

Ah, The Drink

by Larry Strattnr

My mother was Irish as Paddy's pig. So all her family. Lovely people they were. Also, seldom seen among the Folk; stone cold sober.

My father's family; Bavarian German. Bavaria's the wrong side of the German tracks. Frankfort people laugh at Bavarians as people in Montreal laugh at Newfoundlanders or people in Minnesota laugh at Iowans. Bavarians were filed under the heading, bumpkin. My father's family drank copiously. The family motto: Anything worth doing is worth overdoing.

At family reunions where my mother's and father's family were both present the stone cold sober Irishmen watched the red cheeked Germans hoist their glasses. Unlike generic stories recited about the Irish, mother's family didn't seem to have any fun at these reunions. They sat about, hands in laps, dourly observing.

Amusingly, more than one of my father's family married into the Irish gene pool. Some of the offspring grew the wild hairs of both cultures. Some did not.

All were Catholic. As Quebecois and Newfies are different Canadians, there are different kinds of Catholic. The Irish in my Mother's family lived the ascetic. The Germans in my Father's went to confession after having not.

You didn't want to be around the Germans when the gin came out. My father's people, all businessmen and professionals, favored gin Martinis. Read the label on a Bombay gin bottle sometime. Gin is steamed through a variety of herbs, many capable of killing you. Kids on both side of the genetic stream learned to get lost at Martini time. Things could get a bit testy.

My mother's family passed away one by one over the years with nary a whimper. A few years before he died my father stopped drinking. He acknowledged his tastes of the dew may have caused him to occasionally choose the wrong crayon while coloring our lives. More on the subject he did not offer.

After my father, my mother passed away; like the rest of her family, without fanfare. She seldom spoke ill of family drinking history. Neither did she seem to cherish any of its memories.

Years have gone by. I and my brothers and sisters have all had our battles with drink and sobriety. I would score us; mostly winning. None of us celebrate Saint Patrick's Day. Oktoberfest either.

Sláinte Mhath.

