

Limerickman of the Year won't blow his own trumpet

By LEADER REPORTER

INTERNATIONAL Band Parade Day on O'Connell Street—cheats out, music blaring, responding to the local crowd, the Limerick City Brass and Reed Youth Bank is at its best. That is satisfaction for Sammy Benson, the 1988 Limerick Citizen of the Year.

Music is 53-year-old Sammy Benson's life. It has been his family's life blood for a century spanning four generations. On Tuesday night he was named Limerick Citizen of the Year 1988 in the annual tribute organised by Junior Chamber and sponsored by Kearney Jewellers.

His voluntary work with the band, which has taken up almost all of his spare time since 1974, is the reason he was selected from the numerous nominations.

Quite frankly Sammy Benson is astounded that he was chosen as Citizen of the Year.

Fr. Kavanagh

"I did not think that teaching kids music and running a marching band merited such an award. I am truly honoured when you think that Fr. Vincent Kavanagh is a past recipient—now he really merited the award", Sammy told the *Limerick Leader*.

Most Limerick people will be familiar with the band that Sammy runs. They practise on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. and on Sundays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. It takes a lot of time but at least they have their own £120,000 band hall in Caledonian Park. It still needs a lot of work on it, requiring showers and the like.

Sammy would dearly love to see this work being carried out but all his time is taken up teaching the kids music and he has no time to go out and bang on doors to raise money and persuade sponsors to help them out.

For this reason Sammy and his brother, Christy, have often had to put their hands in their own pockets.

They bought the first instruments for the band and got the show on the road straight from their own money. It costs them dear not only in time but in money also.

Residents of the city centre will be very familiar with the band. If the weather is good and there are enough of the 60-strong band around, they will take to the street on Sundays.

Sousa marches—Sammy's favourites—often pervade the air on Sundays as the kids marching along bring music and life to city streets which are free of traffic.

Music in the Benson family goes back a long way. In 1870 the original Sam Benson was born. He went on to become president of the Boherbuoy Band and one of its leading members.

Black and Tans

The Benson-inspired band can now march on Limerick streets with ease—it was not always the case. During the "troubles" the Black and Tans chased the Boherbuoy off the streets. They ran for their lives when shots were fired in Mulgrave Street. The instruments were quickly ferried to the attic of



Sammy Benson and son Sam.

Sam Benson's house in Brown's Lane, off Edward Street.

While some musicians "can't get no satisfaction", Sammy's satisfaction come easy.

"On band parade day when we are coming down O'Connell Street and the kids play at their best, rising to the occasion, and the cheers from the crowd... that's my reward", he says.

Sammy's late father, Paddy, introduced him into his Dance Orchestra at the age of 14½ as a tenor sax. He took this up when his father retired and the orchestra played well into the 70's until Sammy gave it up and found the youth band.

Hundreds of city kids have passed through his hands in those years and he has taken them on many tours—78 England, 79 United States, '86 Geneva.

A number of things break Sammy's heart: kids leaving when he has them trained, the lack of enthusiasm shown by some parents and the fact that the band does not have enough cash.

Shortage

An invite to Geneva this year

Women's World Day of Prayer in Limerick

By LEADER REPORTER

WOMEN'S WORLD Day of Prayer will take place on Friday next, March 4, with services in Limerick.

One of the main aims is to bring together women of various races, cultures and traditions in closer fellowship, understanding and action throughout the year.

At 10.30 a.m. a service will take place at the Church of Our Lady Help of Christians.

At 2.45 p.m. at the Salesian school chapel, Fernbank, North Circular Road, a senior school service will be held. With the co-operation of Sr. Brigid, Salesian Convent and Mr. Thomas Hardy, headmaster, Villiers School, students from both schools

had to be refused because of a shortage of money. "If we had money like, say, the bands in Clonmel and Tullamore, we could have 100 kids marching down O'Connell Street—that's my dream", he disclosed.

Despite the demands made on his time by the band he still has time for his work as a dental mechanic and helps, too, in the family music shop in Catherine Street, run by his son, Sam—the fourth generation of musicians.

He is ever grateful for the patience of his wife, Dolores. They have lived in Janemount Park, Corbally, for the past 20 years. They have four grown up children: Sam, who runs the music shop; Patrick, a technician in St. Fintan's in Sutton; Ed, an engineer in Dublin; and Marian, now Mrs. Tuohy.

Despite a massive turnover of band members—as many as 30 in a year—the band has won the International Band Parade 11 times. It looks set to win a lot more with Sammy Benson at the helm. But he is never quick to take credit.

He insists that he could not have led the band so far without the backing of his family and Bernie Heffernan and Paddy Reals.

Young Scientist test for the West?

By A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A YOUNG SCIENTIST exhibition for second-level students will take place in the Regional College, Tralee, on October 31, 1988.

The competition is open to schools in West Limerick, Kerry and West Cork. It will be divided into five categories: biological and environmental sciences; chemical sciences; mathematical, physical sciences and computers; economic and social sciences; technology projects in wood, metal or other material.

Attractive prizes will be awarded to the winners in each category with a perpetual trophy and cash prize to the overall winner. There will also be special prizes.

The competition is organised jointly by the Regional College, Tralee, Kerry branch of the Science Teachers Association, and the Teachers' Centre, Tarbert.

Full details are available from the exhibition secretary, D. Boyce, Comprehensive School, Tarbert, Tel. 068-36186.

Funds plea

Mr. Michael Finucane has asked Minister for State, Mr. Frank Fahy, for funds from the National Lottery for Feenagh Community Centre reconstruction.

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donors parade

St. Patrick's Parade on Sunday, 13th. The venue is Horse Guards Parade in Whitehall.

nearest station Westminster District Line.

2 parade assemblies at 10.30 and proceeds to Westminster Central for noon Mass.

All Limerick people are urged to get behind our banner," said O'Connell.

Children are very welcome and all children should be dressed in white and white. A float will be able, which will be thoroughly decorated.

O'Connell added: "Our aim in the Association is to bring Limerick people together and involved in our traditional rites. We also try to help unfortunate who need help."

Alcoholics Anonymous

PHONE 31 1222.

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