

Taoiseach leads the tributes to Mick Herbert

By **NORMA PRENDIVILLE**

THE Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, this week led tributes to the late Michael Herbert, former Fianna Fail TD and MEP, who died on Monday and will be buried this Friday.

"He was passionate about politics, about farming and the farming community and was an outstanding sportsman," he said.

Defence Minister Willie O'Dea described him as a man of great energy and determination, a hard-working and assiduous public representative and a frequent and fiery contributor to Dáil debates.

And he has been characterised by those who knew him as a very intelligent and a very witty man, a man of probity who was committed to the idea of Irish nationhood and of public service.

But for many who were not his constituents or of his political persuasion, it is Mick Herbert the hurler who will be best remembered.

Born in Anacotty in May, 1925, he joined Ahane GAA Club at a young age, winning a county minor medal with the club in 1940 before going on to secure seven successive county championship medals with the senior team between 1942-1949. Wearing the county jersey, he played in a number of Munster finals and was a member of the victorious National League team of 1948.

But in 1949, in a well-documented incident at half-time during a match, Mick received serious head injuries which ended his hurling career. But he continued to contribute to his beloved Ahane and the GAA as a selector and one of the last acts of his life was to

listen to a match broadcast on Sunday.

As a young man, having been schooled at Rich Hill, Sexton CBS and the Municipal Technical Institute, Mick Herbert worked for a time with CIE but inherited the family pub at Sallymount from an uncle in 1949.

By then, he had met his wife-to-be, Brid Nash of Oola and the couple married in 1954 and built up the bar, shop and petrol pump business as well as maintaining a small farm. Later, Mick, or Mícheál as his wife called him, was to develop a pitch-and-putt course on his land which was his project and pride. The couple reared a family of three daughters and five sons.

Mick Herbert's politics ran deep. He was an Irish nationalist in the republican tradition and became chairman of the Ahane cumann of Fianna Fail at 17. In 1955, he stood for public office for the first time and was elected to Limerick County Council where he served until 1967.

He had a huge interest in education generally and a tremendous commitment to vocational education in particular and served from 1960-67 as chairman of Limerick County VEC. He was also a member of the Limerick Health Authority from 1955-1967.

Mick Herbert was elected a TD for Limerick East in 1969 and was re-elected in 1973 and again in 1977.

In 1973, he was appointed by party leader Jack Lynch to the first mandated European Parliament, along with the late Brian Lenihan to whom he was close. From the outset, he loved being in Europe where he championed the use of regional funds for Munster and for Ireland and was disappointed when he failed, by a narrow margin, to win a seat in direct elections in 1979.

After his retirement from public life in 1981, Mick Herbert continued his interest in politics and his support for the then leader Charlie Haughey, whom he survived by a mere week. Even in his last days in hospital, he followed the State funeral for Mr Haughey with deep interest.

Physically incapacitated over the past four years as a result of his 1949 injury, Mick Herbert however remained intellectually sharp to the end. His death was a peaceful one.

Mr Herbert's remains repose at his home this Thursday and will be buried in St Joseph's cemetery, Castleconnell following Requiem Mass on Friday.

He is survived by his wife, Brid; daughters Bláithín, Cathy and Mary; sons, Aidan, John, Diarmuid, Gearóid and Turlough; son-in-law, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, sister Helen (Mackey), brothers, Tony and Eamon, sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, many other relatives and a large circle of friends and comrades.



Michael Herbert: TD, MEP and sportsman

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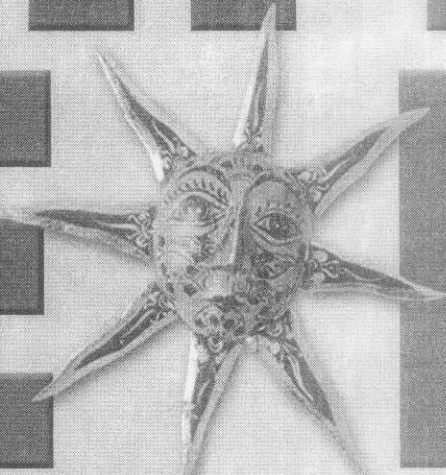
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