

I MET PRINCESS DIANA ONE DAY.
SHE HAD COME FROM KENSINGTON,
I HAD COME FROM KILLARGUE!

Mike McNiffe
"..... No Matter
where I wander
there is no place
like Killargue"

The pretty royal with the blonde hair and lovely smile was there to visit homeless children. Me, well I was just there to report what she said.

I stood right beside her for half an hour. I didn't tell her I was from Leitrim - but I would have, had she asked. You see, I've always been fiercely proud of the native turf.

Journalism has taken me to many places. Not just all around Ireland, but Britain, mainland Europe, the United States and South America. And no matter where I go I have a little postcard with a picture of Killargue. It's my little piece of Leitrim and it's always in my travel bag.

Killargue is hardly even a village. There's the church and then there's Patty Reynolds' post office, shop, and pub all rolled into one.

But it's always there at the back of my mind. One night two years ago I was making my way through the Ozark mountains in Oklahoma trying to find a banker who had vanished with SEVEN million pounds of investor's money.

I eventually found him after hours driving round darkened roads, knocking on the homes of Red Indians in the heart of the Cherokee nation.

THE LEITRIM MAFIA



In the Sunday World Offices L to R: Sean McGoldrick (Sports Correspondent), Paul Williams (Crime Correspondent) and Mike McNiffe (Asst. Editor)

He gave me an interview and I went back to the little motel at the foot of the mountains to write the story for the following Sunday. I rang home to Killargue. My father came on the phone. "Harkins' cow has finally calved," he said.

I smiled all the way back to Tulsa airport. That bloody cow had kept us up for several nights before I left for America! Over the years I've seen many people from different parts of Ireland lose their identity upon arriving in the Big Smoke. I've still got the same strong Leitrim twang I've always had - I couldn't lose it if I tried. They change their accents and say little or nothing about their far flung home places. It's something Leitrim people can rarely be accused of. And quite rightly so. Why should we have to change. I've still got the same strong Leitrim twang I've always had - I couldn't lose it if I tried. Not that I would ever want to.

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Indeed, it's a bonus to be from the country while working in Dublin. It's an even bigger plus to be from Connacht.

Often I will go and see the victims of brutal violence in run-down high rise flats on the outskirts of the capital. At first many such folk don't want to talk about their terrible experiences. But

when they hear the accent, they immediately ask: "What part of the country are you from?" And then they invite you in. Within minutes they're spilling their hearts out.

Like most Leitrim people, I don't think I was ever as proud as the day we took on Dublin in the All-Ireland football semi-final in 1994. Okay, we got beat. But we didn't care. We were there and that's what counted. For years I had heard all the jokes about "poor little Leitrim". I didn't hear too many after that day in Croke Park.

I don't go on many foreign holidays. I've seen plenty of places and sat for hours in enough airports in the line of work. I prefer to go home on my time off - anyways,

the food, the beer and the craic around Leitrim are a hell of a lot better than in some sorry sun-kissed rock thousands of miles away.

Every July I take off my shirt and tie, leave the computer screen behind, and swop the Toyota for a Massey Ferguson 35. It's time for the turf, hay and silage around Killargue. It's work all day in the hills of Blackgardens and then down to Reynolds for a few quiet ones at night, - I couldn't be happier.

Great Memories - Three weeks later I'm back at the *Sunday World* offices in Terenure in south Dublin. Killargue and Leitrim are just memories again - but they're great ones!



Perfect Postcard - Beautiful Killargue in lovely Leitrim

Carrigallen Parish - A History

For the past number of years work has been progressing on researching and compiling a history of the parish of Carrigallen in order to celebrate the sesquicentenary of the building of the church in Carrigallen.

This hard backed book consisting of over four hundred pages, is in the process of being printed and will be launched by the Bishop of Kilmore, Most Rev. Francis J. MacKiernan, on Friday December 20, 1996.

There will be over sixty articles in the book, contributed mainly by parishioners, but with some by such noted historians as Bishop MacKiernan, Father Dan Gallogly, Michael Whelan and Frank McCaughey. There will also be a large number of photographs, a few of which go back to the close of the last century. Not only will it appeal to locals and to exiles throughout the world, but it should appeal to anyone with an interest in local history.

The editors are Michael Reilly and Raymond Hackett, design is by Tony Fahy, and sub-editing by Lord Kilbracken of Killegar. Copies may be obtained from the editorial team, Carrigallen, Co. Leitrim.

The Curiosity Shop

Opening at Easter 1997, the Curiosity Shop in Drumkeerins' Main Street. As well as providing a much-needed coffee and tea shop, serving home-made soup and sandwiches etc. it will be a retail outlet for top quality hand-crafted goods, all produced by local craftspeople. Another service offered is to have your wedding dress made into a family heirloom - in the form of a Christening gown or first Holy Communion dress! Several one-day and week-end courses in traditional crafts are planned once the necessary alterations are completed - Tel: 078 48003 for further information.