

**THE ANNUAL ISLAND THANKSGIVING
POODLESHOOT AND BBQ
NOVEMBER 25, 2001**

Well, the annals of the Island shall remember this Thanksgiving for many a year following for the weather and political events and poodles all conspired to make this a most memorable Holiday. It must have been the extraordinary weather, for nothing else can explain what happened.

Come around me laddies, for I would sing of arms and the people of the Island -- those people who are never at a loss. Fate made us fugitives from urban blight -- we were the first to travel far from the coasts of Babylon after the sack of Bush. Who here remembers the terrible times of '83? Across the lands and waters we was battered beneath the violence of High Ones; for savage Reagan's unforgetting anger; and many sufferings were ours in war. We struggled hard to save ourselves and bring our companions safely home, but many perished by their own madness. Raise up your glass me lads and revisit once again the cities of man and learn their different ways in peace.

I call now on the God of the Waters of Life, Uscque-ba', who resides in the *cruiskeen luin* to grant me words to fill this tale. Grant me the silver tongue of

Vatus Seamus Heaney, the golden wit of Nuala Ni'Domhnaill. Listen, Muse, while I sing this song. Listen, Muse; I sing not loud nor long. Or Whatever.

THE FIRST DAY

Dawn extended her rosy fingers to stir Padriac, for Padraic needed to be about and making ready for the Annual Island Poodleshoot and BBQ. Gently she brushed the shadows of Morpheus from the eyelids of sleeping Padraic and deftly stirred his morning stirabout. When Padraic failed to stir except to turn about beneath the bedcovers, Dawn gave him a mighty wack for Dawn is not one to be trifled with and that got him up all right.

It was important that Padraic be prompt for Padraic was this year's Official Beverage Supply and Control Officer and Padraic had obtained a substantial supply of hard stuff from the Old Country just for the purpose. And let it be known poodle-huntin is thirsty work.

We'll skip the usual enumeration of the assembly so as to get right to it.

Down at the Landing there was much libation and spilling of Padriac's whiskey. To give nuance to the Event, the Island Hoophole Boys Symphonic Orchestra turned out in force with trumpets, kettledrums, fifes, fiddles, didgeradoo and bagpipes and a merrier noise you never heard when they all bent to play "A Nation Once Again." The Rules were read, oracles were consulted, the keg was tapped, and at eight o'clock the starting gun went off. Immediately the hunters dispersed only regroup at Jacks for breakfast, for no one can bear a poodlehunt on an empty stomach. Colum had brought a flask of the good stuff which went liberally into everyone's coffee.

At the more reasonable and leisurely hour of half-past ten the hunters dispersed again.

Across the Island came the merry sounds of the hunt in the form of cries of "Poodle there!" and "Clear shot!" and "Look out ya daft sod, by jaysus!" Bruce of Oakland took a pair of Miniature Greys with a single shot from his crossbow darts, tipped with C4.

By afternoon it became clear by various signs that a herd of poodles had gathered, or been driven, to the West End, but by that time the supply cask began to run low and in many thoughts turned to dinnertime. There was little to suggest that things would run amiss until close to sunset a phenomenal explosion dropped the bicycle bridge main span right into the pond. A number of terriers were seen scampering from the scene.

A halt to the days festivities was called. So ended the first day.

THE SECOND DAY: THE BATTLE OF RITTER PARK

The Second Day began woozily with beer and a brandy chaser for the cold. Things really began to fly apart when Officer O'Madhaun attempted to issue a ticket to a motorized pram crossing against the light on Otis Drive and was assaulted by a pair of guard terriers who appeared out of nowhere. The Good Officer had need to resort to his chemical defences and liberal application of his baton and was glad enough to escape with his life when the terriers were joined by a pack of mixed breed poodle terrierists.

Meanwhile, Eugene Gallipagus found himself treed in a palm when he lost his firearm in the lagoon while taking a little nip anon from his hip flask. Unarmed

and pursued by poodles, real or imagined, the man shinned up one of those goofy palms down by 8th street and no amount of persuading could bring him down. Not until that flask was empty.

At the same time, the Calumny brothers with Eustice and Fay encountered a pack of Silverhairs dug in at Ritter Park and, armed with quart bottles fortified from the Official Keg and Winchester rifles, began exchanging fullisades for quite some time. You may think that the Fairer Sex would retreat at this bloody assault, but Eustice and Fay gave as good as they got, vigorously pumping out round after round until the smell of cordite perfumed the air. It was not until the following day that a concerned passerby indicated that the "return fire" was, in fact, ricochets off of the tin roof and eaves of the school. Much harm was done before this realization, however, and the For Sale vehicals parked along the road lost all their glass as a consequence.

At the time, however, everyone had in mind the terrible outrage when City Hall was hijacked and then the additional insult of blowing up the bicycle bridge to Harbor Bay Island. Of course emotions ran high and the general feeling was that moderation in pursuit of poodles is no virtue.

It must have been this sort of sentiment that moved Artie Javier to remove the top of his Ford SUV and mount a hyperventilated liquid acetylene welding torch to the lip and then, well supplied with fifty-gallon drums of petrol and Padriac's home brew, he took to the beach and set it, the outhouse, the boardwalk and himself on fire. For some two miles. Saints preserve us from the

screams. Not to mention those of Artie, who dove into the ocean to quench himself and found that salt water does not a balm make to open sores.

Fortunately for those dwelling along the peaceful strand, the sky opened up with a vengeance and buckets began to lash down through a howling wind. The Hoophole Band and Orchestra scattered down by the cove looking for shelter.

Five hunters boozing it up in the Eighth street park with the horn section of aforementioned Orchestra, not far from a certain palm tree, took refuge under the children's playset in the sand while fronds whipped by and branches crashed to the ground all about them. "Thank heaven for Cabela's," one feller said, tugging down his extra-special Poofter-Reproof Stetson. Just then the sky made a frightful crack and Eugene slipped to earth, breaking his leg in three places.

Thus ended the Second Day.

THE THIRD DAY: THE BATTLE IN THE BOG

Saturday began in a wet welter of lashing rain, falling trees and soggy spirits, which the various parties attempted to keep alive by liberally tapping the seemingly inexhaustible keg of Padriac. A rude night was spent in the field by many however.

An emergency meeting of the City Council was had, without religious invocation, and laws were passed restricting movements about the Island and calling for bicycle and pram permits with photo ID. A Detention of the Hounds act was passed amid some acrimonious debate and was vigorously protested by the Chins, the Kais and the Jindo-Chiens on account of previous unforgotten

abuses. Supernumery powers were granted to the Traffic Division of the IPD, that included detention without warrant or charge, enforced finger and paw printing, unrestricted surveillance of pounds, kennels, garages and runs, spontaneous search and seizure -- especially motor vehicals and bicycles. Furthermore, assets of known, suspected or probable bicycle shops that may possibly have had something to do with blowing up bridges and harboring terriers became part of the Traffic Division's duties.

Now a few individuals began to question the extent of what they claimed was a bad over-reaction in the wrong direction as the means to handling the case of a pack of bad doggies, but these were quickly hushed up and put away and nobody heard from them again. What's good enough for Chili is good enough for us. And that is the American Way.

Out upon the Field of Honor, under pelting rain, the hunters let fly with everything against anything that moved, for it became impossible to see anything clearly with all the weather and the thick smoke drifting over from where Artie had set it afire mingling with the gun smoke and the occasional flash-bang of a surplus grenade.

The ground at Eighth Street Park down below the baseball diamond began to turn soft with all of the rain. Down by the Crab Cove picnic structures, a gang of poodles managed to take dripping shelter together with an unknown number of wirehairs and scotties. Well it was pissing rain like all the angels had gone to a frat party at Chico and poodles have to hang out somewhere. As for the scotties it was clear that they did not care what company they kept in this wet

and so they became fair game. Seeing this, Jim Kitson took up his blunderbus and ran out towards them in a foolhardy charge and promptly fell flat on his face in the mud before the poodle assembly. And of course they bit him. Running, sliding and slipping to his aid, but finding her flintlock useless in the humidity, Susan Laing swung her rifle stock about her head and clubbed a Munchkin Toy about the ears. There began a melee when the other hunters came up and this action will be henceforth forever known as "The Battle of the Bog". The hunters were driven back by missile weapons past the little slide where they gathered in a bunch surrounded by the snarling, yapping pack.

Only an early nightfall brought merciful end to the slaughter. Thus ended the Third Day.

THE FOURTH DAY: THE MEDDLING GODS

The Fourth Day began in a rollcall of injuries and disaster. Colum fell asleep underneath the Official Beverage Container and woke up in such a state with whatever was in that stuff permeating his brain until he rose in a frenzy and seized his grandfather's military saber. Seeing poodles and terrierists everywhere he ran out to the beach in his skivvies to prevent the landing craft from coming in with more of whatever might try and invade California. Now Column had long been a member of the Native Plants and Species Association, and so it must be remembered that just about 90 percent of the planet had been long pigeonholed in the man's skull for years as some form of potential enemy. It was largely for this reason that nobody hindered him from going down to the beach and flailing

away with that rather nasty saber at the waves, all the while shouting "Up the Republic!"

So there you have the start of the dismal Fourth Day: Colum is out beating the ocean waves in his underwear with a saber, Officer O'Madhauen appeared a sorry sight with his uniform in tatters, his baton a twiddle, his oxters stained, his galluses tangled and his boxers in a twist, yet dangerously armed with new and silly ordinances. Eugene lay with a broken leg and Jim Kitson laid low by a nasty flesh wound. Both Calumny brothers down with self-inflicted gunshot injuries and the beach blackened and smoldering. Holly Golightly rode her bicycle off the end of the bicycle span into the pond and darkness covered her eyes.

Up on the hillock the little band of hunters, out of ammunition, remained surrounded and in desperate straits.

Such was the dispute on the Island that even the Gods took sides. Angus nà Og gave favor to the hunters on the hilltop, but the Sè of Ballyougue had it for poor Colum over a long ago slight so they drove him mad. The God of Bureaucracy, Loki, delighted in the whimsical decisions of the Council, for cumbersome and idiotic law always delights Loki, such is the nature of this God. The Imp of the Perverse, Poe, gave favor to the poodles, for wherever the reason and sense of man is overturned, there goes the Imp. Now this way, now that went the war upon the bog and the field of Ritter. And things looked very hard, very hard indeed for the mortals thereon.

And when all seemed at its darkest, there came a shout for after the defeat at Thermopylae they went down to the sea in ships. Into Crab Cove sailed two jolly frigates, skippered by Carol Watkins and Marlon Price.

A gangplank thunked ashore and striding across it came the troops. First the Shepards, marching in military precision, then the Dobermans, they of perky ears, then marched the brutal pit bulls of Oakland, noted well for ferocity. These took up ranks along the sedge.

Then came the Irish Wolfhounds, the Whippets, the Greyhounds -- fleet of foot -- and a phalanx of smart setters led by Marcus and Vail, tails a-wag. All these noble born breeds and worthy of the name.

Then followed Bassets, Hounds of all types, Borzoi stepping proudly, Spaniels, Braques with black berets, Mastiffs, Chows, Dalmatians with fire equipment, Dingos, Collies, Huskies, Chins from Japan, Retrievers of all kinds - especially labradors, Boston Bulldogs, the life-saving Saint Bernard, The sly Samoyed with two eyes askance, Laikas, Deerhounds, Weimariners, Malamutes, even the Corgis sent a squad from their war upon webmistress Lara Croft, and many others not forgetting the noble Xoloitzcuintle trotting along behind.

A great shout went up at Africa's noble offering: the Basenji's came bounding in with nervous grace and assurance of victory over even the lion, most fearsome of beasts. Victory will surely be ours, for even Africa has sent its legions. All praise the Basenjies, extraordinary fighters!

When all had disembarked, the front lines went bounding and leaping up the hill to rescue the beleaguered there. Angus na Og raised up his spear to give final victory to the humans. This time.

The insurrectionists were quickly put down and the whole army marched down to Ritter Park to take care of the action there.

Dalmatians rescued Colum from the waves easily enough, for who on earth can find fault with a dalmation, pride of the firehouse? And Column was carried back upon a shield of palm fronds and loving tongues licked his face. Such was the disposition of Mad Colum.

Thus ended the Fourth Day.

THE FIFTH DAY: PEACE

Clouds boiled over the Fifth Day, but the rains held off. The dead and dying and dead drunk were carried from the fields of carnage. Long before noon, the keg of Padraic was put aside and bottles of decent Jamesons were brought forth to cleanse the wounds of the injured and the sick. And there were very many sick. The official bugel of the Hunt was blown at noon and the Fourth Annual Thanksgiving Poodleshoot and BBQ was officially over. And we all sat down and had another Thanksgiving Dinner that couldn't be beat.

And so me lads, that's the way it was on the Island, this Thanksgiving. We've cleaned up most of the mess, but now we've got a rather peeved Officer O'Madhauen, and Osama Bin Lassie is still on the loose, and there's a whole lotta really bad legislation and police powers we gotta deal with now -- all on account of a few bad dogs mind you.

By the way, how are things on your Island?