

IN FRIENDSHIP, Unity and Christian Charity



GENERAL MEAGHER'S DISPATCHES

<http://www.aohfredericksburg.org/>

October 2016

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President: Andy Link **Chaplain:** Father Jerry Wooton **Vice President:** Dan Mulhern
Financial Secretary: Jeff Banks **Treasurer:** Dick Dowd **Recording Secretary:** Jack Grey
Standing Committee: Vacant **Marshal:** Shawn Lenahan **Sentinel:** Paul O'Brien, **Newsletter Editor:** Bill Halpin (sisconsulting@comcast.net)

Reminder: If you haven't paid your 2016 dues – please do so or risk being removed from the rolls!

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Division Brothers,

Currently, our Past Presidents Bill Halpin, Hugh O'Brien, Jim O'Donnell, and Harry Crisp are canvassing brothers, soliciting nominees for 2017 officer positions. Brothers accepting nomination will be presented at our next monthly meeting in October and voted on at our November Division meeting. Then at our December meeting, those Officers will be installed.

On Saturday, September 10th, on behalf of Meagher Division, Brother David Chichester, his wife Marge, my wife Martha and I attended the 9th Annual Paul Stefan House Foundation Gala fundraiser in Fair Oaks in Fairfax, Virginia. The photo shows the Paul Stefan Foundation CEO, Randy James, acknowledging groups who donated and sponsored this event. Pictured to the right recognizes Meagher Division Brother David Chichester and Meagher Division President Andy Link along with Knights of Columbus Battlefield Council Financial Secretary SK David Case and Mrs. Betty Case. Also in the picture are Knights of Columbus members of Council 8600 in Fairfax.



On Saturday, September 17th our Division hosted the Virginia State Board Ancient Order of Hibernians Quarterly meeting at Holy Cross Academy, Fredericksburg, Virginia. I am very proud to say that six of our Division Brothers made the Major Degree Exemplification or Tower Degree. Please congratulate Brothers Jack Grey, Jeff Everett, Bill Vanderveer, Bob FitzGerald, Dennis O'Leary and John Tracy. I would also like to thank the Brian Boru Exemplification Team, Brothers Hugh O'Brien, Shawn Lenahan and Bill Halpin for their support and participation to make the Tower Degree possible.

Also on September 17, Vice President Dan Mulhern, Financial Secretary Jeff Banks and Aden Banks (Jeff's son) closed out and supported our annual Trip for Two to Ireland raffle drawing at the Oktoberfest sponsored by Adventure Brewing South in Fredericksburg. Turns out the ticket purchased was on Saturday, March 12 at the St. Patrick's Day Parade at Blue and Gray Brewery.

Please continue to pray for our sick and convalescing Brothers, our families and our parish friends.

In Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity

Richard Andrew Link, II

President

From the VAAOH State Meeting on September 17th

- State President Gene Bransfield thanked the Gen. Meagher Division for hosting the meeting at Holy Cross Academy.
- National Director for Ritual, J.J. Kelly announced the AOH Blue Book hasn't been updated since the Baltimore Convention in 2000. It will be edited/updated in the coming year. Brothers with ideas to improve the Blue Book are encouraged to contact Brother Kelly at: Irishknight1@verizon.net
- The Diocese of Richmond will conduct a Walking Rosary dedicated to Our Lady of Hope in Virginia Beach on October 3d. This annual prayer draws thousands of people. St Patrick Division will participate; all Hibernians are encouraged to attend.
- The disappointing turnout for our Major Degrees was discussed in detail. The State Board finds it unsettling that brothers who pledged their "sacred word and honor" to take the Major Degrees at the earliest opportunity, simply can't find the time to fulfill their promise. One proposal to increase participation was to make the every brother's sponsor responsible his taking the degree at the earliest opportunity. Another suggestion was for divisions to pay dues for Major Degrees recipients if the taken in their first Hibernian year.
- Our Webmaster Pat Shea reported that a virus is infecting Web Press, a service used by some VAAOH divisions and urged division webmasters to update security. Pat is available if help is needed (pshea1128@gmail.com)
- The 2017 VAAOH State Convention will be held in Virginia Beach Resort Hotel in September 2017, exact dates TBD. The hotel is located on the waterfront (Chesapeake Bay) and excellent restaurants are nearby. One of the decision nodes was there is no minimum purchase on food or beverages and meeting room fees waived. Check it out at: (<http://www.virginiabeachresort.com/>). Jim McLaughlin moved that payment of the hotel deposit be authorized. The motion was seconded and passed.
- On October 22d, the Father Mychal Judge Division in Triangle will host Bob Gibson's Big Band. The event includes a live big band playing classic big band era music. The event will have a 40's theme and will honor our many veterans in the area. Music events are the principal fundraiser for the division.
- On September 17, nine VAAOH brothers received the Major Degrees while more than 200 in Northern Virginia Divisions were eligible. Congratulations to those who took the time to receive the degree. Once again, the Brian Boru Degree Team executed the ceremony flawlessly.



Gen. Meagher Division: Jeff Everett, Bob FitzGerald, Jack Grey, Dennis O'Leary, John Tracy, and Bill Vanderveer

Herbert-Cady Division: Kevin McDermott, Mike McEntee, and Jeffrey Petrino,
 Meagher Division Witnesses: State Vice President Bill Halpin (not in photo), Past State President Hugh O'Brien, Past Division Financial Secretary Bill Gilhooly and current Division President Andy Link



“The Celt would forfeit his title to the respect of the civilized world, did he not fight with all his heart and all his soul and all his cunning against the empire which has despoiled him and murdered his kin, now with arms, now with artificial famine. There can be no peace between the two people until either Ireland is a desert or is free. It is war to the knife, and the knife to the hilt. There can be neither truce nor compromise.”

Preserving our local Tradition

Discussed at the September meeting, this concern also appeared in the August and September newsletters.

The Division must prepare for the future.

As the Blue and Gray Brewery fades into AOH history, we need to be proactive in protecting and continuing what has become an annual Irish tradition in the Fredericksburg area – the **St Patrick Day Parade and Irish Festival** that Brother Jeff Fitzpatrick organized for 12 successful years. Now Adventure Brewery owns the facility. Dave McLaughlin contacted the Adventure Brewery and learned they intend to do “something” as a Saint Patrick Day activity, but details are lacking. The problem is we don’t know if the AOH will have a role. Dave suggests the division must act quickly if we are to influence the action. The division has had a prominent role at both the parade and follow-on Irish Fest:

- We led the parade with our Hibernian of the Year in the lead.
- We hung our white “marching banner” behind the bandstand at the fest.
- Our division president was given the microphone to welcome everyone to the “XXth Annual Irish Festival”, introduce the dancers, the band, and promote the Trip for Two raffle.
- We had a high visibility presence to sell Hibernianism and raffle tickets.

Should the Adventure Brewery decide not to support these traditions, we might consider an alternative.

Halfway to St. Patrick Day Celebration

One hundred and twenty guests attended our 5th Annual Halfway to St Patrick Day Celebration. It was another grand success thanks to Lake of the Woods club manager Joey Welsh and her excellent staff. The venue was beautifully decorated and the club staff was amazingly flexible. The dinners and the table service were outstanding in quality, presentation and timeliness.

To commemorate the Centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising each guest received a copy of a locally produced pamphlet “The Long Road to Freedom” and a “highly collectable” AOH pint glass. Our entertainment, an ensemble from the Muggivan School of Irish Dance and the local Irish band, DragonFyre were terrific. Together the band and several world-class Irish dancers put on a really great show. As in past years this was followed by ceili dance lessons for the 50 or so brave souls who ventured onto the dance floor. Ceili dances are a popular form of folk dancing in Ireland a popular form of folk dancing in Ireland.



Our guests learning how to dance Irish!

Irish Heritage



What is an Irish wake all about?

In Ireland, particularly in the 19th century, the rituals involved in preparing and burying the deceased were performed at home in the manner handed down for centuries. Perhaps nowhere else in their culture have the Irish been quite as true to their ancient Celtic inheritance as in their communal customs involving death. The time between death and burial was generally known as the “Wake”. During this time someone needed to be awake with the corpse at all times. Traditionally, this lasted three days – to allow

friends and relatives to gather to mend the hole in their lives caused by the loss of a dear friend (*and to make sure the deceased was really dead*).

The woman of the house would take charge after death occurred. The dead would be washed, dressed and laid out in good clothes. Neighbors and children would be sent to tell the news to the community. They would also be sent to tell the bees and farm animals the deceased may have owned – to ensure the animals would not be upset and leave the farm.

Wakes were a celebration of the timeless cycle of life and death; much more than an aspect of mourning. Food, tobacco and drink were provided and music song and storytelling were expected. The British government tried to suppress many aspects of the Wake, fearing a rebellion might be planned at such a gathering. However those efforts were largely ignored.

Modernization of funeral laws and the mortuary industry have toned down the traditional Wake. However, traces of this tradition still exist wherever the Irish settled.

Click on/copy to your browser and learn more!

<https://www.bing.com/search?q=finnegan+wake+and+clancy+brothers&FORM=EDGEND>

Explore Your Irish Genealogy!

Irish Genealogy is a new website that allows users the opportunity to search a wide range of record sources in their search of their Irish Ancestry. The website is home to the online historic Indexes of Civil Registers (GRO) of Births, Marriages, Civil Partnerships and Deaths and to Church Records of Baptism, Marriage and Burial from a number of countries. More information can be found at <http://www.irishgenealogy.ie/en/>

Another Irish-American Hero

Gustavus Conyngham, USN: The “Dunkirk Pirate” from Donegal

(Edited from a Wild Geese Post by Joe Gannon, Sept 6, 2016)



Navy Art Collection

In 1763 his family immigrated to Philadelphia. His cousin, Redmond Conyngham, had a successful shipping company with fellow Irishman, John Nesbitt. Redmond placed young Gustavus on a ship with Captain Henderson, who found Gustavus to be a natural genius, born to be a life-long seafarer.

By 1775 Gustavus had joined in the revolutionary cause. He was sent to France commanding the brig “Charming Peggy” with orders to return with gun powder and other military items. Conyngham got the supplies loaded, but he’d had the misfortune of having a British ship moored alongside and his activities had been observed. Leaving France, his ship was captured and Conyngham became a British prisoner. However, he and his crew overpowered the British crew and escaped to Holland. For about a year Conyngham was stranded in Europe with no ship.

Benjamin Franklin, the American Minister to France, recruited Gustavus to disrupt British commerce, maritime insurance rates, and British morale while also make them commit warships to protecting their home waters. Franklin issued Conyngham a commission in a Continental Navy. William Hodge, who was working with Franklin, bought a used fishing boat in Dunkirk that they named it “Surprise”. Conyngham mounted ten guns on her and sailed her into international waters immediately hoisted the Continental Navy Jack. He captured two British merchant ships and sailed them to Dunkirk. The French were officially neutral and bound by Treaty of Utrecht (1713) to close its ports to enemies of Great Britain. Conyngham was arrested and held until Franklin arranged his release.

Conyngham obtained a larger cutter he renamed “Revenge” and armed it with fourteen carriage guns and twenty-two swivel guns. The French government allowed him to sail out of Dunkirk after obtaining “promise” that he’d sail directly to the U.S. Conyngham quickly began to decimate British shipping all around England, Scotland and Ireland. He even visited his home in Ireland, brazenly sailing into Broadhaven Bay in Co. Mayo. When he left Ireland he headed to Spain.

Conyngham continued to destroy British shipping. He caused a near panic in British shipping commerce, capturing or destroying as many as sixty ships. Insurance rates for merchant ships soared and many merchants started shipping on foreign vessels, causing massive financial problems for British shipping companies. His work was a tremendous help to the American cause. Money from the sale of the ships and merchandise he had captured was used to purchase arms and equipment for the Continental Army. In addition to disrupting British commerce, he caused the British to assign a large number of warships to protect against him.

He arrived in Martinique in October 1778 and again went to work disrupting British commerce, capturing five more merchant ships. In December he performed an invaluable service when he sailed to warn Admiral Comte d’Estaing’s French fleet that a large British fleet was about attack them, possibly saving them from destruction.

He then sailed to Philadelphia with a load of arms for the cause in February 1779. In Philadelphia he was investigated by the Marine Committee. Given his activities, selling prize ships in foreign ports, etc., he didn’t have much paperwork to back up what he’d been doing. They took Revenge from him and sold it at auction. But it was bought by none other than his cousin’s Conyngham and Nesbitt Company. They gave Gustavus command of the Revenge to sail as a privateer. Up until now he had lived a charmed life at sea, barely avoiding capture numerous times, but in the last years of the war his luck would turn. In April he and his crew were captured by the British off the coast of Delaware.



They locked an iron ring around his neck put fifty pounds of chains on him and put him in a New York harbor prison hulk where they fed him on bread and water for two weeks. Then they paraded him through a jeering loyalist crowd in the city and shipped him off to England, locked in the coal hold of the ship. When the Americans discovered this, they placed a British naval officer in same conditions and informed the British he would be treated exactly as Conyngham was treated. The British then transferred him to Mill Prison in Plymouth.

The British intent was to give a trial and hang him. General Washington informed the British that if Conyngham was executed six Royal Navy officer prisoners would be executed in retaliation.

(18th Century engraving: Conyngham with 5 pistols stuck in his belt)

His life as at sea was legendary and now he would add an exciting prison escape to his adventurous life story. He escaped and was recaptured twice. He was put into a dungeon below the prison that held fifty other American prisoners. This was a miscalculation on their part, for Conyngham now had had a new “crew” and he used it. He organized a tunneling operation that eventually broke through the ground outside the prison walls. On a night in November 1779 they all escaped. Conyngham went to London and contacted Thomas Diggs, a friend of Franklin’s. Diggs got him back to Holland, where he met John Paul Jones, just then arriving from his famous, “I have not yet begun to fight” battle with the HMS Serapis. Jones dropped him off in Spain to travel back to the U.S. on the privateer Tartar.

On March 17, 1780 the Tartar was captured by the British. No doubt they were quite delighted to see they had captured the “Dunkirk Pirate” again. Soon he was back in Mill Prison After about one year he had saved money sent from family and friends and was looking for a weak link among the guards, someone with financial troubles. He found one, bribed him, and escaped.

Conyngham made it back to Europe just as the war was ending. Returning to the U.S., Congress asserted his commission was only “temporary”. This was financially devastating as Captains were being given 1/20 of the value of all prizes they had captured in the war. This was a huge amount in Conyngham’s case as he’d taken thirty-one prizes, more than any other U.S. naval officer. But, he received neither a pension from the government nor the sort of fame of men like John Paul Jones or his fellow Irishman John Barry. Conyngham may have resented this for the rest of his life, but during the War of 1812 he helped raise \$30,000 for the war effort. The Revolutionary War hero, a man who had once terrorized the shipping of Great Britain, who had done so much his country, and suffered so much for it, and gotten back so little, died quietly at home in relative obscurity in Philadelphia on November 27, 1819. He was buried in Saint Peter’s Episcopal Churchyard.

It is irony that almost a century later, naval historian John Barnes bought a John Hancock autograph in a Paris auction and discovered he had Conyngham’s lost commission signed by John Hancock. No statue exists anywhere commemorating Gustavus Conyngham, nor any building or bridge or school. However, during the 20th century, U.S. Navy named three destroyers “USS Conyngham”.

Video: SNA HOF Captain Gustavus Conyngham (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5U8Yvc6WMc>)

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In July 2016 Pope Francis declared “*We are living in a moment of annihilation of man as image of God*”. He recalled Pope emeritus Benedict’s pronouncement: “*It’s the epoch of sin against God, the Creator.*” Pray to Mary Immaculate, Patroness of the United States, for preservation of our religious freedom and for an unambiguous national moral compass. Prayers and votes are critically important in this era of progressive secularism and multiple threats from evil organizations.

Please pray for the repose of the souls of deceased General Meagher Division brothers, especially Ed Cranshaw, Ron Cullen and Larry Pratt all of whom died within a few weeks, and all deceased Hibernians and family members including Gene McKenna’s brother-in-law Richard Mulcahy.

Please pray for the comfort and healing of our Brothers Jeff Fitzpatrick (melanoma), Neil Mulcahy (cancer), Dick Dowd (recovering from cancer), Jim McMorrow (recovering - cancer & knee replacement), Jack Grey (arm & foot Surgery).

Keep in your prayers our family members and friends: Joe Monaghan’s sister-in-law, Donna Maffeo (cancer) and his father Joseph Monaghan Sr. who is caring for his mother and uncle (dementia/Alzheimer’s); Hugh O’Brien’s brother, John O’Brien (recovering from stroke); Rochelle Grey (hip surgery); Bob Doan’s sister-in-law Latisha Horwath (Parkinson’s disease); Barbara McCoy (cancer); Amy Whittaker (cancer), and Andy Link’s mother, Eileen and his father Dick (Eileen’s care giver), Matthew Carroll (Irish Viet Nam Veterans Memorial Project)



Mark Your Calendars!

Multiple Dates: Bingo! Every Thursday and Saturday evening 6:30PM at **St Michael the Archangel High School**, 6301 Campus Drive, Fredericksburg, VA 22407 (540) 548-8748). Bring the family!

Multiple Dates: Roller Derby at **Golden Skate World** (Five Mile Road) -- Family Friendly Fun. For more information, contact Jill Lenahan (Brother Shawn's wife) at 540-295-2464. John Hogan attended the Derby and reports it is terrific family oriented fun!

October 19: Division meeting; presentation of the 2017 Officers slate

November 15: Division meeting; 2017 Officers Election

December TBD (4th?): Annual Family Christmas Party (Date/Location TBD)

December TBD (10 or 11): Wreath presentations at City Dock and Marye's Heights

December 20: Division meeting; installation of 2017 Officers

January 21, 2017: VAAOH State Board Meeting hosted by Colonel Thomas J. Cunningham Division (LO01). Details are TBD



General Meagher Division Attire

In a perfect world every brother would have these articles of clothing:

- For **semi-formal/formal occasions**, the AOH "uniform" is green sport coat, tri-color sash, white shirt, Irish theme tie, black trousers and optional ball cap. These occasions include AOH State and National conventions, Masses, funerals, AOH dinners, parades, and other public events.
- At **informal events** (i.e. Division outings (ball games, picnics, meetings, etc.) the division logo polo or sweatshirts (optional ball cap) are appropriate.

Division Logo Items: The Point of Contact for Division logo polo shirts, sweatshirts and ball caps is Shawn Lenahan (s_lenahan@verizon.net)

Green Jacket: Brothers procure their own green jackets. One source: http://blazerdepot.com/pages/mens_blazer/augustagreenblazer.html. Visit the website; call the 800 number. Tell them you're with AOH and the \$5.00 small order fee can be waived. Kelly green is the color.

AOH Sash: Brothers procure their own sashes. The AOH tri-color sash represents the national colors of Ireland and should be worn over the right shoulder (green closest to neck/collar) crossing to the left hip. Measure from right shoulder to left hip in inches; keep in mind the sash will normally be worn over a jacket, possibly a raincoat/overcoat (and maybe a growing waist line).

Tri-color AOH sashes are available from:

- LAOH Sister Patricia Ankrom. Email Patricia at traceysbydesign@aol.com She produces 7.5ft long sashes costing \$ 40.00 and guarantees satisfaction: if you're not satisfied send it back for a full refund.
- D & E Morrissey (954-426-3514) 1978 S.W. 17th Drive, Deerfield Beach, FL 33442
- Gettysburg Flag: <https://www.gettysburgflag.com/custom/irish-parade-sash#all-variations>