



One For The Road

Our memories of Jackie

Chapter Eight

Back to Curragh

Jackie was thirty-nine at this time, and in 1983 he got the idea to move to Ireland. His mother had died intestate but it had always been an understanding that she was leaving Curragh, the homeplace, to Paddy, who was her eldest son. Paddy lived in Carlow. All the family used to go to Curragh, the house in Glenbeigh, on their holidays, but as the years went by, nobody was claiming ownership to the house.

Paddy did not want the house and neither did Humphrey. All the brothers and sisters signed over their right to the house to Jackie. That was in the late '70s, early '80s. He then decided to renovate Curragh. He put on an extension, modernized it and installed a bathroom and running water. The intention was that it would be a holiday home. By 1982 it was almost complete and at that time, Jackie was looking to move anyway. He had been living in Orchard Grove since

1970 and he had done very well. He felt it was time to move into a different house.

He had spotted a lovely house in London and had put an offer on it. He told the estate agent he was a cash buyer. He gave Margaret strict instructions that if an estate agent rings to say that the offer has been accepted, just say 'thank you very much.' He said, 'I've told them that we're cash buyers and I will get the cash. That's not a problem; I will get the cash.' What Jackie did not know was that Margaret did not want to move and she had no intention of moving. She loved her little house and she just wanted to stay there. Everything was rosy - the kids loved their school and she loved her parish and the community. So when the estate agent rang and told her congratulations, your offer has been accepted, she replied, 'Oh, but we haven't sold our house yet. We haven't even put our house on the market.' Therefore the house was lost and Jackie was livid. Margaret feigned innocence and said, 'But we haven't sold our house, Jackie; we haven't even put it on the market.' In truth she knew that he had everything arranged and had the money sorted.

A few months went by and he found an even nicer house. It was a detached house but it needed a bit of work. It was in a very nice, up-and-coming area with lovely schools nearby. He put an offer in, warning Margaret not to say anything about not being cash buyers. This was all going ahead very well and the only thing to do then was to check that there was room at the local schools for the children.

Margaret didn't even approach the local schools. She really did not want to move house so she told Jackie that the schools were full. That did not put him off though as he felt that the kids could stay in the schools that they were – it would just be a slightly longer drive. Now Margaret dug her heels in and told him she was not moving. She loved Orchard Grove.

Jackie was getting sick of it all. Shortly afterwards they went to Kerry on holiday and they stayed with Jackie's sister, Kitty and her family in Ballinakilla because Curragh was under construction at the time. The old house had been pretty much demolished. Jackie loved the feel of the place and he just thought that if he couldn't move to a new house in England, then he would move to Ireland. Within a couple of months he had made the decision to go; nothing was going to stop him this time.

Everything in Jackie's life was a quick decision, particularly in respect to holidays. They always went to Ireland - Kerry and Donegal - at least twice or three times a year, often after Christmas and nearly every Easter and summer.

Jackie would come home from work at around nine o'clock in the evening and he would walk into the kitchen, his clothes covered in grease and oil and say, 'We're heading for the boat tonight.' Margaret would panic and ring Rose and Liz and everyone would congregate in the house and there would be clothes flying into suitcases.



*On the St Columbus – Easter 1981 on the way to Kerry.
Left to right: Sally, Angela, John, Jackie, Siobhan*

He never could give Margaret more notice because he was self-employed and when the work was there, he worked. However, when he would find out that a site was closing down or there was no work here or a job had finished and there was not another one, he felt it would be a good time to go on holiday. So he would drive past a travel agent and just drop in, buy the tickets, come home and there would be the quick packing of clothes and like a whirlwind they would all be out of the door, into the car and heading for the boat. That would be every single time. None of it was ever organized.

Moving to Kerry was a little bit of a whirlwind, too, because they put the house up for sale and the

house sold before they were ready to move. The house was sold sometime at the end of February/beginning of March and Jackie, Margaret and the kids moved into Humphrey and Liz's house for a few weeks.

They had a big leaving party in the house and they also had a leaving party in a pub.



Left to right: Jerome O'Shea, Jackie, Pat Mullins and Margaret. Their leaving presentation.

They had a bit of a send-off at Orchard Grove too. It was probably their last weekend in the house and in the usual manner the men went to the pub and when they came back, out came the bottle and they joined the ladies for a few drinks. At some point in the evening they decided that if they managed to finish the big bottle of Hennessy brandy, then they would crack the empty bottle against the wall in the dining room.

So Jackie got the bottle first and hit it with a big thud against the wall. Nothing happened to the bottle but a big hole appeared in the wall. Then Pat had a go and the bottle still did not break. When it was Humphrey's turn he decided to throw the bottle against

the wall with all his strength. The bottle bounced off the wall and across the sitting room narrowly missing the television. They gave up then. Their next task was to fix up the wall, as the house had been sold. There were a lot of operations done on the wall - peeling back the paper very carefully and filling the back of it with filler and trying to stick the paper back over it again to cover it up. They managed it.

So they were moving back to Curragh. They had the leaving do in the pub the night before and everybody had drunk a lot of alcohol. Jackie and Humphrey had to be up early in the morning to load up the lorry. The removal lorry had taken all the furniture, but Jackie was bringing back his Scammell, a tipper truck, which he filled up with lengths of steel, a tractor and lots of other bits of machinery - it was full to the hilt. They were partying until half past six in the morning - and Humphrey rang the talking clock to order an early morning call for seven a.m. The operator said, 'Excuse me, sir. You want a call for seven a.m.?' Yes, that's right. 'Sir, it's now six-thirty a.m.' Yes, that's right. They went to sleep and 30 minutes later the phone rang and the two of them were out of bed having had only half an hour's sleep. They spent a couple of hours loading the lorry and then Fred Fitzgerald, who was Humphrey's brother-in-law and a great friend of Jackie's, arrived in the yard. He took one look at the lorry and told the two men to stop what they were doing because they had made a pig's ear of it all. They had it all stacked and packed wrong and it was a dangerous load because they were so hung over they were just throwing things on. They had to take every

single thing off the lorry and start again. Fred orchestrated it all and told them where to put things for a safe trip. So Fred saved the day.

That evening a little convoy hit the road heading for the boat. Jackie drove the lorry. He took off before the rest of the family because the lorry would not go as fast. Humphrey was driving Jackie's little Ford Escort blue van and Margaret was driving the car with the children and Liz. Margaret and Liz took turns to drive because neither of them liked driving on the motorway, so this was a precarious drive for them. One of the children alternated with Humphrey.

It was around a fourteen-hour drive. They all met up on the boat and then arrived one after the other into Glenbeigh and then up to Curragh, on April Fool's Day 1983.

Mag and Dan lived in the house next door to Curragh and when the little convoy arrived, Mag and Dan were the first two to greet and welcome the O'Shea family back to Curragh. Mag and Dan had been living next door when Jackie was a child – they had always been there. Mag had a beautiful dinner prepared and it was a lovely welcome. Jackie had returned to Curragh with his family. It was the beginning of a new chapter in their life.

Jackie settled in straightaway, but Margaret and the children hated it. The children hated it because they had English accents and other children weren't very kind, so it was hard to fit in. The children felt isolated

because although they had never used the public transport in London, they knew it was there and there had been life around and things to do. As young children, they did not actually realize what lay ahead of them and that this would be a fantastic place to live. It was just cold and wet and they all suffered from chilblains, which they had never had in their lives. Margaret did not settle in at all.

Jackie loved it, but it was also a huge adjustment for him because he started to do machine work, excavation work. He had sold up his business in London and sold his house. His friends had said, 'If you don't sell the house, your wife will never settle in Ireland,' and that was actually true. It may not have been a good thing to do financially, but it was probably true, because if they'd still had the house in Orchard Grove Margaret would have gone back, which she admits to this day. It took her a good year to settle in because she missed her sister, as well, who she used to see every day with all the children. It was a big wrench to have been so close all your life and then not to be close. So, she missed the Hardimans most of all, but when they moved to Galway in the summer of '83, that made it all better.

Jackie brought back a digger, a Poclain 60 and an ERF low loader. He was doing excavation work, clearing sites, digging foundations, digging drains for those who were reclaiming land but the main purpose of the digger was to reclaim his own land in Lettir. He spent a lot of time doing that whenever it was quiet. He became busy very quickly, so much so that he bought a

second digger. Another John O'Shea, a man who lived just up the road in Droum, who had also moved back to Kerry from England, started driving the second digger for him. John O' Shea worked with Jackie for a few years.

Jackie did not really enjoy driving the digger. He was a man who was used to getting up early in the morning and hitting the road and being on the move with different scenery, but nobody liked the fact that he started his machine up at half six in the morning. Yet that was late for him; he was programmed to be up very early in the morning. He would arrive in somebody's farmyard at half past six, start up his machine and start digging up the field, but it was too early even for the farmers. They would come out and say, 'For God's sake, the noise!' So he realized the error of his ways and started going to work later. He used to drop the children off at the school bus pick-up point and carry on to work then. That would have been around seven-thirty or eight o'clock in the morning.