**Colonel Thomas J. Cunningham Jr.**

**25th Anniversary Remarks – February 8, 2023**

**Jay McCarthy, President**

**Thank everyone for joining us this evening at Finnegan’s Pub to recognize and reminisce the 25th Anniversary of the Colonel Thomas J. Cunningham Jr. Division.**

**Who is Col. Cunningham?**

**Our Division honors Col. Thomas J. Cunningham.  In the words of one of our original members, the late Ned Woisard, “Thomas J. Cunningham, Jr. was a gentleman — and a gentle man. He was considerate, kind, outgoing, warm, friendly. He personified the Christian ideal — wherever he went, he sowed joy. He was a communicator! He was trained in communications; he practiced communications; toward the end, in a sense, he taught communications.”**

Tom was born in Pittsburgh on September 19, 1918, found his way to the University of Indiana for his Bachelor’s Degree, then to American University for a Master’s Degree in Public Relations. He enlisted in the U.S. Army as a private in 1941 and, 26 years later, retired as a colonel. While in the Army, he was a communicator. **In Vietnam, he was Chief of Communications for General Westmoreland, was responsible for Radio Saigon and was a major factor in introducing military and civilian television into the Republic of Vietnam.** Tom was editor of ARMOR MAGAZINE and European editor of STARS AND STRIPES, the two largest circulation publications in the Armed Services. Among other awards, he received THE LEGION OF MERIT and the BRONZE STAR.

Later as a civilian, Tom directed communications and magazine programs for five national organizations, including the National Defense Transportation Association, and the Retired Officers Association. Toward the end of his life, he was a Communications and Marketing Consultant to the American Road and Transportation Builders Association and the American Society of Naval Engineers. Tom was a communicator to the end.

Looking at the more personal side, Tom was Vice President of the Col. Fitzgerald Division, the largest AOH Division in Virginia, and a Fourth Degree Knight of Columbus. He was also a daily communicant, an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist, and an altar server (when needed). **He was a true Christian, always a source of joy to those around him, always a calming influence in times of stress, always willing to pitch in and help — or take the lead if necessary.** He was a most convivial spirit, good company, a friend to all. **Tom was an outstanding communicator and, most of all, he communicated love!**

**Thomas J. Cunningham entered eternal life on June 26, 1995**. One of his four daughters, Barbara Lynn, predeceased him in 1953 and his wife, Marcella, died in 1997. His surviving daughters are Connie Venberg of Paradise Valley, Arizona; Sally Dina of Brentwood, Tennessee; Kathryn Starr, of Roswell, Georgia. One of his three brothers, Martin, of Annandale, Virginia, is a member of the Cardinal Cushing Division of the AOH.

This description may make Tom appear to be a saint and it would not surprise me a bit if he were standing in the presence of the Lord right now! But let’s play it safe! Please keep Tom in your prayers – and also the Col. Thomas J. Cunningham, Jr. Division of the Ancient Order of Hibernians!

**Acknowledge our Past Presidents**

James Burke (deceased)

Steve Hanley  (deceased)

Bill Halpin

Mike Hippchen

Bob Anderson

John O’Hara (deceased)

Jim Sinnott

David Lawlor

Bob Fay

Jay McCarthy (currently serving 2, 2 year terms) - PSP

Cole Slattery

Bob Carmack

Jay McCarthy

**Charities**

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|  | **Charity** | **Form of Charity** |
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| 1 | Martinsburg VAMC | Veterans Support |
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| 2 | FFAI (Freedom for all Ireland) | Irish Solidarity Support |
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| 3 | Boys/Girls State | Youth Support |
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| 4 | Archdiocese of Military Services | Military Chaplain Support |
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| 5 | SMA Fathers | Missionary Chaplain Support |
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| 6 | Irish Culture of Life, LLC | Virginia Irish Culture Support |
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| 7 | Project St. Patrick | Nat'l Seminarian/Priest Support |
|  |  |  |
| 8 | OLOH School | Youth Support - Tuition Assistance |
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| 9 | St. Joseph School | Youth Support - Tuition Assistance |
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| 10 | St. Theresa School | Youth Support - Tuition Assistance |
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| 11 | St. Catherine of Sienna - CCD Support | Youth Support - Tuition Assistance |
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| 12 | Arlington Diocese (Catholic Charities) | Catholic Community Support |
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| 13 | Birthright | Right to Life Support |
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| 14 | Hibernian Hunger Project | Nat'l Hunger Relief Support |
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| 15 | Fr. Farrell (Chaplain) GMU Projects | Young Adult Support |
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| 16 | Diocesan Gaelic Mass | Religious Support |
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| 17 | VFW - Leesburg | Local Veteran Support |
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| 18 | CTR - CCD Support | Youth Support - Tuition Assistance |
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| 19 | St. John the Apostle - CCD Support | Youth Support - Tuition Assistance |
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| 20 | St. Francis - CCD Support | Youth Support - Tuition Assistance |

**Approximately $17K distributed each year over the past 3 years**

**Upcoming activities**

Wednesday, February 8th - Cunningham Division 25th Anniversary gathering at Finnegan's Pub starting at 6:15 pm

There will be no Division Business meeting in February due to the anniversary party....

Saturday, February 25th - Annual St. Patrick's coloring contest - awards will be presented at GMU Chapel by State/Division Chaplain Fr. Farrell

Wednesday, Marth 1st - Monthly Officer's meeting at McCarthy Pub @ 7 pm

Saturday, March 4th - Annual Ballyshaner's St. Patrick parade in Alexandria - muster @11:30, parade 12:30 pm

Wednesday, March 8th - Monthly Division meeting @ St. Theresa's school @ 7:30 pm

Saturday, March 11th - Annual Manassas St. Patrick parade - muster @ 10 am, parade 11 am

Saturday, March 11th - Annual St. Patrick's Dinner @ OLOH starting at 6:30 pm (details to follow)

Monday, March 13th - Annual Gaelic Mass @ St. James Church @ 7 pm

Friday, March 17th - Annual St. Patrick's raffle kickoff @ Finnegan's Pub starting at 10 am

Sunday, March 19th - Cunningham Corporate Communion @ St. Theresa 10 am Mass followed by brunch at Finnegan's Pub

Wednesday, April 5th - Monthly Officer's meeting at McCarthy Pub @ 7 pm

Wednesday, April 12th - Division Business meeting at St. Theresa school @ 7:30 pm

Thursday, July 13th - VA State Convention golf outing (details to follow)

Friday - Sunday, July 14th - 16th - VA State convention in Alexandria (details to follow)

Thursday, October 19th - "1/2 Way to St. Patrick's" Trip for 2 to Ireland raffle night (details to follow)

**Closing Poem**

May good luck be with you Wherever you go, and your blessings outnumber the shamrocks that grow. May your days be many and your troubles be few, May all God's blessings descend upon you, May peace be within you, May your heart be strong, May you find what you're seeking wherever you roam.

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Jay McCarthy, President