

PADRE PIO

Stray Horses

MAY I respectfully request that you may spare a space in your newspaper for the following true story.

It has been many years since I left my native town (Limerick City), although I have an aunt and many relations still living there, quite a number of my school chums have since passed on. I used to be a pupil of St. John's Boys' National School, it used to be known as Broderick's, in Back Clare Street. My story is an account of my meeting and living with my beloved spiritual father, Padre Pio.

It was in 1946, I was serving with the army in Italy and, of course, the war had ended. I was attached to a unit responsible for handling displaced persons. I was stationed in Foggia and Pietrelcina, and San Giovanni Rotondo where Padre Pio lived in the Monastery of Our Lady of Grace. Padre Pio used to say the 5 a.m. Mass each day. People would gather outside the church doors long before Holy Mass would begin in all kinds of weather. It was a touching sight.

I had the privilege and honour of serving his Holy Mass on several occasions. I can assure everyone who is devoted to Padre Pio that he was a most humble man and holy priest.

At the Consecration of the Eucharist, the alb would slip from his hand and the wounds were visible, if anyone ever had any doubt of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, then let there be no more doubt.

I loved Padre Pio. He had a sense of humour and a most charming way with him, of course in 1946 nothing in San Giovanni Rotondo was commercialised as it is now.

I would have loved to remain with Padre Pio all the days of my life but, of course, that was impossible. I always look back on these wonderful times with my beloved Father, Padre Pio, and thank God.

I remember the day I was taking my leave from the Monastery of Our Lady of Grace and I went to say goodbye to Padre Pio, as we embraced each other the tears flowed freely from my eyes I could not forget, here I was, a simple Irishman, an orphan. Life may not have been too kind to me, but this meeting made up for everything. I am sure that Padre Pio must have known my thoughts because as I took my leave he pressed me to himself, saying, "Remember child sincere effort is success in the Eyes of God".

I went back to visit the tomb of my friend.

I went back to visit the tomb of my beloved Father Padre Pio in May of this year where I met Father Alessio and many of my old friends. Of course San Giovanni Rotondo has changed now. It is visited by many people from all over the world, as you know. Padre Pio is well known throughout the world, especially

I SHOULD be grateful if you would allow me, on behalf of the Limerick Action Committee on Wandering Horses, to make a number of points regarding the recently-announced action by Limerick Corporation in rounding up wandering horses.

1. My committee welcomes the announcement by Limerick Corporation that the 5-point plan we put forward to that body is being put into operation.

2. My committee wishes to express its thanks to the Limerick Corporation, and to the Corporation workforce and their Union for reaching speedy agreement on the delegation of workmen to do the job of rounding up the wandering horses.

3. My committee regrets that the plan will only be in operation during day-time working hours. Many of the incidents involving wandering horses occur at night and my Committee will, therefore, be pressing for an early extension of the plan to cover the rounding up of horses at night, or in the early morning.

4. As I have previously stated, the aim of the 5-point plan which I formulated was the removal of the wandering horses from the roads and streets of our city. I have always seen this as the first priority. There remains the problem of compensation and remedy for any personal injuries and/or property damage caused by these horses. My Committee intends to remain in being to pursue a solution to this latter problem.

5. I would ask members of the public to aid Limerick Corporation in their efforts to ensure the success of the plan to round up wandering horses, by reporting every case of a wandering horse, or horses, in their area. They should not leave it to their neighbours to do it. If the animals are observed at night, this should be reported to the Corporation as early as possible next morning, as the animal(s) may still be in the area and could be rounded up then.

JIM WALLACE,

Limerick Action Committee on Wandering Horses, 83 Ballinacurra Gardens, Limerick.

SAVOY INCIDENT

I AM very glad to see your headline informing us that the Department of Foreign Affairs would be investigating this affair. However, I am bound to say that I think the matter has been fanned into unnecessary flames by the publicity which it has been given.

After all there are many, many young men in this city who have been refused entrance to night clubs on grounds so trivial that they would appear to be dependent on the personal whim of the doorman. Reasons varying from the fact that they were wearing jeans, albeit clean and neat jeans; or blouson type jackets instead of the 'sports-coat' of conventional cut, or because they looked too young or were not wearing ties. The reason is immaterial, the point is our society accepts that the doorman will have a certain amount of discretion.

There is a very much more disturbing aspect of this society and it is more disturbing because it is so common that it has become a completely accepted set of attitudes and does not cause any surprise. I refer to discrimination against travelling people. I was in a privately owned supermarket some time ago here in the city, and observing strange behaviour on the part of the proprietor, i.e., he was taking certain goods from the shelves and placing them in the basket of a woman standing beside the check-out and then returning for other items.

I realised with a shock of horror that the woman was a traveller and that while not banning her from his shop (and this is a common practice) he was nevertheless making quite sure that she was being treated in a very special way.

I cringe when I remember my lack of moral courage on that occasion and I wonder how often it occurs. I wonder what would have happened if she had called a policeman? Perhaps I misjudge and he would, in fact, have upheld her personal rights as laid down in Article 40 of the Constitution. "All citizens shall, as human persons, be held equal before the law." If she had gone to the "Leader" would you?

Unfortunately, the travellers have no ambassadors who would take up the case with our Departments. They possess no political clout which might take from our self-elected position as arbiter of other countries standards of morality. We get so uptight about 'racism' in South Africa or Rhodesia and totally ignore our own lack of humanity

towards our fellow citizens.

Thanks, Co. Limerick V.I.C. for your special training classes to cope with the travellers' needs. Some friends of mine have taken a house in Co. Cork where they have opened a pre-school playgroup for the children of travellers from 2-5 years old. This fills a previously weak link as often by the time they would go to normal school their socialization would already be too well established to fit into our rigid pattern and the culture shock to both settled and travelling children would be difficult to overcome.

We might do worse than to examine carefully the methods which Norway, Sweden and Finland have found effective in the education and absorption of the Laplanders, who have been encouraged to retain their identity and still play their part in the economy and social life of those countries whose territories take in the Arctic Circle.

BERYL FORRESTER
6 Hawthorn Avenue,
Caherdavin Lawn,
Limerick.

Doctor's case

AT THIS moment I wish to thank you plus the hundreds of letters, phone calls, etc. from all who wished Mr. Ponampalam to be reinstated to his rightful position in the Regional Hospital. It was yesterday by the special tribunal. Also thanks to the wonderful people who attended that tribunal and were so patient to sit for nine hours listening to such fair-minded gentlemen.

Now may I once more appeal to you to bring forward and to the notice of the public the disgraceful treatment being given to the doctors at the dispensary. For some time now some doctors are under notice to leave the dispensary where they treat hundreds of young, old and infirm people each week. These gentlemen have no place to go to help the helpless, except on the streets. In God's name what has happened to our city when people running it have become so heartless?

Again thanking you, dear sir, and wishing Mr. Ponampalam a long life of happiness in Ireland which he so dearly loves.

MARGARET KEANE,
3 Summerville Terrace,
South Circular Road,
Limerick.



T. F. McDermott, C.I.E., explaining some of the reasons for the appointment of an Ambassador to Ireland, 1978.

Aussie envoy visits Limerick

BY BERNARD CAREY

CLOSE ties between Australia and Ireland were emphasised by the Australian Ambassador, Miss Ruth Dobson, when she paid a courtesy call to the Mayor of Limerick, Bobby Byrne, at Sarsfield Park this week.

She signed the distinguished book and took a particular interest in the historical chain and other regalia connected with the history of Limerick.

The Mayor thanked the Ambassador for honouring the city with her presence and noted the historic links binding the two countries so close together and said that many people had emigrated to Australia during difficult times.

"It is," said the Mayor, "a progressive and thriving country which has made rapid strides over the years."

The Ambassador, replying, said the basic purpose of her visit was to develop good relations between Ireland and Australia, as there was very little contact between the two countries.

There are negotiations at present going on to develop relations as far as coal is concerned which Australia has practically unlimited supplies," the Ambassador said.

Referring to the Irish in Australia, the Ambassador said they had made a great contribution to the industrial, commercial and cultural life of the

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