

On Or About This Day In Phil's Archives

PHIL'S BLOG

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Happy St. Patrick's Day

3/17/2022

2 Comments



July 1971: Uncle Marty Fallon's Welcome home from Ireland. Mary Fallon Stenson, Emmett McGovern, Maureen McGovern, Phillip McGovern, Joe Stenson

Here in the USA, we say "we are Irish". But I imagine my brethren in Ireland hear this and wonder, "What are those yanks thinking? They don't know what they say. They are American".

I woke up today, and took a few minutes to think about being Irish-American. During my childhood days, I wasn't exposed to Irish Festivals with the music and dance; or abundant Irish music sessions at the local bars. Even if these were around, my parents did not partake in that sort of fun. Today, there are so many festivals and other ways to find enjoyment in being Irish. This made me think I had very little "Irishness" during my growing up years....or so I thought.

I wandered back 50 years and asked myself, "what helped me appreciate being an Irish-American". I wasn't coming up with anything. But hold on Phil. What about in the early 1970s and the time your Uncle Marty and Aunt Dolly visited Ireland and came back with stories and gifts? What about that audio tape of their visits to a local pub, music, and your Grand-Uncle Martin talking about life in Ireland. Or when you were 12 years old, wearing a t-shirt with the England flag on the front and your Dad made the quick comment, "you better not wear that in Ireland, you would be shot". Maybe it was the families in my neighborhood that I played Kick-the-Can in the alleyway? The Connollys, Burns, Elwards, Clearys, Hartnetts....all of Irish background and living within a two block radius from my house on Touhy Avenue (another Irish name!).



Author

I have been interested in preserving family history for many years. Hope you enjoy.

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April 1974: Phillip McGovern, Theresa McGovern, Emmett McGovern

The extent of my knowledge of Irish music back then was the Bagpipes. A Shannon Rover Bagpiper, Tom Hudson, came to visit us and at one point he played his pipes in the living room of our house. Can you imagine that sound? So loud, I am sure. A few of us, Aunt Irene Gamboney, my sister, myself, we tried to get the pipes going. I was the only one to do so. Then the talk at the table was, "do you want to take lessons?". I did for a few months. But summer came and lessons stopped. When September came along, I was asked if I wanted to continue and I declined. Ah, if only! I could be sitting here belting out a tune today.



November 23, 1972, Thanksgiving Day. Tom Hudson, Maureen McGovern, Marty Fallon, Ann Marie McGovern, Phillip McGovern

It was not until my late teens and early twenties, did I really embrace my Irishness. I traveled and met family in Ireland. I listened intently to my Aunts and Uncles stories of their parents who immigrated from Ireland. I began to listen to all types of Irish music. Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem being my first love. Today, I watch or read anything related to Ireland. I even married an O'Brien from Dah-chestah, Bahston (pardon my poor replication of the Boston accent, she is from Dorchester Boston. And she loves her lobstah).

I don't know if this makes me Irish, but I do have fun with it. Erin go bragh.



October 11, 2020 in front of Paul Revere house, Boston, Massachusetts. Phillip McGovern, Fiona Bourke, Mary O'Brien McGovern, Ann Marie McGovern Bourke

[2 Comments](#)

John McCormack

3/17/2022 06:19:34 pm

Phil –
Great memoir of your becoming a conscious Irishman. Like you, it didn't come to me until later, adulthood for me. But I am so glad that I picked up whatever I did as a kid by osmosis, whether I knew it or not, from the brogues, the music, the craic. My awakening started on my first trip to Ireland at age 23, but it really kicked in when I read the novel, “Trinity” (the cover caught my eye), by Leon Uris, at age 45. After that, I started to devour Irish history and I was sucked in from there. I know what they may say in Ireland, but I am Irish and I am American.

Reply

John Sheridan Smith ➦ 3/17/2022 10:34:04 pm

Phil-Very well done!!

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