

THE McCARTIN

In 1954 John Joe McCartin came from Aughnasheelin to a small farm at Mullyaster, Newtowngore, bringing with him his wife and young family of four children, May, Teresa, Joe and Tommy. Now 17 years later, May (a nurse), is Mrs. McDevitt, Main Street, Ballinamore, and Teresa (a poultry instructress), is Mrs. O'Brien, Kingscourt, Co. Cavan.

However, the following article, written by Michael Whelan, B.A., N.T., Aughavas, deals with the fortunes of the sons, Tommy and Joe, now better known as—

Joe and Tommy McCartin are made of tougher metal than their relaxed and seemingly shy dispositions would seem to convey. It was when I pressed them about the capability of their enterprise to withstand the full blast of E.E.C. competition, which we now know the country will be facing in the next few years, that Joe, the slightly elder half of the firm and member of Leitrim County Council gave me this answer: "What is possible is what you believe is possible. I wouldn't let Mansholt tell us what we should do. We went against every rule in the book; we lacked finance, technical knowledge and industrial background and we've made it this far.

"It was our own faith in ourselves that told at the end of the day. When we asked the bank manager for finance to go into the milling business, and we were top class farmers at the time, his advice was 'Ye are doing splendidly, lads, at farming, keep to what ye know.'" They didn't and the mighty measure of their success can be seen in the ultra modern complex of steel and concrete that caps the high hill of Mullyaster, overlooking on one side Garadice Lake, still picturesque despite its late misfortune, on the other the village of Newtowngore and farther beyond it the barren plain of Moysleacht, ancient citadel of Crom Cru which, legend says, was blisted into the dust by St. Patrick.

New hope for the small farmers of Drumreilly

Set on the edge of one of the poorest small farm districts of Ireland, Upper Drumreilly, the employment figure of 38 farmers out of a total work force of 43 tells its own story, the story of two brothers courageously demonstrating that the age-old problem of the small farmer can be solved not "by keeping another sow or putting another acre under the plough" but by his taking a job and carrying on his farming as a part-time occupation. When

Sean Flanagan, Minister for Lands, gave public utterance to this new economic discovery the T.V. cameras were rolled out and he was hailed as the Finbar Nolan of the West, quickly carrying off as a bonus the Mayo Man of the Year Award. But despite the flourishes his pronouncement was important in that it acknowledged, at high level, the unequal fight of the small Western farmer, and the vital role that industrial enterprises set in rural districts were playing. In this respect it must be acknowledged that the brighter outlook now obtaining over the whole area of Drumreilly owes a great deal to the industrial employment available with McCartin Bros.

There is no doubt that the industrial undertaking combining mill, piggeries and engineering unit at Mullyaster is an imposing structure. The mill itself, 8,000 sq. ft. of floor space, turns out 200 tons per week of a wide variety of meals, which are delivered over a 35-mile radius, penetrating into Co. Cavan, traditional pig country. Adjacent to the mill there is a huge grain shed in the course of construction to house

the grain as it comes in on their lorries from the Midlands. Proteins and other concentrates are imported. The piggeries accommodate 1,300 fatteners and are equipped with the latest pipe-line feeding apparatus so that two men can handle this amount at their ease. When I called, two young lads, Sean McKeon and Dan Mulligan, were having a wash up after their day's work. One thing that struck me was the complete absence of smell of any kind. A site is ready for a huge 100-sow unit to replace the present system by which bonhams are purchased at Carrigallen Mart. This proposed sow unit, it is hoped, will keep the fattening house at full strength.

A Magnificent Farming Achievement

I spoke with Joe and Tommy. Tommy is

30, married, and has a baby daughter. In this respect Joe lags slightly behind for he is a batchelor, though a year older than his brother. Tommy's wife, formerly Marie Clarke from Co. Cavan, and secretary with a finance firm in Dublin, is still a great help in the office despite her added domestic responsibilities. Joe showed me a dilapidated old shed in the midst of the modern steel and concrete grandeur. "In 1963 we built that shed at a cost of £90, and then purchased a scrap grinder for £70. A second-hand lorry for £300 and we were millers". But the story began some years earlier when they purchased a 55-acre farm at Dunshaughlin in Co. Meath with the aim of growing sufficient grain for their pig feeding needs. "We had built up by this time an accredited pig herd of 25 sows, no easy task in those days." They are far more interested in talking about their farming achievements than anything else. "From we were 17 years of age my father never transacted one pound's worth of farm business," said Tommy. They commenced a dairy and pig enterprise and by 1963 had won the Killeshrandra Co-

JOE IS OUR

operative Society's Award for the best farming progress over a three-year period. They showed me a cutting from the *Irish Press* and their picture, being presented with a silver trophy by the then Minister Paddy Smith. Macra na Feirme's pioneering, educational drive with its Question Times, debates and stock judging competitions was sweeping like a breath of fresh air across the country and the McCartin Brothers were soon attracted to its banner. At the stock-judging finals at Ballsbridge during the Spring Show of 1962 Joe, then a member of the National Executive of Macra, won the All-Ireland Award. Three years later Tommy emulated his brother's prowess when he led a 3-man team from the Republic to victory in the Pig Efficiency Tests at Balmoral, Belfast. They still love the land but cannot devote the time to it. They run a beef herd of 120 cattle which keeps one man employed full time.

Small Farmers as Industrial Workers

How does their farmer work-force match up to the new industrial challenge? "Rather than being a handicap the farming background is a distinct advantage," Joe thinks. "Being farmers gives them a sense of responsibility. They are managers on their own farms; they must make decisions and be resourceful. These are the type of men we like." They would never dream of moving their factory to a big centre, the trend nowadays with big industry. They wondered I should even ask. "Such a step would destroy all we have worked for and done for this area." They do not pretend to know how E.E.C. conditions will affect their industry or how they will measure up



BROTHERS

TOMMY AND JOE

to its challenge, but Tommy gave me their simple policy plan in one sentence: "We are working to have the most efficient outfit we can have, whether or not Ireland enters E.E.C."

Can the McCartins face the E.E.C. Challenge?

But it is obvious that the McCartin Bros. are following a well-reasoned course. The basis of the whole business is pig production and in this they will be heavily involved, but their plan goes much farther; they aim to be the pig-farmer's complete supplier. Joe put it this way: "If pig production is to be profitable in E.E.C. conditions the units must be large and, therefore, it is essential that the pig farmer must have the best and latest equipment." Already they are gearing themselves to meet this demand. I went into the engineering workshop and saw the huge cylindrical bins each capable of holding 14 tons of meal. I had often seen these 'towers' at farmhouses but was never at such close range to them before. Tommy explained

I came here I worked in Waterford in the foreign department of an engineering firm, but this is my first experience as overall manager." His 10-man workforce will soon be doubled as installation orders for the wet feeding equipment are carried out. In fact a special lorry is already on hand and a team of fitters is being assembled.

New Departure in Pig Rearing

I saw what is planned to be a new departure in pig rearing in Ireland. Tommy showed me what he called pig cages each having 3 tiers or storcys. "The idea is to wean baby pigs at 5 days old by putting them into these environmentally controlled cages where they are reared independently of the sow, until they are fit to be moved to the fattening house. This process, which is at present in operation on the Continent, has the advantage that the number of bonhams per sow can be increased from the present average of 18 to 28 pigs per year and, if correct temperature control is adhered to, the mortality rate of baby pigs will be cut by half.

MAN OF THE YEAR POLL RESULT

There was a massive valid poll of 6,516 votes cast in our 'Man of the Year' Poll as promoted through the columns of the Leitrim Observer Newspaper (a publication unconnected with the Leitrim Guardian Magazine).

Joe McCartin, M.C.C., headed the poll with the full result as follows:—

McCartin, J. J.	...	1,307
Leddy, Hugh	...	1,181
Griffin, Padraig	...	987
Burns, William	...	814
McGarry, Emmet	...	551
Shanley, Michael	...	433
Quinn, Pat	...	421
O'Toole, George	...	415
Laird, Raymond	...	407

We congratulate Mr. McCartin and all the others who were nominated for participation in the poll, and express our thanks to the Leitrim Observer and its Editor, Mr. Gregory Dunne, B.A., for all the invaluable assistance rendered.

As well as being a member of Leitrim County Council, Joe McCartin is attached to the following bodies: County Committee of Agriculture; General Council Committees (Chairman); North Western Health Board; National Farmers Association Nature and Amenity Committee of An Foras Forbartha.

MAN OF THE YEAR

that the meal is blown into this kind of 'tower' from their lorries, runs from here into the wet feeder and thence by pipeline to the piggery cubicles. They are now taking orders for the installation of the complete outfit which costs approximately £800 per installation. Herebefore, if you wanted to find out how the Drumreilly accent blended with the Englishman's way of speaking you had to go to London, but now you can have the treat at Mullyaster where Londoner Peter Burnage is in charge of a Drumreilly workforce of 10 men in what is officially known as T. & J. Engineering. A typically frank young Englishman, Peter gives the impression of being exceptionally happy with his new task of making a success of this branch of the business. "I'm married to a Dublin girl, and that's why I'm in Ireland. Before

Unity of Thought and Purpose

As I was leaving Tommy's new luxury two-storey house—Joe lives with his father and mother—I asked the brothers how they share equally the rewards of their labours. Tommy smiled: "We never have any trouble that way. If either wants money he takes what he needs. If Joe comes short he searches my pockets." I laughed but Tommy didn't. You see they grew up together and have never been apart except for three years when they were at post primary—Joe was at St. Pat's, Cavan, and Tommy at Ballinamore—and they seem to have always thought alike, the same as identical twins are wont to do. Indeed, one could be pardoned for taking them for twins.

A Future in Politics

We came to Joe's Mercedes and I stood to say good-bye to the McCartin Brothers. I couldn't help asking Joe a parting question. Had he his sights set on Leinster House? He didn't hesitate. "Of course, I'd be honoured to be elected to Dail Eireann." Whether or not he will push for the nomination next time I don't know. Naturally his political future is bound up with the future of his party, Fine Gael, which at the moment is dormant enough. present constituency boundaries do not help either. However, given a rise in the fortunes of Fine Gael the idea of Joe McCartin at some future date sitting on a ministerial bench in Leinster House is not at all far fetched.

Hugh Leddy, left and Joe McCartin M.C.C., right. First and Second in our "Man of the Year" Poll.

