The sun rose early on Saturday 4th June in Lanesboro and the promise of the weather forecasters were coming to fruition. Both Lanesboro and Ballyleague were in pristine condition – the tidy towns committees on both sides were making our twin villages look beautiful. Where else would anyone want to be on a beautiful day as you crossed the bridge and see the flowing waters of the Shannon mirroring the sunshine rays. This day of all days was going to be a proud day for the area and it was only right that the good Lord decided to bask us in sunshine. In the days leading to Saturday more and more faces of old started to appear in and around town and there was a great sense of excitement and anticipation.

Lanesboro Community College was about to celebrate its 50th Jubilee.

For the past 50 years Lanesboro ‘tech’ as it was more commonly known in years gone by provided thousands of students not only with a well-rounded education but a terrific insight in the world as it prepared its students for a bright new world of work and further education. The ‘tech and community college’ can be proud of its achievements since its inception and there was not a greater testimony to the regard the school was held than by the turnout of past pupils that travelled from all over the world to be part of the celebrations on the day.

Many months of hard work went into the preparations and the school was in pristine condition as no stone was left unturned in the preparation. The bunting was a sign of welcome and a marquee had to be brought on to the school grounds to cater for the huge number that accepted the invitation to attend the celebrations. It was truly a magical feeling to see so many returning and enjoying the festivities. A stage was also erected where the present day students performed so well in entertaining the vast numbers and showing that the school remains laden with talent.

The opening of the school in Lanesboro must have been tremendously exciting as Lanesboro and Ballyleague were in the initial stages of Bord na Mona and ESB and becoming an emerging town. To be part of this fantastic development must have been very special. Little did Tom Maloney, the first school Principal and the members of staff and the school’s first students realise the footprint they were about to set for the history of the school. The first students in the school were Gene Byrne, Johnny Carberry, Vincent Casey, Seanie Connaughton, Michael Carroll, Ollie Curran, John Clyne, Tom Clyne, Joe Donlon, Kevin Donlon, Patrick Donlon, Mickie Donlon, Michael Duignan, Francis Egan, T.J. Eivers, Joe Fallon, P.J. Fallon, Michael Fox, John Gallagher, Manus Gallagher, Brendan Gilmore, Tom Ginty, Fergus Hanley, Jimmy Hanley, Liam Hyland, Cyril Hussey, David Johnston, Mickie Connaughton, Sean Judge, Joe Kenny, Evoy, John Mc Cormack, Brendan Mc Dermott, Peter Mc Kenna, Pat Monaghan, James Mullooly, Noel Murphy, Des Murray, Mickie Murray, Ray Murray, Tom Nolan, Bobby O’Neill, Mickie O’Sullivan, Seanie Reynolds, James Scally, John Walsh, T.J. Walsh, Brendan Ward, Jimmy Dennigan, Sean Hanley, Bridie Carberry, Marie Carberry, Maura Clyne, Mary Connaughton, Bridie Davis, Chrissie Dennigan, Annie Donlon, Bridie Donlon, Margaret Donlon, Mary Donlon, Olive Donlon, Mary Dowd, Patsy Eivers, Betty Farrell, Bridget Farrell, Veronica Farrell, Patsy Fayne, Margaret Feehily, Mary Feehily, Gabriel Feeney, Eileen Ginty, Mary Harold, Chrissie Heavey, Bridie Hoare, Teresa Hoare, Sheila Johnston, Margaret Kearney, Mary Kelly, Anne Kenny, Mary Masterson, Anne Merley, Mary Mullooly, Jacinta Mullooly, Rose O’Neill, Eileen O’Neill, Margaret Scally, Carmel Skelly, Joan Skelly, Frances Slevin and Catherine Wrafter.

The surviving first pupils were rightly afforded a special distinction by being invited to a special celebratory lunch and reunion before the days events got into full swing. During the lunch the schools first principal Tom Maloney spoke eloquently of the opening of the school and the excitement and determination of the first teaching staff and pupils and present principal Jimmy Flanagan then invited Tom to cut the Jubilee cake. Immediately following lunch Willie Dennigan parents council unveiled a specially commissioned stain glass window commemorating the 50th Jubilee. St. Mary’s church was filled to overflowing for a special jubilee Mass where chief concelebrant was Fr. Mickie Reilly who was joined on the altar by Fr. George Balfe, Canon Jeremiah Macaulay and Rev, Sandra Lindsay.

After the mass everybody made their way to the school where the parents association had a fabulous spread for our guests. People made their way around class rooms, met long lost friends and went for a wander down memory lane! There was a display in the assembly hall which included memorabilia, newspaper clippings and correspondence which drew crowds as they studied old photos to spot themselves and their pals. A timeline poster which people could sign and an altar of remembrance where we were able to write the names of those who are no longer with us into a special book of condolences for which a mass will be offered. Later a buffet was served and many people spent the evening just chatting afterwards in the comfort of the Marquee and browsing through the Jubilee booklet with articles by past students and photos galore.

And of course there were speeches! Jimmy Flanagan opened proceedings followed by Tom Maloney, Michael Lennon, Padraic Best, Sr Judith, Michael Lyons and the CEO of the VEC, Rosemary Johnston. Jimmy Flanagan spoke eloquently of Bart as a colleague and a leader whose influence can still be felt in the day to day life of the College which he laboured so well in. An unveiling of a plaque in recognition of Bart Clancy 36 years as principal of our school was carried out by Michael Clancy followed by a very touching presentation of a bog oak piece by Peter Clancy on behalf of the family to the school after which he said a few words summing up his feelings on this special day. To finish off the official ceremonies there was a tree planting ceremony by Michael Connaughton on behalf of the 60’s class, Sr. Judith on behalf of the 89 class and Daniel Barry on behalf of the class of 2011.

Thank you all, for supporting us, for coming to our school and for making the day one to remember. We look forward to a bright future for this school and for all those who are connected with it.

Ar Aghaidh le Chéile.

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