



## Dec. 2007

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## Memories of Irish Christmas

*by Brian Witt*

Christmas around the world excites the senses and makes one feel joyous. In Ireland, it is the same. The many traditions, including the whitewashing of houses, made somewhat extinct with the rise of siding, cleaning from top to bottom, the candles in the windows to guide the Holy Family to a safe haven, and others have lasted to this day. Families can count on the joys of joining together in the festivities of Christmas, a day unlike others in Ireland.

Ireland's traditions, as seen through the eyes of the Irish, have always been tempered with the reality of the harshness of times past, seemingly long gone now after a decade of the Celtic Tiger. They are reflected in the memories of past events, sometimes softened by the passing of years other times starkly recollected. Here are a few views of Ireland long ago, both fictional and real.

Christmas Morning, the famous story by Frank O'Connor, recalls the switching of presents by the protagonist, Larry, wherein he took the popgun intended for his brother, and let him have the book his mother had purchased for him, under the guise of Santa Claus. This was to his mother's disgust and hurt. "I understood it all," said Larry, and it was almost more than I could bear; that there was no Santa Claus, as the Dohertys said, only Mother trying to scrape together a few coppers from the housekeeping; that Father was mean and common and a drunkard, and that she had been relying on me to raise her out of the misery of the life she was leading. And I knew that the look in her eyes was the fear that, like my father, I should turn out to be mean and common and a drunkard."

Christmas Breakfast. The best way to start the day would be with a hearty meal. Try this **IRISH OMELETTE**. It serves two.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 4 large eggs
- 1 large mashed potato

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- some lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon of chives
- salt and pepper;
- 1 tablespoon of butter.

Separate the eggs and beat the yolks. Add then to the mashed potato, mixing thoroughly and then add the lemon juice, chives, salt and pepper. Melt the butter in a pan. Whisk the egg whites until stiff and stir them into the potato mixture. Cook the mixture until golden and then run under the broiler to finish and puff it up. Serve immediately.

Consiglio Murphy in his story, An East Cork Christmas, talks of the fun of Christmas in the 1920s: “Mother would send us with gallons of milk to the neighbours nearby where there were many children and bottled milk was not ever heard of at that time. In return they gave us slices of rich cake or plum pudding. Mother would chide us saying, ‘you took more from those poor people than you gave!’ The second memory I have is that there were no dance halls as such near our home at that time. We had our own dances the neighbours gathered in, someone played the melodeon and we danced half sets, jigs and reels until morning. Tea, wine and spirits were served to all.”

Treats when you are ready to have visitors are a good thing to have on hand. This recipe for **APPLE BARLEY PUDDING** will serve four.

#### INGREDIENTS

- 4 tablespoons of pearl barley
- 1 and a half pounds of apples, peeled, cored and sliced
- 3 tablespoons of sugar
- 1 good cup of heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon of lemon juice.

Boil the barley in water and add the apples. Cook until both begin to soften. Drain and blend the mixture in a blender or sieve. Cook the mixture after adding the sugar and lemon and boil again. Allow to cool and then chill, adding the cream on top.

In Ireland, you would tell someone “Happy Christmas.” Now, if you were to say Happy Christmas in Irish to just one other person, you would say, “Nollaig Shona Duit”. If you were to be addressing the same greeting to two or more persons, you would say; “Nollaig Shona Daoibh”. This means “You have a Happy Christmas.” The most common response to this would be, “Nollaig Mhaith Chugat”, or “A good Christmas to you.”

After all the greeting and counter-greeting, one would be hungry. This **IRISH WHISKEY CAKE** would be a great way to revive a tired body.

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 large (20 ounce) can crushed pineapple
- 8 tablespoons (one stick) butter
- 1 half cup brown sugar

- 2 cups sultanas or golden raisins
- 4 ounces candied cherries
- 4 ounces mixed peel
- 1 cup self-raising flour
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon soda
- 1 teaspoon mixed spice
- 2 eggs, beaten;
- 2 or more tablespoons Irish whiskey.

In a large saucepan over medium heat, combine the pineapple, butter, brown sugar, and fruit. Bring to a boil and stir continually for about five minutes. Remove from heat and cool completely. Preheat the oven to 325° F. Generously grease one eight-inch loaf pan or four mini-loaf pans.

In a large bowl, combine flours, soda, and mixed spice. Stir in the beaten eggs. Add this to the fruit mixture, and with a wooden spoon, blend thoroughly. Spoon mixture into pan and smooth top with a wet spatula. Bake one large cake for 60 to 75 minutes. Bake mini-loaves for about 55 minutes. When the cake is done, remove and cool on rack. Prick the top with a skewer, and drizzle with the whiskey while the cake is still warm.

John B. Keane's Christmas Stories and Letters of a Country Postman has the postman in a small Kerry town taking it upon himself to right the wrongs inflicted upon a local woman by her thoughtless son, who had emigrated to England. "Finally the postman could bear it no longer. On Christmas Eve he delivered to our house a mixed bunch of cards and letters. Some were from England. He requested one of these envelopes when its contents were removed. He re-wrote the name and address and also wrote a short note which he signed "your loving son Jack." Then from his pocket he extracted a ten shilling note, a considerable sum in those far off days. He placed the note in the envelope.

"When the postman came to the old woman's door, he knocked loudly. When she appeared, he put on his best official voice and said 'sign for this if you please Missus.' The old woman signed and opened the envelope. The tears appeared in her eyes and she cried out loud: 'I declare to God but Jack is a scholar.' 'True for you,' said the postman, 'and I dare say he couldn't get in touch with you until he learned to write.' 'I always knew there was good in him,' she said, 'I always knew it.' 'There's good in everyone Missus,' said the postman, as he moved on to the next house. The street was not slow in getting the message and in the next and last post there were many parcels for the old woman. It was probably the best Christmas the street ever had."

If you and your neighbors work to make another's life better, a great reward would be the rich lobster dish, the **DUBLIN LAWYER**, most likely named after the barrister's bill.

#### INGREDIENTS

- fresh lobster, about two and a half pounds

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 4 tablespoons Irish whiskey
- 150 ml cream
- salt and pepper

The lobster should be cut in two down the center. Remove all the meat from the lobster, including the claws; retain the shell for serving. Cut the meat into chunks. Heat the butter until foaming and quickly saute the lobster chunks in it, until just cooked but not colored. Warm the whiskey slightly, then pour it over the lobster and set fire to it. Add the cream, mix with the pan juices, and taste for seasoning. Put back into the half shells and serve hot.

With any luck, your memories of Christmas will be rich and happy. And again, Happy Christmas to all. Agus Nollaig Shona Daoibh 2007.

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### **South Central Shamrock Club News**

News from October 21st meeting... Kathy LaMasney and Patricia McConaghy gave a wonderful lecture on their trip to Ireland in August. One fascinating note was Pat's daughter, Kelly Kershner, accompanied her mom on this trip and has a beautiful voice and when she was 10 years old she travelled to Ireland with her sister and parents and sang "Galway Bay" and now 32 years later she sang for her mom and others "Galway Bay" at a pub near Galway. The McConaghy family are very musically gifted so the experience for all—I am sure—was a memorable highlight of the trip.

Twenty-five members attended the October meeting.

The Christmas Committee was very informative about the holiday party on Dec. 16. The Christmas committee is Gloria Judge (Chair), Pat Hanes, LuAnne Krohn, Kay Scanlon, Jackie Harris, Suzanne Dischler.

On October 30 our very own members, Bill and Pat Wilde were honored by The Catholic Charities of the Madison Dioceses for their charity works to enable those needing assistance and improving the lives of others. The distinguished Leadership Award was awarded to Pat and Bill. As South Central Members we know them as a kind, dedicated couple who love each other and share their love with others whenever the call comes for help. Congratulations Pat and Bill!

Mark your calendar for Dec. 16 at the Reedsburg Country Club for the South Central Shamrock Club Christmas Party/Dinner.

The dinner and entertainment is \$21 per person. Your choice is that of prime rib or stuffed pork chop. Please contact Gloria Judge to make your reservation at (608) 534-3365. The deadline is Dec. 4, 2007. Or mail your reservations to: Gloria Judge; 2227 Winfield Drive; Reedsburg, WI 53959. Checks made payable to: South Central Shamrock Club

Social hour (cash bar) appetizers included in the meal price. Social hour begins at noon and dinner served at 1 p.m. Mass at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Reedsburg, WI at 10:30 a.m. for those wishing to attend mass prior to the Christmas Party.

Any questions please call Dana Horkan-Gant at (608) 534-6821.

Tidbit of Christmas decorating in Ireland... The placing of a ring of holly on doors originated in Ireland as holly was one of the main plants that flourished at Christmas time and which gave the poor ample means with which to decorate their dwellings.

All decorations are traditionally taken down on Little Christmas (January 6) and it is considered to be bad luck to take them down beforehand.

‘Nollaig Shona Duit’

**– Dana Horkan Gant**  
**South Central Membership Chairperson**

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## **State Chapter News**

### **LaCROSSE**

The Shamrock Club of La Crosse will be having a number of activities planned in December and January. On December 4, the Christmas Party will take place at the Freight House Restaurant, 107 Vine Street, LaCrosse. (608) 784-6211. On December 30, the Shamrock Club hosts Rotary Lights from 4:45 – 10:15 p.m. Volunteers are needed. Call Sharon Candahl at (608) 784-7101. On January 12, we will have a 35th anniversary Hoolie Bus Trip. It will be going to the Monarch Pub in Fountain City. Details to come.

In November, we took part in the International Night at the Onalaska Middle School. For the past several years the Shamrock Club has provided a display and talked with those interested about Ireland. On November 18, the Shamrock Club decorated the club Rotary Lights Christmas Tree in Riverside Park. And on November 23, we participated in the Rotary Lights parade in downtown La Crosse. [<http://shamrockclublax.org>]

## **DANE COUNTY**

The Dane County Christmas Party will take place on December 2 at the Coliseum Bar, 232 East Olin Street. 4 p.m. Social Hour; 5 p.m. Dinner; 6 p.m. Raffle; 6:30 p.m. Entertainment, to be announced. If you would like to register for the party, please send your information to Dane County Shamrock Club, Inc.; ATTN: Christmas Party Committee, PO Box 70765, Madison, WI 53707-0765. Dinner selections are \$16 for adults, and include: turkey and dressing, ham, and vegetarian. There will be chicken tenders for children at \$8.

Members should start thinking about their nominations for Irish Person of the Year. Nominations must be submitted in writing to be considered and must be received prior to the January board meeting.

[<http://www.madison.com/communities/shamrock/index.php>]

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### **Milwaukee President's Message**

Nollaig Shona Daoibh. Merry Christmas to you. And may we have a wonderful time in the run-up to the holiday. I wish to thank the various chairs of the Folk Fair, Malkin Wallace, Mary Culver, Heather Majusiak and Pam Canon, Noreen Barclay, Muriel Crowley and Bridget Jaskulski, for their hard work this past November. It is greatly appreciated. We did a great job representing the Irish.

And now we have the Christmas party on December 6. There is an article in Reflections this month as to how to call to reserve space for the evening. The Club was asked to decorate the Christmas tree at the Governor's Mansion in Madison. It is to be the main tree for 2007. This is a wonderful honor. Our crew will be going out on December 3 to put up all those Irish ornaments.

We will be looking for candidates for the Irish honorees in December and January. Drop off your suggestions at the ICHC, or e-mail them to [[club@shamrockclubwis.com](mailto:club@shamrockclubwis.com)].

We are still looking for donations of gifts for the scholarship raffle. Large is good. Also, if someone would like to have their business underwrite the cost of printing the tickets, that would help to add more money to be given to deserving candidates. Contact Kevin Quinlan at [[kquinlan@tmore.org](mailto:kquinlan@tmore.org)].

At the November general meeting, we had an interesting discussion about the Mass in honor of St. Patrick on March 15, and the role of the Color Guard. It could have been a moment of great

contention, but rather it turned out to be a good compromise for us all. Thank you to all who expressed an opinion, and took a stance. It is so much the better for us all to work together for the common good of the Club.

I attended the Shamrock Club's State Advisory Board meeting in November in Darlington. Thanks to the Lafayette chapter for hosting the event. We discussed the common problems each chapter has, the things that are going well, and the things that are missing. The next meeting is February 23 in Madison at the Claddagh.

Don't forget we are a 501 C 3 nonprofit. You can donate to the Club, and then write it off on your taxes. If you are looking for places to donate, think of the scholarship fund, the Color Guard, the piping scholarships, or just a general donation to the organization. This allows us to continue endowing Irish groups and enhancing Irish life in Milwaukee and Wisconsin.

Also, think about giving the gift of a membership to relatives and friends. We can only grow stronger with more members and more voices.

A warm welcome goes out to our new auxiliary bishop, Bill Callahan. Bishop Callahan is returning to Milwaukee after a stint in Chicago. Now, as you count them, two Irish bishops and one Slovak bishop. And a fond farewell is issued to Counsel General Sean Farrell, who recently retired from the Irish government. A replacement will be named in the coming weeks. Mr. Farrell was featured in our parade in the mid 1970s, when he was the vice-counsel general.

A reminder to patronize our Emerald Reflections sponsors. They help to support the cost of printing and mailing of the newsletter. If nothing else, call them and thank them for their support.

I hope you get all you wish for this Christmas, be it material or spiritual goods. See you in January.

– **Brian Witt**

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## **Christmas Party 2007**

Our annual Christmas Party will take place on Thursday, December 6, 2007 at the ICHC at 6 p.m. We will again be using all of the lower level of the building. The Shamrock Club will be providing meat as well as beverages. We are asking members whose last names start with A to N to bring a side dish of vegetables or salads, and from O to Z to bring desserts.

We will again have entertainment from Santa Claus and the Irish Fest Choir. Reservations will be needed, so please sign up in advance. For reservations and information, call Malkin Wallace at (414) 234-0653.

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## **Pat McCurdy to Headline**

### **Color Guard Pipes and Drums Fundraiser January 27**

On Sunday, January 27, 2008, The Shamrock Club Color Guard Pipes and Drums will be holding a fundraiser at the Irish Cultural and Heritage Center, 2133 West Wisconsin Avenue. The headliner will be Milwaukee musician Pat McCurdy. There will also be a set by the Shamrock Color Guard Pipes and Drums.

Tickets are \$9 at the door. The bar will be open and I.D. carding will be enforced. The doors will open at 6 p.m. The show starts at 7:30 p.m.

For more information, contact Rich Pfeiffer at (414) 759-9562 or [richard-pfeiffer@sbcglobal.net].

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## **Celtic Women First Fridays**

**DATE:** December 7, 2007

**TOPIC:** "Celtic Christmas"

St. Nicholas will be the topic for the First Friday lecture of December. Since we celebrate the Christmas season at this time, please bring a treat from your vast supply of goodies. Tea and cookies also on hand as usual. Browse the craft tables for that unique gift for someone special this year.

Lectures are held from 5:30 – 7 p.m. at the ICHC, 2133 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee. Admission is \$7 for all. Tea and biscuits are served. Everyone is welcome.

– **Jean Bills**

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## Nominations For Irish Honorees

Nominations for the Irishman of the Year, Irish Rose, and Parade Marshal will be taken in December and January. Nominations must be in by the January board meeting. Each nominee must be a club member to be eligible. Send nominations to Shamrock Club, 2133 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53233.

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## Hallamor Fall Concert Series

### **The Clancy Legacy**

**December 22, 2007; 8 p.m.**

**Opening: Jeff Ward; 7 p.m.**

Founded in 2006, The Clancy Legacy is the second generation of one of the most storied families in Irish music. Aoife Clancy, daughter of Bobby, has toured with Cherish the Ladies and has a voice described as honest, clear, and her delivery as straight forward with “gorgeous naturalism.” Robbie O’Connell, nephew of the Clancy brothers and an acclaimed singer and song-writer, has toured and recorded with Green Fields of America, Eileen Ivers, Seamus Egan and his famous uncles. Liam’s son, Donal Clancy, is a guitarist and founding member of Danú, who has also recorded with Solas and Cherish the Ladies.

Christmas is the perfect time to share and enjoy The Clancy Legacy.

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

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

– **Gwen Sisk**

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## Members’ Doings

JJ Garsombke, Dave Culver and Patrick Maes are three of four percussionists accepted into the prestigious Wisconsin

Conservatory of Music percussion ensemble. They are studying with very accomplished musicians and are learning all facets and styles of being a drummer. They will be performing on Dec. 3, 7 p.m. at the Conservatory on Prospect Ave. at Brady Street.

In addition, Patrick has been chosen to be a student ambassador for the "People to People" program. For three weeks in the summer of 2008, he will be one of 40 students from across the country exploring Western Europe. They will visit Ireland, Holland, France, England, Belgium, Isle of Wight and Wales. It's kind of like a foreign exchange program that he receives school credit for.

JJ just completed his work on his Eagle Scout requirements.

In addition to Patrick, Kari Quinlan will join a select group of students in the People to People Leadership Summit at UCLA in Los Angeles next June. All students accepted to the program must meet rigorous academic and leadership requirements. Kari was nominated on scholastic merit, civic involvement and leadership potential. To find out more about the program, go to [[www.lsleaders.org](http://www.lsleaders.org)].

Congratulations to Timm Heck for his election to the Irish Fest Board. Timm and Maura are active members of the Irish community and we are happy to have them as our members.

LaCrosse Irish Fest founder Pat Stephens and wife Joanne were in attendance at the Nova Scotia conference for all Irish Festivals.

Bridget Hamill, daughter of Peg and Bob Hamill, and a former piper in the Shamrock Club Color Guard Pipes and Drums, has taken a job at the University of Kentucky as a sports trainer for a number of teams, (volleyball, track and field and more), since her graduation in May from UW Oshkosh. She has been in Lexington since mid summer.

Roger and Maricolette Walsh have been doing a bit of travelling in 2007. They spent Easter in Spain and September in Ireland. Also in Ireland were Diana and Shannon Stroud.

Emily Fitzgibbons went to Belfast over the Thanksgiving holidays. Megan Fitzgibbons is now a chef at Social on 1st Street, as well as completing her studies at UWM.

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## **Audit Committee**

The Shamrock Club audit committee met to go over the Club's finances. Pat Fitzgibbons, Kathy Donovan, Noreen Barclay, John Fisher and Peter Dundon reviewed finances and bookkeeping for

2007. Some suggestions were made on changes in listings and accountings. Otherwise, the books were found to be in good shape.

– Pat Fitzgibbons

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### **Raffle News**

We are seeking the donation of prizes for the April Scholarship Raffle. Nights at hotels, gift cards, money, and more would truly help. In 2007, we gave away \$2500 in scholarship money. The more money we can bring in, the more students we can assist. Also, if you or the company you work for would like to underwrite the cost of the raffle tickets, please let us know. Your company name will be listed on the tickets as the underwriter. Contact Kevin Quinlan at [kquinlan@tmore.org].

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### **Color Guard News and Notes**

Happy Holidays Avid Readers! I have to say the past 12 months have absolutely flown by. It just seems like yesterday we were getting ready for Savannah. I will write up a major recap of 2007 for January's issue. For now, some recent and future news for the group.

November was still a busy one for the band. In past years our season ends usually mid October, but the need and want for this band continues to grow and in turn, stretches our season through November. A small contingent attended McBob's Grand Reopening in October and I heard they rocked the place. No other band, including the Highlanders or The Sandcarvers received such a standing ovation. All eyes were on them during Highland Cathedral and Rakes of Mallow and I sure think they left a lasting impression. I heard there were quite a few young gents getting in the way trying to flirt with the young ladies of the group. The band also performed on a chilly November 10 for the Veteran's Day Parade. It's quite the honor to march for those who have served and are currently serving, and those who came home or sadly never came home. Despite the weather, we were glad to be there.

Speaking of beautiful young ladies, our very own Kari Quinlan, of the famous Quinlan Clan, has some great news to share. She will join a select group of students in the People to People Leadership

Summitt at UCLA in Los Angeles next June. All students accepted to the program must meet rigorous academic and leadership requirements. Kari was nominated on scholastic merit, civic involvement and leadership potential. While at UCLA, Kari will focus on leadership, team building, community service, college admissions, and professional aspirations. She'll also work on an action plan to make a difference in her community, develop skills to help lead tomorrow's world, and build her college resume, all while earning academic credit. This program was set up by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956 to foster world citizenship. Our own Patrick Maes is in a similar program that will take him overseas next summer. For more info, take a look at [www.lsleaders.org]. Way to go Kari!! On behalf of the entire group, we are very proud of you!!!

December will have us at the Shamrock Club Christmas Party at the ICHC as well as our very own party at Paddy's Pub on December 15. We will continue our clothing drive through December as well, with many pickup points throughout the city as well as the ICHC. Contact Rich Pfeiffer.

We take a well deserved break from mid December until mid January and sadly, our season is over. Way to go everyone. 2007 was a huge success. Off the books outstanding. What can 2008 bring?

– Noel Tylla, 4th year piper

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### **Sunshine Club**

Boston Marathon runner Jack Noonan recently had a knee replaced.

Robert De Graves passed away recently. Rudolph Mikush, brother of Ed Mikush, passed away recently. Our condolences to their families.

The Smith family wants to thank all the members for their cards, prayers, visits, and get well wishes for Tom. Your kind consideration has been greatly appreciated. Thank you to Marianne Fisher for taking care of the membership chair and all that goes with it. Tom continues to mend, and can't wait to back to see all of you.

Scott Dahlke, brother in law of Kris and Daryl Pluskota, passed away recently.

The family of Jack Lyden sent a thank you card for the appearance of the Shamrock Club Color Guard pipers and honor guard at his

recent memorial service.

If you have any information about members, please contact me,  
Joe Donovan, (414) 259-8040.

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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 – Nic Bizub (referred by Mary Culver); Steve and Jill Saxton; Matt Waters (referred by Mary Culver).

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