



Frank Murphy performs an Irish standard for a capacity crowd at Hochstein Music School Saturday night, March 11. Doug Meszler

Irish accordionist enjoys the life of Riley in Greece

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

GREECE — Frank Murphy smiles as he straps on his red button accordion. His bright face is remarkably smooth for a man of his years, possibly because it has seen so many festive days.

Pounding the kitchen floor with his foot — not tapping but *pounding* — the 66-year-old Murphy rides the keys of his instrument as it bellows the traditional Irish jig "Saddle the Pony."

After playing several reels, jigs and hornpipes, Murphy looks over at Anne, his wife of 33 years, and says: "She dances the 'Sailor's Hornpipe.'"

"Oh, shut up," she says, "I've gotten too old to do that."

Despite his wife's protests, her face betrays that she is proud to be married to the jovial gentleman who is renowned throughout local Irish and American country music circles for his accordion and fiddle playing.

A member of the Blackthorn Ceilidh Band, Murphy is busy these days as area Irish-Americans prepare to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. Murphy will be playing a private party at the University of Rochester on March 17, but he'll be available for public perusal at the Holiday Inn in downtown Rochester on Saturday, April 8, at an Irish fest.

Murphy has plenty of time to rehearse for his busy schedule of concerts and parties. He retired last June after spending 17 years as the custodian of St. Margaret Mary's School and Church. He remains active in the parish, and was recently the

main attraction at a St. Patrick's Day luncheon for the parish's 50 and Over Club.

Festive living has been the mark of Murphy's life. Born in County Mayo, Ireland, he grew up in a family of farmers who kept a few cattle and sheep. After his days of work on the farm, the young Murphy practiced on a fiddle that he bought from a friend. His musical education was informal.

"We didn't have any music teachers," Murphy says. "You picked it up from the next one that had music."

Music was a major part of the town's character. Although money was scarce, good times were plentiful. Most Sunday nights were filled with revelry at house dances throughout Murphy's hometown of Westport.

It was at these house dances that Murphy honed his skills as a fiddler, playing jigs, hornpipes and the most popular tunes, reels. But the acoustics of a house filled with party-goers finally led Murphy to put aside the subtle tones of his fiddle for the bluster of a button accordion.

"We didn't have amplifiers, you see," he says. "The violin wasn't loud enough to drown out the talking and the laughing. The accordion had a heavier tone."

That heavier tone was in demand during the dark days of World War II, when musical instruments were hard to come by. Murphy owned the only accordion in his district, so he was often called to play at parties.

Murphy and three friends formed a band that played extensively throughout the region. On a good night, each member would leave a party with a pound apiece. "That was big money in them days," Murphy remarked.

But bigger money lay across the Atlantic Ocean in the United States. Farming made a living for Murphy, but not much more, so in 1949, he bought a ticket on a ship bound for the country that has drawn so many of the Emerald Isle's people throughout the last two centuries.

Even on the trip over, Murphy couldn't escape his musical past. As soon as the many Irish passengers on board learned that the young accordionist was among them, they demanded his constant services.

"I used to have to hide on them in the end, because they wanted to dance all the time," Murphy laughs.

Once he landed in the United States, he found a home with relatives in Rochester. It wasn't long before he began frequenting area Irish pubs and halls, including the Ancient Order of the Hibernians' House on Alexander Street.

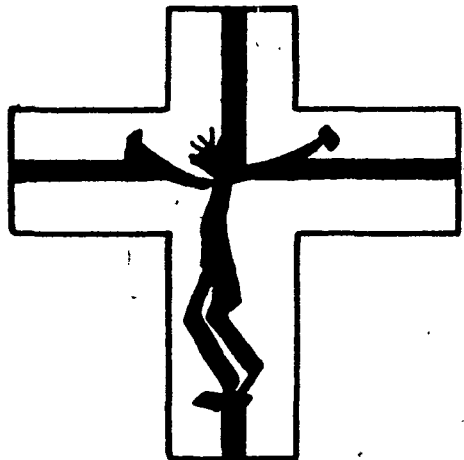
Every Saturday night, Murphy was at the Hibernian House, playing for parties. Although he has played formal concerts, he prefers to pound his feet for a roomful of dancers anytime.

"When you get a good dancer, that helps to play music better," Murphy says, though he joked, "when you get a bad dancer, you can't look at them."

Two dancers for whom he often played were his own two children, Lloyd and Christina. Both took Irish step dancing lessons when they were growing up, and their father often accompanied them on road trips throughout the northeastern United States and Canada, where they would dance at competitions.

Their father's musical career continued to blossom throughout the 1960s and '70s. Through his Saturday night playing, he met Ted McGraw, whom Murphy taught accordion. Together, they formed the Blackthorn Ceilidh Band in 1974. After numerous personnel changes throughout the years, the band came to its current configuration with McGraw and Murphy on accordions, Dick Bolt on harp and Mike Leach on banjo.

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GROSS OF GLORY LIFE IN CHRIST

By Father Robert J. Kennedy
Guest columnist

The celebration of Christianity's "high holy days" is upon us once again as we enter Holy Week and participate especially in the liturgies of the Easter Triduum — the "three days" of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter. These holy days are filled with the memory of the events that liberate us from the powers of sin and death, and reconcile us to God. They celebrate the "passover of the Lord," the paschal mystery, Christ's life-giving death and glorious resurrection.

The memory of these events, however, is not nostalgia or mere commemoration of actions long since over and done. The remembrance of Holy Week and its liturgies is living and active; the paschal mystery of Christ is a present reality today, and the Christian people are invited into it in order to encounter Christ and be fully alive in him. Thus the liturgies of Holy Week are not just impressive ceremony. Rather they are the practical means by which Christians make Christ's death and resurrection the power and pattern of their lives today. Through these liturgies we reflect on the central mysteries of faith in order to act on them more completely; we remember the saving events accomplished by Christ in order to live that redemption today.

Thursday, March 16, 1989

Holy Week liturgies highlight symbols of unity and quiet joy

The liturgies of Holy week are rich with images, rituals and symbols that enable us to do this. These images speak to the whole person — mind, heart and body — and form us in the image of the One who died that we might live. This week I want to survey some of the images and symbols of Passion Sunday and Holy Thursday. Next week we will consider Good Friday and the Easter Vigil.

Passion Sunday serves as the prelude and introduction for the whole paschal celebration. The narrative of Jesus' triumphal entry amid our procession of palms and praises foreshadow the resurrection and triumph of the Messiah. We begin this holiest of weeks on the briefest note of exuberant joy, knowing that this joy is the week's climax and conclusion. Yet, with the reading of the passion, we are reminded that this joy is not frivolous or superficial. It is the result of embracing in faith the pain, struggles, anguish and limitation of life, and moving through life to its far side where a new and better life is found. Thus the passion is not just the story of Jesus' arrest and trial, torture and execution. It is the story of our "passover" any time we move from despair to hope, isolation to communion, sin to reconciliation, brokenness to wholeness, sickness to death, warfare to peace. Jesus' pain, agony and abandonment by friends are the images that help us tell and understand our own stories.

The living presence of Christ's body broken for us and his blood spilled out for us is affirmed in the Mass of the Lord's

Medaille House accepting applications for residency

Medaille House is currently accepting applications for residency, which are due on April 30. Decisions will be made in May, following interviews.

Owned by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester, Medaille House is a residence where spirituality and service come together in community living.

Women wishing to apply for residency

Supper on Holy Thursday — and in every Eucharist. This gift, which Christ gave us "on the night he was betrayed," begins the celebration of the Easter Triduum by focusing primarily on two symbols: eating a meal and washing feet.

In the first Passover meal (Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14), we see ourselves mirrored in the people of Israel, a people of fear and trouble, with our bags packed for the trip to freedom and peace, sharing a meal at which there are no barriers of race, wealth or status. In the bread and wine of our eucharistic table are all the unique gifts and labors of our many lives united in one bread and one cup. In both the Passover meal and the eucharistic meal, we are one people of faith called together by God and refreshed in God's loving faithfulness to the covenant.

To this communal meal of love is added the humble gesture of the presider of the community, kneeling to wash the feet of present-day disciples in memory of Jesus (see John 13:1-15). A fragile faith community's celebration of the Eucharist is incomplete without the commitment to open-hearted mutual service. The Holy Thursday collection of gifts for the poor emphasizes this necessary connection of meal and service.

At the end of the Holy Thursday liturgy, as the sacrament is brought to its place of repose and the altar is stripped, our meditation turns from the quietly joyful family to the reality of the cross, the powerful central image of Good Friday and Easter.

must be 21 or older, in good health, have flexible work and home schedules, and a desire for social and spiritual growth. Both sisters and lay women make a commitment for one to three years of residency.

Contact Sister Kathleen Weider, 48 Peck St., Rochester, N.Y., 14609, or call 716/232-7363.