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LEE CARR

The Luck of the Irish

OPPORTUNITY ALWAYS SEEMED to knock at Louis Carr Jr.'s door. You might even call it the luck of the Irish.

Better known as Lee, the retired 77-year-old last Sunday served as the grand marshal for the 5th Annual Rumson St. Patrick's Day Parade.

Grandson of Irish immigrants, he grew up in Spring Lake, nicknamed the Irish Riviera due to the number of residents who trace their roots to the Emerald Isle. Once married, he settled in Little Silver to raise two children and now spends half the year at his home in Jupiter, Florida, and half in a cottage-like house on a bluff overlooking the Navesink River in Middletown.

He comes from what he jokingly calls a "small" Irish family – only four children.

"My mother was one of nine children. She was number seven, I guess, and she was a character," he said. "My father was quiet and reserved and my mother was a little bit ... unfortunately, she was like me," he said with a grin. "She had a gleam in the eye. She liked to joke around."

His maternal grandparents, Mary and Denis Gallagher, were born and raised in Sligo, Roscommon, immigrated in the early 1900s and settled in New Jersey.

Carr attended St. Catharine School in Spring Lake and St. Rose High School in Belmar. While there, the tall teenager played basketball.

"I was good in basketball, and we had a very good basketball team, but I was not (NCAA) Division I caliber," he said.

But a scout from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York, a Division III school, saw him play and offered him a scholarship.

"At that time my dad said he couldn't finance a college education for all of us and I should take the offer," Carr said. "My sisters – Peggy, Denny and Ellen – looked at dad, looked at me, and said, 'Why does he get to be the chosen one?'"

"Well, at that time, men were the breadwinners," he explained.

"My sisters and I were real candid with each other – no holds barred – but we were a very close family, very. It came naturally," he said, adding later in life the siblings were texting buddies.

But the bottom line, he said, the scholarship was an opportunity.

After graduating, he spent the next five years on ships, one of three deck officers who reports to the captain. The ships carried goods for corporate America. During wartime, the Merchant Marine delivers troops and war materiel.

"I saw the world, but I also saw terrible poverty," he said. "I remember once walking the streets in Pusan in South Korea when a honey bucket came splashing down and splattered on me."

"You see things like this. Then you come home and some guy is complaining because his Ferrari broke down," Carr said. "It brings things into perspective."

That's one reason why, after becoming successful in the financial industry, he wanted to do the right thing, like his parents taught him to do. He gives back by supporting charities including the Parker Family Health Center in Red Bank, Riverview Medical Center in Red Bank, Jupiter Medical Center in Florida, and the Family and Children's Association on Long Island.

Like all sailors, he would be gone for months at a time and visited family on his return. During one visit home he met his future wife, Barbara Ann Lass (daughter of Ernest Lass, a former owner of the Asbury

Park Press), who lived in Interlaken and graduated from Asbury Park High School.

"I met her at a bar in Sea Girt, the Sandbar, on a Friday," he said. "All those years both of us lived at the Shore and we'd never met before."

Meanwhile, he was living with two other bachelors in New York City.

"On Sunday I asked Barb if she wanted to drive up to New York with me. She also lived there," he said. "We get to New York and we discover we live in the same apartment building. It just seemed like destiny to me."

Another opportunity. They will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary this year.

Having found the right girl, Carr decided to leave the shipping business. One thing about serving on board a ship for six months, you accrue a lot of vacation time.

"I was sitting on the beach while my father and all my buddies were working," he said. "So Dad tells me to get my fanny over to the Spring Lake Golf Club and start caddying."

Carr had been offered a job as a terminal manager in Jacksonville, Florida, for SeaLand, a worldwide container shipping company.

This opportunity he declined. He didn't want to leave the Jersey Shore.

Now, a few years shy of 30, he met Allen

Cameron on the golf course who saw something in the lad (as they say in Ireland). He asked Carr to come see him in Manhattan about a job.

Talk about opportunities!

Carr was hired as an investment banker at Morgan Stanley, a worldwide financial services corporation. When the company expanded into sales and trading in 1975, Carr said, he was wooed to the new department by Richard B. Fisher, who became president and chairman of the firm. He also became Carr's mentor.

"He was great. He was well-rounded. He was an amazing guy," Carr said. "He was the only man I ever met who could have a beer at The Waterfront at 11 and give a keynote address at the Waldorf at noon."

Carr's user-friendly personality worked in his favor.

"I really enjoyed the job, especially the customer relations part of the business," he said. "Client relations were easy for me."

But after 9/11, when he was in his 60s and a managing director, he decided to retire. It wasn't any one thing, he said, but he attended 10 funerals, including one for a co-worker's husband at Cantor Fitzgerald whose offices at One World Trade Center were destroyed and 68 percent of its workforce killed.

"Everyone was concerned about me

retiring," he said. "I've adjusted. I keep occupied."

His daughter Tamara manages a charitable trust and lives in Brooklyn with her husband who works for the parochial school system. They have one daughter.

Son Tom and his wife live in Rumson and have four boys. He likes coaching and plans to open a sports camp for children and adults on the former Fort Monmouth campus.

While in Florida, Carr swims, plays cards and golfs. When at the Jersey Shore, he spends time with his sisters and 23 nieces and nephews and his racehorses, which he said, are like family.

He formed a syndicate, the BDL Stables, with his friends Bob Jones and Denis Lynch. Their horse, No Brody No, named after Carr's young mischievous grandson, won a race at Monmouth Park, Oceanport, where the horses are stabled during the season.

"Life is good. I've got no complaints," he said. "I'm not an advice giver or a philosophical man."

"But I am glad I didn't get on that flight to Jacksonville," he said.

BY GRETCHEN C. VAN BENTHUYSEN

DANNY SANCHEZ

