



## Tom Foley (1940 – 2016) An Appreciation

It was with great sadness that we, the members of Malahide Regional Bridge Club heard of the recent death of Tom Foley.

Tom was born in Parteen, Co. Clare in 1940. The family later moved to Ennis, where Tom excelled as a very bright student, taking 2<sup>nd</sup> place in Ireland in Honours Maths. Engineering was his first choice as a career, but for practical reasons he chose National Teaching instead. He graduated from St. Patrick's Training College in 1960. His first post was in Naas, Co. Kildare. He moved to O'Connell's Primary, North Richmond Street in 1961. He remained there for the rest of his teaching career finally holding the posts of vice Principal and learning support teacher. Though Tom was at ease giving tuition in advanced differential calculus down to simple quadratic equations, he had an amazing affinity with weak students. He could make what appeared complex and difficult quite simple and understandable. After retiring he did substitution work as a learning support teacher in Holy Family N.S. Rivervalley, where his beloved daughter Marian also taught.

It was not always serious work in O'Connell's. Amusing stories abound regarding Tom. It was the late seventies and the height of the troubles in Northern Ireland. Even here in Malahide every unattended bag or package was looked on with suspicion. One Friday afternoon Tom took a lift home in my car. He threw his briefcase into the booth. We were in deep conversation and he forgot about the bag. On Sunday morning after Mass I returned it to him. Tom headed over to Wrights newsagents placed his briefcase on the floor, paid for his goods and walked home without the briefcase. Later that afternoon the whole village was put on high alert. The Gardaí called in the Army to examine the suspicious object.

Because it was locked they had no choice but to set off a controlled explosion. They discovered an empty lunch box and two sets of copybooks within!!! Some choice language ensued. Tom was called to the station, he didn't bat an eyelid, even reprimanded them for damaging his briefcase. Such was Tom's laid back attitude to life.

On another occasion Tom was travelling home on the train. He dozed off and ended up at Donabate Station. Undaunted, he decided to take the short way home, walking along the railway line. Unfortunately, the story got back to O'Connell Schools. For some time afterwards his fellow teachers were known to hum or whistle the Johnny Cash song - "I walk the line" whenever Tom passed by. They were a friendly bunch in O'Connells.

Tom started bridge in the late seventies. At that time there was a regular game of cards at lunchtime in the school. Séamus Boyle on occasions brought in a hand of bridge to discuss and Tom's curiosity was whetted. A few lessons from John Murray in the local Community School and Tom's bridge career was up and running. He joined St. Marnock's Bridge Club in Portmarnock, and later moved to The Regional in Malahide. He was Captain of Thursday Night for three successive years and was acknowledged as a successful and popular captain. A list of his bridge partners would include Séamus Boyle, Barry Donaldson, Seán O'Mahony, Tom Freeman and Peter Tierney to name but a few. I was fortunate to be his partner for many memorable years on Monday mornings. Tom had a very fixed but sound practical view about bridge – keep it simple, just basic Acol and play your cards well. Adhering to these guidelines we had some success together but most of all relaxed, enjoyable sessions, wonderful memories and a deep and lasting friendship. Tom was courteous to all his partners and was friendly and helpful to anybody who asked for advice or help.

Above all Tom was a family man. His love for Noreen and the family was apparent to all. He was a wonderful dancer, he and Noreen loved to dance the night away. The "Clare Set" was one of his favourites. He enjoyed nothing more than caring for his family, Marian, Enda and Sinéad and his many grandchildren. He could be considered a new-age Dad as he loved to shop for the groceries and was renowned for his curries and homemade chips.

Tom bore his illness in a brave and stoic manner. He spent his last ten weeks in the loving care of the staff at Beech Tree Nursing Home in Old Town, Nth. Dublin. He will be sadly missed by Noreen, his children, grandchildren and many special friends.

*Níl dabht ar bith gur fear thar an gnáth a bhí ann. Mar a dúirt Tomas Ó Croimhthainn "Ní bheidh a leithéid arís ann."*

*I líonta Dé go gcastar sinn.*

Michael Heelan