

## Passing of Shore Road resident



Sometimes it's hard to contemplate God's plan when a family is faced with the ultimate challenge of death in the midst of busy life and its daily living out. When death comes on two occasions in a short period of time in the one year, the contemplation is the severest challenge.

In the spring time our community in general but the McNeice clann in particular faced in to the passing of a beloved father and founder of the clann in the Shore

Road district of Lurgan, Benny McNeice. He had reached venerable old age after a faith-filled life and on the day his strong loyal loving sons proudly presented his requiem. Little did we know that one of them his loving second son Seamus would in the early winter be called to him after a brief but serious illness by the Lord.

Seamus McNeice was a loyal, loving son born fifty eight years ago in that faith- filled dwelling in 152 Shore Road in North Lurgan, with brothers Francis and Shaun and sister Anne. He attended Tannaghmore Primary School and there and at home developed a love of faith and country particularly, under the influence of Master Alf Murray. In particular he fell in love with Irish traditional music and was introduced to his favourite instrument the violin or fiddle as he preferred to call it. He was also introduced to Gaelic football on the school team and soon graduated to youth football with emerging Clann Eireann and their spacious new hall.

On leaving school he entered the world of work which coincided with the building of the M1 Highway from Dungannon to Belfast where he worked as an operator of plant and its maintenance. When that was completed, he joined his father and brother in the local Glendinnings printing works where he remained until his untimely passing. He would be the first to say that real and meaning of life began when he met his comely partner for life, his wife Maura and their days were joy filled when their family of two boys and three girls completed their happiness.

He was a devoted husband, a loving father and inspired in his family to virtues he had been given in his own family life. The time he had away from his duty filled hardworking life and his family care was given over to his love of Irish traditional music. Soon the name of Seamus McNeice Irish traditional fiddler was being mentioned with Sean Maguire of Fermanagh and a piper such as Willy Clancy of Clare. He became a leader of the fiddle in ceili bands throughout Ireland - a winner of prizes and medals at Feiseanna and Fleadh Ceoil throughout the land. His favourite place was with Patsy Toman or Pat McQuillan and other local musicians in sessions in his own Clann Eireann Hall or clubrooms or in A.O.H. Derrytrasna.

He was a more than competent Gaelic footballer with Minor, Junior and Senior Clann Eireann teams. He was a formidable reader of the game as he was of music and provided many a scoring pass to his brother Francis in the forward line. Only once did his love of music and football clash. He could not be in two places at once in 1964 when Clann Eireann defeated Crossmaglen Rangers to take their second Senior County Championship. He chose unselfishly to represent the club in the All-

Ireland traditional musical final instead. That he was not awarded a medal under rule in those days was unfortunate because he had played his strong heart out in all the other games to reach that famous victorious final. He was more than compensated in the next few years when Clann Eireann became the first All County League winners over that period. Those medals were proudly gained and received.

Seamus to all who knew him was quiet, modest and reserved. He was a gentleman in all his dealings in life, always ready to do a good turn, to play his fiddle freely for one and all to enjoy on the hard road of life. Thus we walked with him up the Shore Road behind his coffin guarded with honour by his Clann Eireann former team mates. At his Requiem, Father Ciaran McPartlan lucidly reminded us of the pain of parting suffered by Maura his beloved wife and his loving sons, daughters and grandchildren.

Seamus' nephews celebrated this good man's life by processing at the offertory and by saying prayers of the faithful.

Above all his son and daughter read the word of the good news bravely in honour of the father who truly loved them. His fellow musicians poignantly and perfectly in harmony played the Coilin and an Buachallin Báin from the choir solemnly paid him tribute with their tonal antiphons. As one who walked the Shore Road from time to time with him and had the pleasure of hearing and dancing to his fiddle and knowing how he would blush and shyly smile about all the fuss and praise heaped upon him I need to thank him for the joyful flight also of his wheeling racing pigeons because with his da and brothers, that was his other great interest. I am sure when they met in the Halls of Paradise, if he didn't know already Benny's first question would have been about the state of the pigeon shed and the blue grey cooing flock within it.

Seamus has gone from us but temporarily and our community will miss him but above all his family and extended family will feel the pain of parting. We offer sincere condolences to his loving wife Maura and his sons Connor and Noel and his daughters Joanne, Roisin and Catrina. We send sympathy to his brothers Francis and Shaun and sister Anne and to his sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, sister-in-law, Anne, grandchildren and all the extended family.

Once upon a time in a classroom in Tannaghmore School Master Alf Murray taught us the words of 'The Fiddler of Dooney' by poet Nobel winner W. B. Yeats. The opening lines sum up what Seamus was when Yeats wrote:

When I play my fiddle at Dooney  
Folks dance like a wave of the sea".

Go Dneadhiah Dia Trocaire ar a anam ditis.

By Brendan McStravick of Clann Fireann and the Shore Road.