

LEADER PROFILE

Ald Allen: Limerick through and through

By PADDY MORONEY

WHEN Tommy Allen topped the poll in Ward 3 at the local elections in June of 1979, it might have been a surprise to many, but not to him.

Since then, he has gone on to become one of the leading personalities not only in the Labour Party in Limerick, but on the entire political scene.

He was 39 when he became the alderman for Ward 3, having received 1,114 first preferences. "People knew me for what I was," he remarked. "Rather than talk to them, I went out and did the work and then I did the talking."

Thomondgate

Born in Thomondgate, "under the shadow of the Treaty Stone," Tommy comes from not only an old but also a very large Limerick family. He was the eldest of ten children.

The Allens are a very well-known family, with deep associations with the railway. Tommy worked there for many years, as did his late father, and his father before him again.

As a fully-qualified train driver, Tommy is a close associate of Alderman Michael Lipper.

He is proud of his Thomondgate heritage: it was a society, he said, where anybody's trouble was everyone's—a closely-knit half-door community structure.

While growing up, Tommy had his first tragedy in life to bear: the death of his younger brother, Paddy.

Both of them were attending the St. Vincent de Paul national school in Henry Street, now Limerick's Social Service Centre. One day after school, Paddy ran straight out in front of a Ranks lorry and was killed.

The tragic irony of the death was that 30 years earlier, an uncle of Tommy's was killed in the very same place; he was run over by a Ranks horse and cart.

Rare disease

Only a few years after Paddy's death, another brother, John, developed a very rare disease of the muscles and, after years of being in and out of hospital, died at the tender age of 19.

Jobs were difficult to get in the 1950s, and Tommy took a job as a galley boy with the Limerick Steamship Company. On his first trip to Liverpool on the 'Mulcair' the steward, John South, was badly burned by the contents of a frying pan as the ship pitched and tossed about in a heavy sea. Tommy was then asked to take over as steward.

Dog killed sheep: decrees

By LEADER REPORTER

PATRICK Moore of Ballyline, Newcastle West, and John Dick of Clancy Terrace, Charleville, had separate claims at Kilmallock court against John Banks of Ballinagull, Kilmallock, for damages arising out of the killing and worrying of sheep by a dog, the property of the defendant.

Patrick Moore claimed £1,000 for 23 killed and 14 that were worried.

John Dick claimed £480 for four sheep killed and 16 other sheep that were injured.

Justice M. C. Maguire was informed that liability was admitted and it only remained to assess damages.

After hearing evidence, the Justice held that the plaintiffs were entitled to recover and he gave a decree to Patrick Moore for £920, and a decree to John Dick for £480.



Digging a furrow in the political life of Limerick: Tommy Allen, Alderman.

after which he acquired much experience in cooking.

Tommy continued his career as a cook after leaving the Steamship Company to work at Victoria Station, London, as a commis chef.

Working with the railway gave him the opportunity to travel, using company passes. He visited France, Germany and Holland.

"I then decided that cooking was not for me," recalled Tommy in an interview, "so when I was 18, I came back to Limerick. The unemployment situation was chronic—there were simply no jobs available."

Window cleaning

"But I made a few bob, off my own bat, cleaning windows. I went around from door to door with my cloth and ladder, and I must say that I did extremely well."

The only snag is that I had no head for heights. I packed it up for that reason and went to work as a groundsman at the LPYMA grounds."

After trying a wide variety of jobs, Tommy returned to England, this time to Coventry, where he worked on the production line of a chain factory. He moved from job to job in England and it was during this time that he became interested in politics.

"I was an avid reader of political history," he said. "As an Irishman in England, I felt the nationalistic 'thing' moving within me."

Tommy returned to Limerick at the age of 20, as he was then old enough to secure a job with C.I.E. He did shunting work and got a guard's certificate before he went on to become a train driver.

It was a job he loved, but one day stands out as the one when "I thought I would meet my Maker."

Train crash

He was returning from the Silvermines in a train with another driver. Coming down the side of a mountain the braking system failed, although the engine brake was working. Despite the engine brake, the train gathered momentum.

"When the driver told me to jump, I did so promptly," recalled Tommy, "but I did not realise he was staying with the engine. "The train went off the track into the side of a ditch. The engine went

including a community newspaper. Tommy joined in its activities with a will, being a resident himself, and experienced at first-hand the difficulties and frustrations of combating the bureaucratic walls in the public administration.

He experienced at first hand, too, the difficulties in publishing a newspaper through his work for the "Community Observer" in Southill—a voluntary effort.

It published for four years, and then suddenly stopped. The reason was simply that the physical effort involved, between getting stories, pictures and advertisements.

Tommy lives with his wife, Freda (nee O'Gorman) at Salvia Court, Keyes Park with their four children: the eldest is 17 and the youngest six. He is employed as the area sales manager with Hanover Tyres on the Dock Road.

Many offices

His endeavours for the local residents at the City Council have earned for him many offices of an honorary nature: he is chairman of St. Enda's Community School as well as being a member of the Limerick City Health Committee (of the Health Board). His responsibilities also extend to the Roads and Sanitary Committee of the Corporation, of which he is former chairman, as well as the Limerick Gas Committee.

Besides his membership of the Harbour Board, he is also a member of the Limerick Housing Committee (of the Corporation) as well as being a member of the Limerick City Health Committee (of the Health Board). His responsibilities also extend to the Roads and Sanitary Committee of the Corporation, of which he is former chairman, as well as the Limerick Gas Committee.

The many voluntary bodies which benefit from his membership include the Southill Development Association.

The highlight of Tommy's career was when he became Mayor of Limerick for the year 1980-81.

"It is a terrific experience," he said in an interview, "I was absolutely astounded at the high esteem that the people of Limerick, and indeed, the country, have for the office of mayor."

The Pope

"I was extremely fortunate that, on behalf of the citizens, I represented them at a private audience with the Pope and presented him with the first edition of the new Irish language version of the Bible."

If Tommy had one regret, it was the fact that the proposed new City Hall for Limerick was becoming like the legendary city's Third Bridge, continually on the long finger.

APPLICATION TO PLANNING AUTHORITY

The Mid-Western Health Board is applying to Limerick Co. Council for permission to erect a terrapin building at St. Nessan's Road, Dooradoyle, for use as a dental clinic. (10c)

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As Mayor of Limerick in 1980-81, Tommy always had a ready welcome for every visitor who called on him.

NOT GUILTY OF THEFT OF COLOUR TELEVISION

By LEADER REPORTER

A YOUNG Limerickman, who said he sniffed glue for "a few hours" on Thomond Bridge on June 29 last, was acquitted of a charge of larceny of a colour, portable television set, valued £400, at Clancy Strand on the same date, by a jury at Limerick Circuit Court.

The jury disagreed on a verdict in relation to a charge against the accused of receiving the same property on the same date.

The accused, Robert Halvey, 134 Glenagross Park, Moyross, pleaded not guilty to both charges.

Malachy Skellig, Clancy Strand, told the court that on the date in question he arrived home from Mass, found a window of his dining-room jammed up and his television set missing. It was a colour portable, valued at £400. He subsequently identified the television in Mary Street Garda station.

On duty

Garda Martin McHugh told the court that at 5.30 a.m. on June 29 he was on duty in the Farranhouse area when he observed two youths carrying something. He followed in the patrol car.

"I saw one of the youths fire what appeared to be a television set into a bunch of nettles. I shouted at him to halt, but he continued to run. The other youth stood at the junction," said witness.

He added that as the youth tried to get over a wall, he caught him, and he gave his name as the accused.

The accused stated that he was carrying the television set for another person.

In reply to Mr. Michael Fitzgibbon, B.L., who appeared for the accused (instructed by Mr. Stephen Coughlan solr.), witness said he was certain that it was Halvey who was carrying the television.

In further cross-examination by Mr. Fitzgibbon, witness agreed that when the accused was apprehended, he denied dropping anything into the nettles.

"The accused did not make much sense on the night in question, as he was high on glue".

41 houses

Deputy William O'Brien, F.G., has been informed by the assistant county manager, Mr. Sean Murphy, that a revised layout and house plans have been submitted to the Department of the Environment for the provision of a housing scheme in Adare. The layout plan shows provision for a total of 41 houses.

added witness. Det. Garda Andrew Cosgrave, Mary Street Garda Station, told the court that he interviewed the accused, in the station, on June 29, and he agreed to make a written statement.

In the absence of the jury, Mr. Fitzgibbon applied for a direction on the grounds that there was no evidence of the accused breaking into the house.

"The only evidence on the receiving charge is that Garda McHugh, while driving, saw two men carrying something. There is no evidence of guilty knowledge on the part of the accused", said Mr. Fitzgibbon.

Refused

The application was refused by Judge Desmond.

Robert Halvey told the court that on the date in question he was fishing on Thomond Bridge, with three other persons, when a fourth person arrived on the scene, and gave him some glue.

"We stayed at Thomond Bridge, and sniffed glue for a few hours", witness told the court.

Witness said that two persons then left, and said they were going to Clancy Strand to get more glue. On his way home witness met another friend, and he walked with her.

"I looked up and saw the two men who earlier left to go to Clancy Strand walking towards me. They were carrying a television, and sniffing glue."

"I did not find this unusual, because when one of the youths finishes work, he leaves whatever he purchases, into some house, and goes fishing before going home", said witness.

"I have often seen him with radios, and I once saw him with a bicycle", he added.

Witness said that one of the two youths then went home, and the other youth asked witness to help him carry the television.

"I did not know it was stolen. He told me that he bought it", stated witness.

"At a lane leading to Shelbourne Park, I left him, went round the corner, and some two or three moments later, the guards arrived and ran at me", he said.

Sniffing

"I ran because I was sniffing glue, and the guards do not give you an easy time when you are sniffing glue", said witness.

In reply to Mr. Gerry Tynan, B.L., (instructed by Mr. Michael Murray state solr.), witness agreed that his friend was not involved in the radio and television business. "It was not unusual to see him carrying a television set at 4.30 a.m. I saw him carrying home a two-in-one unit, on a bike, one morning at 2.00 a.m.", said witness.