



NEWSLETTER

Irish Fulbright Alumni Association

Thanksgiving Dinner 2005

The Thanksgiving Dinner this year was held in the University of Limerick in the Millstream Restaurant, on campus. The IFAA is indebted to the college authorities for making such elegant facilities available and to our very active Limerick member, Dr P.J. Smyth, for arranging a really enjoyable evening. Prof. Donal Dineen represented the university and welcomed the members and current US students and scholars in Ireland with a witty yet thoughtful speech.

Praising the Fulbright idea, Prof. Reville stressed that the best way to get to know a country and its people is to live there. He shared some memories of his time in Iowa as a Fulbright scholar and made some entertaining comparisons regarding perceptions of weather on either side of the Atlantic. Although we complain a lot about the weather in Ireland, in fact our climate is very benign. In most parts of the world the weather can kill you if you are not careful.



Above: Thanksgiving in the USA today is, above all, a family occasion, so there was a warm welcome for Prof. Mitch Lerner, Historian, Ohio State University, holder of the Mary Ball Washington Chair in the School of History and Archives, UCD who came with his wife Michelle and children, Camille, Max and Julia.

Below, from Right: Prof. Donal Dineen emphasises a point to Ms Carmel Coyle, Dr. P.J. Smyth, Mrs Margaret Dineen and Prof William Reville.



Left:

The imposing entrance to the Plassey Campus of the University of Limerick

The university was developed to help meet the changing economic and social needs that emerged upon Ireland's accession to the European Union.

It is a dynamic and responsive institution, which has played a pivotal role in the economic development of the Mid-West.

The university has also become a focus for a wide range of artistic activity and is home to some fine collections of Irish Art, to the Irish Chamber Orchestra and the Irish World Music Centre. Education and research are pursued in six constituent colleges; Business, Education, Engineering, Humanities, Informatics & Electronics, and Science.

Total student enrolment in 2002/2003 was 12,722 including 10,578 undergraduate and 2,144 graduate students. Of these 780 were international students.



Pictured at the Thanksgiving Dinner, Above, from left: Prof. William Reville, Dr Siobhán Tiernan, Ms Elizabeth Matthews, Mr Kevin Kelly.

Below from left: Ms Elizabeth Dyer, Mr John O'Loughlin Kennedy, Dr. Anne Leahy, Dr Carol Rasnic and Ms Emily Steinberg.



New Fulbright Awards to encourage Irish Studies

The Fulbright programme in Ireland continues to develop and 2006 could turn out to be a record year. In addition to the traditional annual awards for Irish postgraduate students and postdoctoral scholars the Fulbright Commission has announced a new Irish Studies Programme in US colleges commencing in the 2006-07 academic year.

A *Fulbright Visiting Scholar in Irish Studies* at Stanford University will be funded jointly by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Stanford University. For the 2006-07 academic year, the Scholar will be based in the Department of History. This award supports recent initiatives to promote Irish Studies on the West Coast of the US, including the establishment of the Western Institute of Irish Studies (WIIS - <http://www.wiisonline.org>) and the Scholar will be expected to participate in WIIS activities.

A new award, the *Fulbright Visiting Professor in Irish Studies - (Irish Traditional Music and Dance)* will rotate between New York University and Boston College. For the 2006-07 academic year the award will be in the field of Irish traditional music and will be based at Glucksman Ireland House, NYU. A stipend of €25,000, funded by Culture Ireland, will be available in respect of a five months placement and NYU will provide local accommodation.

There will also be awards for *Irish Language Teaching Assistants*. Twenty nine third level colleges and universities in the United States offer Irish language classes. The colleges are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the ever-growing demand for Irish language classes from students and adults from a cross-section of ethnic background—not just from Irish-Americans.

Continued on Page 2

Dates for your Diary

The Scholars' Dinner will take place in Dublin Castle on Tuesday 30th May.

The Annual General Meeting of the Irish Fulbright Alumni Association is provisionally scheduled for 3rd May 2006.

Please mark these dates in your diary.

Full details will be sent to members by post or e-mail.



Giving Thanks

Thanksgiving Day has been celebrated in America, sporadically since the Pilgrim Fathers instituted it in 1621 at Plymouth, Massachusetts, and on a regular annual basis since Abraham Lincoln, as President, appointed a national day of thanksgiving in 1863, even as the Civil War continued. He set the context in the opening lines of the proclamation:

"The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God."

It has since become the primary family celebration of the United States and it is fitting that we who are Fulbright Alumni should observe the day with our US visitors, as reported on page one. Most of us remember the extraordinary welcome and hospitality with which we were received by the people of America.

But it would not be fitting if we were to confine our thanksgiving to the fourth Thursday of November. We have so much to be thankful for. The international study reported elsewhere in this issue clearly proves that exchange studies have a beneficial effect subsequently on the cultural and economic life of the student's home country. The Directory of Irish Fulbrighters, currently in preparation, will prove that in this respect Ireland has benefited as much as any other. (Please see page 3 about ensuring that *your* details are included.) We are thankful for the genius of Senator Fulbright and for the perseverance of successive US and Irish Governments in pursuing his vision so generously over the past fifty years. We are grateful also to the expert people who have given their time on the selection boards of An Bord Scoilairachtaí Comhalairte and the Fulbright Commission. Every Fulbrighter has at least one reason to be grateful for their perspicacity and judgement in recognising talent and potential!

We must also thank our Sponsor Companies, past and current, whose support has enabled the number of Fulbright grants to grow over the years. Please read the current list on page 4 and remember to express appreciation when you do business with them. If you would like to put something back into the system, consider suggesting that your own company would sponsor a Fulbright scholarship in a relevant discipline. Finally, support the good work by renewing your membership of IFAA or, if not already a member, join today. Paul Donnelly, Hon. Membership Secretary will welcome your call.

Reception for Sponsors and Friends

On Tuesday 13th December the Fulbright Commission hosted a reception for Fulbright alumni, sponsors and friends at 7 Mespil Road, Dublin 4, the elegant 18th Century home of Mr Johnathan S. Benton, Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy and his wife Mrs Anne Simmons-Benton.

The event was very well attended by representatives of the Irish higher education sector, sponsors, alumni and the current US students and scholars.

The Fulbright Commission and the guests are indebted to Mr Benton and his wife for making their beautiful home available for such an enjoyable occasion.

Concert at NCH

The first Members' Meeting of the IFAA in the 2005-6 season was a concert at the National Concert Hall on Friday 21st October. The RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra presented an eclectic programme featuring *Borodin, Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky and Rimsky Korsakov*. The soloist was Pieter Wispelwey, Cello, with William Eddins conducting.

The well attended concert was preceded by a very erudite talk on the music by Ian Fox and was followed, for the Fulbrighters, by drinks and a convivial supper in the bar of the nearby Conrad Hotel.

New Awards *Continued from Page 5*

The Fulbright Commission is responding to this need by establishing a new *Irish Language Teaching Assistants Programme*. Many other countries around the world participate in the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants (FLTA) Programme which aims to strengthen foreign language instruction at colleges and universities throughout the United States.

The Programme also provides FLTA participants with the opportunity to engage in academic study, refine their teaching skills and gain overseas experience.

In the 2006-07 academic year Irish student teachers will participate in the Programme, sharing their knowledge and love of the Irish language with people from diverse ethnic origins in US colleges.

This new programme will be jointly funded by the Irish Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the host US College which will provide participants with housing and the opportunity to enroll on courses in the college.

Staying in Touch (1)

Joerg Wolf, from Germany (Fulbright, Johns Hopkins, 1999-2000) has contacted us to introduce alumni to the Atlantic Review, a free news digest related to US foreign policy, transatlantic relations, and other topics of interest to Fulbright Grantees and Alumni. The Atlantic Review is available online at: <http://AtlanticReview.org>. It has been circulated to German Fulbright Alumni twice monthly since July 2003.

The Atlantic Review is sponsored by the German Fulbright Alumni Association and edited by Joerg and two other German Alumni of the Fulbright Program: Sonja Bonin, and Joerg Geier. They summarise interesting press articles from respected sources across the globe in which various points of view are represented.

Mr. Jason Haserodt from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State is among those who recommend the project: "Anyone interested in a fresh, thoughtful, and in-depth look into transatlantic relations will find the Atlantic Review an indispensable source for comprehensive, well-balanced news." His review can be accessed at: https://alumni.state.gov/?fuseaction=news.view&news_id=2616

Joerg says they strive for critical, but fair and multifaceted coverage of US policies and aim to contribute towards mutual understanding in the spirit of the Fulbright Programme. In pursuit of this goal, they invite all Fulbrighters to recommend news articles for discussion in the Atlantic Review.

Joerg's e-mail is: wolf@fulbrightweb.org

Staying in Touch (2)

Effective 31 January 2006, the US Department of State has discontinued the website www.speakout.state.gov where alumni of Fulbright and other programmes could tell of their exchange experiences.

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is still very interested, however, in hearing the impressions of exchange alumni and such comments can still be made via another site: www.alumni.state.gov. This site allows participants to stay in touch with their contacts and host families. It also offers:

- Calendar of future events worldwide
- Searchable database of 17,000 Alumni
- Free access through database & eLibrary to 3000 full text academic Journals
- magazines, newspapers & other media.

A site well worth a visit by any Fulbrighter:
www.alumni.state.gov



To Care for the Earth

Fulbrighter gives Challenging Inaugural Lecture

Thomas Bolger, Professor of Zoology and Head of the UCD School of Biology and Environmental Science delivered his Inaugural Lecture on 13th October last. His subject was the *Management of Biodiversity*.

Professor Bolger is currently the Hon Secretary of the IFAA and was a Fulbright Scholar in 1997 at the Institute of Ecology, University of Georgia, examining the relationship between biodiversity and ecosystem function.

He defined biodiversity as the variation that exists in nature. It extends from genes to ecosystems and it is generally believed that variation at every level in this biological hierarchy has its own importance. However, it is now realized that as much as 50% of this diversity will be lost in the next century as a direct result of human activities such as changing land uses and impacts on climate and nitrogen inputs to biological systems. Prof. Bolger asked the question, does this loss of biodiversity make any difference to anybody?

The answers of course depend on the value systems used. This was illustrated using two starkly contrasting value systems. The famous American writer, Aldo Leopold wrote that *'The last word in ignorance is the man who says of an animal or plant: "What good is it?"if the biota, in the course of aeons, have built something that we like but we do not understand, then who but a fool would discard seemingly useless parts? To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering.'* This was contrasted with the, often cited, statement from Bertie Aherne who said that *'A variety of factors have created extremely costly delays. These include, as I have stated, swans, snails and people hanging out of trees, because the delays they create cost millions of euro.'*

Prof. Bolger pointed out that it is not adequate to take the view expressed by Leopold and that we need to supply answers which will satisfy policy makers. However, the fact that biological systems are complex and that small impacts can result in large unexpected changes makes unequivocal answers virtually impossible to supply. Therefore he showed, using game theory, that the correct course of action is highly likely to be to follow the precautionary principle and conserve as much biodiversity as possible because no remedy exists for the loss of unexpected critical components of biodiversity.



Professor Bolger is a member of the Life Sciences Committee of the Royal Irish Academy. His primary research interests are in the effects of global change on terrestrial biodiversity and nutrient dynamics in soil systems. He has been involved with EU projects in these areas since 1988. He also has a particular interest in experimental design and statistical models and has published in these areas. He is a subject editor for Soil Biology and Biochemistry and a member of the editorial board of several other journals.

Irish Fulbright Directory taking shape

The year 2006-07 will complete fifty years of Fulbright activity in Ireland. Initially the scheme was administered by *An Bord Scoilreachtai Combalairte*. While this was part of the Fulbright initiative it was not known by the Senator's name at the time. In 1992, *An Bord* was replaced by a statutory intergovernmental body, *The Ireland-United States Commission for Educational Exchanges* - more commonly referred to as *The Fulbright Commission*.

To mark this Jubilee, a Directory will be published of over seven hundred Irish people who have received awards enabling them to study at universities and institutes of higher education in the US.

Basic information relating to the time of their awards is available from original files and work is currently in progress to update the addresses and discover how their experiences affected Fulbrighters' lives and subsequent careers.

If you received a grant to study in the US, or know another who did, please contact us to ensure the record is as complete as possible. You may contact Xanthe Swift at the Fulbright Commission, Brooklawn House, Shelbourne Rd, Dublin 4. Tel.: 6607670. E-mail: info@fulbright.ie

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Value of Fulbright Experience Assessed

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in the State Department has released the *Visiting Fulbright Student Program Outcome Assessment*, conducted by SRI International. The evaluation is based on a survey conducted from June to October 2004, with 1,609 alumni completing the survey.

Visiting Fulbright Student Program alumni respondents have overwhelmingly positive impressions of their program. The vast majority reported that their Fulbright experience increased their knowledge and understanding of the United States and its culture. Alumni responded overwhelmingly that the program allowed them to develop long-lasting personal and professional relationships with Americans that have enabled them to continue the exchange of thoughts and ideas.

95% of respondents felt that the program gave them greater insight into their professional fields and contributed to their subsequent educational or career choices and decisions. The program also had positive effects on their behavior as 96% of respondents shared their Fulbright experiences with others in their home country through a media or community activity,

and 83% have incorporated knowledge gained during their Fulbright experience into their subsequent professional activities.

Alumni of the Visiting Fulbright Student Program have also moved into leadership positions in important organizations and sectors of society. 89% of respondents reported that the Fulbright experience enabled them to serve in a leadership capacity in their professions. Nearly half (47%) reported that they had received promotions within the faculty hierarchy or positions of leadership in national or international organizations that they feel was wholly or partially attributable to their Visiting Fulbright Student experiences.

For more information and summaries of the assessment, visit one of the following websites:

One Page Summary:

<<https://exchanges.state.gov/education/evaluations/onepaggers/FVSP.pdf>>

Executive Summary:

<<https://exchanges.state.gov/education/evaluations/execsummaries/FVSP.pdf>>

Fighting Blindness

A visiting U.S. Fulbright Student at UCD ran the Dublin City Marathon in October. Rebecca Blue who is conducting research on child welfare and protection in Ireland was running to raise funds for a local charity, *Fighting Blindness*. She had hoped to complete the course in 4 hour 30 minutes but excelled herself with a running time of just four hours. She later admitted to feeling "wrecked" at



the finish but recovered rapidly enough to enjoy the post-run party. Our pictures show her at both stages!

Above: Rebecca passing a well known Dublin landmark and *Left:* Proudly wearing her Fulbright shirt at the post-run party where she seems to have made a complete recovery from her marathon effort.

Well Done, Rebecca



Catherine Leonard

Subsequent to her recital tour in California where she played to great acclaim, Catherine Leonard (Fulbright 1992) has accepted the newly created Bob Christiansen Chair of Violin with Camarata Pacifica, an ensemble that plays chamber music monthly to subscriber audiences at four prestigious Southern California venues. She will spend several months in each of the next three years with the group, despite her burgeoning career as a virtuoso performer with orchestras in Ireland, Britain, Europe, Asia and Australia.

Her commitment of this amount of time to studying, rehearsing and presenting music with the talented musicians of Camarata Pacifica reflects her dedication to the "innate sense of musicality". She described musicality to Charles Donelan of the *Santa Barbara Independent* as "being moved . . . touching someone to the heart" ". . . When musicality like this happens, it's as though the soul of a piece is revealed. There is a rush of emotion, and the audience feels the presence of something far beyond words, and nearly beyond sound" ". . . That's what I am trying to do [with Camarata Pacifica] . . . because if you play all the notes perfectly, and put them in just the right places, that's not necessarily doing enough. The musicality is it. That's what matters."

Fulbrighters will remember her duo, with Gerald Peregrine of the Ravel Sonata at the Fulbright Centenary Celebration in the RHA Gallagher Gallery. *Newsletter* met her after a recent lunchtime concert in the National Concert Hall.

Success and fame have left her refreshingly unspoiled and unpretentious. Her focus on the musical challenge seems to combine with a natural humility and a powerful work ethic to immunise her from the preoccupation with self that is so often the price of celebrity. She considers the Fulbright award that enabled her to study in America a very important step in her career. And does not her career in a way "reveal the soul" of Sen. Fulbright's vision?

Fulbright Sponsors

The continued success of the Fulbright Programme in Ireland is dependent on the understanding of its significance shown by Companies, State Agencies and Academic Institutions. We gratefully acknowledge:

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