



Current Publication Date: 17/01/2008

Lackagh and Claregalway mourn the talented Eddie Fitzgerald

Eddie Fitzgerald

A numbed silence evolved over the communities of Turloughmore and Claregalway and beyond on Wednesday night as news quickly spread throughout the area that Eddie Fitzgerald had passed away. People were left in shock and speechless that such a charismatic and powerful figure could be taken away so unexpectedly. Eddie was a giant in the community and was so much part and parcel of so much activity and had touched so many lives with his gentle witty and charismatic character.

Eddie Fitzgerald had come to live in Lackaghmore, Turloughmore in 1989, when he moved from his native Dublin to work in the Department of Defence offices in Galway. He quickly became involved in community life in his adopted Lackagh parish and was to go on to become a leading figure in the entire community. The untimely and unexpected passing of Eddie at the age of 52 has left a huge void, but the gentle giant has also left an enormous legacy that will never be forgotten. Eddie Fitzgerald came from Navan Road in Dublin and was an extremely talented singer and entertainer. Eddie also took part with Lackagh Mummies and played a major role in their success.

Eddie also played the role of Santa Claus at the annual senior citizens party in Lackagh for the past number of years and enjoyed entertaining the elderly as well as the young. The Santa Claus at the senior citizens' party would convince everybody that he would be down the chimney of every adult as well as child on Christmas night.

The strong acting ability saw Eddie Fitzgerald star with Claregalway/Carnmore Drama Group Compantas Lir. Eddie had started his drama career with 145 Drama Group in Dublin where he won an All Ireland Youth Award. He later joined the Navan Road Drama Society and a few years after moving to Galway Eddie had teamed up with Compantas Lir. With Compantas Lir Eddie played Jack Manders in Mungo's Mansion in 1994 and the following year played the unforgettable Elwood P Dowd in Harvey and scooped awards all over the country in that role. Eddie also travelled the Drama circuit in Poor Beast in the Rain, Professor Tim and A Crucial Week in the Life of a Grocers Assistant and during his time with Compantas Lir won

numerous awards while on the drama circuit. Eddie also starred in the many of the Autumn Supper Theatres with the group, most notably in Paddy Greaney's Nuts and Bolts and Declan Varley's play No Butts.

However it was through his involvement with Lackagh Church Choir that Eddie Fitzgerald made his greatest contribution. Eddie got involved in the choir and it was only a matter of time before the talents of Eddie came to the fore and he quickly became choir director. He guided the choir to new heights. New and additional people became involved and with a blend of male and female voices and young and mature voices amalgamating, Eddie Fitzgerald put Lackagh Church Choir among the top choir groups in the country.

It was with tremendous pride that Eddie, in conjunction with organist Martin Glavin, saw the fruits of his labours brought to a recording studio as just a month ago Lackagh Church Choir launched their CD Hallelujah. New emerging growing talents were important and for ten years he took his lunchtime trip to Lackagh a few times a week to take the children of Lackagh National School (drawn from first to sixth classes in the primary school) and formed Lackagh Children's Choir.

It was with tremendous pride that Eddie Fitzgerald led Lackagh Church Choir when they performed as the opening act at the Gala Christmas Croi Concert in the Radisson Hotel, on a bill that included Liam Lawton. On the night Lackagh Church Choir won wide acclaim and it was one of Eddie's proudest moments to watch this talented group receive such acknowledgement.

Above all else Eddie Fitzgerald was a great family person and wherever Eddie was so also were his devoted wife Rita and daughter Aine. Eddie took tremendous pride in watching Aine grow up to achieve many awards and achievements for music and singing on her own right. While Eddie will be missed by many organisations, groups and people all around the parish and wider community, the loss to Rita and Aine is immense.

At the funeral Mass for Eddie Fitzgerald, Lackagh Church was packed to capacity and people swelled outside despite the best efforts to get everyone in from the rain. Chief Celebrant Fr John D Flannery, P P Lackagh was joined by Fr Oliver McDonagh, Ballintubber, Roscommon and Fr Ray Kelly, Oldcastle, both of whom had worked with Eddie in the Civil Service, Fr Martin Costello SMA, Fr Bernard Shaughnessy and Fr Enda Howley.

At the beginning of Mass Lackagh National School principal Michael Lydon and school organist and teacher Sacra Furey brought up the school management members handbook and hymn book to represent Eddie Fitzgerald's contribution to Lackagh School, with Martin Glavin bringing up the CD Hallelujah on behalf of Lackagh Church Choir. Eddie's wife Rita and daughter Aine brought forward the bread and wine during the Offertory procession. There was a long and appreciative applause at the conclusion of the homily where Fr John D Flannery described Eddie as a true friend and an inspiration to many. A heartbroken Lackagh Church Choir were at their brilliant best to pay honour and thanks.

to their leader. There wasn't a dry eye in the church when Eddie's daughter Aine displayed tremendous courage as she sang In the Quiet which was the opening track of the CD as the Communion reflection.

Members of the Department of Defence from Dublin and Galway, students from Dominican Convent Taylor's Hill, members from Lackagh Comhaltas, Children from Lackagh National School Children's Choir and Compántas Lir formed a guard of honour as the remains were removed from Lackagh Church. Members of Compántas Lir formed a guard of honour as the remains were carried into Kilmoylan Cemetery to his final resting place. After the conclusion of prayers at the graveside at Kilmoylan, Sacra Furey played a musical tribute on the tin whistle to a Dublin native who had made an enormous contribution to his adopted area over the past two decades.

Eddie Fitzgerald is survived by his wife Rita, daughter Aíne, sisters Cathy and Mary, brothers John, Gerard and Michael, in-laws, aunts, cousins, nieces, nephews, relatives, neighbours and a very large circle of friends.

Frank Kearney