

Show me a Rose...

Edwina Guckian

22 dresses

14 hats

11 pairs of shoes

Present for Escort & Rosebud

Berocca Boost

Camera

Brush, Barrel & Dancing shoes

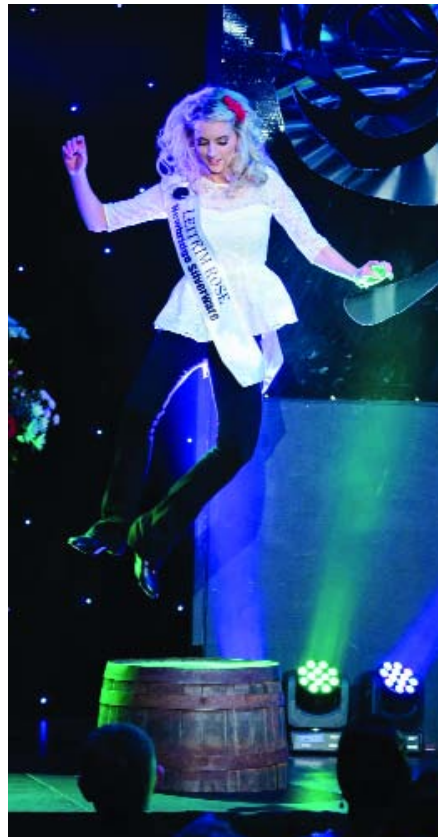
Leitrim Rose sash—

DONT FORGET THE SASH!!

I needed a trailer rather than a suitcase!

And so I was off on my whirlwind adventure, feeling quite like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz; swept away from everyday life, and thrown into an unfamiliar world. First stop Dublin, where awaited 31 other 'Dorothys'; a sea of brightly coloured luxurious fabrics, awash with sequins, feathers, diamanté and pearls, smiling faces, each on as excited as the next.

After departing Dublin our Rose tour bus moved around the country stopping first in Belfast where we visited the Titanic museum, then on to the historic city of Derry. It was here while taking a quiet moment by myself to explore the gardens of a



country house that I met Seamus Heaney who sent me into a reminiscing trance of my wonderful times at St Patrick's College studying himself and McGahern.

I was particularly delighted to stop in Derry as the All Ireland Fleadh was in full swing so I felt right at home. I performed that night outside the Guildhall in the pouring rain on TG4 coming live from the Fleadh, my feet dancing in the puddles, delighted to be out of high heels and back in the comfort of my dancing shoes. And, of course, it wasn't long before I sniffed out a session in our hotel too, tucked away in the corner of an upstairs lobby we played tunes until the early hours.

It was very hard to leave the Fleadh after getting a taste of it, but the rose bus doesn't wait so off we went again, next stop Sligo where lots of familiar faces were waiting. Then Galway! The stop we were all anticipating; for who else would be waiting for us there only the escorts with their impressive Rose handy packs



equipped with plasters, safety pins, sticky tap, hair clips, lipgloss: everything to aid a rose's emergency situation! My escort, Jonny McGailey, won Escort of the Year. He won a Newbridge cutlery set with his family crest imprinted on it. Although, I think my present to him of a ticket for the unforgettable All-Ireland semi final Dublin v Kerry game was a far better prize! As much of a fantastic time as we were having, my mind was still back on film set with the cast and crew of Ken Loach's 'Jimmy's Hall' which had begun filming that week in Leitrim. But once the Rose tour landed in Tralee there wasn't a spare second for the mind to wander. From visiting hospitals, opening exhibitions, dancing at Rose balls, signing autographs, being serenaded by Danny from the Coronas, going to the races, strutting down Don O'Neill's catwalk, showered in jewellery and roses, gala dinners, radio and newspaper interviews, and posing for thousands of photographs.

I got to see very little of my family and supporters as we were just so busy. But that didn't stop them for partying all week long and I heard many stories

about their antics from other Roses' supporters! Their Leitrim campaign gained in numbers as the week went on picking up several wanderers that jumped, or were maybe pulled, on the band wagon. I finally caught up with them on the Sunday night, a tidal wave of yellow and green thundering towards me as I walked in the door. What a fantastic night it was. Several of my young dancers had arrived and we danced and played tunes for everyone in the pub. It was also the same night as the All Ireland Ceili Band competition in Derry where my friends the Moylurg Ceili Band were competing! We did some celebrating and yahoing when we heard they won.

The most memorable moment for me was the Saturday night parade. 30,000 people lined the streets of Tralee to see the Roses on the most elaborately decorated floats pass through the town. Leitrim flags flew high in the crowd round every corner we took. I saw familiar faces I hadn't seen for years and droves of people from home that I never expected to come to Tralee cheer for Leitrim as I passed them. I even glimpsed some Castleisland people, the hometown of my boyfriend Michael, with Leitrim



jerseys and flags! If only the Gooch Cooper would do that! It was a magical night, one I had been to several times over the years but never imagined myself to be one of those girls on the floats.

It wasn't all glitz and glam however! Our hotel floor was like a hospital



ward some nights with the moaning and squealing as 32 girls ripped their high heels off and dipped their swollen, torn feet into buckets of ice. Falling into bed at 2pm and 7am starts took their toll on me over the 10 days too. Although, we were so busy everyday that we weren't given the time to even think about being tired.

By the time our stage night arrived we were all itching to get out there. While every other rose was pacing the corridors, fixing their hair & make up, rehearsing poems or taking a quick shot of brandy, I, while attracting some raised eyebrows, was stretching my quads and calves in preparation for the Brush Dance. 'And 3,2,1...you're on Edwina'. Smile, wave, walk, don't trip on your dress, mind the step, shoulders back, chin up...a hundred thoughts rushing through my mind as I walked out on stage. I was blown away by my support in the Dome, it's impossible to describe the electric atmosphere and mix of emotions, you just had to have been there. What a fantastic feeling to know you're representing your county on such a national level.

I will always look back on my



adventure to Tralee as one that brought great happiness to my family, friends and my county. Since my journey began as the Leitrim Rose in May, I have met many inspiring people, unforgettable characters and made life long friends. I have to commend the Roses for the independent, witty and aspiring ladies they are. As for the support I received, it was just phenomenal; a huge reflection on the powerful community spirit we have here in the West.

My year as the Leitrim Rose continues until next May when I hand over the sash, but in the meantime I have several more events to attend to such as the

New York St Patrick's Day Parade and working with Adi Roche in Vesnova Children's Mental Asylum, Chernobyl. On a final note, I was asked by the judges, journalists and several others what makes me stay in Leitrim?

'In Leitrim we move at a different pace of life to the rest of the world. There's no other place like it: *The quietness, the wildness, the beauty, the people, the accent, its simplicity, the sense of community, the characters, the humour, the music, its landscape, the history, the welcome; that's what my county means to me.* It's not just a county, it's a way of life, and I am so proud to be from there.'