



Mayo Society of New York

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Founded 1879; incorporated 1891 as Mayo Men's Benefit, Patriot and Social Association of the City of New York; later as Mayo Men's P & B Association and in 1985, gender neutral as the Mayo Society, Inc. of the City of New York.

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NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2022

Regular Meeting Tuesday, June 14, 2022
Where: St. Sebastian Parish Center
39-60 57th Street
Woodside, NY 11377
Time: 7:30 P.M. Sharp
Regular meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month. There are no meetings July & August.

Our President's Note

Dear Members and Friends,

I hope everyone is well and beginning to enjoy the long evenings of the summer rays.

New beginnings as today, I announce that the Mayo Society is offering four (4) scholarships this year:

- (2) scholarships for High School Students in grades 9-12 with awards of \$1,000 and \$500 for the winners
- (2) scholarships awarded for College Students with awards of \$1,000 award \$500 for the winner

All details and topics are available on our website

We are getting ready for our Knock shrine trip to East Durham and lunch thereafter on August 21. If you are interested in going, call me at 347-613-1303. Similar to last year, the bus will leave from St. Sebastian's and Yonkers.

Our June meeting will be a social, so please bring your spouse or friend for a cup of tea and a chat. This is an opportunity for us to encourage new members to join our great Society.

Wishing all the fathers a Happy Father's Day

Have a wonderful summer. Whatever your plans are, be safe.

Mayo for Sam

Mike McMahon
President

Upcoming Events and News

- **2022 Tír na nÓg Children's Festival** on July 29 at 4pm the New York Irish Center, 1040 Jackson Avenue, Queens, NY 11101
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2022-tir-na-nog-childrens-festival-tickets-311241982147>
- **Shilelagh Law's Irish Heritage Night** at Citi Field on August 12 at 5.30pm
https://www.facebook.com/events/citi-field/shilelagh-laws-irish-heritage-night-at-citi-field/452454973201643/?_rdr
- **Golf Outing** — Irish American Building Society on June 30, 2022, at Rockville Links
<https://www.iabsny.com/events/golfouting>
- **Irish American Heritage Celebration** on Saturday, June 25, 2022, at 6:00 pm. Experience an exciting variety of cultures from around the world this summer without leaving Westchester County during the annual Cultural Heritage Celebrations held in county parks. Festivals will be held rain or shine. Seating is informal; bring blankets or folding chairs for seating on the lawn.
<https://westchester.news12.com/westchester-events#!/details/Irish-American-Heritage-Celebration/10372566/2022-06-25T18>
- **Gala 2022:** A Celebration of the Musicals of Harold Prince: Honoring Loretta Brennan Glucksman On Monday, June 13, 2022
<https://irishrep.org/event/2021-2022-season/gala-new/>

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Michael Gaughan

Michael Gaughan was born on 5 October 1949, the oldest of 6 children in Ardnaree, Ballina, Co. Mayo. He grew up on Healy Terrace and was educated in St. Muredach's College in Ballina. He was interested in music, comics, and sport, being a keen follower of the Mayo Senior Gaelic Football Team.

Like many young men in his time, he found opportunities limited at home, so he went to London. There he joined Clann na hÉireann, a support organization for Irish emigrants in England. The organization was also very politically oriented concerning events in the North of Ireland. Michael was recruited into the Official IRA by Danny McElduff who remembered him as cheerful and humorous, but a serious-minded Irish Republican.

Michael was arrested at Liverpool Station in London in May 1971 with three others for his part in a robbery of a bank in Hornsey, North London: as part of a fundraising mission for the IRA. He was also charged with the possession of two revolvers. On 23rd December, he was convicted at The Old Bailey and sentenced to seven years.

He was sent first to Brixton Prison, then to the Wormwood Scrubs Prison for 2 years. His status and treatment was that of a common criminal. Irish Republican Prisoners in the North of Ireland had obtained Special Category status from July of 1972. This was after a Hunger Strike of 40 Republican prisoners in Long Kesh prison in the North of Ireland led by Billy McKee. This did not apply to Irish Republican prisoners in England. He was determined, nonetheless.

He wrote his family: "This month, I am three months in prison and looking back I believe I am a stronger Republican, mentally if not in my body, than when I came in. So, what good does prison do? It has not reformed me, nor has it broken me. The road to freedom knows no stop posts and it is not a road for those who stop to rest." He also joined the Provisional IRA from prison as the Official IRA had moved away from armed struggle.

Michael was transferred to Albany Prison on The Isle of Wight, where he requested political status. This was refused and he was then placed in solitary confinement. He was then transferred to Parkhurst Prison, also on the Isle of Wight. By then there were more Irish Republican prisoners in England. Sisters Dolores and Marian Price went on Hunger Strike demanding to be transferred to a prison in Ireland. They were joined on Hunger Strike on 31 March 1974 by Gerry Kelly, Paul Holm, Hugh Feeney, Michael, and fellow Mayo man Frank Stagg, who came from Hollymount.

The prisoners had a list of Five Demands (some of the same ones later to become iconic in the Hunger Strikes of 1981. They were:

- The right to political status
- The right to wear their own clothes
- A guarantee that they would not be returned to solitary confinement
- The right to educational facilities and not engage in penal labor
- The setting of a reasonable date for a transfer to an Irish prison

On April 10, Michael and Frank Stagg were transferred to the prison hospital. Two weeks later began the force-feeding. The National Hunger Strike committee describes the process: "six to eight guards would restrain the prisoner and drag him or her by the hair to the top of the bed, where they would stretch the prisoner's neck over the metal rail, force a block between his or her teeth and then pass a feeding tube, which extended down the throat, through a hole in the block."

Michael's brother John described his condition after a visit: "His throat had been badly cut by force feeding and his teeth loosened. His eyes were sunken, his cheeks hollow and his mouth was gaping open. He weighed about six stone." He was force fed 17 times from 22 April to June 2. Michael died on June 3rd after a force feeding. His official cause of death was listed as pneumonia. His family maintained his death was actually caused by food being lodged in a lung, punctured by the force feeding. He was 24 years old.

Michael's last message was: "I die proudly for my country and in the hope that my death will be sufficient to obtain the demands of my comrades. Let there be no bitterness on my behalf, but a determination to achieve the New Ireland for which I gladly die. My loyalty and confidence is to the IRA and let those of you who are left carry on the work and finish the fight."

His body was moved for burial in his native County of Mayo as he had wished. An IRA honor guard and 3,000 mourners accompanied his body through Kilburn in London. He had another IRA honor guard in Dublin where his body lay in state at Adam and Eve's Franciscan Church where thousands paid respects. His funeral took place at St. Muredach's Cathedral in Ballina, where over 50,000 attended. The tricolor flag which draped his coffin was the same that had draped the coffin of Terence McSwiney, who died on Hunger Strike in Brixton Prison on Hunger Strike in 1920.

Michael's ballad "Take Me Home To Mayo" written by Seamus Robinson, which tells his story; has become an anthem for his home county.

Kevin Rooney

