



One For The Road

Our memories of Jackie

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For Jackie's grandchildren.

*You never had a chance to get to know your Grandad, which
is such a shame as he was quite a character.*

*Hopefully our memories of him will help you
to know him better.*

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Chapter One

Family Ties

Jackie's grandparents on his mother's side were Patrick Foley and Margaret Foley. (Foley was also Margaret's maiden name). They both came from Glencar and they were born in the late 1870s or 1880s. They were probably married in the 1890s.

They settled in a place called Canknoogheda which is near Cloon Lake in Glencar and they had a small farm, which they lived off. It was a quaint little stone whitewashed cottage, with low windows near to the ground and a slate floor. On entering, you would walk straight into the kitchen, which served as both the living room and kitchen. There was a door to the right of the fireplace which was a bedroom and also a door at the other end of the room which led to another bedroom. It was like that in recent years and probably had not changed much since it was built around the 1860's.

Glencar is a mountainous and remote area. It is rugged but beautiful. Life would have been hard up there. There were very few facilities nearby and the nearest shop and pub was about five miles away from their house, as was the Church. The area is about fifteen miles from Killorglin, which is the nearest town.

Patrick and Margaret had seven children: Humphrey, Tade, John, Cathy, Peg, Sheila and Hannah. Hannah was Jackie's mother and she was born in 1908. Jackie's aunts, Sheila and Peg, both married local men and stayed in Glencar to raise their families. His uncles never married. John lived in London for a while and then returned to live in Killarney whereas Humphrey and Tade stayed in Canknoogheda.



Margaret Foley (left) and her sister Kate O'Shea

Hannah went to England when she was in her early twenties – sometime in the late 1920's or early 30's. John and Tade often went to England to work in the fields at harvest time. Quite often people would travel across to England and be employed to pull beet during the harvest season. Once that was done they would

return to Ireland again having made some money.

The house had hardly changed by the time Humphrey and Tade died in the late 1990s. The major change was the introduction of electricity but that did not change their everyday life very much. They still depended on the large open fire for warmth and they always had a kettle swinging off the crane over the fire.

On Jackie's father's side, his great-great-grandparents were John O'Shea and Mary Murphy and they lived in Reenalagane, Glenbeigh. They were probably small farmers living the simple life that everybody lived in those times. This would be in the 1840's and 50's. They had three children; Patrick, Denis and Johanna.

Patrick O'Shea was Jackie's great-grandfather. He married a girl called Mary-Ellen Burke in 1864 and they too lived in Reenalagane, Glenbeigh. They had four children - John, Mary, Bridget and Ellen. Of those four children, John was Jackie's grandfather, and he was known as Sean Bán, which means 'white hair'. John was born on 28th October 1869 and he died in 1940.

John O'Shea (Sean Bán) married twice. He first married a girl called Mary Fenton and they had two children, Patrick and James. Mary died when the children were young and following her death Sean Bán married a girl called Kate Mulliney and it is believed that she came from Longford. Sean Bán and Kate went on to have two further children, John and Ellen. John was Jackie's father and he was born on the 22nd

November 1912. He was always called Jack and his sister Ellen was known as Nell.

Jack left to go to England around the same time that Hannah Foley from Glencar went to London. It was probable that he went to London to get work, as many people did then and somehow that was where he met Hannah. They were married in July 1937 in Chiswick.

While they were living in London, Hannah received letters from her parents, Patrick and Margaret Foley. They talk about what is going on at home in Glencar and details about the farm. At some point



Jack and Hannah on their wedding day in July 1937

Hannah had written home to her parents to tell them that she had met a man from Glenbeigh and that she was getting married and they had written back wishing her the best of luck saying they were delighted that she had met somebody from the village, from the hometown. Transport and communication was such that they would have been unable to attend the wedding.

... 'We felt very sorry the day ye got married when we weren't able to attend the wedding but we must wait patiently now until Christmas that we all may be happy. Hoping to see you and your two Johns home for Christmas...'

Extract from a letter to Hannah from her parents dated 5th September 1937

The 'two John's' referred to in the letter relate to Hannah's new husband, John O'Shea (Jack) and her brother John who was also living in London at that time.

Judging by the old letters Hannah and Jack made it home quite regularly on holiday. They would try and make it home for Christmas or for Puck Fair – perhaps both. Jack and Hannah had two children while they were in London. First they had Kathleen, born in 1938, who was known as Kitty. Then in 1939 they had Patrick, who was known as Paddy or Patie. There are more letters from Hannah's parents when she lived in England asking her to come home to Ireland to get away from Hitler:



Kitty in her pram in London - 1939

'I am afraid it will go ahead ye better strike for home. I hear there were 400 women and children came into Dublin today.'

Extract from a letter to Hannah from her parents (no date)

It was war time and her parents were concerned for their daughter, her husband and two young children. London was not a very safe place to be because of the bombings and if they stayed any longer Jack would have been conscripted into the army. The war forced them to leave England and return to Kerry.

They were living in Harlesden on a road called Crownhill Road and it is believed that they owned their house. They left London so quickly that all they had time to do was pack two suitcases, pick up their children and head for Euston Station to catch a train to the boat. Hannah often told her children in later years that all she was able to take with her was a holy picture off the wall as she was leaving the house. They walked away from their home and all their possessions and headed for the safety of Kerry. It was around 1940 or 41 and they moved into a house opposite the Glenbeigh Hotel.

The Glenbeigh Hotel is the oldest hotel in the southwest of Ireland. Opposite the hotel there are four houses, all joined together and they lived in the second from the end on the Killorglin side. The house was tiny. There was a slate floor and an open fire with a crane. That room served as the kitchen and the living room. There would have been stairs leading up to the bedroom. This type of house was typically known as a

'one up, one down' house, referring to the fact that there were only two rooms - one of which was upstairs.

Jackie's father got a job in the Glenbeigh Hotel as the Farm Manager, running the big farm that was attached to the hotel. He was not in the hotel itself. He would have tended the crops and the animals. The land around the Glenbeigh Hotel in those days stretched from the Glenbeigh Hotel all the way down to the old train station. There used to be an avenue going from the hotel to the train station, which would be quite a trek, right through to the village. However, today, the only land attached to the Glenbeigh Hotel is the lawn and tennis court. All the rest of the land was sold off and there are houses there now.

Chapter Two

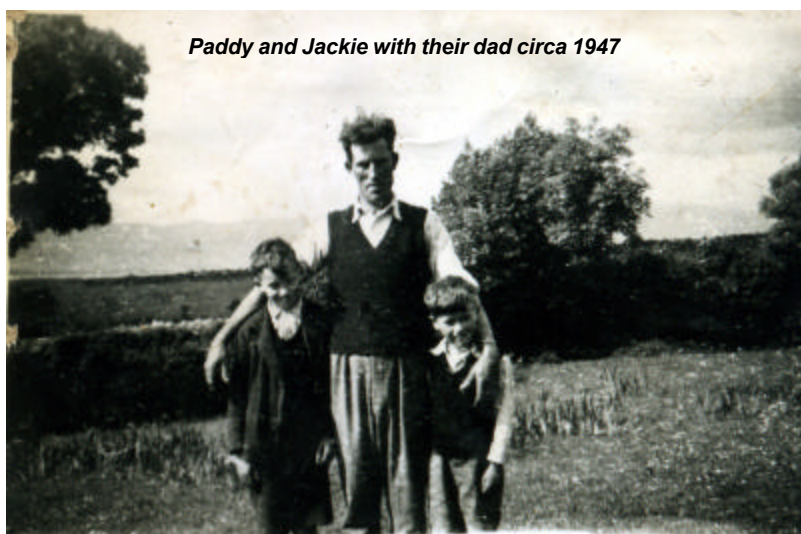
John Francis

Jackie was born in 1942. He was their third child and was christened John Francis but was always called Jackie, just as his father had been christened John but was called Jack. He was born at home.



The O'Shea family circa 1948 – left to right. Paddy, Jackie, their father with Humphrey in his arms, their mother, Margo in front and Kitty.

Margo was born in 1943 in Glencar. She was born on a day that Hannah was visiting her own parents. Whilst there she went into labour and gave birth to Margo. In order for Hannah to get to Glencar in those days she had to walk. That was a long walk and it probably took her the best part of a day. Her route would be through the village, up the 'High Road' and over Seefin Mountain via the Barna (which is called 'the windy gap' today). From her house in Glenbeigh to her parents' house in Glencar would easily be a 15 mile trek – perhaps more and a lot of that would have been 'across country'.



Paddy and Jackie with their dad circa 1947

In 1946, Humphrey was born, again at home and then in 1950, Joan was born. She was the only one born in hospital. So, there were six children and two adults living in a one-bedroom house, which would have been very cozy, but that was how life was then.

Life was hard. They weren't well off by any means, but Jackie always said they felt that they were because everyone was in the same boat. They grew up with nothing, but in a way they had everything at the same time. That was the feeling he always had. He was close to his parents and they were a nice family. They had fun as children, but it was simple fun. Margo used to recall how Jackie would bite her as a child if he could not get his own way or if there was an argument!

When Jackie was very young - about four years of age - he went to Glencar for his summer holiday with his big sister Kitty. She would have been about eight at the time. He loved it so much that he went every year of his childhood and he spent his summers in Glencar making hay with his grandparents and uncles and jobbing around on the farm. His grandmother was there for much of his youth and he absolutely loved Glencar. He was always very close to his mother's side of the family.



Jackie at the Glenbeigh Hotel.

When Jackie was around ten, he started working in the Glenbeigh Hotel across the road from his homeplace. All of the family worked there at

one time or another. The house they lived in was rented from the Glenbeigh Hotel. Jackie's mother also worked

at the Hotel; she was the laundrywoman, which was tough in those days. The kids would get little jobs to do in the hotel, perhaps cutting grass or weeding - nothing too hard or taxing. They never went hungry; they were all well fed by the hotel. A lot of other people at that time may not have been so lucky.

As the children got older they got more work to do. By the time Jackie was twelve, one of his jobs at the hotel was washing up in the pantry. He would be washing forks and cups and saucers and anything else that needed washing. The woman who owned the hotel was very, very strict. It was a very successful hotel, so she would have had to be. They would hear her coming, *clip, clip, clip* and she would saunter into the pantry. Out of the hundred or so forks that they had washed she would pick one up at random and inspect it. If there was any speck of anything on that fork, she would tip every fork back into the water again and make them wash and dry them all again. The cutlery the hotel used had to be polished; so it was not just a quick wash and dry. Jackie used to hate that.

One day they were quite vexed with her for some reason or other. The pantry had a hard polished floor, like marble and the floor had a slight slope leading to the wash-up area. They decided to smear the slope with butter. They continued washing the dishes and in came the owner of the hotel, marching through the kitchen barking orders at everyone and then there was a big *Crash!* She had slipped on the buttery slope and went upside down. They were absolutely delighted. They never owned up to it, of course. They

would have been slaughtered. But that was their little revenge and as kids, that seemed to solve everything for them. No doubt the next day she still tossed the cutlery back into the water.

Jackie was quite mischievous but in a nice way, a fun way. He would not have been at all spiteful. He was not like that. Of course, like all kids, anything they were told not to do, they would have to do because that was the thrill. There was an orchard at the hotel with about 20 or 30 apple trees in it, and there was one particular tree that produced lovely apples. The owner of the hotel pointed this tree out to the children warning them not to go near it. He told them that they could take apples off any of the other trees. Well, of course, they went for the forbidden one.

In later years he used to laugh when he remembered the bull that used to be in the orchard. One day they did not realize that the bull was there and they were up the forbidden tree happily stealing the apples. They had to do this quickly because the tree was right by the kitchen and the owner could come out at any moment and catch them. In the height of it all the bull sauntered in to the orchard and lay down to go to sleep at the bottom of the forbidden tree. They were stuck. They did not want to take the chance of climbing down and waking the bull so they had to wait until the bull was ready to stroll out of the orchard again.

There was also a pig at the Glenbeigh Hotel, as well as all sorts of animals. At one point there was an enormous pig and they used to hop up on its back and

gallop around the field on it, even though they were told not to. One day they were having great craic, going around on the pig, riding him like a horse when the pig just collapsed. They all ran, scampered away, thinking they had killed it. They hadn't. The pig just decided that he had had enough and decided to lie down and go to sleep. The pig was up and about again after a while.

Jackie went to Curraheen National School, which is on the Glenbeigh to Killorglin road by Caragh Bridge. It is still there today and is still operating as a school. It is probably the same shape and size as it was when Jackie went there, but the interior has been modernized. The school was about one mile away from his home and he used to walk to school in his bare feet because they did not have shoes. They had shoes for special occasions and perhaps for the winter time but other than that they went barefoot. The roads were not tarred at that time; they were predominantly dirt roads. They did not see this as a hardship at all because it was simply the way it was. They used to look forward to the mild weather so that they could run barefoot.

Jackie loved school and he was quite clever, but he finished school at 14 which in those days was often the case. Most people could not afford to send children to secondary school, although you did not have to pay for secondary school. It was a case of a child going to school or helping on the farm at home or getting a job. However, Jackie's brother, Paddy, went on to secondary school and also went on to college - which was a great achievement coming from their background. His mother and father worked very hard to fund his

education. He went to a boarding school in Limerick. Kitty and Humphrey also continued to secondary school for a while. They attended the Vocational School in Killorglin for a year or two.

In those days there was a train track; a big steam train ran from Cahirciveen to Killarney and they used to play on the train track. They used to place pennies on the rails and then lie down away from the track so that they could watch the train roll over it and the penny would be as flat as a pancake.

They used to cycle everywhere and as a nine- or ten-year-old Jackie would probably have cycled to school. Everybody cycled in those days. It was the main mode of transport. In spite of that, Jackie's mother never cycled a bike in her life.

When he was about 10, he had a ruptured appendix and was rushed into Tralee Hospital by the local hackney driver, Eileen Foley. He was in a very bad state and he had blood poisoning – septicemia. He spent about six weeks in hospital. By all accounts he absolutely loved it because after sharing a room with six other kids and two adults he had his own little bed in a ward with other people. There was lots of space and he was tended to hand and foot. He just loved it. Towards the end of his stay in hospital, about two weeks before he was discharged, he got a job on the ward. He became the little helper and it was his job to collect everyone's cup and saucer after they had their tea. He used to go around with a trolley and he was in his element. The nurses loved him. Although he was delighted to go

home, part of him missed being in the hospital.

One amazing thing about the time he spent in Tralee Hospital, which is a good 30 miles from Glenbeigh, is that his dad cycled in to visit him several times. That was a long cycle. In today's climate it would take about 40 or 50 minutes to *drive* to Tralee from Glenbeigh and the roads today are in much better condition than they were in those days. His father used to cycle into Tralee to visit him every week in rain, hail or shine. The roads were pretty rough then - they would have been tarred but would still be pretty rickety and of course there were lots of hills he would have had to cycle up. It was a tough cycle on a rickety bike. Bikes in those days did not have suspension or gears.

Jackie often talked about Eileen Foley driving him in and how his father often cycled in to visit him. On one occasion Eileen Foley was driving past Jackie's house and she saw his dad preparing to get on his bicycle. It was a horrible wet day and she stopped to ask where he was going. He told her he was going to visit Jackie in the hospital (on his bike) and she told him to hop in and she would drive him into Tralee on such a wet day. She was a hackney driver – a taxi driver in today's terms - but she would not accept payment. She drove him in free of charge. It was a generous thing to do. His father would not have been able to afford the fare and she would have known that, which makes her gesture even more special.

Jackie always loved stewed tea, really strong tea – in his adult life he always made his tea in a mug with

two teabags. That was from being brought up with a pot of tea on the hearth, which would have been made for a while. One day when he was about ten years old his mum was going out of the house briefly, the last thing she said before she left was, "Don't touch the kettle on the hearth". The kettle would have been hanging off a crane over the open fire. Perhaps she knew the kettle was full and would therefore be too heavy for him. She was only gone a matter of minutes when Jackie decided he wanted a cup of tea, so he went to the fire and got the kettle, but the kettle was too heavy for him. He was trying to pour the water out of the kettle into a mug and it spilled onto his foot, so he just ran away clutching his sore foot. He did not tell anyone, but three days later he was hobbling around, his mum asked what was wrong with his foot. He did not want to tell her but she investigated and found that his sock was stuck to the top of his foot. When he had scalded himself he had just run away. He had not taken his sock off or soaked his foot in cold water. Of course he had to admit that he had tried to use the kettle but he got a lot of tender loving care from his mother and his foot healed in no time.

His mother was lovely. She was a born mother - very loving, cuddly, affectionate and tactile. She always had time for hugs and kisses. Years later when he was in England she often sent letters and photos to him but there was one particular photo and message on the back that summed them up as a family. It was a photograph taken at Christmas and on the back she had written, "We hadn't much, but sure we were happy." That message summed up their life and her attitude. That

was what it was all about. She was a very loving mother to all of her children: a very caring person.

Here is a photograph of Jackie taken at Kitty's Communion around 1944. He was about two or three. This photo shows that he had fair hair when he was young, whereas when he got older, he went dark brown and eventually black.



Jackie, Kitty, Paddy and Margo circa 1944

The photo on the next page was taken when Jackie was about seven or eight. It looks like he has just run into the frame and stood still for the photograph

and probably raced off again. His shirt is quite ragged – he was not wearing his Sunday best. These would have been his typical everyday clothes.



You will also notice in the photograph that his front tooth is chipped.

Johnny Moriarty was a great friend of the family and oftentimes Johnny would be cycling up to their house to visit and if one of the children happened to be outside as he approached Johnny would cycle straight toward them and swerve at the last minute just missing them. Johnny always did this and the children loved it.

One day Paddy decided to do this to Jackie. He cycled straight up to Jackie but instead of swerving to avoid him Paddy kept going presumably thinking that Jackie would move. No doubt Jackie thought that Paddy would swerve at the last minute but he didn't.

The end result was the chipped tooth. Jackie had that chipped tooth for years and only had it fixed sometime after moving to London.



Circa 1948 opposite the Glenbeigh Hotel. Johnny Moriarty the man seated in the middle. To his left are Margo and Paddy and to his right are Jackie, Kitty and Humphrey.

Religion was very important as a child. They were brought up in a religious environment and in the 1940' and '50s, even up to the '70s, religion was a huge thing. They were brought up as Catholics and went to mass and did their bit. Jackie was an altar boy at some stage. The priest was somebody to be revered. People were poor and although they did not have much, they had their faith. They all had a strong faith. He was brought up with receiving Communion and doing the Stations of the Cross. And the Missions were a big thing.

A 'Mission' is when a collection of priests, or missionaries, travel around different areas and come to your village for a week or so. There are masses and confessions and years ago the priests conducted what was a bit like a witch hunt. They would find out from the confession box that such-a-person was up to no

good and they would not stop until they got this person and tried to turn him or her around. The priests were very strict in those days. The children used to love it when the Missions came to Glenbeigh because it was the closest thing to a festival. It would be different now.

Chapter Three

Curragh

On the 10th December 1957, when Jackie was fifteen, they moved from the house across the road from the Glenbeigh Hotel to a new house in Curragh. It was a council cottage. Curragh is the area from the Behy Bridge to just past the forest. It's a small mountain. Kerry County Council built four cottages on that road – two in Curragh and two just over the brow of the hill in an area called Droum.

Four families were re-homed, because their houses were obviously too small for their needs. This was a lovely little cottage, which they would have rented from the Council. It had a window either side of the front door and as you walked in, to the left was the kitchen and to the right was the sitting room. Down the hall to the right was a bedroom and to the left was a second bedroom and just at the back was a little

scullery/pantry. There was no running water or bathroom but that was not unusual in those days – not many people had those facilities then. Out the back were two little outhouses and one of them was a little shed and the other one was a toilet. It was not a flush toilet; it was a toilet with a plank of wood with a hole in it and a bucket would fit into the hole. That was the toilet. The toilet paper would be newspaper cut in squares hanging on the wall.

So, they had an 'outside toilet', but that was a great luxury because they never had an outside toilet before - probably a potty and probably no outhouse. They felt like kings because Jackie's parents took the sitting room at the front as their bedroom. The girls had one of the bedrooms and the boys had the other. So suddenly they had all this room and probably did not know what to do with themselves. Kitty would have been a bit older so did not live there for very long. Paddy went off to school in Limerick and Jackie did not live there long either because he went off working on a farm.

Jackie loved to recall how he was the first person to go up to the house at Curragh. He got a bucket of whitewash and a brush and he painted it – inside and out - all by himself and then the family moved in. He was always proud of that – being the first man up to Curragh. He was always very fond of the place. The excitement would have been something else. Imagine moving into a brand new home. However his father was not too pleased about moving up there because he was used to living near to the village –

Curragh was a mile outside the village. Before moving up to Curragh, Jackie's father would finish work in the Glenbeigh Hotel, cross the road to go home, cross the road again to go out for a pint and life was easier when everything was on his doorstep. In a way, it was almost like living in a town and he was used to the hustle and bustle in those days of the horses and carts and the craic going on in Glenbeigh, morning, noon and night. Then suddenly he found himself a mile up the side of a mountain and there was quietness. He could not go home, get changed and come out and have a pint. He would finish his job, go for his pint and then go home. That was a bone of contention, but he got used to it and soon settled into Curragh. No doubt he would have preferred it if the new house had been built nearer the village – that would have been perfect.

They all got used to it and loved it. But they had no running water, even when Jackie's mother died in 1975. Even then there was still the toilet outside (the bucket). You would get water from the well (which was actually a natural spring but was called a well) and it was just over the brow of the hill. The house was built up high off the road and about 20 steps led up to the front door, so it was a pretty steep climb. It was a tough trek to the well to fill your bucket of water – and a lot of water was drawn from that well - every drop of water you needed for washing, cooking, everything. They all took turns to get the water. Whoever was there at the time would be sent for a bucket of water. It was just something that was done. If the bucket was empty, you had to go to the well and get some more, come rain, hail or shine.

One day, Jackie managed to catch a hare and then he caught a rabbit. He must have been very agile as a boy. He was delighted with himself. He decided it would be nice to have pet rabbits so he got a big crate and put the rabbit and the hare into the crate with the intention of letting nature take its course so he would have some baby rabbits. When he went to check on his rabbits a couple of days later all that was left of the rabbit was tufts of fluff. The hare had eaten the rabbit! What Jackie hadn't realized was that they were two different species – up until that point he thought a hare was a male rabbit. He released the hare and all his dreams of pet rabbits disappeared with him. He always enjoyed telling that story.

He used to caddy at Dooks Golf Club for the guests of the Glenbeigh Hotel. Another of his little jobs was to meet guests off the train and carry their luggage to the hotel for them. He would be tipped by the guests. The Glenbeigh Hotel was a very fine hotel in its day. People like Frank Sinatra stayed there. People who stayed there would have been so far removed from the people who lived in Glenbeigh; they would have been very wealthy. The locals would have been in awe of them. He did not really get much for all the portering services he carried out, but he met lots of people and he loved it.

His mother used to get great tips because she was very very good at her job and the guests were always delighted with her quality of work. She was very well-respected because she really took care of their clothes. She used to do their laundry – shirts, etc. -- and

she used to really starch up their collars and everything was pristine and well-ironed. In those days, they had the iron that went on the fire, a big heavy iron and she used to do a great job with it. It would have been tough work. Of course washing the clothes was a big job – there were no washing machines – it was all hand-washed with a washboard. She used to get brilliant tips from the guests, though, so she was well rewarded.

Jackie took after his mother in that way – he was a bit of a perfectionist and he was very particular about anything he did. If he was doing something, it had to be done right. There were no shortcuts. You do it right, or you don't do it at all.

His father would have been the typical father of the household. He would have been pretty strict with the children and possibly with his wife. In those days whatever the man of the house said went and the man was the decision maker. But his parents had a good relationship. His father was not as tactile as his mother so he would not hug and kiss them but he would not dismiss them either. He would talk to them and Jackie was quite close to his father. His mother would have been a lot softer and probably let him get away with anything. From his father he would have picked up a 'firm but fair' attitude.

Jackie got his first big job when he was around fifteen, working as a farm-hand on a big farm between Farranfore and Killarney in a place called Ballyhar. The farmer's name was Tom Groves. He used to cycle out there, which would have been a good 30 miles, so he

lodged on the farm and only cycled home at weekends. He enjoyed working on that farm, but it was very hard work. He did everything from milking cows to helping with the crops. He would herd cows and possibly sheep, make hay, sow potatoes. In those days it took a lot of hands to run a farm. They did not have the machinery and conveniences that exist today. Stones had to be picked in fields – hay had to be turned and saved – turf had to be cut, saved and drawn home. There was always a lot of work to be done.

He did not earn a huge amount of money but he got lodgings as part of his wages. He earned about £20 a month. They slept in the loft of the farmhouse and it was a drafty place. Nobody had heating in those days and very few had electricity. No sooner would they be settled in their beds when they would hear scratching and scurrying around from the mice nesting at the bottom of their mattress. They would just bang their legs on the mattress to quieten the mice and then drift off to sleep. It never occurred to them to run for the hills because they were brought up with land and nature and it did not bother them – they felt the mice were quite clean. The mattress was made of horsehair – pretty lumpy and bumpy and probably not very comfortable.

He was in that job for a good three or four years. He did not go to England until he was about nineteen, so he spent his teenage years working on that farm and going to dances. He went out a lot with his father and in those days, most of the socializing was going to other houses, not bars. There were '*raffles*' and '*gambles*' held

in people's houses and he would go with his father. They might raffle a turkey or a calf and this would attract a lot of people who would buy tickets at maybe a £1 a head or so. Jackie and his father often won a turkey. There were also people's Stations, where once a year a different house in the village or within the parish of Glenbeigh would have a mass said in the house and it was like a party.

They would go to dances at The Emir, which was a big dance hall in Glenbeigh. It was located near the village by the turning for Rossbeigh but is no longer there. It was replaced by townhouses in the late 1990's or early 2000's. It was a huge dance hall in its day. Dances were held on Sunday nights and all the locals



1957 at The Emir Dancehall. Jackie, Kitty and Paddy

would go. There was no alcohol served at these dances – just soft drinks. There was never any drinking in dance halls in those days. They just went to the country dances, never to anything formal. They would have

gone to dances in the other little villages like Castlemaine and around Killorglin. He loved set dancing when he was younger. Set-dancing is an Irish folk dance. It is danced to reels and jigs and you need four couples to complete a set. He was not too fond of set dances in his later years... he felt that they went on too long.



Dancing with Joan Breen at The Emir circa 1958

A funny story about him is that as a teenager he used to sneak into his parents' room and 'borrow' his dad's good shoes and go off set-dancing in them. When he got home after the dance he would sneak the shoes back under his parents' bed thinking they would be none the wiser. Inevitably the day came when the game

was up – his father discovered that the soles were completely worn off his good shoes that he only wore occasionally. It must have puzzled him for a moment, but he was pretty sharp and it did not take him long to work out what had been going on.

Jackie also went to wakes and funerals. Everyone would be waked in their house in those days. He said that everyone would gather and the old people especially would tell stories around the fire and the stories would then turn into ghost stories - but they would tell them in a very credible way. He said that as a young fellow listening to these stories, he found them fascinating and intriguing and it was just so wonderful listening to them....until it was time to go home. Then he would find himself out in the pitch dark on his bike, his heart racing, pedaling like the clappers to get home before any of the 'ghosts' could get him. He said the stories would come to life as soon as he got outside and he was on his own. Of course, sometimes he had to cycle past the graveyard on the way home to Curragh and he used to whistle as he sped past it. He did not believe in all that sort of stuff in later years but as a youngster you believe pretty much anything. He said the way they used to tell the stories, it would put the hair standing on your head.

Jackie enjoyed his youth. He was a great believer in enjoying what you have now. It was not until he got older and made his own way in life and got his own things and his own family that he realized how hard his life had been. He never had that feeling growing up. He was quite protective of his own

children in that he wanted them to have the things that he did not have. For instance he was not very happy about his own children getting summer jobs when they were around fourteen. He could not understand why they wanted to do that at such a young age. He encouraged them to 'enjoy their summer off school' and that they would be working long enough. He wanted children to be children, because he felt that he had worked all his life. So in later life, as a father himself, he went out of his way to try and provide his children with the things that he did not have. His children had a very comfortable upbringing – they grew up thinking he was a millionaire whereas he was nothing of the sort. That was the kind of life he gave them. Nothing was too much, even if it was hard on him.

As a teenager Jackie had lots of girlfriends. He was a very good-looking lad. He did not really believe in monogamy as a young person. He did not believe that when you are sixteen you should go out with just the one person. Life was too short. That doesn't mean he was promiscuous, but just that he would go to a dance with a girl one evening and go to another dance another night with somebody else. He did not see anything wrong with that.

He was quite handy at making things. Throughout his life, he was able to fix practically anything. As a child he made a crucifix out of wood that is still in Curragh. He also made a huge blanket box – a big chest. It is still usable and is in good condition. He made the blanket box in the Emir at carpentry classes. Years ago, produce came in good

packaging and people used to make underclothes, pillowcases and all sorts of things out of flour sacks, which in those days were made out of a material that was almost like silk, a very soft material, not like the coarse hard sacks of today. Other things came in wooden boxes and there would be lots of those boxes around the Glenbeigh Hotel. Jackie made quite a few things out of the boxes that were discarded.

He always loved Christmas. It was always celebrated with decorations and a lovely Christmas dinner. They did not give and receive presents. They would get an orange or an apple for Christmas and they were absolutely thrilled with it. They did not get anything else – no hand-knit clothes or anything. It was the same for birthdays; there were no birthday presents. It just was not done in those days. They enjoyed the festivities though; the whole family would be together.

That was always quite important to him in his life, his family together at Christmas. He spent every Christmas with his family up until he got married and then he had his own family.

There is a photograph taken on Christmas day in 1961. They were all sitting around the table, having dinner. When you actually look at the photograph in detail you can see that the table is set perfectly. There are plates underneath the soup bowls and the cutlery is all laid out the correct way - just perfect. Kitty had returned from America where she had been for a year or so and it was quite a momentous thing for them as a family – being reunited. Jackie had returned from

England for Christmas. This would have been their last Christmas together as the 'O'Shea' family as Kitty got married the following year.



Christmas 1961: Left to right: Jackie, Kitty, Joan, Humphrey, Dad, Mum, Margo – empty seat is where Paddy was sitting as you can see from the photo top right