



THE LIVING TRADITION

Comhaltas Ceoltoirí Éireann

Newsletter of the O'Neill-Malcom Branch <http://www.ccepotomac.org/>

March 2008

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Lá fhéile Phádraig shona dhaoibh go léir
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A HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY TO ALL!

Join the Branch mailing list for news and announcements:
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nova_cce_members/join

BRENDAN MULVIHILL AND LARRY REDICAN CCE HALL OF FAME

The Mid-Atlantic Region of CCE recently inducted two prominent champion musicians into the Hall of Fame, our own Brendan Mulvihill and the late Larry Redican. Below are the program notes from the Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann 2008 Mid-Atlantic Region Hall of Fame Ceili and induction ceremony.

Brendan Mulvihill, a renowned fiddler born to Irish parents in Northampton, England, is the eldest of four children (Brendan, Brian, Gail, and Dawn). His mother, Olive (nee McEvoy) hails from County Offaly and currently resides in Glin, County Limerick. His father, fiddler Martin Mulvihill of Ballygoughlin, County Limerick, was a National Heritage Fellow and one of the most highly respected Irish music teachers in America. The SIX Mulvihills immigrated to New York in 1965.

Brendan first learned to play the fiddle from his father in the Bronx at age 12. He went on to study with Pete Kelly of County Galway. In the 1970s Brendan traveled to Ireland and England playing throughout the country and building a repertoire of tunes. In 1972, he won the All Ireland Fiddle Championship.

In 1975, Brendan returned to New York, where he played with accordion player Billy McComiskey of Brooklyn and singer/guitarist Andy O'Brien of County Kerry. The three moved to Washington, DC as The Irish Tradition and became a seminal influence in traditional music, helping to establish it as a permanent and integral part of Washington's musical fabric. In 1977, Brendan and Billy traveled back to Ireland to win the All Ireland Fiddle/Accordion Duet Championship.

More recently, Brendan appeared at the *Éigse na Laoi* at University College, Cork, Ireland in 1993 and again in 1995. Brendan toured the country in 1994-95 as part of the Masters of the Folk Violin tour sponsored by the National Council for the Traditional Arts. In 1998 Brendan played in the PBS broadcast, "Performance at the White House," for President and Mrs. Clinton and their guests.

In 2005, Brendan received the Maryland Traditions Folk Arts and Culture Apprenticeship Award for teaching the art of traditional Irish fiddle playing in Maryland. Brendan continues to spend his time teaching, playing, and composing music. He lives with his wife Abbie, and their 7 year old daughter Ciara in Silver Spring, Maryland.

More biographical information on Brendan can be accessed at <http://www.brendanmulvihill.com/>

LARRY REDICAN By LARRY REDICAN JR

My Dad was born in Boyle, County Roscommon, on April 30, 1908, to Tom and Ann (Kielty) Redican. He was the youngest of five children: Tom, James, Paddy, and Nora were his older brothers and sister.

The family moved to Dublin some time later and stayed with Nora and her husband Sean Harling in Rathmines. My Dad studied the violin with Arthur Darley who had been classically trained and was one of Ireland's foremost traditional musicians. He was the first traditional player to perform on Radio Eireann.

My Dad also had a great friendship with Leo Rowsome and the other members of The Pipers' Club who frequently played for the ceilis at the Gaelic League. He always made sure to stop there on any of his trips to Ireland.

During the Insurrection of 1916 both of my Dad's brothers, Tom and James, were heavily involved with the Volunteers and James was sent to the Frongoch concentration camp in Wales along with Michael Collins and some of the other survivors. (But that's another story all its own).

My Dad came to America in 1928. He met and married my mother Mary Sullivan from Tourmakeady, County Mayo, in 1933, and they settled in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn.

Later, they moved to the Park Slope section where I was born in 1936. I don't know too much about his outside-of-the-house musical activities during that time as I was preoccupied with growing up in the tough Irish-Italian neighborhood. I do know that every night he would play the fiddle, learning new tunes and composing some of his own. On the weekends the house was always full of people, musicians and avid listeners. There would be music all night. During that time there were very few venues for traditional music other than the home.

In the 1950's my Dad played for the ceilis of the St. Brendan's branch of the Gaelic League on Willoughby Street in Brooklyn. He was soon joined by Andy McGann, Paddy Reynolds, Matt Donohue, Felix Dolan, Jack Coen, Lad O'Beirne, and Jerry Wallace. Sean and Paddy O'Sullivan, Nick Erwin, and others would sit in as well.

The Gaelic League was one of the few places available for traditional musicians to gather together, and rousing renditions of The Humors of Bandon and The High Cauld Cap would be roundly applauded by appreciative dancers.

There were four branches of the League at that time: St. Brendan's in Brooklyn, The Bronx Gaelic League, The New York Gaelic Society in mid-town Manhattan, and the Philo-Celtic Society in Queens. Each one held a ceili on a different Saturday night during the month. A "controlling" organization, the *Comhorla na Cumann Gaelige*, made up of individual delegates of the four societies along with members of *An Fainne* (the all-Gaelic Speaking society), coordinated activities and would sponsor such things as Monster Ceilis as fund-raisers for *feiseanna* held in the Spring and Summer, usually at Iona College.

My Dad could be found at at least three ceilis a month, along with Andy McGann and Paddy Reynolds. Between dances you could see them, heads together, my Dad usually showing them how he had gotten from one bar to another or demonstrating some "bridge" he had constructed to smoothly go from place to place. They would be discussing these little twists and turns among themselves, oblivious to any disturbances in the background.

My Dad also was continually called upon to play for the dancers at "Open Competitions" at one feis or another. Not many musicians could immediately play "Bonaparte's Retreat," "The Ace and Deuce of Piping," "Planxty Drury," after numerous renditions of "The Three Sea Captains" or "The Blackbird." Such was the depth of his repertoire. He was always asked-for by the McNiff Troupe of dancers, as they were very innovative and respected his wide knowledge of tunes as well as his skill in providing them with a flawlessly smooth background from which they could shine on stage or platform. He appeared with them on TV on the "Arthur Godfrey Show" and on the "Ed Sullivan Show," usually around St. Patrick's Day. They frequently appeared on stage as an opening-act for Carmel Quinn, the popular Irish singer.

My Dad worked every day in a factory in Queens for Elizabeth Arden Cosmetics and did so for thirty some-odd years. A grueling job. And yet, at night, he relaxed by playing his fiddle. As I did my homework for school I'd kind of whistle along. I recognized all the tunes but didn't have names on them. I'm still the same.

Some of my most vivid memories are about the visitations to the apartment in Brooklyn by newly-arrived musicians from Ireland. I especially remember one night. Returning from a late night class at St. John's I arrived home to a strangely quiet place. There were clouds of smoke coming from the living room and the murmuring of many men. Sitting in the middle of a wide semi-circle, with his Paolo-Soprani accordion on his lap was Paddy O'Brien. The men in the room whispered to one another rather than talk loudly. Paddy was a quiet man who let his accordion do most of the talking. Out of respect, the rest of the men tried to restrain their enthusiasm and confined it to "oohs" and "aahhhss" along with requests for another reel or jig. Paddy had a special "gift" which was immediately acknowledged by the gathering. Men leaned forward, listening to every note. They nodded to one another. They closed their eyes and squinted to enable them to concentrate even deeper. No one picked up an instrument. This was a Showcase. My Dad took his seat with the other men and my Mom spent the night in the kitchen making tea. Soon after that night Paddy

was doing the ceili circuit with my Dad. They got along famously. Neither one tried to out-do the other and there was a mutual respect for one another's abilities.

A not-very-similar event took place the night Sean Maguire came to Brooklyn. The room was packed again, the smoke billowing out the open windows. There was more of a crackling electricity in the room. Maguire was not one to be quiet or timid. Quite the contrary. He actually tried to out-do himself. By the time he had ended his signature piece "The Moving Cloud" there was little horsehair left on his bow and the towel around his neck was sopping wet. When he let loose, there was a great whooping and hollering to urge him on and he loved it. It's a wonder we weren't thrown out by the landlord after that night.

Another visitor to Brooklyn was Ciarán MacMathúna from Radio Éireann, who came with boxes of tapes and recording devices and asked my Dad to introduce him to the traditional musicians in and around the town. Together, they traveled back and forth to every nook and cranny in the city to tape an interview or a series of tunes. My Dad took him to Philadelphia to meet Ed Reavy, who had composed many reels of his own and who invited many of his fellow Philadelphians in for a few sessions. Ciarán had quite a lot of good music for his program "*Mo Cheol Thú*," which aired every Sunday morning from Dublin.

I could go on and on with these small vignettes from my memories but I imagine they might be very repetitious. I wanted to paint with a wider brush to give you a better idea of my Dad's unselfish commitment to the music. I loved my Dad. I loved him for his reverence for his music. I loved him for his uncritical respect of his fellow musicians. I treasure his memory and the few tapes I have of him playing and composing in the evenings at home. They were all truly a Band of Brothers in those days. They kept a tradition alive.

My Dad died with the fiddle in his hands, on the stage of the Inish Fada Irish Society in Mineola, New York, just after he had played a selection of reels to thunderous applause on January 26, 1975

Larry Redican's Reel

The musical notation for "Larry Redican's Reel" is presented in four staves. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. There are several measures with a tilde (~) above the notes, indicating a grace note or a specific articulation. The second staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots. The third staff begins with a repeat sign and continues the melody. The fourth staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' below it in the fourth staff.

THE NEXT GENERATION

WEEKLY SEISIUNS

DC/VA SEISIUNS

Sunday 6:30 - 9:30

Jim Wade & Betsy O'Malley
O'Faolain's Irish Pub
20921 Davenport Dr, Sterling
VA 703-444-9796

Sunday 3-7 & Wed 7-11

Philippe Varlet & Rob
Greenway, **Ri Ra**,
4931 Elm Street, Bethesda,
MD 301-657-1122

Tuesday 8-11

Dennis Botzer & Patrick
Kavanagh **McGinty's Public
House**, 911 Ellsworth Dr,
Silver Spring, MD 301-587-
1270.

Saturday 12-2

CCE Slow Session
Auld Shebeen Irish Pub,
North St. & Rte. 123, Fairfax
City. www.novasession.org

BALTIMORE SEISIUNS

Sundays 5pm-8pm

Laura Byrne, Pat Egan &/or
Julia Fitzgerald, **Ryan's
Daughter**, 600 E Belvedere
Ave, 410/464-1000,
www.rdirishpub.com

Mondays 8-10 pm (Slow)

Tuesdays 9-Midnight

Thursdays 8-9 (Slow)

Thursdays 9-Midnight

Donna Long, Laura Byrne,
Jim Eagan, Peter Fitzgerald
J. Patrick's 1371 Andre St.
410/244-8613

The Washington Area is blessed with excellent musicians who are dedicated to bring the traditional music to a new generation. Karen Ashbrook and Mitch Fanning are two local musicians who have made great contributions teaching and nurturing younger musicians.

Karen Ashbrook got her start with Irish music in 1976 when she built her first hammered dulcimer as a high school project. She attended the Eastman Preparatory School in Rochester, NY. In search of Irish music, she went overseas and spent 5 years playing in Europe and Asia, traversing the globe twice. With her delicate touch, trademark shimmering lilt and ear for authentic ornamentation, Karen Ashbrook is considered one of the finest Irish hammered dulcimer players anywhere.

In 1998 Karen started a monthly children's Irish music session to give a few of her students and her son a place to start playing and learning Irish music. The session met for 8 years at Nanny O'Brien's and regularly drew 12-18 children to participate. Eventually the session outgrew the space and moved up to Mrs. O'Leary's in Gaithersburg and stayed there until it sold a year later. In October 2006 the session moved to McGinty's in downtown Silver Spring and moved the meeting to the first Tuesday night of the month to line up with the adult session that follows.

Early on Karen realized most of the children had no context for the music and knew little of the culture, so she founded the Sligo Creek Hedge School to fill the gap. The Sligo Creek Hedge School is an Irish music and culture summer day camp for children. The camp day includes lots of music – singing, learning new tunes, beginning bodhran and pennywhistle instruction and even a bit of accordion. The children get many chances to try many instruments and at least one fiddler a year decides they need to add a mandolin to their arsenal come Christmas! But the day includes more than music. Words are an integral part of the Irish experience and the camp has a daily Tea & Poetry break. Potatoes – an Irish dietary staple – are served at lunch. Field trips include visiting local instrument builders. There is a daily Celtic themed art project. Campers learn a few words of Irish. Visitors have included our branch Irish language officer Beth Benedetto, and members of the Potomac Valley Irish Wolfhound Society! The camp started out for children who already play Irish music, but Karen has added weeks for newcomers to music as well as a more advanced session on band arranging for the group of very talented teenagers that has grown up with music. This summer Karen is adding two half-day camps called "Sprouting Celts" for ages 6-8 to plant the seeds of love of Irish music and culture.



Sligo Creek Hedge School in Action

For more information on children's sessions in the DC area, the Sligo Creek Hedge School, and a free tune book, visit Karen's website at <http://karenashbrook.com> and click on "For Children" in the sidebar menu, or contact Karen at mail@karenashbrook.com, 301/592-0101.

Mitch Fanning is a violinist and fiddler based in Silver Spring, Maryland. He earned a Bachelor of Music degree (1982) in violin performance from Catholic University of America, where he studied with Jody Gatwood and Robert Gerle. He has studied Suzuki violin pedagogy with John Kendall and Ronda Cole. Mitch has also studied traditional Irish fiddling with Brendan Mulvihill and participated in music festivals in Ireland over the last four years. He teaches violin and fiddle out of his home studio in the Forest Glen area of Silver Spring and is on the music faculty at the Washington Waldorf School.

In September 2004, Mitch started a fiddle club at the Washington Waldorf School for a group sixth grade boys who wanted to play traditional Irish music. The boys thought it would be really cool to learn traditional Irish fiddling and hoped in the process to get good enough to perform and help raise money for their eighth grade class trip.

It wasn't long before "Pete Moss & The Bog Boys" made a name for themselves in the Waldorf school community and Greater Washington, DC area. They first performed with concert artist Nicholas Kendall at a Waldorf anniversary event, and subsequently appeared at numerous Irish ceilis, the Smithsonian Institution's Discovery Theater and the Potomac Celtic Festival, among many other venues.

Soon others joined in the fun, and the Bog Boys expanded to include the eleven fiddle players + one harpist, with representation from six elementary, middle and high schools throughout the

Washington, DC vicinity. Lately others have joined the group, including a number of really good fiddlers who happen to be girls - hence the name change to "Pete Moss & The Bog Band."



Mitch Fanning and the Bog Band

For more information on the Bog Band, visit <http://www.bogband.com>.

CCE FIDDLE WEEK

The O'Neill-Malcom Branch of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCE) and Mitch Fanning (Director of FiddleWeek) are pleased to announce CCE FiddleWeek 2008.

The purpose of FiddleWeek is to offer violinists and fiddle players of all ages and levels of ability a unique and fun-filled opportunity to improve their playing through the study of traditional Irish music.

Students will be taught traditionally – in group classes, arranged according to ability and level of experience with traditional Irish music. Each group will have an opportunity to perform at a closing concert and ceili dance and each individual will also have a private lesson (half hour) with one of our teaching staff during the week.

The teachers for the week are all accomplished performers of traditional Irish music as well as excellent instructors. In addition to our teaching staff of local talent, through the aegis of Comhaltas we're pleased to feature the fiddling and class teaching of Brendan Mulvihill, Brian Conway, and Heather Bixler for the entire week.

FiddleWeek is designed to accommodate beginning, intermediate and advanced fiddlers and violinists of all ages and levels of experience. However, because of the demands of ensemble playing, the fast tempi and ornamentation of many of the tunes, prospective students should know that FiddleWeek beginner classes are not designed for people that are new to the instrument.

The beginning class for FiddleWeek 2008 is best suited for the student that has studied the violin or fiddle for 8 months to a year. If you have substantially completed Book I of the Suzuki method or can play well in the keys of A, D and G, have a good ear, sense of rhythm and tempo, then you are well-prepared for a great week! The intermediate class is designed for violinists or fiddlers with two to four years experience. The advanced class, for fiddlers with four or more years experience.

FiddleWeek 2008 will be held July 7-11 at the Washington Waldorf School, 4800 Sangamore Road, Bethesda, MD 20815. Tuition for CCE FiddleWeek is \$395. Registrations postmarked or delivered by April 30th will receive a \$45 discount for early registration, and assistance is available for those with demonstrated financial need.

For more information or an application, send email to jmitchellf@yahoo.com.

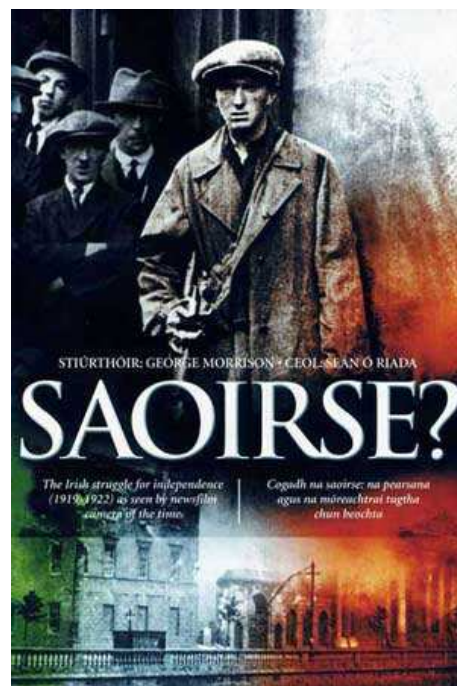
Saoirse? (Independence?)

*Translation from the article in Treoir #3, 2008 (p.45)
by Beth Benedeto*

The War of Independence presented from contemporary sources.

It is cause for rejoicing that Gael Linn has issued a DVD version of the film Saoirse? by George Morrison, and the CD of music that Seán Ó Riada composed for the film. The film deals with the period 1919 to 1922 and narrates events from the War of Independence, the Truce and the Treaty, the beginning of the Free State and the Stormont government, and the great tragedy of the Civil War.

Saoirse? comes to an end with a sorrowful portrayal of the results of the split in the nationalist movement: "And it was thus that the heart of the cities was broken, the heart of the nation, and thus comrades were separated. The end of the battle and the beginning of the war - a grievous war of brothers. The end of our story tonight is bitter."



The film draws much benefit from archive material; indeed, much of it was preserved when the film was made.

Use was also made of photographs and newspaper articles to give the historical background. Filming of the launching of the First National Loan is shown, with Michael Collins taking donations from Desmond Fitzgerald, Joseph MacAngus, etc. The events of the War of Independence are shown exactly as they unfolded - the sporadic fighting, the attacks and the revenge that resulted from them. A dramatic portrayal is seen of the ambush on Talbot Street where Sean Treacy was killed.

Here are some of the highlights of the film:

The funerals of Terence MacSwiney and Tomás MacCurtin.
King George V visiting Belfast for the opening of Stormont.
The burning of the Custom House, 1921.
Major figures of the Truce and the Treaty, coming together to give speeches to the DeValera, Collins and Griffith supporters.

George Morrison directed Saoirse?, and the film was first shown in 1961. It received widespread acclaim, particularly for the music by Seán Ó Riada. On the CD that comes with the DVD, music from the film can be heard that has never been issued previously. It is possible to add subtitles to the film and it can play in every region. The DVD and CD are sold in one package for 25euro.

Saoirse? is a true retelling of the dramatic events from a tortuous period of history, events that will live in our heritage for ever.

For more information: Gael Linn, caitronag@gael-linn.ie.

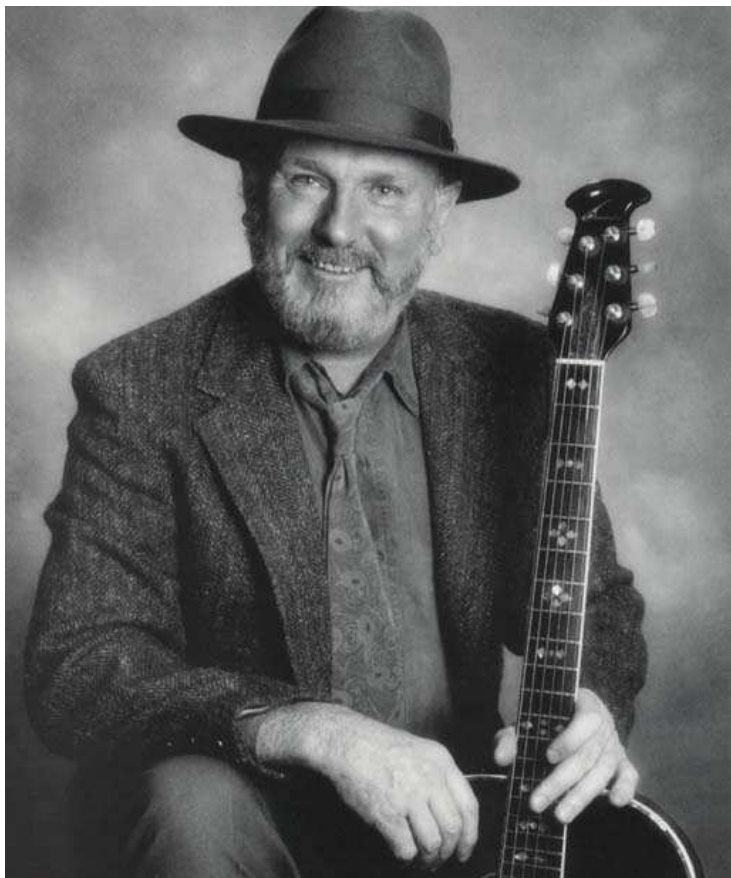
‘Oh Danny Boy, the Pipes ...’ Irish musicians play together to help one of their own.

By Margo Sanabria
January 10, 2008
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The Auld Shebeen Restaurant and Pub in Fairfax overflowed with Irish music and Celtic goodwill Sunday afternoon, Jan. 6, as musicians from around the region gathered to raise money on behalf of Irish balladeer Danny Doyle. Doyle, a resident of Manassas and a premier Irish balladeer of international renown, had surgery in August to remove a blockage from a carotid artery. Due to the surgery, he will be unable to perform from nine months to a year. Sunday's event raised approximately \$2,560 for Doyle. Robert Hickey, the immediate past chairman, and Jesse Winch, the current chairman of the O'Neill-Malcom Branch of Comhaltas Ceoltoirí Eireann (CCE) started organizing the event around Thanksgiving. Hickey is also one of the original founders of the O'Neill-Malcom Branch, which is the only CCE branch in the Washington, D.C. area. Winch said it is important to remember that Doyle is a fulltime musician "which means if you don't work you don't get paid and whatever health care you have is what you can buy yourself." Winch is also

grateful for the many years Doyle donated his services to the CCE's annual festival at Fairfax City's Van Dyck Park. "We always tried to offer him an honorarium and his response was always 'send it back to the bank,'" he said. Musicians such as Bog Mates, Celtic Marc, Mad for the Road, Brendan Sheridan, Cara and many others donated their time and provided Irish music that kept people on the dance floor.

One of the highlights of the event was the participation of Brendan Mulvihill, who is an All-Ireland champion fiddler and who has recently been inducted into the Comhaltas Hall of Fame. Sunday's fund raiser included a raffle for donated door prizes: Belleek China, a wool scarf handmade in Ireland, decorative bottle openers, T-shirts and caps with Irish beer logos, a \$25 gift certificate to Auld Shebeen and the grand prize, two roundtrip tickets to Ireland. The winner of the roundtrip tickets to Ireland was Christy Moore, the owner of the Irish Inn at Glen Echo, Md. About two months ago, Moore ran his own benefit for Doyle. A few at Sunday's event expressed personal connections with Doyle. Dominic Preston, the guitarist of Cara, remembers being a child and listening to Doyle on a Dublin radio program for children. Sean Culkin a dance teacher and director of The Culkin School of Traditional Irish Dance, in Silver Spring, Md., spoke about Dublin in his introduction of his dancers, whose hour-long performance ended the fund raiser.



Danny Doyle

"One of the best memories I have is Danny's 1995 performance at Wolf Trap," said Culkin. "It was a great moment to see him on stage. Listening to Danny is like riding a roller coaster. Danny pulls emotions out of you from crying to laughter." Paul O'Donnell of Silver Spring, Md., and raffle winner of a decorative bottle opener, described Doyle's music as person-to-person music. "He puts himself into the music and makes you believe," O'Donnell said. Rebecca Conley of Washington, D.C. and Lauren Robinson of Philadelphia became impromptu performers, when it was discovered they could step dance. Off the dance floor Conley said she was not too familiar with Doyle's work, but she "wanted to support the Irish community." Robinson admitted the draw for her was Mulvihill. "He's the best fiddler in the world and I knew the music would be fantastic," she said. Even before Doyle made his name in the United States, he had hits that topped the charts in Ireland. "He is an icon and not only a wonderful singer, but plays the guitar with finesse," Winch said. He was such a part of the Irish music scene that it was taken for granted he would always be there, Winch said. A message in a Christmas card that Doyle sent to Hickey gives some indication of how he is coping. "My father used to say when he'd catch us feeling sorry for ourselves, 'there are fellas in the grave yard would love to have your troubles,'" Doyle wrote.