

MARCH 28, 1985

St. Patrick's Day, I think, is a special holiday. Colorful and spirited. An independent event that brings out the fun in life, the mischief and the fairy stories that lie underneath the drabness that too much responsibility brings.

Being from a quarter to half blood Irish, I relate freely with them. Not too long ago I spent an evening with a person from Northern Ireland. He was a royalist and a staunch outspoken supporter of Mrs. Thatcher's government.

True to his heritage he was a grand storyteller and a lively actor. He was a table pounding orator inspired by a fierce dedication to his cause for his home land.

It was my first experience with a political activists. In other times, I had watched the turmoil and tumult that go with the victories and defeats of the Dallas Cowboys. On other occasions I had witnessed Democrats and Republicans scowling at each other, separated from certain bloodshed by a mere TV moderator to arbitrate the event. The closest I had ever come to violence was inviting an insurance adjuster to settle a claim on the front end of my pickup by meeting me in an open grave with bowie knives, and that was only for effect.

But here was a man who was part of a war that had lasted so long that it was a part of his people's culture. The best civil war ever fought should have been kept a secret. This outrage (and these are my opinions) had become filler for the press. Yet as I watched his body tighten and quiver along the necklines, I knew that it was more than a flash across the screen of helmeted English troopers carrying guns or people fleeing from the streets from a burst of gun fire.

I was forced to listen so long that I was afraid I'd lost my voice. Finally I became so restless that I began to throw in lead words trying to break up the monologue. I wasn't having a bit of luck until I blurted out that I knew now St. Patrick didn't have much trouble leading all those Irish snakes out into the sea; from what I was hearing him say, the snakes were probably eager to move and St. Patrick merely offered the opportunity for them to change islands.

Well, it sure shut down that Irish war song. One time I had to tell an old gal that was all caught up over her great grandpa helping conquer the Shortgrass Country from the Indians that it never would have happened if the redmen had actually wanted to own such a dry country. Like those Irish snakes, or like I think those Irish snakes were, the Indians weren't going to stay out here waiting for a rain or a fat buffalo to stray off the plains. It was our forefathers that set deep stakes in the ground and laid out the fences. Until then the tribes just used the area for a short cut to get to better hunting grounds.

When I got home that night I read in the World Book that St. Patrick had converted over 100,000 heathens in old Ireland. The part about the snakes was unclear. I am not taking any bets, but I think he was an opportunist. Once the Irish guy got off the war, he was great fun to talk to.