

Money, money, money and Greece is the word

It's Monday morning and as I hit the road to the day job, (it's the only one I have), the whole country is talking about whether or not Maire Geoghegan-Quinn should give back her Dail and Ministerial pensions. Now, of course, there should be no debate about the matter. She, apparently, is now on an EU salary of €243,000, which, for an ordinary two and sixpence, who's struggling to survive on a modest wage, is a mind-boggling sum of money. So, her pension, which by the way, is another €2,000 per week, should be parked to one side while she is being paid in her current post as EU Commissioner. She is of course not the only one as it seems we have 20 other politicians who are also topping up their salaries by drawing pensions that are costing me and you, the taxpayer, up to a half a million a year.

I was talking to a fellow the other day about Michael Fingleton and his million euro bonus. He made the very valid point that it's very hard to give something up that you have already got. It would be much easier to do what the Bank of Ireland boss Richie Boucher did – waive his rights to it before it was actually paid over. Anyway, while Brian Cowen says it's her own decision, I believe she should set an example and do the right thing and give up her €2,000 a week. She'll hardly miss it! (Editor's note: politicians have been falling over one another to 'return' pensions since Frank put pen to paper earlier in the week!).

Talking about money and wages and that sort of stuff, I have to admit that I have very little understanding of high finance or such matters and when I read about Greece and the huge IMF rescue, it all more or less passed over my head. However, a friend of mine, who has a pretty good understanding of such things, put it in very plain language, and I have to say he painted a very bleak picture. The bottom line is that Greece was broke and if it didn't agree to the bailout terms, there would have been no money to pay anyone – the police, teachers, doctors nurses, civil servants – effectively all the public servants – would all be left without any wages. Also, there would

have been no money in ATMs, Banks, Building Societies or anywhere. It would all have led to anarchy, and he says Italy, Portugal and Ireland are all on the brink of similar problems. As I say, I don't understand how he's come to that conclusion, but I thought I'd tell you just in case you needed a bit of cheering up!

Talking of cheering up ... on Saturday night I found myself at a triple 40th birthday party in Gannon's and on a number of fronts it brought me back to the good old days when myself and Dympna (Collins), travelled the countryside as the Karaoke King (and Queen). We were a bit like a famous Joe Dolan impersonator in Mullingar, who, when expounding on how successful and how far-travelled he was, he said "he had played all over Ireland, as far as Ballinalack, Ballinallee and Ballinacarrigy"! Dympna and I were somewhat similar. We went to Castleplunkett, Castlereagh and Castleblakeney! On one of our frequent visits to the Hollywood Bar in Roscommon, we came across a young talented singer called Ciarán Cunningham. I hadn't seen him much until last Saturday night, when along with a young lad from Clare, Ger Hahessy, he was providing the musical entertainment for the triple party. As far as I could see, they were simply working with two guitars, but I will say that I don't think I have seen, anytime, anywhere, anything better. They were simply brilliant and while they didn't play 'diddly-aye' music, they really had the house rocking. I don't know if they have a name, but if you ever get a chance to hear them, don't miss it.

The other reminders of the old days were the presence of another of our more regular karaoke performers, 'Hanley, Hanley & Co.', (John and Brian Hanley and Seanie Lohan), who spent years in the desert with 'The Horse With No Name', and also Anthony and Dolly Gibbons, whose post-wedding party we did in Frank's of Ballybeg almost 20 years ago on a Sunday morning. Anthony told me they have spent many years in England since but are now back home in the Emerald Isle. It's funny, but I can remember their party as if it was yesterday. Anyway, it all made

for good fun and to Brian, Jacinta and Karen, belated Happy Birthday!

Now, I am not on the payroll, (although I think I should be!), of either Mikeen's or Gannon's, but I must tell you that on next Saturday night, the Mattie Clarke Roadshow is back in Gannon's when Mattie will do his 'Big Tom Medley' and the highly-talented 'Coise Tine' will provide the musical entertainment. Recording star, Linda Welby, is one half of 'Coise Tine' and they are really worth coming to. It's a Bank Holiday weekend so keep the village swinging and let's hope we see you all there! A good night is guaranteed.

Continuing with the local entertainment guide, my neighbour, Mary Keane, tells me there is a dance coming up soon for the local school's Parents Association. She made the big mistake of telling me late on Saturday night, so the details are slightly fuzzy. However, I know it's in the next couple of weeks so I'll remind you later. I was involved in the Association while my kids were in school and know how much work they do and how much help they provide to the school. They need our support, so watch out for the definite information on their fund-raising dance.

Also, I've just been asked to remind everyone to get their sponsorship money back for the Barrie Harris Walk as quickly as they can. The Presentation Night, when all the local charities receive their contribution, is on May 8th in Mikeen's, so please, get the money in!

Finally, for this week, I am ending on a particularly sad note as on Sunday my former Creggs rugby team-mate, Luke Daly, was laid to rest at the very young age of 42. Back in the early days of our rugby club we were sort of like a big family, of which Joe Daly, Luke's Daddy, was our father-figure. Friendships were made then which despite the passage of time and the changing of circumstances are as strong as ever and the entire Daly family have always been universally loved and admired by the rugby club fraternity. Luke arrived on the scene in the late eighties, and in truth, he should never have fitted in. He was extremely good looking, tall, fast and talented with the most pleasing personality, while most

of his team-mates were lacking in one or two or all of the aforementioned traits! However, Luke became a vital member of our team, (despite all his deficiencies), and scored one of our best-ever tries when we made it to the Connacht Senior Semi-Final against Corinthians in 1989. All the lads were there on Saturday evening, (I couldn't be there on Sunday), and as we reminisced, while his rugby ability will never be forgotten, it was his lovely, easy way that left an indelible impression. To his wife, Jacqui, and their children and all the Dalys', I can only extend my sincere sympathy and may Luke rest in peace. We will never forget him. Ar dheis de a raibh a ainm.

*'Til next week,
bye for now.*



Frankly
Speaking ...
with Frank Brandon



Bikers pictured at the recent launch in Strokestown.

■ Geoff Cooper

Friday the 23rd of April saw the launch of this year's annual bike run in aid of the Roscommon/Mayo Hospice.

Around thirty bikers gathered in Strokestown to show their support and a briefing meeting was held in the Percy French Hotel after a photo shoot. Last year's event was supported by one hundred and four bikers from all points of Ireland and was also attended by riders from the United Kingdom.

The original event, which first took place eight years ago, was the brainchild of several stalwarts who are involved to this day and still carry the same amount of enthusiasm that they had all those years ago. On Friday night, I had a brief chat with Gerry Kelly, Des Kiernan and Donal Power who along with Sian Fallon and Jim Donoghue set up the original concept. The message from them was loud and clear. Des Kiernan said, "The hospice needs the cash and we intend to raise it. Our efforts over the last eight years have raised around €200,000. We play our part but the folk who really deserve the accolades are the fantastic general public who, in these times of hardship, donate very generously. They are the true supporters and without them the event would not be the amazing success that it is. Every cent collected is donated directly to the Hospice and a massive thank you goes out to all who support us."

This year's event will take place on the 3rd and 4th of July, leaving the Percy French Hotel around 9.30 am on the 3rd. The riders then travel in a northerly arc, stopping off at towns and villages as they go. The entourage arrive that evening at Westport and thanks to the support of the management of the Westport Hotel are extremely well catered for. The following morning being suitably refreshed, the riders leave around 10 am and then travel in a southerly arc reaching the Percy French around 5.30 pm. All accept it is a gruelling two days but well worth the effort.

Anyone who wishes to take part or help in any way can ring Des Kiernan on (086) 8330035 or Denise Nolan on (086) 1717057. Official collecting cards for the 2010 Hospice Motor Cycle Run are also available from Des and Denise.

HOSPICE BIKE RUN LAUNCH