



The Ceilíer

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"All The News We Want To Print"

Spring 2026

Getting to Know... Jim Guay

Most members of the Ceili Club know Jim Guay as a guy who is funny, a good caller, and a great dancer. But, in a recent interview, I discovered that he has some hidden depths.



Jim's family background is Irish, French-Canadian and German. His Irish ancestors left the green island to become miners in Wales in the nineteenth century and eventually made their way to the U.S., ending up in the Oakmont/Verona area. His knowledge of his French-Canadian ancestors was a bit hazier. He believes they may have migrated from Brittany to perhaps Cape Breton. By the 1820s they were in Quebec and he is unsure when and where they first, settled in the U.S.

He does know that his father grew up in Highland Park, and that he himself was born in Wilkinsburg. Shortly after Jim's birth, the family moved to Whitehall. Jim's father died soon after the move, when Jim was only nineteen months old. His mom and her two little sons got a small stipend from the government, and she began to earn a living by doing catering out of her home. Jim went to St. Gabriel's for grade school and St. Elizabeth in Pleasant Hills for high school. His commute to Saint E's required a car ride to a bus stop, and then a bus to Pleasant Hills. Often, coming back home, the car ride wasn't available and he walked two miles from the bus stop to home.

Jim went to college at St. Louis University. At that time, WQED ran a program called "The Making of a Doctor," and Jim got it into his head that he wanted to be a doctor. So, he started in pre-med, but only lasted two semesters before switching to a double major in Psychology and

Business Administration.

Most of you who remember Kate may not know this, but Jim and Kate knew each other from childhood. They grew up a few doors from each other, her family later moved to another block, but still close by. The families were very close. When Jim's mom was diagnosed with cancer in the 1960s, Kate's family were still neighbors and helped her a lot.

Jim's brother was ordained a priest in May of 1973 and performed Jim and Kate's wedding ceremony at St. Gabe's in August of the same year. The newlyweds honeymooned in Montreal and Quebec, then moved to the Newtown section of Chicago, where Jim had a job selling diesel-testing equipment. They later moved back to Pittsburgh when he was promoted to product manager in original equipment manufacturer sales. But he eventually left that job to go into his father-in-law's print brokerage business, which he later took over. He and Kate had four kids and he needed a better income than he was making in the diesel testing business! Jim enjoyed the print brokerage business. When he first got into it, the work involved a lot of contact with people. Later, when everything went digital, he was more desk-bound. But he did enjoy learning to do print layout, and that became a big part of his business. Jim finally officially retired at the end of this March, but he is still doing some referral business here and there.

Jim says he has few regrets in life. He does wish that he had travelled more. But, since he is half Irish and Kate's grandparents were all from Ireland, they did take

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2026 Kickoff Ceili: Do We Know How to Have Fun? Yes, We Do!

If you missed our 36th annual Kickoff Ceili on March 8th, you missed a really good time!

We found a new location this year, Olympia Banquet Hall in East Pittsburgh, and everyone seemed to like it: nice stage, plenty of room to dance. Giant Eagle provided the catering, and members pitched in with yummy desserts. Al was home sick and he never wants to eat when he's sick, but I brought some of those desserts home to him and suddenly he had an appetite! (Whoever made the orange bundt cake, thank you: he especially liked that).

Thank you also to our great musicians: Bruce Molyneaux, Vince Burns, Mike Hurley and Mike Byrnes, to Mike Byrnes for the sound, and to callers Craig Connelly and Jennifer Rumble.

And those baskets! Joanne Fitzgerald and all contributors did a wonderful job.

Karrie and Doug Wagner were the winners of the 50/50 raffle this year.

But, most of all, thank you to the Kickoff Ceili Committee: Sue Anne Hogan, Kathy Erhart, Liz Grinko, Joanne Fitzgerald, Maureen Strotmeyer, PJ Kernick, Elizabeth Donohoe, Colleen Rumble and Craig Connelly.

Looking forward to doing it all again next year!



PCC Shines in the 2026 Saint Patrick's Day Parade!

The Pittsburgh Ceili Club turned out in force, as usual, for this year's Saint Patrick's Day Parade, enjoying the bright sunshine and undeterred by the cold morning temperatures. The Bell School played music on their speakers, so we kept warm by dancing in the street while waiting to march.

Many thanks to all who participated from the PCC:

Maureen Strotmeyer for keeping us all organized

Jim Tipe and Bill Jamison for driving

Jim Guay for coordinating the dancing.

Craig Connelly for suppling the sound equipment.

Marchers and banner carriers Joanne Fitzgerald, Karrie Wagner, Sue Anne Hogan and Carolyn Bolton

And, of course our dancers: Evan Adcock, Kelsey Stark, Alex Canto, Frank Cindrigh, Marissa Canavan, Jonathan Kelly, Craig Connelly, Jennifer Rumble, Kathy Erhart, Hannah Hogan, Ken McCarthy, Dan McIntyre, Colleen Rumble, Sophia Porter, Hannah Patterson, Heather Ward, and Maddie Summers. I also danced in the parade, for the first time ever, and it was so much fun. Frank Cindrigh was a fantastic partner, and he was great at getting the crowd cheering for us.

We were also glad to see our beloved elders, Brian Griffin and Theresa Orlando, who rode in the car.

I spotted other Club members at the parade, too. Diane Byrnes was in her own car right behind us. Val Keeley marched with her dog club. I also spotted Peggy Bond and Janice Meehan.

Also participating:

Miss Smiling Irish Eyes 2026, Molly McKenna of Mt. Lebanon, who rode in a horse-drawn carriage with her court: Kennedy Aryn Elizabeth Kuntz and Sidney Ann Hoover.

Our friends from the Shovlin Academy of Dance

Mayor Corey O'Connor, marching with his wife and two young children, and proudly wearing an AOH jacket

Castle Shannon's green emergency response vehicles

The Pirate Parrot

A woman dressed as the Easter Bunny giving out candy from Grandpa Joe's

Vehicles from Pittsburgh International Airport, promoting Aer Lingus' new direct flights between Pittsburgh and Dublin.

All in all, a wonderful day to celebrate being Irish, being a Pittsburgher, or just enjoying a good time!

And did you know...

That the Pittsburgh Saint Patrick's Day Parade is one of the largest in the United States and dates back to 1869?

That our parade draws between 200,000 and 350,000 spectators each year?



PCCP (PCC Pets!)

Just to make you smile, here are some pictures of members and their adorable pets! If you'd like you and your pet to be featured in an upcoming issue of the Ceilier, please sent a photo to kbashaar@gmail.com



Life Events



Amy Bennett is having a good year. Her poetry is being published in Phoenix, the CCAC Literary Arts journal, and she is being inducted into the CCAC South chapter of the Psi Beta National Honors Society on April 15th. Congratulations, Amy!



Long-time member Peggy Bond was chosen to be LAOH Hibernian of the year 2026. Congratulations, Peggy!



One of our teenage members, Maria Rath, participated in a fashion show at the Warhol Museum that was featured in the latest edition of Carnegie Magazine. All of the fashions were created from reused clothing. Take a look at Maria's fabulous blue gown!

Maria, age 15, is a student at CAPA, Pittsburgh's arts magnet school downtown. In her interview in the magazine, she said that she wanted to express ideas about society through her dress. The metal in the dress referred to Pittsburgh's history of steelmaking.



Maria said that she wanted to push back against the elitism associated with high fashion, by grounding her gown in Pittsburgh's working class. "Making the dress and modeling it myself on the runway showed me I can make something and stand by it," she said.

The Youth Fashion Show has been an annual program at the Warhol for twenty years.

Congratulations, Maria! Photo and quotes are from Carnegie Magazine.

Photo: Camila Casas

Getting to Know... con't.

a trip to Ireland in 1998. Their four children and Kate's sisters and brother-in-law joined them. It sounds like it was a whirlwind trip. They covered Dublin, Wicklow, Glendalough, Arklow Woolen Mills, Tipperary, Cashel, Cork, Muckross House in County Kerry, Dingle, and Galway and Clare – all in ten days!

Jim told a couple of funny stories about that trip. On the way to Dingle, they took a wrong turn and ended up on what passes for a road in the Irish countryside – blocked by a cow placidly nursing her calf.

He also lost the keys to their rental car on the trip. He tried on a pair of pants in O'Maille's and left the keys in the pocket. He didn't realize it until they were headed back to the garage to get the car – and it was nearly time for the garage to close. He had to call the police station, who in turn called the store owner. The store owner agreed to come back down to the shop after he finished dinner. Jim met him and went to the rack where the pants hung, retrieved the keys and thanked Ger O'Maille profusely. He says his children have never let him live that one down.

The trip to Ireland indirectly led to Jim's finding the Ceili Club. While in Glengarriff, Co. Cork, his brother-in-law asked about places to hear traditional Irish music. They were guided to a small ballroom on the second floor where a "Ceili" was taking place. Jim and Kate and his daughters danced the Walls of Limerick and the Seige of Ennis which inspired him to look for Irish music and dance in Pittsburgh. They discovered that the Bell School had just opened near them in the North Hills, and he and Kate started taking step lessons. They also took lessons from Rusty Petro in the South Side for a while. They started coming to the Harp in 2002, at first only occasionally because Tuesday night conflicted with their lessons at Bell.

I asked Jim what he's good at and – no surprise! – he said dancing. He also revealed a less-known skill. He did a lot of coaching when his kids were playing sports: baseball, softball, basketball, soccer. He also coached the North Hills Junior High girls' volleyball team for five years.

And about those four kids... All four were born between 1975 and 1980. Erin lives in Pittsburgh and is a director at PA Health Law Project, which helps senior citizens who have health-related legal issues. Matt is general manager of the Indianapolis Indians, and has a daughter. Mary is a physician's assistant at Columbia Presbyterian Health System in New York City. And John is a union plumber here at the University Pittsburgh, and has three sons.

I asked Jim what he is terrible at and he said: "Nothing. If I'm terrible at something, I don't do it." But then he

confessed that he took four semesters of German in college and got D's all four semesters. So: terrible at foreign languages – although he does say that, years later in business, he was in a situation where his clients spoke German and he could understand a little bit of it.

Jim's family had pets in the past, but his last dog died in 2011. He recently took his sister-in-law's dog when she died in 2023. See our Ceili Club Pets feature in this issue for a picture of Maddie.

When I asked what some of us might be surprised to know about him, Jim mentioned two things. First, he said that he was very shy as a child. Yes, I was very surprised to hear that! He says it was going away to college and his jobs in customer service and sales that got him more comfortable talking to people.

Second, he said that at some point in the late 90s he attempted to learn to play the violin. He discovered that when you are older, it is hard to find time to practice, and that he remembers dances a lot better than he remembers tunes.

Some other fun questions I like to ask...

What are you most proud of? Jim said he is very proud of his children. He feels that he has done well at everything he's attempted (um, except German and violin), and he is satisfied with his life.

What is your philosophy of life in ten words or less? "Don't be too serious. Do what makes you feel alive."

What five words best describe you? Funny. Unintimidating. Like intellectual challenge.

What you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? A priest, for a very short period.

What would you do different if you had a chance? Nothing.

What is your pet peeve? People holding their phones when they're driving and people who pull in front of you then slow down.

Are people basically good or basically bad? Basically good, but it depends on influences.

I always like to ask people about their spiritual life, and I almost always get interesting answers. Jim's response was especially thoughtful. He was raised Catholic and is still officially Catholic, but he feels that Christianity was only in its true form for the first 200 years. He thinks that all religions get corrupted by human beings and our need for rules and domination, and described himself as more spiritual than religious.

We ended the interview with a morbid laugh. I asked Jim what his vision for his future is and he replied, "death." Well, yeah, it's coming for all of us, but we hope not soon!



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF IRISH TRIVIA

This quiz is just for fun. No prizes, since it would be so easy to cheat: the answer key is in this issue! See how many you can answer without cheating and compare with your friends. Each question is one point unless otherwise noted.

1. James Joyce wrote a famously difficult novel about a single day in the life of a Dublin man.

What is his name?

What's the name of the novel?

What was the date when the story takes place?

Score yourself one point for each correct answer. Bonus point if you also know the nickname of the date when the story takes place.

2. What's the name of the John Wayne movie in which Wayne plays a troubled American boxing champion who marries a pretty redhead in a little Irish town?

What actress played his wife?

What was the wife's name in the movie?

Score one point for each correct answer.

3. Whose harp is preserved at Trinity College?
4. What town in Ireland received the survivors of the Lusitania?
5. What was the shillelagh originally used for?
6. What is the first day of the Celtic new year?
7. What percentage of Americans claim Irish ancestry?
Bonus question:
Which state has the highest percentage of Irish ancestry?

8. What Irishman won the Nobel prize for Physics?

9. What modern celebration had its origins in the Druid Festival of Samhain?

10. How many bridges cross the Liffey?

11. "Black Pool" is another name for what Irish city?

12. What do the hands, heart and crown on a Claddagh ring symbolize?
(1 point for each correct answer).

13. How many counties are there in the Republic of Ireland?

14. How many counties are there in Northern Ireland?

15. Where did President John F. Kennedy's grandfather come from? (one point each for town and county)

16. What is the name of the Irishman who designed the White House?

17. Where was the Book of Kells produced?

18. What is the name of the oldest prehistoric burial tomb in Ireland? In what county is it located?
(1 point for each correct answer)

19. Who read the Proclamation of the Republic on the steps of the Post Office in 1916?

20. When did St. Patrick first arrive in Ireland?

Coming up in future issues:

What's your favorite song or piece of music? Email me at kbashaar@gmail.com Help your friends discover a new favorite!

Are you over age 80 or under age 30? I'm trying to put together an Ask An Elder panel where our oldest and youngest members can ask each other questions. If interested in participating please email me at kbashaar@gamil.com

Also, I'm planning a surprise that I'm very excited about for the summer issue. Only Jim Guay knows what it is and he will not reveal it if he knows what's good for him.



Remembering the Hunger Strikers

Hunger strikes date back to pre-Christian times and have deep roots in Irish society and in the Irish psyche. When someone felt an injustice had been done to him, usually involving a debt or perceived wrong, the injured party would fast on the doorstep of the accused. This was due to the importance the Irish placed on hospitality, as allowing someone to die on your doorstep was considered a great dishonor. This practice was even incorporated into civil law. But this assumes that you were dealing with an honorable enemy who follows the same rules.

Like so many events in history, the 1980-81 hunger strikes began by accident. The British government discontinued political status in 1976, turning political prisoners into “common criminals” denying them the rights of political status. By accepting prison rules the men and women would accept criminalization and the legitimacy of the state of northern Ireland, thereby accepting the partition of Ireland. In Long Kesh prison, the first prisoner under the new regime, Kieran Nugent, refused to wear the prison uniform, saying, “You’ll have to nail it to my back”. He was placed naked in a punishment cell embarking on a routine of surviving on a concrete floor. He covered himself in a blanket and thus “the blanket protest” began. Over the next four years hundreds of prisoners would join in the protest. This was added to by the “dirty protest” in 1978 after prisoners were beaten by guards when they went to the toilets so they refused to leave their cells. When Cardinal O’Fiaich visited Long Kesh he compared the conditions to those of homeless people living in the sewers of Calcutta. He noted: “They prefer to face death rather than be classed as criminals. Anyone who knows Irish history knows how deeply this attitude is in our country’s past”.

After the failure of repeated attempts at mediation, the prisoners decided the only course was a hunger strike. In September 1980 they went on strike, along with women in Armagh prison. This was called off in December when it was believed that a courier was en-route with a settlement. This never materialized and once again, the dishonest enemy misjudged the Irish character as this was a grave error and guaranteed another strike - this one to the death. It would prove to be a huge mistake to the British as the eyes of the world turned to Her Majesty’s prison and people questioned why young men would be willing to die in this horrific manner.

On March 1, 1981, Bobby Sands went on hunger strike protesting the barbaric conditions in Long Kesh. By August 20th, ten men were dead. While on strike, Bobby Sands was elected as MP for Fermanagh-West Tyrone on the Sinn Fein ticket. Several other republicans won seats in the next few years thus initiating Sinn Fein into politics with the strategy of “armalite and the ballot box”.

The world was inundated with pro-British, anti-Republican,

“they are all thugs and murderers” propaganda. They assured us that the British government stood for law and order, democracy, justice, peace and stability and those who opposed were gangsters. But people began to ask why Sands was in prison, why was he confined to a maggot infested cell? He was a writer and a poet. He loved to sing and tell stories. He loved Ireland and his family. He loved life. People began to realize that Bobby was an intelligent, creative and compassionate human being and not a fanatical killer. If these men had grown up in a normal country they would be living their lives with jobs and families and a future. Would gangsters starve themselves to death so that their comrades would not be brutalized? These men changed the course of history with their determination. “The trouble with a hunger strike is that so many honorable people in the past have been praised for it. You cannot now turn around and say this is immoral and violent if you have said the opposite in the past.” (Fr. Des Wilson)

What did they gain? This tragedy raised the question of freedom and democracy in the north. In the light of the enormous immorality of British behavior during the strike, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the government had to defend themselves in the international arena. After the last death, the prisoners again went on the “blanket protest”, which had been postponed during the strike. By October most of the demands of the prisoners had been met and this was called off. The Irish Prime Minister and Margaret Thatcher agreed on the establishment of the Anglo-Irish Inter-Governmental Forum which, though flawed, crystallized many of the issues that would be faced by those setting up a future Ireland. Sinn Fein saw the number of nationalist votes rise to 43%. And in time, came the “Good Friday Agreement” and the laying down of arms by the IRA.

These men laid down their lives for the Irish people and the freedom of Ireland. Whether one agrees with their politics or their methods, their heroism labeled them as advocates of an ancient cause. Coming forward to die a long and painful death, they gave dignity to the 800 year struggle, which sometimes was tiresome and sometimes vicious.

May they rest in peace.

Bobby Sands,(27) 66 days on strike;
Francis Hughes,(25) 59days;
Raymond McCreesh,(24) 61 days;
Patsy O’Hara (23) 61 days;
Joe McDonnell (30) 61 days;
Martin Hurson (29) 46 days;
Kevin Lynch,(25) 71 days;
Kieran Doherty (25) 71 days;
Thomas McElwee (23) 62 days;
Michael Devine (27) 60 days.

Sources: “The Hunger Strikes”, RK Walker; “The Irish Hunger Strike”, Tom Collins; “Ten Men Dead”, David Beresford

This year marks the 45th Anniversary of the Irish Hunger Strike. A version of this article appeared in the Spring 2011 Ceilier written by Jean Kaniecki.

Upcoming Local Irish Events

What	When	Where	Contact & Information
AOH Sean McBride Div 32	4/3/26, 4-7 pm	Uke's Club, 302 Mansfield Blvd, Carnegie	
Logan Joyce, local author of "Sins of Erin"	4/11/26, 2 pm	Bethel Park Library	https://bethelpark.librarycalendar.com/event/sins-erin-author-talk-11334
AOH Sean McBride Div 32 Mass & Communion Breakfast	4/12/26, 10 am	Chartiers Country Club	aohdivision32.org,
GAS Irish Music & Dance Program	4/19/26, 2 pm	AJ Palumbo Hall	Pghgaelicarts@gmail.com
AOH Division 1 Night of Irish Music & More	5/2/26, 6 pm	Castle Shannon Fire Hall, 3600 Library Rd. Pgh.	412-401-3945 or pghsaintpat@verizon.net Rich O'Malley
GAS High Tea	6/7/26,	Pittsburgh Golf Club	Pghgaelicarts@gmail.com
AOH Division 4 Day of Irish Entertainment	6/20/26	Croatian Center, Evergreen Rd., Millvale	Details TBD
45th Anniversary of the 1981 Hunger Strikes	8/22/26	St Patricks Church, Strip District	Details TBD

As always, thank you to Diane Byrnes for most of this information. Listen to Echoes of Erin on WEDO 810 AM and 93.3 FM at 12:30 every Sunday

If you know about upcoming Irish-themed events, please email kbashaar@gmail.com.



Answers to Irish Trivia Quiz

- Name: Leopold Bloom
Novel: Ulysses
Date: June 16, nicknamed Bloomsday
- Movie: The Quiet Man
Actress: Maureen O'Hara
Wife's name: Mary Kate Danaher
- Brian Boru's
- Cobh
- To teach Irishmen sword fighting when they weren't allowed to use swords
- November 1, when dead spirits return
- 9-10% of Americans claim Irish ancestry. New Hampshire claims the highest percentage, 20%. But give yourself a point if you guessed Massachusetts, which comes close at 19.29%
- Ernest Walton, in 1951, shared with John Cockcroft, "for their pioneering work on the transmutation of atomic nuclei by artificially accelerated atomic particles." Give yourself an extra point if you are Evan Adcock, probably the only person in the club who would know what that means. Give yourself 10 extra points if you knew what that meant and you are NOT Evan Adcock.
- Halloween
- Twenty-six!
- Dublin
- Hands: friendship, heart: fidelity, crown: reign
- Twenty-six
- Six
- Dunganstown in County Wexford
- James Hoban
- St. Colmcille Monastery
- Newgrange in County Meath dates back to 3000 BC
- Patrick Pearse
- 432 AD



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If you have an article of Irish interest that you would like to place in The Ceilier- email kbashaar@gmail.com.