

It's hard to ignore the presence of the Irish in Cleveland. They are as abundant as clover on the gentle hill in Erin. Fluent in poetry and song, diverse in their ability to have a good time, the Irish do have their quirks, especially when St. Patrick's Day nears. ■ *By* MIRIAM CAREY

## You Know You're



## Irish in Cleveland If ...



**YOU ARRIVE** two hours early for Mass at St. Colman's to be assured a seat in a pew.

**EVERY CONVERSATION** waiting for Mass to start begins with, "What's your mother's maiden name?"

**TWO MINUTES** before Mass starts, Irish hospitality

requires you to give up your hard-won seat to an old lady wearing a green cap, sporting a mean stare and waving a shillelagh. You stand for the entire 90-minute service.

**YOU DON'T PACK** a bag for a guilt trip. You can fill a steamer trunk for that job.

**YOUR MOTHER** used to write a note excusing you from school: "St. Patrick's Day is a Holy Day of Obligation in our religion." This allowed you to spend the morning at church, the afternoon at the St. Patrick's Day Parade and the evening sneaking beers from the keg at

your uncle's house.

**YOU LET** the poseurs drink the green beer, insisting on a Guinness poured by Jimmy Campbell at the Pride of Erin bar.

**YOU CAN IDENTIFY** Cleveland's Green Mile on a map. (Big hint: It's that stretch of pubs on Lorain Avenue between Kamm's Corners and West 130th Street.)

**YOUR FAMILY** hails from County Mayo, having left Ireland during or just after the famine wearing no shoes and hardly any clothes, and having

nothing more than 14 cents between them. You are reminded of this every time you ask your parents for a loan.



YOU TOOK Irish dancing as a young boy. And happily admit to it as an adult.

YOU KNOW all the words to the National Anthem of the Republic of Ireland — well, at least the part that goes Soldiers are we.

YOU'VE ATTENDED a "fund-raising" keg party for a poor, insurance-less, skinny Catholic kid visiting from Belfast who broke his leg during a Gaelic football game at the West Side Irish-American Club.

YOU REFER to Ireland as "home" in everyday conversation.

YOU CAN swear fluently — in Gaelic.

YOU'VE BEEN intimate with the floor tiles in the bathroom of the Public House in Kamm's Corners.



YOUR GRANNY'S soda bread recipe — and only your granny's — is considered the best in town.

YOU KNEW the good O'Malley from the bad one on the Election Day ballot.

YOU AT LEAST own a copy of *The Dubliners*.

YOUR MOTHER — who forced you to wear a winter jacket over your Halloween costume — let you attend the St. Patrick's Day Parade wearing a traditional Irish sweater with no coat at all.

YOU SAW the humor on every page of *Angela's Ashes*.

YOU HAVE to date outside your ethnicity because the risk of dating a first cousin in this town is too high if you try to stick to your own gene pool.

ON ST. PATRICK'S DAY, you beat to a pulp anyone wearing orange (except Cleveland Browns orange).

YOU CAN CITE the MacBride Principles by heart.

WHEN YOUR March bank statement arrives, you discover political donation checks written in your blurry hand dated March 17th.

YOU KNOW the difference between West 25th Street's "Irish Angle" evening at St. Malachi's and the Irish Angle Pub on West 25th Street.



YOU PREFER to pronounce it "arse."

YOU'VE ATTENDED a concert and wound up giving a donation to NORAD.

AS A WEST SIDER, you feel genetically, politically and morally superior to the East Side Irish.

AS AN EAST SIDER, you feel genetically, politically and morally superior to the West Side Irish.

AS AN IGNACIUN, you feel genetically, politically and intellectually superior to the kids at St. Ed's.

AS A ST. EDWARDIAN, you feel genetically, politically and intellectually superior to the kids at St. Iganatius.

YOU, HAILING from a family with six kids, apologetically describe your tribe as "small."

WHEN ASKING someone

where they live, you inquire, "What parish are ya from?"

YOU LOOK forward to a good wake.

YOU MET your wife at a wake.

YOU ARE RELATED to at least three judges on the county bench, two cops who live in West Park and a couple of firemen across the county.

YOU CAN TELL the Corrigans apart.

WHEN ARRIVING on Achill Island for your first visit, the female clerk at the "chemist's" asks, "So are ye from the East Side or the West Side?"

YOU HAVE a map of Ireland in your home, centered between a picture of the Pope and John F. Kennedy.

COLIN FARRELL'S Dublin accent makes you homesick. (Even though your people are from the other side of Ireland.)

YOU WORK hard to make and keep friends in this life so your funeral will be packed.

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What did we forget? Let us know. E-mail us at [magmail@plained.com](mailto:magmail@plained.com).

