



muskegon  
irish  
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society



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*Quarterly Newsletter*

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Summer 2009

Next Event

## Summer Barbecue

Thursday, August 27, 2009 - 6:15 p.m.

Mona Lake Boating Club

Entertainment by Mona Shores Fiddlers



Photo by Realistic Photography - Jay Jurkas

The tradition continues! We have had such great positive feedback from the past two performances by our own Mona Shores Fiddlers that we have asked them to return for a third consecutive year! This is the 2009 group, and we will be the first audience to hear their new repertoire, because they will have just returned from their annual music camp. The enthusiasm and energy of these kids is catching, and they always inspire us with their talent and dedication. Remember, these young folks devote themselves to learning and performing this traditional music *on their own time and on their own dime*, so let's show them how much we appreciate all their hard work! As always, we commend their director Tim Staudacher for his leadership of these fine young musicians.

We have our choice of a barbecue steak or chicken dinner for only \$13.50 per person, the same price as last year! Please phone your reservation to the Wright's 777-2122 or Kathleen Marek 759-7344 before Tuesday, August 25. You can also email your reservation to [bobpctech@comcast.net](mailto:bobpctech@comcast.net). If you do not make a reservation, we cannot guarantee that you will have a dinner. Rain or shine, we are under the pavilion. Don't miss this fun evening!

## Last Event

On Tuesday, May 12, about ninety of us gathered at the House of Chan for our annual educational dinner program. Our speaker from Chicago was **Cliff Carlson**, the publisher and editor of the Irish American News, one of our country's oldest and largest Irish American publications. Cliff spoke about today's challenges to traditional print publications in general, and to the Irish American News in particular. Because he realized early on the necessity of embracing the internet and new methods of media communication, Cliff took steps to adapt his magazine and create a unique website. The result is that the Irish American News continues to thrive, and has added an Ohio edition. A pleasant surprise was that our last year's speaker, **Frank West**, accompanied Cliff with **Cathy Curry**, and addressed us briefly. Frank has been the paper's book reviewer and drama critic for more than 25 years. Many thanks to Cliff, Frank, and Cathy for traveling to Muskegon to meet with us. By the way, Cliff has offered



Chris Zahrt K evin Donovan Cliff Carlson Frank West Neil Mullally

our members a *free subscription* to the Irish American News. To order your free subscription you need to call the paper at 708-445-0700, and tell the answerer that you are from the Muskegon Irish American Society and that Cliff Carlson has given you a free subscription.

## Michigan Irish Music Festival Set for Sept. 18 - 20!

This year's festival promises to be another top-notch event. The festival Board is going all out because this is the **10th Anniversary Festival**, and several dignitaries will be appearing. And no more worries about the weather—for the first time in the history of Heritage Landing, all the festival entertainment and audience areas will be **protected under new clear-span tents!** And this year's entertainment line-up reads like a who's who of Irish music. Here it is, from the official festival website, [www.michiganirish.org](http://www.michiganirish.org):

Headliners - Natalie MacMaster & Donnell Leahy  
Masters of the Fiddle

Solas ~ Slide IE ~ Old Blind Dogs ~ The Makem and Spain Bro's  
Seamus Kennedy ~ Captain Mackey's Goatskin and String band  
Laurence Nugent and Danny Burns ~ Evans & Doherty  
Blackthorn ~ Kennedy's Kitchen ~ Switchback  
Cralc Wisely ~ Waxles ~ ConkIn Ceili Band

Our club members are always needed for volunteers, especially at the Cultural Tent. To volunteer go to the above website or call 739-2028. A full description of all the volunteer jobs is on the website.

## Cathie Ryan Returning October 22!

It has been too long since one of Irish music's most popular vocalists, **Cathie Ryan**, has performed in Muskegon. She is one of our favorite entertainers and we are one of her favorite audiences. This date is a Thursday night before Cathie's weekend booking at the Wharton Center at Michigan State, and we are fortunate it works out for her to return here. This is a major tour for Cathie, and she is bringing her full band with her. And not only that, this concert's venue will be the terrific new performing arts theater of Orchard View High School across Quarterline Road from Muskegon Community College. Cathie will be including members of the Orchard View music program in her performance. This will be a night to remember! This concert could very well be a sell-out, and it is not too early to buy your tickets now at the reduced advance purchase price of \$14.00 each. You can purchase your tickets by visiting the Quietfaith Productions website [www.quietfaith.com](http://www.quietfaith.com) or by calling (616)604-1001. The telephone call is not a long distance call and it is not necessary to dial a "1" to make the call.

# Frank McCourt

19 August 1930 - 19 July 2009

The news last month of Frank McCourt's death from metastatic melanoma was especially poignant for us in Muskegon. It was less than ten months ago that he came to Muskegon for a public reading and to talk at the Frauenthal Theater as part of our community's fall Humanities Festival. The legendary author drew us in with his humanity, his humility, and his quick dry wit. He was a gentle soul, and we extend our deepest condolences to his wife Ellen, his daughter Maggie, his three grandchildren, and his brothers Malachy, Alphie, and Michael. Ar dheis De go raibh a anam (May he rest in peace).

## The Irish and Melanoma

*by Neil Mullally*

Frank McCourt died from metastatic melanoma, also often called malignant melanoma. Melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer, and one of the most lethal of all cancers. Death often follows diagnosis in a matter of months, as happened with Frank McCourt. Those of us of Irish heritage must be especially vigilant against melanoma, because there is a significantly higher occurrence of melanoma among fair-skinned descendants of Northern European ancestors, and people of Irish descent have one of the highest rates of melanoma in the world.

In the U.S. our government does a good job of warning us to protect ourselves from the uv rays of the sun by reducing our exposure time in the sun, by wearing hats and clothing, and by using sun block. But in the U.S. we do a lousy job of getting out an equally important message - **regularly check our skin moles!** Melanoma takes place when a mole turns malignant and grows like a little root down into the skin. If it grows deep enough its cancerous cells will be carried to multiple organs throughout the body. But if the malignant mole is caught early enough, it can be removed safely. All too often, a melanoma victim has no idea that a mole has turned cancerous because we have not been educated about the seriousness of what may be happening when a mole changes or "looks different" from the way it had been.

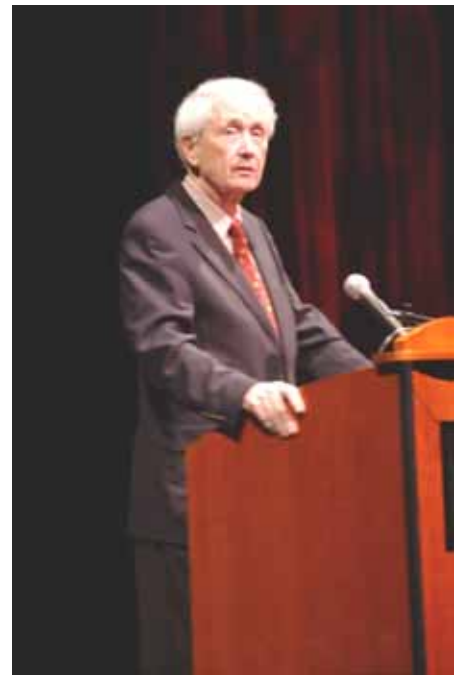
The emphasis on sun protection can be misleading because, as mentioned above, melanoma is most prevalent among Northern European populations and their descendants, where sun bathing and skin exposure to the sun is much less than in other climates.

Among the four siblings in my family (my three brothers and myself), two of us have had melanoma, and one of us died from it. That experience has taught us some valuable lessons to pass on. Although a family history of cancer can be an indicator, in our family there is no history of cancer in either of our parents' families. So an absence of family history is not a safety factor to rely upon.

A cancerous mole can be anywhere on the body, and not necessarily where the mole has been exposed to the sun. The mole that killed my brother was up under his arm pit and he had not noticed when it changed. A malignant mole can be anywhere - on the scalp, on a foot, on a leg, etc. The key is that if a mole changes in any way, such as shape, size, color, or if it bleeds or raises up, it should be checked as soon as possible by a dermatologist. On the internet can be found pictures of what malignant moles can look like. But do not be misled by those. If you have a mole that changes, no matter how slight you think the change is, get it checked right away.

One helpful approach is to establish your own baseline by look-at your moles regularly. Also have someone else look you over because you may have moles on your back and other areas that you cannot easily see. Some take pictures so that they don't forget what their moles looked like originally when they are trying to decide if a mole has changed later.

To sum up, **check your moles regularly, and see a dermatologist if a mole changes in any way.** Due our Irish ancestry, we cannot take any chances with melanoma.



Frank McCourt at Frauenthal Theater, October 26, 2008

## Ali to Visit Ancestral Irish Home

When President Obama was elected, a fact known to historians became better known among the general public: some African Americans also have Irish heritage. In the case of Muhammad Ali, his great-grandfather emigrated from County Clare to Kentucky in the 1860's. Ali has always acknowledged his Irish ancestry, and first visited Ireland in July of 1972, when he fought Al Blue Lewis at Croke Park stadium in Dublin. That was a non-title bout following Ali's loss to Joe Frazier. His most recent visit was in 2003, when he traveled to Dublin in support of the Special Olympics held there. Ali is now 67 years old, and despite his Parkinson's, continues many activities on behalf of charity.

Ali's great-grandfather, Abe Grady, emigrated from his home on the Turnpike Road in Ennis, County Clare, to Kentucky. There he married an African American woman, and their son also married an African American woman. One of their children was Odessa Lee Grady, who married Cassius Clay, Sr., and was Ali's mother. Ali's birth name was Cassius Clay, Jr., until he changed his name when he joined Islam in 1964 after winning the world title.

Ali will visit Ennis on September 1, and Mayor Frankie Neylon and the Ennis Town Council are preparing for thousands of visitors coming to County Clare to see the famous boxer. During his stay Ali will be made an honorary citizen of Ennis.

For an interesting video narrative of Ireland done by Ali himself in 1972 during his first trip there, go to YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2T8jr8WQC8I>, or just do a search on YouTube for Mohammad Ali and Ireland.



Muhammad Ali at Special Olympics in Dublin, 2003



On May 8 some of us attended the Irish Heritage Society meeting at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids

## New Members

Cead mile failte - One hundred thousand welcomes to our newest members, Clare and David Closz!

## Dues Notice

We sometimes hear from a club member, "Why aren't I getting notices of club events?" Or "How come I'm not getting the newsletter?" The answer is, "You have not paid your dues!" We can only keep you on our active list for so long. If you have not paid your dues yet for this year, a notice is included with this newsletter. After this, you will be dropped from our membership list. Your dues are critical to supporting our club activities and the newsletter, and we cannot afford to do that for you unless you pay your dues! Our dues are the best deal anywhere, just \$15 per family!