

'A vividly humane account'

Page Turner /

Edited by Peter McDermott

Danny Morrison's "Then The Walls Came Down," which was first published in 1999 to favorable reviews, went out of print earlier this year. However, it's now been made available on Kindle with additional material, some of it political, that had been excluded from the original for reasons of space.

"It's a collection of my prison letters from Crumlin Road Jail and the H-Blocks before, during and after the IRA ceasefire," Morrison said of the book. "It is very personal, about my relationship with my partner and the difficulties imprisonment imposes on relationships. But it is also about how I viewed the early stages of the peace process."

A reviewer in the Irish Times said it was "remarkable as a human document" and another in the same paper described it as "one of the most important books to emerge from the conflict in Northern Ireland" and as a "vividly humane account of life in prison."

A Belfast Telegraph reviewer had praised Morrison's 1997 novel "The Wrong Man" in similar terms, saying it "should



Danny Morrison. PHOTO BY BOBBIE HANVEY

come to be regarded as one of the most important books of the Troubles." The Sunday Times' recommended it as a "powerful and complex piece of storytelling," while "The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature" called the novel "a powerful evocation of betrayal, deceit and guilt."

As well as his career as a writer and commentator, the former republican prisoner is secretary of the Bobby Sands Trust and was chairperson of Féile an Phobail from 2004-2014.

Morrison, Sinn Féin's na-

tional director of publicity from 1979-1990 and an Assembly member for Mid-Ulster from 1982-1986, was well-known as the first to articulate the "Armalite and ballot box" strategy, which, he has said, "argued for the party to engage with and embrace electoral politics."

DANNY MORRISON

Date of birth: Jan. 9, 1953

Place of birth: at home, 17 Corby Way, Andersonstown

Spouse: Leslie Van Slyke

Children: three sons, to two earlier relationships

Residence: Andersonstown, Belfast

Published works: "West Belfast" (1989); "On The Back of The Swallow" (1994); "The Wrong Man" (1997); and "Rudi - In The Shadow of Knulp" (2012); "Then The Walls Came Down" (1999 and 2016); a memoir - "All The Dead Voices" (2002); a play - "The Wrong Man" (2005), and some scenes for the play "Binlids" (1998); a collection of political writings - "Rebel Columns" (2004); and editor of a literary anthology - "Hunger Strike: Reflections on the 1981 Hunger Strike" (2006). My short stories have appeared in a number of publications and have been broadcast on BBC, RTE and Lyric FM.

What is your writing routine? Are there ideal conditions?

I write in my upstairs study but I take notes everywhere, and at any time, whenever an idea comes into my head or I want to remember a snatch of conversation. I was at a residential in Berlin last year for some dedicated writing. But I also - unexpectedly - wrote the last chapter of "The Wrong Man" at Heathrow when my flight had been delayed.

What advice do you have for aspiring writers?

To write is to practice to write, to be always experimenting, to feel comfortable with words and sentences, where they sit, how they sound, do they communicate meaning and mood.

One of the most important things one must do is: read! By reading classics - novels which have withstood the test of time - you will learn how the masters carried off certain effects, how they were in control of their material and how that material immortalised an imaginary life.

Name three books that are memorable in terms of your reading pleasure.

"Anna Karenina" by Leo Tolstoy; "Alone in Berlin" by Hans Fallada; "Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee" by Dee Brown.

What book are you currently reading?

"Fear" by Gabriel Chevallier.

Is there a book you wish you had written?

"The Butcher Boy" by Pat McCabe.

Name a book that you were pleasantly surprised by.

"Brideshead Revisited" by Evelyn Waugh.

If you could meet one author, living or dead, who would it be?

Oscar Wilde.

What is your favorite spot in Ireland?

Black Mountain, above West Belfast.

You're Irish if...

You were born in Ireland, practice kindness, tolerance and hospitality, and go with the flow.

MARGARET M. JOHNSON'S

Favorite

FLAVORS of IRELAND

Signed copies available from www.irishcook.com

The Irish Echo Quiz

- "Make a new plan, Stan" is one recommendation given by Paul Simon in which of his songs?
- The Faroe Islands are an autonomous country within which European state?
- Kathleen Sibelius was Democratic governor of Kansas from 2003-2009. Her father Jack Gilligan had the same job (1971-1975) and for the same party in which other Midwestern state?
- Who wrote the novel "Vanity Fair" (1848)?
- Name the world champion boxer who was born to Irish immigrant parents in Greenwich Village, New York City, on May 25, 1897.
- The north of which Irish county is classified as being in the Mid-West Region with the south in the South-East Region?
- What Tennessee-born singer (1894-1937) was known as the "Empress of the Blues"?
- The first crosstown matchup between the NY Yankees and the NY Mets in a World Series took place in 2000, 2001 or 2002?
- Name the County Clare-born (Dec. 15, 1930) novelist who has written biographies of James Joyce and Lord Byron.
- The title of the Oscar-winning film "Spotlight" (2015) refers to a team of investigative reporters working for which East Coast daily newspaper?

Answers are on Page 15.