

Couple singing at Brendan's, telling story of Irish history

By CORINNE ABATT

There is a serious note just under the surface of the music which Joan and Joe McGrath are offering at Brendan's Pub in Farmington.

Their authentic Irish songs are rollicking and lively. McGrath gives an introduction before the melodies explaining they are either rebel or comic tunes, sometimes adding a word of two about the song's history and composer. The listeners often clap in time as the McGraths flash infectious smiles.

But underneath, there's a special quality. Maybe it's the Irish flag on the stage right behind them proudly displayed beside the stars and stripes.

The couple acquired the Irish flag from Africa. It belonged to a contingent with the Canadian United Nations peace-keeping troops in the Congo. For sentimental reasons five of Ireland's soldiers signed the flag. A week later they were wiped out in a jungle ambush.

"We want people to know Ireland contributes to the United Nations peace keeping forces. There's always a number of people in America who think the only army in Ireland is the IRA."

"Did you know," McGrath says in a soft brogue, "that the Irish soldiers were the most decorated in the Civil War here or that they received more Victoria Crosses in World War I and World War II than any other group?"

THE MUSIC is devoted to their homeland. She, one of 16 children, is from County Clare. His home is County Cavan. They have been entertaining across Canada and the U.S. billed as the "Repatriates" successfully

for several years. Repatriates was the name of the original guerrillafighters who took to the hills in 1919 after the battle of Limerick.

Although Irish, the couple has probably seen more of North America than many of the listeners. They have lived in Cape Cod where they spend each summer, Atlanta and Dublin, Ga. where they were welcomed as long lost relatives.

They often travel to college campuses to put on a history in music program.

"WE LIKE TO THINK we're trying to help educate people about the history of Ireland," McGrath said. "The only way a lot of our history is recorded is in song. Often in the music, Ireland is a woman—the old lady is many of our songs is Ireland."

He used the song, "Four Green Fields" by Tommy Makem as an example. The four fields are the four provinces of Ireland and the lady the nation itself.

While playing an appreciation for Ireland in foreign soil, the McGraths acquired an appreciation for this country. With the appreciation comes concern—the open drug scene and at times the patriotic spathy.

At the end of each performance they play the Irish national anthem and then the "Star Spangled Banner."

JOAN McGRATH has had people tell her many times when they are through that it isn't right not to play the national anthem of the U.S.

"Would you believe they think it's 'God Bless America'?" she says incredulously. "We tell them we have played it and they won't believe believe us."

Another thing that concerns them is how few people stand when the "Star Spangled Banner" is played.

"Only one or two out of a room full of people," McGrath commented.

"Joan, tell them about the night you almost got in a fight."

His wife smiled and started her story. As she played the U.S. national anthem, no one rose.

"WE DON'T EXPECT them to stand up for the Irish national anthem—most don't recognize it."

She flashed a disapproving look at a table near the stage as they played the "Star Spangled Banner" and heard mocking remarks. Joan McGrath replied and a woman said, "What do you care, you're not even American!"

Joe McGrath picks up the story. "Joan looked at her and said 'and you're lucky I'm not, because if I was I'd wrap this guitar around your neck.'"

No, all is not sweet and green in Ireland. The couple are quick to admit they can't condone the killing of innocent, harmless people. Neither can they condone turning patriotism, here or anywhere, into a joke.

The Repatriates will be at Brendan's through April 27. The audiences have welcomed them, and friends have driven many miles to see and hear them.

Perhaps the warmest reception for their music has come on the evenings when the pub has had a young late teen and early 20s audience.

"They have been just wonderful," says McGrath, "so polite, so warm, we could hardly believe it and they keep us singing through two and three encores."



Joe and Joan McGrath sing the songs of Ireland. (Staff photo by Gary Friedman)

Farmington Junior High students want school open

By SUSAN AVERILL

FARMINGTON—Students at Farmington Junior High School have formed an organization to promote the millage election and keep their school open yet another year.

The school board's austerity budget for the 1975-76 school year has called for the shutdown of the school a year ahead of schedule in the event of millage failure.

Known as SOS (Save Our School), the group has a central core of approximately 25 active members, led by eighth-grader Tam Richardson.

SOS began a little more than a month ago with a meeting of about 52 junior high students and is working on bagel sales to raise money for poster board supplies and flyers.

These flyers, designed and written by the group's publicity committee, will be distributed by students stationed in shopping centers during the

final week before the April 29 millage election.

To assist voters with small children, the students have formed a "manpower" committee to make babysitters available for those voters who might otherwise have difficulty finding one.

They also will set aside a room in the school for the same purpose on April 29.

Chairmen of the group's four committees are Marcia Perry, manpower; Kerry Madner, poster; Betty Baseman, fundraising; and Ann Polderser, publicity.

Sidor receives honors at U-M

FARMINGTON—Charles Sidor, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sidor, 2115 Birchwood, has been named to the dean's honor list for the fall term at the University of Michigan's College of Engineering.

To be named to the dean's list, stu-

dents must complete 12 or more credit hours with at least a 3.3 grade point average.

Sidor is a senior, and has been named to the dean's list for four consecutive years.

Farmington students graduate from MSU

FARMINGTON—The following Farmington students received bachelor's degrees at the Michigan State University winter term commencement: John W. Kerastas, Michelle A. Lajer and Richard L. Lajer.

The following Farmington Hills students also received bachelor's degrees: Karen A. Cowall, Laura Gilman, Larry B. Higgins, Cynthia B. Slaughter and Janet L. Strand.

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