

AL IN PERSON, TECT



late John Christopher Thompson.

ter his rugby days, and he was at stage president of Limerick off Club, and continued his membership of this club, as well as Shannon Rowing Club, here he played snooker occasionally, up to his death.

Padre Pio

Padre Pio national pilgrimage to Knock Shrine will take place on Sunday, September 18 next. Buses will leave Knock Shrine Bureau, Bedford Row, Limerick, at 8 a.m. Booking now.

Management

The 13th international management evening, organised by Junior Chamber Limerick, will be held on Friday, September 16, at the Two-Mile Inn.



Limerick mother of four, Joan Griffin, who travelled to Venice this Wednesday to represent Ireland in the European Triathlon championships. Joan, who resides on Monleion Road, will compete with the sur-around Irish ladies team. Upwards of 200 athletes will take part in three disciplines, 1500m swim, 40 kilometre cycle and 10 kl. run. Joan is the first Limerick woman to be chosen for the European championships. She was accompanied on the trip to Venice by local solicitor, Tom O'Donnell, president of the Irish Triathlon association, and her husband, Dr. Michael Griffin.

the morning

PICS ARE IN FULL SWING



Mike: How I gave up a life of crime

LIMERICKMAN MIKE KELLY, 33, told the *Limerick Leader* this week how, through the influence of Fr. Joe Young, C.C., Southill, he renounced 17 years of crime and alcoholism. "I was contemplating suicide as an easy way out, when I first met Fr. Young," admitted Mike, who spent 10 of the 17 years up to 1986 behind prison bars. "Everything I have to-day, including the happiness, I owe to Fr. Young."

One of a family of 13 and a native of Prospect, Mike said of his life as a criminal: "I lived like an animal and had a terrible hatred for society."

Describing his school days at St. Brendan's primary school, now Adapt House, he commented: "If the principal saw me for one week out of the year he was lucky."

Petty crime

At the age of 14, Mike with his family moved to live at 9 Lilac Court, Southill. "It was at this time that I first became in contact with the guards, in relation to petty crime", he said.

At 16, he served his first term of three months detention in St. Patrick's Institution, for assaulting a guard, and, following that he served terms in various prisons for offences including causing grievous bodily harm, actual bodily harm, burglary and larceny.

In March 1984, in the Dublin Circuit Criminal Court, he was sentenced to 10 years in prison, seven of which were suspended, on condition that he be of good behaviour for five years, on a charge of shooting with intent to endanger life.

In 1985, while he was serving those three years, Fr. Young was appointed to the visiting committee of Limerick Prison by the then Minister for Justice, Mr. Michael Noonan, T.D.

From the age of 17, Mike said, he started to drink a lot: "My drinking got so bad that I used to rob to get money to drink."

"At the height of my drinking, I could drink £100 a day. I would start with two bottles of whiskey and I had the shakes so bad then, that somebody would have to hold the glass up to my mouth."

Asked if his drinking habits led him into crime, he explained: "I did not have a mind of my own when I drank, but nobody forced me to do the things I did. It was easy to make drink the excuse."

Even while in prison he said he still continued to cause trouble. "I was very depressed at this time in 1986 as my marriage was breaking up, I was fighting and smashing things. I was a bit like an animal."

Governor

During this time, the governor of Limerick prison, Mr.



I lived like an animal and had a terrible hatred for society — Mike Kelly this week.

Bill O'Keefe, asked Fr. Young to talk to him.

"The only way I can describe Fr. Young's entrance into my life is a walking miracle, a breath of fresh air," said Mike, who added that he would be ever grateful to Mr. O'Keefe for the introduction.

Describing his first meeting with Fr. Young, Mike said: "When Fr. Young came into the cell, I said 'Get to F— out of here, I do not want to talk to you.'"

"He reasoned with me, saying that I had given all my

and that he could use me as an example to help other people."

"That was two years ago, and I have not committed a crime or taken a drink since. I was always a man of my word," added Mike, who never received any other help or attended a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous.

"I just did it myself, on my word to Fr. Young," explained Mike, who was released from prison four months later.

"I do not have very much

By DYPHNA BRACKEN

life to prison, and asked me for five minutes.

"That five minutes turned into two hours, and when he left, I felt like a new born child, I was most taken by Fr. Young's understanding of alcoholic and domestic problems."

The following Sunday, Fr. Young returned to Limerick Prison, and in the governor's office told Mike that his father had died suddenly that morning.

Through the then Minister for Justice, Michael Noonan, Fr. Young arranged for Mike's temporary release to attend his father's funeral. "From that moment I was a changed man," he said.

On the evening he was due to return to the prison, Mike went to Fr. Young's home at 6 p.m., and again talked with him for an hour.

Clean sheet

"On the way back into prison that evening, I told Fr. Young that I would not commit a crime or drink again,

now, I'm working for the Southill Community Services Board, but I will thank Fr. Young for this chance for the rest of my life.

"If I were to die in the morning, and I know there are a lot of people who would probably wish that I did, I would die a happy man, thanks to Fr. Young."

Asked if prison life served as any form of deterrent for him, he said he found the facilities in prison very poor. "The only thing I learned in prison was more about serious crime," he declared.

Since his release from prison, Mike through Fr. Young is now very involved in working with young people in Southill: "I only hope that I can help somebody else as a result of my experience."

Mike recalled one occasion recently when he spent all night driving around the city with Fr. Young looking for a young girl who had left home.

"I'm not judged now on my past by the young people in Southill, and I'm grateful to

them for that," said Mike, who added that the Guards in the area, when they saw him making an effort, were also very supportive.

Asked why he got involved in such serious crime, he said: "I worked when I could up to the time I was 19 years of age. Then I was out of work, and as a result of boredom began to hang around street corners, and get involved in fights."

"I feel that unemployment and resulting boredom contributes a lot."

Respect

"At the time I was not sorry for what I was doing, but if I had my life to live over again, I would have more respect for people, their property and the Guards."

"All my life I used the excuse that nobody cared about criminals or poverty stricken people, until I met Fr. Young and saw the way he cared."

"I then came to realise that there was another way — a happier way," said Mike, who added that he would be forever grateful to his own family and the people of Southill who stood by him, and who were now very supportive of him.

This summer Mike, now manager of Carew Park soccer club, travelled to Boston with Limerick Connection.

"Three years ago if somebody told me that I would be going on a trip to Boston and that I would not be having a drink, I would have them locked up," he mused.

"To suggest that the trip to Boston by Limerick Connection was used for anything else other than for the enjoyment of the young people, is totally ridiculous," he added.

Asked if he made money from his life of crime, he said that any money he did get he spent on drink. "If I had put it into a piggy-bank for the rainy day, I might be a bit better off now, but that is in the past, and I'm now happier working for £60 a week."

Happiness

Preferring not to be described as a "hard man", he commented: "There is no such thing as a hard man. I fought with the best, and after all I was only a kitten. The happiness I have now, which is so important to me, I do not have to fight for."

Reflecting on his frank confession, he concluded: "If this helps one person in Limerick to realise the great work being done by Fr. Young, that will be good enough for me."

Cover was 'assured'

Denis O'Neill, 1 Baker's Road, Charleville, was fined £75 with endorsement at Bruff court when convicted of driving while uninsured.

He told the court that his policy had been issued to him in England, and he had been assured that it covered his driving in Ireland.

WALL: I'M READY TO FACE MY HIGH NOON

By MARTIN RYAN
Agriculture Editor

A SENIOR Limerick IFA officer faces "disciplinary action" after a day of high drama and worsening farm organisation rift in the county, in the countdown to the abortive IFA-ICMSA debate on farm tax.

Defiant Feenagh farmer, Mr. Bertie Wall, vice chairman, Limerick County IFA, told the *Limerick Leader* on Wednesday that he would "call on the farmers of County Limerick to decide the issue" if any attempt was made by the association to remove him from office.

A county IFA officers meeting, to which Mr. Wall is being summoned, has been called for Monday night at Limerick following his surprise intervention in the calling off of the debate on Tuesday night which stunned Limerick IFA.

Mr. Wall accused the IFA of "rigging" the planned debate on farm tax at Adare on Tuesday night at a press conference in association with the ICMSA at Limerick hours before the debate was due to take place.

Journalists were given 40 minutes notification of the hurriedly arranged press conference at the Glenworth Hotel at which he launched a public appeal to both sides to call off the planned debate for later that evening.

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structure discussion on IFA and ICMSA intervention of national IFA officers and the planned off of buses to bring people over the country.

He said that the IFA comprised mainly of a "clite."

"They have started to small and medium-size whose only purpose in now is to cough up money is not going to last," he said.

"The last thing we farming now is conf Farmers themselves don't I could see the real day they started to bus people over the country to this I am merely asking farming up to what is happening."

"Plenty of small and sized farmers, like myself future in farming been policies which are been led in Europe and the matters that we should bring ourselves with," he

Elected

Asked for his reaction to the making call for his I from office or remove office, he replied: "That very silly and immature."

He added: "I have elected an officer of the I have a right as an I express my views when going very wrong. I was good working relation ICMSA and not confront ICMSA and not confront I have expressed that I Farmers from as far Sligo, Longford and of the Midlands identified at the meeting which sprinkling of ICMSA present."

It is understood that spent most of the making contact with I ber ship around the cu advising them not to

Mr. Fachtina O'Drisc ick chief agricultural o was to have been the ic chairman of the de withdrew and did not

Association presiden ton, and chief execu Michael Berkery, gave outline of their policies an alternative tax farmers.

Members

They replied firm critics from the floor an by some farmers that I be devoting their tim positive services to the

By 10.05 p.m. many I commenced drifting meeting which conclude 10.20 p.m.

The "debate of the farm taxation between and ICMSA ended with of the rift.

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