silent-ness noise, intoned that "Irishness is not primarily a question of birth or blood or language; it is the condition of being involved in the Irish situation, and usually being mauled by it." "And the keen Irish Keane's keel-hauled to Australia, the fierce Irish men wheel-called to Monserrat, the Pearse women balled in Yankee halls by American Patriots, the Parnell babes black-balled in swanky malls by African polyglots, the carnal children walled-in by the Romans, sent out to Africa by the Dail, welcomed in France by De Gaulle, the priests were appalled, and all the unwanted and unwashed dumped off in Youghal" humbles the newly arrived (once again) ghost of Brendan Behan's 'Quare Fella. From seemingly out of nowhere, the ghost of Lydia M. Child declared that "Gentlemen, Gentlemen, we all know the Irish writers with their glowing hearts and reverent credulity are desperately needed in this cold age of intellect and skepticism....." to which the ghostly 'Quare Fella grumbles "but the old skeptical intellectuals abide in England and can't possibly be compared to the bold intellectual skeptics who thrive in Ireland..." and not to be outdone or outshone, the bold, resounding, resonant voice of the ghost of James Connelly booms out once again "ladies, ladies, laddies, lassies, ladles and gadflies, the Irishman in English literature may be said to have been born with an apology in his mouth....." but is immediately retorted by the (once again) ghost of the 'Quare Fella who announces "arraghh, but it is the Englishman in Irish literature who wishes he was born with all that verbal ventriloquy in his head" admonishing the rapidly assembling coven of seemingly invisible apparitions. "Come, come, Ladies turn," interjects the newly arrived ghost of Edna O'Brien, here's what I reply when anyone asks me about the Irish character. I say "look at the trees; maimed, stark and misshapen, but ferociously tenacious." Ah, but "more like the wild bees; pained, dark and mistaken, but tenaciously ferocious," bumbles the (once again) ghost of the 'Quare Fella, his heart pining all the while for his long-lost, goblin-love of the broom-less Witch Hazel with her irresistible pheromones of witch hazel.....

"Now, now, Patricks, Paddies, Pdraighs and Colleens, Chlairs and Caitlins, we all acknowledge that the Irish are a fair people, always proven by the fact that they never speak well of one another," blurts out the ghost of Samuel Johnson, to which the foaming, frothing and frenetic ghostly form of the (once again) 'Quare Fella blurts out "the blithering spalpeen, the blathering spaldeen, the seldom-seen spleen of you all," and with his now rickety-rosary of his rib-cracking skeleton echoing like a washboard played by the Devil himself, gambles and rambles on about "and whose 'fair' people are you rambling and gambling about anyway ? Some Fair people work the swings, the big wheel and the roundabouts, they aren't fair but are dark, they're unfair to the employed and we call them 'the tinkers.' Other Fair people work stings, the big steal and are lager-louts, they work in the dark and are unfair, they're always unemployed and we call them 'the drinkers.' Now some Fair people aren't unfair, don't work at The Fair, are employed and are fair, they build wings, small wheels and just barge-about, whether they're dark or they're fair, fair or unfair, work unpaid at The Fair, never pay their fare, but they're really unemployable derelicts and so we call them the 'thinkers.'"

"Come now," retorts the ghost of Samuel Johnson, "I am not a Jester to be paraded before the King 'nor a eunuch to be paraded before the Queen," but they were ALL on him now, "you're Adelsburn to King George I, Merry Andrew to Henry VIII, Berdic to William the Conqueror, Patche to Cardinal Wolsey, Will Somers at Hampton Court, Aksakoff to Czarina Elizabeth" rant the Apostolic Catholics. "You're Cardinal Soglia to Pope Gregory XVI, Abgely to Louis XIV, Rosen to Maximilian I, Colquhoun to Mary Queen of Scots, Da'gonet to King

Arthur, Patison to Thomas More, and Yorick to the Court of Denmark,” pant the Ameliorating Protestants. “Lighten up, lads,” intones the newly arrived ghost of Peggy Noonan, murmuring and rumouring in her malodorous monotone (like gas from a burner), “the Irish are often nervous about having the appropriate face for the occasion. They have to be happy at weddings, which is a strain, so they get depressed; they have to be sad at funerals, which is easy, so they get happy.”

“And at least Finnegan’s awake,” crumbles the rattled ghost of the (once again) ‘Quare Fella, shaking his rattles and prattles on before bowing respectfully to the soft-perfumed and well-legged ghost of William Butler Yeats, which is now mourning over his morning coffee, pouring over his afternoon tea, boring over his late-night dinner in the Diner, and is decidedly perturbed when the (once again) ‘Quare Fella begins bee-hive snobbing and apple-core bobbing about how really noble is Yeats’s Nobel Prize for Thespian Poetry “which is by the very nature of things.....” and is then unceremoniously and immediately upstaged downtown by the very ignoble but Nobel ghost of the Scholastic Irishman (James Joyce, your man himself), who now know-how starts sobbing “a poet is by the very stature of wings one who thrives with satire insincerity, or blather, to the bettor his artistry, the more in sense here his wife. His strife is a sediment in dying and those who went before him have a left to mow it. Under everything, it is un-necessary that the empiric poet’s sight be shown, that the wee-us could misunderstand that his idolatry is nay a rooting weed but the screech of a woman; that is, a right object to perceive something in any part, to band apart forceps, one-two many fears, too wet to woo a bath, three to know than another where t’other Maid Maude Gonne has gone, to refuse four’s own wrought when the fives and sixes well-naught of sexes mothers mass the paucity of the moon in front of it verily taking another’s wife into that deep well of tree’s herbs (which are so much further from one’s own bowl) to the knit-less wit-some of the spoiled.....”

Well now, this left the ghost of W. B. Yeats foaming at the mouth, roaming in the south, combing at his gout, droning with a clout, honing with a flout, groaning with a pout, loaning for the grout, moaning at the joust, cloning of a mouse, and intoning “folks is queer as now’t” while the ghost of non-citizen Kane, stumbling with a cane, mumbling in the rain, and newly proposes a counter-claim that “anybody who believes in fairies is mad, with caries is bad, with dairies is had, hairy is Dad, but how nary a lad, wary a cad, but forever inside Mary’s is consummately glad.” At long last, with ethereal grace, encumbering a cloudless face, at a leisurely pace, the face-less ghost of George Moore finally stands up to make a speech. “My one claim to originality among Irishmen it that I have never made a speech....,” he starts off, but with a clash of lemur-less femurs and non-humorous humeruses, the ‘Quare Fella’s coat-less ghost starts off panting and ranting again with “well, don’t start now, and the less we hear from Moore the better !”

“Well now, it’s all coming out now, here and now, there now, here now,” up-spoke the un-tamed ghost of wild Oscar Wilde, “because we coarse Irish are too poetical to be poets; we are a nation of brilliant successes, the greatest debaters since the Disciples and the latest reprobaters since the Greeks !” To which the now animated ghost of the (once again) ‘Quare Fella related that “we are too literary to be writers; we are a nation of scintillating and brilliant excesses, the greatest quitters since the Romans, themselves a nation of devastating fighters, wiping their asses in front of the Trojan blighters, an affront to the Macedonian fighters, then hunt the Bohemian blighters, who stick their tongues out at the Slovenians, who are barefoot with the Armenians, bare-headed with the Athenians, they get stuck in the post-diluvian sand, shoveled muck in the river-rich land, have no luck in the rock n’ roll band, would ruck in the café all-nighters, and then can’t stop the rain with their window-shield wipers.”

A new mist enveloped, then suddenly developed, erasing the zealots, and delightfully descended into the amorphous form of V.S. Pritchett, whose resounding absent voice exhaled "it is often said that in Ireland there is an excess of genius un-sustained by talent; but there is talent in the tongues....." He was immediately impaled by the ghostly whiter shade of pale-face of the (once again) 'Quare Fella who inhaled "the very silly sod....any auld cod can see the talented geniuses in the tall tents in The Round, the heinous talent of the wall gents in the Four Courts, the gallant Fenians on the Dail bench, the malevolent menial-ness of the hall dents, the rampant see-less of the pall vents, whatever....."

"Yet a people so individual in its genius, so tenacious in love or hate, whether tankard or plate, so captivating in its nobility, it's civility, and so admiringly so in its ability" stated an additional inquisitorial admonition, the very transparency of F. E. Smith, Lord Birkenhead himself, in an evolving mist of mature sensibility. "And we're all drinking down the Guinness in Hartlepool, Liverpool, Blackpool and Dorset's Poole, that's for sure....." adds the ghostly (once again) 'Quare Fella. Now at that point stood up the latest, greatest, noble Nobel Laureate from Mossbawn, born one Seamus Heaney (pronounced "shame-us he-knee"), an apparition of intellectual virtuosity, without Anglo-Irish pomposity, but adorned with Irish-Anglo verbosity; an historian of prose, a Victorian of verse, an elite of language, a romancer with rhythm, a sailor with prism, and when reciting his poetry, the evangelical choir always announces 'he is risen.' "Now Ireland is where strange tales begin and happy endings are possible...." he starts off before being interrupted by the schlock, gimcrack, gin-craic, chintzy, tatty haughty-taughty, blast from the past, one sadly miss-named and disdained, ghost in-the-name, of one Charlie Haughey (pronounced "haw-hee"-which is really a donkey talking backwards). "Well now, what's this all about now, here now, right now, here-and-now...." says the floating ghost and gloating post of the former *An Taoiseach*, now about in his non-prime minister, *bon-mot* sinister after-tea squawk, "and I'd like to think....." "That's impossible!" Screams the non-adornful, ever scornful, cheerily derisive and permissive cheering crowd of ghostly profundity, "and that's the very truth" yells the never-boring, goal-scoring, ever-touring (once again) 'Quare Fella. "And isn't it very strange that haughty Charlie owns a castle in Spain and an island off Ireland and there's them down in the *Ghaeltacht* that don't even have the electricity! Now that's a very unhappy tale with a very strange ending!"

"Ah, but an Irishman's heart is nothing but his imagination....." concludes the ghost of Great Britain's GB Shaw. "And an Englishman's fart is nothing butt his exsanguination!" Concludes the 'Quare Fella to incessant, prodigious, capacious, Brobdingnagian, magnanimous, felicitous and gratuitous applause from the decaying mist of ghostly celebrities. One last apparition, in magnificent condition, now materialized and stated "I propose to bring Bill into Parliament and deprive all of you who wish to publish these theses and subject you all to peculiar penalties," concluded the tartan-clad ghost of Lord John Campbell, who, with one dilapidated long wave of his bony forearm, led the assembled gathering of drowning fog up into the hills and the heather; tapped his sporran, his kilt, his tam and his feather; and just like that, they were gone. The whole bloody lot of them.

Ring, ring, ring, ring! It was the alarm clock that woke me up from my afternoon nap. It was 5 pm. The "Eve of All Hallows" Irish Pub and Restaurant didn't open until 6 pm. I would be there at my usual time. It was a rainy, dark, dreary chill of a slowly dying day one late October evening when I finally made it to the door, and I wasn't a bit surprised to hear the Proprietor sing out in his usual whimsical baritone, the words "good evening, Leon O'Chruadhlaoidh, your usual table, your usual pint and the usual fish and chips?" "Auch Aye, laddie" I said as I sat down in my usual crimson pleated armchair, laid my usual overcoat on the usual adjacent emerald pleated armchair, and settled into the usual dancing wispy cloud of disintegrating cigarette and cigar smoke partially mixing with the inevitable post-combustible motor car exhausts wafting inwards from the street, as usual, and

which could be silently heard, sensed and smelt but not seen. Once again I became acclimatized to the usual very boisterous, bawdy and bellowing assemblage of the tavern's semi- and fully-inebriated clientele, the smaller eclectic group of the articulate minority, the even smaller cluster of romantics snogging in the Snug, and the larger dyslectic group of the inarticulate majority. Ho Hum. Just another day in the neighborhood, just like any other evening.....

ON THIS DAY IN IRISH HISTORY - NOVEMBER

1st

1883 - Mater Infirmorm Hospital in Belfast takes in its first patients.

1920 - 18-year-old Kevin Barry executed for killing a British soldier.

3rd 1841 - Foundation stone is laid for St. Malachy's Church in Belfast.

4th

1957 - Éamon de Valera attends the coronation of Pope John Paul XXIII.

2001 - Police Service of Northern Ireland established.

5th 1992 - The Irish government loses a vote of confidence and the Dáil is dissolved.

7th

1924 - Amnesty declared for politically motivated crimes committed during the Civil War.

1940 - Éamon de Valera lets it be known that Irish ports will not be handed over to the British.

1990 - Mary Robinson is elected seventh President of Ireland.

8th

1949 - Street names in any language other than English are banned in Northern Ireland.

1960 - Nine Irish soldiers serving with the United Nations are killed in the Congo.

1987 - The IRA kill eleven people at a Remembrance Service in Enniskillen.

9th

1907 - The Irish International Exhibition ends after six months.

1919 - Labour leader James Larkin arrested in New York for attempting to overthrow a government.

10th 1966 - Jack Lynch receives his seal of office as the new Taoiseach.

11th 1997 - Mary McAleese inaugurated as the eighth President of Ireland.

12th 1957 - Brendan Behan's Borstal Boy is banned by censors.

13th 1991 - Defence Secretary Jim McDaid resigns following criticism of his attending an IRA funeral.

14th

1866 - St Peter's Cathedral in Belfast is dedicated.

1923 - William Butler Yeats is awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

15th 1985 - Taoiseach Charles Haughey and British PM Margaret Thatcher sign the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

16th 1994 - The Fianna Fáil-Labour coalition collapses.

17th

1890 - Captain Willie O'Shea divorces Kitty O'Shea, naming Charles Stewart Parnell as co-respondent.

1926 - Following the killing of two gardaí, President W.T. Cosgrave introduces the Public Safety (Emergency Powers) Bill.

1948 - The Republic of Ireland Act 1948, aimed at repealing the External Relations Act of 1936, is introduced in Dáil Éireann.

19th

1913 - Irish Citizen Army founded by James Connolly to protect workers in the general lockout.

1971 - An Taoiseach Jack Lynch holds talks with British Prime Minister Harold Wilson.

20th 1936 - General Eoin O'Duffy leads 600 men to fight for Franco in Spain.

21st

1920 - Bloody Sunday. Following the assassinations of 14 undercover British agents by Michael Collins' men, British forces kill 12 people at a GAA football match at Croke Park.

2001 - GAA abolishes 'Rule 21' so that members of the security forces and British army can play.

22nd 1932 - Prince of Wales opens the new parliament building in Belfast.

23rd 1867 - William O'Mera Allen, Michael Larkin and William O'Brien are executed at Manchester.

24th

1922 - Erskine Childers is executed for the possession of a gun which Michael Collins had given him as a Christmas present.

1995 - A referendum in the Republic narrowly passes in favour of allowing divorce.

25th

1890 - Charles Stewart Parnell re-elected leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party.

1892 - Douglas Hyde delivers a lecture to the Irish National Literary Society on 'the necessity of de-anglicising the Irish people'.

1913 - Irish Volunteers founded.

1948 - The Republic of Ireland Act is passed in Dáil Éireann.

26th 1998 - Tony Blair becomes the first British Prime Minister to address the Oireachtas.

28th

1863 - First edition of The Irish People.

1905 - Sinn Féin founded.

1913 - Andrew Bonar Law addresses a huge Unionist rally in the Theatre Royal in Dublin, encouraging Ulster to resist Home Rule.

1920 - Flying column led by Tom Barry kills 16 Auxiliaries at Kilmichael in County Cork.

29th

1955 - Bord na gCon set up under the Greyhound Racing Bill.

1979 - Taoiseach Jack Lynch greets EEC heads of government in Dublin.

1999 - Ten designated ministers appointed to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

30th

1947 - A sixty day transport strike ends in Dublin.

1956 - Petrol rationing is introduced in response to the Suez Crisis.