

Out at the Ranch

with Bill Ellis



THE IRISH

St. Patrick's Day has come and gone once again. I bet you wore something green, didn't you? And you told someone that you had ancestors named McKinney and O'Brien, didn't you? So did I! What a coincidence! So did almost every other Canadian! And that is the myth of Ireland and the Irish. Almost everyone wants to be a little Irish, if for only one day of the year. By the way, I said myth -- not mist, though a lot of the Irish Mist was likely consumed on St. Patrick's Day!

St. Patrick's Day celebrations, in North America, are pretty light hearted affairs. Witness the St. Patrick's Day parades in places like Boston and New York City. I understand St. Patrick's Day, in Ireland, is a very somber and quiet day, of deep religious meaning.

Most of us know very little of the life of St. Patrick. We know he is credited with driving the snakes out of Ireland, which seems like a worthwhile feat. So many of us formulate our ideas of Ireland and the Irish, straight out of Hollywood. You know, all Irish women are red headed and beautiful and all Irish men love to fist fight and drink brown beer. Remember The Quiet Man and that little gem, Barry Fitzgerald. (I must watch that movie again soon)

Another part of the Irish myth, is the famous "Blarney Stone" located in Ireland. Apparently, the belief is that anyone who kisses the stone is bound to mouth highly exaggerated compliments. This Irish stuff is strong. Just think of it, a rock, with it's own name, known in every English speaking nation in the world!

The true Irish maintain that the Leprechaun is for real. This is a funny little Irish being, which is mostly of the imagination, I think. But -- who knows? If you buy the snakes and the stone, why not accept the Leprechaun for real too! After all, it's only one day of the year!

I was part of a St. Patrick's Day luncheon tradition, that went on for years. Nothing fancy -- just piles of corned beef, dill pickles and bread. This was, of course, accompanied by green beer and a little touch of Irish Mist, for the adventurous. Great Stuff!

It is difficult to think of the Emerald Isle, without thinking of the turmoil which has gone on there for centuries, seemingly without end. When you think about it, the Irish have impacted much of the world with their style and their beliefs, without the use of any army or occupation. They have done it all with their good humour and their lilted delivery of the English language.

Just think of the folks you saw on St. Patrick's Day. How about the guy who is as Canadian as can be, with an eleven letter Greek name, shouting "Top O' The Mornin'" to you? Or how about the young lady, who says her parents were born in Poland, and her dress, on St. Patrick's Day, is as green as the "auld sod" itself!

So, I hope you enjoyed being a bit Irish, for a day, and I hope you wore the green and maybe you even heard an old "Pat and Mike" joke repeated again. It's the Irish myth - and may it go on forever!

Bill Ellis is an Associate Broker with Canada Trust Realty, Georgetown.

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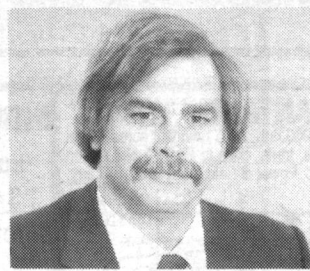
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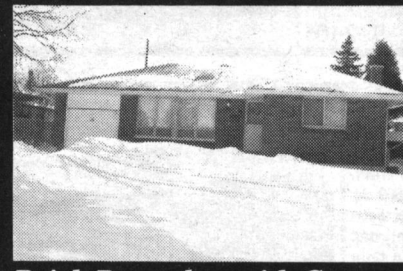


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