

## Humble Introduction

For those of you who appreciate stated dates, or even a proper year, you may be disappointed. On the other hand, you may enjoy the challenge of assessing the time line yourselves from the events recounted below. I was born Paul Patrick Coughlan on January 31, 1967 in the United States of America. I am the only child of Patrick Joseph Coughlan and Monica Theresa Moran Coughlan, Monica the second eldest of the Moran clan. If you enjoy a bit of nostalgia and recall events that you and I have experienced together, or identify emotionally with some of these experiences, then my narrative might provide some entertainment for you. This is my purpose and my hope.

## Two Worlds

My time spent in Ireland as a child was akin to something one would find in a book of fairytales. As trite as that may sound, it was undoubtedly true for me. The most popular stories told today of childhood experiences tend to reflect times of traumatic cruelty and adolescent hardships for those who eventually grow up with emotional scars, which explain their mental challenges and irrational behaviors. For any of my own irrational acts of behavior, and there are many, I cannot blame them on my childhood years in Ireland--unless of course you want to take being spoiled a bit into account. Okay, maybe I was spoiled more than a bit.

As I was growing up in New York, I often heard friends and acquaintances reflecting on their childhood summers, elaborating on their great moments of adolescent explorations and self-discoveries at summer camp. Summer camp was the seasonal escape to the nearest country area with a lake for most urban youth. Against my usual character, I would be quiet during these excited exchanges of similar stories of first kisses, first fights, first of most encounters that occurred outside a classroom, away from the concrete environment. Eventually my silence would be noticed and I would be asked if I ever went to summer camp. Feeling slightly insecure, I'd answer "No, never once." As always, someone would say with a condescending tone, "Really?" That tone made me drop my insecurity and with a forced modest smile I would say, "No, I always went to Ireland." I never played a decent game of poker in my life, but with that answer I always knew how it felt to win a big pot with a good hand.

To date, I have traveled to Ireland a total of eighteen times. Most of those times were in the summers of my childhood. My very first year of school was in Ireland and, luckily for me, it was a grand experience. I went to Gortnaloher and was treated special by the other students because I was from "America." One might expect to hear stories of being treated negatively as an outsider. It was not true here. The other students were kind, inquisitive and cheerful. That year in school in Ireland was far more delightful than any years I spent in Catholic schools in Queens, New York. In retrospect, I wish I had spent many more school years in Ireland. I believe I would have built better confidence as a child both academically and athletically, each of which I lacked in achieving my full potential as a student in New York. I always felt like an outsider going to

school in Sunnyside, Queens. (Yes, the neighborhood is actually called Sunnyside.) I never felt like an outsider in Ireland. What made the difference was that in Sunnyside I was just another white Catholic school kid. In Cloone, County Leitrim, I was a Moran.

### Matriarch, Patriarch, Kevin and the Locals

There were many days and even weeks when I was alone with my Grandparents Ann and Peter Moran. I never became utterly bored or discontented as a four or five year old left alone with the two elderly folks. I honestly can't recall ever having a true argument or holding any resentment of any kind against them. How fortunate I was. These two people were actually my friends, my "buddies" even. They had a farm where I could run around and explore all summer long. When I was in the house I would have long chats with Grandma as she performed her endless chores, one of them being the baking of her famous brown bread. I couldn't help much as a child, but apparently my company was grand enough for Grandma. I had a habit, as most children do, of saying what was on my mind, but delivering it in an awkward manner. I once said to Grandma, "When I grow up to be a Mammy, I'm going to bake brown bread just like you." With such comments Anne would stand back from her task, hold her stomach, look up into the air and let out a long, soft cackle. Then she would grab me and tell me I was the best little child. I was delighted, yet baffled, that she was so entertained by my childhood pronouncements.

Time with Grandpa was spent "out in the shed" gathering and cutting wood. He taught me how to "draw" the saw upon the wood and let the saw do the work. When his concentration was at its peak, his long tongue would stick out and tuck to the side of his mouth. A trait I now carry when I'm working on something diligently with my hands. It's something I rarely realized unless told so by someone who may be watching me. When I'd catch myself with my tongue out, I knew I was getting things done and doing it well. I might even say a little hello to Grandpa.

Small excitements of the day included visits from Comiskey, the short mailman in his little orange mail wagon who was always smiling, or a visit from Sonny Mitchell, the tall neighbor who lived up the lane. He would stop in for a cup of tea and would always have a Crunchie bar for me. Occasionally, when he was seated on the couch he would reach down and touch the floor and say that that floor was going to eventually rise one day. I'd always look at Grandpa for a reaction to this wild prediction, but I never once got one. Grandpa seemed to always let that one go.

At night, Grandpa would be seated next to the warm stove reading the news paper. Eventually he would put the paper down and place his elbows on his knees and hold his head held between hands, shaking slightly from a mild condition of Parkinson's. Sometimes Grandma would mention my name "Paul" while speaking to me and Grandpa would say out loud, "The midnight ride of Paul Revere. Do you know about the midnight ride of Paul Revere?" Grandma would role her eyes and I would give a summary of the famous rebel of the Revolutionary War. Grandpa would then say, "Heh, ya boy ya, that buck knows his history."

For some reason, unknown to me or anyone else, I gained an allergic reaction to tomatoes in Ireland. The result was hives, small red bumps similar to a rash, that were fairly itchy and lasted no longer than twenty-four hours. One day, Michael Reynolds (aka Ample Time) was visiting. To my complete surprise, he noticed the hives on my hand. Considering the condition of his challenged eyes, I never guessed the man would notice something of such minor significance. I explained to him that there was something in the tomatoes that my body didn't want in it and that it would get rid of it by carrying it through the blood and releasing it through the skin. My Grandfather practically shouted from the corner of the stove, declaring what a bright child I was for explaining the science of a rash. Amp just stared at me and smiled, a very rare sight from everything that I remember about the man. He then declared it his lesson of the day, if I recall his words properly. Grandma smiled, stuck her tongue just out a little at me, and winced her eyes. Something she always did when she was slightly amused.

Part of my trip to school was a quarter mile walk to the main road where I would meet the Mahons, who then made sure I made it to the school bus at the intersection where their grand home stood. Connie the patriarch, his wife Beezy, their son, young Connie and two daughters, whose names escape me, were the most pleasant people anyone could ever meet. Connie always ended a story with, "And that's the whole of it!" A phrase I still use myself at times. Beezy couldn't do enough to make everyone happy. Young Connie was my guide to and from the bus. As much as I felt I might be an inconvenience to them, they always seemed delighted to take care of me in any way that they could.

On the walk home from school I would sometimes bump into Packy Reynolds. Here was a man who had very little means to go by. Yet on his pan shaped face, upon a large head donned with a cap, rested what seemed to be an endless smile with large lips that went from ear to ear. It was a genuine, pure smile. After a few inquiries about my Grandparents he would reach into his pocket and offer me a tuppence. Except for the very first time, he would always come up short and say that he left it in his other pants. I was actually relieved that he didn't have it, for I felt guilty taking money from the man. The innocence of such a soul would make Henry David Thoreau proud. Living and working in New York City, I both witness and participate in the rat race to get ahead by all means. In a city that represents the so-called greatest advancements of mankind, I have yet to meet anyone that was as happy or content as these simple folks I was so fortunate to meet as a child.

Once I arrived back home to my Grandparents' house, my biggest excitement was to see what Kevin Moran was doing. Being the youngest, Kevin was the last of the clan to leave the nest. He was my first true hero and father figure in Ireland. Kevin was the young man who, through the years, first taught me how to use the simplest hand tools, use a chain saw, and drive a tractor. I still fold my shirts the exact same way he showed me almost forty years ago. It's hard to believe I'm using "forty years ago" in reference to anything concerning myself. Kevin had a charismatic masculinity fused with a charm that came easily to him. Having the looks of a movie star didn't hurt either. Anywhere you went with this guy, somebody knew him. I mean anywhere. Walking through Mohill could be a chore at times with everyone wanting to stop and chat,

especially women. Kevin always gave everyone all the time in the world. Mind you, this was a common occurrence with any Moran, but Kevin took the cake for most stops. In the pubs, there were always loud laughs near or around this man. If there was a real “good one,” Kevin would stand back a bit, lift the head and laugh into the air, exactly like Grandma, except louder, and with a pint in his hand instead of a cup of white flour. He was called “horse” by many of his compatriots. I was always tagging along and was tagged “pony foe” for laughs. Being this man’s nephew, instantly opened up social doors for me which made my teen years spent in Leitrim enormously entertaining.

Back in the early years, the first car around the house was the Morris Minor. I can still recall the smell of the interior. Grandpa always sat in the front seat with his right hand extended to the dashboard on sharp turns. This car was the magic bus for me to see the sites and characters of the parish of Cloone. One of our common visits was to the Hart’s house. Joe Hart was the buddy who showed me whatever Kevin didn’t. Joe kept a cool demeanor, while his brother Michael was always smiling or looking for a good laugh. One of the thrills for folks such as these was to listen to my telling of encounters I had with characters they knew. I was always in awe at how thoroughly entertained they were in hearing my graphic descriptions and antic imitations of characters with whom they were familiar.

## The Younger Morans

Back at the house, another thrill was when the uncles and Aunt Carmel would come for visits. The boys would start wrestling in the kitchen and they always ended up on the poor couch. Grandma would begin shouting with her low voice and Grandpa would give a scowl. Uncle Gerard always seemed to get the best of the boys. He wasn’t as tall as the others, but he seemed to be built bulletproof. Always in exceptional good shape, with sharp, tight fitting clothes, this man would eventually become another father figure. He instilled values in me that would last my entire lifetime. Uncle Louie and Peadar were not around as much then. Their influences would come in my later visits to Ireland. For these boys, discussions of people of interest and social issues were their means of entertainment. Aunt Carmel was the sweetheart of the younger gang. In my earliest visits to Ireland, I would stay at Aunt Carmel’s first home that she had with Peter Gilgunn. I remember Peter (aka The Gunner) making a bed for me on a small couch. Their offspring Sandra and Stephen were my first friends as cousins. Their energy level was incredible. They were willing to participate in any game I could come up with, and add to it as well. Once, as a preteen, I took cinder blocks that were sitting outside the house for sometime and decided to make a mini-house so to speak. The blocks were from something that Gerard was building. Gerard was always building something. I put together what could be called an extremely large dog house with windows that could fit three children sitting down. Later that day, I was lucky enough to get a ride into town. The Gilgunns came visiting in the meantime. I returned from

town to find plants in the windows of my “house” and small bits of rug and furniture set inside by Sandra and Stephen. It made me feel very house proud!

One day, I had a preteen lesson in maturity that I’ll never forget. Sandra, Stephen, a few others, and I were playing hide-go-seek outside around the old house. There was lots of commotion going on inside the house as it was bustling with visitors. I knew Kevin’s Vauxhall’s car trunk could be opened with the twist of a screwdriver. As such, I couldn’t wait to utilize this secret. So on one particular round, I opened up the trunk and jumped in, closing the cover on top of me, thinking that it could easily be opened from the inside. Sandra and Stephen were very bright and they suspected that I was in the trunk even though I never made a sound. Next thing I knew, I heard someone getting in the car and starting it up. I played it cool and went along for the ride. I guessed that it would be Kevin heading into town for a few pints. After a bit of a rough ride, my guess was right. I waited a few minutes after the car was parked and popped out of the trunk. I look around and there I was in front of Creegan’s Pub with Cloone and the day at my disposal. I eventually went into the pub smiling with my cute antics. Kevin was not amused one bit. He shook his head slowly, took a sip of his pint, and gave me a look he never gave me before. I went outside, found some mates to play with, and brushed it off. Late night came and everyone had gone home. Kevin stayed very late. We were the last in town. This wasn’t by coincidence. I was in front of Cunniff’s Pub when Kevin came up in the car. He roared out at me and told me I’d be walking home that night and then drove off without me. I couldn’t believe it. When the car was gone far enough there was a silence in the empty town that was deafening. At eleven years of age, this walk home would be a wakeup call. Fifteen minutes later, a car came up from the other side of town and I figured I would do some explaining to someone and get a ride back to the house. It was Kevin. He drove around the back road just long enough to put the fear in. He pulled up and said, “Get in.” There wasn’t a word said between us the whole ride home. Lesson learned.

The task of picking me up at the airport became Gerard’s duty during my teen trips to the “ol Sod.” I can’t be thankful enough for the many times I would see his smiling face at Dublin airport upon my arrival. Many people had picked me up and I’m grateful to them as well, but Gerard had the highest count by far. Gerard and Margaret lived in Swords, which wasn’t too far from the airport. Their home was my mid-stop before heading down to Leitrim. Their house was on the corner block directly across from a park. In “the States,” as the Irish like to call America, a park is composed of a tar or concrete area for sports such as roller hockey or softball; a swing, slide and monkey-bar area for children; and concrete walls on which to play handball. In Ireland a park is an open field of fresh cut grass. You played with what you brought to it. I looked out the window one day while eating--I was always eating--and spotted a fellow hitting a golf ball in the park. Upon closer inspection, I realized he had a small terrier chasing and retrieving the ball for him. Looking for some entertainment, I went outside and had a chat with him. Upon setting the

ball, the dog would take off to an early run anticipating the direction of the ball coming from behind and sailing past him. I asked if I could take a shot at it and the pleasant man foolishly obliged. I could honestly see hesitancy in the dog's eyes. I set the ball and prepared my swing, for which the dog properly took his early start. I swung hard, connected, and hit the dog right in the ass twenty five yards down the field. Tiger Woods wouldn't have made that shot if he tried. You could hear the dog yelp a mile away. I stood and stared with my jaw dropped as I felt the club being pulled from my hands. "That'll be all for you," was what the man said as I sheepishly walked away.

Margaret and I would chat for hours while Gerard was at work. Margaret was fascinated by how much I could eat. I was constantly hungry and didn't know why. I was always a big eater. Just in case, Margaret got stomach worm medicine for me. I took doses of that and just kept on eating. Thank God the Moran family always did well for themselves and were very generous.

## The Tragedies

With a family so large tragedy is inevitable. Regardless, it still doesn't make tragedy any more logical or any less painful to those who experience it.

I was sitting at the dining room table at home in my mother's apartment in Queens, New York, with my friend Bobby Terzi. I had just cooked a meal for the both of us. Bobby remarked that he was impressed that I properly covered all the major food groups in the prepared meal. I began to inform him that one thing he didn't know about me was...and then the phone rang. This is annoying, I thought to myself. I wasn't expecting a call and everyone knew my mother was in Ireland. If they didn't, I'd have to explain to someone she knew about her whereabouts and entertain them with small chat, as that would be the courteous thing to do. I can still smell the food I prepared that night as I write this. I answered the phone. It was my Aunt Pauline, and she was clearly not herself. The aggravation of hesitancy in explaining what had happened was compounded even more by the voice of my Aunt Peggy in the background telling her not to tell me exactly what had happened. I told Aunt Pauline to do the exact opposite. It was the single worst phone call of my life.

What went through my mind foremost, as I went through this ordeal, were three things. First was a priority which I hope I kept: Don't do or say anything stupid. There were a lot of tasks to be covered and many people to see and to whom I would have to speak. Second was my own feeling of guilt that I didn't do more or enough for my Grandmother when she was in my company. There were times when she stayed with my mother and me in New York. Mom would be at work and that would leave me at home with Grandma. I wanted to go and do things that young teens do, not sit home with Grandma in an environment that had nothing to offer her. Television doesn't work its magic on the likes of a farmer's wife who raised twelve children the way it does on most elderly folks in America. Sometimes selfishness took the better of me and I would go out anyway. Need I explain the pain that these simple thoughts brought to me? Third, I thought Monica Moran Coughlan was the toughest person I was to ever know in the world after I

had seen her for the first time since the accident. I couldn't believe I was the son of this person and that maybe there was a chance that I would have some of that essential, spiritual strength handed down to me through our bloodline. I have seen powerful people buckle and wilt in public in the face of lesser adversities many times. All of them were men, and none of them had witnessed the loss of their mother within inches of their reach. For my mother, the release of pain and sadness was something that wasn't to be witnessed by anyone. It was to be borne alone in solitude. Irish pride? I think, some would say that's part of it. But I believe it was mostly out of respect for others, so as not to trouble them with hearing someone else's sorrows.

Through all the years certain memories remain stronger than others, not through choice. Memories tend to choose their own strengths without one's own consent. Of all the faces, it was my Uncle Gerard's I remember the most after seeing him for the first time since the accident. Everyone's faces were distorted, but his affected me more so than anyone's. I can't explain why. I don't even remember what room it was in.

When circling my Grandmother's coffin inside the mortuary, I had to struggle between being masculine and proud, or succumbing to guilt and sorrow, and expressing my pain through tears. I observed the two eldest men of the clan, Uncle Paric and Uncle Vincent who both held tight and decided to take their cue and remain stoic. Uncle Louie gave a slight buckle from his throat and I nearly lost it, but I distracted myself somehow and held back. I was afraid of being thought of as cold but I knew that, if I let a tear drop, a flood would follow.

At one point I was in a car outside the old house with the three sisters. Aunt Peggy pointed out a lone magpie up in the trees and said, "Look, one for sorrow." I quietly stared at it for a moment until it flew away.

We were all preparing for the funeral and Peadar said to remember to take off all hand rings before the ceremony. With that, there were thankful replies in agreement. I didn't understand what all the fuss was about. Yeah, I thought, I'll be shaking hands more than usual, so what? Cut to the end of the mass and after the first ten or so people came around to shake hands and say, "Sorry for your troubles," I took a peak around and realized half of Leitrim was to shake my hand and tell me the exact same thing with very little alteration of the four words. This strange experience wasn't customary in the U.S. and wasn't fully explained to me beforehand, and it truly put my vow of don't do or say anything stupid to the test. Many people were going by me some of whom I knew and many I didn't, from the cute girl to whom I might have always wanted to speak, to the guy I couldn't stand the sight of. All these impressions came rushing in, but seemed meaningless as we looked each other in the eyes with sincerity, trying to respect the solemn moment at hand.

I didn't go "home" to Ireland for Grandpa's funeral. This was a dark time for the family. My mother was broken hearted when she came back to America. Grandpa didn't pass away as the man we both remembered and he wasn't in his own home where he would have liked to have been. Modern times bring on decisions that contradict the wishes of our elderly. How often do you hear people saying that someone died just the way they wanted?

Regardless, both of my Grandparents will be remembered for their lives and not for their deaths. And what lives did they lead. They raised twelve children in one of the most rural parts of a nation that was forcibly kept out of the industrial revolution and had little to offer other than good soil and moist weather. They never heard the word retirement. They now have working family roots in three continents. They may have complained about someone's ignorance or the uncooperative weather, but they never whined. Then again, when I expressed this notion to a Moran, I was told, "Who would listen?" An answer Peter and Anne Moran would appreciate. Whatever one can say about them, they exuded one trait that a king can't buy and a beggar can't borrow, and that is class. When I complain at times to myself, I think of their accomplishments and it straightens my back.

### Taken Too Soon

I don't remember exactly how old I was other than definitely being a pre-teen when Aunt Carmel showed me the picture of her baby boy that passed away not long after his birth. It may be the first time I thought of the meanness of a God. The black and white photo is still clear in my mind.

How often do you hear people exclaim how truly wonderful someone was and how tragic it is that they died at such a young age? It's sadder still, when this person is so giving and caring of others and when they fully appreciate everything around them. They were always laughing and smiling and had the ability to bring out the same in others they knew. You've heard it countless times in person and quite often in the news. It's a cliché until you actually experience such a person and such a loss. The person I described above was truly that and her name was Annemarie Flynn the daughter of my Aunt Pauline and Tom Flynn.

She had the greatest giggle you ever heard. It was sincere and infectious. Annemarie, her brother Tommy (Young Tom as the clan likes to call him), Annemarie's friend Linda and I were all taking a walk along the Cloone road one summer's eve when Annemarie pointed in the sky and observed the sun beaming through a cloud formation in a way that one could actually see the rays of the sun. Annemarie said, "Look, it looks as though God is talking to us." From that time on, whenever I see such a rare site, most often in dramatic movies, I always think of Annemarie. At her funeral, it was the final moment before lowering the casket that I felt an urge to touch it just once. But then I thought it might be inappropriate at such a delicate moment so I refrained. It was time for everyone to leave and as we headed off I looked back and saw Tommy reach out and touch the casket himself. I couldn't believe my eyes. It was such a relief to see him do that and much more appropriate that he was the one to do it. Thank you, Tommy.

Gerard, Margaret and their three kids Karen, Gerard and Linda were living in Cloone while construction was underway for the new house being built over at Keeldra Lake. One day, young Gerard and I were kicking a soccer ball around just a few doors up from Creegan's Pub. Gerard was around five years of age, which made me around nineteen. To my surprise, Gerard didn't know how to drop kick a ball. I decided I was going to teach the lad this simple act. This

was ironic considering I never had much interest in “Gaelic” football and Gerard senior had won awards for furthest kick while playing for Cloone. Regardless, it didn’t require much talent to teach a child to drop kick a ball and young Gerard loved the attention, so the lesson began. I stood twenty or so feet away and gave simple instructions to drop the ball toward the foot, swing away, and make contact. With a bit of luck, some action should take place. It didn’t come easy, but that wasn’t the interesting part. At times Gerard would stop and retie his laces unnecessarily or put the ball under his arm for a moment and ask a silly question. Then suddenly he would go into action. It took me a moment to figure out that he synchronized his pauses whenever anyone would walk by. The young lad was self-conscious. He didn’t want to be seen making a mistake kicking the ball. It reminded me of myself when I was younger. I started to laugh out loud in awe and went over and gave him a bit of a hug and shook the top of his head. He giggled and said, “What’s wrong with you?” The strong Cloone accent had already taken hold with emphasis on the long “you.” I told him I’d explain it to him one day when he was older. I never got that chance.

That summer visit eventually came to an end and Gerard, with young Gerard in tow, drove me to the airport yet again. As we headed to the departure gate, I turned to give my final goodbyes. Young Gerard hadn’t realized what the trip to the airport was all about. He looked up at me with a frown and said, “Where ya goin?” I said, “I’m going home, Gerard.” He started to cry. This child rarely, if ever, cried in my company before. I was struck by the attachment he had for me. It would be the last time I would ever see him.

I keep his picture mass card open faced in my wallet in place where I should keep my ID visible. The picture is of young Gerard holding his dog Rambo. Working in New York, I have to show my ID quite often to get into ridiculously over secured buildings. More than once as I pick through my wallet for my proper ID, I’ve been asked why I keep a picture of myself when I was younger in the ID slot. One woman said that I must have really loved that dog. The picture always reminds me to appreciate everything good that I have in my life and to try not to waste my good time frivolously.

I never had the great fortune to meet young Kevin Moran, the son of the first live hero I had in my life. I ponder what a man he would have become. His father had taught me so much in such a short time. I wish I had the chance to tell him how much his father meant to me as a child. Once again, I’m humbled and I learn to appreciate what I have and--like my Grandparents Moran--learn not to whine about what I don’t have, but to persevere.

## The Boys In England

I remember one great summer when Uncle Eamon, his lovely wife Julie, and their boys (Peter, young Eamon and Dennis) came for a visit. Imagine the antics of four boys shooting each other with spud guns and running at full speed into haystacks at the bottom of the front meadow. And this was just for starters. The loudest I ever heard Grandpa yell was when he discovered this particular performance.

When I visited with Uncle Eamon's family in Oxford, England, the boys gave me a book, The Wonder Book Of Daring Deeds. It may sound silly, but I treasure this book and will keep it for the rest of my life. It was on that visit that I played cricket for the first and only time in my young life. I can thank Uncle Eamon with his raspy voice and I thank his family for those experiences.

I recall only one summer with Uncle Cahill. I was maybe seven or eight years of age. No one else was visiting at that particular time. Uncle Cahill reminded me of Kevin, but he'd been around a lot more. Grandma was different with Cahill. She seemed more bright eyed than usual in his company. I remember that he built me a wooden toy that I tossed around the yard. I wish I had seen him more often.

One summer when I was a teenager, I saw Derek and Gavin getting shouted at for being rambunctious boys. They were doing something I had only done a few years before. At that moment, it felt like yesterday that their mother Kathleen gave me a toy cowboy belt as a gift when she first started dating Peadar. Time seemed to be in a hurry. It has only gotten faster since.

### The Grateful Fate

I remember one significant day in my pre-teens when just Grandma, Grandpa and I were having supper. Within no time the oily plates that just previously hosted the classic Irish dish of rasher and sausage, boiled spuds, and brown bread are now being washed by Grandma and dried by me. Having read the paper, Grandpa heads out the back door and gives me a cue, "C'mon amach." He grabs his walking stick from the back shed and we're off for a walk down the lane with the endlessly pregnant feline, Mini, dutifully following behind. We meet the Cloone Road, cross it, and go into the meadow on the right. From here you can see the Donnelly's house where Molly and Charlie raised her four daughters Patricia, Margaret, Rita, and Nora. I always thought of Molly as Grandma's best friend. She was very witty and perceptive. Vincent Moran would own that house at one point. He and his wife Linda made me feel at home there, as they always did wherever they lived. In the meadow, Grandpa would sit upon a stump as Mini and I watched him pull long drags from a Player's filterless cigarette. He blatantly looked me up and down. It was a look that I'd never seen before. Grandpa was the stealthiest observer one could ever meet. Off that look, he told me of the time his father removed him from school so that he could work on the family farm where he was much needed. The Schoolmaster told his father that he was making a tragic mistake. Regardless, Peter Moran was to work on the farm as his father had wanted. My grandfather was delighted with his father's decision at the time, but may have truly regretted it later in life. I gathered this by the long silence that followed his telling of the tale. Ne'er a regret the man would have if he were to see how his vast brood has prospered in the world today.

### The Historian

My earliest memories of Uncle Louie, were that he was the toughest uncle to get a ride into town with. Many a time he left me crying outside the house as he walked toward the yellow VW, looking back at me with his left arm up, hand extended and level, saying, "No, amach. No." He looked exactly like Grandpa, but younger and with a straighter back. Jump ahead thirty-five years or more, and I find Louie is a man who understands how important it is for a person to know who they are and where they came from. I agree. For maybe in doing so, it will make you a better person. The poet Tennyson once said: "I am a part of all whom I have met." The Moran clan has certainly been a big part of who I am. Thanks for making all this possible Louie. I think I can forgive you for the some of the tears that were left outside the old house that is no more.