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These Irish From Ireland Forget to Talk That Way

By BOB EMAHISER

At least once a year I go Irish with a vengeance.

When St. Patrick's day rolls around it is just as natural to be wearin' a bit of green as it is to be gardening in the spring.

Well, this year, as usual, I get warmed up for the great saint's day. Like Jiggs, I try a few preliminaries of corned beef and cabbage and then I saunter out to Gonzaga university, home of the Irish, to renew some auld acquaintances.

During the visit I am introduced to a couple fine-looking lads. One is James Patrick McNally.

"Ah, McNally," I says, "'tis a foine pleasure. Me own family hails from Ireland. You no doubt have heard of the River Shannon?"

"I think I have," he says quietly. "I'm from a village in County Leitrim. The River Shannon provides part of the picturesque scenery."

This stops me a minute. "Ummm," I says. "Could be me family was from the other side of the river. 'Twas a long time ago. Come to think of it, maybe they was from the north of Ireland."

That's when I meet Patrick McBreen. "What did you say your name is?" he asks.

"Emahiser."

He grins. "Unusual Irish name. I'm from the north of Ireland. County Armagh. In fact, I was there just last year visiting my family."

Brogue Fades Away

Well, this crowds me clear off the map of Ireland and I even lose my brogue. McBreen does not. Neither does McNally. Anyhow, we all agree St. Patrick's day is a very fine holiday, for Irish and Americans alike, and we get better acquainted.

Brought up in widely separated parts of the Emerald isle, McNally and McBreen met during the war years.

In 1946 both signed up at Southampton with the United States 508th parachute regiment for service with occupation forces in Frankfort, Germany. In this country both were stationed in North Carolina. Discharged, both came to Spokane to enter Gonzaga last fall.

McNally is studying law. McBreen civil engineering. And they can tell you plenty about Ireland. McNally is from the hilly country in the southwest, near the famous peat bogs. McBreen's home is in



Irishmen McNally (left), McBreen

the more mountainous north country, near the sea.

Both like Spokane, but miss the "green" which they say truly marks the Emerald isle.

"In my part of the county all lenten restrictions are removed for the day," McBreen said. "The stores and shops close and there is dancing and other festivities."

I told him it's a big day here, too. They don't close the stores, but the festivities are varied and vigorous.

McNally told me about the "big famines" of 1846 and 1847, when crops failed, potatoes were scarce and the large-scale emigrations to the United States started.

"The emigrations are still going on," he said. "It is because Ireland is a land of little opportunity except for the few. For example, nearly everyone owns a bicycle. If you own a motor car, you are a big-shot, indeed. If you're too poor to own a bicycle, you're really poor."

But after spending the winter in Spokane, both McNally and McBreen agree that Ireland has something the Northwest doesn't have . . . an ideal, temperate climate.

"It rains," McNally said. "It rains plenty. But it never gets colder than 10 above zero."

That, I tell McBreen and McNally, I would like to see.

Anyhow, regardless of weather, me and the other Irish are going to have a warm time of it this St. Patrick's day.

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