

Getting Passport Was Toughest Part Of Trip To Ireland

BY EDDIE SWEATT

I've been trying to get around to writing about our trip to Ireland ever since my wife, Carolyn, and I got back two weeks ago, but have been unable to do so because of a chronic case of jet-lag and trying to catch up at the office to pay for the few days I was away.

For a fellow who vowed not to travel south of Grisetown or north of Supply unless absolutely necessary, going to Ireland was unthinkable. Some folks who know me well still don't believe I went.

Be assured, the trip was necessary. There just had to be some coverage in the Beacon when someone from Brunswick County competed for the World Oyster Opening Championship!

When we found out that no one from the chamber was going to Galway, Ireland, with our local, state and national champion, Cathy Carlisle, there was no other choice. We had planned earlier to ask whoever went to snap a few pictures and make some notes for a story.

At first I thought about sending someone else on the staff. But I figured if I spent all that money for someone to make the trip and they didn't come back with some pictures, I would have had to fire them if I didn't kill 'em first.

The decision to make the journey was made about ten days before the plane was scheduled to take off. Getting airline tickets, hotel reservations in Ireland and a rental car were a breeze, thanks to the efficient folks at the travel agency here in Shallotte.

What was difficult was getting permission to leave this free country in which we are all blessed to live.

Passports were required, and naturally since one is not needed to travel to Supply or Grisetown, I have never had one.

But even before one gets a passport, one has to have a birth certificate. Problem was, I had never had a copy of my birth certificate, and wasn't positive in which state my birth was registered. I was born so long ago that when I grew up it was not necessary to produce a birth certificate to enroll in school and such. Back then folks just took your word about when and where you were born.

My shame for not having a birth certificate gave Carolyn a chance to crow since she had this pretty gold-sealed certificate from the hospital showing she was, in fact, born. I got the last laugh, however, when she learned that the fancy document was no substitute for a legal birth certificate and she was no better off than I.

To make a very long story as short as possible, a life-saver of a young lady, Judy Bentley, a staff assistant in Congressman Charlie Rose's office in Wilmington, accomplished the impossible. She not only helped us get passports processed in one week, but she helped us get copies of birth certificates, too.

Our friend and neighbor Sybil Anderson, who lives in Cary when she is not at Holden Beach, saved the day by picking up my birth certificate and express mailing it just in the nick of time.

Would you believe the passports came in Wednesday afternoon, the day before our flight out of Wilmington. Now that's cutting it close.

The trip was exciting and, for the



BEACON PUBLISHERS Carolyn and Eddie Sweatt, with Cathy Carlisle (center) at the World Oyster Opening Championship in Galway, Ireland.

most part, pleasant, except for a couple of exchanges.

One was with that car rental company that claims to try harder because they're Number 2. They wouldn't take the keys to the car at the desk in the airline terminal, insisting instead that the car be driven to some shed clear across the field, despite the fact that I had a very short time to catch the plane back home.

I blew my stack. I had suffered

enough embarrassment in that little tin can with the steering wheel on the wrong side. Being set in my ways, it was tough to remember to ride on the wrong side of the road. Even tougher was trying to shift gears with my left hand. It had been a couple of decades since I had driven a car with a manual transmission and I never had driven one with the gears on the wrong side.

Completely devoid as I am of a sense of direction, driving a weird lit-

tle car on narrow little paths they call roads in Ireland, trying to read strange road signs to get from Shannon to Galway—and back—the 60-mile trip both ways was humiliating.

My dear wife was a lot of help. Although she kept my ego pumped up by assuring me that she could not have possibly driven under those conditions, she had no difficulty telling me how to do it.

The other time someone got under my skin was when I tipped a sky-cap at JFK in New York for hauling our luggage about 100 feet from the Immigration checkpoint to the Piedmont pickup location.

He took one disgusted look at the dollar bill, shook his head and, loudly declared to the entire airport that a dollar is nothing. Instead of taking the bill back, as I should have, I quickly let him intimidate me into dropping another buck in his hand. My parting shot wasn't great, either, when I managed to mumble that I would like to have a job like his.

The rest of the travel was okay, even for a stay-at-home like me. The flights were all on schedule going and coming, thank goodness, since we left Thursday at 2 p.m. from Wilmington and got back to Wilmington at midnight Sunday.

Of the four days we were gone, we spent two of them in the air. We lost five hours on the trip over because of the difference in time zones, but picked them back up Sunday. It was hard to tell if it was jet-lag or just tiredness that kept us out of tune for a week or so.

The two days in Galway were delightful. It was a lot of fun covering the oyster festival there, where our own Cathy Carlisle was such a

celebrity. Those folks take the oyster festival very seriously, and really put the emphasis on the world oyster "opening" competition.

They don't call it "shucking" oysters over there as we do here. One of the newspaper accounts of the festival sent to me by a publisher I met describes Cathy as an oyster "shuckler" from the USA.

There are a lot of other differences in the oyster festivals here and there. To attend all the various events there, including two dinners, a reception and the oyster opening competition, costs about \$250 per person.

The final dinner and dance, where the oyster opening prizes are awarded, is a black-tie affair. I had some trouble reconciling myself to wearing a tuxedo at an oyster festival, when jeans or shorts are about as dressed up as we get here.

But the objectives of the two festivals thousands of miles apart are the same, to extend the fall tourism season and sort of get together locally to celebrate after a busy summer.

Galway is a charming city on the west coast of Ireland, tucked away in a bay with hills on each side, and dozens of quaint little shops on narrow streets. The population, I guess, is about 20,000. We were not there long enough to find out for sure.

Too little time to explore Galway and surrounding area is the only regret we have about the trip. But, now that Cathy won the state title again this year means she has two more trips to Maryland to try for the national title. Perhaps she will go to Ireland again and, perhaps, we may go, too.

But don't bet on it.



PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

BIRDS need space to look for food and to rear their young.

The Need For Space

One of the observations easily seen in nature is how each species has its particular need for space. Plants need a place to gain a foothold and room to grow. They need space for sunlight to reach them and soil space for roots to spread. Likewise, animals need space to live, to forage for food, to look for a mate, and to rear offspring.

Much of an animal's time may be spent defending his space. He sets his boundaries according to the habitat he needs for survival and defends his space from intruders. In birds the defense of space is very apparent during the breeding season and even the young birds are often fought off when they are considered to be old enough to be on their own.

Most often space is determined by the carrying capacity of a portion of the habitat. Since only so many birds or animals can find food, nesting sites, and roaming room in an area, any increase in numbers would mean that all would be unable to survive. Birds and animals seem instinctively to know this and fight off any violators of their space.

Sometimes space will be occupied by several species that are not in competition with each other and they live together in harmony. The egrets and herons are good examples for they all use the same general habitat, but each has its own way of feeding



Bill Faver

and seldom competes with the other species.

Man, too, has his need for space. Some require more space than others, both physically and symbolically. Some feel uncomfortable in large crowds and would rather be in small groups. Observe people at any gathering and see how some are comfortable in close contact as they converse face to face and how others require much greater distances. There are times when each of us may feel the need to "get away"—to gain some space to react and reflect to what life brings us.

Henry David Thoreau was one of those who needed space—who needed to be uncrowded. That he chose a simple life and uncluttered space is evident in most of his writings. One of those writings that illustrates his need for space is this:

"I'd rather sit alone on a pumpkin and have it all to myself than be crowded on a velvet cushion."

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