

Jimmy

McGovern

Gone are the days of yore when our Irish catholic parents instilled in the family that school work came first, family dinner at 5:30 sharp, no excuses, curfew was as soon as the street lamps came on, fish on Friday, church on Sunday, viewing "The Quiet Man" on St. Patrick's Day with the entire family and then line-up along 5th Avenue to witness the rosy cheeks, albeit some noses were more pronounced, of the multitude of marchers and band performers on March 17th; rain or shine. However, the most paramount and nourishing virtue was to sit around the kitchen table and listen to the stories of those that came before us, good and bad, but always with an anecdote and always with an Irish brogue. Sadly, times have changed, school work and dinner are intertwined, curfews expanded, menus modified, technology the storyteller and rare is the occasion of the family bonding socially around that kitchen table. But one remains constant, St. Patrick's Day.

Jim McGovern does not take lightly the honor bestowed upon him in wearing the sash of Deputy Grand Marshal for the Rockaway St. Patrick's Day parade. Proudly, he will walk the route but always be thinking about those that came before him. He was born in Yorkville, New York to Francis and Grace McGovern. Jim was one of nine children born in the McGovern household; so now you~ why the kitchen table was the epicenter of his childhood. :Jim McGovern has taken the learned stories of those "after dinner +clks" and brought them back to Ireland where he used the information to reconnect with several families. His hard work and determination along with using ancestry.com as a reference have connected him to the past with better light. He has laid claim to several ancestors surnames (McGovern, Kelly, Dewey, Lent, Begley, Sweeney, Sullivan, Gordon, Kilcullen/Collins, and Mannion) from Killeshandra, co. Cavan, Breierfield, c~y, Castleblakeney, co. Galway, Easky west, co. Sligo just to name a few. Amazingly, he was also able to retrace his mother's family tree to her cousin Naval Admiral George Dewey and peaked as far back as 1638, thirteen years after the Mayflower, her 8th great grandfather Abraham Ryker Von Lent's arrival to the New World.

Jim McGovern has worked for the Department of Sanitation for the past two decades. He has never rested on his laurels and persevered with his education during the days while working at night. His hard work has paid as he has his Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Education from Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, NY. Jim plans on going in pursuit of a PHD in 2017.

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The aforementioned hard work and determination he is known for came in handy during Superstorm Sandy in October of 2012. Jim McGovern not only lived on Rockaway Beach during this tumultuous time, but he also had the honor and epic challenge to lead the NYC Department of Sanitation, as Deputy Chief, to coordinate and haul over 650,000 tons of debris from the streets. He grew to know since 1976 when his family moved permanently to the Rockaways. These very streets that at one time housed Playland amusement park, Martin's corner, Pinky's Fascination, Boggiano's clam bar, The Irish Circle, the massive stretches of bungalows and more recently, the Rockaway Rockies hockey rink. Sorrowfully, they were now filled with cherished mementos, memories and family heirlooms; in some cases handed down from generation to generation but now encapsulated in mounds of sand and debris. "The destruction and its magnitude were overwhelming, especially after seeing the mangled and twisted boards and fences of the hockey rink the storm left in its path." Jim stated, but knew failure was not an option. Jim has always stressed this point for many years, twenty to be exact, while volunteering his free time with the Rockaway Rockies hockey program to his many players during his family's game day speeches. Fail-on. Jim McGovern was one of the cornerstones of the Rockaway Rockies hockey program. For two decades that saw him heighten the program and catapult them to success. Ironically, several of his alumni now were sanitation workers and again under the leadership of Deputy Chief "coach" Jim McGovern but in a different capacity. One such alumni, Brian Fox, had been witness to coach conjure up one of those old speeches during Sandy and said to Jim afterwards, "like old times, we needed that. Thanks". Jim states that seeing the community come together as well as witnessing the remarkable outpouring of support and volunteerism from outside the community was far greater more powerful than the storm itself. He recognized the importance of civic responsibility beyond his immediate community which is why he has given up weeks of vacation to volunteer in the cleanups of Moore, Oklahoma tornados aftermath in 2013, and the cleanups of the Rainelle, West Virginia floods in 2016.

The march on Saturday, March 4, 2017 will be significant for more than one reason, but most notably it will be his deceased Korean War veteran father's 84th birthday, as well as, the two year anniversary of his sister, Christine, passing. Congratulations to all our honorees and thank you to the parade committee.