

# DANNY BOY

In those pre-ILGO days, I'm sure there were other gay construction workers but none of them came out quite like Danny Quinn. Ask Bull Murphy! He spent a week in the hospital for callin' Danny a faggot.

The kid was mad for music and would stand there at our gigs, pint in hand, analyzing every song. Even then, his quiet intensity set him apart. He wasn't unfriendly, just careful. I guess he had to be. He was good looking too—tall, slim and naturally muscular. He had been a minor hurling star and you could tell that he was used to attention. The women fancied him, at first, and he smooched good-naturedly with many of them. You had to see the looks on their faces when they found out!

We smoked our first joint together outside the Bliss Tavern. He told me about his passion for soul music and how he came to the States to be close to it. I misheard him and thought he was speaking metaphorically, about his own soul. He was serious when he replied, "yeah, boy, that too!"

Some years later, I met him down Sheridan Square. He was well out by then and walked with that particular "late 70's" fag-swagger. The meek had inherited the earth and weren't apologizin' anymore. He was sweet on a kid called Joe from Akron. We smoked a bowl down by the pier and watched the Jersey lights sparkle across the Hudson.

He opened up and told me about growing up in Cork, knowing he was different but not havin' a clue what to do about it. He had his first gay experience while on a trip to Dublin with the county team. Then, not being able to live with himself, he dropped out of school and took the boat to London.

I don't know why he and Joe broke up, but he was never the better for it. He drew even deeper into himself, the way lonely people do. He got bitter too. One night, with the snow driftin' down Avenue B, I asked him if he was goin' home for Christmas. He just shrugged and muttered, "there's not a lot of point, if they won't let you be what you are." I told him I was going back to try and bury some past. He just smiled and said, "off with you then. But an Irish dog'll never bark at my arse again!"

I remembered those words when we sent his effects back to his family in Cork. There he was in his scrapbook - the minor hurling star, all of eighteen and about to set off and find himself.