

Dickie Dempsey RIP
Funeral Mass
Durrow Church
Wednesday 10th August 2022

Predeceased by his beloved wife Joan, father Richard, mother Sarah and brother Joe. Survived and dearly missed by his sister Monica, sons Ken, Kieran, Patrick and Finian. daughters Muriel and Sarah, grandchildren Lina, Shane, Grace, Caitriona, Conal, Jack, Joe, Orlaith, Oisín, Eoghan and Finian, great-grandchildren Josh and Leah, sister in law Muriel, brother in law Pat, daughters in law Simone, Rosarii, Jinnie and Niamh, nieces, nephews, relatives and friends.

It is more than twenty years since I first came to know Dickie and Joan at card tables in both Cullohill and here in Durrow. For that reason I would like to use the game of Bridge as a kind of starting point for reflecting on, and celebrating the life of this man whom we honour with Christian burial today.

Over the years since I started playing the game, I'm well aware that some people have certain pre-conceived notions about people who play Bridge. Some of those pre-conceived notions are not all that positive. It is probably true that whenever people sit down to play any game of cards and maybe Bridge in particular, how they play and how they behave can sometimes reveal certain aspects of their personality. I have to tread very carefully here as I know there are a fair few Bridge players in front of me. I'm simply making this point because over the years Dickie and I have come to know each other's personalities in a unique kind of way. Dickie was a very experienced and astute Bridge player but what I remember about him was his humility, his kindness, gentleness, generosity and sense of humour. Most of all I remember the utter respect he showed to his partner, be that Joan or someone else, and also to whoever were his 'opponents'. I don't think I ever heard Dickie use the

phrase at the end of a game; 'you should have done this or 'you shouldn't have done that' As I listened to you his family speak about your brother and your dad and your experience of him, I'm fairly certain that how he was at the Card Table was pretty much how he lived his life generally; Selfless, Loyal, reliable, understated putting others first especially Joan and you his family.

From my experience of playing Bridge and indeed any card game I know that there is no great difficulty in playing when you are dealt a really good hand. Equally so there is little difficulty in playing a really bad hand. The challenge comes when you are dealt a hand which is a mixture of good, bad and middle of the road cards. Such a hand requires a lot of skill and a bit of good luck as well. In truth most of our lives reflect that third hand of cards and the story of our life is the account of how we played the hand we were dealt.

Last Friday night, Dickie Dempsey's earthly life came to a close just a few weeks short of his 86th birthday. Dickie's story, his hand of cards is in some sense laid out before us today as we gather here for his funeral mass.

Dickie's life began here in Durrow also on a Friday, the 18th of September 1936. I don't know if Dickie knew this that he was born on the same day as the singer Big Tom. His family ran a farm and also a pub in the Square which I think was located where Bowe's Café now is. Dickie's mother Sarah, who was perhaps the most significant influence in his young life was, I suspect, a woman somewhat ahead of her time. Sarah managed the books and finances in both The Stores and later Whelan's Hardware. Following his early education here in Durrow Dickie spent some time as a boarder in St. Kieran's in Kilkenny, an experience I'm not sure he altogether enjoyed, something else he and I had in common. One of the attractions for Dickie in going to St. Kieran's was his love of hurling and indeed all things GAA a passion he was to retain all his life. Dickie had a particular passion for Laois GAA and he proudly followed any team at any level in either hurling or football that

wore the Blue and white of Laois. Mind you that also reveals the sense of complete loyalty in Dickie's personality. It is easy be loyal to a team and a club and a county that is constantly bringing home silverware. Unfortunately, Laois have not enjoyed too many days of success on the national stage. As a young thirteen-year-old teenager, Dickie went with his mother to the 1949 All Ireland where not only were Laois heavily defeated but it was to be the only time in Dickie's life that we would reach a Senior hurling all Ireland. On many days Dickie left GAA grounds around the country vowing never to support that team again but Loyalty and Laois were in his DNA so he always came back. I'm not sure if he was aware but on the last Sunday of his life Laois Lady Footballers and an under 16 Laois Camogie team both won All Irelands so he might well think things are looking up.

As a young man Dickie became a member of An Garda Siochana and served for thirty years from 1958 to 1988. The first twelve years were spent in Dublin and the last eighteen at The Garda College in Templemore. Following his retirement from the Gardai Dickie embarked on a second career spending ten years working for Meadow Meats in Rathdowney

From my own knowledge of Dickie, I know that he had a very strong Catholic Christian Faith. He very much trusted in His God and He utterly believed that God had always been a guiding force in his life particularly at important moments. When, as a young Garda working in Dublin in the early 1960's he went one night to a dance at The National Ballroom and there he was to meet the love of his life, Joan Spillane from Skibbereen County Cork. Some might feel such a meeting was pure chance, but I know that Dickie believed that God had a very big hand in that encounter which led to fifty seven years of very happy marriage. Dickie was broken-hearted when Joan died just over two months ago and today the two of them are united together in heaven.

As that first reading from The Book of Wisdom refers to, Dickie has sought to please God and God has loved him.....I believe Dickie knew that to be true and so as his earthly life comes to an end he too can say

with St. Paul in that second reading today: *the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.*

Sarah sent me a little reflection for her dad last night and I will end with it today. I think of these words as Dickie's final hope filled message to all of us who knew and loved him... *A silent tear- just close your eyes and you will see all the memories you have of me. Just sit and relax and you will find I'm really there inside your mind.*

Dont cry for me now I'm gone, for I am in the land of song. There is no pain there is no fear, so dry away that silent tear. Don't think of me in the dark and cold for here I am, no longer old. I'm in that place that's filled with love known to you all as up above.

Dickie, united again up above with your beloved Joan, with your parents and with Joe, May your gentle soul rest in Peace.