



*Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine. Under the shelter of each other, people survive.*



egaling regally, retelling ruefully, an' relating randomly, this year's Annual Wee Epistle 20 (AWE 20) is about to unfold. Custom encumbers me to recount herein in alliterative allegory the truly epic adventures recently reknowned of Ryan Year 19 lest their effervescence fizzle into mere frivolity at this the dawning of Ryan Year 20 (RY20) but first things first: *Beannachtam na Feile Padraig!* Happy St. Patrick's Day and Happy Ryan New Year! As Long Time AWE Inspired Readers (ALTAIRs) and those about to find out (TATFO) will from heretofore attest, 'tis the time to diminish social distancing via social media to recount yet again the annual comings and goings of the wee wee band of Amer-Irish known from heather and yawn as The Ryans (and at my age please don't say "wee wee" too often). 🇮🇪 As you have by now no doubt been told by AWE-struck glitterati and paparazzi the world over this annual tall telling of



tantalizing tidbits of tempestuous travels, tumultuous traverses, and terrific tiramisus transcends time as since the dawn of our progeny, upon whose innocence lay blame for unrequited Christmas wishes and holiday homilies nary noticed, the blur of babyhood overwhelmed parent, purpose, and protocol during those halcyon holidays of our children's earliest years. To wit: too overwhelmed to profess prophetically fealty and friendship at the appropriate time we resolved to make amends at that most Irish, most libatious and most loquacious time of year, Saint Patrick's Day; hence, the AWE! 🍀 I write this year from my deployed location, an undisclosed site near Washington DC at 801 N. Pitt Street, Alexandria, Virginia to say "thank you very much indeed" for your thoughtfulness at Christmastime and throughout the year and in return

I, nay we, subject you to this. What are friends for? 🇮🇪 Well, 'tis St. Paddy's an All 'n' All so drink up, fill'er up, and lap it up as the happy memory of RY19 cascades marvels and mayhem before your very eyes to amaze and amuse and to start, we say "*Céad Mile Fáilte*" -- "A hundred thousand welcomes" to AWE-someness AWE-fully inflicted upon the solitude of your self-isolation and as we know one can only read the back of the cereal box so many times, you have us to thank for this! 🍀 [I would note here that those playing along at home all year via FaceBook will notice a significant amount of repetition – sorry for that but since every story requires only a minimum 10% truth you may find some entertaining variations TBTG] 🇮🇪 The year began as it ended, at sea! In dentures servitude lecturing mostly to those older than I aboard luxury cruise vessels is, for someone who's greatest joy is the sound of his own voice, a dream assignment, and for his manager (aka wife) it's even better! My birthday present just 3 days removed from Patrick's was a heliborne heil to islands of such beauty one could scarcely take it in but a thousand photos later and I had. Then a dolphin escort to the Bay of Plenty aboard Crystal Symphony with the likes of food and new friend one can nary imagine! Then to Auckland, NZ, an America's Cup Yacht, local wine on an enchanted isle, and an amazing Kiwi zoo. Our Volvo+4 holiday was really a Ship+2 and we were just getting Spring started...scooting in DC, chain sawing around our farm, and the pursuit of cheesable milk colored our home life while we finished our attic redo, afore Michael the Elder (ME) was off to be Godfather to my brother from another mother in Singapore of all places (TBTG)! A great honor, a spiritual blessing, and a wonderful respite before DC again (wait for it!), a few rounds of golf, a little consulting business, and then off to sing for our supper on Crystal Serenity with a layover stop in Munich to train for luxury eating at the Augustiner Keller before arriving Civitavecchia



(Rome) for a two-week odyssey to ports of call such as Portofino (a fine port), Monaco (et le Jardin Exotique), St. Tropez (no tan), Sorrento (where great friends whisked us to Herculaneum), Cannes (during the film festival – no pictures), Marseille (lunch in the Officers Club in the castle of the old port), Ajaccio (boyhood home of Napoleon), and Barcelona (tapas, tapas, tapas)! Then back to Rome for a few days via an AirBnB in Trastevere near Enzo's where we had a most divine lunch out of doors, but the greatest event of our trip was to ascend the Sacred Steps on our knees. Thanks to our good friend we heard that for the first time in hundreds of years the wood covering was removed for restoration so during this brief window pilgrims could ascend the very steps Christ walked up to see Pilate, an ascent that can only be accomplished on one's knees. Given the passion of He who went before it was small sacrifice and one so moving we did it two days in a row! Epic. 🍀 We returned to the ancestral home in time for ME to once again have the honor to deliver hometown remarks for Memorial Day (a singular distinction). Hence began such a summer of merriment and mayhem the likes of which I'll let you imagine but in Gloria's own words "It's all about the food!" when frolicking with Floridastrasse friends (twice mind you), frequenting renaissance fairs, the Seven Springs wine



fest, weddings of wonderful formerly wee ones, Music in the Park, the Golf League (for two!) and topped off by the County Fair! But did I say golf? 🇬🇧 TBTG e' t' the legendary Bruce family formerly of the Scottish highlands & ME enjoyed some midsummer's play on the finest links at the birthplace of golf (I'm not sure the links enjoyed ME mind you, as I would note that the short grass was never in danger). We played both courses at Royal Dornoch, then Castle Stuart, the Jubilee Course at St. Andrews, next Elie Golf Club, and finally Kingsbarns all of which were magical and well above par! Weren't we all dontcha know safe one hole-in-one in our party! (not ME) A few hangover days in Edinburgh then back home to 🍀 Gloria! Gleefully, gracefully, and gorgeously growing grandiose gardens and gargantuan gourds the apple of my eye takes to farm and country life with enthusiasm, charm, charity, and cheerfulness Christmassing to her hearts content, cruising the seas, cooking at church, cleaning 3 households, all while unpacking storage from 2009 to see if we still need it – and we do! Safety Tip: to keep the deer and varmints out of the garden plant it by the road! Now a gym rat she dropped her waist size 27%!!! For a change of pace she went to China for Chinese food only to find, due to the tourist-trap nature of the PRC-sponsored trip that the Chinese food is better in Johnstown, PA! Whole30 is now her diet!



Meanwhile, “The Jeff” and Carissa are proud wannabee parents of a wombat named Comet or it would seem so from the photos of their trip “downundAH” (any instincts kicking in?) The galavanting couple leverage her new job, promotion and telework (when she's not entertaining clients at Celtics and Bruins games) and The Jeff's business travel to log “first-Ryan” status in countries Mom&Dad have yet to visit. The race is on on! Europe (& Oktoberfest – which proves parentage!) and a visit to places we've lived filled in between rock climbing and marathons (Philly & half Maine). The Sacred Family you'll be happy to know now has shelf space in a new “speakeasy” bar area in Cat Tree overlooking their first adult purchase – a wonderful couch (I'm told it's ‘childproof’ – hint??) King Squirrely is no doubt pleased as is LoveCat TBTG! 🇮🇪 Michael Me Boy (MMB) continues to eliminate career options in

true Edisonian style rapidly discovering 1000 things that didn't work for him. In faith and truth he is closing in while gently surrendering the things of youth in favor of the finer things! (Just stay outta the good whiskey if ya can! Sorry, lost me head d'ere). No doubt the 1.99 Masters Degrees will come into play soon as will dat monthly t'ing they call a what? Ah, ah... ah... a paycheck? Thanks Be To God (TBTG in case you were wondering) he's healthy, happy and has a good home from which to explore God's green earth! 🍀



And a good thing too as MMB is now the man about the house as ME failed retirement (for the second time) Guess that's what you get when you ask a friend “Who are you ever gonna get to do that job?” and so Pentagon “life” it is dontcha know, but it's not so bad being the guy who has to work Europe and NATO for the big boss as the travel perks are OK (2x Brussels, London, Paris, Rome, Stuttgart, Ramstein, Munich) and the colleagues are extraordinary, seeing old friends all over is a real treat, and the dinners and receptions are sumptuous (and free! See my Irish is showing). Family and friends came to the swearing in (a bit of '82 reunion at that) and we're making a difference at a key time, but I do miss golf at Chetremon, Altoona Curve games, the Fireman's Jubilee & tractor parade, sleeping in, sitting by our huge fireplace with a great glass of wine (we still have some), sunsets from the upper



porch, the magic of Carrolltown, digging weeds, cutting grass, shoveling snow...hey, wait a minute...Oh, and of course I miss our dear Obi Wan who crossed the Rainbow Bridge too soon 🍀 Well, I don't know about you, but I'm all talked out so must go find a restorative of the triple distilled variety to chase my Guinness on this St. Patrick's day; God Luv Ya and B good! Finally, as is our custom please join us in inviting our Lord to watch over our coalition troops as they go into battle today, to give comfort and strength for the battles they will fight inside, and to shine your face upon the families at home who both hope and mourn in equal measure.



**Godspeed one and all 'n' all!** Mike, Gloria, Carissa & Michael Ryan et ux (that's you Jeff)

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