



The Irish Rover

By James McClure



Fire and Water in the City of Lights

It's a slow Saturday morning in the City of Aurora but Fire Captain Michael McCue is already hard at work on a training exercise.

"Yeah some people think all we do is sit around, play cards and pet the dog," laughs McCue, who is hard at work hand-training local U.S. Naval Sea Cadets in the art of firefighting.

It's work he could delegate but

prefers not to. "I love working with children, that's the best part of the job."

The Sea Cadets from the Aurora Division are high school aged and are preparing for a firefighting competition against cadets from five other states. "We teach them nautical skills and citizenship in a drug-free environment," says Lt. (j.g) Catherine Cabe, who

commands the local unit and will see some of her cadets go on to service in the Navy, Marines and Coast Guard. "Real-world training like this from professionals like Captain McCue is invaluable for us. We really appreciate the time the Aurora Fire Department spends with us."

"Oh, it's really a pleasure," adds McCue. "School groups come through all the time, and we especially like the Sea Cadets. They pay attention and have fun learning."

As McCue demonstrates various techniques for beating down a fire with a stream of high pressure water, local citizens stop and look at the group of teens and adult volunteers in naval uniforms. One Navy veteran overseeing the training is Sea Cadet Corps Regional Director Lt. Commander Dan Wayeshe, a 24-year veteran of active and reserve duty.

"Everybody in the Navy has to do firefighter training," notes Wayeshe. "It's part of their 'D.C' ...Damage Control." Many times it is the firefighting ability of sailors that saves a ship that has been mined, torpedoed, or struck by a

missile, as happened to the U.S.S. Stark, a frigate which almost sunk after being hit by a mistakenly targeted Iraqi Missile in 1987 during the Iran-Iraq war.

Guided by McCue, the Sea Cadets take turns individually and in groups of three using different pressures and types of spray.

"If you've got a lot of heat you open up the fog," says McCue as he aims an arc of water droplets to cascade down onto the target area. "If I get into a bad spot I can do this, it absorbs the heat and gives you some protection."

McCue also demonstrates and lets fly with a high pressure stream, which the cadets use to practice targeting a safety cone and moving it down the alley. "This a fraction of what we use in a real fire." At 90 pounds of pressure it has quite a kick and a single adult needs a shoulder harness to control the full-strength spray, which can go up to 125 pounds per square inch.

Firefighting is not a business for the weak of heart, or strength. "It is a young man's job," remarks the very fit McCue, who has been doing this for more than two decades.

Fire training for regular firefighters is no cake walk.

"We have the consumption test where you carry a ladder for fifty feet and put it back on the truck. Then you drag a dummy for the length of the course." Sounds tough? Try the next step.

"You have to carry a kit we call the 'High Rise Bundle', a heavy coil of hose four flights up and down and then drag a sled 100 yards," says McCue.

Now most everybody's heard that firefighters eat well. And the Captain has to pitch in with the cooking to fuel all the needed energy when the fire bell rings. This is one area where Michael McCue's Irish heritage comes in handy.

"I make corned beef and cabbage every St. Patrick's Day. Nobody else in the firehouse knows how to make it!"

In addition to working with the Sea Cadets Aurora also has an Explorer program of teens aged 14 to 19 who are interested in the firefighting service and learn the profession after school.

"Ever since I was little I wanted to be a fire fighter. It's a profession where you can help people and protect them."

McCue, who once rescued cap-sized canoers clinging to life near a bridge, has a ready answer for the hardest part of the job. "Dead children," he says with a grimace and a shake of his head. "That 's always the hardest to deal with."

It makes sense then that on this day spent with laughing young sailors in training that McCue is the happiest firefighter in the City of Aurora.

"This time with the kids is the best," he grins with smiling Irish eyes.

E-mail Jim McClure with comments and ideas at IrishRoverJim@aol.com



Aurora Fire Department Capt. Michael McCue teaching Naval Sea Cadets.

WHY SHOULD AMERICANS FUND BRITISH PERSECUTION IN IRELAND?

Americans are now being asked to invest their tax/pension dollars in the British-controlled Northern Ireland, but are we being told the truth of what is going on there?

Some months ago the British government announced that none of its soldiers or police operatives will ever face prosecution for their involvement in the killings of Catholic civilians, either directly or through collusion with Loyalist paramilitaries during the conflict known as "the Troubles." Yet, ten years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement when everyone is being asked to celebrate and "move on," **the British government continues to hound and prosecute Irish republicans for incidents that allegedly occurred decades ago during those same Troubles.**

Last year Tyrone man Gerry McGeough stood as an Independent Republican in the March, 2007 Assembly Elections. As he exited the vote-counting center in Omagh following the poll, McGeough, who is the editor of THE HIBERNIAN magazine, was arrested in a major RUC/PSNI operation with the mass media only yards away. The very public arrest was an act of blatant political intimidation. Gerry (www.freegerry.com) was interrogated and charged with the wounding of a British soldier during the Hunger Strike of 1981. More than a year later, his movements are severely restricted, surveillance terrorizes his family, and no evidence has been presented against him.

While the British government immunizes mass murderers of the Occupied Irish, it continues to harass, frame and imprison Occupied Irish innocents, and the US government continues to treat Pol Brennan (www.polbrennan.com), and other honorable Ex-IRA men as if they had perpetrated heinous crimes like the immunized British. Ditto the "Irish" government re Michael McKevitt (www.michaelmckevitt.com) and others. How does such injustice nurture Peace? Wouldn't any American rebel against it? **Above all, why should any American fund such crime?**

Please ask Sen. Barack Obama, 312-886-3506; Sen. Richard Durbin 312-353-0150; NY City Comptroller Wm. Thompson 212-669-3500, Fax 212-669-2707

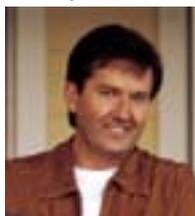
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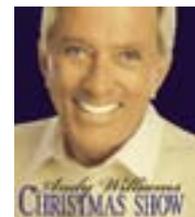
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