

## IRELAND!!!

Once upon a time.....

May, 1999

Mike and I decided this had to be the year to go to Ireland because they don't let you drive a rental car there after you are 75 years old--as good a reason as any to go!

Sue and Andy took us to the airport at Green Bay in time for a 1:25 flight in a NW commuter plane to Detroit. We sent our bags straight through to Dublin, so we had to follow them. Detroit airport was a madhouse, but we got our boarding passes and found the gate in time to catch a NW (KLM) plane to Amsterdam at 4:20 PM, CST. The plane ride was relatively uneventful, with a little turbulence, Lu craning her neck to see land below, etc. the usual food, movies, and trying to get in a few winks since we would lose quite a few hours due to time zones. Arrived at 6:55 AM and disembarked in a terminal worse than Detroit. After finding our boarding passes and proper gate for the Aer Lingus flight to Dublin, we had some time and took a train to the City Center, where we took pictures, found the WC (No, not a wedding chapel!--Public, but with a .50 charge --(Netherland money). Had gotten some Guilders in Detroit as we needed some to pay for lunch and shopping. Not much time for that--but it was interesting to see the buildings, churches, etc. in the vicinity of the train station. Needless to say, we stayed within the area near that so we could find our way back in time for the plane to Dublin via Aer-Lingus.

Arrived in Dublin about 4:20 PM, picked up our luggage and got directions to the Avis rent-a-car which was about 3 blocks away. Luckily we found a cart to haul our luggage, but it was raining and very unpleasant. They gave us a new car--Toyota Corolla--and Mike got in and picked me up. Since the driver is on the right side and must drive on the left side of the road, he was already keyed up by that time. However, we followed the directions given us to the St Andrews bed and breakfast and did quite well until we got fairly near the place. After asking directions from a man on a corner, and not really understanding them, he said he would get in the back seat and take us there--which he did--well, within about a block and we did find the place after passing it once and turning back.

The first thing we learned about Ireland is that the people are very friendly and willing to help one, but with a somewhat different way of using English and giving directions. We lost our way many times. I started writing down some of their "idioms" such as "top of the road"--(T intersection)--also "bottom of the road"--same thing the other way! Terry Masterson, the owner, and his hostess (waitress--Eileen from Kerry) were gracious. The rooms were quite small and there was little place to put your luggage except on a chair, but we were prebooked and in no mood

to look for any other place. After settling in, we asked about restaurants and Terry directed us to a place called Cat and Cage

which was a bar and restaurant. I guess--nothing special, but it was food. Of course we managed to get lost going there and had to go back and get the directions again--and still got lost, but by luck ran across it.

Breakfasts in all the B&B's had about the same menu--eggs made the way you like them, sausages, bacon, cereal, toast, and some extras like yogurt, fruit, and black and white pudding--which turned out to be sort of like slices of brats and something that looked like blood sausage--not to our taste! At least we started out each day with a hearty breakfast--never knew where lunch would be.

We asked about Mass and they told us there was one in walking distance--"To the bottom of the road and turn right and its just down the road a bit--you can see the steeple." Well, "a bit" was about 7 or 8 blocks and they thought the Mass was at 9, so we went quite early and arrived at the church--a big one, 60 some years old--but there was no one around except a man sitting in a van near the gate. After walking all around and trying locked doors, we saw a lady by a side door and asked her when Mass was. She said 9:30 but the sacristan was a little late coming to open the doors. We chatted awhile with Mrs. Madigan and a few other old ladies who came, and soon the doors were opened and we went in. Very interesting architecture, they have the prayers for each week's mass on a leaflet and no bulletin. The pastor and assistant were both fairly old and shared the Mass somewhat. Except for no music, it was not much different than ours, but much more dull and the church was not very filled--mostly with old people.

After Mass, we walked back and each took a rest awhile. Then the manager gave us directions how to catch a bus about a 1/2 block away and we ventured into downtown Dublin. Unfortunately, there were few stores open, but we found a "Carvery" (restaurant) run by Brennan and had lunch and took pictures. Decided to forego Trinity College and St Patrick's Cathedral (protestant) as they were not in walking distance and driving was worse than in Chicago or LA.

Roamed around and found a WC again and then found a bus stop with No. 11 on it and caught a bus back to the B&B. After a bit, we decided to try to find a different restaurant for supper. Saw the Skyline Lodge which sounded ritzy, and since there were no parking places anywhere, we drove in. The parking valet asked if we were residents, but we said we had just come to eat there. He then found a parking place for us (they are scarce) and we went in but found they would only serve people residing there!! We

didn't want to go the "parking" route again so sneaked out a different gate when the valet was turned away, and wandered down the block--all restaurants were super busy due to a big soccer game in the area, but we found a take out place and got some sandwiches and drinks and then went back to the B&B, watched a little TV and retired early. The walking sure tires a person.

The next AM after breakfast, the boss wasn't around (he had been to a party the night before!) and the waitress had to call his wife to find our bill so we could pay for the two days. She was Eileen, gave us directions out of Dublin toward Wexford. Unfortunately, she told us to turn left just before the Tesco store which we did. The street was narrow and became like an alley which then took a sharp left into another narrow street. Mike had to back up to make the turn and missed the walls by inches. Then we came upon a regular street and found our way back to the starting point and out of town toward Wexford where we had hoped to find some of the relatives of Mike. Of course we managed to take a few wrong turns enroute. We learned a few things about "roundabouts"--an intersection with a tiny "garden" in the center and one had to go around it, turning off left, forward, or right as the signs directed. But with everyone zooming by and the signs in Gaelic first and then English, one had to make snap decisions and some we made were wrong, which meant trying to find an almost non-existent place to turn around and go back and try again. We did find the city after Mike got soaked walking back on one road to look at the signs. Found a nice B&B by chance called the Faythe (pronounced Foyth) House--one of the better ones we encountered. There was a wall of an old castle in the back yard, flowers, etc. and a view of the ocean or bay. We looked in the phone book and found 24 Scallans and one Scallon. Mike called and the lady said that was a misprint--should have been an a! There were also about 2 1/2 pages of Phelans, so we sort of gave up the idea of finding the needle in the haystack. After breakfast, we browsed around the town, checked with the tourist bureau--which had moved and people gave us all kinds of directions!! ("Go down the quay (key) to where there's a statue in the street (you can't miss it!) and the bureau is right across from it. The statue was off to the left, so I thought it wasn't the right one, so of course we missed it and had to go back and look some more. Found a restaurant, a pay-to-park lot and got lost a few times, but got back to the B&B okay but tired from all the walking. One of the places we had walked a long way to was "Michael's Restaurant" ("Just down the road a bit.") The menu was in Gaelic and we learned that "bootje" was sandwich. The stores all close at five in these smaller towns, so shopping was a problem.

By this time, driving was driving Mike crazy, so when someone told us a fairly simple route out of town and a scenic way to Waterford, we ate a good breakfast (they all were!) and headed

that way. Roads were extremely narrow with tall bushes lining the sides and stone or wood rails and doorposts across the fronts of nearly everyone's property. Semis took more than half the road and there were very few places where one could stop and take a peek through the bushes to see the beautiful scenery everyone had told us about. We pulled over by a little country store at Wellington Bridge and picked up some drinks, and Mike got a nice cap for Andrew, his grandson--Irish looking. The two ladies there were just great and we visited for about a half-hour. I saw a neat blouse I liked but they didn't have my size. *missed a dance we might have gone to the night before.*

Then we went on to a peninsula called the "ring of hook" trying to find a town where we could get some lunch. We saw lots of scenery, a beach, and some fishing areas, and other scenic spots. Stopped, I believe, at Duncannon in front of a church and took a picture of a fort and cemetery and then went on to Bally-Hack where we had to catch a ferry to cross an inlet to get to Waterford. That was interesting. I guess we ended up eating in Waterford in an upstairs restaurant in a store. They don't believe in cooking vegetables over there, but we managed to stay alive and I only gained 1 1/2 lbs the whole trip. In Waterford, we found the tourist bureau, got a B&B lined up, Loughdan B&B, hostess was Noreen Dulleghan, and then toured the Waterford Crystal Factory. It was similar to what Abler glass does, but on a huge scale. Four men work on one piece as a team and if anyone quaffs, the piece gets thrown back in the scrap and no one gets paid for it. If it passes, they get paid, but then it goes to the cutters, and the engravers, etc. who are the top of the line (20 years training) so we found out why Waterford Crystal was so expensive that we couldn't afford to buy it for all of you kids! The tour was quite interesting and the glassware they make and display is fascinating. Vases up to about 5 ft., trophies for special things like championships, decorative pieces in color and just oodles of ordinary, but beautiful goblets, dishes, etc. Had lunch at the company's dining area there.

We also checked out a shopping center near there, but it, too, was not what we were looking for. I wanted to get everyone a souvenir, but we had overpacked and there was no room for anything big to take home. There also was very little time for shopping, or stores like we have here. In the evening, we visited with the daughter of the owner, in the lounge, and learned a little about teens, schools, their hopes, (she wanted to be a hotel manager) etc.

Mike is beginning to remember "left". Wednesday we started out for Tipperary--its a long way--but we enjoyed more of the scenery and several small towns enroute--roads were slightly better in some places than in the south. Some towns were Mooncoin, Fiddown, Kilmeadow, Piltown which had a tower in the middle of the road and Carrick en Suir and Cahil. Saw quite a few castle ruins

in towns. Some road signs were "no overtaking" (no passing) and "traffic calming" (slow down or lower speed limit). N. of Clonmel were the Galtee mountains--I didn't realize they have so many mountains in Eire.

In Tipperary, we found the tourist bureau as usual--but it was closed for a couple weeks and a sign directed us to a place around the corner where they did family research for a fee and filled in for the bureau. We did not have enough information on Mike's ancestors so that didn't help. People always were very helpful, though, or tried to be. A man there told us about a B&B his daughter ran but we decided to upgrade and go to a hotel for a change, so we went to the Royal Hotel. Nice parking lot and two priests from a nearby abbey were taking a walk around in the lot. But that's about all we could say good about the Royal--rooms were small and cold (most places were, because they don't turn on the heat until about 9PM and then not for long.) The TV's had no good volume and only two channels available--mostly news and soccer. Every shower was different to operate, and some were lukewarm or just a dribble. We walked to a nearby grocery and picked up a few snacks.

In the morning we tried to find someplace where Mike could send some E-mail home. It was called Knockenrawley Resource Center and seemed to be a place that helped people find jobs, etc. They also had a computer center there where they taught computer skills. We were directed past the above mentioned B&B and up a street past the fire station--it was supposed to be next to the fire station, but it turned out after a number of inquiries of a lady outside her house and the fire station personnel that it was on a street just past the station and the sign on a factory there, that they said was across from it, was hidden from the street by greenery! Many streets don't have names where you can find them. Finally found the place but had to come back at noon to use the computer. Marguerite Anne O'Brien was working at the centre and was just great--we asked for her address and took her picture with Mike. After we got the E-mail sent off to everyone, we decided to stay at a place just outside the city, Clonmore House. Was a nice place and we learned that the owners were Joe and Mary Quinn (and Mike's grandmother was a Quinn.) However, Ireland is full of Quinns, Phelans (also Whelan, a form of Phelan). In a tour book we saw an O'Faelin's Pub, but it was in the North where we didn't plan to go. Also there were quite a few Scallons and O'Donaghces also, so one has to have more detailed info available to find roots. Quinns were the usual friendly folks. We were able to walk to the downtown--about 8 or 10 blocks and did a lot of looking around there. Ate at Nellie O'Briens restaurant, took a picture of Wm O'Brien's Pub to show Fr. O'Brien (also tons of O'Briens) and took a picture of Phelan bakery for the fun of it.

Went to the Tipperary Library and the lady there tried to help us with family tree info but we didn't have enough background info for her to do much. Small library and I had to go next door to a courthouse to use a bathroom--third floor and quite antique! We also walked down Michael St. to St. Michael's church for a visit and prayer. Very nice big Gothic church. Back to the library which had been closed, as were many places, from 1 to 2PM. The lady told us about a cemetery nearby that we thought we would tour--the records were from 1914 to the present and some names I recognized were Quinke, Tuohy, McNulty, O'Brien, etc. Didn't stay too long. The sacristan showed us the names Josephine Phelan 1937 and Philip Phelan 1941 in the records. Also went to another cemetery where people were buried that had died in a plague--many unmarked graves, but some more recent ones. Took a couple pictures there. Got caught in rain and headed back to Tipperary, had supper and stayed at Clonmore B&B.

The next day, Mrs. Quinn told us about a place called Rock of Cashel, to the East, so we went there to see the Castle. It had been owned by a King and then was given to some monks who later built an abbey on the grounds. Most of it was crumbling, but we took pictures, toured the place and watched a video about its background.

Because it was fairly late and we liked Tipperary, we decided to go back to Quinns and stay another night. Walked down to the edge of town to a pub called Donovans and had lamb--was tough and the food wasn't good, place smoky, etc. We were not overly impressed with Irish food and never did see corned beef and cabbage!

From Tipperary, we headed to Limerick, not wanting to rush to get back to the airport. Took a side road down a half mile or so to get a picture of a typical farm, if there was such a thing. The high "brush" walls on most roads had precluded getting pictures of the beautiful scenery. Barn roofs are mostly rounded and the houses often looked very old and small except in cities. Yet there were some big and beautiful ones too. Castles and ruins of castles were plentiful, saw magpies, but they seemed smaller than our western magpies I remember. Never did find out what the yellow flower hedges were, but they looked like our lilacs and there were a few purple lilacs here and there. Pulled over at a Cattle breeders farm--very big house with a long driveway--I took a picture of Mike walking up the drive to get a better picture.

Some of the terms we noted along highways were "layby" (wayside--just a small space to pull off awhile).--A white sign with a big black dot in the center we assume was a warning that was a dangerous spot for accidents. Cars passed us very closely many times and on curves, etc. Very few roads were straight! Also, some places there were cones alongside the road and a sign

that said "Major Construction" and then we would come across an area with slightly broken blacktop--hardly major by our standard! Seams took up their half of the road and a little more, and everyone seemed to zoom along at 60-70 MPH. Didn't see many speed limit signs. Mike started out about 40-45 and eventually got up to about what others were doing--especially after we found better roads from Limerick to Dublin. They are finally realizing they need better roads to attract tourists. The road to Dublin (N7) had "climbing lanes" for slower drivers and trucks. A railroad with barriers was called a "hatched" area.

At Limerick, we found a parking garage and a tourist bureau and got directions to the Trebor B&B, which was okay. A unique feature was a bidet in my bathroom. Church was only two blocks away, and there was a Sat. eve Mass and since there is little to do evenings, we went then.

The downtown was about 6 blocks away, so we decided to walk there and then someone directed us to Dolan's Pub--"just down the road a bit which turned out to be about 10 or 12 blocks. It was the first one we had gone to in the evening. They had advertised "authentic Irish music." The group played flute, guitar, drums, violin and accordion. The music was nice, but the crowd was young people, smoking of course and noisy, so we had a soda and didn't stay very long. Mostly uphill going back so we got a lot of exercise.

At breakfast, we met a priest from St. Louis who was heading a tour. Apparently that was his job and I suppose it was a "fund-raising" activity of the Jesuits as he would do that several times a year and had traveled to many different places. The hosts at Trebor were Jean and Jim McSweeney. In Limerick we walked to the Hunt Museum, a collection of unusual art objects and religious articles by the Hunt family, and saw St. Mary's Cathedral. Since the downtown was only about 6 blocks the opposite direction, we walked there, shopped at Tesco store and had supper at Burger King across from McDonalds! The area was somewhat like a big mall would be here. The place was out of milk and shakee, so I went to the grocery nearby and got some milk to go with my Whopper. We didn't eat many meals like we eat at home--mostly soups and sandwiches. We also walked around a castle and came upon an antique shop--it was small, crowded and smelly so we didn't stay in it long. Nothing interesting there. Got some pictures of the Shannon River, etc. While walking back, a girl about 11 or so with four younger children--two in strollers--asked if she could take our picture as I was carrying my camera. We thought that was nice, but then she quickly took pictures of the other kids and tried to get one of herself and begged us to send them to her. She wrote her address on one of our brochures. Pretty nervy, we thought, so I'll have to decide after I get the pictures whether to send them. *L.S.S!*

Monday we headed East toward Dublin--took some pictures of the mountains which had silvermines--guess Eire is noted for silver and crystal. Towns like Tomyvera and Moneygall are about the size of Whitealea.

Along the way Mike saw an unusual building like a church or castle and since we had time, we turned back and read the sign which said Busherstown Creative Center. Sounded interesting so we drove in the lane leading to it and parked and started to take a picture and look around. A young man came out and told us his mother owned the place and he was just home on a holiday. He was a jockey and had won some top steeplechase just recently. His name was Tom Fudd. The grounds had a pretty garden and flowers, etc. We didn't meet his mother, but I think she probably taught creative arts or something. Had an interesting visit with Tom. He told us about a castle at BIRR (Biorra) about 18 miles north of Roscrea, so we thought, "Why not?" As we reached the highway, Tom came running up the lane with a brochure about the place. Turned out the castle was lived in by the BIRR family so one could only tour the grounds, etc. There was a building fixed up for tourists which told all about what was at one time the world's largest telescope, built by some ancestor I guess. So we walked to where the telescope was and waited for the "demonstration" which was to occur at 1:30. After about 20 people waited 25 min. we decided to walk back, disgusted, (it was cold!) and met the guide coming with a tour group who apparently had more pull than those who came by themselves! The science building was educational, but the experience was unpleasant.

At mid-afternoon we stopped at a town called Montrath--every little town would have a 3' ice cream sign outside the place where one could buy a newspaper and sweets, so of course we had to try one--they were like our softserve, but hit the spot. By 3 PM, we neared a town called Port Laoise where I would have liked to have stopped and stayed, but Mike wanted to get closer to Dublin (not because he loves Dublin, but because we wanted to be sure to find a B&B close to the airport as we had a fairly early flight out on the 18th.) Went to Kildare and it was a good choice.

As we drove through the town, we saw a sign "Eidelweiss Guest House" and though the place seemed very deluxe and we expected it would be expensive, we drove in anyway. It turned out to be the very best place we stayed. The people, Rachel and Mary, were very gracious and we even took a picture of them before we left. I had taken a picture of the room I stayed in because it was so nice and Mike's was just as nice. Rooms were spacious, big bathroom with a corner tub and the price for a room was much less than those at the Royal Hotel which was so crummy. Breakfast was generous and they even served Mike black and white pudding with his eggs. We had been wondering what black and white pudding was



and it turned out to be slices of something like bratwurst and possibly blood sausage! Not our idea of pudding, but they had an explanation of the name--when they make it, it looks like pudding before they put it into skins. After breakfast, we drove into Kildare to exchange some more money as we would have to stay in one more B&B before enplaning again. The bank wasn't open until 10AM so we started walking and saw a "Toy and Gift" store with a window full of porcelain dolls for under 10 punts each. Mike said, "Can I buy you one?" Since I had only had one doll in my lifetime, I agreed and picked one out. He also found a copper scale he liked that I bought for him and so we have our birthday presents for each other already solved! Then I picked out trinkets that would fit in my luggage for all those I had left on the list. At that point we had to go to the bank for more money so we could eat lunch. Went to the Jailhouse Restaurant--a pub across the street from what had been the jail at one time, but was now the tourist bureau and public restrooms.

We left Kildare after shopping, etc. and headed to Dublin where we had made reservations at a place called Airport Lodge which was supposed to be near the airport. M7 was one of the better highways we encountered--wider and it accessed M50 which was a route around the West of Dublin. We took M50 to the airport and sort of planned our way for the next morning, but after getting directions to the Airport Lodge, of course we got lost again a few times. Each time we got closer, someone would give us new directions and finally a lady at a pub called the place and got some more directions. Turned out we had passed the place shortly before--the sign was very minimal! She told us to go to the 2nd stoplight and there would be a shopping center across from the Lodge. (Well, no one told us they also have pedestrian lights which look just like stoplights!) So we were getting pretty confused by the fourth light when we spied the shopping center and lo and behold, there was the Lodge.

That turned out to be the worst B&B we stayed at, but we were in no mood to try to find another. My room fronted on the street and had a big window, so I pulled the drapes and used the lamp. The shower was nice and simpler to use than most, but the bath was very tiny, though clean. Then, when I turned on the overhead lights at night, they flickered even after I turned off the switch, so I told Mike and he called the hostess who took out the bulbs so they wouldn't keep me awake!! Hope they got an electrician in the next day. Most B&Bs had skeleton keys and one didn't even have a lock on the door, but the hosts and the people we met at breakfast were all so nice that we weren't concerned.

In the A.M. we got up early, finished packing, had breakfast and found we could get to the airport via the street we were on, so we were on time, had time to convert most of our Irish money back to American, I finally found some Irish lace in a gift shop and

Mike got himself a rap, before we headed to our gate for the trip back. Aer Lingus took us to Amsterdam--those airports are a madhouse, but quite well signed if you can understand the terminology. It was 78 degrees in Amsterdam which was 3932 miles from Detroit and 7 1/2 hours flying time. Got there about 1PM and had to leave at 2:15, so we didn't have much time. Luckily our luggage had gone through to Detroit (we thought Green Bay). When we arrived at Detroit, we had to claim our luggage, go through long lines at customs even though we had bought much less than the \$400.00 which meant we didn't have to pay any tariffs. Then we had to check our luggage again for the flight to Green Bay and find our gate for the last leg. There was a pretty low ceiling w/fog coming into Detroit, but the pilot didn't "bounce" the landing. Food on KLM wasn't great but lots of drinks, some yogurt, peanuts, etc. and very gracious attendants on all the flights.

Sure was good to get back to Green Bay, though. Sue and Kids were waiting, helped claim our bags and we went to Perkins for a late supper and then home. Mike was dead tired and I think it took him a couple days to cope with jetlag and Two Rivers "reality". Says he almost drove on the left the next day.

Overall, I would characterize this as quite an educational and interesting trip despite all the hassles. Wish we could have spent more time with the people and perhaps seen a few more of the tourist sights, but the things we did see, and especially the people, we will always remember.