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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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An Irish American Christmas With White Mistletoe

by

Raymond D. Aumack

Dave and Brigid Garvey were sitting in their den, in front of a roaring fireplace to ward off the early December cold wave and rainstorm. They were watching the evening news.

“You know Brigid, we have been so blessed. All of our children turned out to be wonderful people and each of them is blessed to have married a wonderful person.”

“Don’t forget Maria,” said Brigid. “She is one of our surrogate daughters. I am so proud of her. All she came here with was a stolen rowboat and the clothes on her back. Look at her now. She is technically a step mother and also the mentor and friend of Rosellen. She has gently guided her to the beautiful, confident woman she has become. Of course, Patrick contributed to that with a scholarship. She received an ‘A’ in both her summer courses. I am so excited to have a grandson. I wish I could rush the calendar to May .”

“Remember the days when we were just starting out. We wouldn’t turn on the heat on a night like this just to save pennies against the heating bill. Remember the bassinets we brought to our little rented office fearing, that we might not be able to pay the rent. We had two babies after John was born and our little office was still big enough. Then we got lucky with the success of the clients who dared to join with us. By the time Michael arrived we could afford a larger office. When Maeve arrived she was our good luck charm. Things really started to take off. I hired a couple of startup lawyers who were daring enough to join us. More clients meant larger quarters. We still had bassinets in the outer office and playthings for Brian and Michael. Maeve was confined to a playpen and she really didn’t like that. We didn’t have anything like preschool or daycare in those days. John was in kindergarten.”

“You hired two secretaries to replace me and hired another paralegal. And don’t forget your enterprising spouse whose Donegal friend, Marcie

McCarron was married to the mayor of King of Prussia who was looking for a municipal attorney,”

“I was On roller skates in those days,” said David. “All the little suburban towns around Philadelphia joined with our firm. I had to quickly develop a municipal law division and hire attorneys with that kind of expertise. I was fortunate to find a democrat who fell out of favor with a Republican mayor.”

“Weren’t you going to represent the Archdiocese?” asked Brigid.

“Yes, we considered it. By that time Joe was our investigator and gave me about 25 reasons backed up by evidence why we shouldn’t touch that. Joe was far more astute with optics than I ever was.”

After that, growth came amazingly fast. We started making money faster than I ever dreamed possible. I took a course in investments and learned about the tax implications. I set up investment accounts for the kids with a relatively modest amount of money. I figured that if anything happened to me, they would at least have an inheritance. I contribute something to each account every year. For the most part, they ignore having it and are reminded of it when they have to sign papers at tax time. John’s account, because he is the oldest and has had it longer, is now twelve million. As the youngest, Maeve’s account is at eight million. Michael is taking a collateral loan to buy a building. Paying off that loan is less expensive, and he is actually paying back to himself over five years. Maeve has a two-million-dollar emergency fund to defend against a recession. Since she made her employees co-owners, they also contribute to it. I think Hugh Quinn has a lot of fun with the accounting.”

“Gosh,” said Brigid. “When I started working for the nuns at Chestnut Hill, I had two pair of stockings, two skirts, a couple of blouses and a couple of sweaters. I took part of my \$25.00 a week salary to buy underwear. However, I also had a scholarship and room and board. That equaled a fortune in those days. I think the nuns expected that I would join the order after graduation. However, I met this incredibly handsome law student and a year later, we were married. At that point I had a few more skirts and sweaters and a whole weeks-worth of underwear.” Dave laughed as he kissed her. “I didn’t have much more. What a great risk you took.”

“Ah, it wasn’t such a great risk. I had a handsome lawyer and a non-paying job with him at his dynamic firm. I didn’t need underwear all that much when I was with him.”

“Oh, Brigid McCarthy, you are a lascivious woman and I love you.”

Dave turned off the gas fireplace, put out the lights, and he and Brigid went upstairs to bed.

On the afternoon of Thanksgiving Day, Charlie Colombo and Grace O’Malley were taking bold steps to his parent’s home to meet what appeared to be dozens of relatives. It was the first time Charlie ever brought a young lady home to meet his parents. This was now a serious matter.

The initial reaction was amazing. Charlie’s Mom and Dad had prepared for this. They were expecting someone shy and frightened. The person they met was a strong and confident woman, genuinely pleased to meet them.

Charlie’s parents, Dino and Anna were equally thrilled to meet Grace. Her smile lighted the entire room. They kissed each other on both cheeks. A cute little girl ran up and asked Grace if she was Uncle Charlie’s girlfriend. Grace pondered for about three seconds and said, “Uncle Charlie and I are very good friends. But I have a sense that he is your boyfriend. Did I guess right?”

“I really love Uncle Charlie.”

“So do I,” said Grace, “would you mind if we share.” The little girl put her index finger to her cheek and pondered. “ Well, I guess so, if it is alright with Uncle Charlie.” Charlie picked her up and gave her a super hug and a kiss. When he put her down, she came to Grace and asked, “What is your name. My name is Emily.”

“Well my name is Grace and I think we have a deal. Can we seal it with a hug?” With Emily’s assent she picked her up and gave her a big hug and a kiss.

“These are my two sisters, Amelia and Catalina, who answers best to Kate,” said Charlie.” The two beautiful girls seemed younger than Charlie. They were smiling and loquacious. They told me they would talk with me

privately to tell me all the secrets about Charley that only they knew. Charlie laughed and waved in his brother Alfredo. Alfredo resembled Charlie. He was the youngest in his very early twenties. there were several aunts and uncles who were brimming with enthusiasm. Teen age nieces and nephews shyly came forward to meet Grace.

Grace was easy to like. She spoke nicely with every one and got them to tell her about themselves.

Charlie knew that this would be a big success. His confidence was paying dividends. Everyone loved Grace. At dinner they asked her where she was from, where she worked, what she did at work, and how she met Charlie.

“I grew up in a little town near Pittsburg. I went to high school there and went to Immaculata University. That was a life changing experience. I grew up which means that I grew out of the insular cocoon that surrounded my life. At Immaculata I met two girls who have now become close friends. I was a bridesmaid at both their weddings. Both were super achievers. June Gilliam was the school valedictorian, an All – American basketball player in each of her four years and has a doctorate from UPenn. She is a Black girl and one of the most beautiful persons you would ever want to meet, inside and out. Last week she married my other friend’s brother. She is the director of Jesuit Urban Mission in Philadelphia.

My other friend from college is Maeve Garvey. She was also at the top of the class. I was number three behind her and the three of us were inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa honors society. She is an attorney. She founded a very successful public and corporate relations company in Philadelphia. Two of my other friends work for her and I will be working with them on a fundraising golf tournament for the Jesuit Urban Mission. I was the auctioneer for a fundraiser they had the year before. Charlie’s company is a client of Sotheby’s where I am a Vice President responsible for institutional fund-raising efforts. My friends meet together every Sunday for Mass and a great brunch. I asked Charlie to join me for our first date, although he didn’t know it then. We went to church together with some friends. We both loved the experience and that has been our practice for the last four months.

That is pretty much my biography. Did I leave anything out?”

“Ooooh yeah,” laughed Amelia, “but we’ll talk privately about that.”

Everyone seemed to be delighted and that pleased Charlie very much.

Grace delicately turned the conversation around to have people telling their stories. Charlie's parents were almost left out of the conversation until Grace brought them into it to tell their story.

It turned out to be one the happiest family gatherings they every had. The food was delicious, and the family atmosphere was great. Little Emily asked if she could come to church with them sometime. Grace promised her that they would work that out.

December 10th was a magnificent day, John and Theresa's wedding was to be at a Nuptial Mass concelebrated by about a dozen priests with the pastor, Fr. Fred Milos as the principle celebrant and the officiant of the wedding celebration. Fr. Jim Keenan, president of the Jesuit Urban Mission was the homilist. Theresa was formerly the executive director and finished her ten- year career there with an amazing gala that generated four milliOn dollars. She then turned the Mission over to her friend, Dr. June Gilliam, along with the four million, to implement the plans that she, June, Maeve, and, Maria, formulated over the last ten years. The center now owns an urgent care medical center, an ambulance, a post college graduate, volunteer program started by Theresa, a day care center, an after the school day tutoring and academic support program, and an outdoor basketball court. Dr. Maria Costo Dowd, has been running an English as a Second Language Program that was also started by Theresa.

The crowd was starting to pour into the church. The groomsmen were serving as ushers and elegantly escorted everyone to satisfactory seats. A huge crowd of clients from the Jesuit Urban Mission came to the church to see their "Mother Theresa" marry John Garvey, also known to many of them.

Theresa arrived five minutes before the ceremony. The rear of the church was crowded with clergy who would lead the procession. As soon as they were in place. Dierdre led the procession of bridesmaids. Theresa's pregnant best friend, Maeve Garvey Malone, was the Maid of Honor. Her foster father, Dave Garvey escorted Theresa down the aisle. This was the fourth Garvey wedding this year. The maids of honor processed at all of them and their beauty still left the onlookers breathless.

At the rehearsal dinner the joke of the night was a carryover from the bachelor party. If all of John's former girlfriends came to the church, the overflow crowd would fill the street outside the church.

Theresa and John sang some songs at the dinner and led the community sing-along of several traditional Irish songs.

A good time was celebrated by the large group of bridesmaids and groomsmen. Michael Garvey was to give the toast at the wedding reception. His wife Susan had designed and prepared the keepsake pamphlet to guide the congregation through the ceremony and the hymns.

When everyone was located where they were supposed to be, Fr. Fred stepped from behind the altar. He welcomed everyone to the parish church remarking that some were old friends now that this was the fourth Garvey wedding this year. "It was almost two months ago that we all met in Gettysburg. We welcome Theresa's brothers who came one from Canada and the other from Ireland. The rehearsal dinner last night was a grand family reunion."

Fr. Fred returned to the altar to begin the Mass. Susan Boyd Garvey and June Gilliam Garvey each read from the Scriptures. Father Keenan was at his best about the emptying of selfishness in the act of loving and paid tribute to the love shared by John and Theresa with whom he worked for ten years to build the Jesuit Urban Mission. "Perhaps the greatest tribute is the hundred or so people here who came to the marriage of their own "Mother Theresa" who supported them so well. I never told her, but I was so proud to be working with her. Whatever was asked of her, she did double and was a heroine on the front lines of life where pain is most intense. The President gave her the Medal of Freedom and only then did the rest of the world see the courageous woman who was soothing people's pain day in and day out. Her husband, John, has the same qualities. I know that every time it snowed, he personally cleared the snow from this church property. In those lean days when the Jesuit ministry didn't have two pennies to rub together, whenever we were in desperate need for anything, it would mysteriously appear. When I asked John where it came from, he would answer, 'you don't want to know.' I never told Theresa that either. However, over the last two years she has discovered the giant of a man she is about to

marry. As I stand in this pulpit, I think that I am looking at two of my own children. May they be blessed all the days of their lives. We who know them are already blessed.”

There wasn't a dry eye in the entire church, including those of the bride and groom.

The offertory hymn was, Make Me a Channel of Your Peace, the prayer of St. Francis, chosen by both Theresa and John.

After the sermon, the couple joined Fr. Fred for the exchange of vows. They had written their own vows with the encouragement and blessing of Fr. Fred. There was resounding applause from the congregation, long enough for the couple to exchange a quick kiss.

After the Eucharist was distributed, they gathered to exchange rings. Then they moved to the candle and lighted a wick from two smaller candles to light the large centered candle, signifying that the flame of life was lighted symbolizing the individuality and togetherness of the bride and groom. This was a ceremony celebrated for centuries by the Native Americans of northern Maryland, near her dear friend, June Gilliam Garvey's home town.

The reception was a memorable affair. The club members wanted to make it special for John and Theresa and with the supervision of the creative Banquet Manager, Peg Boyd, it was indeed special. The Byrne Brothers band was at their best. It was an Irish hooley to end all hooleys. There was dancing, singing, and general good cheer throughout the evening. The food was outstanding. During the evening John and Theresa gave Peg a giant thank you hug.

During the evening, Theresa and John introduced her brothers to Dave and Brigid. “After our parents died, I was very alone in Philadelphia. I met Maeve at church one Sunday. After Mass she introduced me to her parents, and I immediately adopted them as my foster parents. I am so proud of them and all of my friends, the bridesmaids you have both met.

I think Maeve may have had something to do with John and I connecting. I never thought that was a possibility. After all, he was my best friend's big brother and he didn't pay much attention to us.”

“I had nothing to do with that,” said Maeve. “He told me all these wonderful things about Theresa. I suggested that he tell Theresa. Then he showed up one day with a truck load of expensive golf clothing for the people we served at the Jesuit mission. They didn’t date. They were friends going out for dinner, walking around the neighborhood. A little gas was thrown on the flame and they were in love. And so their story began. Everyone started planning a wedding. And Theresa and John volunteered to wait until December. They spent six months doing pre-Cana.”

“That was only because it was such important fun,” said Theresa.

“Sis, you and John have got to come and visit with me in Canada. No, said Denis, come to Ireland.”

“We’ll do both,” said John. “We’ll plan both visits before the end of next year. Maybe we can drag Patrick and Maeve with us.”

Did you guys know that Theresa has a black belt in karate, she saved all of our lives, and was awarded the Presidential Medal of freedom?”

“Glory be, sis. I didn’t see that coming.”

“Neither did I,” quipped Theresa. “Come with us. We’ll introduce you to a real hero, as soon as I can find Dierdre.”

“Ah, there she is” said Maeve, “Dancing with Tommy.” A clever move to take Theresa and John off the hook.

John spied Tom and Rosellen on the dance floor, and he and Theresa walked over to them.

“Tom, thank you for joining with us,” said John.

“I wouldn’t want to miss this for the world,” said Tom. Yours’s and June and Brian’s are festivals to remember. It is the coolest wedding I ever went to. It is also the first time I was in a wedding party, even though I have four sisters.

Early the next morning Patrick drove them to the Philadelphia airport where they embarked for Barbados and the Irish resort that they selected even before Susan and Michael. St. Joseph’s University was closed for the end of the semester and the long winter break. His brothers would meet with the Dowds and join them for dinner on Monday with Tom McNalley

and Rosellen, as well as Maeve and Patrick. Later in the week they would dine with the senior Garveys and hear about life in the Donegal mountains before either of them was born. John had promised a trip to Canada, to the Laurentian Mountains where Patrick's brother, Stephen, was a Geologist, consulting to several gold-mining companies. Denis was a journalist with The Irish Times. and a writer with credits in several periodicals.

Monday came around very quickly and, though Maria had to teach all day, she had prepared Chicken Cordon Bleu, covered on a tray, oven ready, and stored in the refrigerator, ready for the oven. Desmond was in charge of hors d'oeuvres, drinks, and dessert. These he purchased from Bookbinders and the friendly chef and cooks made sure the trays were extra full.

Rosellen set the table with the fine china and good silverware, and beautifully folded linen napkins. The Waterford crystal water and wine glasses adorned each place setting. This is the first time Desmond and Maria really entertained and the first time the good china was used by them. A good guess was that it was the first time the place settings were used, period. When Fr. Paul was pastor, he spared no expense to keep the nuns happy. Sadly, they changed their mission a couple of years later, anyway. Desmond and Maria committed themselves to making their house a home where everyone was welcome and treated as if they were royalty. They also had an extra guest. Rosellen invited Fr. Fred who was so grateful that he didn't have to heat up a frozen chicken pot pie.

The guests started to arrive around 6:30 PM. Fr. Fred was the last to arrive with his arms loaded with six bottles of wine, four of them, white wine.

"My mother always taught me never to be a guest with my hands in my pockets." The remark generated laughter from everyone who also brought wine with them. Drinks and hors d'oeuvres were served in the living room with the huge fireplace, fitting for a cold December night and provided warmth and atmosphere. Patrick's brothers loved the house. Desmond had taken them on a grand tour before the others arrived. Maeve mixed cocktails while sipping her club soda. June brought a gallon of eggnog from her Irish grandfather's recipe. It was a big hit.

The conversation was lively. Denis had read some of Patrick's articles as well as those he co-authored with Desmond. Patrick was doing some work

on Catholic Imagination in Irish Literature. “I haven’t written anything, yet but the thought has been torturing me so, I guess the Spirit is pushing me in that direction. When I know more about what I think I am doing, I will collaborate with Desmond. Maybe we can get two or three articles out of the ideas.”

“Have you thought of trying to communicate faith through fiction,” asked Denis? “Is that even possible,” asked Patrick? “Well, if you read the New Testament, Jesus made a living doing that. He was the master of metaphors. We call them parables. It was the way he taught about God and the kingdom. There is a physician in the North of Ireland. His name is Taylor. He has been an apostle of peace. The Church of Ireland minister is the best friend of the parish priest. The police are all about protecting rather than intimidating. They solve problems together. Dr. Taylor is not a literary guy. But he has imagination and vision. Patrick, you have the highest level of academic achievement. Don’t let learning get in the way of living. Use your imagination to teach. You can be spiritual without being preachy. You can preach by the way you tell a story. Think of a lens that helped you see things that you can’t see with the naked eye. My Jesuit friends have taught me to see the world through the lens of the Gospel. Why not try a couple of things and run them by Desmond? He can teach you all about Irish mysticism. Run your ideas through Maeve or your friend, Fr. Jim. I’ll bet there is a great story in the soul of Fr. Fred. Talk to the lad, Stephen.”

Stephen laughed. “All I do is try to figure out where the gold is. I talk to the mountains and ask them to reveal their secrets.”

“There you go, Patrick. A true mystic is ever there was one. I hope he has bags of gold dust hidden under his bed.”

Laughter erupted from all around the table.

I have just one final piece of advice. Charles Dickens used to sit by the window of his favorite pub. I actually sat in his chair at his table and looked out the window. He used to watch people walk by and try to imagine their lives. Then he would go home and write his observations. James Joyce used to go for a pint at the end of his work day. One day someone asked him, “Hey writing man! How many chapters did you write today?” Joyce responded, “Twenty-five words, but they are perfect.”

Rosellen refilled everyone's wineglass. The exquisite dinner was finished with dessert yet to come.

Maria chimed in, "Patrick, you know that Maeve is the mystic, but Theresa is the agitator." Our resident genius is Susan Boyd. She has an incredible sense of how the universe works and can design anything to fit into the divine flow. "Good Lord, we are surrounded by mystics. Patrick, get on the bandwagon. You can still write academically but how much better it will all be if you create a story to explain it."

"I'm reading June's book and it is fabulous," said Maria.

"I am, too," said Maeve. It *is* fabulous. My first thought was, 'who would want to read a doctoral dissertation. Well, this one is better than a novel. I had a picture of sitting in the dorm room, around midnight, intensely discussing the great mysteries of life.'

"There you go," said Denis. "That is exactly what I am talking about. I haven't read the book yet, but I'll bet it comes from the depths of her soul."

"I just started it," said Rosellen. "I am going to recommend it for required reading for one of my courses."

"Maria, I'm waiting for your book," said Maeve, "When is it coming out?"

Maria responded, "I'm told that it will be out before Christmas. It is not the genre that would make a good Christmas present. I did work hard at describing the human dimension of what it means to discover hearing and to be able to communicate verbally."

"Again, a woman with an artistic soul," said Denis. "Patrick, you are in paradise and you don't even know it, man. Get out of the hole you are in and look at the stars. Maria, I'll bet you cried when you wrote those thoughts and got all teary when you read them dozens of time later."

"I did," Denis. "Ironically, my publishers criticized every paragraph I wrote from the heart."

"Having no soul is a requirement for the profession of publishing. They have no sense of the beautiful unless it has a dollar sign in front of it. I hope you didn't give in."

“The book is a genuine breakthrough in human communication. It will have legs for decades. I held the winning hand.”

“Will you listen to the girl talking in metaphors! God love you lass. I’ll read your book, too.”

“I’m sure the list price will be astronomical.”

“I already have faith in you. I’m sure the book will be magical.”

“From your lips to God’s ears,” sighed Maria.

Maeve and Rosellen served the tera miso.

The conversation continued to the wee hours of the next day. Tom McNally had to leave because of an early morning military meeting. Rosellen walked him to his car and kissed him passionately at the curb. “Rosellen, this is one of the most fantastic evenings I ever had. I didn’t even have to say a word. Listening was an amazing experience. These people are wonderful. Thank you.”

“I expected that,” said Rosellen. “I’m sure there will be many more.”

Maeve left the dinner before Patrick. She has a number of calls to return in the morning to set up the company marketing tour with Theresa in January.

Maria had to teach in the morning, so she just excused herself. Rosellen said that she would take care of cleanup, probably in the morning.

Desmond and the Malone brothers continued to conversation for another hour. Rosellen was starting to doze off when she quickly wakened to an Irish poem recited in Irish by her father. Denis picked up on some verses, but Irish was not one of his better languages. It is only spoken in southwest coastal Cork and Kerry and in the Connemara region north of Galway city. In the 1840’s and fifties many of the immigrants escaping the famine did not speak a word of English. When Desmond commented, Denis told him of his fascination with languages that helped him to be a better writer of English. Desmond called for a Huber ride, and the Malones brothers took off for their hotel. Desmond and Patrick finished their wine. Rosellen already drifted off to her downstairs suite of rooms because they were closer than climbing to her second-floor bedroom. Desmond piled dishes and organized glassware for morning cleanup, locked the doors, put out the

lights, checked the fireplace, and joined Maria, quietly, so as not to awaken her.

The next dinner was at the home of the senior Garveys on Friday. Theresa's brothers were scheduled to fly to their respective countries on Sunday evening.

Maeve, Patrick, Michael and Brian were there with Susan and June, Maria and Desmond, Rosellen and Tom. David had also included Dierdre and Tommy, Grace O'Malley and Charlie Colombo.

Brigid insisted on providing the dinner herself. She ordered steak tenderloin from the butcher and had him cut into eighteen slices three inches thick. They were in a covered tray in the refrigerator. Maeve took the afternoon off from her office and just showed up to help her mom. Brigid was making mashed potatoes from scratch and was in the process of mashing the boiled potatoes. Once mashed she would blend in some milk crushed garlic, grated gruyere cheese and put them in a big pot in the refrigerator until they were placed in the oven before dinner. She then crafted an outstanding sauce for the tornadoes. She then set about preparing mixed vegetables.

Meanwhile, Maeve put two more leaves into the dining room table, collected extra chairs and assembled them around the table. She went into a buffet drawer and took out two laundered Irish linen table-cloths and spread them neatly over the table. She then laid out her parent's fine bone china dishes. Her parents had a set for twenty places they had prepared for celebrations for their many friends. They weren't hosting those big dinners anymore except for their growing family. So Brigid was in her glory for the opportunity to do a big dinner again. For their Christmas party, Dave will have Bookbinders cater it giving Brigid the opportunity to enjoy the season only a few short days before Christmas.

Maeve had just finished placing the silverware around the place settings and was putting out the Irish crystal wine and waterglasses.

Brigid was startled when she came into the dining room. She was so busy in the kitchen she didn't even know that Maeve was in the house. Everything was already prepared. "Thank you, thank you," said Brigid. "I didn't know you were here and look what you have done." Brigid was tired and grateful.

“Mom, why don’t you take a little nap? We have plenty of time before any guests arrive.”

“I will after I have a cup of tea with you?”

“Good, I will take a nap as well.”

Brigid insisted on fixing the tea. Maeve settled into a big chair. And was dozing when Brigid brought in the tea with some Irish soda bread. Both napped for slightly more than an hour. Neither had a sip of their tea. Both were refreshed from their nap.

Maeve laughed. She promised herself that she would leave at this time so she could catch a nap at home. On her way out she picked up a piece of buttered Irish soda bread to eat on the short drive home.

She kissed her mom and was on her way.

Guests assembled at 7:00 as instructed. Dave’s favorite role was to serve as the bartender. Maria brought a large tray of hors d’oeuvres, compliments of Bookbinders. Both Stephen and Denis were almost overwhelmed by the hospitality of their visit. June had brought with her another gallon of her grandfather’s Irish eggnog. It was always a big hit at parties.

Patrick was talking about how much Theresa would enjoy being here and wonder if she was thinking of us.

“Not at all,” laughed Maeve. “For these two weeks I can guarantee she won’t think of us even once.”

Only Dave noticed that Susan was drinking water. Dave discretely asked her if she was well. Susan assured him that she was and said she would tell him later.

Like the last dinner, conversation started with small talk and greetings. Michael and Susan were sitting together on a love seat in the living room. Michael spoke up and said they have an announcement. “Mom and Dad, and you, our friends, Susan and I will become parents, also in May. You will have at least two grandchildren next spring. “I didn’t want to say anything before this because I didn’t want to upstage Maeve.”

“You stinker,” said Maeve. “We were talking about the joy of pregnancy and babies for the last two weeks and you never mentioned anything.”

“We were saving it until tonight when all of us would be gathered. You don’t know how difficult it was not to just blare it out in the office. We are going to have to let Theresa run the office.”

Maeve laughed. “She’s probably pregnant by now.”

“Our plans for office daycare have suddenly become very important,” said Susan. Dave and Brigid were right there hugging Susan and Michael and congratulating them. It was the beginning of a great night.

“I told you.” said Denis. “You folks are surrounded by mysticism. Only now it is called faith and goodness. I have never seen the likes of you, and I am truly inspired. And look at the crowd of you here. You are the stars in the sky, the most brilliant of them, the guideposts on the path of life.”

“Good Lord! said Stephen. Someone get him a drink before he starts reciting poetry in Irish again.”

”Aye, it is a good time to call everyone to the table for dinner,” said Brigid.

David offered the prayer of thanksgiving for all of us sharing in each other’s lives, for the second grandchild, and the wonderful parents each grandchild will have.

Just like it was on Monday, the dinner conversation was lively and almost dominated by Denis Malone. Maeve opined that Denis was Theresa in different underwear. They talked a lot about Theresa’s exploits, stories that astounded her brothers, including Patrick. Telling Theresa’s story about saving the Garvey’s dragged Dierdre into the conversation. Tommy, for his part enjoyed everything but said little. Charlie Colombo was interested in Denis’s feelings about mysticism and the two of them went through Charlie’s concept of “mysticism in the market place” learned by Charlie at his Jesuit high school and solidified into practice at Georgetown University. Grace was quiet but also chatted with Susan about the pre-Cana that she and Charlie were going to start in January. Grace had her weekly telephone conversation with her father and her mother had made no improvement since their last conversation. In fact, she had made no improvement over the last several months since she entered the hospital. She still considered herself as the *Grande Dame* on the top rung of society. Sadly, Grace’s memories were those of her mother’s climb to social prestige. This was also Grace’s goal in high school. Somehow she discovered how shallow that

would be. At the “finishing school,” that her mother thought of Immaculata University, Grace entered the real world of real people. She met both athletes Maeve and June who were roommates. June was the superstar Black athlete. brilliant, and a genuine beauty. She remembered June from her high school days. June was from tiny Gettysburg High School and always played Grace’s school’s girls’ basketball team in the State Tournament. Grace’s team, for which she was cheerleader always lost. June was one of the State’s super dominant players. June enjoyed that same dominance in college but as she got to know her, she discovered how low-keyed and sweet she was. She never showed off her accomplishments and fame. She was the role model for Grace to achieve a normality that she hadn’t enjoyed since she started high school. Maeve was on the equestrian team and became a dressage champion. Both Maeve and June were extremely smart. Maeve had a Black boyfriend who is now an Admiral in charge of the Mediterranean fleet. June had a white boyfriend who is now a leading forensic engineer. Grace saw them at a parent’s day with their boyfriends and their respective parents and they seemed to be having so much fun. Grace realized that she wanted a life like that and became somewhat friendly with Maeve and June. The crowning point of their relationship was first at their induction together in Phi Beta Kappa, the highest academic honor on a campus. The second highpoint was when Grace saw Maeve’s and June’s photo in the Philadelphia Enquirer in a story about the Jesuit Urban Mission. She found Maeve’s company and called her and offered to help with the gala. Maeve introduced her to all of her friends at Church. She met Fr. Fred. Later when met Charlie, he came with her. Charlie always talks about his first romantic date at Sunday Mass.

Brigid remarked at all the changes that life has offered to this group. She herself came from Ireland as a teenager with barely the shirt on her back Desmond, you did the same. Maria, you came here in a stolen rowboat and rowed over a hundred miles in the shark infested Atlantic. You have a fabulous life and so do your parents. Your baby sisters were in that boat, but they don’t remember the trip. Dierdre and Tommy met on the battlefield when his position was attacked by a much larger enemy force. “She saved my backside when we were about to be overrun,” said Tommy. “Theresa and Dierdre saved all of our lives when the Colombian cartel tried to assassinate us,” remarked David. “Charlie is responsible for saving my

life,” said Grace. Meeting Maeve at Church was the beginning of our life together.

“And Grace, the pirate queen, has saved my life in turn,” said Charlie.

“Gee, my life is dull by comparison,” said Susan.

“Get away with you, lass,” said Desmond. “Look at what you have achieved in your short life and how much you have helped your Mother.”

“It was Maeve who saved my life. She didn’t give up on me and then she became my role model. Then she invited me to a Thanksgiving dinner at her apartment and I met Michael.”

“I knew June because she hung out with my little sister,” said Brian. “Then when we met at that same Thanksgiving dinner, I was smitten,”

“You know,” said Susan, “Maeve is the connection in all of our lives that brought us this moment.”

‘Ha,’ laughed Desmond. “Do you remember the first time you brought Patrick to Bookbinders? I asked if you were interviewing a prospective client. You said, no, you were interviewing a prospective boyfriend. Do you remember my remark?”

“Yes,” said Maeve, “you said, ‘How romantic!’”

“What you don’t know is that after chatting up Patrick for a bit, I said to myself prayerfully, this is the one, please God, let them connect.”

“What you don’t know is that your prayer was answered before we got to my apartment.”

“Well I was introduced to Maria by Maeve at one of the Sunday afternoon gatherings,” said Desmond. “The next day was a school holiday and I invited her on a picnic. Thanks be to God, she said, ‘Yes.’ That night coming home from our picnic, I picked up some cheesesteak sandwiches who do we meet coming out the door? Everyone shouted, ‘Maeve.’”

Stephen said, “I heard there was some talk that Maeve was responsible for connecting Theresa and John.”

“Not true! Fake news! It took them long enough. I might have greased the skids a bit.”

“How much grease did you use,” asked Brigid?

“Theresa knows nothing and neither does John, nor does anyone else.”

“Tom and I met at Mass for one of your gatherings,” said Rosellen.

“Ah, simply a very curious collection of unrelated connections,” said Dave.

“Oh yeah,” said Brigid. “You’ll have to consider the one obvious relative that is responsible for almost all the connections in this room.”

“See Stephen! Didn’t I tell you it would be a mystical night.”

At the Christmas celebration on the fourth Sunday of Advent, everyone came loaded down with gifts. Maria needed a cart to cross the street. It was loaded with books, each one carefully and personally annotated and signed.

“Good Lord,” said Brigid, “Can this price be right? I’ve never seen a book that cost \$75.00.”

“Textbooks are amazingly expensive. This book should have an explosive impact on the communications industry. A lot of colleges will want to use it. The publishers think it will be a top seller for the treatment of the deaf. I talked the publisher into giving me twenty-five books to distribute among my family and friends.”

“Yes” said Rosellen. “Textbooks are very expensive. Almost all of mine are second or third hand. Some I got for free because the former owner didn’t want anything to do with it ever again.”

“Ouch, I sounds like a tough curriculum. How are you doing with it?”

Patrick answered that question. “Rosellen aced her two summer courses and aced the five semester courses. Folks at St. Joseph’s are very proud of her.”

“The important thing is that I love what I am doing, and I love what I am learning,” said Rosellen. “I wouldn’t do as well without the help of Dad and Maria. We discuss my subjects a lot at home and I bring the insights to my class discussions.”

The evening was festive. Christmas was and will continue for at least a week just from the fuel of enjoyment throughout the afternoon and evening. John and Theresa, fresh from their honeymoon provided entertainment by

leading Christmas carols. Brigid and Dave thoroughly enjoyed hosting this group that had become the centerpiece of their lives.

Jesus lives in the manger of our hearts and soul and that was evident among this group they loved so much. The grace of the Eucharist they celebrated earlier in the day continued throughout the season. The white mistletoe, sent from County Cork, hung in every doorway of the Garvey home. The love was obvious in the abundance of kissing.



The Strangely Unmistaken Story of a Mistakenly Unintended Meeting.

By Leon O'Chruadhlaich

The other day, in the midst of the bleak Irish mid-winter, with the soft eiderdown mist of an East Cork morning dropping lazily out of a gun-barrel grey blanket of a uninterrupted leaden sky, it was so cold that my 104 year-old dad (Matthew) made me put on his Russian-styled beehive of a balaclava head-covering hat, suitably embroidered with the harp insignia, and his all-weather flying jacket, suitably lined with lambs' wool, and which he always wore when he went to the local hamlet for shopping on a winter's day. Upon seeing me walking out the door his delightfully friendly and conversant Irish housekeeper said, "well now, you look just like the way your Dad used to dress when he went to town every Christmas-time for the last 30 years or so." Being quick to please and slow to chide, I embraced her remark like a friendly father-son embrace, and lightly and brightly stepped out into the damp, decaying dawn into the newly enlightening twilight of an increasingly, progressing winter's day. So I went into town (dressed like my Dad) and immediately and spontaneously a Quare 'Fella

crosses over the road towards me and asks "Matt, is that you?" – obviously believing his is addressing my Dad - so I reply "yes it is" (pretending to be my Dad), and the Quare 'Fella says "my you do look well" and I reply "well I don't feel so well," and his eyes light up and he says "well, then, you are Matt Crowley for sure, 'tis the very thing he would say!" Not waiting for any explanation, and without any margin of chagrin, the Quare 'Fella now says "my, but you do look great" and I reply "well I don't feel so great" and again his eyes light up and he says "well, you are Matt Crowley for sure, 'tis the very thing he would say!" Then delving into the depths of his deepening memory recesses of many years of knowing my Father, and his rapidly-clamoring brain self-informing him that my dad had passed his 100th birthday some years ago, the Quare 'Fella then politely asks and respectfully states "I thought you died a long time ago" and I reply (again pretending to being my Father) "well I did die, but I did not get a free pass to Heaven as the Archangel that I was assigned to told me I would have to do further penance." "Ah, well now," says the Quare 'Fella, "that's a very strange story and a very strange happening" and expecting a very strange ending, he encourages me to continue. "Well now," says I (now pretending to be my suddenly deceased Father) "well the Archangel further explained to me that it was of the opinion of his consulting overseer Saint Peter that 'although the Irish were too good for the Earth below, they were not quite good enough to enter Heaven above' and so an extra penance was levied on them." "And what was that, then?" Asks the Quare 'Fella to which I replied "well my penance was to return to Earth and personally have to live with my own kids for another 5 years" says I, as succinctly as possible. "And why was that?" asks the fella, now rumbling and tumbling into his own aura of questioning incredibility....."well, it was explained to me that then and only then would I understand the true meaning on Earth of real pain and real suffering." "That's it! 'Tis very true, the very thing" says the now suddenly and independently departing Quare 'Fella, processing this new information like a paper-shredder stuck in mid-shredding, his glowing face now wrestling with this new futuristic fantasy and inexplicable incomprehension, and taking a step backwards, he slowly dissolved into the greying background of the busy street, stepping carefully into the enveloping melodramatic mist of his own obscurity, shaking his head, and then, like a new day dawning off the shimmering river Blackwater, and suddenly self-piercing his own *cloud of unknowing*, he suddenly breaks into a smiling caricature of himself, delightedly glowing with a new

incandescence, his comprehension without further mention, and he departed decidedly and deliriously out of the un-mistakenly marvelous egalitarian experience of his own creation.....

This Day in Irish History – December

2nd 1999 - Irish government ratifies changes to Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution.

3rd 1925 - The Boundary Commission recommends no change to the border.

4th 1967 - The first independent computer in Ireland is introduced at Shannon Airport.

1971 - 15 people die in the bombing of McGurk's Bar.

6th 1890 - 44 members of the Irish Parliamentary Party walk out in protest at Parnell's leadership.

1921 - Treaty signed in London, allowing for the creation of a 'Free State' in a partitioned Ireland.

1922 - Irish Free State officially comes into existence.

1976 - Dr Patrick Hillery becomes the Sixth President of Ireland.

1982 - The INLA kill 17 people with a bomb attack on the Droppin Well Inn.

7th 1979 - Charles Haughey is elected leader of Fianna Fáil.

1933 - Blueshirts banned by the Irish government.

1980 - Margaret Thatcher becomes the first British PM to visit Ireland since independence.

9th 1973 - The Sunningdale Agreement.

10th 1974 - Seán MacBride wins the Nobel Prize for Peace.

11th 1920 - British forces set fire to the centre of Cork.

1979 - Charles Haughey becomes Taoiseach.

2000 - President Clinton arrives in Dublin.

12th 1928 - First Irish coinage issued.

1936 - Following the abdication of King Edward VIII, the Executive Authority (External Relations) Act is passed to abolish the crown and role of the king in constitutional law.

1955 - Cork Opera House is destroyed by fire.

13th 1867 - Attempted rescue of Richard O'Sullivan Burke from Clerkenwell Jail results in twelve civilian deaths.

1922 - Oireachtas meets for the first time.

1972 - President Éamon de Valera signs documents covering Ireland's entry into the EEC.

14th 1955 - Ireland is admitted to the United Nations.

15th 1844 - St. Malachy's Church in Belfast is dedicated.

1993 - Downing Street Declaration issued by Taoiseach Albert Reynolds and British PM John Major.

16th 1921 - The British House of Parliament accepts the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

18th 1946 - The Irish government announces the release of 24 internees, including Brendan Behan.

1953 - The Censorship Board bans almost 100 publications.

19th 1974 - Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh becomes the fifth President of Ireland.

1981 - The Dublin-registered Union Star sinks on its maiden voyage with sixteen casualties.

20th 1961 - Robert McGladdery becomes the last man to be legally executed in Northern Ireland.

21st 1916 - Announcement made at the British House of Commons that all prisoners from the Easter Rising will be released.

1948 - President Seán T. O'Kelly signs the Republic of Ireland Bill at a ceremony at Áras an Uachtaráin.

23rd 1895 - Opening of Grand Opera House in Belfast.

1939 - Ammunition is stolen from the national arsenal at Phoenix Park by the IRA.

24th 1889 - Charles Stewart Parnell publicly accused of adultery.

1895 - Fifteen people die in the Kingstown Lifeboat Disaster.

25th 1945 - In his presidential address, Seán T. O'Kelly calls on the young to support the Irish language.

27th 1997 - LVF leader Billy Wright shot dead in prison by the INLA.

28th 1821 - Four lifeboat men drown while rescuing the brig of the crew Ellen of Liverpool at Sandycove.

1918 - Sinn Féin win a landslide victory in the Irish general election.

29th 1908 - The Irish Transport Workers' Union is founded with James Larkin as general secretary.

1937 - The Constitution of Ireland comes into force.

1967 - A new redundancy payments scheme is announced.

31st 1909 - Harry Ferguson becomes the first person to fly in Ireland, using his own monoplane.

1961 - Teilifís Éireann goes on air.

1998 - The punt is traded for the last time and the Euro is launched.

FALL 2020

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OCTOBER

Eating Well for A Strong Immune System

WEDNESDAY 7TH - 10AM (CST)

Guided by a dietician from Swedish Covenant Hospital, we learn what foods to eat to strengthen our immune systems and help us fight off illness.

Halloween Folklore & Live Music

WEDNESDAY 21ST - 10AM (CST)

Joining us from Ireland, storyteller and historian Mick Fortune will share ancient Irish Halloween traditions with musical accompaniment by harpist Geraldine Carrigg,

NOVEMBER

A Step Back in Time

WEDNESDAY 4TH - 10AM (CST)

Sharing stories, recipes, and Irish expressions from her recent book about rural west of Ireland, Angela Burke takes us down memory lane! Prepare to be filled with nostalgia!

An Irish Workout!

WEDNESDAY 18TH - 10AM (CST)

Maryclare McMahon invites us to move our bodies & calm our minds with seated yoga and guided meditation. The resistance bands we recently sent many of you will be useful for this session!

DECEMBER

A Festive Celebration

WEDNESDAY 9TH - 10AM

While our holiday party will be a little different this year, we've got a great line up of live music from Ireland, special guests and a few festive surprises!

HOW TO ACCESS OUR REMOTE PROGRAMS

Below, you'll find detailed instructions on how to join any of our remote senior programs either by phone or using a computer, tablet or smartphone.

All time listed overleaf are Central Standard Time
(6 hours **BEHIND** Ireland/GMT)

If you have questions about how to join in, please call us on 312-371-0937



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computer**

DIAL-IN BY PHONE

A few minutes before the program is scheduled to begin, call;

From the US
312 626 6799

From Ireland
01 653 3895

From the UK
131 460 1196

From Australia
02 8015 6011

From Canada
438 809 7799

You will be asked to enter the '**Meeting ID**' below and then press the **# key**

Meeting ID : 884 0991 8529

After you've done this, you will be asked to enter your participant ID **OR** press the **# key**.
Just press the **# key** and you will be joined into the call!

JOIN USING YOUR COMPUTER

For online meetings, we use a platform called **Zoom**. When you join our programs using a computer, laptop, tablet or smart phone you can hear and see other participants. Remember, even if you don't want others to see you, you can still join using your device and choose to switch off your camera.

A few minutes before the program is scheduled to begin, use your internet browser to go to the website listed below.

www.zoom.us

Click on '**join meeting**' at the top right side of your screen.

Enter the Meeting ID listed below in the box titled '**Meeting ID or Personal Link Name**'

Meeting ID : 884 0991 8529

Click on the '**Join**' button and you'll be joined into the meeting - welcome!

Remember, our remote programs can be enjoyed from anywhere. Let your friends and family know they're welcome to join us too, wherever they may be!