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**Venerable Matt Talbot**

by Brian Witt

When I was growing up on the West Side of Milwaukee, I would occasionally pass the Matt Talbot Lodge off of 27 and North Avenue. I had no idea who Matt Talbot was, except for the fact that he had been an alcoholic, and that family members had attended meetings there. He has been called the “Saint of the Workingman”, even though he is still only in the process to canonization. And he was an ascetic, who died alone in the streets of Dublin. He was an ordinary man, not much different than thousands of his countrymen of the same time, at least on the surface. And as to why he became so entrenched in the hearts and minds of Catholics is a bit of a mystery.

Matt Talbot was a Dubliner who lived from 1856 until 1925. An unskilled laborer, he was the child of Charles and Elizabeth Talbot, a poor family in the North Strand area of the city. He left school at the age of 12 to work for a wine merchant, a job that allowed him to drink. Afterwards, he got a job at the Port and Docks Board, which gave him access to work in the city’s whiskey stores. At an early age, he was a confirmed alcoholic, and had incurred large debts. When he found himself broke at one point, he stole the fiddle from a street entertainer, and sold it to go drinking.

In 1884, he found himself penniless, and unable to get anyone to offer to buy him a drink. He went home, and told his mother that he was going to renounce drinking. He “took the pledge” at Holy Cross College, Clonliffe. The Irish Temperance Society, led by Father Theobald Mathew, managed to get half of Ireland pledging not to drink by 1843, but within a decade the campaign had collapsed. However, the temperance movement still had life in the country, and there were people to support men and women like Talbot, if they asked for help. Talbot filled the void in his life by attending daily Mass, reading religious pamphlets and praying for hours on end. He repaid all of his debts, and

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even looked to find the fiddler whose instrument he stole. When he was unable to track him down, he paid for Masses to be said for the musician. He spent the next forty years of his life in total sobriety.

Talbot's work ethic was always strong, even at the height of his drinking. He was known for his ability to set the pace for hod carriers, the persons who lifted the mortar and mud for masons on building sites, for his employer, a building contractor in Dublin. Talbot joined the builder's laborers branch of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. When the Dublin Lockout of 1913 led to sympathy strikes throughout the city, Talbot joined his fellow workers on the strike lines. He donated his strike pay to his fellow workers, feeling he had not earned it.

Talbot was to live his life as an ascetic, mimicking the existence of the early monastic Irish, who lived prayerful, meager lives in constant devotion to God. He ate very little, and slept on a plank bed with a piece of timber for a pillow, which caused some paralysis of his face in later years. He attended early Mass each day before work. He began to wear a chain as a form of penance, joined the lay Franciscans, as well as many other religious societies. He was generous to a fault, giving away most of his meager wages to neighbors, workers, and charitable institutions.

When Talbot died in 1925, on his way to Mass, his body was taken to Jervis Street Hospital, where he was found to be wearing a heavy chain wound around his waist, with more chains around an arm and a leg, and cords around the other arm and leg. Talbot's story spread throughout the city, and his funeral at Glasnevin Cemetery was attended by a number of spectators. Talbot's reputation for teetotaling soon made him the poster boy of the Temperance Movement, as the Irish communities around the world carried his story. Almost immediately, there were lodges across much of America, England and other countries, as well as Ireland, where men who wanted to could find help for their drinking problems. Youth hostels worldwide were named for him, as well as a bridge in Dublin.

In 1931, Archbishop Byrne of Dublin opened an inquiry into the claims to holiness of the laborer, which led to the Apostolic Process at the Vatican, in 1947. In 1975, Pope Paul VI declared him to be Venerable Matt Talbot, which is a step on the road to his canonization. Talbot's remains were removed from Glasnevin Cemetery to Our Lady of Lourdes Church in 1972.

The question again is, why did Matt Talbot become so popular, and why did he strike a nerve amongst the Irish, Catholics of many countries, and people who had various addictions? In America, it was the middle of Prohibition, so there was that aspect of his life. More than likely, it was the harsh circumstances in which he gave his devotion to God and the Church that differentiated him from the average Catholic, whom could not be as generous, pious or ascetic as Talbot. When or if he actually ascends to the hagiography of the Church remains in the future.

## New Dublin Irishman and Irish Rose 2006



*Judi and Moochie (Thomas) Barrington*

“Saint Patrick’s Day is not just a day, it’s a season,” says Moochie (Thomas) Barrington, 2006 Irishman of the Year for New Dublin. He’s the seventh of nine children born to Ward and Margaret (Collier) Barrington. “Moochie” is the youngest of four sons raised in a traditional Irish Catholic family.

He was taught from a toddler on to be proud of, and to honor his Irish heritage.

Being raised in an Irish family comes with many traditions, but first they were taught to do for themselves and to be sure they always help others. Those who know the Barrington family would agree that their hearts are as big as the world.

His mother, Margaret, was the first Irish Rose chosen by the Shamrock Club of New Dublin. She made many Irish flags, some of which still fly today. Margaret also hand made the outfit worn by Moochie, who has portrayed St. Patrick in every parade since the first official one in 1984.

Several years later his sisters, Judy McDaniel and Suzi Snyder, were honored also as Irish Roses. They were all charter members of the Shamrock Club.

In 2000, Moochie’s brother, David “Fluff” Barrington, and his wife, Bonnie, were Irishman and Irish Rose.

Judi Barrington, is proudly IBM, as she calls it, “Irish by marriage.” Moochie and Judi met in July of 1971. Five days after her family moved into town near the Catholic Church, Liz Heideman introduced the couple. Those few days before the introduction however, Moochie admits to eyeing up Judi, through the windows of the Catholic School.

“Moochie’s dad was a custodian and hired the boys that summer to help

in annual maintenance of the building,” said Judi with a laugh. “Mooch’s Dad always said it took them boys two weeks to clean the rooms on that side of the building.”

Moochie blushed slightly and grinned. “We used to go to the Lutheran School all the time when we were kids and shoot buckets, until Judi moved into the neighborhood,” he explained. “Then we shot hoops at the Catholic School and tried to put the ball over the fence and into her yard,” he added with a chuckle.

The couple married in 1976. They have two children, Lincoln age-26, and Lindsey-24, plus a grandson, Alexander David who is one-year old. This year, Lincoln will have the honor of wearing his dad’s St. Patrick costume for the parade, since Mooch will be attending to his royal duties as Irishman of the Year.

Both Judi and Moochie are long time supporters of the NL Jaycees and they’ve been involved in numerous philanthropic projects in New London. Moochie is also a member of the Wolf River Men’s Club, Knights of Columbus, and he is a past assistant Scoutmaster.

Moochie is also very active in the Shamrock Club. He’s one of the charter members. Barrington fondly recalls the first unofficial parade in 1983. “We started at Coyle’s and went as far as Midtown,” said Barrington. “The next year the police chief made us get a permit and gave us half the road.”

From there the event grew into a week long, all-out celebration culminating with the largest St. Patrick’s parade in the Midwest. Thousands of people make the pilgrimage for parade every year. “We always wondered how many people actually attend the parade,” said Judi. With the bit of Irish humor, she said, “Too bad we couldn’t get the DNR to do a fly over, they’d give us a pretty good count.”

On the night of our interview we viewed tapes from previous celebrations in New Dublin. Everyone’s favorite, Finnegan’s Wake, had us rolling with laughter. We watched as Mike Coyle worked his magic with the crowds.

Judi and Mooch and the entire Shamrock Club miss Coyle, as he is recovering from a severe accident that occurred this winter. “He really did a lot of work, and not just the wake,” explained Barrington. “We definitely missed him this year,” he explained. “A lot of people work hard to make St. Patrick’s events happen in New Dublin. To do this you need people, and lots of support.” He and Judi are thankful for the people and the community they live in.

Mooch has worked at Curwood in New London for the past 33 years. Judi has 30 years experience as a registered nurse, and is currently employed at Aurora Bay Care Hospital in Green Bay. She works in the Surgery Department.

The couple plans to take their first trip to Ireland this October. Most of the time they travel locally, visiting numerous Irish attractions in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

## **Milwaukee President's Message**

October is here, as the summer has started its final waning, and fall is waxing, slowly, into place.

In October, you can see a famed Irish poet, James Liddy, at the monthly meeting. James has a new book out, and has a new book out about him. This is possibly the third written about Professor Liddy. James headed up the Shamrock Club's scholarship committee for decades. Dennis McBride did a wonderful job at the September meeting, explaining the ties between Irish nationalism and modern terrorism.

The AOH is sponsoring its annual initiation into fall, the annual Irish Mass of Remembrance, to be held on October 7 at St Rose of Lima Church, 32 and Michigan. The program starts at 4:30 p.m. in the church, and is followed by the Mass, and then the world famous William Ryan Drew Scholarship Spaghetti Dinner at 5 p.m. in St. Rose Gym adjacent to church. The Irish Fest Choir and the Shamrock Club's Color Guard Pipes and Drums will perform.

In November, we will be meeting at the Irish Fest Center, where Kaitlin Hahn and the Irish Fest School of Music will entertain us. And in December, we will be having our famous Christmas Party. In February, John Gleeson is scheduled to speak, in March the Color Guard Pipes and Drums will be in concert, and in April, the McMennamin Dance School will make their Shamrock Club debut.

I had a request from the CGPD on having members come out to tell them that they saw them at parades. They like to know we are watching them, and they do make the Shamrock Club look really good when they march. Do you like the St Laurence O'Toole outfits? The addition of the vests adds a new element to the Guard.

Speaking of March, our events will take place on March 10, one week prior to the day itself. This will allow us to get more groups that would be marching in Chicago or other parades, and also allows us not to compete with all of the St Patrick's Day events. Chuck McLaughlin is working to get Archbishop Timothy Dolan for our annual Mass. And we are working to put the Shamrock Sprint back on again. We are hoping to not have to compete with street construction.

We were at the Wisconsin Highland Games, where we had a display. Thanks to Kris Pluskota for her putting it together, as well as the people who came to man the booth, especially Cate Harris and Patsy Grimes. We will be at the Holiday Folk Fair, and we will need volunteers for food, cultural and sales. This is a big fundraiser for us. Please work, if you

are able.

New members made their debuts in various ways. We had some at the September meeting, and Melissa Heck, the new daughter of Tim and Maura Heck, made her debut on earth on August 28. Welcome to all of them. And if you want, you can give memberships as presents.

Just a comment about meetings: The ICHC has a liquor license, and therefore open bottle laws are in place.

Well, as we head into the Celtic New Year on November 1, enjoy the fall.

– **Brian Witt, info@shamrockclubwis.com**

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# Shamrock Club of Rock County

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **OCTOBER 17** – Regular monthly meeting at Janesville Senior Center, 69 South Water St., 7 p.m.
- **DECEMBER** – Christmas Party?

This year our new President is Ann Lehr and Sally Churchill is our new Vice-President. Mary Bickle is our Treasurer and Rosie Hughes, who has been Secretary for at least four years, has consented to stay on as Secretary for a short while until we can get someone for that office. I hope all of you members will come to the October meeting and meet our new officers. If we all work together, and support our new officers maybe we can get this club growing again.

Christmas will soon be here so we had better start thinking about a Christmas Party. Do we want a party? Where will we have it? If you have any ideas or suggestions, please bring them up at this meeting.

The program at the October meeting will be a video on Ireland.

– **Tom Kennedy, Scribe**

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# Member News

Holly Kolanko and Dave Delgado returned after years in Austin, Texas,

rejoined the Shamrock Club and got married. Congratulations to the newlyweds.

Tim and Maura Heck have added Melissa to their family. She joins brother Jeremy. They are the grandchildren of Ed and the late Mary Lou Heck, and Bill and Marni Starr.

Bob Mikush received the Meritorious Service Medal, (First Oak Leaf Cluster) for Meritorious Service, 1 July 2000 to 13 April 2006. Bob recently retired from the Air Force 128th Air Refueling Wing, based at Michell Field, as Chief Master Sergeant. Congratulations to Bob for the award.

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## **San Patricios**

On Saturday, October 21, The Story of San Patricios will be the focus of the evening at the Irish Cultural and Heritage Center (21st and Wis. Ave.) We will celebrate a group of Irish immigrant soldiers who began fighting in the US-Mexican War of 1846 on the US side only to switch allegiance and become allied with the Mexicans. Come find out why, and learn about these men who have become legends. Their story is still celebrated in Mexico and Ireland more than 150 years later. This evening will begin with an introduction, and then a 42-minute documentary video will be shown. This will be followed by Irish and Mexican music and dancers. Don't miss this informative and fun-filled evening.

Doors will open at 7:15 with the performance beginning at 8 p.m. Reserved seat tickets \$15 are on sale now. Please call (414) 345-8800. The bar will be open during this event.

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## **Hallamor Concert #2**

### **The Fenians**

**Sat., October 28, 2006**

This electrifying Irish musical quintet offers a mix of original creations, contemporary and traditional songs. Their foundation is Celtic, but there is no mistaking the complimentary influences of rock, folk, bluegrass, jazz and world music. Band members are: Terry Casey (lead vocals, mandolin), Nate Light (bass, vocals), David Burnett (whistles, sax, flute),

Chris Pierce (drums, vocals) and Rob Williams (vocals, guitar)..

Irish Cultural and Heritage Center  
2133 W. Wisconsin Avenue  
414-345-8800

Tickets: Advance/reserved \$19, \$21 Day of Concert

– **Kristina Paris**

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## **Color Guard News and Notes**

October Already! A season of success is coming to an end. Here's a recap of 2006:

- To date, we have added 14 new members to our roster. Maybe more by presstime!
- Awards were won. Two for BEST MUSICAL UNIT at South Shore Water Frolics and Muskego Fest. We can't forget to mention again the very nice award that was given to us by the fine people of Savannah on St. Patrick's day.
- We have marched almost 50 miles this parade season, in extreme hot and cold and haven't lost a soul yet.
- New Kilts for some and uniform bits were acquired and unveiled at Irish Fest.
- We said goodbye with the retirement of Dick Tierney and Tom Blaha, founding members of the group you see today. We miss them every parade.
- Irish Fest was truly a blast. Despite confusing directions from me, the group pulled together for a truly brilliant result and made one Mr. Richard Pfeiffer very proud.
- Little Cobb has now mastered many, many, many tunes just by watching fingers. No music required. I, for one, am jealous.
- We gained a very valuable addition to our already fine drumline. Beth Andrews, the only member playing tenor drum and doing a very fine job at it. Huzzah!

In other news:

WELCOME to David Culver, new snare drummer. This talented kid saw us at Irish Fest and decided that we NEEDED him. You bet, David. Welcome to the SCCGPD.

And a fond adieu to Bobby Hamill. I wanted to spotlight him this month as his contributions to the group are great and too many to count. He joined the Shamrock Club and started playing the bagpipes approximately seven years ago upon inspiration from his sister, Brigid.

He started by carrying the banner a few times in the beginning to now, becoming a full-fledged, teaching member, and Pipe Sargeant of the band. He is now off to pursue a degree in International Relations at UW-Eau Claire and plans to study abroad in the future. On behalf of the group, HATS OFF to you Mr. Hamill. We all wish you luck in your studies and eagerly await your return.

If you haven't caught us yet this season, you have two more opportunities to do so:

- Oct 7: A.O.H Mass and Dinner, St. Rose's Church, 5 p.m.
- Oct 14-15: Sister Bay Festivals, Door County, 11 a.m.

We encourage all who are curious to stop by meetings or practices, generally held Tuesdays at the ICHC at 6:30 p.m. Now is the time to start if you want to learn the pipes/drums or would like to be in the color guard. Just think, St. Patrick's day is only 5 ½ months away!

Until then , my Celtic friends.

– Noel Tylla, 3rd year piper

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## Donn's Poetry Corner

### Refuge

*I'll take the comfort you offer  
With the ocean so restless  
Wind still smells of the seas  
It carries Ancient music and dance  
Into silent glens  
Awakening the soul to Ancestry  
Surrounded by stone fences, sheer cliffs  
And sheep that wandered aimlessly.*

*Hills, stroked green by soft days  
Raise Celtic Crosses  
To remind the Ruins of concerned Brethren  
Who prayed within their walls:  
Sometimes for food,  
Most times for Peace.*

*Like the suire who comes ashore  
Knowing that she cannot stay  
But eventually return  
To where she came from,  
I'll wait, one last time,  
While the tea steeps  
Before the beauty and the harshness  
Fade with the winged clouds.  
Ireland,  
I'll take the comfort you offer.*

– Grace Goodwin

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## **Milwaukee Hurling Season Finale**

The Milwaukee Hurling Club held its finals on Sunday, August 27 at Brown Deer Park. In an exciting match, McBobs prevailed over the Milwaukee Ale House, 38-23. The Shamrock Club Griffins, having made their way into the playoffs for the fourth consecutive year, lost to McBobs in the semifinals on August 13, 25-16.

The Griffins led the Harp division for most of the season, until they lost a rubber-match game to the Ale House. They came in second place, behind the Ale House, with a 5-4 record.

### **GUINNESS DIV.**

McBob's 8-1

Tracks 6-3

Wolski's 4-5

Club Garibaldi 3-6

### **HARP DIV.**

Ale House 7-2

Shamrock Club 5-4

Packy's 2-7

County Clare 1-8

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## **Sunshine Club**

Condolences to the Katie and Vince Agnew Family. Katie's father,

Thomas Jennings, MD recently passed away.

Celeste Jasloski recently had surgery at St Francis Hospital. Muriel Crowley had knee replacement surgery. Mike Maher has undergone surgery for colon cancer. The club wishes a speedy recovery to all.

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### **Golf Outing Recap**

The 2006 Shamrock Club Golf Outing, held at the Edgewater Golf Club on Sunday August 27th, was a resounding success. The event was won by the foursome of Ken Tehan, Rick St. Ledger, Paul Soleski, and Mick Marinoff. They came in with a three under par round of 33, narrowly nipping out two other foursomes who tied at 34. The longest drive by a woman contest was won by new member Julie Casey, while the longest putt trophy was taken home by Bob Donovan (Tom Ordinans who actually recorded the longest putt had already left.) The winner of the hotly contested putting contest was Dennis McLaughlin. Following the scintillating golf, a very tasty dinner featuring broasted chicken was served, door prizes were distributed, and everyone went merrily home vowing to return for the 2007 Outing.

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### **New Members**

NOTE: Please send your dues to your Membership Chairperson in your chapter. All names and addresses are listed in Emerald Reflections.

Milwaukee: John and Barbara Bird (referred by self); Mike and Julie Cosey (referred by S.C. Golf Outing); Jeffrey de Groot (referred by self); Pat and Gene Gross (referred by Irish Fest); Mark and Natalie Howard (referred by Pam Canon); Mark and Nancy Huolihan (referred by self); Michael Johnson (referred by Irish Fest); Anne McCarthy (referred by Pam Cannon); Kathy McLaughlin (referred by Irish Fest); Peggy Massie (referred by self); Thomas and Rita Mauermann (referred by self); Joseph T. O'Brien (referred by self); Bill and Lin O'Connor (referred by self); Daniel and Julie O'Connor (referred by Irish Fest); Eric and Heather Poster (referred by Irish Fest); Patricia Rooney-Brown (referred by self); Bob Scanlon (referred by self); Schwarz Family (referred by Irish Fest); Suzanne Sullivan (referred by self).

New Dublin – Anne Sievert (referred by Irish Fest).

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