

The O'Reilly Clan

Elizabeth Reilly examines the history of her family name

The O'Reilly family name is derived from the Gaelic "O'Raghailligh," meaning descendants of Raghaillach.

The O'Reillys were the most powerful sept of the old Gaelic kingdom of Breffny (Cavan and the surrounding counties), and the family is still prominent in the area.

The family has a proud religious tradition. The O'Reillys have served as archbishops of Armagh, and the Franciscan Abbey in Cavan was founded by **Giolla Iosa O'Reilly** and has had 39 O'Reilly abbots.

Among the military members of the clan was the leader of the San Patricios, **John Riley**. The San Patricios were a group of Irish-Americans who, during the Mexican War, deserted the U.S. Army to fight for Mexican leader Santa Anna. The reasoning behind the desertion was two-fold: they felt that they suffered discrimination by non-Catholic members of the American Army and they also disapproved of the treatment of Mexican civilians, priests and nuns throughout the war. John led the San Patricios in five major battles against the Americans, ultimately establishing his unit as a force to be reckoned with. To this day, the flag of the San Patricios continues to fly in his hometown of Clifden, County Galway, and a sculpture stands there in honor of John Riley and the men who served under him.

One of the most extraordinary O'Reillys has to be **John Boyle O'Reilly** (1844-1890). Born in County Louth, he was sent to the penal colony in Australia in 1868 for his involvement with militant Fenian groups. He escaped in 1869, and went on to America. John found work with the *Pilot* newspaper in Boston; he eventually became editor and under his leadership the *Pilot* became one of the most read newspapers in America.

Continuing in the journalistic tradition of his ancestors, **Bill O'Reilly** is one of the most prominent faces of journalism today. Bill's career extends far beyond his current show *The O'Reilly Factor* on Fox News; he has also been an anchor on *Inside Edition*, a correspondent on *ABC*



World News Tonight and has held a variety of reporter and anchor positions at local news stations across the country. He has also penned several books, five of which became best-sellers.

The clan is also well represented in the world of the arts. **John C. Reilly** has established himself as one of the movie actors of the decade. In 2002 he appeared in three films that were nominated for Oscars as best picture, *Gangs of New York*, *The Hours* and *Chicago* (for which he was nominated for an Oscar for best supporting actor). More recently he has made forays into comedy, starring alongside Will Ferrell in *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby* and *Step Brothers*.

Folk singer and guitarist **Paddy Reilly** is one of Ireland's most famous balladeers, best known for his renditions of "The Field of Athenry" and "The Town I Loved So Well." Paddy began his career

as a solo act, touring throughout Ireland, the U.S. and Australia for over 30 years. In 1996, he was approached by the folk group The Dubliners with whom he played until 2005.

Former Top 100 honoree **Heather O'Reilly** is one of the top female soccer players in the country. An Olympic gold medal winner in both 2004 and 2008, Heather was nominated for *Sports Illustrated's* Sportsman of the Year in 2007. **Noel Reilly**, a popular soccer coach in Ireland who passed away earlier this year, also represented the family with distinction. In basketball, **Pat Riley** is one of the best coaches to have graced the NBA, winning championships with the LA Lakers and Miami Heat.

The O'Reilly clan has always been an adventurous one, though none have gone as far as former astronaut **James F. Reilly**, who has logged over 850 hours in space, including five different spacewalks.

Former Irish international rugby player **Tony O'Reilly** has also excelled in the business world. Former CEO and chairman of the Heinz Corporation, Tony co-founded the American Ireland Fund in 1976 and is a Pro-Chancellor of Trinity College, Dublin.

Former *Irish America* Business 100 honoree **John O'Reilly**, is the Chairman and CEO of O'Reilly Law Group, LLC. John has represented such high-profile clients as Olivia Newton-John and Mike Tyson.

Finally, **David O'Reilly**, CEO of Chevron, is the subject of this issue's cover story. Born in Dublin, he graduated from University College, Dublin in 1968 and began working for Chevron that year. Since being named Chairman and CEO, David has scored record profits for Chevron in 2005, 2006, and 2007.



Basketball coach Pat Riley.