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## SHAY ELLIOTT – A SPORTING LIFE.

By

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On a cold blustery night in September 1951 the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Dublin Wheelers Cycling Club was held in an antiquated Georgian tenement house in Pearce Street. Dublin. Ireland. The sturdy oak door groaned when I pushed it open and I found myself in a dank musty hallway. Rays of weak yellow light filtered in through a grimy fanlight as I groped my way in the semi-darkness. Ghosts of a more leisurely era accompanied me up a creaky staircase of shining banisters rails, mildewed lace curtains and brass stair rods. When I entered the meeting room I was met with the clamouring voices of cyclists from the racing and touring sections of the club. I was asked to identify myself which I did and was duly impressed with the formality of it all. I found a seat and sat down. Behind a long table a grim faced committee was trying to impose order on the unruly throng. I had just turned 17 years old and was about to become a member of the famous cycling club.

If I could back-pedal for a moment to try to give an idea of Dublin in the late 40's and early 50's as a backdrop to the immense popularity of

bicycle racing in Ireland.

Post world war II Dublin was in the throes of social unrest caused by high unemployment, poverty, and unending labour strikes. Roaming gangs, in particular the Animal Gang out of Gardiner Street and the Hawks Nest Gang from Dominick Street terrorized the inner city. Parishes were seldom ventured out of. Every crammed tenement house bred Artful Dodgers and other candidates for nearby Mountjoy Jail, known colloquially as 'the Joy'. In this landscape a descent to the nether regions of crime and incarceration was a rite of passage; fragile blossoms withered on the bough in the arid environment of the inner city. Established families lived in dread of being separated from lifelong neighbours and resettled in the new outlying 'Corpnoration' estates of Cabra, Drimnagh and Finglas; areas according to writer Brendan Behan, where they ate their young. In desperation thousands took to the mailboats from the North Wall to begin new lives in Great Britain, Canada, the USA and Australia. Winston Churchill was heard to quip that Ireland could have the six counties of the North if the Irish returned Liverpool and Birmingham.

Infectious bacterial diseases were rampant in Dublin. In 1948 Ireland had the highest infant mortality rate in Europe. Over 10 % of the lower income groups, mostly children, died of or were infected with tuberculosis, chickenpox, diphtheria, whooping cough, scurvy, scabies, measles, mumps and ringworm. In 1950, five years after the end of World War Two and six hundred years after the 14<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance, Ireland was the last medieval jewel in the Vatican's crown. The Knights of St Columbanus were feverishly proscribing the most gifted writers and intellectuals of western civilization from Huxley to Sartre. The power and prestige of Archbishop John Charles McQuaid rivaled that of the Jesuit monk Torquemada in the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain in 1483. And if Dublin lacked Auto-da-fe's and garroting, heads rolled nevertheless when John Charles invoked Article 44 of the Constitution, which he co-authored, and flexed his political muscle; witness his scuppering of the Mother and Child scheme of the innovative Minister of Health Dr. Noel Browne. But for all that and the penurious squalor of the inner city we

were a happy lot. Knowledge, however modest, would have had to accept a measure of guilt for its acquisition if it compromised the serenity of our blissful ignorance.

It was an age of innocence, of sodalities, penny candles and midnight Masses, of miraculous medals and regular sightings of the Venerable Matt Talbot and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Pompous Bishops emblazoned in gold vestments served Mass, glowing in the candle-lit luminescence of the High Altar of the Pro Cathedral. Angelic altar boys in black soutanes and white surplices chanted Latin hymns in candlelight processions amid the crumbling tenements of Marlborough Street. At 16 years old we played spin-the-bottle, drank fizz and had a first shave with a Macs Smile. A Kingston shirt made all the difference when with a tremulous heart one savoured a first kiss.

Dublin's inner city in winter was like a setting for a Becket play. Beneath the claustrophobic dome of the night sky the buckling walls of decaying tenement houses were buttressed up by massive wood beams. Whole families often occupied one single room. The nefarious glimmer man made his nightly rounds dimming the sputtering gas globes of fin de siècle lampposts in streets lost in shadow and despair. Dublin's gothic skyline always seemed less pervading in the darkness than in the harsh light of day.

This was the setting then that brought one to the sport. Bicycle racing offered a chance to travel, to breathe fresh air, to escape the grim environment of a Dickensian Dublin.

Every Sunday morning in the social season, ( that is the non-racing time of year ) I left the myopic confines of Parnell Street and cycled with the Dublin Wheelers into the countryside. The Clonee / Dunshaughlin / Navan / Trim circuit was most favoured for touring. Apart from the occasional farm tractor the roads were usually devoid of traffic. Mulhuddart and Clonee were sleepy villages awakened only on the day of an all-Ireland final or horseracing at Fairyhouse. After Black Bull the Navan Road weaved in cloistered silence under canopies of oak

trees. Church bells tolled in the distance in a Turner landscape of flocks and herds and startled wildlife. The spinning tyres of the bicycle wheels alone disturbed the pastoral stillness.

Once my cycle racing career was launched in 1952 I rode with bravado and feared no one. Initial failures only served to intensify my insatiable greed for trophies and public veneration and unabashed I climbed hills with the indomitable spirit of Sisyphus. By the time I discovered I couldn't go for a message on the bike I was already too committed to turn back. Whilst my Dublin Wheelers clubmates cavorted in the Crystal and Metropole and Balalaika Ballrooms I wore out my John Bull tyres training on the Swords, Howth, Clontarf circuit in the dreary depths of winter. Big miles and ambition would circumvent my lack of natural talent, I was certain of it. I knew one day I would join my hero Fausto Coppi in the Bianchi team. We would share podiums in Paris and Rome while the monk Bartali seethed with rage.

In the rough and tumble sport of cycle racing many events ended in flared tempers and angry exchanges. In the longer, tougher races hardworking roadmen were plagued by opportunist sprinters and trackmen who often stole the fruits of victory in the last 20 yards of a race, having 'sat' on a breakaway group for 20 or 30 miles. All that was about to change as a different caliber of rider, more forceful and aggressive ushered in the new decade of the 50's.

John Lackey and Shay Elliott were among those riders who made life very difficult for the sprinters and hangers-on. Lackey aptly fit the popular axiom 'savage roadman' which he himself coined. The winner of over 200 races Lackey was perhaps more intimidated than any other rider by Elliott's presence in a race. It was more than the aversion a proud man feels in ceding to an adversary; Elliott's pure class mesmerized him. Lackey was a talented Salieri, living his life in another's shadow. John was not gifted anatomically, as Elliott was for the unnatural sport of cycling racing. His wide shoulders hindered him aerodynamically and he had a peculiar habit of twisting in the saddle to maximize his final rush to the line. But what he lacked in finesse he more than compensated for by being fiercely combative. An intensely private man he hid his

feelings behind a veneer of jovial buffoonery, a hail-fellow-well-met Falstaff whose loud bellowing laugh echoed in pelotons and dressing rooms. After he retired from racing Lackey went on to organize and direct multi stage races. His own life was to end in very tragic circumstances.

No one who knew the Elliott family in the early 1950's could possibly envisage the series of tragic events that would befall each family member barely two decades hence. Shay's father Jim owned a garage and filling station on the South Circular Road in Kilmainham, Dublin. After some difficult years the business was at last turning around and doing well at about the time Shay's amateur career was taking off. Jim had been a champion racing motorcyclist in his day with many successes. He was a tall man, patrician in bearing with a strong face, an aquiline nose and silvery hair. One would never guess that this gentle mild mannered man had been engaged in the savagery of the Irish Civil war. Shay's mother Nell was a member of the Cumann na Mban. Some stories Jim shared with me including his friendship with Liam Mellows were vivid moments out of the history of the Irish struggle for Independence.

Nell, nee Ellen Farrell, was a gentlewoman from an old Westmeath family. She was an avid gardener and a great cook as I would happily discover. When the family moved to Crumlin, a suburb of Dublin she went everywhere on an old 'upstairs' bicycle complete with front basket. In later years she confided many stories to me of when the family was young and their horizons so bright with hope. When Nell met Jim Elliott she got caught up in his world of fishing and wildfowling as indeed I would in time. She once remarked to me that she seemed to spend all of her life plucking feathers. Always prim and sedate as a young woman it was Jim's love of wildfowling that brought out an adventurous streak in her. On many a night Jim took Nell with him while 'lamping' for rabbits on the plains of Kildare. She sat on the car roof with a spotlight and lit up the pitch-black fields where Jim was hunting. Rabbit soup and game were high on the culinary agenda when the boys were young. She was thrilled about Shays successes on the bike and went to watch most of the races he was involved

in. I believe it was Jim and Nell's unwavering encouragement and belief in him and that formed the core of Shay's inner strength. The eldest brother Eddy, staunch and dependable would be a great support when Shay retired from cycling and returned home from France. Younger brother Paul would also prove to be a champion cyclist; in 1970 as a member of the Bray Wheelers he would win both the National Championships and the Tour of Ireland and in the meantime, a devoted wildfowler, he was emptying Wicklow of fish and game. In the early '50's the family lived in Old County Road in Crumlin. Later they moved to Shaymallee in Kilmacanogue. County Wicklow. (Nell named the house after Shay's win in the Tourmalet stage of the 1954 Route de France.)

On the 19th Dec. 1959 Shay married Marguerite Geiger, a blond Strasbourgoise. Their son Pascal was born to the untold delight of Jim and Nell. Eddy married Bridie. In 1962 Shay came 2<sup>nd</sup> in the World Championships in Salo di Gardia in Italy, sacrificing the race in the interests of Jean Stablinski; a strategy he would sorely regret. In 1963 he took over leadership of the Tour de France, wearing the coveted Yellow Jersey for three days. And despite running disagreements with Jacques Anquetil over his function in the Saint Raphael-Geminiani team, fate seemed at last to be according him a more positive role. His career was at an all time high. His cup runneth over. The gods however were about to set in motion a sequence of events that would decimate the entire family, a reversal of fortune that was merciless and swift in its execution.

Shay was born in Rathfarnham Dublin on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1934. Later the family moved to 96 Old County Road, Crumlin. At age sixteen in 1950 Shay began a six year apprenticeship as a metal worker in a Dublin garage.

Just around Shay's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday it was discovered that he had a fine singing voice. Their neighbour was the celebrated violinist Geraldine O'Grady and they could hear her rehearsing in the house next door. If Shay was familiar with the piece she was playing he sang along with her, with gusto according to Nell. Just how fine Shays voice was I had occasion to hear. On a Sunday evening in the autumn of 1952 the touring section of the Dublin Wheelers stopped for a brief repast in O'Hagans

Tearooms in Portmarnock. After tea the club members sat about the hall and, as was the custom, a song was called for. An embarrassed silence ensued, almost everyone hoping to avoid the spotlight. A clear resonant tenor voice suddenly filled the dining room. It was none other than the bold Shaymo, singing like the proverbial lark. He just thrilled the fair sex of the club and left the racing men, myself included shaking our heads. It was a final ignominy; he was not only cleaning up in the races, he could sing into the bargain. The richness and promise of his voice caused a dilemma in the Elliott household. Nell envisioned a singing career for him and wanted to have his voice trained while Jim sided with Shay who wanted to devote his time to racing. Nell was finally won over, the deciding factor being the acne Shay suffered from; the cycling seemed to be having a gradual healing effect. Within a year the acne cleared up completely.

When he was 17 years old Shay joined St. Brendans sports club in Donnybrook Dublin. His brief sojourn with St. Brendans was not a happy one. One night he was playing alone in the billiard room when an older club member, a little over the top, made a slighting remark about him being there and asked him to leave. Shay quietly replaced the billiard cue in the rack and walked out of the club. Soon after he joined the Southern Road Club. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 1951 he won a first novice award, recording 1hr 21mn 58sc for a 30 mile Time Trial. The SRC disbanded in February 1952 and in March of that year Shay joined the Dublin Wheelers. As a member of ‘The Wheelers’ his superlative talents took wing. On 21<sup>st</sup> April 1952 he recorded his first open win, a 30 mile open handicap on the Navan Road. On 10<sup>th</sup> June 1952, just after his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday he won the Grand Prix of Ireland from the legendary Jim McQuaid and a field of 100 riders. On 27<sup>th</sup> June 1952 he won the Mannin Veg trophy race in the Isle of Man, winning from Paddy Boyd of Liverpool and in the same year added the Raleigh Dublin-Galway-Dublin 2 day stage race to his growing palmares.

The 1952 June evening in the Phoenix Park when Shay won the Grand Prix cycle race from Jim McQuaid remains vivid in my memory as if it was yesterday. There were clouds overhead but they were high and the evening was

bright and clear. I was on the roadside near the whitewashed finish line opposite the cricket ground. On the last lap of the race Shay had broken away from the peloton with two other riders and the peloton was quickly closing the gap. Shay zoomed across the finish line just seconds ahead of Jim McQuaid. The race was a spectacular event with literally thousands of on-lookers lining the course. Cycling up to the Phoenix Park to see the race I passed crowds of people mostly walking. They had taken CIE buses to Parkgate Street to see the race. A decade before television came to Ireland there was great nobility attached to champions when bike racing was open air theatre. Later television would reduce the drama of sporting events to a small screen in the living room.

The attention resulting from his exploits on the bike often proved hard for Shay to handle as an 18 year old; he was wont to act the prima donna on occasion. From the moment he discovered he had a facility for winning races he ceased to be a team player. I saw team mate and international rider of repute, Donal O'Connell angrily remonstrate with Shay for chasing him down. The Team Award never concerned him, his eye was always on the main prize. He also developed an ill-advised habit of placing his little finger in the extended hands of fellow riders offering congratulatory handshakes. It was a denigrating gesture that cost him some admirers. At any rate his father Jim put short shrift to such idiosyncrasies in his son's precocious formative years. Many riders who competed with Shay in his early years were divided as to his personality and character. Some found him aloof, others vindictive, others again said he was gentle to the point of shyness. Depending on the setting he was all of those things. Good manners and a natural refinement were endemic in Shay's nature but they did not define him; he did not take politeness with him into a race. The moment the flag dropped in a bike race he rode with a grim single-mindedness often with scant regard for the niceties of fair play. In the 1954 Tour of Ireland stage race he approached the stage end into Cork having broken away from the peloton with British rider Bernard Pusey. They agreed to sprint for the finishing line side by side. While Pusey was reaching down to choose a gear for the sprint Shay was gone in that instant and beat the Englishman to the line. I finished fifth and afterwards asked Shay how the stage went for him. He told

me he 'got the drop' on the Englishman. At the dinner table that night Joe (Joe Joe) McCormack said Shay would chase his grandmother around the parlour for a medal. While everyone laughed Shay smiled and modestly shook his head.

Shay was 5 feet 6 inches tall with a stocky build, strongly muscled legs and narrow shoulders. He had a full corpulent face and a sallow complexion that remained ashen even after years of racing in sun-drenched lands. His acutely arched eyebrows, long thick nose, piercing eyes and swept back hair gave him a Mephistophelian aura. Off the bike Shay had an ungainly way of walking that was often the target of good-natured ribbing; he leaned forward on his instep in a sort of rolling gait with his heels barely touching the ground. In contrast, in full flight on the bike he was a verisimilitude of aerodynamic grace. His powerful legs and short upper torso facilitated the best position possible to compete in the most unnatural of sports known to man. With this formidable advantage he also brought to the sport a ruthless will to win that was at variance with the bland smiling amiability of his character off the bike.

A racing cyclist, seen in the abstract, hovers over two large narrow wheels with angled steel tubing jammed between his legs. Balance is crucial to remain upright but cavalierly disregarded once mastered. The rider then propels himself forward with his two feet strapped to two revolving cranks. It falls to the lot of a favoured few to achieve grace or symmetry balanced on such a contraption. The Italian rider, Il Campione Fausto Coppi perhaps best epitomized the fusion, the harmony possible between rider and bicycle. A man of gentle and modest disposition Coppi weaved his magic by playing the waiting game in a bicycle race. He waited for the steep mountains or for the moment when his adversaries succumbed to pressure and soared away to leave them floundering in his wake. Coppi became an immortal during his lifetime.

In 1953 at age 19 Shay was nominated to ride in the 3 lap Manx International in the Isle of Man. British rider Les Willmott won but it was generally accepted it should have been Shays race. I was riding in the two-lap Viking

Trophy on the same course and I remember the commotion after Shay had crashed when he was about to catch Willmott. There is a notorious sharp bend at Governors Bridge at the bottom of the mountain. Shay hit the turn at speed; his tyre rolled off the wheel and down he came. He picked himself up and rushed to the line on a borrowed bike to finish fourth. His father Jim had glued the tubular tyre to the wheel rim but he had not used enough adhesive. He was in the doghouse for months when Nell found out what happened. The next momentous occasion was the 1954 Tour of Ireland. As a result of finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> overall and taking the King of the Mountains prize he won a months stay at the Simplex Training Camp in Monte Carlo in the south of France. In 1954 he also competed in the 10 day Route de France stage race with team members Karl McCarthy, John Lackey, Derek Quinn, Terry Carmody, Tony Duggan and myself. Joe Loughman and Gerry Duffin were managers, Paddy McQuaid drove the team car. When Shay won the Col de Tourmalet mountain stage and finished 4<sup>th</sup> overall the French press sat up and took notice for the first time.

Shay reported to the Simplex Training Camp in Monte Carlo in February 1955 and came to the immediate attention of Jean Leuliott and Mickey Weigant, two of the most influential names in French cycling. In a 'friendly' training spin on a hilly circuit Shay had dropped a group of riders that included French star Louison Bobet, a two time winner of the Tour de France. The camp was riveted by the incident as it was known Bobet was looking for early season fitness. (He went on that year to win the Tour de France for a third time.) As a result of his stay at the camp and his impressive dossier Mickey Weigant offered Shay a months trial, room and board, with the Paris based Athletic Club Boulogne Billancourt. The terms of the offer with ACBB were explicit; either he impress in that month or he was out. But the canny soigneur had seen enough to assure him the talented Irish newcomer would be around for longer than a month.

During his stay in Monte Carlo Shay had the great good fortune to become friendly with Jean Tchamassanian, a fellow club mate of the ACBB. Jean lived in Paris and had just begun his military service. When he returned

home he invited Shay to go with him and meet his parents. The family was immediately enamoured of the quietly spoken expatriate and as he was looking for accommodation they offered him Jean's room. The house was in the old village of Passy in Paris. After his first classic win the neighbours on the street where he lived were usually to be found leaning of the windows to welcome him home after a race. Thus began one of the happiest periods of Shay's career.

I've heard it said that the chauvinist French hate everyone in Europe except the Irish. Perhaps the fact that our tiny isle produced four Nobel Prize winners for literature impressed the haute couture minded French. The Dublin expatriate James Joyce had set the Parisian literary salons on its heels with the publication of 'Ulysses' in 1922. Dubliner Samuel Beckett endeared himself to French hearts for his heroism in the French Resistance in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and in 1954 took Paris by storm when he launched his surreal stage play 'Waiting for Godot'. And history shows the newly formed First Republic came to the aid of Wolfe Tone and the Irish insurrection of 1791. At any rate the French seemed favourably disposed to another Irishman Seamus Elliott, storming the bastions of their national sport

Shays 1955 debut in the French amateur races created a sensation. The Paris-Evreux road race, finishing on a stiff climb outside the town of Evreux in Normandy was the most prestigious event on the calendar. Shay won the race from a field of 200 riders, thus ensuring himself of a professional contract. In the Grand Prix de Boulogne he finished the race on his own ahead of the peloton. In all he won the incredible total of five amateur classics and was placed in many others. In November of the year on a banked wooden track in Brussels he set a new world record for the 1000 metres flying start. In December he failed in an attempt to break the hour record but enroute he created a new world record for the 10 kilometres. Not many professional riders had come close to the quality of his victories as an amateur. He rode with panache and flair and tactical brilliance, winning in every conceivable way, in mass sprints, in lone breakaways; he was fearless in descents and a formidable climber. The

French sports fans and media were enthralled by him. They were flattered by his struggle to come to grips with the language and so admiring of him when at the end of 1955 he was conducting interviews in French. These were the halcyon days, some of the most rewarding days of his life, scaling the dizzying heights of fame and living the dream for us at home.

France embraced him as one of their own. And when he married Strasbourgeoise Marguerite Geiger on 19 December 1959 he became like a favourite son. After victories he was feted and plied with garlands of flowers, acclaimed and toasted at receptions in his honour. His exploits were written about in newspapers and magazines all over Europe. Under the astute guidance of public-relations conscious Mickey Weigant he became as well known as the great professionals whose ranks he was about to join. His feats brought him into the company of the legends of the sport. Shay's mother Nell said she got 'weak at the knees' when Shay introduced Fausto Coppi to her. Shay hunted game and wild boar with his 'copain', his pal Roger Hassenforder, the irascible jester in the court of King Jacques Anquetil. Hassenforder often broke away in a race, dismounted, grabbed a camera from a reporter and photographed the peloton as it passed by. Shay partied and played cards with Rik Van Looy, Andre Darrigade, Louison Bobet, Charley Gaul, Jean Stablinski, Raphael Geminiani and the mercurial Jacques Anquetil; Maitre Jacques the team leader with whom Shay would have an unsettled relationship over the next decade. Nell was also delighted that Shays taste in clothes remained quintessentially Irish, favouring brown tweeds and brogues. Tongue in cheek Jim said he was decked out like the jockey Johnny Roe.

It should be added here that the names of drugs and stimulants of any kind had not entered the vocabularies of Irish racing cyclists. When the names of Coppi, Koblet, Van Steenbergen and other heroes became linked to drug taking there was a sense of incredulity, of disbelief on our part. Our despair diminished when the allegations went unchallenged by the legendary riders. I saw two friends become involved in a heated argument over Coppi's involvement or otherwise in taking drugs and

they ceased to speak with each other from that day forward. In the end we were forced to face the inevitable truth even as we swore at the messenger with all the passion and vehemence of betrayed youth. In time we saw our heroes ignominiously toppled from the pedestals upon which our misplaced reverence had ensconced them. The ascetic Fausto Coppi, whose exploits surpassed the winged Icarus in his lofty flights over the cols indeed went too near the sun and proved to be all too human.

No one who knew him could ever accuse Shay Elliott of naivety; his astuteness and intelligence was evident on and off the bike. But the day he stepped into the charnel-house of professional cycling he was as an innocent abroad among the strychnine-laced doppelgangers masquerading as sportsmen. In his early days as a top-flight amateur in France he had heard of trade team sponsors, team physicians and managers putting unrelenting pressure on professional riders to produce wins whatever the cost. Sponsors took the view that cycle racing would cease to exist without their backing. Professional racing, they insisted, provided the majority of riders with an income well in excess of what they would earn on a farm or punching tickets on a bus. This harsh reality made the average riders of the peloton willing victims to the overtures of corrupt physicians who had forgotten where they put their Hippocratic oaths. That drugs were used to secure wins was still in the realm of public speculation. It was only when several riders died; Tom Simpson's death in the 1967 Tour de France was the most widely reported, that the lid blew off the bubbling cauldron of the widespread use of drugs in cycle racing. Any lingering illusions fans may have entertained about the well being of the sport were quickly dispelled when in 1967 Jacques Anquetil took center stage and made a public announcement. Speaking with the imperious effrontery to which his fans were accustomed he informed the French public that they were naive to believe races could be won without drugs. He mistook either the tenor of the times or the adulation of his fans. His remarks were considered outrageous and as a result calls were made for a judicial inquiry into all levels of the sport. Doctors especially were pilloried for their shameless disregard for the health of the riders. The uproar resulted in the

International Olympic Committee publishing a list of banned drugs in 1968.

Shay was invited to ride with the Helyett-Leroux-Potin team in February 1956. His new teammates were Andre Darrigade, Roger Darrigade, Miguel Poblet, Francois Mahe, Pierre Brun, Gilbert Scodeller, Raymond Hoorelbecke and captain Jacques Anquetil. Shays outstanding previous season as an amateur barely impressed the battle hardened professionals in the peloton. Brilliant amateurs had too often been touted by the media as the next Rik van Looy or Louison Bobet only to fade to oblivion in the professional ranks. In his first few races Shay was 'allowed' to spread his wings. He wasn't overtly helped but as a new boy his team gave him the freedom to earn his spurs. In the Grand Prix de l'Echo d'Alger in North Africa in March 1956, in just his second race as a professional he finished in 1<sup>st</sup> place. A week later he won the Grand Prix de Catox in Marseille and followed this up with a win in the Grand Prix d'Isbergues. Several more wins came in quick succession. Considering his impressive debut Shay could have been forgiven for believing that with this powerful team behind him there was nothing he could not achieve in his professional career.

Jacques Anquetil was five months older than Shay when they teamed up, just 22 years of age. Incredibly he had already been a professional with La Perle Cycles for three years, winning the Grand Prix de Nations time trial each year. At this point in his career all of France hoped that Anquetil was the saviour whose coming was fervently awaited. In the decade following the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War France desperately needed a hero to inspire a resurgence of French pride after the harrowing years of German occupation. Louison Bobet seemed the obvious choice; he had won an unprecedented three Tours de France. But Bobet was 31 years old, he lacked charisma and accusations of stinginess had followed him throughout his career. He lacked what Anquetil radiated, an aura of invincibility. Anquetil was France incarnate; he was arrogant, petulant and proud. And if he was ruthless in terms of team discipline and loyalty he also had a reputation for honesty and fair play. As a cyclist Anquetil possessed flawless class. His prodigious talent was demonstrated in November 1956 when he broke the world hour record of the Campionissimo Fausto Coppi at the Vigorelli track in Milan,

Italy. He had the elegance and poise of Koblet, the grace of Coppi, the raw courage and grit of the diminutive giant killer Jean Robic. Among other of Anquetil's attributes was his ability to motivate and inspire his teammates, even if solely in his own interest. The son of a fruit grower from Normandy, Anquetil ruled over the new team like a feudal lord over his fiefdom.

Before the racing season got under way in 1956 the Helyett sponsors, riders and soigneurs held meetings to discuss tactics and strategy, all fine-tuned to serve the needs and aspirations of team leader Anquetil. The first bitter pill Shay had to swallow was when he was told he could no longer orchestrate his own wins unless it was sanctioned by Anquetil. The concept he first had of his role as a professional now seemed naively idealistic. He learned of the practice of races being 'given' to riders, a sort of reward for loyalty and service. Usually it had to do with a rider competing in a kermesse in his own hometown. With the unstated consent of the peloton he was free to break away alone or win a sprint finish from a few breakaway companions. It made a huge hero of a local lad and everyone went home happy. The two Isle of Man Manx Trophy races in 1959 and 1964 were 'given' to Shay. That is to say his strong team could control the peloton and facilitate the win for him.

When he made a flying visit to his parents' home in 1964 prior to the Manx race I cycled out to Kilmacanogue to see him. He told me in a matter of fact tone he would probably win the race. The Isle of Man was considered Shays backyard, his 'turf'.

Shay rebelled instinctively against the constraints Anquetil imposed on him but he was hesitant to let his feeling be known. He was deeply troubled as he wanted to be part of Helyett; the ACBB and Mickey Weigant especially had taken a personal interest in getting him placed with a good team. Shay found Anquetil's public persona to be aloof but he was cordial and friendly with teammates who were unswervingly loyal. In the end Shay felt he would have had to sacrifice too much of himself to make his relationship with Anquetil less tenuous. He was consigned

the role of a domestique and he couldn't pretend to be happy about it. For over nine years of racing and training with Anquetil Shay was never privy to the warmth of personality that he knew to be a part of Anquetil's character. There were ample opportunities to reconcile their differences. They were at countless after-race parties where the wine flowed freely and Shay all but bared his soul to his team leader. They drove the highways of France with Geminiani, Van Looy, Darrigade, Riviere, Hassenforder and Stablinski, their Mercedes cars bumping off each other at speeds of 160 KPH. An uneasy peace prevailed but the pride of both made the rift unbreachable. Shay excluded himself, as later would the German rider Rudi Altig, from the Great One's inner circle.

His chief nemesis in the team was his former best friend Jean Stablinski, now Anquetil's second-in-command. An undercurrent of ill will between the two riders erupted in a dramatic confrontation in the 1965 Paris-Luxembourg race. Shay was leading the 4 day stage race when Stablinski, and Anquetil, latched on to a small group which detached itself from the peloton and was meandering up the road. None among the group posed a threat to Shay's leadership and he watched unconcerned as the escapees inched away. Shay reasoned that his teammate would sit on the group and contest the finish, possibly even win the stage without endangering his grip on the race. But the wily Stablinski was ambitious and wanted more than a stage win. In what would become known in cycling annals as an infamous act of betrayal Stablinski whipped the stragglers into a cohesive working group that powered away from the peloton. The fast-moving 'eschapees' took Stablinski into overall leadership on the road and to final victory of the race. Immediately afterwards the incensed Shay quit the team realizing Stablinski could not have 'stolen' the race from him without the approval of team leader Anquetil and manager Geminiani.

Quietly and without fuss Shay packed his bags and accepted a place with Raymond Poulidor's Mercier BP Hutchinson team. Raymond Poulidor, 'Poupou' was and remains a treasured possession of France. In 2003 President Chirac decorated Poulidor with the Medal of Honour. His tally of 189 professional wins

makes him one of the all-time greats of the sport. He was also dubbed the 'Eternal Second' by the media owing to his riding in the shadow of the legendary Anquetil. The fans respected Anquetil, they adored the populist Poulidor. Softly spoken and taciturn with the swarthy features of a boxer he welcomed Shay as a new teammate. Shay responded by winning 7 races for his new team.

I lived in the tiny village of Saint Andre de L'Eure in Normandy in the years 1960-63. Spirited arguments about cycling often broke out in the time-worn Inn where ancient oak beams criss-crossed the smoke-stained ceiling. I especially loved the noisy Friday night atmosphere in the Bar during the running of the Tour de France. I sat huddled among the locals under an erratic TV set as the songs of Edith Piaf and Jacques Brel blared in from the bagatelle room. Choking on the rank incense of Gauloise cigarettes and the pungent odour of garlic I cut baguettes with a penknife, inserted slices of local cheese and washed it all down with glasses of rich red Beaujolais. It was pure bliss. But I digress. The general consensus about Shay among the clientele in the Bar was that he should have joined a more modest team as a 'protected' rider and concentrate on the classics. Like the Belgian Rik Van Looy and Andre Darrigade he had the build of a 'flahout', a roadman. His stocky build and massive legs were ideal for the one-day classics but he would never soar up the cols in the manner of lithesome Fausto Coppi or Charley Gaul.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1966 Shay opened a small hotel / guesthouse in Loctudy on the coast of Brittany amid much fanfare helped by the presence of some of his famous peloton colleagues. He named it the 'Hotel Irlandais'. Nell and Jim voiced concern about the hotel. They felt that professional advice should have been sought to apprise its viability, it's investment potential before he risked his life savings in a business of which he had no experience. And the timing made the venture more suspect in their eyes. Shay had joined Poulidor's Mercier team. How could he supervise the running of an hotel while he was still tied to a cycling regime that took him to all corners of Europe for weeks on end ? Mismanagement, attempting to run the hotel

in absentis and bureaucratic red tape put paid to all his cherished hopes. After a decade as a professional cyclist he watched his savings and dreams dwindle away to nothing.

Shay's star as an amateur had been a straight trajectory into the heavens; similarly as a professional he began with a run of spectacular wins. And though he ended his career with 57 races won he was never to win a classic. A run of incredible bad luck had befallen Shay dating back to his amateur days in France. I can't recall him ever crashing in races at home in Ireland. He almost crippled himself for life in the 1955 Route de France when he crashed into a roadside marker stone and shattered his right knee. Stripped freewheels, mechanical malfunctions and punctured tubulars deprived him of victory when it was most assuredly his. He accepted his misfortunes stoically and fought on. But in the battlefield of the peloton there were other debilitating factors to undermine his resolve. He had to contend with Machiavellian intrigue when he took matters into his own hands and won races in defiance of Anquetil, Geminiani and Stablinski who now had Anquetil's ear. He felt that the mundane races 'allocated' to him were a sop to quench his thirst for bigger game. The German Rudi Altig and hunting colleague Roger Hassenforder saw the brilliance and potential in Shay but they could not alter the intractable team strategy set by Anquetil.

After the Stablinski incident a withering disillusionment about professional racing set in, even as he was winning races for Poulador's Mercier Team. Cycling would lose its aura of romance, its charm, something that never seemed possible until that moment.

Years later on a cycle spin with him to Edgewardstown in Co. Longford he recalled this low point in his life and smiled suddenly. He said he wished he had been more careful about what he had dreamed of.

By 1966 Shay's marriage had taken a turn for the worst and at 32 years of age time was making big inroads into whatever options might be left open to him. In the latter part of his career the racing circuit became a frenzied carousel from which, due to the gathering storms in his private life, he was unable to extricate himself. With cycling commitments were taking him all over Europe, visits to

his Paris home were like pit stops in a car race. The marriage was severely strained at the time of his last full year in 1966. By the end of his career he had won stages in the Giro d'Italia in 1960, Vuelta a Espana 1962/1963, Tour de France 1963, 2<sup>nd</sup> World Championships 1962 and had career total of 57 professional races. Shay wound up his affairs in France and returned to Ireland.

Shays father Jim had opened a garage and panel beating service in Princes Street, Dublin. and he wanted Shay to come back and be part of the business.

Shay returned to Dublin, reeling from the breakup of his marriage, the loss of his hotel in Loctudy and the sudden demise of his cycling career. The Bray Wheelers Cycling Club under the chairmanship of Joe Loughman accorded Shay the hero's welcome he so richly deserved. Joe was the heartbeat of the Bray cycling community. I won't attempt to sum up his magnanimity and character in a few words. He merits an entire chapter unto himself in that he was an author; 'Trusty Steeds And Rain Like Stair Rods', an avid historian and a cycling coach without equal. Shay was made an honorary president of the club and was warmly received into their ranks. Within a short time he would be guest of honour and speaker at BWCC functions. After Shays death it was the BWCC that organized, funded and erected the splendid granite monument, unveiled by Nell, atop of Glenmalure mountain in County Wicklow. The BWCC inaugurated a classic annual bike race in his name. A closely-knit group of lifelong friends the Bray Wheelers Cycling Club made certain Shay would never be forgotten.

Nell and Jim, Eddy and Paul rallied around Shay, lessening his grief by sharing it. Jim had been in the motor trade for all of his adult life; he was widely respected and liked and was soon to put his knowledge and influence to work for his son. After a brief respite and rest for Shay they went to the family solicitors O'Hagan Ward in Dawson Street and proceeded to buy the property in Princes Street. The one-storey building was in a sorry state of disrepair but it didn't stay that way for

long. Within a few weeks of creative block-laying, painting and cleaning it housed a thriving business with customers cars lined up outside in the street. Mick Fagin, Shays old cycling pal and a master carpenter built an apartment over the garage almost single-handedly. Another friend John Scahill put business his way and gave him expert advice. I replaced the broken glass around the place. Jim and Paul worked full-time in the garage with Shay. Eddy Elliott was a regular visitor and livened up the place with his bubbling good humour.

At the time when Shay returned home and the garage was up and running I was keeping myself in reasonable shape; cycling on the weekends and getting the odd spin in during the week. When we began cycling together Shay had hardly looked at a bike and wasn't in good form. He was sluggish and as we meandered along the Wicklow roads at a snail's pace I wondered how I could arouse him from his torpor. Little did I realize the Pandora's box I was about to open. All conversation ended one Sunday as I inched my bike past him and half-wheeled him from Rathnew to Ashford. It was a piece of impertinence that I knew I would have to pay for but when I saw a resentful glint in his eye I felt I had resurrected a competitive spark inside him. The pace picked up noticeably and I spent the remainder of the spin sitting on his wheel. It took a while but gradually he regained a semblance of his old self and my half-wheeling days were over. Not long after we went on longer forays, cycling as far afield as Arklow and Longford with me sitting in most of the time.

Princes Street Garage was a magic place to be. Each one of the Elliotts was unique and idiosyncratic, all gifted with a fine intelligence. The enigmatic Paul inherited his father's love of the outdoors and was an excellent marksman. At every opportunity he indulged his passion for wildfowling, fishing and golf and sporadically, bike racing. Paul had won the Tour of Ireland stage race, the National Massed Start championship and other important races, yet cycle racing was a sport he never totally committed himself to. His talent was immense and many knowledgeable riders believed Paul could have surpassed Shay if he had given himself over completely to the sport. But the fact was that if Paul had the choice between sitting

in a duck-blind waiting for a flight of geese or riding the bike, the bike would lose out every time. I first met Paul when he was 14 years old. He was already developing the strong personality traits that would characterize his later life; his conversation even at that early age was measured and thoughtful. That is not to say he was without humour, I was often a victim of his practical jokes. In contrast to Shay and Paul, Eddy was the extrovert of the family, you knew the sparks were going to fly when he came through the garage door. His conversation was peppered with jokes, often falling flat in the company of unresponsive Paul. In appearance Eddy and Paul were very much like their father Jim while Shay resembled Nell. In the garage Jim and Paul and Eddy spoke with the authority of experienced engineers and I often sat there feeling like the village idiot because much of what they discussed was over my head. Eddy's interest was car engines. Years ahead of his time he talked about running a car on methane gas extracted from the offal of pigs. As for Paul, one day I found him intently studying the strewn parts of an old radio. When I asked him what he was doing he loosed on me technical jargon about diodes, capacitors and resistors. Another time I found him machine-tooling precision parts for a broken outboard engine and he got it running perfect. He made his own harpoon gun for underwater fishing. I was intrigued because their formal education was as basic as my own, that is Grammer School, and Nell told me they had never formally studied subjects in which they showed this marked degree of expertise. They seemed possessed of knowledge they had not acquired through learning and I wondered if they had what in epistemology is known as 'a priori' knowledge, knowledge that is independent of experience. Coleridge made the point that forms of thinking revealed by experience, ( a priori as opposed to empirical ) must have pre-existed in order to make experience possible. Eddy and Paul seemed to exemplify that notion. Shaymo on the other hand knew how to turn the key in the ignition, that being the limit of his mechanical expertise and close enough to mine.

When the wildfowling season opened in November 1968 Shay and I cycled the 67 miles to the Hotel Edgeworthstown in Co. Longford. A

friend was there to meet us with suitcases, guns and dogs. After a late meal a card game was set up that went on to the late hours. It was the first time I played cards for money and as luck would have it I cleaned up. The game was Blackjack, or 21, and to give the others a chance I took hits on 17 or 18 and still managed to win. I thought it very funny watching Paul shaking his head as I pulled in my winnings time after time. He had a dry acerbic wit and rarely smiled whereas I found it hard to keep a straight face in his company. He was intense and close-lipped and adhered to a scrupulous moral code. In all the years of our acquaintance I rarely heard him indulge in gossip or malign another person. Nell once asked me how it was that Paul was so popular since he was so reclusive and hardly spoke a word. I was at a loss to explain how Paul captured the hearts and minds of so many of his contemporaries as so very few pierced his stoic reserve. His Bray Wheelers teammates were zealously protective of Paul when he wore the leadership jersey going into the last stage of the 1970 Tour of Ireland. On the final stage Irish champion Peter Doyle, a clubmate and one of his best friends, strung the entire peloton out in a straight line all the way from Monaghan to Dublin to ensure Paul won the race. Often when out on cycle spins with Paul barely a couple of sentences would pass between us for hours at a time, yet I cherished his company. When in a rare mood of levity he joked and smiled it was as if the sun came out and you waited patiently to hear everything he had to say. We remained close friends up to the moment of his own tragic and sudden death.

At 4:30 A:M the following morning after the late night card game I was standing with Shay in a duck-blind on a small Island on the Shannon, swathed in waterproofs under drenching rain, waiting for the first flight of geese. We had found our way to the deserted island with the aid of a hand held compass and rowed silently through the choppy waters. In the pre-dawn darkness the treacherous Shannon echoed to an unceasing cacophony of local and migrant wildlife. We partook of a little poteen, a present I got from Nell, fortifying ourselves one might say against the harshness of the morning. As a result we were in the very best of moods and quite oblivious to the stormy weather. Among the fondest memories I have of Shay were the

mornings we spent in a duck-blind with the foam-flecked black Shannon waters swirling about our feet. Talking and laughing in the rain, our animated chatter caused birds to veer off and fly away. In that tempest strewn milieu of raging Shannon waves and torrential downpours time seemed to slow and to petrify the image forever in memory. In other more serene settings cycling through Wicklow Shay would recall epic moments of his career. He shrugged off the ill luck that deprived him of a classic among the 57 professional races he had won. He had accomplished great things. Much of it had been inspiring, elevating; the bliss of meeting Marguerite for the first time and the birth of his son Pascal, the audience in the Vatican with Pope Pius XI, the family of Madame Tahmassanian who befriended and practically adopted him in Paris, the joy and pride of Nell and Jim in all he accomplished.

When Shay stepped back on Irish soil after a decade of racing as Ireland's first professional cyclist he was not accorded the hero's welcome he so richly deserved. The Irish media and CRE, the Irish cycling authority, all but ignored him. Gone was the remembrance of times past when he captivated Europe with his exploits. The news reports of his achievements had never been more than perfunctory in Irish newspapers. When he established a new world record for the 1000 metres Flying Start in Belgium in 1955, a tiny photo and a few nondescript column inches in the 'Evening Herald' newspaper underplayed that remarkable achievement. Shay's role as a public relations emissary for Ireland was in itself significant and worthy of note. At a time when France was mired in a lingering xenophobia after the war years Shay carried a breath of Irish culture to remote hamlets and villages on the professional racing circuit. Ireland couldn't ask for a more cordial ambassador-at-large. He had qualities of temperament the French applauded. He was softly spoken and unpretentious while his friendliness was tempered with a slight reserve; a gentleman by all accounts and a weekly communicant in catholic France.

Ten years of exhaustive physical and psychological pressures took their inevitable toll. As his adult character was forged on

the anvil of professional cycling, Shay was like a soldier returned from the trenches when he came home. Wasn't it Orwell who described sport as war without the shooting? He was much quieter and profound, more introspective; it would take him a full year to reconcile to the sweeping changes in his life. Marguerite was making the occasional journey from Paris to Dublin at this time. There was great hope that the rift between them might be healed but it was not to be.

In 1970 the British firm Falcon Cycles invited Shay to participate in the marathon London-Holyhead road race. It was a big event on the calendar and all the British professionals and top amateurs were scheduled to ride. Shay accepted the invitation. While Jim and Paul held the fort in Princess Street he threw himself wholeheartedly into an intensive training program that included long stints pacing behind a motorbike. I thought the whole idea of his participation in that race was ill conceived given the short time he had to prepare. The six to nine months he needed to get fit after a long layoff were reduced to three to meet the tight schedule. On race day he wasn't even close to the fitness he needed to contend with the 275 mile one day marathon from London to Holyhead. He finished well down the field in 21<sup>st</sup> place and took a terrible hammering. That was the last attempt he made at any kind of competitive cycling.

Jim Elliott took ill and was confined to St. Stevens hospital where he died on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1971. Shay died just 2 weeks later on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1971.

The interior of the Dublin City Mortuary on Ushers Island reflected the grim purpose it was designed to serve. It was dank and foreboding, reeking of chemical vapours. The table upon which Shay was laid out filled the small room. He was dressed in a brown and red chequered shirt and grey trousers. He looked for all the world as if he had fallen asleep and might awaken at any moment. Nell and Paul, Shay's wife Marguerite, Bridie, Eddy and I stood over his body each of us trying to come to terms with his sudden death. Marguerite cried quietly as she caressed his forehead. Nell's face was an implacable pale mask. Having buried Jim 2 weeks before, she had lapsed into a quiet inconsolable despair. In a few days she would recover her

strength and will to live from a sense of duty to Paul and Shay's son Pascal, at the time living in Mulhouse in France. Marguerite had agreed for Pascal to come to Ireland and live with Nell and Paul when he reached the age of sixteen years.

In an extraordinary epilogue to Shay's death his dog Kim, a Springer Spaniel and an inseparable companion, crossed the road at Kilmacanogue just days after Shay died and was killed by passing traffic.

Father Jack Lynch of Kilmacanogue parish, an energetic and likeable young priest worked wonders to help Nell through the funerals and burials of Jim and Shay. Saint Mochonogs, the small church at the bottom of the Long Hill was filled to capacity for the funeral mass. The mourners, the majority of them local cyclists spilled out to the winding driveway leading up to the church.

Within a few short years I flew with Paul to Mulhouse in France to attend the funeral of Shay's son Pascal. He had been working as an assistant waiter in a local restaurant to earn some money as he prepared to leave for Ireland. He commuted back and forth to the restaurant on his motorcycle. The one day when he did not wear his helmet he skidded in the rain and crashed into the back of a van. He died instantly. He was 16 years old, a lovely mischievous lad my own son's age who dreamed only of Ireland, Nell and Paul and the two hunting dogs. The active and adventurous life he hoped to share with Paul was far removed from the stark circumstances of his life in an apartment building in Mulhouse. I remembered an occasion when I was visiting Nell and Paul in the new house Weirview in Dodder Road, Rathfarnham. We were sitting in the living room while Pascal, on holidays from France was out in the back garden playing with the dogs. Nell smiled at me as Paul shouted out to Pascal that he wanted to talk to him. Pascal came in and sat down. Paul, in his usual somber and grave manner told him that he had met the girl of his dreams and he'd be getting married in a week, selling the dogs and there would be no room for Pascal in the house. Paul then picked up a newspaper and said he was looking for someone to buy the dogs, Luddy the Springer Spaniel and Flash, the English Pointer. Otherwise, said Paul,

they'd have to go to the Dogs Home as his girlfriend didn't like dogs. The unfortunate child stared disbelievingly at Paul as his lips began to quiver. He hugged the dogs in a state of shock. With a loud wail he began crying and threw himself in Nell's arms. When Nell explained that Paul was joking Pascal rushed at him and in a moment they were wrestling on the floor.

To the utter despair and disbelief of all who knew him Paul drowned in a boating accident on the Shannon at Lanesborough. Co. Longford on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1988. Nell died in June 1989 to be followed by the sudden tragic death of Eddy Elliott on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2000.

Much has been written of the circumstances of Shay's death. There has been speculating by journalists who never met Shay nor known the circumstances of his death. Why should anyone insinuate his death was other than an accident, or appear to be privy to details unknown to his own family? The coroner for the City of Dublin Dr P.G. Bofin in his post-mortem held on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1971 made no such inference. Not a single journalist who rushed to judgment bothered to enquire about the faulty Luigi-Franchi shotgun that was the instrument of Shays death. He used the shotgun every time he went wildfowling. He was sentimentally attached to the Luigi Franchi shotgun having won it as a prize in the 1963 Tour of Spain cycle race.

The barrel of the 12-gauge shotgun had what is known as an improved cylinder choke. It was designed to disperse a wide spread of light shot ideally suited for clay pigeon shooting or the elusive snipe. In this case number 7 or number 8 cartridges are used, fairly light as loads go. Shay used the Luigi Franchi almost exclusively for geese and mallard, game that require a heavier shot load. For this he used Magnum and number 3 cartridges. The higher powder charge affected the timing of the shotgun's bolt action and by the end of the 1967 hunting season the cartridge ejector was malfunctioning. I had occasion to use the Luigi-Franchi as did John Scahill and we both found it unsafe to use. Paul wouldn't touch it because of its lightness and faulty mechanism. On the one occasion I used it a cartridge jammed in the trigger housing. We advised Shay in no uncertain terms to either drop it in the Shannon or take it to a

gunsmith. He was safety conscious to a fault but in this matter he couldn't see the inherent danger of the piece.

With the trigger mechanism thus affected, the most singularly lethal aspect of the shotgun was that when the safety catch was disengaged the firing pin would click forward if the gunstock was subjected to a sudden impact. That is to say the shotgun could discharge without the trigger being pulled.

During the week Shay lived in the apartment above the garage in Princes Street in Dublin, going home on weekends to Kilmacanogue. The garage had already been burglarized twice since it opened. It was Shay's habit to keep the loaded shotgun and a rifle by a window overlooking the back of the garage with the intention of scaring off intruders. His body was found under the back window of the wardrobe closet. Eddy and I scrubbed the wardrobe clean after Shay's body was removed to the Mortuary. We put his clothing into tea chests and disposed of them. The coroners report showed that death was caused by trauma to the liver and heart. The wound was consistent with Shay falling over the shotgun as it discharged. The faulty mechanism of the Luigi-Franchi shotgun was the cause of the death of Shay Elliott, not a self-inflicted wound.

Nell's last words to me were to the effect that Shay would never leave her like that. I hope there the matter will rest.

Nell passed away a year after the death of Paul on 3 July 1989. I was living and working in Boston when I got a last letter from her. She wrote mostly about Paul, how she missed cooking for him, looking after him, her isolation and sense of loss. I cannot help but think of Nell when I hear a refrain from one of Moore's melodies – the last rose of summer, all her lovely companions faded and gone. I think Nell willed herself to her final resting place.

The words of Earnest Dowson come to mind;

They are not long the days of wine and roses:  
Out of a misty dream our path emerges for a while  
Then closes within a dream.

THE END.