

St. Brigid's New York Connection



New York State

Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians, Inc

September 15, 2009

NY State President

Meg Redling

Hello, Sisters,

It has been only a short couple of months since the Convention and I am still humbled and grateful for all of you to have elected me as your New York State President. I want to congratulate many people for insuring this Convention was such a success. Karen Keane and Liam McNabb did a wonderful job for us. Their dedication and tireless efforts made this Convention a most memorable one for me and many others. Thank you! You both and Albany County deserve a much needed rest. It was an honor and privilege that our National President Mary Ryan attended. I also had a bit of a sentimental moment when our National Vice-President installed the Board. I thank Margaret Hennessy for the wonderful installation that she did. I want to congratulate Winifred (Una) McLoughlin of Division #3 Suffolk County on

being awarded the Mother Theresa Award and Bridget Hanley of Division #7 Suffolk County becoming the NYS Junior Hibernian.

Above all, I want to thank Kathy Conway for guiding over all at the Convention. She did a magnificent job. I want to thank her for her friendship and help over the past two years. She is not only our Immediate Past President, but also our organizer. I have received a couple of inquiries regarding membership so Kathy, I think, will be busy. As for the Convention, many things were passed too numerable to mention but I will mention that all State appointees now have a voice and vote at State Conventions. Division Presidents or their Alternates now have a voice and vote at State Board meetings. The other officers will keep you posted of more changes, if any. This would include the new officers to the Board, Francine Connerton, our Missions and Charities chair,

and Helen Gilgallen Murphy, our Catholic Action chair. Welcome on Board.

Writing of State Board meetings, the next general meeting will be held on Saturday, October 17th, 2009 in Elmira NY. The meeting will begin at 10:45 am following the AOH Pro-Life Mass and a continental breakfast in the Marion Hall in Elmira. The Holiday Inn at Riverview will be taking reservations. Secretary Carol McTigue will be sending more info.

The LAOH National President's dinner will be held at the Sheraton, in Braintree, Massachusetts, on Saturday Sept 19th 2009. The National Board meeting will be at 9:00 am that morning. I hope many of you are going as Mary has been very good to us. The AOH National Presidents dinner will be held at the Radisson Hotel, Old Lincoln Rd and Rte 1 in Philadelphia, Pa on October 31st. Please go to the AOH website for further details.

If you plan on going, please contact me at 58maggie@live.com.

Finally, I want to thank my own Queens County for extending themselves so greatly for my campaign. I am very proud of them. Team Queens made some very memorable evening socials that someone remarked it reminded them of the Conventions of long past. Thank you, Ladies for all the support from all over the State. This job cannot be done without your love and support. I am looking forward to meeting and greeting many of you, God willing, in the next couple of years.

NY State Vice President Denise Sobus

Hello Ladies,

As your new Vice President, I am happy to say that I will not miss the Secretaries job. It has been a busy two years. The proceedings from the convention are in the works and I will let everyone know when they are ready. I know the next convention is two years away, but it is not too early to start thinking about candidates for the Mother Theresa award. If there are any Counties or Divisions that need any info, on juniors or who want to form, a new division please let me know and I will help you any way I can. Our next State Board meeting will be October 17th in Elmira, NY along with the AOH/LAOH mixed doubles

bowling, I hope many of you can attend.

The Auburn AOH is celebrating their 40th Anniversary of our building on October 2nd and 3rd. We will be having a band, raffles, food and great memories of days passed both days. Please join us. If you need any information, please call or e-mail me. PH-315-252-4390.

NY State Secretary Carol A. McTigue

At this time, I am in the transition mode going from the Treasurer to my new position of the State Secretary. I am really looking forward to this new position and the challenges it will bring. Each position I've held has given me the opportunity to meet and get to know more of you ladies in our state. It's always a pleasure to see you face to face after having spoken to you on the phone. The women in New York State are certainly friendly and helpful.

Late summer and early fall is certainly a busy time for the Board. I will be attending Our National President Mary Ryan's Testimonial Dinner on September 19, 2009 in Braintree Mass. Then our State Board Meeting will be October 17, 2009 in Elmira, NY, at the Holiday Inn. There will be a Mass for the Right to Life and a bowling tournament, along with the men. Plans are still being made and as soon as it all

comes together, I will send out the official letter.

I hope to see many ladies come out to our fall State Board Meeting in Elmira, it's a nice way to meet each other and get important information first hand.

NY State Historian Eileen Fee

Dear Ladies,

I am looking forward to being your New York State Historian. Letters have gone out recently with the current topics for the Irish History Writing Contest for 2009-2010

Subjects:

Level 1- grades 6 , 7 , 8 : "Role of Irish Women in the 1916 Rebellion"

Level 2 -grades 9 , 10 , 11, 12: "The Irish Playing the Game: The Sports of the World"

The contest opens August 15, 2009

All students in levels 6-12 are encouraged to participate that attend public, private, parochial and home schools. I know you have heard it before but it is a wonderful way for our young people to learn about their heritage.

Also included in the letter is a reminder about the **History Reports** for the Counties and Divisions.

If you have any questions regarding any of these matters

please feel free to contact me at efeefee@aol.com or (585-377-7500) at anytime and I will respond as soon as possible.

NY State
Mission/Charities
Francine Connerton

Dear Sisters,

First, let me say that it is an honor and a pleasure to serve you as the new NYS Missions and Charities Officer. I had the opportunity to meet some of you at the M&C meeting at the convention and I look forward to working with all of you to preserve our order. I will be taking over for Mary Hogan and she is a hard act to follow. My job will be easier because of the impeccable job she has done while in this office. Thank you Mary!

The Columban Fathers is our main charity followed by the Columban Sisters. The Mission of the Columban's is to "establish the Catholic Church where to Gospel has not been preached." Our third charity is the Danielle House, "a temporary homelike atmosphere," which offers compassion and comfort to family members while their loved ones are in the hospital or receiving treatment. The Danielle House is located in the Broome County area and is near and dear to my heart.

Please keep in mind that your **minimum** annual donation to the charities should be \$2.00 per member. Many of the divisions actually give more. Kudo's to you! Remember when sending your donation please designate what charity you want your donation to go to. There were several suggestions given at the M&C convention meeting as to how to raise the funds. Some of those suggestions were, 50/50, pancake breakfast, spaghetti dinner or just having a donation jar at your meetings. All donations should go from the Division, to the County, to the State, and then the State sends the donation to the National Officer. Following this procedure gives all levels credit. **All checks should be made out to LAOH Missions & Charities and sent to me at the address below from the County or Division if a County Board does not exist.**

Another way to support the Columban Missions is by purchasing the **Mass cards**. Your County and/or Division can purchase a packet of assorted Mass cards, which can be used for healing and memorials. The cost of the packet of assorted cards is \$10, which covers shipping and handling. You can purchase your packets by writing to Columban Missions, PO Box 10, St. Columban, NE 68056. Please send the Mass request back to the Columban Fathers. **Please note ladies: there is an expected \$10 donation for each Mass card used.**

The check should be made out to LAOH Missions and Charities and mailed to: Francine Connerton LAOH NYS M&C Officer 141 Hillside Terr. Endwell, NY 13760. If there is any confusion on this, please email me at connerton@stny.rr.com or call me at (607) 621-7798.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your support at the July 2009 NYS LAOH Convention in Albany. A special thank you goes out to my sisters of Broome County who encouraged and supported me to pursue this office. May God Bless You All! In our Motto.

NY Press and Publicity
Jackie Clute

Hello sisters, my name is Jackie and many of you may remember me, I served as the NY State PR chair 2005-2007. I am thrilled and humbled to have been asked to fill this position. Thank-you, Meg Redling for allowing me this opportunity to once again serve the ladies of New York.

My first priority is to gather as many e-mail addresses as is possible. To do this I will need everyone's help and input. When you go into your next division meeting, please ask if everyone is receiving the newsletter that has e-mail. For those that are not, give them my e-mail address and ask them to send me a e-mail with their name and county. I will

then add them to the mailing list.

The second thing I believe that it is important to our members is education, by this I mean learning about our Heritage. We come from a people that have a rich culture, beautiful art and music, wonderful myths and legends, great heroes and a vibrant religion. The Irish people have a need to be free, and many of our ancestors lost their lives protecting their freedom and that of others. I hope to be able to include short pieces telling the stories of our people, their myths and legends, events and historical happenings. If you have an idea for an article or if there is something you want to learn about, please let me know and I will try to put something together for the membership to read in the newsletter.

Third, I would like to see more involvement from our members. I love the articles that all of you sent to me and look forward to sharing them with all of New York State. I plan to restart the event listing for sharing information about the events and giving ideas to divisions for local events.

In closing, I want thank all of you for your help and encouragement. If you need my help just e-mail me or pick up the phone and call My e-mail is : banbha1@nycap.rr.com and my phone # is 518-395-9964. Please remember that I am here to serve all of you and to

help the Order grow and prosper.

NY State Freedom for All Ireland Pat Ratigan

Hope everyone enjoyed their summer! September is here and back to Hibernian business. At the past convention, I was appointed Freedom for All Ireland Chair and I get much information emailed to me but I do not know who the FFAI Chairs are for the Counties as well as the Division. Due to the information being so voluminous and not to clog up the newsletter with too much information I would appreciate it if all County Presidents who receive this newsletter would ask that their County FFAI County and Division Chairs contact me ASAP. I am going to set up a new email address is FFAIhooleygirl47@hotmail.com I look forward to meeting all of the FFAI appointed officers but more importantly hearing from you so that I can disseminate information as I receive it.

NY State Scrapbook Cecilia Leonard

Dear Sisters:

I hope you had a good summer. As always, it went by very fast. Our new President, Meg Redling, has asked me to stay on as Scrapbook Chair. Needless to say I will be asking

you to send me pictures, fliers, newspaper notices, anything showing activities that your County and/or Division has held since the last National Convention. New York State has done very well at the last two national conventions, so let's keep up the good work.

See you soon I hope,

NY State Fund Raiser Aggie O'Leary

ALERT! ALERT! ALERT!

Hi! I know it has been a busy summer for all, and now our children and grandchildren are going back to school, but I hope I have your attention. I am your sister, Aggie O'Leary, from Suffolk County. Our President Meg Redling has asked me to be your New York State Fund Raiser. PLEASE don't stop reading.

I know it seems like everywhere we turn someone is asking for money. But please understand that we do need a little financial help to keep the State Board afloat.

I am asking if each county and division could appoint, brow beat, or trick someone into being a fundraiser coordinator. If you sent me their name, number, e-mail I'll bug them instead of County and Division Presidents.

At the October 17th, 2009 State Board meeting the 2010 calendars will be distributed to

each county/division to begin our fund raising projects. The profits from the calendars are divided between the AOH & LAOH. Any unsold calendars **MUST** be returned. Please, Please, Please return any unsold calendars. Just follow the guidelines on the calendars regarding the purchase or return.

*****I have an "IDEA", how about purchasing a calendar for your children /grandchildren's teacher! Send a little note suggesting the teacher share a little Irish History with their class each week! Or, how about each County/Division purchase a calendar for your Irish Historian so they can share some info at your meetings, short, sweet and informative!

If you have any suggestions for fund raising, to help defer some of the State expenses please let me know, or if you have a strong desire to tell me to go jump in the lake, you can e-mail me at ragtop@optonline.net.

NY State Webmaster Elizabeth Colgan

Dear Sisters,

I am so excited to begin my second term as webmaster! I would be remiss if I did not thank Meg Redling for her trust and the opportunity to serve our Order. Autumn is just around the corner! Crisp days and crispier nights, colorful foliage and the Celtic New Year

are just some of the things we are looking forward to. Now is the time most of us gear up for another year of Hibernian activities, and Ladies, we are busy! Please remember to share your events, accomplishments, news and celebrations. We have plenty of space on the website for calendar postings and photos.

Don't forget the Juniors – they have a lot to be proud about as they learn our motto and put it into action. As always, I appreciate your input and suggestions. On a final note, please check the web contacts – with elections behind us (for the most part) updates are inevitable. Please send all corrections to laohnys@optonline.net. May the good Lord, St. Brigid and St. Patrick guide us.

Albany County

Hope everyone is enjoying the final days of summer. The JFK Division 1 Ladies and friends honored Our Lady of Knock on

August 21st in East Durham. Mass was celebrated by Father Jeremiah Nunan, Pastor of Our Lady of Knock Shrine who gave a moving homily on Our Lady of Knock Shrine in Ireland. The day concluded with lunch at the Shamrock House and shopping at Guaranteed Irish. It was a great day.

We ask our brothers and sisters to join us in celebrating the I2K Festival to be held this year on Friday and Saturday

(September 18th and 19th) at the Saratoga Fairgrounds in Ballston Spa, NY (for more information)visit <http://www.irish2000fest.com> We will be selling coffee and Irish Soda Bread on Friday and Saturday and corned beef sandwiches on Saturday - it should be fun for all. Please join us.

Broome County

The Ladies of Divisions 1 and 2 had a busy summer starting with the **AOH/LAOH Family Picnic on July 19th** at Ross Park. It was great to see so many members and their families and the weather was great too!! Thanks to the men for staffing the grills and to the ladies for all their wonderful dishes and desserts. The Hibernian Garden that we maintain at the zoo was in full bloom as you can see in the picture and thanks to those members who do the weeding and watering.



August 8th the AOH Golf Tournament was held at Ely Park Golf Course, both men and women Hibernians had fun, thanks to all the volunteers and sponsors, see you on the links next year. At the end of the week on **August 13th** we had

our annual outing to see a **Binghamton Mets** game. Once again, **Andy Cooney** was here to sing the National Anthem and afterwards joined us at the Hibernian Hall. We ended the month on **August 30th** with **Our Lady of Knock Mass** at St. Paul's Church followed by a luncheon hosted by Division 2. We were honored to have **NYS Missions and Charities Officer Francine Connerton** attend our mass. Division 2 is selling "Enjoy the City" coupon books for \$20.00, please contact Maureen at 607-648-8131 or stop in at the hall to purchase one, they make a great gift.

Upcoming events in Broome County include the **Halfway to St. Patrick's Day Hooley** on **September 18th** from 7-11pm at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 136 Park Avenue in Binghamton. Tickets are \$12 advance or \$15 at the door which includes beer, soda, coffee and snacks. Music is by "Old Friends", there will also be pipers, dancers and raffles. Proceeds from a 50/50 Raffle will go to D.A.R.E Programs of Binghamton and Johnson City. For 50/50 tickets call 607-648-8131 or 621-7798 and for admission call 607-724-2705, 729-5244 or 729-3402. This is our 6th Annual Hooley, hope to see you there...

October brings the annual Fall Rummage Sale sponsored by Divisions 1 and 2. It will be held October 1-3. On **October 24th** we will have a very busy day, starting with our participation in the **Broome County Ethnic**

Festival from 11am to 5pm at the Veterans Memorial Arena. And the night will end with the **Celtic New Year/Halloween Party** sponsored by Division 1.

November 8th we will be having an Irish Breakfast at the Hall from 8am to 12noon.

November 21st is the **Sock Hop** from 7 to 10pm. Join Bill Grace as he'll be spinning the oldies and we'll be dancing the night away, come and join us in this fun night, get out your bobby socks and poodle skirts, admission is \$3.00 and a food donation for C.H.O.W.

We close the year with our **AOH/LAOH Christmas Party** on **December 5th**. This year Susan Connors and Nancy Hyatt (Division 2) and the **Ballyclare Irish Dancers** will perform.

Erie County

On Tuesday, August 4th, the AOH/LAOH annual picnic was held in Clarence. The food was abundant and delicious. The Chinese Auction to benefit the Fenians (The Irish Football Team) and the AOH Charities was a great success.

The Western New York Famine Mass was held on Saturday July 25th. Many of our members were there to represent the LAOH. A donation of food was requested to help the hungry in Western New York

Father Patrick Keleher celebrated a Mass in honor of Our Lady of Knock at the

Buffalo Irish Center on August 21st. A reception following the Mass was hosted by the LAOH.

Many of our members helped in the raffle booth at the Irish Festival in late August. The shared profits from the raffle helped to enhance our treasury for our many charities.

A program honoring Commodore John Barry was held aboard the USS Little Rock at the Buffalo Naval Park on Saturday, September 12th. Erie County Historian Douglas Kohler speech was entitled "Commodore John Barry and Captain John Paul Jones, Celtic Heroes of the American Revolution."

The LAOH St. Brigid's Luncheon and Fashion Show by the Tara Shoppe will be held at the Buffalo Irish Center on Saturday, October 31st. Chairman Rita Nolan is chairing this fund raising event. Many of our members put a great effort into making this a success. Donations for our Chinese Auction will be greatly appreciated. The event helps to fund the charitable works of the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians.

Greene County

It has been a busy summer and we look forward to the fall. We celebrated the 130th Anniversary of the Apparition of Our Lady of Knock with a beautiful mass and dedicated to the memory of Bishop Hugh

Lindsay. We served refreshments under our new tent. It was lovely to see the buses come from Yonkers and Albany with our sisters from other areas. More than 350 people attended the mass. The following week we had our parish picnic and on the Labor Day weekend we had a Yard Sale, it was a great success.

On September 8th we had our regular monthly meeting and celebrated with our sister Anne Downey with more than Fifty years as a LAOH member and our three sisters who received their degree this past July in Albany. We have just scheduled a Social at Sacred Heart Hall in Cairo on Saturday, October 10th from 12 noon to 4:00pm. All are welcome We have picked our Nominating Committee for election of officers in November. We are also preparing to have our "Memorial Christmas Tree" in memory of all our family and friends, which will be lit in their memory. Watch for future developments. We are a busy bunch.



Nassau County

Lovely Ladies of Nassau County attended the 95th Biennial New York State Convention in Albany July 8th to 11th.

Here we are with Nassau's "adopted" Sister from Albany, Maura McSweeney Tearno, with Marian Cronin, Maureen Murphy-Ade, Kathy Hayes, and Division President Mary Jo Walsh.



The Lovely Ladies of Nassau congratulate our newly elected State Officers: President: Meg E. Redling; Vice President: Denise Sobus; Secretary: (our very own) Carol A. McTigue; Treasurer: Karen Keane; Irish Historian: Eileen Fee; Office of Missions and Charities: Francine Connerton; and Office of Catholic Action: Helen Kilgallen Murphy. We congratulate our Sister from neighboring Queens County, Maureen Leahy, on her appointment as the New York State Chair of Immigration and Legislation. Thank you to Maureen Graham, Division 14, who put together our beautiful Long Island Wreath (complete with shells, fishing nets, lounge chair, and gaggle of gift cards). Our Vice President and 2009 Woman of the Year, Regina Begley, won the wreath! Congratulations Regina!! Also at the Convention, the delegates voted for Pearl River,

New York, as the location for our 2011 State Convention.

Thank you to Pat Radigan for her assistance these past two years as New York State Publicity Chair. Pat has been appointed New York State Chair of Freedom for All Ireland. Congratulations Pat!

Lastly, we welcome back Jackie Clute as the New York State Publicity Chair!

SAVE THE DATES



Our first major event of the Fall is the 37th Annual Nassau County AOH Feis – Festival of Irish Dance, Music and Culture on **Sunday, September 20th** from 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. This year, the Feis will honor **Dr. William A. Donohue** of the Catholic League., and dedicated to the memory of **Alice Caffrey**. The venue for this year's Feis has been changed to **MOLLOY COLLEGE, ROCKVILLE CENTRE**. Admission is \$10; children under 16 free with paid adult. For more information, please visit <http://www.nassuaohfeis.com> All are welcome! Come and watch, or come and help, or both! We look forward to seeing you!

October 5, 2009 – Annual Irish Day in Long Beach, which begins with the Grand Marshall's Mass at 9:00 a.m. at Sacred Heart Church, Island Park; and a Communion Breakfast immediately following at the VFW in Long Beach. The Parade steps off at 12:00 p.m., with the route along Beech Street ending in the West End. After the Parade there is a giant street festival along Beech Street with Food, Vendors & Fun!! Everyone is welcome! If you would like to march with us, the dress code is white blouse, black pants and comfortable black shoes, a your sash.

November 1, 2009 – Missions and Charities Fundraiser – Bellmore Theater, 2:00 p.m., **Fiddler on the Roof**. More details to follow.

November 8 - LAOH Nassau County 2009 Woman of the Year. – mark your calendars! We are pleased and proud to announce that **Regina Begley**, County Board Vice President, has been selected our Woman of the Year! Further details to follow. **Congratulations Regina!**

For more information about upcoming events and the goings on in Nassau, please visit our new and improved website: www.nassaulaoh.com.

Around the County

Most of our Divisions are holding their Fall meetings the first week in September. A few Divisions celebrations this year

are – **Division 8** in Glen Cove is holding its annual Halloween Dinner Dance on October 24th, **Division 15** in Massapequa is celebrating its 40th Anniversary on October 21st with an 11:00 a.m Mass at St. Rose of Lima Church, followed by Brunch at Katie Daley's; **Division 17** in Long Beach will be hosting our celebration for our 2009 County Woman of the Year—Regina Begley—at Lambrow's in Island Park. More details to follow.

Schenectady County

The ladies of Schenectady have been very busy this summer and soon to be fall. We have been working with our AOH brothers on a "Celtic Day in the Park" in Schenectady's beautiful Central Park. This event will take place on Sunday, September 27th from noon until 7pm. We will have wonderful Irish music, a seanchai going from place to place telling the stories, Farrell's School of Irish Dance will be performing, there will be many service agencies, vendors and even some animals for the children. This is a big undertaking for us but with all of us working together, we know the citizens of Schenectady County will have a great time. If any of you will be in the area, stop by Central Park- the event is free and we would love to show off our great park



Convention Updates

Sister Nancy is a member of the Little Sisters of St Francis, an African religious community. Sister, stationed in Tanzania, was sent to the USA by her bishop to pursue an MBA degree at the college of St. Rose, Albany, N.Y. Sister's expenses were to be paid by wealthy gentleman and unfortunately, the gentleman's money was lost when the recent Stock Market crashed leaving Sister here in Albany without any financial assistance. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet at Cathedral Convent in Albany took Sister Nancy into their convent and offered her room and board for the duration of her studies.

A CSJ Sister from Cathedral convent called the Troy LAOH to ask for any assistance to help Sister Nancy through this year and next year. This past April Troy's Division #5 gave Sister Nancy a check for \$500.00 for books, materials and supplies and any other needs she may have had this past school year. She still needs financial assistance for this coming year.

Once Sister finishes her studies, she will return to Tanzania to help women and children improve their standard of living, learn their rights and write grants. She will work with community development projects for women, provide education in financial

management for women and assist them to find grants. Sister Nancy is still in need of donations to study next year and if any LAOH Division would sponsor a fundraiser or send a donation for Sister, she would be gratefully appreciative for your assistance. I wish you could have seen her reaction to the Convention donations. She didn't know anything about our asking for the Appeals for Aid nor the collection that was taken up for her. She was astonished to think that we would come to help her in this time of dire need.

Checks may be made out to Sister Nancy Kanau, OSF and may be sent to Pat O'Grady, 5 Woodrow Court, Troy, NY. This way we can keep a record of the LAOH donations. Should you prefer to send the checks directly to Sister Nancy her address at the convent is: Sister Nancy Kanau, OSF, Cathedral Convent, 93 Park Avenue, Albany, NY 12202-1799 Thank-You so much for anything you can do for Sr. Nancy.

Trinity Degree Team Shines at New York State Convention

The Trinity Degree Team, made up of LAOH members from the Albany, Schenectady, and Watervliet divisions, exemplified the Major Degrees at the NYS AOH/LAOH convention July 10th in Albany, NY. Prior to the convention, the

newly formed team had performed the ceremony only once. The 53 candidates came from 11 different counties across the state. Also in attendance were 40 observers, including the LOAH National President, National Vice President, National Treasurer, Past National President, National legal counsel, NYS President, NYS Vice President, NYS Catholic Action Officer and members of the Celtic Degree Team from Suffolk County.

The ceremony was performed with the passion and stage presence of a seasoned team; showcasing the many months of hard work and dedication of the team members. Numerous fundraisers were held to purchase the necessary items for the exemplification of the Major Degrees. The team has worked together and collaborated on the many decisions that needed to be made.

The Trinity Degree team would like to thank all of the people who assisted us with registration, set up, break down or any of the many jobs over the last few months, as well as all of our 'guinea pigs' and especially Katherine Keane who was our 'guinea pig extraordinaire'. We would also like to thank the Celtic Degree Team for their guidance and positive feedback. We could not have been a success without everyone's help.

Convention Pictures



Incoming President, Meg Redling being escorted by the Guardians of the Celtic and Trinity Degree Teams-Betty Kramer and Jackie Clute



National President, Mary Ryan installing NY State President, Meg Redling while Celtic Degree team guardian Betty Kramer watches.



Incoming President, Meg Redling enjoying installation with outgoing President, Kathy Conway

Samhain



November 1 is the Celtic feast of Samhain. Samhain, Gaelic for "summer's end," was the most important of the ancient Celtic feasts.

The Celts honored the opposing balance of intertwining forces of existence: darkness and light, night and day, cold and heat, death and life. The Celtic year was divided into two seasons: the light and the dark, celebrating the light at Beltane on May 1st and the dark at Samhain on November 1st. Therefore, the Feast of Samhain marks one of the two great doorways of the Celtic year. Some believe that Samhain was the more important festival, since it marked the beginning of a new dark-light cycle. The Celts observed time as proceeding from darkness to light because they understood that in dark silence comes whisperings of new beginnings, the stirring of the seed below the ground. Therefore, the Celtic year began with the season of An Geamhradh, the dark Celtic winter, and ended with Am Foghar, the Celtic harvest. The

Celtic day began at dusk, the beginning of the dark and cold night, and ended the following dusk, the end of a day of light and warmth. Since dusk is the beginning of the Celtic day, Samhain begins at dusk on October 31. Samhain marks the beginning of An Geamhradh as well as the New Year.

Whereas Beltane was welcomed in the summer light with joyous celebrations at dawn, the most magically potent time of Samhain was at night. Oidhche Shamhna, the Eve of Samhain, was the most important part of the celebration. Villagers gathered the best of the autumn harvest and slaughtered cattle for the feast. The focus of each village's festivities was a great bonfire. Villagers cast the bones of the slaughtered cattle upon the flames. (Our word bonfire comes from these "bone fires.") Personal prayers in the form of objects symbolizing the wishes of supplicants or ailments to be healed were cast into the fire. Many sacrifices and gifts were offered up in thanksgiving for the harvest. With the great bonfire roaring, the villagers extinguished all other fires. Each family then solemnly lit their hearth from the one great common flame, bonding all families of the village together. As they received the flame that marked this time of beginnings, people surely felt a sense of the kindling of new dreams, projects and hopes for the year to come.

The gods drew near to Earth at Samhain, as at all the turning points of the Celtic year. The Celts believed that Oidhche Shamhna was a very holy time, when the boundaries between our world and the Otherworld were broken and the dead could return to the places where they had lived. Many rituals of Oidhche Shamhna involved providing hospitality for dead ancestors: Celts put out food and drink for the dead with great ceremony, and left their windows, doors, and gates unlocked to give the dead free passage into their homes. Bobbing for apples, another traditional Samhain pastime, was a reference to the Celtic Emhain Abhlach, "Paradise of Apples," where the dead, having eaten of the sacred fruit, enjoyed a blissful immortality. Swarms of spirits poured into our world on November Eve, but not all of these spirits were friendly. Celts carved the images of spirit-guardians onto turnips and set these "jack o'lanterns" before their doors to keep out unwelcome visitors from the Otherworld.

In the agricultural year, Samhain also marked the first day of winter, when the herders led the cattle and sheep down from their summer hillside pastures to the shelter of stable and byre. The hay that would feed them during the winter must be stored in sturdy thatched shelters, tied down securely against storms. Those

destined for the table were slaughtered, after being ritually devoted to the gods in pagan times. All the harvest must be gathered in -- barley, oats, wheat, turnips, and apples. Peat and wood for winter fires were stacked high by the hearth. It was a joyous time of family reunion, when all members of the household worked together baking, salting meat, and making preserves for the winter feasts to come. The endless horizons of summer gave way to a warm, dim and often smoky room; the symphony of summer sounds was replaced by a counterpoint of voices, young and old, human and animal. Divination of the events of the coming year was another prominent feature of Samhain. Celts used hazelnuts, symbols of wisdom, to foretell the future.

There was also a lighthearted side to the Celtic New Year rituals. Young people would put on strange disguises and roam about the countryside, pretending to be the returning dead or spirits from the Otherworld. Celts thought the break in reality on November Eve not only provided a link between the worlds, but also dissolved the structure of society for the night. Boys and girls would put on each other's clothes, and would generally flout convention by boisterous behavior and by playing tricks on their elders and betters.



For centuries, Christian people have commemorated the intercommunion of the living and the dead in the Body of Christ by honoring the dead who had professed faith in Christ during their lives, especially those who had crowned their profession with heroic deaths. Historic documents show the observance of a festival of martyrs as early as the year 270, although no month and date are attached to it. In the 4th century, an observance of this type is noted on the date of May 13th. John Chrysostom, who died in 407, says that a festival of All Saints was observed on the First Sunday after Pentecost in Constantinople at the time of his episcopate. It is believed by many scholars that the commemoration of all the saints on November 1 first originated in Ireland, spread from there to England, and then to the continent of Europe. That it had reached Rome and been adopted there early in the ninth century is attested by a letter written by Pope Gregory IV, urging that such a festival be observed throughout the Holy Roman Empire.

With the rise of Christianity, Samhain was changed to Hallowmas, or All Saints' Day, to commemorate the souls of the blessed dead who had been canonized that year. The night before became popularly known as Halloween, or All Hallows Eve. In Scotland and Ireland, Halloween is known as Oíche Shamhna, while in Wales it is Nos Calan Gaeaf, the eve of the winter's calend, or first. November 2nd became All Souls Day, when prayers were to be offered to the souls of all who the departed and those who were waiting in Purgatory for entry into Heaven.

Many ancient Celtic customs proved compatible with the new Christian religion. Christianity embraced the Celtic notions of family, community, the bond among all people, and respect for the dead. Throughout the centuries, pagan and Christian beliefs intertwine in a gallimaufry (hodgepodge) of celebrations from October 31st through November 5th, all of which appear both to challenge the ascendancy of the dark and to revel in its mystery.

<http://allsaintsbrookline.org/celtic/samhain.html>

