



Tell Us Your Story

Pat Gorham



My father’s ancestors came from Ireland. My mother’s came from just across the Irish Sea - England. Yet, their cultures could not be more different.

Growing up in Buffalo, NY, I was immersed in Irish culture. This included St. Patrick’s Day Parades, Step Dance, sing-alongs, and especially storytelling. Most of the stories told revolved around family, living paycheck to paycheck, and enjoying the simple pleasures of life. They loved to joke, especially about themselves. Above all, they loved to connect with others.

My mother’s family was a bit quieter and more reserved. Even their pastimes were more subdued: reading, painting, gardening, and tinkering in Grandpa’s workshop.

My parents could not be more different, yet they balanced one another. This led to thought-provoking discussions. One in particular stands out. My father prided himself on striking up lively conversations with strangers. My mother, on the other hand, gave a nod and a smile but remained silent.

After one spontaneous conversation, my mother whispered, “Joe, what if the person is shy? What if they are immersed in thought? Perhaps not all strangers want to engage in a conversation.”

There were no right and wrong answers. There were just different perspectives, upbringings, and personalities.

Photo: At first glance, my parents appeared similar. Their ancestors grew up just 12 miles apart, divided by the Irish Sea. Yet their heritage and family traditions were worlds apart.

