



Jean Charest to be the speaker at the 2008 St. Patrick's Society Luncheon

By Anne Forrest

In 1834, St. Patrick's Society was the first national society to be founded in Quebec. What could be more fitting than to have Quebec's premier as the Guest Speaker at this year's luncheon, the 175th. Twelve years ago, Jean Charest addressed the luncheon guests and SPS is delighted that he is able to grace us with his presence again. In 1996, he claimed the honour of being the first francophone leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, a position he held for three years at a time when his party occupied only a handful of seats in parliament. It's unlikely that those attending the luncheon suspected that within seven years, after leaving federal politics and serving as the leader of the Quebec Liberal Party for five years, Charest would become the Premier of Quebec.

Born in 1958 on St-Jean-Baptiste Day in Sherbrooke, Quebec, which remains his home to this day, Jean Charest claims Irish descent through his mother, Rita Leonard and French-Canadian descent through his father, Claude Charest. Sadly, his mother died when Jean was only 18, but it was through her that he acquired a love and respect for his Irish heritage. After high school, he attended the Sherbrooke Seminary and went on from there to l'Université de Sherbrooke where he was awarded a law degree in 1980. Following one year as an articling student and his acceptance to the Quebec Bar, he became a lawyer in the firm of Beauchemin, Dussault in Sherbrooke until his decision to pursue a career in politics in 1984.

His meteoric rise to the lofty heights in the federal government is almost unprecedented.



Premier of Québec: the Honourable Jean Charest

Two years after being elected to the House of Commons as the Sherbrooke member for the Progressive Conservative Party, and after serving as Deputy Speaker, Charest was appointed to Brian Mulroney's Cabinet as the Minister of State for Youth. Aged 28, he had become the youngest cabinet minister in Canadian history. In 1988 he changed portfolios and became the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport but in 1990, after an altercation with a judge over a case involving the Canadian Track and Field Association, he had to resign from the cabinet only to return the following year as Minister of the Environment.

However, after Brian Mulroney's resignation, despite his popularity, Charest came in second in the leadership race to Kim Campbell who became Prime Minister. He served as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Industry, Science and Technology

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A Word from the President

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to another exciting Irish Season in Montreal, and to the 175th Anniversary celebrations of St. Patrick's Society of Montreal.

Our first annual luncheon was held on March 17, 1833, and the Society was incorporated in March 1834 – so the two dates become the bookends of our Celebration. To launch our Anniversary Year, we are privileged to receive as our Guest of Honour at this year's Luncheon, the Honourable Jean Charest, Premier of Quebec – and one who is deservedly proud of his own Irish ancestry.

The Society, as it became in 1834, was responsible for the first St. Patrick's Day Parade in Montreal, and handed the torch on firstly to the AOH, from whom it was then passed to the United Irish Societies who are responsible for its continued and, indeed, its increasing success in our times. St. Patrick's Society was the founding contributor to the Centre for Canadian Irish Studies, now enjoying successful years of important expansion both here and abroad. Cine Gael, our Irish Film Association, arose out of discussions at a Society board meeting and it too enjoys a sterling international reputation. The Parade, Irish Studies, Cine Gael, each is a perfect example of our fidelity to our Founders' wishes: "... to unite the members of our community, to promote their best interests and those of our society at large, and to promote charitable, educational, cultural and other purposes..."

In the spirit of those words, we named Marianna O'Gallagher as recipient of our Community Award this year, in honour of her life-long commitment to making known the history of Grosse Île and,

by extension, the record of Irish settlement throughout our Province. Between Quebec's 400th Anniversary and St. Patrick's 175th – it was time to celebrate Marianna O'Gallagher!

Matthew Rooney is the Chair of our Anniversary Committee, and the Chairs of all our annual events – Christie Brown (Ball); Barbara Gale (Parade); Danny Zangwill (Luncheon); and Paul Doyle (Golf Tournament), will collaborate with his committee to honour our history at all our major functions between 2008 and 2009.

I am also pleased to announce that Christie Brown was recently named a Vice President of the Society. A longtime member, Christie has for many years been involved in the organization of the Ball and is now chairing the event for the second year.

The long and winding road leading to the 2009 Exhibition continues to stretch before us and Dr. Victoria Dickenson, Director of McCord Museum, visited Belfast and Dublin in early January to discuss our plans and the possibility of obtaining artifacts. She was very well received and we look forward to increasing activity this year as the exhibition takes shape.

The Society is as successful as its members and friends enable it to be – I thank you all for your support and collaboration and wish you all a most joyful celebration in the weeks ahead. A very Happy St. Patrick's Day to all the Irish in Quebec!

Mary McDaid
February 2008



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Gone but certainly not forgotten

When I was approached by Pat Dunn in the summer of 2002 to take on the responsibility of editing and doing the layout of *NUACHT*, little did I know that this was to become an all-consuming, yet most rewarding activity. Before anything was decided, I met with Mary McDaid, the former editor, and Ned Eustace, the business manager of the newsletter. In all honesty, I was extremely nervous. I knew Mary but Ned was something else! His imposing presence and incredible facility of language made me realize that working on *NUACHT* was not going to be a walk in the park.

As time went by, I learned to respect Ned's qualities: his willingness to give me advice; his wonderful gift with words; his great sense of humour; and his determination to ensure that *NUACHT* was something other than a church bulletin. Never one to ignore a controversial subject, he would often tread where the angels feared!

Some of you are aware that Ned has resigned from the Board of SPS and has ended his leadership of *NUACHT*. This decision reflects changes in his life that don't allow him to do justice to either of these former obligations.

Ned is going to be missed by the *NUACHT* team. Our planning sessions were always lively when he was in attendance. However, he has promised to contribute articles in the future, so we will be able to appreciate his writing skills yet again. We wish him well and thank him for all those years of hard work!

Anne Forrest



Quebec historian to receive community award

By Kathleen Dunn

It would not be a stretch to say that no one knows more about the history of the Irish in Quebec than Marianna O’Gallagher, the 2008 recipient of the St. Patrick’s Society Community Award. The Quebec City resident will be honoured at the Annual Luncheon in Montreal on March 17th.

Over the years, Marianna has come to be recognized as an authority on Grosse Île, the quarantine station in the St. Lawrence River where so many Irish perished in the 19th century. The more fortunate went on from there to make a better life for themselves across North America. Marianna has stories to tell about so many of them. “The stories are real,” she assures us.

John Little, Selection Committee Chair, told *NUACHT* “the decision to choose Marianna was unanimous.” He explained that the Committee had long wanted to recognize Marianna’s great contributions as author of numerous books and articles, as guest lecturer in Canada, the U.S. and Ireland, and as tour guide par excellence at Grosse-Île and Quebec City. “Everywhere she goes, she brings the memory of the Irish in Quebec to life,” John said. Also, he added, “the timing was right,” given that 2008 marks the 400th anniversary of Quebec City, the launch of our own 175th anniversary year, and the research stage of an ambitious history of the Irish in Quebec exhibit scheduled for the McCord Museum in Montreal in 2009.

Marianna’s interest in Grosse Île developed quite naturally. It was her grandfather, the Irish-born Jeremiah O’Gallagher, who, as Secretary first and then as President of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, steered the committee that raised the Celtic Cross on the island in 1909. She attributes her interest in history to her father. “It was he who got me going on history in general, and the history of the Irish in Quebec in particular. He spoke Irish history all the time,” she recalls. In fact, “both my mother and my father were good story tellers,” she adds.

Marianna was born in Quebec City in 1929, the eldest of six children of Dermot O’Gallagher and Norma Kathleen O’Neil. A genealogy buff, she describes herself as “a descendant of O’Gallagher, O’Neil, Loney, Lee, Whyte, Corrigan, and McGrath, who came from Cork, Fermanagh, Donegal, Armagh, Tipperary and Carlow.” That means, she concludes only half jokingly, “the whole island belongs to me.” She also describes her people as “stone masons, good mothers, school teachers, homemakers, singers and flute players, land surveyors, good cooks, head waiters, piano players, story tellers, lacrosse players and referees, engineers, politicians, and contractors.” She says nothing about priests or nuns. She filled that gap herself when she joined the Sisters of Charity of Halifax who had been her teachers at the Leonard School.

It was during her 35 years as a Sister of Charity that Marianna honed her skills as a student and a teacher of history and as a writer. From 1963 to 1985, she taught history at St. Patrick’s High School in Quebec City. While she was there, she worked towards a Master’s Degree in History and graduated from the University of Ottawa in 1976. For her Master’s thesis, she wrote the history of St. Patrick’s Parish in Quebec City. That led to writing the history of St. Brigid’s Home for its 125th anniversary in 1981. Around the

same time, and with the blessing of her religious congregation, Marianna established Livres Carraig Books to publish her own work, in English and French, as well as that of others with an interest in the Irish of Quebec.

Then she immersed herself in the history of Grosse Île and published *Gateway to Canada* in 1984 and, with Rose Masson Dompierre, *Eyewitness Grosse Isle 1847* in 1995. “Grosse Île is the biggest part of what I’ve done,”



Marianna O’Gallagher

Marianna acknowledges. She is eager to share every tidbit of information she acquires and is constantly in demand as a lecturer at historical, genealogical and cultural conferences in Quebec (English and French), Eastern Canada, and the United States. She has been to Ireland ten times and, in 1999, was honoured in Nenagh, Tipperary, for her work in the development of Grosse Île as a national historic site and for making the story of Grosse Île known in Ireland.

Marianna has written numerous articles for a variety of professional journals and other publications. She is particularly interested in the orphans of Grosse Île and their adoptions by French Canadian families. At the same time, however, she does not want to leave the impression that the Irish arrived here only during the Famine. “There were Irish soldiers in the French armies serving in New France,” she wrote in *The Shamrock Trail* which she published in 1997 for the Irish Summer in Quebec City commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Irish Famine. This little book offers three walking tours of Old Quebec to discover the traces of the institutions that the Irish built for themselves.

Marianna is called on regularly for radio and television interviews here and in Ireland and even in France. She has made herself available to amateur genealogists and has often succeeded in connecting them to far-flung and long-lost relatives. She is a founding member of Irish Heritage Quebec, a family history and genealogical society in Quebec City with licensed tour guides. For several years, Marianna gave in-service lectures to the guides on Grosse Île “to give them a sense of pilgrimage.” In other words, she never stops.

St. Patrick’s Society is proud to be counted among the many organizations which have already paid tribute to Marianna. She was appointed Chevalier de l’Ordre national du Québec in 1998, named to the Order of Canada in 2002, recognized by the Canadian Association for Irish Studies in 1995 and 2001 and by the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network in 2003, among others.

Marianna’s contributions are too numerous to mention. Suffice it to say that the Irish in Quebec will never be forgotten thanks to Marianna.



Plans to celebrate the 175th anniversary now under way

By Andrea Bobkiewicz

This year is shaping up to be a most significant one in the history of St. Patrick's Society. It marks the 175th year that St. Patrick's Society of Montreal's annual luncheon has been held – the longest-running event in our history. Although our actual anniversary will be March 17th, 2009, we have decided to bookend this occasion and get the festivities started during the present season – 2008.

The event Chairs have generously allowed the 175th Anniversary Committee to add some flavour of the upcoming celebration to each of their events. At the first of these, the Annual Charity Ball, which will be held on March 7th, 2008, at the Marriott Château Champlain Hotel, a unique approach has been created this year. There will be no one individual Patron, but instead, all St. Patrick's Society members have been named to the Patron's Chair for this 175th celebration.

The following weekend at the Parade on March 16th, 2008, we will have five horse-drawn calèches to celebrate the beginning of the 175th anniversary, as well as our walking contingent wearing the traditional top hats.

WANTED

Please check your basements, attics, or wherever you keep family memorabilia. St. Patrick's Society is anxious to borrow artifacts relating to your Irish heritage. These could be photographs, letters, books, post cards, boat tickets, birth, marriage and/or death certificates, or a host of other items. If you are able to provide anything of interest, they would be on loan to the McCord Museum for the duration of the Irish exhibition. Be assured that great care would be taken with these items.

As an incentive to help make this a memorable year, a \$10.00 discount is being offered to members on both the tickets for the Ball and the Luncheon. Also, we are planning to launch the St. Patrick's Society pins this year (beginning with the Ball attendees) to be distributed to our members at any upcoming activities that involve them.

These are big changes from past years and we look forward to a strong turnout at each event. The theme will run through all the events for the balance of this year and into 2009 until the Irish exhibition opens at the McCord Museum in March 2009.

It should be mentioned that the other co-sponsor of the Irish exhibition is the **Irish Protestant Benevolent Society of Montreal**. This is indicative of the mutual co-operation that both societies now enjoy. The exhibition will run from March 2009 to the end of January 2010.

Meanwhile, join us in celebrating each event during this year! Tickets are available through the St. Patrick's Society office; please call Erin Matheson at (514) 481-1346.



Charest (cont.)

for that brief, five-month term. The general election was a rout of the PC party with only two members being re-elected, Jean Charest and Elsie Wayne. Four years later, in 1997, the party had 20 representatives in parliament, but for Charest this was a big disappointment.

In April 1998, Quebec Anglophones were still in shock after coming so close to losing the referendum. The Quebec Liberal Party needed a dynamic leader, someone who could defeat the sovereignist Parti Québécois government. It was at this time that Charest was persuaded to abandon federal politics, change parties and run for election in his home province. Despite receiving more votes than the PQ, the Quebec Liberals won fewer seats and stayed in opposition until 2003 when Charest led them to victory and formed a majority government. Today, as a result of last year's election, the Liberals are now the first minority government in Quebec since 1878.

As premier, Jean Charest has had to fight many battles with labour unions and discontented students. The merger/demerger issue became a nightmare both for him and Quebecers in general. The past five years have not been easy for him or for his party and although he gained support because of his opposition

to the federal government's resolve to opt out of the Kyoto protocol, his own decision to permit the building of condos in the Mount Orford parking lot, caused dissension in his own party and the resignation of the former Minister of the Environment, Thomas Mulcair. Interestingly, Mulcair has paralleled Charest's actions in reverse by leaving provincial politics and joining the federal NDP. Despite the setbacks, Charest is to be complimented on what he has done for this province. Housing starts have improved, and the economy as a whole seems to be in an upswing.

A committed Quebecer, Charest campaigned during the 1997 election in favour of Quebec becoming a distinct society. In recent years, Charest has also gained more international recognition for Quebec by obtaining a place for the province at UNESCO, the cultural branch of the United Nations.

To have accomplished so much before reaching his fiftieth birthday is highly commendable. We hope that he, his wife Michèle Dionne and their three children, Amelie, Antoine and Alexandra, will celebrate our province's national holiday in a very special way on June 24th. St. Patrick's Society is honoured that Premier Charest will be the Guest Speaker at the 2008 luncheon.



One of Canada's finest movie producers to be Guest of Honour at the SPS Ball 2008

By Anne Forrest

In the March 2007 issue of *NUAcht*, Ned Eustace wrote a comprehensive profile of Kevin Tierney, who on March 7th of this year will be the Guest of Honour at the St. Patrick's Society Ball. To quote Ned, Kevin had "become a presence" in his life, and after reading about the accomplishments of this talented Montrealer, I believe Kevin Tierney has become a presence in the lives of many. No stranger to the Montreal Irish Community, for many years Kevin has been an influential member of Cine Gael which has benefitted from his generous support in its efforts to present obscure Irish films and introduce distinguished guests from the movie industry.

A proud holder of an Irish passport, Kevin was born at St. Mary's Hospital on August 27th, 1950, baptized at St. Roch's and raised in Park Extension. His father's grandparents had emigrated from Co. Armagh many years previously, and in 1929, when his mother was nine, her family – herself, three brothers and their parents – emigrated from Ardglasson, Co. Meath to Montreal.

Kevin studied in Montreal earning degrees from Sir George Williams and McGill, and a diploma in communications studies at Concordia in the '70s. His first visit to Ireland was in 1970 and two years later, with the intention of settling over there, he went back and bought a little house in Ardglasson next door to one that his grandfather had owned. However, in this pre-Celtic Tiger period, job opportunities were few and his plan backfired. He returned to Canada but held on to the house for almost 35 years. A wise move! This was fortunate for us too in that after teaching both here and in China, Kevin ventured into the movie business, later entering into partnership with Roch Demers before ultimately establishing his own company, Park Ex Pictures Inc.

Best known for being the producer and co-writer of *Bon Cop, Bad Cop* (2006), the highest grossing movie ever made in Canada, Kevin has an outstanding list of accomplishments. His TV productions have been nominated for 11 Emmys and 12 Geminis and most recently *One Dead Indian* (2006) was nominated for Best TV Movie. Other notable productions include *Varian's War* (2001) a UK co-production; *Choice: The Henry Morgentaler Story* (2003); *Twist* (2003), a feature film – an official selection at the Venice, Toronto and Rotterdam Film Festivals – written and directed by his son, Jacob; *More Tales of the City* (1998) and *P.T. Barnum* (1999), both nominated for Emmy Best Mini-Series Awards; and *Bonanno: a Godfather's Story* (1999) which aired on the Global and TVA networks.

His latest work, *Serveuses demandées*, his first French-language feature, written and directed by Concordia professor, Guylaine Dionne, will be in theatres this fall. And when he attends the Ball in early March, he will just be back from two weeks in Ireland, scouting locations for a new film that he is producing with partners in Ireland and Newfoundland, *Love and Savagery*, a powerful story of unrequited love between an Irish novice and a Newfoundland poet. Written by Des Walsh and directed by John Smith, the same team behind the award-winning mini-series,




Photo: Lois Siegel

Kevin Tierney: proud to be Irish and Canadian


Random Passage and *The Boys of St. Vincent*, the movie begins shooting in Co. Clare for two weeks on March 31st, followed by four weeks of shooting in St. John's, Newfoundland.

As she will be in Brazil on a Social Justice trip with a group of her students from Royal West Academy, Kevin's wife, Terry, won't be able to accompany him at the Ball. Nor will his daughter Brigid (22) be there as she has just begun an exchange semester at the University of Capetown. However, in attendance will be son Jacob (28), a Montreal filmmaker, whose second feature film, *The Trostsky*, will be produced by Kevin in August of this year.

St. Patrick's Society is delighted that Kevin Tierney will be the Guest of Honour at the Ball on March 7th. 

Everyone asked to chair the Patron's Fund

In honour of its 175th Anniversary, all members of St. Patrick's Society are being invited to "Chair the Patron's Fund." The money raised this year will be donated to two specific charities: Benedict Labre House and the Montreal General Hospital Foundation (Palliative Care Unit). All members are encouraged to give generously to these two worthy causes.

Please contact Erin Matheson at (514) 481-1346 for more information and to find out how you can make your contributions. 

UIS names its 2008 Parade Officials

Grand Marshal



Photo: Anne Forrest

John Meaney

Proud of his Irish ancestry which stems from the southern part of Ireland on his father's side, John Meaney is the 2008 Grand Marshal.

John was first elected to Kirkland City Council in 1975 which he left in 1990 to become the Assistant Director of Public Works. In 1993 he successfully ran for Mayor, a position that he holds to this day. Mayor Meaney presently serves on the Montreal Urban Community's Conseil des Arts, the Montreal Region Waste Management Board, the MUC Environment Commission and the West Island Business Development Commission. He is also a member of the Conference of Suburban town Chairmen.

Each year, as Mayor of Kirkland, John has hosted a reception for the Irish Community, honouring the Parade officials and the Queen and Court of the Parade. It is his turn to be honoured this year!

John is married to Evelyn and they have three daughters, Colleen, Sharon and Laurie.

Chief Reviewing Officer



Photo: Anne Forrest

James Barrière

James (Jim) was born of an Irish mother and French-Canadian father in Cantic, Quebec, a small town near the Canada/USA border. He entered the business world as a clerk at Blackpool Custom Brokerage and, except for a two-year stint in the United States Marine Corps., has spent almost 50 years in the business. He has been President of BGL Brokerage since 1978.

In 1987 he was named Irishman of the Year and in 1999 he served as Grand Marshal of the St. Patrick's Parade which he has supported financially for many years.

Jim is a member of the Montreal Board of Trade, the Ireland-Canada Chamber of Commerce, and is the former Director of the Canadian Society of Custom Brokers. An avid golfer, Jim is a member of two Montreal area golf clubs. He is also a hockey patron and has a great passion for handball, having been directly involved in organized tournaments for many years. In 1990, a Foundation bearing his name was established to help the underprivileged of Montreal from which more than \$1,000,000 has been distributed.

2008 Simon McDonaugh Humanitarian Award

Brian Dowd is the recipient of the 2008 Simon McDonaugh Humanitarian Award in recognition of his generous contribution to the community throughout his lifetime. Simon McDonaugh was someone who never refused a helping hand to anyone in need and Brian exemplifies what Simon represented.

Brian's Irish heritage stems from his maternal grandfather, James McLaughlin, who was born in 1889 in Newtown Cunningham, Co. Donegal, Ireland, and came to Montreal at a very young age. Now retired from the educational field, his grandson, Brian, taught in both elementary and high schools and later became a principal.



Photo: courtesy UIS

Brian Dowd

A family man, Brian, was the community father, piling the neighbourhood kids into his car and taking them here and there to various events. His happy disposition and generous nature are well known and greatly appreciated. Volunteering has always been part of his life and he spent many years at Father Dowd Home and working for Meals on Wheels in the West Island. He also did volunteer work at Benedict Labre House. Today, Brian is one of the most appreciated workers at St. Patrick's Soup Kitchen.

He is married to Carole McGivern and is the father of Kenneth, Mark, and the late Alison.

2008 Parade Queen and Court



Charlene O'Sullivan (23)

Co. Armagh:

Charlene works for an international freight-forwarding company as a logistics and dispatch coordinator.



Briana Yerbury (19)

Co. Kilkenny:

Briana is taking a BA degree in History and Political Science at McGill. She would like to be a lawyer and work for the U. N. In her spare time she is an avid rugby player.



Jennifer Trainor (18)

Co. Cork:

Jennifer is in her first year of nursing at John Abbott and plans to attend McGill and become a nurse/practitioner.



Monica Peters (20)

Co. Galway:

Monica is studying psychology at Concordia. She hopes to work in schools helping children with disabilities.



Sarah Devaney-Pinsonnault (24)

Co. Kilkenny:

Sarah attends the Université de Montréal where she is studying law. Her objective is to be a lawyer or diplomat, ultimately in the field of politics.

Photos: courtesy UIS

2008 Liam Daly Heritage Award Winner

Born and raised in Verdun, Elizabeth Quinn's heritage on both sides is from Counties Mayo and Tipperary, Ireland. After graduating from the Notre Dame Secretarial School (the Mother House), she obtained a BEd from McGill University, and continued her studies at Concordia and the University of Montreal.

Elizabeth worked in the commercial field for six years before becoming an elementary teacher for 32 years. Since her retirement in 1997, she embarked on a career in the printing industry and presently holds the position of Vice President of Charles Boulanger (2000) Inc.



Elizabeth Quinn

Photo: Anne Forrest

As a volunteer, Elizabeth has held the positions of Entertainment Chair, Corresponding Secretary, Vice President and President of the UIS and is a part of the organizing committee of the St. Patrick's Parade and the Selection of the Parade Queen and Court. She is currently President of the Board of Directors of Good Shepherd Community Centre and a member of both St. Patrick's Society and Innisfail Social and Sports Club.

Since 1989, Elizabeth has shared her life-long talent as a singer with the UIS entertainment group, providing enjoyment to many seniors in various facilities throughout the Island of Montreal.



Selection evening an all-round success

By Martina McLean

On February 2, 2008, the UIS held the 53rd Annual Queen's Selection Evening at Buffet Sorrento in preparation for the 184th Montreal St. Patrick's Day Parade, scheduled for March 16th, the oldest parade in North America and the oldest in continuity globally, older than my native Dublin. The new Queen and her Court were selected by a panel of seven judges, an event considered to officially start the "Irish season" in Montreal, which includes the St. Patrick's Ball, the St. Patrick's Luncheon and the naming of "Irishman of the Year."

What a grand evening we were treated to! Aimed at preserving and promoting the Irish Culture in Montreal, the evening's programme also acts as a showcase for the manifold Irish art skills, reflecting great talent across the broad demographics of the Montreal Irish population. Although we got off to a late start to enable the some 700-strong audience be seated in the ballroom having battled through the snow for a parking spot, Lori Graham, the CTV weather lady herself, and Emcee for the evening kept the proceedings moving along. The public speaking programme and awards were interspersed with acts including the Allion Elementary School Choir from LaSalle, with two wonderful soloists, Matthew, six, and his equally talented brother Anthony Licursi, 12, who wowed the audience with personalities to match their charming and uplifting voices; the energetic and ever graceful, smiling Bernadette Short Celtic Grace Dancers; Francis Baddeley who sang both Ireland's and Canada's National Anthems; Terry Clahane, accomplished accompanist; Jennifer Nolan-Arditi who had a sneaky way to get a well-deserved standing ovation when she asked us to stand and join in with her song of love; the sweet strains of Fr. McEntee's treat "Fancy, Nancy Clancy, give me your answer do"; quirky Heidi Foss from the "Comedy Nest" and last but not least "St. Gabriel's Choir."

The young women were encouraged by a very appreciative audience who found it hard to narrow the selection from the 25 in the preliminary round to the ten semi-finalists and to the final Court of five – the Queen and her Princesses. No language can express how impressed I was with the character calibre of these 25 young women. To have the courage to use a microphone and speak in front of some 700 people at their ages is a feat in and of itself. To speak with eloquence, idealism, knowledge and preparation demonstrates strength that comes from the wealth of experience already gained through their involvement in sport and volunteering and their commitment to their educational development, supported by the values inherited from their fine families.

It was an honour and a privilege to witness, although not an easy task for a judge. The Preliminaries and Semi-Finals were particularly difficult to judge in the four categories of stature,

public speaking ability, self portrait/response and personality, as all the young women were very well rehearsed and seemed quite comfortable with public speaking. The finals were judged on the same categories only this time, the five young ladies asked their choice of judge for a question and were required to reply impromptu without any time to prepare a distinct opening, body and conclusion. What an excellent way to prepare these ladies for the positions they will perform over the coming weeks of Irish festivities when the media will interview them on a variety of topics related to being Irish.

Considering the humble beginnings of this entertaining evening, when, in 1956, the first Montreal Parade Queen was chosen on the basis of applause for five contestants, this modern event definitely reflects the esteem in which we hold women today and they and I salute the UIS for creating an occasion for young women to shine. It did not surprise me, then, that half of the semi-finalists chose the question about the importance of the two Irish women from the "Famous Five" on Parliament Hill, Ottawa.

To my mind, this "Selection Evening, Parade and Court, 2008" merits another title, as while it certainly throws the spotlight on the young females of our Irish community and named the selected Grand Marshal, and the 2008 Chief Reviewing Officer of the St. Patrick's Day Parade, it also recognizes the winners of the prestigious 2008 Liam Daly Heritage Award and the 2008 Simon McDonagh Humanitarian Award.

Photo: courtesy UIS



Future singing sensation: Matthew Licursi

A Libran and a Toastmaster, with an interest in inclusion, I felt I'd like to see some more balance and I have an idea which the young men in our community might enjoy. What about choosing a St. Patrick for the parade – a public speaking contest for young, single men in our community? Perhaps this is something that St. Patrick's Society might adopt.

If you've never been to this evening, I highly recommend it as it:

- Offers an annual female public speaking competition that ranks among the top competitions in the world;
- Provides the opportunity and motivation for people of Irish descent to attend and join in the energy and excitement of the kick-off for the "Irish season" celebrations;
- Projects, among the larger Montreal community, an accurate image of Ireland as a creative, professional and sophisticated country.

All the contestants are winners, wholesomely beautiful promises of what lies ahead for the Irish community – Irish beauties with brain power, sophistication and social conscience manifested

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Robert (Robin) Burns: Irishman of 2008

By Anne Forrest

No stranger to the Montreal Irish community, Robert (Robin) Burns, is proud to be the 2008 Irishman of the Year. In 2000, following in the footsteps of his father and uncles, who were Parade Marshals, he was thrilled to have been chosen as the St. Patrick's Day Parade Grand Marshal, but this latest accolade gives him even greater pleasure.

Robin values his Irish roots. His paternal and maternal grandparents hailed from Co. Cork and immigrated to Canada during the potato famine with his father's family settling in Granby and his mother's family, the Doyles, in Levis. Irish Montrealers will remember his uncle, Bill Doyle, who served as the highly respected organist of St. Patrick's Basilica for 45 years.

Born in 1946 and raised in N.D.G., Robin married his high school sweetheart, Frances Crowdis, whose heritage is a mixture of Irish, Welsh and Canadian. Together they raised three children, Tracey, Randy and Todd, whose birthdays, coincidentally, are within two days of each other – February 8th and February 10th. Nine grandchildren, whom Robin says are his greatest gift, complete the Burns family.

Recruited by the Junior Canadians where he played under coach Scotty Bowman, Robin entered the world of professional hockey in 1967 and played left wing for the Pittsburgh Penguins and the Kansas City Scouts.



Robert (Robin) Burns

Photo: Anne Forrest

Following this direct involvement with the sport, Robin started and became president of his first company, Micron, which produced hockey skates. Then, in the early '80s, he began ITECH, another sporting goods manufacturer, which, after its humble beginnings in Robin's basement, ended up twenty years later with 300 employees and ranked third in the world in its field. Although Robin sold ITECH in 2004, he retained a 10% share in the company.

Always anxious to assist the less fortunate, Robin has served on the boards of Youth for Christ/Youth Unlimited and the West Island Executives Available. He also helped to organize the Walk of Courage, raising half a million dollars for prostate cancer research. His contributions to other charities are remarkable: organizing an All-Star Raffle and Cocktail fundraiser for the Tony Proudfoot Fund in support of the fight against ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis); co-chairing the Shriners' Annual Sports Celebrity Dinner; organizing the Rotary Club's Celebrity Golf Classic at Mt. Tremblant; and guest-speaking at many golf fundraisers.

Firmly believing in the importance of family and friends, this ever-smiling, gregarious man claims that the Irish are the finest people in the world. Robin Burns is living proof of this!



Erin Sports hosts a warm-up party before the March breakfast

By Anne Forrest

On Friday, February 8th, I was privileged to attend the Erin Sports' annual pre-sashing party in the club's premises on Hickson in Verdun. A record turnout of 130 people enjoyed an evening that was interspersed with good food and drink, Irish music, and a few speeches.

The evening's special guests were the newly crowned St. Patrick's Parade Queen, Briana Yerbury and the four princesses, Sarah Devaney-Pinsonnault, Monica Peters, Charlene O'Sullivan, and Jennifer Trainor. Notable Montrealers who were there for the fun were Aislin, Christine Long and Sean Ryan (CTV), and Gerry McGrath (coach of the Concordia Stingers who, to my eye, is a Michael Caine look-alike) among others.

After welcoming everyone, Barry Holdbrook, President of Erin Sports, told us that the organization had held a Christmas party for 115 children in that very room and had provided 60 single parents with food baskets. Entertaining large groups is obviously something that is done well by these men (yes, there are no women members!). Barry next introduced the presidents of some of the sister societies: Victor Boyle (AOH); Mary McDaid (SPS); Brian Mitchell (Irish Protestant Benevolent Society); Paul Loftus (ICCC); Marlene Demers (UIS); and John Gilroy (Innisfail).

Singing was one of the highlights of the evening. Lisa Forget, of *Les Miserables* fame, sang the familiar old favourites of the Irish community. She was joined on occasion by Francis Baddeley, Father McEntee (with good old "Fancy Nancy Clancy"), Elizabeth Quinn and even Michael Kenneally (but he shouldn't give up his day job!). Terry Clahane was the tireless accompanist.

The reason we were at this party was to honour the 2008 Irishman of the Year, Robert (Robin) Burns, who was accompanied by many of his family. Robin delivered a moving and emotional speech in which he expressed the extreme pride he felt at being Irish and being selected for this great honour. Before the sash was placed over his shoulders by Dennis Dougherty (2007 honoree), a large contingent of former Irishmen of the Year posed for their annual photo. A finer-looking group of men you couldn't find anywhere!

I congratulate Erin Sports on a most entertaining evening and wish them well with their next big event, the Irishman of the Year Breakfast which will take place in Windsor Station on March 8th. If it's as much fun as the pre-sashing party, I suggest you buy your tickets soon!



Cine Gael's season gets off to a great start

By Dana Hearne

We are delighted our sixteenth season got off to such an impressive start and judging by our audience's response to *Garage* and *Cre na Cille* these two films were much appreciated. The prize-winning film *Garage* showcased what one commentator described as "the singular vision of this odd film-making partnership" (Director Lenny Abrahamson and writer Mark O'Halloran). It also introduced us to the exceptional acting talent of Pat Shortt who so poignantly captured the uneasy balance between tragedy and comedy that characterizes the film. Gazette film critic, John Griffin, introduced the film and our 16th season with humour, as well as with praise for Cine Gael's excellent track record in bringing the best of Irish film to our annual festival. *Cre na Cille*, Director Robert Quinn's film based on Mairtin O Cadhain's celebrated Irish novel of the same name, was an all too-rare and much-appreciated opportunity to experience something of the Gaelic literary tradition. Set in the Connemara landscape, this is a darkly humorous tale of an intense jealousy and hatred between two sisters which continues beyond the grave. Martina Branagan with her knowledge of O Cadhain's work and her knowledge of the Irish language was an excellent presenter for this film.

Coming up on February 29th is Director Tony Herbert's feature film debut, *Speed Dating*, a romantic comedy starring Hugh O'Connor (whom you may recognize from his roles in *Bloom* and also in *The Boy From Mercury*). Looking for romance can be an activity fraught with danger!

Our weekend special (Friday March 28th and Saturday, March 29th) complete with guest Director and reception on Saturday at McKibbins is now finalized. Thanks to Kevin Tierney, filmmaker Mary McGuckian has agreed to be our guest for the weekend. McGuckian has a new trilogy of films – *Rag Tale* and *Intervention* and the third will be released at the end of February. We will screen a mix of these new films along with one or two of her earlier features.

Our evening of award-winning Irish short films on Friday, April 4th, selected by Kester Dyer (ably assisted by Heather Macdougall) is ready and includes a mixture of themes from Ireland North and South. Some are winners of several awards,

one was the official selection at Sundance, one was nominated for an Oscar. The short film genre does not get the recognition it ought to get, but it is as important as the short story is in the world of literature. It is always one of our favourite evenings at Cine Gael. This event will be introduced by Heather Macdougall, a doctoral student at Concordia whose research focuses on policies and practices in Irish-language filmmaking.

On Friday, April 18th, we will be screening Director Niall Heery's *Small Engine Repair* described by one critic as "a little gem, beautifully paced and filmed." This is the story of an aspiring country singer who badly needs a break to get him out of his small-town loser life. Shades of *The Commitments* with a country and western spin.

Finally, we are thrilled to announce that we have been able to secure Director Tom Collins', by all accounts, superb movie *Kings* starring, among others, Colm Meaney, Brendan Conroy and Donal O'Kelly. It is the story of five men who emigrated from the west of Ireland 25 years previously, promising to return home rich and successful. But things don't always work out the way you might hope! Adapted from Jimmy Murphy's acclaimed play *Kings of Kilburn High Road*, *Kings* is the first bilingual feature film to be produced in Ireland. It has received rave reviews since its first screening at the Galway Film Fleadh last summer and was Ireland's official nomination for the Oscars in the foreign language film category this year.

As always we will end the season with our usual flourish at a reception in Concordia's Faculty club in the Hall Building.

Membership Details:

Cine Gael now has a new all-inclusive membership rate. The Cine Gael Committee has voted to change the membership fee to \$60 annually to include ALL Cine Gael functions, i.e. all films in the series; opening reception; closing reception; film weekend; and member appreciation evening at Hurley's Irish Pub. The price for individual films is \$7.00.

All screenings take place at De Sève Cinema, Concordia University, 1400 de Maisonneuve West, Montreal at 7:15 p.m.. For more information consult: www.cinegaelmontreal.com

Selection (cont.)

through their commitment to higher education and their involvement in making the world a better place through their volunteering activities.

My heartiest congratulations to the 2008 Royal Court. May you enjoy your time as ambassadors for the Montreal Irish Community's St. Patrick's Day Parade, courtesy of the generous organizational skills of the United Irish Societies.

Thank you, Colleen Murphy, for inviting me to be a judge, for placing me beside Fr. John Walsh whose company I enjoyed throughout, and to you and your team for a most enjoyable Saturday evening.



Footnote

Cré na Cille – Graveyard Clay

On February 15th, Cine Gael treated its audience to *Cré na Cille*. First aired on TG4, the Irish TV station, on St. Stephen's Day/Boxing Day 2007, we're pleased to say that it is still available for viewing, albeit on a smaller screen on the TG4 TV website with English subtitles: www.tg4.tv/default.aspx. When you reach this page, choose "Drama – Cartlann" on the left and scroll down to *Cré na Cille* on the right and press "play." So, if you missed the Cine Gael screening or would simply like to view the film again, visit this link soon as we're not sure how much longer it will be available.



Gaeltacht Cheanada – making for the stars

By Martina McLean

“Cé a déarfadh é, tá Gaeltacht i gCeanada” is how the Irish TV station, TG4 announcer introduced the documentary “Gaeltacht Cheanada” filmed last year on location near Kingston in Canada and at “Oideas Gael” in Donegal.

The documentary focuses on Aralt Mac Giolla Chainnigh, professor at Kingston Military College, who spends his time looking at the stars during the day and making for the stars with the unrelenting mission of developing the *Gaeltacht* in Kingston.


No doubt, we are provided with insights into the personal motivation of the man whose forbears hailed from Sligo during the Great Famine, his determination to learn the language by osmosis as well as through classroom tuition in Donegal, his love of Irish culture at all levels and particularly music. We also learn that it appears to be quite fortuitous for Aralt to be near his in-laws who are proficient in the Irish language and having the opportunity to speak with his wife too.

Against the backdrop of a vast green field that was once wild and full of stones, the pride of the North Americans is obvious in the various snippets of interviews chosen. With the support of the locals in Kingston and almost because of the strong English influence there, it is clear that it is possible to lead Irish lives in Kingston and build on the Irish heritage in spite of being so very far from “home.”

This documentary leaves us with the distinct impression that Liam Ó Cuinneagáin, *Oideas Gael*, is right. Aralt is the leader who will make the vision a reality, the *Gaeltacht* will be achieved because of this wonderful, intelligent and diligent man, who gives 100% to what he's involved with. Furthermore, there's no doubt that it's the international dimension that will really shift the tides of fortune of our native language. One day, who knows, Aralt's grander vision that people of Irish descent will buy other sites like “Gaeltacht Cheanada” in other areas of Canada and North America might be realized.



Aralt Mac Giolla Chainnigh

We're delighted to announce that the TG4 documentary film with English subtitles may be viewed at: www.tg4.tv/channels/FaisneasArchive.aspx. On reaching this page, choose “Fáisnéis – Cartlann” and scroll down to “Gaeltacht Cheanada.” 

St. Patrick's Society celebrates Christmas

Our Christmas Concert raised over \$7,000 for our various causes, despite the fact that a snowstorm prevented some people from getting to Loyola that evening. It was a most enjoyable concert, emceed by CJAD's Andrew Carter and featuring the Le Chœur des enfants de Montréal under the direction of Iwan Edwards, the Bernadette Short Irish Dancers, and the Greater Montreal Chorus. Our sincere thanks to Loyola High School for its kind hospitality and the benefits of a beautiful auditorium.

Over 100 people attended the reception and, from the excellent feedback we received, it was a great success!



Christmas Concert: The Bernadette Short Irish Dancers take a well-deserved bow



Past Presidents: Gus O' Gorman, Patrick Wickham, Lynn Lonergan Doyle & Bill Wilson (with D'Arcy McGee)



Sandy McDonaugh, Erin Matheson, Doris Rooney, and Mary McDaid

Montreal Idle – the surprise competition

By Martina McLean

You all know the rules of the game for *Canadian Idol*. Well, what if I told you that *Montreal Idle* recently proclaimed a 92-year old the winner and he didn't even have to sing a single note? You'd say I was barmy, wouldn't you? Well, anything can happen on stage, when reality is suspended for a good cause.

From the 6-10 January 2008, thanks to the Saidye Bronfman Theatre and the Hudson Theatre Group, a dynamic, multi-talented cast of all ages, Infinitheatre staged another fundraiser that surprised its audience. These annual fundraisers are produced and performed to spawn new plays and help young Quebec playwrights by building up the coffers to subsidize budding writers.

This year the mould was broken in many ways as the audience was treated to a musical spoof, instead of a detective or more serious play, produced by Randy Davis and written by Tex Dawson who used to write shows for the "Fossils Group." The Saidye Bronfman was used as the venue during off-peak times whereas plays are usually performed at the old public bath on St. Dominique in the Plateau. This time, our very own Gus Ó Gormáin played a comic 92-year old, frolicking around the stage with a 25-year old well-endowed teaser caregiver who pushes him around in a wheelchair while he promotes the "B-Alice" drug for making a new virile man of him. For the second year in a row, he played alongside Montreale Pam Dunne, his "younger" wife and owner of the TV station hosting the *Montreal Idle* competition. Shame on you, doctor, and you winning the coveted title and all!

This is the fifth year for our respected Irish doctor and budding thespian to participate with Infinitheatre and let it be noted that it's hard for him to move far from the medical field on

or off the stage. Last year he played an old man with amnesia married to Pam again and in 2004 and 2005, he played his own medical self in Agatha Christie's *Appointment with Death* and *And then there were none*. It was only in 2006 that he played a lord with a frightful English accent in *The Hollow*.



Gus Ó Gormáin and Martina McLean at "Gaeltacht Cheanada" 2007

Infinitheatre would love a permanent home and hopes to be able to convince the City to lease the public bath on a long-term basis as it does to other non-profit organizations. A potentially wonderful theatre venue, this lease would encourage some investments to be made in better seating for the audience that will benefit from mainly English and sometimes bilingual plays penned by the likes of Nicholas Billon who has been at Stratford, Ontario for the past two years and whose plays were first read at the public bath thanks to Infinitheatre.

If you'd like to help to foster the theatrical arts here in Montreal, please contact Gus directly: ogorman@sympatico.ca.

Gus Ó Gormáin was the founder of NUAcht and first co-editor together with Pádraig Ó Laighin. He was sole editor for the next 12 issues until he became President of SPS in 1991 when he handed over the job to Michael Callaghan.



Recognition for AOH Canada, finally!

By Victor Boyle

After years of separation from the AOH in the USA, the AOH in Canada re-established contact with the AOH Board of Erin in Ireland.

In August 2007, Brother Jack Meehan, the National AOH President in the United States, joined the Pilgrimage to Grosse Île where he recognized the AOH in Canada as being a distinct and equal Order. He presented AOH with a plaque from the AOH Brothers in the United States in recognition of Canada's ongoing dedication to the Order and its faithful yearly pilgrimages to Grosse Île. In addition, a new federal Charter was created in the name of The Ancient Order of Hibernians in Canada instead of The Ancient Order of Hibernians in America.

Later, in November 2007, the Canadian National Board of the AOH was invited to Boston to participate in the National President's dinner. Board members of the Canadian society attended and met with the AOH National President from

Ireland, Jim Crossan. It was at this event that Canada's national board was officially recognized by both the United States and Ireland.

AOH Canada was presented with a crystal plaque from the Board of Erin and in return presented both national presidents with Shadow Boxes containing a piece of the last remaining fever shed from Grosse Île.

An agreement is now in place to have AOH artifacts on sale at the Gift Shop on Grosse Île. Both national presidents have agreed to participate in the three-day convention in Quebec City rededicating the Celtic Cross on Grosse Île as part of its 100th anniversary in 2009.

Meanwhile contact has been established with the AOH in both Australia and New Zealand and plans are under way to form an International Board of AOH.



What's new at the Centre for Canadian Irish Studies

By Kester Dyer

Montreal's Irish Protestant Benevolent Society sponsors annual Irish public lecture series

The Irish Protestant Benevolent Society has been a strong supporter in the development of Canadian Irish Studies. Its members generously contributed \$25,000 to create the Matthew Hamilton Gault Scholarship which now provides \$1,250.00 annually to a student who excels in Canadian Irish Studies. In addition, in 2006, the Irish Protestant Benevolent Society provided \$10,000.00 to establish a second scholarship, to be known as "The Irish Protestant Benevolent Society 150th Anniversary Scholarship." It is the hope of Society members that this endowment can be increased in the future.

The Irish Protestant Benevolent Society Lecture in Canadian Irish Studies will provide an opportunity to understand the history and culture of Anglo-Ireland and the enormous contribution and pervasive influence of Irish Protestants in the development of Canada. For example, in nineteenth-century Ontario, Irish Protestants were the largest group of immigrants, and they played a central role in the development of agriculture, the establishment of towns, the evolution of the economy, as well as in the political, social and cultural life of the province. The details of this story have been largely untold and it is hoped that this new lecture series will begin to cast light on this central thread in Irish and Irish-Canadian histories.

Renowned scholar, Kerby Miller, Professor of Irish History at the University of Missouri, will give an inaugural lecture on Monday, June 2nd. His study, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Exodus to North America* is the definitive work in the field, and he has also written or edited *Out of Ireland: The Story of Irish Emigration to America*, *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan: Letters and Memoirs from Colonial and Revolutionary America, 1675-1815*, and *Irish Popular Culture: 1650-1815*. Contact the Centre for Canadian Irish Studies for further information.

Accomplished musician/distinguished scholar to teach exciting early summer course

From the Celts to Riverdance: a history of traditional Irish music

This course will introduce students to the instruments, performance settings and regional styles within the Irish music tradition. No prior knowledge of Irish traditional music is necessary, and every effort will be made to invite visiting performers to present their music, song and dance in the classroom as part of this program. Likewise, the instructor, Dr. Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin will perform many of the illustrated classroom extracts throughout the programme.

A fourth generation musician and a native of Co. Clare, Dr. Ó hAllmhuráin holds five World Championship Irish music titles: as a concertina player, uilleann piper, and as a member of the renowned Kilfenora Céilí Band, the oldest traditional dance band in Ireland. As a scholar, Professor Ó hAllmhuráin is an authority on Irish traditional music and its cultural history in Ireland and throughout the Irish diaspora. With undergraduate and master degrees from University College Cork and Trinity

College Dublin, Ó hAllmhuráin received his doctorate in Social Anthropology and Ethnomusicology from Queen's University of Belfast, where he worked with the renowned European ethnomusicologist, Professor John Blacking. Fluent in Irish, French, and English, Ó hAllmhuráin's research is distinguished by his extensive use of original and cross-disciplinary historiographical and ethnomusicological source materials unavailable to most researchers. The course will be offered on Mondays and Wednesdays from 6.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. beginning April 30th until June 16th.

New courses on Irish Theatre

Early Twentieth Century Irish Plays I: Dramaturgy
Early Twentieth Century Irish Plays II: Scene Study

Two courses dealing with Irish drama will be offered in the coming academic year. In the fall, Early Twentieth Century Irish Plays will deal with three Irish plays written between 1900 and 1950, focusing on the history, politics, geography, society, economic and class structures, and moral and religious values of the period. Students will be provided with a systematic and practical approach to the dramaturgical analysis of a given play, so that its theatrical and contextual dimensions can be explored as fully as possible. This course will be offered in the fall semester, each Tuesday from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

In the winter semester, a more focused course will deal with specific scenes from the plays studied in the previous course, and students will undertake extended dramaturgical analyses of plays, characters and scenes, as well as learning the appropriate accents, and will rehearse extensively under the direction of the course instructor. The course will culminate in performance of the scenes in a studio space before an invited audience. The earlier course will be a prerequisite for this course and enrollment will be limited and require the instructor's permission. It will be offered each Thursday, 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

Study in Ireland this summer for credit

This custom-tailored course will allow you to study in Ireland in whatever subject interests you and receive credit for it at Concordia. So, if you are interested in Acting, Archaeology, Environment, Film, History, Folklore, Language, Literature or Music, you can work out a programme of study with a Concordia professor and carry out your studies in Ireland. For further information contact the Centre for Canadian Irish Studies. Students wishing to work in Ireland during their stay might consider the Student Work Abroad Program at www.swap.ca.

Bumper crop of courses for coming year

In the 2008-2009 academic year, The CCIS will coordinate nineteen courses in a wide range of subjects, beginning this summer and running through to April 2009. To get a full listing of these courses, contact the Centre for Canadian Irish Studies at (514) 848-8711.



Beannacht Dé ar d'anam, a chara!

By Moira T. Carley

A few simple words on his webpage told the world that the Irish poet-philosopher-author John O'Donohue died unexpectedly and peacefully in his sleep on the night of January 3rd while on holiday in France. At his funeral Mass in St. Patrick's Church, Fanore, Co. Clare, the celebrant described him as "priest, poet, prophet, philosopher, mystic and, as he often called himself, peasant of this valley." He was 53 years old. Born on a farm in the Burren country of North Clare, he later made his home in a small cottage in the solitude of the Connemara mountains. He spoke Irish as his native language. John travelled the world with the message that Celtic thought and imagination offer nourishment for the spiritual hunger that permeates contemporary culture. In the last few years his calendar of events included retreats and workshops for general audiences as well as people in the corporate world on leadership, creativity and how to maintain the integrity of the individual within the system.

John O'Donohue earned degrees in philosophy and English Literature as well as a PhD in Philosophical Theology from the University of Tübingen in 1990. He was ordained and ministered for nineteen years before resigning from the Catholic priesthood.

His books are filled with the imagery of the landscape that shaped his Celtic mind and imagination and gave him the soul of a poet. He writes of cosmic loneliness and belonging; of learning how to become a midwife to the birth of the divine presence within; of the desperate need in our times to recognize how beauty (other than the "L'Oreal" type) transforms the imagination and sets free those eternal longings for the 'embrace of belonging that holds everything together.'

His published work includes: *Anam Cara* (1997) an international best-seller exploring the human desire for belonging and the gift of a soul friend to calm the primal restlessness; *Eternal Echoes* (1999) identifying the modern desire for 'a nest of belonging in which one is embraced, seen, and loved'; and *Beauty: The Invisible Embrace* (2005) invoking the compass of beauty by pointing the way to the Divine Presence in every aspect of creation. To open oneself to beauty in the natural world, in music, color, movement, imperfection and even in death, keeps the sensibility of the imagination from getting numb and heightens one's awareness of the invisible world which is so real to Celtic consciousness. CDs of readings from his books and of talks on Celtic Spirituality are available. (www.soundstrue.com) His last book, *Benedictus: A Book of Blessings* (2007) addresses crucial thresholds on life's journey such as birth, death, exile, addiction, and broken trust that call out for ritual blessings.



John O'Donohue (1954-2008)

The blessing of God on your soul, friend!

Here is an excerpt from his blessing "For Death":

That the silent presence of your death
Would call your life to attention,
Wake you up to how scarce your time is
And to the urgency to become free
And equal to the call of your destiny.
That you would gather yourself
And decide carefully
How you now can live
The life you would love
To look back on
From your deathbed.

When we heard of his unexpected death, those who knew him in life couldn't help but recall poignantly what we had learned from John O'Donohue about death and dying. He claimed that each birth is an awakening to the divine invisible presence in which we are immersed and death is our surrender to that same presence. Since death is a primary fact of the human journey, he said, "...keeping one's eye on it keeps you clean."

Last March, Patricia Murphy and I drove to Lenox, Massachusetts to take part in a weekend retreat on "The Beauty of the Celtic Mind." For two days we listened to John O'Donohue's lilting Irish voice accompanied by the trance-inducing Irish

harp music of Aine Minogue. "Beauty does not linger, it only visits. Yet beauty's visitation affects us and invites us into its rhythm, it calls us to feel, think and act beautifully in the world: to create and live a life that awakens the Beautiful."

As we left for home on Sunday, we were given a list of questions and advice to follow each question as if it were a lantern. "What seven thoughts shape your life? What seven feelings are dancing with the seven thoughts? Where is the centre? What is my current concept of God? How can I become truly aware of my great beauty? Or if you are Irish, do I have any clues to tell me I'm not so bad after all?"



On my first visit to Ireland in 1971, as my mother Margaret and I stood quietly before Kilglass lake in Roscommon near her home, I had an eerie feeling of being immersed in the world of my Celtic ancestors. "You never told me it was so beautiful!" I said. This experience of being seized by beauty at Kilglass Lough gave me a glimpse into the mystery of where I had come from and where I was going on my own life-journey to God. I have discovered a kinship with the ancient Celt who seemed to look at the world with open eyes – always seeing more and not less in nature, in the events of history, and in the mysterious unfolding of an individual human life.

Potato appeal takes on a whole new meaning

By Elizabeth Johnston

When you think about potatoes, what comes to mind?

For me, it's my grandmother peeling potatoes at the kitchen table. When she made perogies, the table would be piled high with spuds ready to be peeled, quartered, boiled, mashed with fried onions and cheese, then stuffed into little circles of dough.

As a child, I'd watch her peel so deftly I was sure she could do it in her sleep. The knife cut into the potato skin and lifted off thin strips as if they had wings. In my mind's eye, I can see her bent over her work with the intense concentration of an artist, and suddenly I understand why artist Joseph Beuys once said that even the act of peeling a potato can be considered a work of art.



Elizabeth Johnston (left) with staff and technicians of the Quechua Potato Park in Cuzco, Peru

That respect is obviously embraced by Van Gogh who painted a series of paintings depicting potato farmers. In his journal he wrote that he considered those paintings his best because they showed something real and tangible. This elevation of spud to star-status appealed to me because something as basic and fundamental to so many people's survival, and something that created so many memories like the one I have about my grandmother, ought to have a better position in our collective estimation.

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To be honest, I always felt the spud was the least majestic in the vegetable kingdom until I began the research for my book, *No Small Potatoes*. Having always identified with the underdog nature of the potato, I was thrilled that there was another way to look at this humble, yet amazing tuber.

Today the potato is the third most important crop worldwide, up from the fourth position just a few years ago. Having originated in Peru, the only place on earth where potatoes are indigenous, they're now found almost everywhere. Potatoes are even replacing some rice paddies in China.

Historically, King Henry VIII believed potatoes were an aphrodisiac; yet French peasants believed the potato caused the Black Plague. And while Marie Antoinette was heard saying, "Let them eat cake," her husband was implementing a plan involving the potato to save the starving masses. The ancient Peruvians practically worshipped the potato and even performed blood sacrifices to ensure bountiful harvests. What, I wondered, made the potato fall off its pedestal in one country and land on the couch in North America?

That curiosity triggered journeys that led me to people on Prince Edward Island, and in Peru, Hungary and Ireland. It was a privilege to meet these down-to-earth people. The result is a book that is a mash of potato history and lore, personal travelogue, and conversations with farmers, scientists and everyday people whose lives have been irrevocably shaped by the potato.



Elizabeth Johnston's book *No Small Potatoes* will be out in the Fall of 2008. If you'd like to be notified of the launch, you can sign up for her newsletter by going www.explore-the-possibilities.com.



NUACHT received this cute photo from Peter Behrens (winner of the Governor General's Award for Literature with his compelling novel, *The Law of Dreams*). Peter, whose work was reviewed in our September 2006 issue, was born and raised in Montreal. His two-year-old son, Henry, seen here, is walking the picket line outside Fox studios in Los Angeles on the day before the producers offered the screenwriters a contract.

Montreal Irish Rugby Football Club elects first woman president in 51 years!

After dusting off their sore bodies from a long 2007 season, the Montreal Irish Rugby Football Club kicked off their 2008 season with their annual AGM, held Jan. 9th.

Having run two very productive seasons for the Club, both on and off the field, Eric Hough stepped down as President, leaving the position up for grabs. The Irish are extremely proud to have voted in Jen Bridgeman as the first female president in the 51- year history of the MIRFC. Jen was one of the founding members of the 1st female Irish team 10 years ago, and still holds her position as the team's fly-half to this day. She brings an outstanding amount of enthusiasm and some new and interesting ideas to the position.



Jen Bridgeman with current Men's first team coach, Andy Plimer

The MIRFC was proud to have four men and six women represent it on the provincial squads, the Quebec Caribou in 2007. This is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the players and coaching staff. Following a shakeup of the divisions by the FRQ, the Irish are looking forward to a competitive 2008 season, again fielding two men's and two women's teams.

MIRFC invites you to support its teams as they make a run for the 2008 finals.

If you are interested in learning more about the Montreal Irish Rugby Football Club or in becoming a member, contact them at info@mirfc.ca or check out their website at www.mirfc.ca.



Don't miss the glorious "June 17th" – SPS annual golf tournament

Hey! Our 13th Annual St. Patrick's Charity Golf Tournament will take place on June 17th at the beautiful Bellevue Golf Course. As in the past, we are usually sold out a few weeks in advance, so if you are planning to attend, get your name in early by calling Erin Matheson at the St. Patrick's office (514-481-1346).

Last year's tournament was the most successful to date, raising nearly \$17,000.00 for the charitable works of the Society.

The cost per golfer is \$120.00. This includes green fee, golf cart, roast beef dinner and wine.

There is a substantial prize for each golfer, as well as 16 super prizes and four "super-super" prizes. All in all, we estimate that the value of these prizes approaches \$10,000.00 – all donated.

This is the time for members of the Irish community and their friends to get together and help support our charitable works.

Wayne Hogan claims that last year he shot a 68 – but he says that he did better on the back nine!

While there is a prize for nearest-to-the pin on all par-threes and prizes for low gross and low net for men and women, this is really a "fun tournament" for every category of golfer. Special rules apply so that you cannot shoot more than 2-over-par on any hole – even if you don't play it!

All short putts are "gimmies" and you can buy "Mulligans" to help your score!

We also feature a shot-gun-start at 12:45. Dinner and all festivities are usually over by 9:00 p.m.

If you would like more information, please call me at the number below.

Paul Doyle
Chairman: Golf Tournament
514-481-3503



Montreal's Gaelic Athletic Association honours its finest

The GAA's Annual Awards Banquet was held on December 15th at the Molson Brewery. The following people received awards at this event.

Ladies:

Most Valuable player: *Elaine Gilmore*

Most improved player: *Oonagh O'Neill*

Men:

Most valuable player: *Donal Lacey*

Most valuable members: *the Moran family*

Montreal's Gaelic Football winter training is starting soon and new players, with or without experience, are encouraged to sign up.

For more information, go to www.montrealgaa.com or email GAA at montrealshamrocksgaa@gmail.com.



People in the news ...

By Kathleen Dunn

What a Valentine's gift for **Matthew Rooney**, Chair of the SPS 175th anniversary committee, and his wife **Julie Balderston** who gave birth to twins at 4:30 a.m. on February 14th. The boys are Ethan, 6 lbs. 10 oz., and Owen, 7 lbs. 11 oz., and they join big brothers Conor, 3 and Bryce, 22 months. Congratulations to all—and good luck.

Congratulations of a different sort to another SPS Director **Patrick Shea** who was named partner at Ogilvy Renault in January. A graduate of Princeton and McGill, he worked for a New York law firm for five years before joining Ogilvy Renault in 2004. Patrick, 34, is the son of past-president Peter Shea and his wife Margaret.



Photo: Louise Abbott

Colleen Curran and Glenn Roy

If the show is anything like the advance publicity, you won't want to miss Montreal playwright and actress **Colleen Curran's** newest comedy *Ireland's Own Carmel O'Reilly Tonite!* at the Théâtre Ste-Catherine from March 4th to 9th (see Around Town, p.19). The play is set in Ireland in 1998. The Celtic Tiger is roaring. Inside the concert lounge of Ballymalarkey Castle, cabaret star Carmel O'Reilly and her accompanist/brother, Michael (played by Glenn Roy), are getting ready for another busload of North American tourists eager for a relaxing evening of ballads, banter and blarney. But the performance may not be quite what anyone on the coach tour, or any of us for that matter, have in mind. Knowing Colleen as we do, though, it will be hilarious. Colleen has been writing plays since high school at Hochelaga Convent and has produced about 25 so far. She recalls her days at Loyola which, she says, "was a great place to be creative because people were willing to be in your shows." Her first professional play *Cake Walk* made its debut at the Blythe Festival in Ontario. In all, she had six plays produced there, which is quite a feat for someone from outside the province. Colleen has also written novels and radio commercials, and taught moral education at the elementary school level which, true to form, she turned into a drama class.

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The Irish Show is back, and looking forward

By Red Shannon

2007 was a difficult year for the Irish Show. Above all else the show lost its bodacious host, Ernie Butler. Ernie's death was a huge shock and left a hole impossible to fill. Shortly afterwards, our broadcaster CJAD revamped its schedule, leaving The Irish Show's team with a decision: Go on hiatus until a new station could be found, or make the show an exclusively online radio production with CJAD.

Given that the Irish Radio Show was always available online anyway (since its inception in 2005) and that fans were listening in from as far away as China, Israel and ... Galway, it was decided that the future, in the near-term at least, lay on the Internet. The management at CJAD committed to promote the show on air as its first exclusively online radio show, and links directly to the Irish Show now appear on the CJAD homepage. Yes, the show is now a "Podcast," but don't let that term scare you off. The most important thing to remember is that you don't need an iPod. All you need is a computer and an interest in all things Irish. Current and past shows are now archived so that you may listen to them whenever you wish.

To listen in now, just go to www.cjad.com/irishshowpodcast and click "Listen." Here are some of the headliners of recent shows:

January 15th


- 2008 is the International year of the potato:
- Elizabeth Johnson talks about her book *No Small Potatoes*

- A cooking moment with Karen Bright
- Benjamin Shingler visits Griffintown
- Courtney Mullins shares her experience as Queen of the 2007 St. Patrick's Parade

February 1st

- Paul Loftus talks about events happening within the Irish Canada Chamber of Commerce
- Karen Bright enlightens us about Imbolc -- the Irish equivalent of Ground Hog day
- Patrick Vallely comes to kick off Cine Gael Montreal's 16th season
- Frank McMahon shows us his solution to the out-dated umbrella; the "Portable Architecture"
- JJ O'Carroll calls in from Ireland to discuss the historic first voice transmission from Ireland to Canada

Since our restart on November 1st we have made shows available on the 1st and 15th of every month, and we no longer have to worry about adverts, or limit the time allowed for interviews. If you have a facebook page, you can now join the Irish Show group to get updates of new shows as soon as they are available.

As for the future, we may find a new home on good old-fashioned radio to compliment our online show. But for now, Kimberley, the tireless team of volunteers and I endeavour to keep everyone posted with the latest and greatest of the Irish community, in Montreal and beyond. 

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Around Town

ICCC offers monthly networking gatherings

On the last Thursday of each month, Ireland-Canada Chamber of Commerce members and friends meet at The Irish Embassy Pub & Grill, 1234 Bishop St., just south of St. Catherine St. from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., for a couple of hours of *craic agus comhrá* (fun and conversation). These networking events are proving highly popular as attendees get to exchange information in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Finger food is provided courtesy of the pub. The next gathering will be on February 28th when members of the Canada-Poland Chamber of Commerce will be in attendance.

For more information, contact the Chamber of Commerce: info@icccmtl.com or jolyon@avantimontreal.com
Hope to see you there!

A different kind of pub night

The Bernadette Short School of Irish Dancing will be hosting its 2nd Annual Pub Night in support of the World Championship Development Fund. Taking place at 8 p.m. on February 29, 2008, at Bistro Westminster, 49 Westminster Ave, Mtl. West, the event will feature live music, Irish dancing, hot snacks and a silent auction table (Hockey and football tickets!).

Tickets, limited in number, to be purchased in advance are \$35.00 each, and available by contacting Kathleen Coull at (514) 481-1134 ext. 227 or at Assurances R.C. Coull Inc., 68 Westminster Ave.

Come out and support a community event and help send our World Qualifiers to the World Championships in Belfast N. Ireland this March.

Check out your family tree

The Quebec Family History Society is introducing a new series of "one-day intensive seminars" given by experts. Various facets of genealogical research within a given country or province will be examined together with the latest databases in the Heritage Centre and on the Internet. The four seminars scheduled for this spring take place at the QFHS Library, 173 Cartier Ave., Suite 102, Pointe Claire. Each begins at 10:00 a.m. and runs until 4:00 p.m. with a one-hour lunch break (bring your own!). Admission is \$30.00 (members) or \$40.00 (non-members). Space is limited to 15 persons per seminar and seats will only be guaranteed once payment has been received.

Saturday, March 15 – A Genealogical Day in Ireland

– led by James Joyce and Gary Schroder

Saturday, March 29 – A Genealogical Day in England

– led by Daphne Phillips Diafas and Gary Schroder

Saturday, April 19 – A Genealogical Day in Quebec

– led by Jacques Gagne, Lorraine Gosselin and Gary Schroder

Saturday, April 26 – A Genealogical Day in Scotland

– led by Susan Gingras and Bruce Henderson

To reserve a seat or for further information, visit the website www.qfhs.ca or call Susan Gingras at (514) 482-3418

Ireland's own Carmel O'Reilly Tonite!

A new comedy by Colleen Curran will run from March 4th to 9th at Theatre St. Catherine, 264 St. Catherine St. East (Berri metro). Showtimes are 8:00 p.m. from Tuesday to Saturday with matinees on Saturday and Sunday at 2:00 p.m. Tickets are \$20.00 or \$17.00 (students and seniors) and may be obtained from the box office: (514) 284-3939 or directly from Erin Matheson at (514) 481-1346.

For more information, email colleencurran@sympatico.ca or call (514) 487-1216. See p.17 for more about the playwright and her latest work.

Seminar offered by Canadian Irish Studies

Be sure not to miss the upcoming seminar presented by the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling. Entitled "Making History Public: Integrating Oral History into the McCord's 2009 Exhibition "The Irish in Quebec," the seminar will be led by Anna Wilkinson, Penney Burton and Anthony McGuinness. It will take place on Thursday, March 27th at 3:30 p.m. in LB-1019, Concordia University.

Concert featuring one of Montreal's finest children's choirs

If you missed the SPS Christmas Concert last December, you have another chance to catch the great singing of the Chœur des enfants de Montréal under the direction of Iwan Edwards. The Junior, Senior and Chamber Choirs present *Adiemus – Together in Song* at 3:00 p.m. on March 30th at St. Viateur Church (corner Laurier and Côte Ste-Catherine). Tickets, available at the door, are \$15.00 and \$10.00. For further information go to www.choeurdesenfantsdemontreal.com or call (514) 989-8925.

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To place an ad. or to get more information, please call
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Please Note:

If you are receiving *NUACHT* and have not paid your annual subscription or would like to be put on the *NUACHT* mailing list, please remit \$10.00 to Erin Matheson at the Society Office.

2008 CALENDAR OF EVENTS / CLÁR IMEACHTAÍ 2008

DATE	EVENTS	FURTHER INFORMATION	
Feb. 28	ICCC <i>Craic agus Comhrá</i> , The Irish Embassy Pub & Grill, 1234 Bishop St., 5:00 pm.	ICCC	845-0973
Feb. 29	Cine Gael, <i>High Speed Dating</i> , De Sève Cinema, Concordia, 7:15 p.m.	Lynn Doyle	481-3503
Mar. 7	Short film night in Gaelic at De Sève Cinema, Concordia, 7:00 p.m.	CCIS	848-8711
Mar. 7	St. Patrick's Society Ball, Chateau Champlain Hotel, 7:00 p.m.	Erin Matheson	481-1346
Mar. 8	Erin Sports Assoc., Irishman of the Year Breakfast, 9:00 a.m., \$60.00	Mabel Fitzgerald	989-1539
Mar. 9	UIS Mass of Anticipation, St. Gabriel's Parish, Centre St., Montreal, 11:30 a.m.	Marlene Demers	366-3623
Mar. 16	St. Patrick's Parade, 12:00 Noon, St. Catherine/Fort St.	Michael McCambridge	932-0512
Mar. 17	St. Patrick's Society Luncheon, Hilton Bonaventure, 11:15 a.m.	Erin Matheson	481-1346
Mar. 27	ICCC <i>Craic agus Comhrá</i> , The Irish Embassy Pub & Grill, 1234 Bishop St., 5:00 pm.	ICCC	845-0973
Mar. 28/29	Cine Gael, <i>Rag Tale</i> , <i>Intervention</i> and others, De Sève Cinema, Concordia, 7:00 p.m.	Lynn Doyle	481-3503
Mar. 29	UIS Parade Awards Banquet & Dinner Dance, Buffet Sorrento, 1250 Dollard, LaSalle, 6:00 p.m., \$65.00	Mike Kennedy	(450)368-2066
Apr. 4	Cine Gael, An evening of award-winning short Irish films, De Sève Cinema, Concordia, 7:15 p.m.	Lynn Doyle	481-3503
Apr. 18	Cine Gael, <i>Small Engine Repair</i> , De Sève Cinema, Concordia, 7:15 p.m.	Lynn Doyle	481-3503
Apr. 24	ICCC <i>Craic agus Comhrá</i> , The Irish Embassy Pub & Grill, 1234 Bishop St., 5:00 pm.	ICCC	845-0973
Apr. 24	Cine Gael, Closing Film & Reception, Concordia Faculty Club, 7:15 p.m.	Lynn Doyle	481-3503
May 17	Ville Marie Feis, John Abbott College	Pat Short	697-4343
May 17	Tara Golf, Opening Tournament for members & guests, Heritage Golf Club, Lancaster, Ont.	John O'Shea	697-8889
May 25	AOH Walk to the Stone, leaves St. Gabriel's Church, Pointe St. Charles, 12:00 noon	Victor Boyle	928-7196
May 29	ICCC <i>Craic agus Comhrá</i> , The Irish Embassy Pub & Grill, 1234 Bishop St., 5:00 pm.	ICCC	845-0973
June 14	Tara Golf Tournament, Mountain Acres Golf Course, Qc	John O'Shea	697-8889
June 17	St. Patrick's Society 13 th Annual Golf Tournament, Bellevue Golf Course	Erin Matheson	481-1346
July 12/13	Tara Golf Tournament, Craigwood Golf Course, Lake Placid, New York	John O'Shea	697-8889
July 23/26	AOH National Convention, New Orleans	Victor Boyle	928-7196
July 26	AOH Annual Mass in the Park, Griffintown-St-Ann Park, 7:00 p.m. (rain or shine)	Victor Boyle	928-7196
Aug. 9	Tara Golf Tournament, Missisquoi Bay Golf Course, Qc	John O'Shea	697-8889
Aug. 16	AOH Annual Golf Tournament, Hemmingford Golf Club	Victor Boyle	928-7196
Aug. 23	AOH Annual Pilgrimage to Grosse Île, leaves Picasso's Restaurant, 6810 St. Jacques, 6:00 a.m. sharp	Victor Boyle	928-7196
Sep. 6	Tara Golf Tournament, Adirondack Golf Course, Plattsburg, New York	John O'Shea	697-8889
Sep. 27	Tara Golf Tournament and Closing Banquet, Hemmingford Golf Course, Qc	John O'Shea	697-8889
Nov. 1	AOH Way of the Cross, Notre Dame des Neiges Cemetery, 1:00 p.m.	Victor Boyle	928-7196



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