



• UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER •

The Golden Generation: A Living Legacy

by Liam Reidy, President, United Irish Cultural Center, (lreidy@irishcentersf.org)

IT'S NATURAL TO REFLECT ON THE past and the contributions of those who came before us, particularly when attending memorial events and funerals. The "golden generation" of Irish immigrants that arrived in America in the post-World War II era played a significant role in shaping this country, and their legacy lives on through their families and communities. Many from this generation are now being lost with the passage of time. The names of the deceased UICC members in the annual memorial mass booklet is now a Who's Who of local community stalwarts and avid UICC supporters during the past 50 years.

Listening to eulogies and reading obituaries it's truly inspiring to hear about the sacrifices and hard work of these immigrants. Many of these immigrants came to the United States "without a jacket for a gooseberry" seeking a better life and opportunities for themselves and their families.

They faced challenges and hardships, but they also worked hard and contributed to the growth and prosperity of the country. They established businesses, built communities, and raised families. It's important to remember and honor the sacrifices and contributions of this generation of immigrants, as they paved the way for future generations to thrive in America. By reflecting on

their experiences, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the struggles and triumphs of the immigrant experience and the enduring values that continue to shape our society.

Closer Inspection

Typically the stories of early immigrant struggle and eventual success are never heard unless you attend a funeral of a loved one or listen carefully to the eulogy of someone recently deceased. For many of the UICC members that have passed on to their eternal reward the Irish Center building is part of the living legacy they have left behind. They dreamt up the idea of a Center, built it, paid for it, and sustained it over the past five decades. Now it's the turn of their kids and grandkids to carry the flag forward.

Funny Anecdotes

Many Irish emigrants that arrived in America from the middle of the 20th Century onwards did so by chain migration. Usually someone here in the States sent the money home to Ireland for the passage of the next sibling, cousin, nephew or niece. Upon arrival, many of the men and women were indentured workers so to speak who had to work to pay off the advance of the cost to come to America.

I know of one man that arrived to work as a rancher in southern Oregon in the early 1950s. Within days of his ar-

rival he lost his index finger in a tractor moving accident in a field of thistles. He spent the next few days recovering in a local hospital. When his boss arrived to see how he was doing the poor lad said: "I'm doing OK I suppose." His boss quickly answered: "Get well soon, you owe me \$100!" Welcome to America!

Another man arrived in Toledo, Ohio, in 1962 with a young family with the aid of a local Catholic priest. The curate managed to get the man a job locally as a farm laborer. His first day on the job was his last. He was asked by the boss man to weed between the tomato stalks and budding lettuce heads in the tilled beds. Never letting on that he didn't know the difference between dock leaves, dandelions, tomatoes or lettuce was a recipe for disaster. When the boss returned at the end of the day to review his day's work, he observed that the new man in town not only pulled the weeds but had pulled all the tomato stalks and lettuce heads as well! In his defense the young man said that the weeds all looked the same to him! He fared better in his next job manufacturing bullets for a US Army contractor and he was soon on the road to success.

And that's how things went for many people. Early setbacks proved educational to most emigrants, who couldn't

return home in a hurry. You had to wise up fast. There were bills to be paid, families to raise and a future in America to build towards.

Leaving a Legacy

The legacy of these Irish immigrants can be seen all around us, from the many Irish businesses, the built environment, and pubs that dot the landscape of our cities, to the vibrant Irish cultural scene that continues to thrive in our own Center here in San Francisco. The story of these Irish immigrants is a story of hope and perseverance, a reminder that anything is possible if we have the courage to dream and the determination to make those dreams a reality. Their legacy is felt in the thriving Irish community in the Bay Area, and in the success of their children and grandchildren who have gone on to achieve great things in their own lives.

Many of them have followed in their parents' footsteps by valuing education and hard work, and using these tools to build successful lives for themselves and their families. Some have become business leaders, doctors, lawyers, educators, and politicians, while others have pursued careers in the arts, music, and sports. Their success is a testament to the hard work and perseverance of their parents and grandparents, who

instilled in them a strong work ethic and a commitment to their community.

The legacy of the "golden generation" of Irish immigrants is a powerful reminder of the strength and resilience of the human spirit, and a source of inspiration for us all. Their story is a reminder that with determination and perseverance, anything is possible. Are we ready to develop a legacy of our own and contribute towards a new Irish Center? Neosfaidh an aimsir! (Time will Tell!)

Leo Walsh Scholarship Awards

On Sunday May 7th at 3pm the Leo T Walsh scholarship will disburse awards to graduating high school seniors going off to college and eighth grade students moving onto high school in the fall. Many thanks to all those who contributed funds to the scholarship program.

Humours of Bandon

This award-winning production written by and starring former Irish Dance Champion Margaret Mc Auliffe is a coming-of-age story, full of heart, humor and wisdom, for anyone who had a childhood passion that threatened to overwhelm their life. This will be the first live play at the Center in many years. Please come out and support live theatre on May 12 at 7pm.

Irish Center Summer Camp 2023

THE UICC IS COMMITTED to providing top-notch cultural programming opportunities, with special attention to youth as we build for the next generation of Irish Americans. We are delighted to have international creative force, Máire Clerkin, returning to the summer program and leading the charge as Camp Director. She is eager to work with a talented and diverse team of artists in a variety of activities and experiences for our Campers ages 8-16 years. With such variety, every Camper will discover new passions and find their way to shine!

Máire has revealed an exciting theme for 2023—the famous Irish myth, Tír na nÓg, or Land of Eternal Youth. She explains, "We will interpret the folk tale by dramatizing, singing, playing, and dancing around the legend of Oisín and Niamh and how a curse by King Manannán mac Lir brings his daughter Niamh to Ireland where she meets Finn Mac Cool's son, Oisín."

With three weeks of fun sessions in singing, drama, drumming, hip hop dance, fiddle, piano, storytelling, visual arts and crafts, outdoor sports, web design, video making, and theater performance, Campers will work to create a theatrical production by Camp's end for all to enjoy.

"There is a lot of scope for intrigue with comedy, disguise, songs of adventure, a mystery voyage, wild sailors, a sad pig, banshees, hurling games, and a magic horse," says Máire. "Every



Máire Clerkin.

camper chooses their favorite activities, and our experienced camp leaders will show them how to gain new skills, laugh as they play, and prepare to perform on the final night!"

Steeped in Irish arts her entire life, Máire was born in London of Irish parents—her mother was a renowned Irish dance teacher, adjudicator, and feis musician. Máire has made a career in Irish arts, with her acclaimed

dance theatre companies touring Britain and Ireland in the 1980-90s. Her award-winning show The Bad Arm—Confessions of a Dodgy Irish Dancer toured North America, Dublin, Edinburgh Festival, and London's West End, as well as an appearance at the Irish Dancing World Championships in North Carolina.

Over the next few weeks we will introduce other members of the Camp staff. As for what campers can expect, the possibilities are endless. Immerse themselves in playing music, dancing, singing, acting out stories, creating art on paper, and digitally, and joining in Irish sports, Campers will no doubt form friendships and discover new talents while enjoying the rich experience of Irish arts and culture.

Irish Camp enrollment is still open, but spaces are filling up fast. Irish Camp is available to 8-16 year olds and it runs Monday through Friday from 9 am to 3 pm from June 12—June 30 at the Irish Center.

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Our Local Dancers—Earning Their Place In The World

by Eileen Mize

THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA was well represented in the 51st Annual CLRG World Irish Dancing Championships held in Montreal, Canada during Easter week. With more than 2,500 Irish dancers from 23 nations—from Ireland to Argentina to Hong Kong—the eight-day competition featured the best of the best, and we couldn't be prouder of our local participants. Kudos to all the dance schools, families, and dancers who have worked so hard to achieve this level of success. Of particular note we would like to highlight we would like to congratulate the following dancers and schools who competed, with a special shout-out to Hannah Logar who placed 3rd in the world and brings a



Rohan Murphy Irish Dance Academy's Cassidy Howard with dance teacher Lauren Edberg, TCRG.



Whelan Academy's James McLoughlin with Deirdre McLoughlin.

coveted globe back to the Bay. Well done to all involved.

The 2024 Worlds will be held in Glasgow, Scotland. (Thanks to Rohan Murphy's Lauren Edberg for contributing to this write-up).

Whelan Academy of Irish Dance:
Hannah Logar (3rd place)—Ladies 21-23
James McLoughlin—U15

Kennelly School of Irish Dance:
Lyla Quinones—U11
Rowan Mitchelson—U11

McKeever School of Irish Dance:
Olive Kincaid—U13

Rohan Murphy Irish Dance Academy:
Cassidy Howard—U13



Patricia Kennelly, TCRG, ADCRG with her dancers Lyla Quinones and Rowan Mitchelson.



Olive Kincaid with teacher Nicole McKeever, TCRG, ADCRG.



Hannah Logar of the Whelan Academy of Irish Dance brings home the globe with an impressive 3rd place podium finish.

Award-Winning Irish Dancing Play At The Center May 12

THE HUMOURS OF BANDON by Margaret McAuliffe is on a major North American tour, supported by Culture Ireland. This 7-week tour will play to audiences at 26 performances in 14 venues and cities, across 11 states and provinces in the United States and Canada—the most ambitious tour to date for Dublin's Fishamble: The New Play Company.

This award-winning production written by and starring former Irish Dance Champion Margaret McAuliffe is a coming-of-age story, full of heart, humor and wisdom, for anyone who had a childhood passion that threatened to overwhelm their life.

Annie is a 16-year-old Irish Dancer from

Dublin and we meet her on the eve of the biggest competition of her life, the Irish Open Championships 1999. She charts us through the various successes and disappointments of her Irish Dancing life. We share her mind-numbing commitment and burning desire to win the coveted Irish Open title. Will she win and, if so, in what way?

From the confines of every community hall in Ireland, Irish Dancing champions are churned out at a massive rate. Medals and cups build up in drawing rooms and Riverdance swells a national pride, but the public aren't privy to the blood, sweat and tears that pave the way to the first-place podium.

National Award For The UICC's Keepers Of The Steps

EILEEN MIZE ACCEPTED an Irish Echo 2023 Irish Arts award for the Keepers of the Steps on behalf of the Keepers committee in Buffalo, New York on Friday April 28th. Keepers of the Steps is a special cultural program of the United Irish Cultural Center—a growing collection of Irish dance stories, memorabilia, and ephemera. The compendium traces the roots of Irish step dancing in the San Francisco Bay Area back to the mid 1800s during the Gold Rush era when Irish immigrants arrived in record numbers.

Eileen was also part of a special panel discussion on the importance of promoting Irish arts and culture to younger generations, which is really at the crux of what she believes is so important about the work of Keepers of the Steps. "For today's young dancers to understand that their participation in a feis or an Oireachtas is so much more than the training and skill, the dress and the hair—it's about breathing life into a centuries-old cultural art form steeped in tradition and a way to really feel a part of something bigger than yourself. Having that extra perspective should inspire any dancer!"



Máirtín Ó Muilleoir, publisher of the Irish Echo and Eileen Mize at the 2023 Irish Arts Award show in NY on April 28th.

Award-winning, one-woman, coming-of-age story

The United Irish Cultural Center presents

A FISHAMBLE PRODUCTION

THE HUMOURS OF BANDON

Written & Performed by Margaret McAuliffe
Directed by Stefanie Preissner

Don't miss this West Coast Premier!

Friday, May 12, 2023

United Irish Cultural Center
2700 45th Ave San Francisco

TICKETS:
www.irishcentersf.org

Cultúr Éireann
Culture Ireland

★ AWARDS ★

★ CEREMONY ★

★ LEO T. WALSH ★

★ SCHOLARSHIP ★

★ PROGRAM ★

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SUNDAY MAY 7TH, 2023

AT 3PM

SF. PATRICKS ROOM