

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A business manager, consultant and writer by trade, the author has twenty four years experience as Assistant Director of Cleveland's Irish Cultural Festival. A first generation Irish American whose father is Founder and Director of the festival and hails from County Roscommon, Ireland; John continues his father's legacy, love of the Irish heritage and vision for the festival. With nine stages, twenty eight bands, an extensive and nationally recognized cultural hall and numerous other attractions, the festival is recognized as one of the very best in the United States.



This love of the Irish heritage and dedication to producing an authentic cultural event has earned the respect and trust of the performers featured in *Festival Legends: Songs & Stories*, and an unmatched access to them and their stories.

John continues to write articles, profiles and reviews for travel, heritage and special interest publications such as the Irish American Post, where he has a byline.

He also writes poetry centered on the themes of love, loss and glory. He has extensive experience in dealing with health issues related to Rheumatoid and Psoriatic arthritis, hearing loss and back pain.

Founder and Chairman of *Eire Og* (Young Ireland) ; John was Editor and sole writer for the monthly special interest publication for the group, which has over 4,500 members, for more than two years. The publication features profiles, interviews, book and event reviews, historical items of interest and local and national special events. Active in the Irish community in Cleveland and with the Festival Organizers Convention, where he was a featured speaker in 2005 and 2006, John has been interviewed on numerous radio and television programs and in print media. He developed, wrote and produced, "The Legacy Project," a twenty-six minute video for the United States Library of Congress highlighting Cleveland's Irish Cultural Festival as "an event of cultural significance," featured dozens of interviews with festival organizers, performers and volunteers.

The author has taught extensively in the areas of Leadership, Coaching and Behavior Based Interviewing as well as Microsoft Word and Excel, for audiences ranging from one to three thousand. He is a graduate of **Cleveland St. Ignatius High School** and the University of Dayton, where he majored in Business Management and Communications.

John enjoys reading, traveling, attending cultural events and festivals and spending time with his seventeen nieces and nephews. **He lives in the Westpark neighborhood of Cleveland, Ohio.**

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

A Tommy Makem fan, when asked if she knew what music is, responded: "It is the soul of the world expressed in sound." To me, Tommy Makem and the other Festival Legends featured in this book, express the soul of the whole world, Irish or not, in each and every performance they give, in Dolby surround sound.



From Tommy Makem, The Godfather of Irish music, to his sons, The Makem & Spain Brothers, from the Ballad Boom to Riverdance, and the Ed Sullivan Show to Carnegie Hall, the incredible explosion of Irish music directly related to the success of the Clancy Brothers & Tommy Makem and Riverdance, as well the stunning growth of Irish music and cultural festivals across the United States, has led to live Irish music and dance being the most sought after form of cultural entertainment today. The Celtic Tiger is thriving in America.

The happiest times in my life are those spent around festivals, especially the afters parties. I have gotten the opportunity to get to know these wonderful men and women as people, not as performers. Seeing these amazing and genuine people, up close and off camera, has been the inspiration for writing this book. When I tried to find out more information about them, where they came from, in the sense of what made them who they are, beyond just the town they were born in, there was so little information available. I decided to change that.

Derek McCormack's sudden passing only reemphasized the need for me to get these wonderful stories, filled with humor, jaw-dropping accomplishments and deep love for the Irish heritage, from those who know it best, the performers themselves. I have strived to eliminate any inaccuracies, myths, false stories and general lack of hard information about each of these legends and present it in their own words. I hope you will enjoy finding out their stories as much as I have.

Festival Legends offers an entertaining but historically accurate look at these iconic entertainers with detailed, behind-the-scenes information on the journeys, backgrounds, inspirations, people and stories in the rise of these great talents to the top of their field, and a place in the indelibly linked American and Irish histories. This capturing of these entertaining and surprising stories as well as correcting the myths and misinformation that seems to surround these performers, has been the driving passion behind this book.

Based on over twenty years of professional experience marketing and producing one of the top five Irish festivals in the United States and authored articles and media presentations, the author expertly writes Festival Legends to accurately detail such amazing and highly entertaining stories as:

- The Clancy Brothers & Tommy Makem - have achieved legendary status by igniting the Irish music boom in the United States and eventually, back in Ireland and are fatefully linked with folk music's own explosion that came out of New York's Greenwich Village in the late 1950's. The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem's story includes such luminaries as Odetta, Josh White and Bob Dylan, who called Liam Clancy the best ballad

singer he ever heard in his life and professed at a young age that he would "be as big as the Clancy's." Both proved true. But it was not their first appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show that shook the foundations of Irish music in America, as most believe. The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show four times. Saving the best for last, the final appearance, for a record setting sixteen minutes, is the episode that altered history.

- Danny Doyle - His grandmother was a runner during the 1916 Irish Rebellion, burning haunting stories of the people and events of the war and the love of Irish history into one of Ireland's finest balladeers and Danny interweaves these harrowing and often humorous stories in powerful concerts, presentations and theatrical shows.
- Barleycorn - At the outbreak of Internment, on August 9th, 1971 at 4:00 a.m., British soldiers overran Catholic areas of Belfast, beating and imprisoning, without trial, scores of Irish men. In a political irony typical of the time, Barleycorn's Paddy McGuigan was interred for four months for writing The Men Behind the Wire, a song about internment. Barleycorn continued to perform the #1 song, despite opposition and Paddy's detainment.
- The Makem & Spain Brothers - The present, and the future, of the Irish ballad tradition, the Makem & Spain Brothers are gaining notice throughout the Irish music world for carrying on the legacy of those that came before, with a style and energy all their own. It is abundantly clear that this is what they were born to do.
- Johnny McEvoy - The Beatlemania era in Ireland took Johnny McEvoy to Superstar status, going from pub crowds of forty and fifty people to playing before sold out concerts of 70,000, all over the United Kingdom and the United States, and all in a few months.
- Tom Sweeney - Anthem for the Children, his peace song for children of all nationalities, brought Tom Sweeney to the Clinton White House, in the weeks before the Good Friday Peace Agreement was reached. Did Anthem for the Children help bring peace to Ireland?

# Irish Dog Breeds Bark Up Milwaukee Tree

By John F. O'Brien, Jr.

On the shores of Lake Michigan, in a little bit of hidden grass, dogs that are native to Ireland are gathered to show off, market and educate the more than 140,000 attendees to Milwaukee's Irish Fest. Seven of the eight officially recognized Irish Kennel Club breeds were present this August to give demonstrations and guided classes on obedience, agility and conformation. A ninth breed, the Kerry Beagle, although not recognized by the Irish Kennel Club, is also reviewed here.

Milwaukee's Irish Fest is the largest Irish such cultural event in the U.S. and an annual party unmatched anywhere in the world. But the breeders, trainers and owners of these diverse groups of

Irish breeds are deadly serious when it comes to discussing the heritage and characteristics of these animals.

## **Irish Red & White Setter:**

"My son has autism. He couldn't speak much, only mimic others' speech. We were babysitting for a friend's dog (a Red & White Setter), and my son spontaneously started talking, for the first time. We looked around at many breeds to find a dog for him but it kept coming back to the Red & White Setter. So we sent a video of my son to a woman who had pups of that breed. She played the video and only two female pups didn't react [to the movements of the boy]. One even went to the TV screen and tried to calm him down. That is the dog



Red & White Setter  
Maggie Erin Witt of Trinity  
with owner Louise Witt

we got. We call her Maggie." - Louise Witt, of Greenfield, WI., owner of Maggie, officially called "Maggie, Erin Witt of Trinity," now 3-years-old.

The Red & White Setter is probably the most misunderstood of the Irish breeds. Many believe it to be bred from the Irish Setter. Actually, the reverse is true. The Red & White originally came from Spain, probably pre-17 century, and is often called "Old Irish Setter." The Red & Whites were exclusively bred to yield only Reds, when, in 1812, the Earl of Enniskillen banned the Red & White and only allowed the Red. The solid red color became the mark of the "more desirable" dogs and the Irish [Red] Setter became so popular that the Red & White nearly became extinct. Only extra effort in the 1920s in Ireland and then by John Kerr in the U.S in the early 1990s saved the breed from being lost in each country. Today, there are approximately 700 Red & White Setters in the U.S., not enough to qualify as an official breed for the Foundation Stock Service of the American Kennel Club (a type of governing and advisory board for breeders, with rules and regulations, standards, judging criteria and guidelines).

Irish Red & White Setters are high-spirited dogs, intelligent and friendly and make excellent companions. They are also great with children and other dogs, and are easily trained. Their low numbers have led to little notice but they are slowly returning as a viable and valued breed.

## **Soft Coated Wheaten Terriers:**

Tom Traeger, owner of 'Chapin' [*Chape inn*], a 10-year-old Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier, has owned Wheatons for over 25 years. He was looking for a non-shedding dog that would be good for his children where he lived in Waukesha, Wis., and went through book after book before falling in love with the gentle, "be with" dog (a term that means the breed does best with one owner and not transferred to another). He has had four adult dogs and 21 puppies over the years.



Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier  
Chapin and owner Tom Traeger  
teach kids about dog breeds of  
Ireland

Wheatons, named for the color of their coat, are full of life, love to give kisses and other shows of affection. They are great watchdogs, love to ride in cars, love lots of people and dogs around them and "are especially fond of popcorn and carrots," according to Traeger. Fully grown dogs are generally about a foot and a half high and weigh around 35 to 40 pounds, females less. The Wheatons were purposely bred to be less aggressive than other terriers and their gentleness was easily evident as child after child came up and played with Chapin and received many kisses in greeting. But the Wheatons still rule the yard in which they live, trapping rats, rabbits, otters and badgers in olden days as well as gophers and moles today.

Having been around since at least the 1800s, Wheatons are believed to be the oldest of the Terrier Breeds (Wheaton, Kerry Blue, Irish and Glen of Imaal). The Kerry Blue Terrier, it is believed, derived from the Wheaton when the Spanish Armada sank off the shores of Ireland. The blue dogs with the Armada swam ashore and eventually mated with the Wheaton.

Wheaton's are especially adept at farm and field work, bad weather and fatigue have little effect on them and they are very intelligent, able to understand how to assist their owners but have adapted to be able to handle living in apartments and smaller homes as well, as long as proper care and exercise is given.

## **Irish Water Spaniels: (Shannon Spaniels, Water Spaniels, Rat Tails or Whip-Tails)**

"In Irish mythology, it is said that Prince Paen wanted to teach a leprechaun a lesson and put him inside an Irish Water Spaniel pup for a year. When it came for the leprechaun's release, he promised the dog that a bit of him would remain forever in the dog and its descendants." (1)



Irish Water Spaniel  
Beacon Bowfield  
Shining Light.

Irish Water Spaniels figure that every dog is there especially for them to play with," say Lisa Schaitberger, of New Muenster, Wisconsin, who has owned Beacon (full name: *Beacon Bowfield Shining Light*),



since it was born five years ago. Beacon is an American Champion Tracker, holds Novice Agility title through the American Kennel Club and has been invited to the National Tracking Invitational held in September at the Biltmore in Ashville, N.C. Despite all that seriousness, Beacon is happy all the time and also wants to be working continually, expressed through a lack of attention if not being challenged.

Beacon and most Irish Water Spaniels love children, as long as they are socialized with young children from the very start. They can be a shy breed but are often very intelligent. With outstanding stamina, proud and eager, but with a quirky sense of humor, Irish Water Spaniels are "purpose-bred" retrievers, meaning that retrieving, usually bird hunting, is what they are trained and bred to do. They are eager to please because of this style of training. Irish Water Spaniels are distinctively *not* watchdogs but are considered family dogs and will protect and alarm their family if needed.

The dogs of this breed go by many other names, all coming from physical characteristics or from the areas where they were found, some as far back as the 7th and 8th centuries. *Shannon Spaniels*, for those found south of the River Shannon, were recorded in writings as far back as the 1100s. *Water Spaniels*, *Rat-Tails* or *Whip-Tails* were also common names for these dogs. Averaging from 25 to 60 pounds, females less, their breed characteristics stand out; distinctive ratlike tail, with curly short hair at the base and tapering to a thin whip-like end with very short, clipped looking hair the rest of the way, naturally water repellent double coat, distinctive top knot and a beard at the base of its throat. These distinctive physical traits all make this lovely dark brown (often called "liver") colored animal easy to recognize.

"The exact origins of the breed remain obscure. Generally, it is thought that Water Spaniels evolved from dogs that originated in Persia and came to Ireland via Spain. The first Irish reference to "water dogs that pursue fowl" dates from 1600, so we know that dogs with waterproof coats were used in Ireland even before the advent of the fowling piece. There is no real evidence of the ancestry of the Irish Water Spaniel except in its most peculiar feature - the rat tail. This feature appears in no similar dog and makes it likely that the modern breed had an indigenous ancestor." (2)

**Kerry Beagle:  
(Pocadan)**

While the Water Spaniel evolved from dogs that originated in Persia, the Kerry Beagle, a breed that is so small in number that it is not recognized as a breed at all by most breeding professionals, seems to have descended from "the old southern hound," a breed almost decimated in the throes of *An Gorta Mor* (the Great Hunger). Surpassed in years in Ireland only by the Irish Wolfhound, the Kerry Beagle is an expert hunting dog, built for speed and endurance, it is unique from other hounds in that the pack will spread out in a large circle when searching for its prey and then return to the first hound that opens.

"The most likely outline of the history of this breed is a Celtic hound going back probably to the time of the first Celtic settlements in Ireland, which in the Middle Ages and later centuries was mixed in breeding experiments with other hounds from the

continent to produce a very efficient hunting dog. The word Beagle, curiously enough, is thought to be derived from the Irish word "beag" (meaning small), and certainly the beagle is a small hound used to hunt small game like hares, whereas the Kerry Beagle is often used to hunt stag. The current word for the beagle is "*Pocadan*," which refers to its use as a hunting dog rather than its size. The Kerry Beagle is also known for its speed and endurance and its music (baying) can be heard for miles." (2)

There were no Kerry Beagles represented at the Dogs Native to Ireland area at Milwaukee Irish Fest. Other breed owners didn't really seem to know that they existed, for they had "never heard of them." Hopefully this overlooked breed will not fade from existence, and disappear. The lessons learned from the Red & White should echo here.

**Kerry Blue Terrier:  
(Kerry Blue, Blue Terrier)**

The Kerry Blue Terrier is "well nigh perfect" as a working and companion dog. Its origins are mentioned above, from dogs who swam ashore at the sinking of the Spanish Armada off the



Kerry Blue Terrier  
Keely with owner Brigitte  
Mikush

coast of Ireland but further study shows more.

"Like the other Irish Terrier breeds, it [is] assumed that the Kerry Blue has been in the country for centuries, but once again, because of its humble beginnings at a rat catcher and allaround farm dog, there are few, if any, references to the breed before the 20th century. The first probable reference to the Kerry Blue dates from 1847. The author describes a bluish slate-colored dog, marked with darker blotches and patches, and often with the tan about the legs and muzzle.

This blackish-blue Irish terrier was supposed to be prevalent in Kerry but it has been developed in other counties as well. ... The Kerry Blue became quickly so popular as a sort of mascot for Irish patriots. ... By 1928, this impressive balanced terrier with its beautiful soft blue coat became popular worldwide and its reputation as an excellent working and companion dog agreed with ..." the above mentioned breed assessment as "well nigh perfect."

Having first been noticed around its namesake, Co. Kerry, the Blue Terrier has an especially keen and sharp expression - always ready for action. Its blue-black coat does not shed, is soft, wavy and grows very closely together - meaning it matches well for many people with pet allergies. The Kerry Blue has been and is used in Ireland for pursuing and retrieving such small game as rabbits, birds, "tackling otters in deep water, to engage badgers underground and hunt vermin." They are also used with great success in herding sheep and cattle.

The dogs were thought to be bred as a comeuppance to the local nobility, who bred the great Irish Wolfhounds to protect their precious hunting grounds from those of lesser standing. So those pushed out developed the Kerry Blue to allow them to silently work the nobility's hunting grounds, out of sight of the Irish Wolfhound trained to protect it. The first Kerry Blues came to the U.S. in 1918-1919.

"I wanted an Irish dog, non-shedding. *Keely* is spontaneous and likes to steal things. He likes to learn things and do the agility [exercises and training] and shows he's bored when he doesn't. He's wonderful with kids too." - Brigitte Mikush, owner of 16month-old Kerry Blue Terrier, Keely.

#### **Irish Setter:**

##### **(Setter, Red Setter, Red)**

"The origin of the Irish Setter is not known. However it is reasonable to believe that it evolved from some combination of land spaniels. These land spaniels were imported to Ireland from Spain when the Spaniards helped the Irish in their rebellion against the British.

"The breed, established as early as 1800, was not originally a solid color, but a combination of red and

white. Through selective breeding, the rich mahogany red color we know today was derived.

"Irish Setters were originally used to 'set' game, hence the name 'setters.' They found upland birds and crouched down close to their find so that the hunter could come and throw a net over dogs and birds. When firearms were introduced, this practice was discontinued as the hunter wanted a dog that pointed, flushed game and hunted with an upright stance." (3)

This change in desirable function, plus the breeding of the dogs for beauty only, led to the breeding of two very different types of Irish Setters. There is an effort underway to reunite the field and bench dog and dual champions are being seen regularly now. The Irish Setter is recognized around the world for its beauty and abilities.

"The Irish Setter was developed in Ireland as a working dog for hunting game. The breed is derived from the Red & White Setter and an unknown solid red colored dog [possibly a mix or proportion of the Irish Water Spaniel, Irish Terrier, English Setter, Spaniel, Pointer and/or the Gordon Setter. It is not a part of the Red & White Setter Breed but a separate and distinguished breed unto itself]. The Irish Setter has evolved over the years as a hardy, healthy, intelligent dog, possessed of excellent working ability and great stamina. Keen, energetic, affectionate and loyal." (2)

The breed is very athletic, kindly and a great family dog, caring and protective of children. The rich chestnut hair (described as mahogany, as well), kindly disposition, graceful lines and expressive personality has led to the breed often being called the most beautiful dog in the world. It averages 23 to 27 inches in height and about 70 pounds, females less. The breed is slightly longer than it is tall.

Judy Huffman, owner of Brefney Irish Setters, of Racine, Wis., a breeder of Irish Setters for more than 30 years, spoke of the outgoing and friendly personalities and abilities of the Irish Setter breed, emphasizing their loyalty and family friendly dispositions and how they get along well with people and other breeds.

Randy Wojcik, of Port Washington, Wis., owner of three set



Irish Setter - Owner Randy Wojcik's 3 Setters; Riley Brefney's *Be Reliable*, Quinn Anamacara's *Kiss Me Quick* and Bailey *Singing Winds Turbulence* pose with Riley's sister Lisa Brefney's *So Blest*, and Brefney Irish Setters breeder Judy

ters; Bailey (5, called *Singing Winds Turbulence*), Riley (4 - called *Brefney's Be Reliable*) and Quinn (2 - called *Anamacara's Kiss Me Quick*), talked about the distinguished accomplishments of his setters and the long lineage that is very carefully traced. The father of Riley and another Setter at the festival, Lisa (4 - called *Brefney's So Blest*), was called Court wood Innkeeper and was champion Rom, earning a Register of Merit and American and Canadian recognition. The mother or "dam" was also a champion, called *Kerrie* or *Eire Kachina*. Riley, Quinn and Bailey also have obedience titles and hunting titles.

#### **Irish Terrier**

"Ireland has produced four Terrier breeds, all of which are markedly different from terriers on the continent and in England. The dog now officially called Irish Terrier is possibly the oldest of the Irish terrier breeds but records are so scarce that it would be difficult to prove this conclusively. Before the



Irish Terrier *Caitlin* poses in front of owner Don Pierce

1880s the color of the Irish Terrier had not been settled. Apart from red they were sometimes black and tan and sometimes brindle.

"At the end of the 19th century, efforts were made to breed out the black and tan and the brindles so that by the 20th century all Irish Terriers showed the red coat. The Irish Terrier's reputation was enhanced during the First World War when they were used as messenger dogs in the terrifying noise and confusion of trench warfare, thus proving both their intelligence and their fearlessness." 92 These brave and loyal dogs received medals for the service mentioned above.

"The temperament of the Irish Terrier reflects his early background: he was family pet, guard dog, and hunter. He is good tempered, spirited and game, show[s] fire and animation. There is a heedless, reckless pluck about the Irish Terrier which is characteristic, and which, coupled with the headlong dash, blind to all consequences, with which he rushes at his adversary, has earned for the breed the proud epithet of 'Daredevil.' He is of good temper, most affectionate, and absolutely loyal to man kind. Tender and forbearing with those he loves, this rugged, stout-hearted terrier will guard his master, his mistress and children with utter contempt for danger or hurt. His life is one continuous and eager offering of loyal and faithful companionship and devotion. He is ever on guard, and stands between his home and all that threatens.

"The Irish Terrier, while being game and capable of holding his own with other dogs, is remarkably loyal, good tempered and affectionate with mankind, but once he is attacked, he has the courage of a lion and will fight to the bitter end.

"Though the terrier may be fierce when the circumstances call for it, the Irish Terrier is easily trained and a gentle pet, living up to his early description as 'the poor man's sentinel, the farmer's friend and the gentleman's favorite.'" (2)

Country or city, large farm or small apartment, blazing hot or icy cold, the Terrier thrives in all environments and loves company, especially children, and likes to join in their games. This gentle side is in marked difference to the times that the Terrier

is "at work." Targets of his hunts include woodchucks, rabbits and other small game and the water provides no protection for those the Terrier has marked. The Terrier is at home on either land or chasing into the water. The average Terrier is 18 inches high and 27 pounds, females less.

According to Don Pierce, who inherited his love of Terriers from his father, who had them in the 1920s and now owns Caitlin, a 5-year-old Terrier, this breed is one of the few dogs encountered at Milwaukee Irish Fest that does not play well with other dogs.

Owning Irish Terriers for more than 47 years has given Mary Best special insight into their personalities. "They are a challenge to train, stubborn and opinionated. They will do [what you ask], then do it a second time because you asked, but if asked a third time, will give you a look." Best is on the Board of the Irish Terrier Club of Chicago and the Irish Terrier Club of America and pointed out that there are 12,000 Black Labs registered a year, Irish Terriers about 120. This is not because they are not desired or available.

Instead, through very careful breeding practices, these dogs are kept to very high health and "true to the breed" standards. Because of this careful breeding, there are no known instances of inheritable diseases among the breed. "The breeder will examine you as much as you examine the dog," [for suitability] Mary explains. "We don't make puppies, we breed only to improve the breed. They generally have only three litters."

#### *Irish Wolfhound*

***(Irish Dogs, Greyhounds of Ireland, Wolf dogs of Ireland, Great Hounds of Ireland, Big Dogs of Ireland)***

*"Lambs at home, Lions in the Chase."*

Irish Wolfhounds are the largest dogs in the world. Standing well over seven feet tall, when on hind legs, they tower over the biggest of men. On all fours, the dogs average 32 to 36 inches high and 120 to 160 pounds (with the obligatory stipulation, females less). Its hair is course and long, especially

over the eyes and under its jaw, an adaptation made over centuries, probably due to

the inclement Irish weather. The most highly seen colors "are shades of grey and white but brindle, red, black, pure white, fawn or any other color that appears in the Deerhound" (2 is prevalent).

Although protective, Wolfhounds are generally not a guard dog for their personality is bright and keen but they are not suspicious nor aggressive, by nature. It does best in an environment that provides lots of human interaction and love as well as consistent exercise. Wolfhounds generally live from seven to nine years, with their hearts often giving out as the cause of death. Although swift and powerful, they are also gentle, docile and fantastic with the rough and tumble play of kids.

These giants have been present and, at times instrumental, in Irish history and mythology. Bred to hunt large game, like stag (which often stood up to six-foot-tall), elk and especially the

large wolf population that existed before deforestation, the hound with great tracking abilities, stamina, strength and loyalty, also began to accompany nobles to war.

"Up to the end of the 17th century, Irish Wolfhounds were used for hunting wolves and deer in Ireland. They were also used for hunting the wolves that infested large areas of Europe before the forests were cleared. The Irish Celts were interested in breeding large hounds. These large Irish hounds could have had smooth or rough coats, but in later times, the rough coat predominated possibly because of the Irish climate. The first written account of these dogs was by a Roman consul, 391 A.D. [cited by Roman Consul Quintus Aurelius, who received seven of the Irish Wolfhounds as a gift] but they were already established in Ireland in the 1st century A.D. when Setanta changed his name to Cu-Chulainn (the hound of Culann).

"Mention is made of the Uisneach (1st century) taking 150 hounds with them in their flight to Scotland. Irish hounds undoubtedly formed the basis of the Scottish Deerhound. Pairs of Irish hounds were prized as gifts by the royal houses of Europe, Scandinavia and elsewhere from the Middle Ages to the 17th century. They were sent to England, Spain, France, Sweden, Denmark, Persia, India and Poland.

"In the 15th century, each county in Ireland was required to keep 24 wolfdogs to protect farmers' flocks from the ravages of wolves. The Cromwellian prohibition (1652) on the export of Wolfhounds helped preserve their number for a time but the gradual disappearance of the wolf and continued demand abroad reduced their numbers almost to the point of extinction by the end of the 17th century. The revival of interest in the breed accompanied the growth of Irish nationalism in the late 19th century. The Irish Wolfhound became a living symbol of Irish culture and of the Celtic past.

At this time, one determined enthusiast, Capt. G. A. Graham, set about obtaining some of the few remaining hounds of the Wolfhound type that could still be found in Ireland, and with the use of Deerhound blood and the occasional outcross of Borzoi and Great Dane, he eventually achieved a type of dog that bred true in every generation. The results were ultimately accepted as a legitimate revival of the breed. The Irish Wolfhound now enjoys once again something of the reputation that it had in the Middle Ages. Wolfhounds are now owned and bred in fairly large numbers outside of Ireland." (2)

"Besides it being fun, one of the reasons why we come to the festival is to educate people and to show how special they [Irish Wolfhounds] are. They loved to be pet, love human affection and attention" - Victoria Cook, of Cary, Ill., who along with her husband, Brian, has owned four Irish Wolfhounds over the last 11 years and been attending and showing her Wolfhounds, now *Jada (Torian's Jacinth Cornerstone, 1-year-old)* and *Lucas (Torian's First Light, 4-years-old)* at Milwaukee's Irish Fest ever since.

#### ***Glen of Imaal Terrier (Turnspit Dogs, Tiny Glen of Imaal)***

From the largest dog in the world to the smallest dog in Ireland, the Glen of Imaal Terrier is as distinctive as the great Irish Wolfhound. Although only about 12 to 14 inches high and around 35 pounds, the tiny breed is tenacious in work and joyful

Irish Wolfhounds  
Victoria and Brian Cook  
(with darker coated)  
*Jada Torian's Jacinth  
Cornerstone  
and Lucas Torian's First  
Light*

in play. It has an unusually accurate standard, called 3:5, meaning the length from nose to end of the head is at a three to five ratio to the distance from the back of the head to the tail. The breed is also 40% longer than it is tall and is the only terrier breed not clearly defined by its color. The coat color is usually wheaten, with variations from cream to red wheaten, the blue from silver to deep slate and the brindle is usually a mix of dark and light blue with tan thrown in, all in any combination and amount.

"The Irish Glen of Imaal is an old breed which was simply ignored for a long time, rather than the result of later breed experiments. He is very much a local dog, confined to the bleak area of the Glen of Imaal [a valley in the Wicklow Mountains, in the Northern part of Co. Wicklow]. The farmers of this area, who were descended from [Flemish and Lowland] soldiers given land in the 16th and 17th centuries as payment for service to the British Crown, had to utilize their natural cunning and dexterity to survive in this harsh terrain. A dog who could not pull his weight in the day-to-day struggle for existence would not be tolerated. So he had to spend long hours propelling dog wheels and was often pitted against other dogs in the dubious sport of dog fighting, customs now disappeared." (2)

The "turnspit" was a wheel used to rotate food over a fire and for churning butter. The tiny Glen's body build, with longer back legs than front, gave it unique ability to run the wheel that turned the spit as well as ideally suited the terrier to pulling animals such as the fox and badger, out of their underground dens. It is also ideal for chasing down burrowing rats. Due to the relative remoteness of the Glen of Imaal, this breed is one of the few, if not only, breeds to be essentially the same in characteristics, physical and disposition, as it was centuries ago. The characteristics once common to all terrier breeds are often called "antique" features, and include, for the Glen of Imaal, turned out feet (which help to pull heavy, resisting weight out backward), a unique head with bent over ears, called "rose or half prick" ears and a harsh but not quite wiry coat with a soft undercoat.

The Glen of Imaal is tenacious, active and deadly silent in the hunt, but very gentle and not very excitable when not working. Very loyal, very affectionate, the Glen is a very good companion, house and family dog that likes to clown around and appears to always be smiling, happy and ready for fun and games.

Although the Kerry Beagle and Glen of Imaal were not represented at Milwaukee Irish Fest this year, those that were represented gave a wonderful snapshot of the common traits that seem to abound in all of the breed dogs of Ireland - fiercely loyal, great companions and work dogs, great family dogs. Of course all of these characteristics are based upon careful breeding, care, exercise and suitable home environments in which that particular breed can grow, excel and flourish.

As with all distinguished breeds, Irish breeds of Ireland are carefully tracked, on paper, histories, training, characteristics and performances. All of the owners at the festival were able to give detailed histories of their own dog's lineage, accomplishments and strengths as well as that of others too. Almost all breeders offer (and will readily insist upon) a contract stating that the dog can be returned if things do not work out with the

new owners. As mentioned, they are screening you while you are screening the dog and will not hesitate to refuse to sell if they find reason to question the good health potential for the new dog.

There is a very significant cost in time and money to breed any of these dogs and the breeders are very conscious and committed to keeping the breed up to a standard that is hard to achieve and fiercely protected. A rescue program exists to help those dog owners that cannot maintain these fine animals, for whatever reason, and the dogs are "rescued." They then stay at a foster home, until a new owner can be found. This type of rescue program is available for all of the breeds highlighted here.

#### Endnotes:

- 1 From: *Irish Water Spaniel Club of America, Welcome! Come Explore Our Secrets*. [www.clubs.akc.org/iwsc](http://www.clubs.akc.org/iwsc).
- 2 From: Irish Kennel Club. [www.ikc.ie](http://www.ikc.ie).
- 3 From: *The Irish Setter. Irish Setter Club of America*. <http://www.irishsetterclub.org>.

Resources to find out about dog breeds of Ireland: All Breeds -

Irish Kennel Club [www.ikc.ie](http://www.ikc.ie)

The Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier Club of America, [www.scwtca.org](http://www.scwtca.org).

Irish Water Spaniels - Lisa Schaitberger, [www.sandhillfarm.com](http://www.sandhillfarm.com)

Irish Water Spaniel Club of America, [www.ikc.ie/iwsca](http://www.ikc.ie/iwsca)

Kerry Blue Terrier Club of America, [www.uskbt.com](http://www.uskbt.com)

Irish Red Setter Club of America, [www.irishsetterclub.org](http://www.irishsetterclub.org)

Brefney Irish Setters. Breeder: Judy Huffman, Racine Wis. [jahuffma@scj.com](mailto:jahuffma@scj.com)

The Irish Terrier Club of America, [www.irishterriers.com](http://www.irishterriers.com) Irish Wolfhound Club of America, Judy Simon, Secretary. [www.iwclubofamerica.org](http://www.iwclubofamerica.org)

Great Lakes Irish Wolfhound Association, [www.gliwa.org](http://www.gliwa.org) Glen of Imaal Terrier Club of America, [www.glens.org](http://www.glens.org)

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# Curragh Regatta Churns Traditional Waters

By John F. O'Brien, Jr.

"We're friendly enemies in the water. This is not a pretty sport - it's hardcore, hand blisters, butt blisters ... It's the competition and tradition."  
— Chrissy Mulkerrin, Pittsburgh Curragh Team, one of 11 Mulkerrins active in curragh racing in Pittsburgh, making up one of the oldest clubs in the U.S.

According to ancient legend, and his own writings, called *The Navigation*, Brendan the Navigator took his curragh, 10 explorers and provisions for 40 days and eventually found America. First landing at Newfoundland, which is almost directly due west of his homeland in Kerry, St. Brendan then allegedly journeyed south to Florida, the Bahamas and then around the southern tip of the U.S. into the Gulf of Mexico.

This was approximately 500 A.D., almost 900 years before Christopher Columbus left Spain to do the same. There are references to curragh boats as far back as 100 B.C.

The curragh (sometimes spelled currach) is a hardy but light boat frame of wood, usually oak or ash, covered with canvas, often painted with a black oil paint. Originally, animal skins were used instead of the canvas. With length of 25 feet and weight of only around 250 pounds, it moves under guidance of long oars of about nine feet in length, but taper to only about one inch at the water end.

This lack of a blade is to prevent catching on rough Atlantic waves. Sails are also be used on a curragh, but not in these races. The light weight of the curragh allows them to ride on top of the waves, rather than fighting through it. Yet it is so strong that it can, and has, crossed an ocean.

Mostly used as a fishing vessel on the west coast of Ireland, curragh racing became a sport when speed became a necessity for the fisherman - first one in each day got the best price for his catch. Naturally, the competitive spirit led to boasts on who was the fastest and curragh racing was born. The boats, in various

modifications depending on locations and use, are still used for fishing, transportation, rescue and, of course, racing. NACA uses a boat modeled after the Naomhog curragh, noted for its sleek lines and outstanding seaworthiness.

Ten U.S. teams are part of the North American Curragh (*Kure uh*) Association (NACA). Teams from Pittsburgh, Boston (two teams) and Albany joined the Milwaukee team this year to compete in the Irish Curragh Club of Milwaukee Regatta, held annually at the Milwaukee Irish Fest at the Henry Maier Festival Grounds on gorgeous Lake Michigan. Other clubs include Annapolis, Columbus, New Orleans and Philadelphia and new clubs are being researched for South Bend and Cleveland, among others.

Each club hosts an annual regatta, with team points awarded for finishing in the top four. Six to 10 races are held at each regatta. Total points for the team are then used to determine NACA Cup



Pittsburgh Curragh Team  
Margie Mulkerrin, Beth Carroll,  
Carolyn Mulkerrin, Chrissy  
Mulkerrin

Champion at the end of the racing year. Any ties are broken by whichever team placed higher at the other clubs' regatta.

Race length ranges from one to two miles, about 12 to 15 minutes each and are held in multiple categories; four men, four women, three men and one woman, two of each and then combinations of two and one rowers. On the full load (four person) boat, the two at the ends do the steering while the two in the middle are called *jrs* or *juniors* (for "just row, Stupid"). All four steering would get the boat in a

great speed - going in circles.

The reality of curragh racing, the reason so many get involved and stay involved, is the competition and the camaraderie. Practices are usually three times per week, when the weather allows, often early Sunday mornings and two evenings. Family and friends follow the teams and as soon as the race is over, all adrenaline is gone and the friendships grow.

"We've had a lot of adventures," recounted Margie Mulkerrin, of the Pittsburgh club. "We raced in Hurricane Bertha in Albany (on Saratoga Lake) about six years ago."

Her cousin, Chrissy, is endlessly teased about driving a curragh into a bridge abutment when she tried, too late, to correct her course for a larger opening under a narrow bridge. The race finished, *then* others came back to rescue her. Priorities, you know.

Originally hailing from Connemara, Chrissy and Carolyn, father, and Margie's uncle, Pete Mulkerrin, used the curragh in daily life and also played Gaelic football before coming to the U.S. in 1968. He continued to play football in the US for many years after with the Pittsburgh Roger Casement's Gaelic Football Club.

The Mulkerrin (pronounced *Mul Kern*) family is very typical of all the racing teams, in their following of Irish traditions, in sport, active involvement and passing on those traditions to the rest of the family as well as the next generation. They do it for the love of their heritage and the love of curragh racing.

2005 NACA Schedule:  
June 4th - Philadelphia  
July 9th - Pittsburgh  
July 30th - Columbus  
August 20th - Milwaukee  
August 27th - Boston  
September 17th - Albany  
October 1st - Annapolis



The Race

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# Success Clips Along for Irish Barber

By John F. O'Brien, Jr.

"If you fell in a river, you'd come out with a salmon in your mouth."

- Gerald Gormley, to his son, Sean

Good things have been happening to the Irish Barber since he first was selected to be a part of Project Children at 12 years old. Sean Joseph Gormley has built his success one day, and one client at a time...from apprenticing in Len sen's Barber Shop in Derry, Northern Ireland, at 15- years-old to now being owner of his own thriving business — The Irish Barber, in Rocky River, Ohio — as well as owning several land parcels.

Project Children is a non-profit organization that pairs Irish Catholic and Protestant children from the north of Ireland with a host family in the U.S., giving the children six weeks freedom each summer from sectarian related violence, turbulence and tension that is sometimes a steady way of life in the north of Ireland.

A secondary goal is to show the kids that Protestants and Catholics can get along perfectly well - once the bird-in-the-ear whisperings of peer pressure and deep-seated old grudges are removed. The host family usually has children near the same age as their visitor and individual activities are planned by the families as well as by the local Project Children organizers.

Gormley was born May 31, 1973, in Ballymena, Co. Antrim. His parents, Gerry and Mary (or Phyllis) Philomena Gormley, moved Sean and his older siblings; one sister and two brothers, back to Derry, when Sean was -year-old. Derry is about 70 miles northwest of Belfast on the border next to Donegal.

## Worked Part-time

After working part-time on weekends for three years while in high school, young Gormley then became a full time apprentice at the barbershop in Derry upon graduation. He started in the barbershop by doing all the cleaning and similar everyday duties before earning his way up in the trade to cutting hair.

In early 1985, Gormley was asked by a teacher, Eugene McGinty, if he would be interested in being a part of Project Children. The 12-year old youngster talked to his family about it, explained that there was no cost to the children. His parents then began corresponding with Tom and Maureen Daly of Elmira, N.Y. The Dalys had two sons; 11-year-old Daniel and Tommy, 14. The families exchanged letters, photos and phone calls. Gormley was



Shop Front

selected by Project Children in 1985 and joined the Daly family for his first summer in the States. He returned to the Daly family the following summer, as well.

Once Gormley got a little older, (for the next three summers after that visit), he came to the U.S. each summer with Project Children and stayed with Tom Daly's brother and his wife, Gerry and Liz Daly, also in Elmira. These trips not only gave Gormley a strong view of life in America but also a strong view of life as Irish-Americans. The Dalys owned an Irish gift store called Ireland's Own and traveled the East Coast to many fes

tivals each summer. Gormley's strong Northern accent immediately drove up the Daly family's sales totals. He became an other sibling in the Daly family and accompanied them on fishing and vacation trips and to Disneyworld.

Five foot-ten and slim, Sean Gormley is now intense man of 31 whose wears his emotions on his sleeve. The seriousness his face and voice is contradicted by his relaxed body language, frequent laughter and dialog. He is clean cut - as a barber should always be. But the brown eyes soften when children hop up into the booster seat for a haircut. The intensesness is only outward. Quick to smile, Gormley is very good at getting young children to relax, not cry or to stop crying. Mothers love him for this.

Laughter and constant chatter battle the television in the shop, with copies of the *Irish Echo* and the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* newspapers, plus numerous hair fashion, and Irish and American magazines resting on a long church pew that serves as the waiting room seating.

## Photos on Walls

Framed Irish photos, Glasgow Celtic memorabilia and a picture of Gormley swimming with dolphins catches the eye. Postcards and money from Iraq with Sad dam's picture on it, sent by clients who are friends serving in the armed forces are tacked to the wall in front of Gormley's work area. The timely items can't help but be noticed as client sits in the antique refurbished barber chairs facing them and a mirrored wall.



In the Shop

A refurbished tin-plated ceiling from 1914

that Gormley discovered while remodeling the shop adds to the bright, warm and comfortable feel. The kettle is always boiling as the shop bustles with clients leaving, clients coming and the phone never stopping with the constant pleas for Gormley to "fit me in."

The barber is the first Project Children alumni to become a U.S. citizen. His proudest accomplishment was when he was sworn in by the Honorable Donald C. Nugent, on Nov. 5, 1999.



From his very first trip to America in 1985, Gormley knew that he wanted to emigrate to the U.S. Over the years, he spent a lot of time with the Dalys figuring out how he could do that and what needed to be done. When he was qualified, at age 19, in 1992, Liz Daly entered Gormley's name into the lottery for a Morrison visa. His luck continued to run high and he was picked immediately. On St. Patrick's Day, 1993, Gormley and his father went to the American Embassy in London, England, and began the interview process. Gormley got his green card less than one year after Liz first put his name in the lottery.

Besides the Daly family, Gormley also had support in the U.S. through the local Hibernians. The John J. Lee Division #1 in Elmira had already lined up a job for him, doing maintenance and general work at a local car dealership when he arrived in the U.S., on May 13, 1993. Gormley subsequently learned how to drive an automatic.

Although he had more than enough qualifications to get a New York state barber license, he had to wait for the paperwork to be accepted. So he worked at the car dealership through the winter of 1993 to 1994. Then, upon receiving his license, he took a job at the Arnott Mall Barbershop in Elmira.

#### **Found Second Cousin**

Soon after, Gormley found out he had a second cousin, John Zeucher, living in Rocky River, Ohio. Gormley came to for a visit and loved the city and the area of Greater Cleveland. Discovering there were more opportunities and a more vibrant life there. He knew that if he ever left Elmira, it would be to come to Cleveland.

In July, 1995, Gormley made the move. Once he did, he again had to wait, this time for the New York barber license to be accepted in Ohio. In the interim, he worked as a waiter and bartender at a country club. In January, 1996, started as a barber at Johnny's in Fairview Park, when his license came through. He continued to work at the country club on weekends.

On March 11, 1997, Gormley left the country club to bartend at the newly opened Flannery's Pub in downtown Cleveland, with friend John McKenna. A few months later, Dennis Flannery, one of the owners of Flannery's, offered Gormley and another Irish-born manager, Declan Synnott, the opportunity to purchase another pub that Flannery owned. The two men took ownership on Feb. 1, 1998 and were partners for six years.

Gormley's dream of his own barbershop finally took root at a small duplex that he had had his eye on for more than four years. He initially leased the building for eight months, then

purchased it outright on Dec. 1, 2002. Soon after, he purchased the adjacent building and property, as well. He sold his interest in Parnell's in May of 2004 to concentrate on building his barbershop and other businesses.

The Irish Barber currently has a client base of more than 800 customers each month, served by appointment only. A second barber was added to handle overflow and walk-ins. His first client was Charles Sullivan, whose family originated from Co. Cork. Sullivan and Gormley became close friends, with Sullivan taking Gormley to his first St. Patrick's Day Mass - at St. Coleman's Church, on West 65th Street in Cleveland.

#### **Married at St. Coleman's**

St. Coleman's was also the site of another big event in Gormley's life, his wedding to Julie Hanratty, on Oct. 13, 2001, performed by Fr. Thomas Flynn. The couple met at Stamper's Grill Pub on Nov. 11, 1999, where there is now a dedication brick laid in Stamper's new patio, detailing when they met. Julie is an account manager with MBNA. Her mother's family hails from Thurles, Co. Tipperary, and Julie's father's family is from Crossmaglen, Co. Armagh.

Gormley is still a member of the John J. Lee AOH Division #1, Elmira and is an avid fan of the Glasgow Celtic Football Club. He joins other fans at a local pub called The Blarney Stone each Saturday or Sunday morning to watch games.

He was delighted to meet the whole team and his favorite player, striker Henrik Larsson, when Celtic played in Cleveland Browns Stadium in 2003. Thanks to Julie's pushing, Gormley got pictures and autographs while the Celtic players sat around drinking coffee at the Radisson Hotel in downtown Cleveland.

Gormley also has Cleveland Browns season tickets, courtesy of his wife. "No comparison, they don't sing enough ... (in American football)," Gormley states when asked about the Dawg Pound fan area versus Celtic mania. He has also been practicing karate for almost five years and is just about ready to test for his first-degree black belt.

The Irish Barber is closed on Sundays and Mondays but this is not a time of rest. Gormley spends many Mondays providing in-house barber services to handicapped and elderly men in nursing homes. The men spent their lives going to a barber but had to use the services of a beautician since they entered a nursing home. Gormley thus became a welcome sight, whose visits were appreciated by the male residents.

"If it wasn't for coming over when I was 12, I wouldn't be here today," Gormley states unequivocally about his new life. He is grateful to Project Children, the Daly families and the Hibernians for all their support and love. He is proud of his Irish heritage and loves Cleveland for having such a good mix of all Ireland, whether it be Mayo, Roscommon or Clare.

The Irish Barber has successfully brought an additional piece of Ireland to the city and solidifies another part of the American Dream.

## SHORT STORIES

### CRYSTAL BALL EYES

Vincent is silent and as combustible as the coal under the earth. He attracts trouble and orphans with the ease of metal to a magnet. Freaky gray eyes that look with disdain at the world and the entire foolish goings on in it - kind of like those paintings that seem as if the eyes are following you around the room and are always watching, always watching, that's Vincent. His coat is black, almost a charcoal blue and impossibly thick and shiny, misty morning dewdrops, even on the driest of days. Neighbors have told me they have found him watching outside their windows or inside their open doors. He is known to stow away in minivans and under strollers. Always watching and waiting. But Vincent is not all bad. As cats go, he's pretty good to have around. A life saver, actually.

The disdain that Vincent so obviously displays toward our emotional world was born of this ability to be the proverbial fly on the wall. Laissez-faire. Silently slinking in or out of the house at will and without any thought of letting anyone know, Vincent tours the neighborhood around our home with purpose, not the slow languishing sway of most cats. He gathers what he sees, and remembers. It doesn't appear that he does anything with all the joy and dirt and such that he sees, but that's not true. He steps in every once in a while.

Vincent the cat has a dog-like characteristic. When he needs something, he will bang up against you, demanding your full attention, then walk a few steps toward whatever it is he wants you to see. If you follow, he leads you on to his desires. Not following or persistent refusal to get it will result in a nasty nip of razor teeth on the finger closest to him -- "Do I have your full attention now?" he often seems to be saying. But I am getting better at reading him, I am a quick study and he has trained me well.

When Joan, the neighbor from two doors down, would come to visit, Vincent would immediately leave. I don't know why. Well, 'though I don't want to even think it, maybe I do know the reason, in the black, evil places of the mind that I don't ever want to go to. But if Joan brought her daughter, Megan, still in the carrying chair, with her, Vincent would react quite differently, standing sentry protectively between Joan and the baby, giving Joan an awfully hard time when she tried to touch the baby. Something deep, fearful and horribly unsettling inside of me tells me that Joan is not a good mother, not even a good person. She smells evil. But only Vincent knows for sure.

Emily, Joan's other daughter, four years old, "fell down the stairs," one night. She died. Joan claimed that she thought the little girl with the curly Q ebony hair and haunted eyes was asleep in her Growing Girl bed. "It was only the racket of my poor baby falling down the stairs that made me wake up and find her. I sensed something was wrong in my heart and I woke up." The racket? The nausea I still feel at not saving that child haunts me, in sleep, and in daytime nightmares too.

The day after Emily died, Joan came over, to supposedly borrow some aspirin. Joan had been hitting on me since well before her husband of six months, and father of both Emily and Megan, got the hell out of Dodge, but I knew to evade the endlessly conniving Jezebel Joan. She wasn't going to get any sympathy love from me. Vincent knew better too and cleanly sliced Joan



from ear to lip with one finely sharpened paw as Joan passed by the eye-level cabinet that Vincent was sunning on. It couldn't bring Emily back but Vincent had a message to send. He knew what Joan had done. The cops suspected, but only Vincent and Joan knew. In the months that followed, I saw how Joan's husband, while on his supervised visitations, went from doting father to empty shell, hollow eyes daring to dart a look at something, before resuming their depths of desolation, so lost. I think the doubt in his mind drove him away. He tried to get custody of Megan too but the courts are stacked against a man.

---

Carolivia had been Emily's best friend. She lives between Joan, and Vincent and I, and was inseparable from Emily while Emily was alive. I think Carolivia knew Joan was evil too. One day Carolivia's mother tried to get her to go to Joan's for an hour while she ran some emergency errand. Joan kept trying to cajole Carolivia into coming with her, but Carolivia would have none of that. She threw a tantrum unseen before or since. She just would not go.

Reading on my porch, with Vincent perched on the bay window sill behind my shoulder, I heard the commotion. Vincent gave me a nudge to get up and as I walked toward the neighbors, I asked if I could help. I was determined that I would take Carolivia or I'd do the errand myself. That woman was not going anywhere near her. Carolivia abruptly stopped her screams, walked over to me and held her hands up to be picked up. I had never held Carolivia before. I had barely even talked to her.

"Mommy, I will stay with Vincent's Daddy, can you bring me back some booberry?" I nodded to her mother, both of us equally shocked. The transformation from flailing, wailing child to cuddly Hallmark-card child had taken all of one half of one second. Carolivia knew that I had Joan pegged. Joan just wilted and slinked away, her speed picking up as she moved further from us.

My new friend started coming over a lot. She expected Vincent and I to protect her, and Megan, from Joan. "Vincent, your daddy doesn't like her either. He won't let her hurt baby Megan like she did Emily, I know it."

The overheard one way conversation from Carolivia to Vincent chilled my soul. More unsettling deep inside of me. Vincent licked Carolivia's hand, looked up at me almost hidden behind the door frame and silently ordered me to do something about it. I didn't have a clue of what to do but I was scared. Scared for Megan, and scared of Joan, of what she might do.

---

I think Megan missed her sister. She became more and more restless and Joan became more and more frazzled. I could hear her screaming at the child once in a while. I could hear the child screaming more often. Vincent always heard it first. He would rise, hiss and arch his back, all hackles and spikes and spewing angst. Out he would go as I watched him cross our yard; Carolivia's, and then turn the corner up Joan's driveway. Vincent's silent reproach each time he

returned to our house burned a hole in me. Yesterday, he came back almost immediately. And he was running.

Vincent never ran. He moved quickly and with purpose, but he never, ever ran. He was way too cool. He didn't try the bump and lead this time. Vincent bit me, hard, pulling me toward the front steps, tail swishing and cutting through the air. I knew before my mind could process and I ran. I don't remember leaving the house. I don't remember anything, until I found myself at the window of the bathroom of Joan's house, which faced out into the backyard. I looked in, my heart pounding, violent unease in my stomach.

Megan was in the white porcelain tub, the water rising, and Joan was nowhere in sight. The steam was rising too. I out screamed Megan, for Joan, and the very surprised mother instantly popped into sight, turning from where she was leaning against the wall, just outside of the open bathroom door. She saw me, her vacant expression wavered, eyes rolled upward, then snapped back into this world and grabbed Megan from the tub, all soothed and murmurs, the concerned mother.

She had been caught, it was fake, and we both knew it. I knocked out the screen, vaulted through the window and found the phone, dialing 911. I trembled and my fingers followed suit. Joan screamed at me, "Stop, she's fine. It was an accident."

I didn't believe her. She had been leaning just outside the bathroom door, not four feet from her baby, and not responding to the screams, the steam or the rising water. "She's trying to kill Megan, as sure as she killed Emily," I muttered to Vincent, who had followed me through the bathroom window.

I took the baby from Joan, placed her on the hamper and wet slightly cool facecloths, resting them on the writhing baby. The ambulance, and the cops, arrived. Megan was still screaming of course; she had burns all over her tiny white back, hands and sides. Both officers talked to Joan as I leaned in stunned silence against a kitchen countertop, the E.M.T.'s feverishly assisting Megan. Vincent sat on his haunches, between my legs, and never moved. The ambulance rushed off with Joan and Megan and I sat down for a chat with a police officer.

I told my story, skipping the part about Vincent "telling" me that there was a problem. He is a smart cat though and I knew he would understand. The cop walked with me back to my house and I found the phone number for Megan's father. He was going to be the full time parent again, if Megan survived this.

---

As I'm drifting off watching TV, Vincent suddenly rises from my chest, he had been especially cuddly and happy with me all evening. He softly steps to the door and looks back at me. I hit the mute on the TV and then I hear what he had heard. A little knock on my door. A little knock. I rise, open the door and find Carolivia there. She is holding her mommy's hand and gazing up at me.

"Carolivia wanted to tell you something," her mom informs me. "She wouldn't call on the phone or wait until tomorrow."

"That's okay, do you want to come in?" To Carolivia more than her mother,

I think.

Carolivia shakes her head no. I step out and kneel down on one knee. Carolivia moves close to me and I see one tear slip away from the puddles in her eyes as I wrap one arm around her. I feel her little open hand rest on my knee. Her forehead to my bent down cheek, Carolivia slips her other arm around my neck.

"Vincent was right. You saved Megan," she spoke softly

A sharp intake of breath. I feel such a chill. Goose bumps and the flip flops of my stomach all rush over me at once. "I think it was Vincent that saved her," I whisper back, my throat almost completely closed up now.

"No, he could see, but you heard. You saved Megan. Emily is happy now."

My tears join Carolivia's, and as I hug this most precious little girl, I see two tears splash on the porch, from her mother's eyes.

Vincent's swishy tail sweeps my side. He looks right at me as he settles on his haunches to watch us. I see, for the first time ever, no disdain in Vincent's freaky gray eyes.

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## SAVING BORU

On a cold and wet fall day in November, knowing it might be one of our last walks outdoors for the year and facing a weather induced quarantine to the indoors, we tread the well-worn path and pipe dream towards weight loss once more. Large, multi-colored oak leaves stuck to my shoes and the damp wind had the scent of chilly days hanging on its edges.

I was taking Vincent for a walk, even though most folks say cats don't "go for walks." But you have to know Vincent. Cat or not, there are no parameters too broad, for Vincent walks her own line. She likes to stroll along the neighborhood's busier streets with me, looking around and making sure all is well, with me and with the world. Vincent seems to worry that I don't exercise enough and is always demanding to take me for a walk. We weave the same old course, forwards or back, a big square around the main streets of our WestPark, Ohio neighborhood.

That day, at the spot where we usually walk right on past Lucille Avenue, Vincent made a left. She took a short burst of steps and vaulted onto the braces of a six - foot high fence. Such a serious privacy fence, on the corner lot. Vincent took a look and waited for me to do the same. I knew something was wrong. I could taste something foreboding in the air, and in Vincent's raised hackling back. I am tall, so seeing over the fortress wall was not too hard. I wished that day, for the first time in my life, to be a vertically challenged man.

The yard was a household's junkyard. Dirty old blankets, broken furniture, pieces from cars and lots of dried and lumpy mud covered the area from the back porch to the back fence. The only green came from several large trees,

used to hold up more garbage. Not a blade of grass anywhere - just hard packed earth and dried out muddy lanes. I didn't see any way to get into the yard, nor a reason to do so. But Vincent did.

Over the fence, silently leaped the blue- black shadow, almost disappearing in the garbage piled high. The long and so straight tail was the only antennae to her location. Leaping on top of a propped up gas tank, Vincent turned, looked back at me, sat back and then covered her nose with one curving paw. I couldn't smell it but Vincent was giving me fair warning. There were dead things back there.

---

I waited, knowing full well she would show me what needed to be seen, and sadly, I wasn't wrong. Laid full out on the ground was what was left of what must once have been a most magnificent animal. It was a huge, albeit soulless carcass of an Irish wolfhound. The hot rock that was my heart went from its usual resting place below my ribs to drop into my stomach and it lurched and sank among the new acid located there. What Vincent had found was a dead dog. Magnificent in life, horrid in death. His long harried coat, normally dark grey and white, looked more like matted black seaweed, discarded in a corner - wet, clotted, stuck together by dirt and who knows what, and crawling with bugs and flies.

Vincent went toward the dog, stepped through the mess like an Indian scout, a wind, stepping silently, disturbing nothing, until she reached the hound's side and called into his ear. That Vincent would approach a dog was, in and of itself, not surprising. Vincent loved dogs of all kinds and would often lay down beside a few of her favorites to catch a well deserved nap while they kept an eye on things. But not a dead one. That should have been my first inkling that maybe the great hound wasn't dead after all. I couldn't see any reaction to Vincent's approach but I moved over to the corner of the lot to get a better look. The hound must have heard me, for suddenly it raised its great shaggy head, looked at me looking at him, and then flopped back down hard, not a drop of strength left. My heart leapt in fright, from my stomach to the top of my skull, then back down again.

The hound may not have had any strength in its body but in a sliver of recognition within my fright, I had seen the hurt in its great big sorrowful black eyes. That dog had been abused, often and intentionally. Vincent whispered once more, into the hound's ear. The ear twitched once and the wasted hound seemed to relax. But its eyes did not open again. I feared it was gone, but now that I was closer, I was able to see an occasional, oh-so-faint and highly irregular rise in the Wolfhound's chest. I also saw the look of anger, hopelessness and despair in Vincent eyes too.

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I leaned against the fence and Vincent hopped back up onto the beam, so we could consult. What to do? I knew of the Irish Wolfhound Rescue group that would take hounds and find them a good home. It was usually meant for owners who could no longer care for a hound and called for help. This was far different. Calling the APL might help, I didn't know much about them. But



calling the cops was certainly in order. So I did. And I waited, speaking softly to the grand dog as Vincent rubbed her furry black face across the dogs muzzle repeatedly, encouraging with the thought that help was on the way.

I pulled a beef jerky out of my pocket, unpeeled it and held it out. Vincent came and got it, then brought it over to the hound and waited. Achingly slow, the hound caught scent of it, then raised its head and opened its mouth, accepting the gift from my cat. The pain seemed more than the poor hound - or I, could bear.

A squad car came by soon enough and I waved the officer over. He took one look and made a call himself. Westpark is the last great neighborhood in Cleveland and the Residency Rule is in force here. City government employees must live in the city. A lot of cops lived in Westpark and, via the radio traffic, a lot of cops heard what was going on in their neighborhood. Soon there were all kinds of people tripping over themselves to find a way into the yard. No way had been built, except for from the house. Vincent and I stayed out of the way. I was learning to watch just like my cat.

I liked these cops, my neighbors, they didn't mess around. When no one answered the front door, they took it down. It only took four or five seconds for them to all come back out, holding anything they could find over their noses and quickly shutting the door to keep something inside. There were more dead things in there, I feared. More calls, more arrivals, and the cops started talking to the neighbors too.

Somehow, no one knew that this abomination existed, right next door. Soon technicians in white protective suits, like poncho pantsuits with oxygen, started making forays into the house, removing all kinds of dogs - only dogs. Almost all seemed alive, none as bad as the hound tossed into the backyard graveyard. All wore muzzles and were nearly as gaunt as the hound. Hate and distrust radiated from their eyes but the gentle touch, warmth and caring of the technicians did seem to help, at least a little. Then they started removing the dead ones. I had to turn away.

Light bulb flashes turned the fading sun into daylight again and the news stations got a hold of the story. The news and the police photographers competed to document all that I wished I could not see.

After an hour or so, the house was cleared of animals enough to allow passage into the backyard. Vincent nudged me, to take a look, as the back door swung open. Technician #1 went directly to where we were standing, with me leaning on the other side of the fence and Vincent overseeing both me and the hound. The tech called for help but his words were drowned out by other calls from the yard. "I've got one over here," or "there's another one over here." Over and over. The chills that ran through me would not have been lessened by the hottest summer day, let alone this soggy precursor to the bitter cold on the way.

Dead compatriots in the yard. I gagged. The smell of dead bodies didn't reach me, the overwhelming release of massive amounts of lime did. The intent must have been for the lime to eat all the evidence and kill the decaying smell. There was no grass in the graveyard.

But then the two techs oh-so-tenderly hoisted the hound up, looked toward the house and the long carry. The arrival of Fire Station No. 1, and three axes, gave the technicians a much closer exit. These guys were seriously pissed now. I was just sick. I held Vincent in my arms, stroking her and feeling the anger coursing through her too.

The techs carried the hound to a waiting SUV and laid him gently on a few blankets arranged into a bed. The poor creature still didn't open its eyes and I knew it couldn't last too much longer. A stream of vehicles headed for the nearby Warren Village Animal Hospital, and Vincent and I headed there ourselves too, once we told the police of our very brief involvement. We left the most silent bedlam I had ever seen.

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The animal hospital was not much better but it smelled clean, a scent I was wondering if I would ever experience again. I needed a mental and emotional shower. Dogs were lying and sitting everywhere, but not a bark was heard. I saw lots of trembling though. People were shaking my hand and nodding as Vincent made his rounds. I just numbly looked around at the eerily silent chaos.

I was told volunteers had been arriving at the hospital since the first reports were aired on Live at Five News and every one of them was needed. When the hound went into the back for surgery, I saw Vincent slip out an open door, stop to nod to me, and head for home. I put on a pair of gloves, doing whatever I was told. Mostly it involved holding, stroking and trying to fuse love back into these hollow lives as doctors and assistants looked them over. Realistically though, after love, food and water were the medicine they needed most.

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After a few hours, I woke up a friend at the hound rescue group with a call and gave him a heads up. He said he'd take care of it. Over the next few weeks, we moved dogs from critical to just plain lonely and their health changed tremendously in a very short time. Amazing resilience. Over a two dozen dead dogs had been found in and around the house on Lucille, four more died that week. But thirteen didn't. Vincent had gotten to them in time.

The owner was eventually found, in Death Valley, of all places, where he had run after getting a heads up by the reports on the radio. He ran, the police chased, and hell hath no fury like a neighborhood embarrassed by its own daze. The neighborhood watch hunted down every clue and forced their findings and ideas on anyone who would listen. The man was caught, tried and convicted, - to three years in jail. He had no explanation. All thirteen dogs found a new home, and love.

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Now, two years after that fall walk, Boru, the hound, is nuzzling me, a leash in its mouth. Comparatively tiny Vincent is not jealous, only watching out for the dog that is a good seven feet tall when standing on its hind legs, thick and strong. Boru is healthy, affectionate. Seems to be happy, and barks once in a

while too. Boru thinks I don't get enough exercise either. That darn cat has been talking in his ear again.

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## POETRY

### Tommy's Song

Awaken *Mary Ann*, for  
*The Liar*,  
*The Man of No Conscience*, cries,  
*That No Irish Need Apply*  
*Peace and Justice* disappear  
in *the Rape of the Gael*  
*In That Land I Loved So Well*,  
*True Love and Time*.  
have stopped.

*There Was An Old Woman*.  
among the *Four Green Fields*,  
She entreated me,  
*Brendan, The Darkley Weaver*,  
*Don't Go Down To The Big Green Sea*.  
contrast,  
from *Clean Air, Clean Water*,  
to the *Ships of War* ready,  
even *The Water Sings* out -  
to the march of  
*The Enniskillen Dragoons*  
*Where Ever The Winds*,  
*The Winds of Morning?*

*The Winds Are Singing Freedom!*  
And call for *Better Times*.  
I went anyway.  
And so,  
*Farewell My Friends*.  
*Farewell to Carlingford*,  
*Fare Thee Well Enniskillen*  
Let there be none  
of *The Morning After Blues*.  
Fear, but hope again to walk  
*This Dusty Road*.

when next again, in victory  
we are *Rolling Home*.

But now, as we enjoin  
*The Boys of Killybegs*  
toasting farewells,  
sipping *Paddy Kelly's Brew*.  
*Freedom's Sons* are singing;  
singing sad songs,  
to their love, songs.  
*Pretty Maggie O', Sally O',*  
*Pretty Saro and Rosie.*  
for some,  
a *Song For The Children*.

In *The Time Of Scented Roses*,  
let they be not black,  
*The Long Woman's Grave*.  
Rather *Sing Me The Old Songs*;  
of *Rambling Rivers*  
in *The Rambles of Spring*,  
*Clear Blue Hills*  
or *Grey October Clouds*,  
among *Long Winter Nights*.

If I should return,  
*If You Should Ask Me*,  
*I'm Going Home To Mary*,  
*Smiling Mary*  
I can see her, as she holds  
our *Gentle Annie* in her arms,  
listening to  
*The Listowel Blackbird* sing;  
*Music In The Twilight*,  
In *Newry Town*  
I will return again

### **A Window In a Memoir**

Time stops for no man, woman or child  
But the stories in "My Grandfather's Emigrant Eyes"  
or  
"The Old Man"  
slip away when they do  
Of lives lived, things that were that are no more  
First fading in memories,  
then just fading

History that I want to raise from the dead,  
before they are dead.  
History from before I ever lived  
For when I am gone,  
and they are gone,  
the history will be gone too  
Too precious to lose without remembering, recording, preserving,  
to be studied, admired,  
understood – history whose presence shaped  
and reshaped-  
to make the people and the land



what they are today  
Old practices, old beliefs,  
rushed past by the trickling, falling sand  
And forgotten. Almost.  
I do not forget.  
I know what I do not know  
And seek to know it.  
Not only for myself but for my children,  
and theirs  
Preservation of the memories  
keep alive what has passed away  
I was raised on songs and stories,  
a stored up library  
given for others to borrow,  
read, see,  
re-live and mostly,  
As a window within a memoir -  
to understand.

### **The Years in Her Eyes**

I see the years in her eyes  
A miasma that can only be caused by the pain of a life well lived  
It may be the years, it may be the mileage  
It may be all she has seen or lost - that took bits of her heart

A far off look, of things remembered, regrets  
Then she smiles and those thoughts are supplanted, eradicated  
The stories come forth, Almost unwittingly, shyness overcome  
Good memories flood and wash away the momentary darkness  
and the present recedes, to become overloaded with recollections  
Now so much to tell, an urgency, to beat the recorder and the march of time  
Wouldn't do to have the stories lost.  
It wouldn't do to have the teller not feel this cherished, all of the time.  
at least while we can. Until the next injects its own urgency.  
The kettle is always boiling, and the stories taste so sweet.

Hours give way. New memories are born in crying the old.  
for both the teller and the awed.  
Perhaps, in a different way,  
even more treasured than the stories that brought me here in the first place  
The recorder shuts off but my mind keeps turning, reliving. The images so  
vividly reborn  
giving context to the foggy images of history  
that until now, only slipped in, and out of my consciousness.  
A way that was only legend, has now become a history -  
living and breathing - reborn, again.  
For a few more generations to breathe, taste  
Captured briefly, before it could disappear completely.  
to what was, today, I know the light in her eyes has illuminated.  
yet another window to what was, how it was.  
The stories in her eyes, light, explain  
how I see, the years in her eyes.