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## The Briscoes and Service to Ireland

*by Brian Witt*

It was a trivia question. Who were the father and son Lord Mayors of Dublin in the 20th Century? Bonus question: What set them apart from other Lord Mayors of the capital city? Additional bonus question: What legislative achievement did they accomplish?

The answer is Robert and Ben Briscoe. What set them apart was the fact that they are Jewish. They were also the longest serving family in the Irish Dail.

Robert Briscoe was born to Lithuanian Jewish immigrants to Ireland in 1894. He joined the Irish Republican Army, ran guns and ammunition for the IRA, and later raised money to help bring Jews to Palestine. He also served as a member of the Dail, the Irish parliament, from 1927 to 1965. He was befriended by Eamon de Valera, and was one of the Sinn Fein representatives who traveled to the United States to raise funds for the group and the cause. He spoke for the Sinn Féin cause at public meetings and was adamant that being a "Hebrew" did not lessen his being an Irishman. Robert Briscoe was sent by Michael Collins to Germany in 1919 to be the chief agent for procuring arms for the IRA

Starting in 1927, Briscoe served in the Dail, the Irish parliament, serving the South Dublin district for the Fianna Fáil party. Redistricting in 1948 created the Southwest Dublin district, and Briscoe was elected until his retirement in 1965, serving as Teachta Dála (TD) in the Oireachtas for thirty-eight years. In 1956, Briscoe became the first Jewish Lord Mayor of Dublin, a largely ceremonial post. He was re-elected in 1961. He decided not to run for reelection in 1965, and was succeeded by his son, Ben.

Ben Briscoe served in his father's seat in Southwest Dublin for Fianna Fail, starting in 1965. Later, he would serve Dublin South Central, and when the district was realigned again, he served Dublin Rathmines West, until that district was eliminated and he

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Dublin Rathmines West, until that district was eliminated and he served South Central again. In 1988, he was elected Lord Mayor of Dublin, thus becoming the first, and only, father-son duo for that office in the 20th century. In 1992, Ben was involved in a protracted election recount with the Democratic Left candidate, Eric Byrne, which Briscoe had originally lost. The recount took ten days, and Briscoe was to say it was a case of “the agony and the ex-TD.” Ben would retire in 2002. Between father and son, south Dublin was represented for seventy-five years.

Although there were never more than 6000 Jews in Ireland, a number had been elected to high office since their arrival in 1079. William Annyas was elected mayor of Youghal, County Cork in 1555. In 1899 Sir Otto Yaffe was Lord Mayor of Belfast. In 1977 Gerald Goldberg became the Lord Mayor of Cork.

The Irish Jews have made a difference in the world, as well. The former president of Israel, Chaim Herzog, was born in Belfast in 1918. He was president from 1983 to 1993. His father Isaac was the first chief rabbi of the Irish Free State.

There was limited Jewish immigration to Ireland during the late 19th century. In 1871 the Jewish population of Ireland was 258, and mainly from Germany or England. There was a wave of new migration in the wake of Russian pogroms, and by 1904 the total Jewish population had reached an estimated 4,800, with the majority living in or around Dublin.

Ireland’s Jews were hyper-patriotic. Many joined the part-time army reserve during the war. A newspaper report in the *Evening Mail* said of a visit to a police station as “I thought that I was in a synagogue”.

Still, Ireland’s treatment of Jews was ambivalent, at best. There was an anti-Semitic boycott in Limerick, known as the Limerick Pogrom, and caused most Jews to leave the city. Fr. John Creagh, an influential Catholic priest, initiated the action. For his efforts, Creagh was assigned to a remote island in the Pacific Ocean. During and after World War Two, the Irish government put up restrictions on who would be allowed into the country, but were seen as being blocks to any Jewish immigration.

Today the number of Jews in Ireland has dwindled to 1800. Of these, 200 live in Northern Ireland and the rest in the Irish Republic.

Robert Briscoe was able to cross over many lines in Irish society. His best friend was Eamon Martin, with whom he served in the IRA, and was a founder of Fianna Eireann. Martin served as Briscoe’s best man. His work amongst all groups moved the Emerald Isle immigration center in New York to name their award for service above and beyond the call the Robert Briscoe award. Robert Briscoe died in 1969. Ben lives in retirement in the Dublin area.

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## **South Central Shamrock Club News**

The SCSC is happy to announce the 2009 Irish Rose is Charlene Ann (Kohlmeyer) Terry of Baraboo, Wisconsin and 2009 Irishman is Atty. William T. Curran of Mauston, Wisconsin.

The St. Patrick's Day Party is set for March 21 at the Voyageur in Reedsburg, to toast these fine Irish individuals. Be sure to watch for more information on our 2009 party and Irish Rose and Irishman in the March issue and local papers.

Additional raffle tickets are available at Scott Construction, Inc., Lake Delton, WI and at Blue Heron, Reedsburg, WI and by all members. Be sure to purchase your tickets and sell, sell your tickets to your family, friends, co workers.

Our raffle tickets are to raise money for our Marguerite I. Murray Scholarship. Thought it would be nice to give you a bit of background on our former Irish Rose who's name represents the scholarship with her dedication and gentleness to those she taught for many years.

Marguerite graduated from Mauston High School and graduated from Juneau County Normal School in 1949. She taught in Mauston, Union Center and Dellona Schools. After raising her family she went back to school. She taught in the special education department in the Reedsburg School District for 23 years. In 1982 she was honored by the State Department of Public Instruction as a Reedsburg Teacher of the Year. She retired in 1990. Marguerite was very involved in the local Special Olympics. She knew each child had different needs and abilities and always helped each individual child to achieve their potential.

February Birthday Wishes to: Annette Baker 2/1, Mary Stieve 2/2, Dan Howley 2/21, our treasurer Bob Hanes 2/11, Robert (Bob) Walsh 2/28, Joe Lynett 2/5, Robert (Bob) Judkins 2/17, Suzanne Dischler 2/16, Kathy Howley 2/13.

February Anniversary Blessings to: our vice president and his lovely wife, John and Jan Delmore on Feb. 21; Vince and Margaret Marchetti on Feb. 7.

Speedy recovery wishes and prayers to Rita Bill.

Respectfully submitted,

**– Dana J. Horkan-Gant, Membership Chair**

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

Have you set your plans for St. Bridgid's day on February 1st yet? As the female patron saint of Ireland she at least deserves an extra cup of coffee in the morning if you're too busy to celebrate in a different way. It would be interesting to have overheard the conversations in Ireland leading up to each gender having their own saint, and then to add St. Colmcille just for good measure.

Spring should be showing up in Ireland now with the daffodils already starting to pop up, might be a nice time for a visit, and the euro to dollar exchange rate may be improved. Do we ever need an excuse to go to Ireland? I don't think so. If you're one of the many members reading this in Florida or Arizona, you'll be glad to know this winter is as bad as last year's weather. Despite that, hurry back to join us in our many events.

Our own Dave Culver showed how hard work and talent helped him be a member of the 300 pieces All American Band at the Rose Bowl Parade. His mother, Mary Culver, can be justifiably proud in his achievement. Mary was able to accompany him as well as the proud brothers, Sean and Clay. Please know he will return again to our SCCGPD, and the drumline to do us proud there.

Perhaps you went to the Midwest Center to view the two back-to-back *feiseanna* in January. This large gathering of largely regional Irish dancers makes a great weekend for the dancers and their families. Many of whom stay downtown enjoying the water park, restaurants, and shopping.

Many of the volunteers for the Sunday *feis* were our club members who were gracious in giving their time to the ICHC fund raiser. I know the ICHC Board and especially Kris Pluskota appreciated the efforts of all the members who stepped forward to assist wherever needed. Thank you again to our retail chair Linda Tuescher and her sidekick Noreen Barclay. The ladies always do us proud with the selection of items and displays.

The Shamrock Club Board of decades ago, in their decision to bring Irish dancing to Milwaukee can be credited with planting an acorn that gave rise to a mighty oak that continues to grow.

There are *feis* scheduled this month in Poland, Germany, and at least five other countries, who could have seen this back then. But there's no denying the impact worldwide of Michael Flatley's *Riverdance*, and now he has his own prime time show here in the US called "Superstars of Dancing" with Irish dancing and dancers from all over the world participating.

Many thanks to Paula Harrold in agreeing to take care of our very

special St. Patrick's Day Mass, and to Bob Harrold in continuing to bring us the finest music and choral arrangements. I'm sorry to see Chuck and Bonnie McLaughlin leave the position, but think they should take a bow for the work they've done in 20 plus years. God bless both of them for the devotion and care in seeing this mass so loved by the Irish community, so well done.

February's general meeting will be back at the ICHC, and we hope you will enjoy the announcement of our 2009 honorees. Perhaps it was your nominee that was chosen, or maybe you are one of the honorees. In any event, congratulations.

I looked for you at the last meeting, we even saved a seat, there's room at the next meeting so see you there.

– **Julie Smith, President**

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### **Brendan Loughrey At ICHC Feb. 14**

County Donegal, Ireland, native Brendan Loughrey will perform a mix of Irish rebel songs, original compositions, and classic Irish ballads during two concerts on Saturday, Feb. 14, at the Irish Cultural and Heritage Center, 2133 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee. In honor of Valentine's Day, carnations will be given to women concertgoers at both the 2 p.m. matinee and the 8 p.m. evening shows.

Recognized as one of the finest and most passionate male voices to come out of Ireland in recent years, Loughrey credits Tommy Makem, and Christy Moore as influences. A strong family tradition of music, songs and storytelling provided the foundation for his heart-felt songwriting and compelling performances.

Currently based in Chicago, Loughrey has played many of the major festivals and venues in this country and Ireland and has opened for well-known artists such as Bruce Springsteen and Chuck Berry. He has released five critically acclaimed CDs.

Shamrock Club member Bob Harrold will open at 7 p.m with a performance of the Hallamor's 4000-pipe organ. Harrold is the music director for the Shamrock Club's Mass in March, and is also the music director of the Irish Fest Mass.

General admission tickets for the 2 p.m. show are \$15 and \$10 for seniors 65 and older. Reserved seat tickets for the 8 p.m. performance are \$19 in advance and \$21 at the door with discounts for students and groups.

To order tickets online and also view the full Hallamor concert series, visit [www.ichc.net]. Tickets may also be ordered by calling (414) 345-8800.

– Kathy Schultz

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## **Color Guard News and Notes**

Hello everyone. I've decided to take this month off from writing the article. Wish I could say I was sitting on the beach drinking tequila, but alas, I'm at home and thought anyway this next bit would be more enjoyable reading than my normal drive!

This note is from Super Dave Culver about his trip to the Rose Bowl Parade. (Thank you Mary Culver!) Here goes:

“It was the most awesome experience I've ever had. The musicianship of the band was incredible. There were 315 students from 202 high schools across 36 states and to play with these guys was intense. I was only one of about ten sophomores and there were only maybe ten freshman in the group. The rest was made up of junior and seniors in high school and college freshmen.

We practiced for two days and then started performing. This was the first time the band had performed together except for the percussion line. We did a dress rehearsal for our family and fans at UC-Fullerton and then we immediately bussed over to Disneyland to perform in front of 60,000 people at Disney Castle. We then had a chance to hang at Disneyland for a couple hours. That was all on Monday, December 29. Tuesday we set off for band pictures in front of the Rose Bowl stadium and then to perform for Bandfest in Pasadena. Bandfest was a two-day performance of all the bands that would be performing in the TOR parade. It was great to see all the bands do their shows! We also got to see the float being made and were allowed to help put flowers on our Big Bird/Sesame Street float. That was pretty cool and those floats were huge!

The next day we toured LA and Hollywood and got to see Gouman's Chinese Theatre, dove past the La Brea tar pits and kind of saw the Hollywood sign but it was too far away.

January 1st was the parade and we had to be up at 3:30 a.m. to be ready for the buses to leave at 4:30 a.m. California is really cold in the morning! We got to Pasadena and stood around until we stopped off at 11 a.m. The parade was so intense with people screaming and clapping. We marched so fast?almost a run for six miles. Mom said they reported that some floats dove at 45 mph at

some points to catch up. Our adrenaline was pumping so hard I didn't even notice how tired I was until right at the end when a woman held up a "one block to go" sign. I thought WOW, that's it? The screaming fans never stopped and I loved it!

My favorite thing besides the parade was our uniforms. They were so cool that I purchased mine. It's red, white and blue with gauntlets and gloves. The jacket went over white overalls and we had this great hat with a huge white plume. We didn't get to keep the pants or hat. I really wanted the plume!"

Wow, Dave. I can't say it enough, and on behalf of the entire group, we are so *proud* of you. Congratulations on a job well done. We hope that you get more opportunities in the future to travel around the world making music!

Until March Everyone, Take care of yourselves.

– Noel Tylla, 6th year piper



*From left: Color Guard members Matt Waters, Clay Culver, Dave Culver, Sean Cavanaugh at a Rose Bowl Practice.*

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## **Ceili for Peace**

The 18th Annual Ceili for Peace will be held at the Irish Cultural Heritage Center, 2133 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, Wisconsin on Saturday, February 7, 2009.

A ceili (kay-lee) is a traditional gathering of friends and family joining together in a celebration of music, song and dance. This

very family friendly event begins with a mini concert of traditional Irish music from 7–7:30 p.m. After that, Irish jigs and reels will be taught by Ceili instructor Julie Clark from 7:30–10:30 p.m. Beginner and experienced dancers are always welcome! Live music provided by *Ceol Cairde* (Music of Friends).

Admission is \$8 or \$6 and two non-perishable food items for Casa Maria Shelter. Low or fixed income \$4, children 6-16 years \$3, children under 6 free entrance.

All of this year's proceeds benefit Casa Maria Shelter where guests receive housing, food and clothing. All donations received at Casa Maria are used solely to help the homeless and needy. They receive no government or corporate funding.

For further information about the Ceili for Peace, please call Kristina Paris at (414) 372-3060 or visit [[www.ceolcairde.com](http://www.ceolcairde.com)].

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## **Annual Scholarship Raffle**

During February, March and early April we will sell our tickets for the Shamrock Club Scholarship Raffle. Tickets have been mailed. Please do what you can to help us to support our scholarship fund. Grand prize is a land package to Castledaly Manor in Ireland; Other prizes include a night stay at County Clare Inn in Milwaukee; a night stay at The Irish Cottage in Galena; a Belleek vase; a Golf package, and more. Please support us when you get your tickets in the mail. Since 1972, we have given over \$25,000 to students. For more information, please call Kevin Quinlan at (414) 571-0722 or email at [[kquinlan@wi.rr.com](mailto:kquinlan@wi.rr.com)].



*Scholarship winners Julie Pikulik, Kenton Farmer, and Sarah Kortsch recounted their trip to Ireland in a recent meeting.*

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## **Oireachtas 2008 Columbus, Ohio**

A number of Shamrock Club members went to the Oireachtas in Columbus over Thanksgiving. Bridget Jaskulski, Katie Paszkowski and Kelly Fadeski took students from the Glencastle Irish dancers. Kate Habel and Maura Heck were there with dancers from Cashel Dennehy. Natalie and Mark Howard took a contingent from Trinity's schools.

Erin Canon competed at the Oireachtas. She placed 11th out of 111 dancers in her solo competition, and has qualified for the World Championships which will be held in Philadelphia in April. She also competed in ceili dancing, and her team placed 2nd. Erin dances for Trinity Academy.

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## **Shamrock Club Upcoming Milwaukee Meetings**

The Shamrock Club meets the first Thursday of the month, usually at the Irish Cultural and Heritage Center. Upcoming meetings will include the following entertainers:

March 5 – Shamrock Club's 49th birthday party. Shamrock Club Color Guard, Pipes and Drums will present a concert at 7 p.m. John Gleeson will be speaking about Irish life.

April 2 – Irish Fest School of Music; Irish Fest Center; 7 p.m.

May 7 – Shamrock Club yearly elections at 6.30 p.m. Monthly meeting at 7 p.m.; ICHC; Speaker: Mary Culver "Images of Ireland"

– Sandy Quinlan, VP

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## **Brendan Heart Fundraiser March 1, 2009**

The Emerald Society of Wisconsin is again going to be holding its annual Brendan Ward Heart Fund Fundraiser. The date of the Brendan Heart is March 1, 2009 at Derry Hegarty's Pub, 5328 West Bluemound, from noon to 6 p.m. Music will be provided by *Atlantic Wave, Reilly, Glencastle Dancers, Greater Milwaukee Fire and Police Pipes and Drums*, and the *Shamrock Club Pipes and Drums*. There will also be a great raffle. The cost is \$5 in advance and \$6 at the door. For more information, please go to the Emerald Society's website at [www.emeraldsociety.us].

– Pete and Dawn Fleming

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### **24th Annual Mass in Honor Of St. Patrick**

The Shamrock Club of Wisconsin's 24th Annual Mass in Honor of St Patrick will take place on Saturday, March 14, 2009 at 8:30 a.m. at St Patrick's Church, 7th and Washington. Milwaukee Bishop William Callahan will be the celebrant of the Mass. It will feature readings in Irish and English, the Shamrock Club Color Guard Pipes and Drums, most Irish organizations, including dance schools, and more. The Shamrock Club Choir, under the direction of Bob Harrold, will be singing the liturgy.

Flower donations are needed. Contact Chuck McLaughlin at (414) 771-0458 about donating for the purchase of flowers for the Mass, or order at the February or March meetings. Dedications for the flowers will be noted in the Mass booklet.

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### **Post Parade Party March 14**

The Shamrock Club's Post Parade Party plans are underway. The Post Parade Party will feature these groups and performers: *Green Tea, Blarney, athas, Celtic Keep, Ian Gould* and *Steel Bonnets*. Along with the Color Guard, *Green Tea, the Rince Nia, Trinity*, and *Cashel Dennehy* dance schools will be in the Hallamór. *Blarney* and the *Caledonian Scottish Dancers* will be performing upstairs, and Parlor B will feature *athas, Celtic Keep, Ian Gould* and *Steel Bonnets*. Along with the Color Guard, *Green Tea, Rince Nia* and *Trinity* and *Cashel Dennehy* dance schools will be

in the Hallamór.

The party runs 1–6 p.m. at the Irish Cultural and Heritage Center, 2133 West Wisconsin. The party is a part of the Shamrock Club's events on March 14, including Downtown Saint Patricks Parade Milwaukee. For more information, or to volunteer, contact Al Cross at [mossjr.alton@millercours.com] or call (414) 234-9811.

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### **50th Anniversary Committee**

The 50th anniversary committee is looking for ideas for the Shamrock Club's celebration. Planned so far are a trip to Ireland, a dinner dance in September 2010, and a commemorative book. The commemorative book's editor, Brian Witt, is going to be looking to get biographies from our past presidents and honorees, Irish Roses, Irishmen, and Parade Marshals. We are also looking to have photos taken of all of past presidents and honorees. Look for notice of when we will be taking photos.

We are also looking for members to share their memories of the past half century. Memories can be happy, sad, or otherwise, long or short.

If you have any suggestions, or wish to join the committee, please contact Josh Walton at [joshwalton1@yahoo.com].

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### **Shamrock Club of Wisconsin State Advisory Board Meeting**

**November 1, 2008**

The Wisconsin Shamrock Club State Advisory Board met at Forest Hills Country Club on November 1, 2008. Members present were John and Jan Delmore (South Central), Harry and Pat McCarthy (Dane County) and Linda Pfaff, Dee Martin and Tom Nolan (La Crosse).

President John Delmore called the meeting to order. The minutes from the August 16 meeting were reviewed and approved. The treasurer has \$200 held in the Dane County Shamrock Club account.

Clubs present shared current activities and concerns. Each club shared brochures and membership information with the other clubs.

**ASSIGNMENT TO ALL CLUBS:** Brian Witt suggested that the Board set up a display at Irish Fest in the cultural tent. The Board will go ahead with this idea. Suggestions from the club was discussed. Some suggestions were to display our mission statement, show where all the clubs are and list the Board's responsibilities. It was decided that club brochures would be a great expense and it was suggested that business cards from each club be used in the display. Each club will be responsible to produce business cards with their membership information and have them available for use at Irish Fest. At the January meeting, a draft of the proposed display will be discussed in anticipation of the final plan being approved at our April meeting so it can be created in time for Irish Fest in August.

Our many thanks to Linda Pfaff for coordinating this meeting.

The next meeting will be held Saturday, January 31 at the Claddagh Irish Pub, Greenway Station, 1611 Aspen Commons, Middleton at noon. Harry and Pat McCarthy will host the meeting. A reminder will be sent after the holidays.

Respectfully submitted,

– **Pat McCarthy, Secretary**

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## **Members Doings**

Kristina Paris visited her son in Hawaii over the Christmas holidays. Mary and John Fisher spent the Christmas holidays in County Clare with their children. This included Shamrock Club scholarship winner Tom, who also played for the Griffins in the MHC this past year. Cathy Ward visited daughter Caitlin in Florida, and then headed to Las Vegas for a vacation. Matt Larson went to San Francisco recently for the North American GAA conference. Olive Witt went to Seattle to visit her family. Julie Pruske was recently on the Fox Six Christmas special. Colleen Jaskulski had a solo in the Whitnall High School Christmas concert. Pat Fitzgibbons was recently elected to the Irish Fest board. Mary Beth Holloway and Joan Keenan took a 14 day cruise through the Panama canal.

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## **Sunshine Club**

Rory Modlinski recently had surgery.

Shirley Boyle, the mother of Mike Boyle, died recently.

Tom Callen and Kari Quinlan were recently hospitalized.

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

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