

## Two events celebrating the Good Friday Agreement: Breakfast at the Kennedy Library and unveiling of Northern Ireland mural

Within a week (in late April and early May) the Irish Cultural Center received invitations to two events, each celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. On Friday, May 2, Chip Costello and Sister Judy Kappenman attended breakfast at the John F. Kennedy Library where An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern gave an address in his last public appearance in the United States as prime minister.

He began by announcing a \$2 million gift on behalf of the Irish people, saying that it was a down payment on the debt owed to the Kennedy family. He praised Ted Kennedy for supporting Ireland in Congress for forty years and Jean Kennedy Smith for serving as United States Ambassador during the years leading up to the historic Good Friday agreement of 1998, which formally ended the conflict in Northern Ireland. The slain president's daughter, Caroline, joined her uncle in presenting Ahern with a glass bowl made by Vermont artisan Simon Pearce.

Congressman Edward Kennedy, in his introductory remarks spoke of his families' Irish roots and of President John Kennedy's visit to Ireland in 1963. He praised Bertie Ahern for his part in ending the Troubles, Ireland's longstanding struggle.

Also included in the program was the showing of a short video with scenes of some of the violence during the Troubles, a listing of statistics of death and injuries over the years, as well as photos of the major players in the peace process.

John Shattuck, chief executive of the Kennedy Library Foundation, said the donation will be used to establish the Irish Heritage Collection of the Ken-



**Pictured above: An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern**

nedy Library Digital Archive, to underwrite part of the Profile in Courage Award, and to develop new public programs on diversity in the slain president's tradition.

On Monday, April 28 Kathy Riordan, Kathy Gullivan and Sister Judy Kappenman attended the unveiling of an historic mural from Belfast, Northern Ireland/the north of Ireland at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in a program entitled Painting from the Same Palette.

The mural by the two artists, Danny Devenny and Mark Ervine, previously on opposite sides of the conflict point to a future of hope as it pictures in brilliant colors, smiling children's faces, holding, not guns, but paint brushes, poised and ready to create a new world of peace and beauty. The artists included on the mural the statement: "If you pay too much time looking out of the rear view mirror, you will miss what is ahead of you." Present also, but not prominent, were pictured figures of the Troubles, all in shades of gray.

The program concluded with a teleconference with the two artists from Belfast. After initial remarks, they

answered questions from those present. They particularly stressed their belief that real peace comes by following their example - two ordinary workmen working together. Peace comes about, they said, not from the top down, but from the roots.

Congressman Richard Neal who gave the keynote address recalled some of the major figures in the peace process. UMass professor, Leah Wing spoke of how her Belfast experiences had led to her involvement in the project. She showed a short video of the history of the Belfast murals during the years of the Troubles. The film also included interviews with the two muralists.

One of the artists, Danny Devenny, former IRA prisoner said, "During the war the murals told the story of injustices we experienced. Now they show hope for the future." Mark Ervine, son of David Erivne, former Progressive Unionist Party Leader and Ulster Volunteer Force member, pointed out that there have been more than a thousand murals in Belfast, which have constantly changed to reflect the two communities' concerns about the conflict. "Now hopefully, this is the beginning of ones that reflect the peace."

Since the mural is on canvas and can travel, we hope that we can host Leah Wing and the mural at the Elms College in the fall.

Before the program drew to a close, Associate Dean of the graduate School, Nigar Khan announced a symposium and arts celebration for the second semester in 2009. The organizers hope to bring the two artists to Amherst when they will work with faculty and students at the university.

## Looking back over ten good years by Tim Allen

It was the right time in my life to get involved in something. Sean Cahillane explained that he and a few others were meeting in the hopes of starting a group at the Elms College that would focus on the preservation of Irish culture. Would I like to be a part of this group?

Yes, I said. The timing was good.

Mary Kate, my younger child, was a senior in high school, and the nest would soon be empty. I'd have some time available.

That was the Fall of 1998. Almost ten years ago- almost ten years of my life involved in this group that set out with a mission to keep the Irish arts alive. It seemed like such a simple mission but it has led to so many strands of activity. Like a river which has sprouted tributaries, my involvement in the Irish Cultural Center has, I hope contributed to its achievements, and as important has profoundly affected my personal life.

First, there were many organizational accomplishments.

1. Around 300 members
2. A strong board of about twenty people
3. A great relationship with Elms College
4. Around 200 events. Think of that – 200!

### Ed's Corner by Ed Callahan

When we begin to research our family roots, we are trying to fill in the gaps in our knowledge about our own selves. We are going back through time and distance. It is a journey into the unknown.

Most of us have our origins in foreign lands and the knowledge of these places and people are lost in the mists of time.

How does one begin? We must start with the known material in the present and go back in time to the un-

5. Partnerships with other Irish organizations.
6. A place for people to go to celebrate Irish culture.
7. The development of an Irish Studies program.
8. Elms students studying in Ireland.
9. Visitors from Ireland – including several famous ones.
10. A full-time director of the Center.
11. Recognition in the local and regional Irish community.

It's nice to sit back and review the outcomes. Hopefully you and many others have enjoyed the programs we've offered.

But my relationship with the Center is on a much more personal level. I think it is that way for many board members, but I know that it is that way for me.

1. I have made friendships that I will treasure forever.
2. I have been part of a board that works harder and is more loyal to its work than any other board I have been involved in. (It was always a big joke that board meetings lasted two hours, but twenty minutes later half the people would still be there meeting and talking about issues and events).

known. The best place is to start with yourself. List all your family members: parents, grandparents, siblings, children and others that you have personal knowledge about.

In this list, add any information about locations that you know, such as addresses, including towns, counties, states, countries. Include any material that is directly related to the search: for example, family wills or bibles with names and birth dates.

Once you have this material listed,

3. I revived my writing career (so to speak).

4. I met people from Ireland that I visited when I went there, and then I met more people. Great and fun people. I've visited my new friends and they've visited me.

5. I became involved in Billy's Malawi Project through meeting Mags Riordan.

We built something that will last. It's cool to do that in life.

What we built will go on. There is a strong board of twenty-one people with six new members. They will bring energy, enthusiasm, new ideas. It will continue because of these good people and others like them who will contribute through their membership, their interest, their love of Ireland, the friendships. It will grow in new ways because of the new people and the new opportunities that will come. I've spent about 200 nights in ten years on the Elms campus in board meetings or other meetings – that's only twenty a year, not too bad. I missed four board meetings in ten years. I put a lot of time in. No regrets. Not one.

I got paid back in so many other ways. My friends and my memories will last forever.

then you can talk to other family members who may have additional information, or that may have actual knowledge from an older generation who have since passed away. Include any stories about older generations.

This is the core of the family history that has been passed down to you. However, it is just a rough outline of the actual material that you will acquire in your search.

## Marshal award accepted by Thomas Moriarty continued from last issue

Tom was honored at the Chicopee Colleen Ball where he delivered an address on March 15.

This evening we're celebrating the Irish heritage and Irish Culture. The Irish-American piece of Chicopee history has long interested me. Perhaps this is an opportunity to remember and pay tribute to the early Irish community of Chicopee.

Actually, the Irish were here before Chicopee was Chicopee! In the 1820s and 1830s an identifiable Irish community existed in the Cabotville section of Springfield. Here was a pre-Famine Irish settlement. These Irish worked on the dam, the canal, and the early factories. They were a bit better off, more English-speaking, of somewhat higher social status, and more religiously diverse. However, Cabotville became the rallying point of the Western Massachusetts mission of the Catholic Church. So, this pre-Famine Irish community became the nucleus of the Cabotville Catholic Church organized in 1838. The actual structure was completed in 1843. The Cabotville Church Book, housed in the Elms Archives, tells us much about this early Catholic-Irish-community. It contains page after page of Irish names with the amounts they contributed to the building of the first church—\$.50, \$1.00, some \$2.00. My sense is that this early community assimilated fairly comfortably into the life of Cabotville.

Then, in the late 1840s and 1850s the Famine Irish came in huge numbers into the now separate town of Chicopee. Records of births and marriages show them swamping the town, and raising serious concerns and reservations about their presence. The natives felt overwhelmed. These Irish immigrants were differ-

ent from themselves, and to some extent, from the earlier Irish community. The Famine Irish were poorer, of lower social status, mostly Irish-speaking, and overwhelmingly Catholic. The Irish of the 1840s and 1850s lived in Chicopee Center, the Falls and the West End. The latter was called the "Patch", and evidently was the location of the poorest of the poor.

These Irish in the Patch (Paddies as they were called) were viewed as unruly and constantly fighting among themselves. They were clannish, so that the man from County Kerry would like to lick the first man from County Clare. They drank to excess and made illegal home brew. The Yankee-run local newspapers were filled with "Irish jokes in which the Irish were pictured as ignorant, naïve, and childlike creatures. They are described as ill-bred immigrants from priest-ridden Ireland.

Cholera outbreaks were evidently fairly common among the Irish of the Patch. *The Chicopee Weekly Journal* reported several deaths in August and September of 1854, for example, that of a mother and three children named Fitzgerald who had arrived in town only a few days earlier. There was a tendency to blame the deaths on the inappropriate Irish life style: five deaths among the Irish of the Patch were owing to "nonsensical fear, swinish filth and miserable liquor." The paper reported that most deaths occurred on Monday and were the result of the previous day's rum drinking.

The intense anti-Catholic feeling toward the Chicopee Irish is well illustrated in a long editorial in *The Chicopee Weekly Journal* on February 9, 1856 entitled *Catholicity*. It read in part: "And let us look at our town of Chicopee. About one third of the population is composed of Irish-

Catholics; and three quarters of the crimes come from that class. Were it not for the Patch, our lawyers and justices would have much leaner purses. And just so throughout the country. A very large proportion of the crime is of Catholic procreation."

Many of these Irish in the Patch must have fallen through the cracks—victims of overwork, illness and excessive drinking. Yet, by 1859 they had contributed out of their meager earnings to the building of a magnificent new church to replace the 1843 structure. It was to be called Holy Name of Jesus and was to become the mother church of the Springfield Diocese. By the late 1860s and 1870s, moreover, the Irish were climbing into the lower ranks of the middle class and beginning to enter the political life of Chicopee.

New waves of immigrants, the French Canadians and the poles, were arriving. They, too, were to meet some of the same hostility as the early Irish. But these early Irish had paved the way for later groups. So, let's remember this early Irish community of Chicopee—their hardships, their struggles, but also their perseverance and eventual progress. They are a part of the Irish and Irish-American story and heritage which we are celebrating this evening.

So my thanks again to the Parade Committee, to my family, to the Elms, and to the Irish Cultural Center.

*Táim an bhródúil gur thug sibh an onóir seo dom. Go raibh míle, míle maith agaibh. Is é seo go hiontach ar fad! I'm very proud that you have given me this honor. A thousand thanks. This is altogether wonderful!*

## Irish language study an essential part of our programs

Since its founding in 1999 the Center has hosted over 200 events welcoming thousands to the Elms College campus. For the first five years we offered a dozen or more programs or about one a month, but in the last five years we have more than doubled that number.

We offer a wide variety of programs: lectures and book readings, concerts, films and plays, children's events, travel to Ireland, workshops. Some of these events are a one-time offering, others become the first in a series of yearly events. Each of them has the single goal of "keeping the Irish arts alive."

For example, in 1999 we offered for the first time Christmas with an Irish Touch (a liturgy followed by entertainment) and we have hosted the event every year since. It is one of our most popular programs. "The event always begins for me the Christmas season," says one of our long time attendees.

The unique program that we call Celtic Adventures for Kids began in 2001 and every year, we have welcomed 50-60 young people to the campus and introduced them to Irish dancing, singing, playing the tin whistle, arts and crafts, story telling and Irish language.

Another program that is longstanding is the showing of films. In 2002 Sean Crane began hosting a series in February, and in 2006 Heather Lowe who had taken over the series the previous year, expanded the series to showings in the fall as well.

One consistent offering we have had is the services of a volunteer genealogist. George Kennedy helped people for years and since his death, Ed Callahan has continued the service for those who are researching their ancestors.

The other constant and one of the most essential to who we are is the language classes and groups that meet on the campus year round. As a matter of fact, a group of language enthusiasts had been meeting since the early 1980s after taking Irish language courses at the Elms College with Ken Nilsen, language professor at the time.

This group continues to meet weekly to work on translations and conversation. Many enthusiasts hone their skills by attending immersion workshops in New York, New England areas and even in Ireland.

One of the students in that early language class at the Elms, Tom Moriarty, has, in turn, become one of the Irish language teachers, and its strongest advocate at the Elms College. The course is run as an Elms non-credit course. Both introductory Irish and Irish language study group are offered each semester.

The non-credit introductory course includes an introduction to the sounds, vocabulary and spelling patterns of the language. Students learn words, phrases and sentences in order to carry on simple conversations; they also study the place of the language in Irish culture. The study group continues to develop their skills, increasing their ability to read, write and converse in Irish.

On June 7 we hosted Lá Gaeilge for the third year in a row. As a day of immersion, participants attended two language classes in one of four language levels depending on ability. They also attended a workshop and viewed an Irish film on the Irish poet Seán Ó Riordain.

In addition to the advanced group that has met since 1999, other groups have met independently throughout the year.

The importance of the language to a nation is essential to the country and

its people. Tom Moriarty wrote an article for the Springfield Republican newspaper in 2006: "Many Irish language enthusiasts endorse the sentiment 'Tir gan teanga, tir gan anam' (A country without a language is a country without a soul.)" They believe that part of Ireland's soul is inextricably connected with the Irish language and its loss would contribute to a rootlessness in the nation's culture. They realize that the loss of language has damaged many native American African cultures. They are determined to prevent Ireland's culture from experiencing a similar loss."

Call the registrar at 265-2314 to enroll for fall classes.

## Study abroad continued from page 1

Nevertheless, students had to pay for their own roundtrip tickets to Ireland, which is increasingly expensive given the rising cost of fuel and airfare. The idea that students might be left behind because they couldn't raise the cost of airfare at the last minute was unacceptable to the Irish Cultural Center. "Our Center exists to help spread awareness and appreciation of Irish culture," says Sister Judith Kappenman, the Center's Director. "We had to do something." To meet these needs, the Board of Directors voted unanimously to provide a \$500 stipend to the students to defray the costs of participating in the program. "Participation in study abroad programs is an increasing feature of the Elms College experience," says Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Walter Breau. "We are excited that our students will be able to take advantage of this great opportunity."