



- MEET A TOWNIE -



SIXTY-FOUR YEARS ON AND BOSTON CONTINUES TO HOLD ON TO JIM!

Had it been possible at the time, Jim Gallagher would have upped sticks and returned to the town of his birth close to 3,000 miles away.

And over sixty years on from when he first set foot in Boston he still harbours a measure of regret that he didn't make that move.

"I definitely would have gone back had the opportunity presented itself. I loved the people of Letterkenny and the town itself. Friendly people and a good place to live."

Not that Boston hasn't reaped life's dividends for him. For it was here that he met the woman who would become his spouse, Eileen, she hailing on the other side of the world from Letterkenny. Or Kerry as it's better known....!

And then there were work commitments and the friends he had made in the capital city of the state of Massachusetts.

The faraway hills of Donegal may indeed have been greener but there was plenty to keep him in Boston.

And there was always those opportunities to return to his home town - not least whenever the Letterkenny Reunion came around.

It comes around again this August but, unfortunately, Jim won't make it home for it on this occasion. "I had hoped to go but things have changed."

He had been conversing with fellow Bostonian and Letterkenny native, Mary Mansfield, about the event. "She's in Letterkenny now and will be there for the Reunion and I think she's expecting me but that's the way it goes."

Jim was, however, present for the 2015 event and notes: "I was there but other people who I would have met over the years weren't. I suppose that's life. But I keep in touch with some of those who are living in other parts of the world - New York, Australia and Scotland."

He was born to Dan and Hannah Gallagher at St. Eunan's Terrace, one of a family of six who included Danny, Mary, Sally, Rosaleen, Jim and Frank. Three of them, Danny, Mary and Sally, have gone to eternal rewards.

His memory of national school in his native town is not one he cherishes. "All bad," he says simply and while he doesn't delve further into his primary education, in those two words he reflects a few years of unchristian attitudes and corporal punishment meted out at the drop of a hat.

"I try to forget about it and then I might run into one of the boys I was in class with." And those memories flicker back into the harsh glare of reality.

But secondary school, in Jim's case at the local Tech, represented a much more positive experience.



Jim Gallagher

"We had good tutors and I learned a lot. I enjoyed my time there," he declares.

Even if the time there was relatively short - two years before he ventured out into the University of Real Life.

"I worked with the E.S.B. for a couple of years and that was a good experience and a learning process."

He remembers the characters of the time around Letterkenny including Sticks Donegan, Toal McGrath and Barney Grogan. "Barney taught me how to play chequers and taught me well." So much so that the pupil was eventually able to beat

the teacher in the popular board game!

But a much bigger move was on the horizon and in 1954, Jim headed to a city and a country indeed where so many Irish had gone before him and continue to go.

His own initial experience was, as with so many of his peers, sponsored - "claimed" as he describes it - by an individual, in his case, Annie McDevitt from Glenswilly. "It was all very new to me so it was great to have someone who knew the city to help me through those first few months."

After training at Fort Bragg in North Carolina, he undertook two years of national service with the

U.S. Army - active duty making him a veteran of the Korean War - before venturing into the career of regular employment working with a couple of different companies in the field of logistics.

In Boston Jim was, and is, never far away from a fellow townie and attended dinners in the home of Mary Mansfield where the likes of Liam Kelly, Marie Mellett, Gerard McAuley and Joan McCauley were regulars for this Donegal get together. "Gerard, Joan and Marie are all gone now," he reflects on life's inevitable course.

Another Letterkenny man with whom he came in frequent contact was his next door neighbour from home, Fr. Tommy Curran.

Jim may not be back for the Reunion this year - he recalls with fond recollection the 2015 event and the dance he attended in the Clanree Hotel and meeting up with the likes of Paddy McGranaghan from the Slate Row - but before 2018 is out he will be back.

"I'll be over later in the year but, sadly, not in August."

And even if the international element of the Letterkenny Reunion will have departed by then, there'll still be plenty there to greet him, family, friends, and that close community that had and has attempted to lure him back on a permanent basis.



Jim Gallagher during his two year stint in the U.S. Army.

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Jim Gallagher on the Letterkenny Reunion

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