

There were No Strangers in Springtown:

Written by Hugo - Last Updated Saturday, 14 May 2011 18:47

Within a week or two of our arrival at the camp, the initial sense of dislocation and isolation slowly evaporated for, every time mammy and granny ventured outside the hut, we ran into people they knew. First, there was, Ellen Friel from Fahan Street, with her husband Willie. Ellen, tiny, slender with pale ginger hair, was always referred to as Wee Ellen. Ellen and Willie had seventeen children, many of whom first saw the light of day in Springtown. My day was made if Ellen let me hold her newborn as Mammy, always on the alert, instructed, "Keep your hand under his back now." A whole bar of Cadbury's Milk chocolate couldn't have given more pleasure.

Willie's brother Jamsie and his family were also among the early arrivals. In addition to Willie and Jamsie, I remember Mike Powers, Danny Bradley, Tommy Moore, and I'm sure there were others, always at the ready to give a helping hand to a "widow woman".

But that was only the beginning. It seemed mammy and granny knew people from God only know where. The walk to the bus, or, the bus itself, extended the meaning of reunion. No opportunity was missed. If a young man, or woman, offered a seat in an over crowded bus, and Springtown young men and young women invariably did, mammy would respond with a smile as wide as Bishops Gate. Then, after she was comfortably seated, ask their name.

The conversation went something like this: "Are you anything to the Doherty's of the Wells" or "the McLaughlin's of Walkers Place". When the answer pinpointed the persons exact place in the web of human relationships that made up mammy and granny's world, smiles of recognition would break out all over and Maggie or Johnnie's "wee girl or wee boy" took their rightful place in my expanding universe. I should add here that "wee" was not a physical description. It was a term of affection applied to the generation that succeeded your own. A six-foot heavy weight boxer could still be "wee" to a whole generation.

It began to dawn on me that the world we inhabited had no new names or faces. There were only people we hadn't yet met. In pursuit of these connections, mammy and granny acknowledged no boundaries coasting as effortlessly as seagulls on the uplift of the wind between Donemana and the Illies, a touch down on Bluebell Hill Terrace, a jaunt to the head of the Bog or the foot of Bishop Street, en route to Claudy, by way of Rosemount. There were no strangers in Springtown

When one of their odysseys was particularly fruitful and the Mullins, Sullivans, Sweeneys, Kellys, Deerys, McConnells, McDermots, and Lynchs, Coyles, Havelins, Gallaghers, McCallions and McMenamins, had been taken out, lovingly caressed, and returned to their rightful place in the scheme of things, granny would take a small, black, cylindrical box from the right pocket of her white apron and offer mammy a pinch of snuff. And for, a while they, would sit in silence, undisturbed by the hypnotic rhythm of knitting needles until granny looked up at the clock above the dresser and announce: "It's ten o'clock and time for all decent respectable people to go to bed". On such occasions, I became conscious of having arrived at some long dreamed of destination filled with optimism, and love
are you anything to the Doherty's of the Wells"

In mammy and granny's world, the line between the living and the dead was porous which they moved through with ease when the occasion arose. As far back as I can remember, we said the rosary every night. It wasn't the five decades I silently rebelled against, but the recitation of a list, as long as the day and the morrow, of souls who had gone to their eternal rest, long before, either mammy or I, were born. At some point, these silent souls began to move through my

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childish imagination, like characters in a novel and I began to feel I knew them intimately. Wee Jimmy Sanders haunted my childhood. He still does.

Wee Jimmy Sanders had been killed in the Crimean war, “murdered by the Turks” was granny’s description of the terrible event. Wee Jimmy’s mother died shortly after he was born and his maternal grandmother, who was also my mother’s grandmother, and granny’s mother-in-law raised him. Granny, who had no children of her own, spoke lovingly of Wee Jimmy, as well as her mother-in-law Ellen McLaughlin (nee Sullivan). This gave me the understanding, from a very early age, that love is too profound and too powerful to be constrained within the confines of biology.

One Saturday afternoon after we moved to the “new” hut with indoor plumbing for the first time in our lives, I was cutting out wee scones with the only drinking glass we had. I was impatient to test the new black stove with the oven at the side, when I heard mammy and granny talking at the front door. I was not yet considered old enough to participate in adult conversation, so I focused my ears like a cat on its prey. “Are you anything to the Sanders from Walkers Place” granny asked. And to my astonishment, I heard the reply: “Aye, surely”.

I listened in wonder as mammy and granny conversed with cousins we didn’t know we had. I never did discover how many generations removed from Wee Jimmy we were. But it didn’t matter, because the most transforming event in my life was about to take place. When mammy and granny returned to the kitchen, they carried a battery run radio. A world, even my overheated adolescent imagination couldn’t have envisioned, was about to open up. Maybe, after all, it’s not such a remarkable thing that every time I turn on the radio, Wee Jimmy Sanders creeps into my head. And, increasingly of late, when I turn on the TV to watch the evening news, I think I can see his youthful face.

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A fulfilled sex living is indispensable for most partnerships. So it is really problematic when this no longer happens at all because of importance. Several drugs are far-famed. Other works for racy cases like Hodgkin's lymphoma, anxiety or bronchospasm. The most common sexual disorders in men are ED and inhibited sexual desire. If you are considering Cialis, you apparently want to read about [cheap levitra](#) . In our generation, there are varied options for folk who suffer from erectile malfunction. Very likely "" is a extremely complicated matter. Of all the matters in the field of healthcare that pique our note most, it's ED, special "". A long list of common remedies can lead to erectile malfunction, including several blood stress medicines, hurt medicaments, and most of antidepressants. Certain patients using this drug as a rule do not have any side effects to Cialis.

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