

PHOTO: KATHARINE GILBERT



IRISH HEROES

Pari Livermore

BY KATHY McGEE BURNS

On October 3, 2020, the Commodore John Barry Arts and Cultural Center will be honoring 100 local women of Irish descent who have contributed in some way to the Irish community of the Delaware Valley. Some 28 organizations will participate with the selections. This is a huge tribute to women and a gift of a remarkable woman, Pari Livermore.

If Pari hadn't been the sponsor of this news-making day, she would have been my first choice. This, my friends, is no ordinary woman.

There are many facets to this beautiful person: She's gracious, generous, thoughtful, charitable, personable, empathetic...Oh and she wouldn't like me saying all these things because she is so humble, but I am in awe of her.

Pari was born in Cincinnati, Ohio to Phyllis Talbot (whose roots are in Glasgow, Scotland) and Edward Caldwell (Whiteabbey, Co. Antrim). She credits her mother for teaching her to be generous with her hands and her heart.

*"Find the Good and Praise it."**

Pari earned a bachelor's degree in fine arts from New York University and a master's degree in English literature, from University of California Berkley. She worked for 26 years for Transworld Airlines (TWA), initially as a flight attendant, then as a supervisor and finally as a director of customer services.

Along this journey, Pari lost her 3-year-old son, Davey, to a brain aneurysm. This dropped her into a deep depression, and she promised God if she survived, she would devote the rest of her life to helping children and others.

*"The best way from being sad is to do for someone else."**

After graduation from Berkeley, she stayed put in San Francisco and decided to be a caterer because she loved to cook but she had no clue how and where to start. So she combined the need to show off her

culinary skills, a charitable event, her promise to God and voila!... the Red and White Ball.

This would benefit the American Heart Association. Pari invited 150 eligible

bachelors and many of her smart, attractive women friends. The women, dressed in red and white, would pay the men \$1.00 a dance. The man who collected the most dollars would be named king of the event. This became an annual affair which lasted for many years.

Many of these men would ask her to fix them up and so she found her niche...matchmaking. In San Francisco, Pari Livermore is known as the Robin Hood of Matchmaking having arranged 307 marriages. In true spirit, Pari has given all her fees, \$5 million dollars so far, to charity.

*"It is in giving that we receive."**

In this case I think she received much more than she gave. She met her husband at the Red and White Ball.

Horatio Putnam Livermore was a member of a large California pioneering family. A graduate of Yale Law School and a confirmed bachelor, he and Pari went on to change the lives of many children of migrant families. During his lifetime he established 11 California State Parks, authored a book, *The Conservation Easement in California*, and was elected state chairman of Republican Party. Put, as he was known, had family roots in West Cork, the town of Glencarriff. His family were Sealys. They had migrated to Pennsylvania, in the Molly Maguire town of Mauch Chunk (now Jim Thorpe).

As a couple, the Livermores established a scholarship program for the Minnie Cannon Elementary School in Middletown, California, which gave scholarships

to children who demonstrated a high level of achievement in, among other things, leadership, science, 4H, music, community service, and girls' athletics. So far 36 families have seen their children graduate from University of California at Berkeley thanks to the scholarship.

*"Always take every honest opportunity to make people feel bigger, better and more important."**

The Livermores later bought a house in Glencarriff. Pari discovered her love for Irish music and dance in the trad bars there. She also joined the Irish Center in San Francisco.

Pari and Put loved Victorian architecture. This brought them to Philadelphia and the lovely town of Wyncote. There, on a winding lane, sits a 3-acre lot with a stunning Victorian home. Built in 1897, by William Cramp, the famous ship builder, it has all the good stuff: turrets, wrap around porch, 12-foot ceilings, beautiful moldings, a chapel, 10 bedrooms, aristocratic furnishings, beautiful collectables, five fireplaces and yes, even a ballroom.

Sadly, Pari lost Put in 2015 when he was 94. She was devoted to him and his memory will always live on with her charities.

"I have been very lucky. I had a front row seat to a really good ride."

Struggling with her sorrow, she researched where she could find Irish dancing in the Philadelphia area and discovered the Irish Center where instructor John Shields and his dancers welcomed her and have taught her set dancing.

One night, there was one seat left at the bar. She quickly grabbed it and there she met John Durning, a lovely Donegal man. As they said in the good old days, they started keeping company. When I went to Pari's house to interview her, she insisted on cooking me an Irish breakfast, deliciously made and beautifully served. John arrived and joined us. He proudly praised her accomplishments.

He said she was on the Jay Leno Show, has been interviewed by Martha Stewart and Katie Couric and for 10 years hosted "Everyday Angels," a cable TV show that focused on the extraordinary work of people dedicated to helping people. She is the author of a book, *How to Marry a Fabulous Man*. Every cent she has made has gone to help someone else.

She has fallen in love with the Irish Center and will use her time and talents to help our Grand Old Lady survive another 100 years.

As I was leaving her house, the Vince Gallagher Sunday Show was on the air and Pari and John were waltzing.

**Every quotation in this story is an adage that Pari Livermore lives by.*