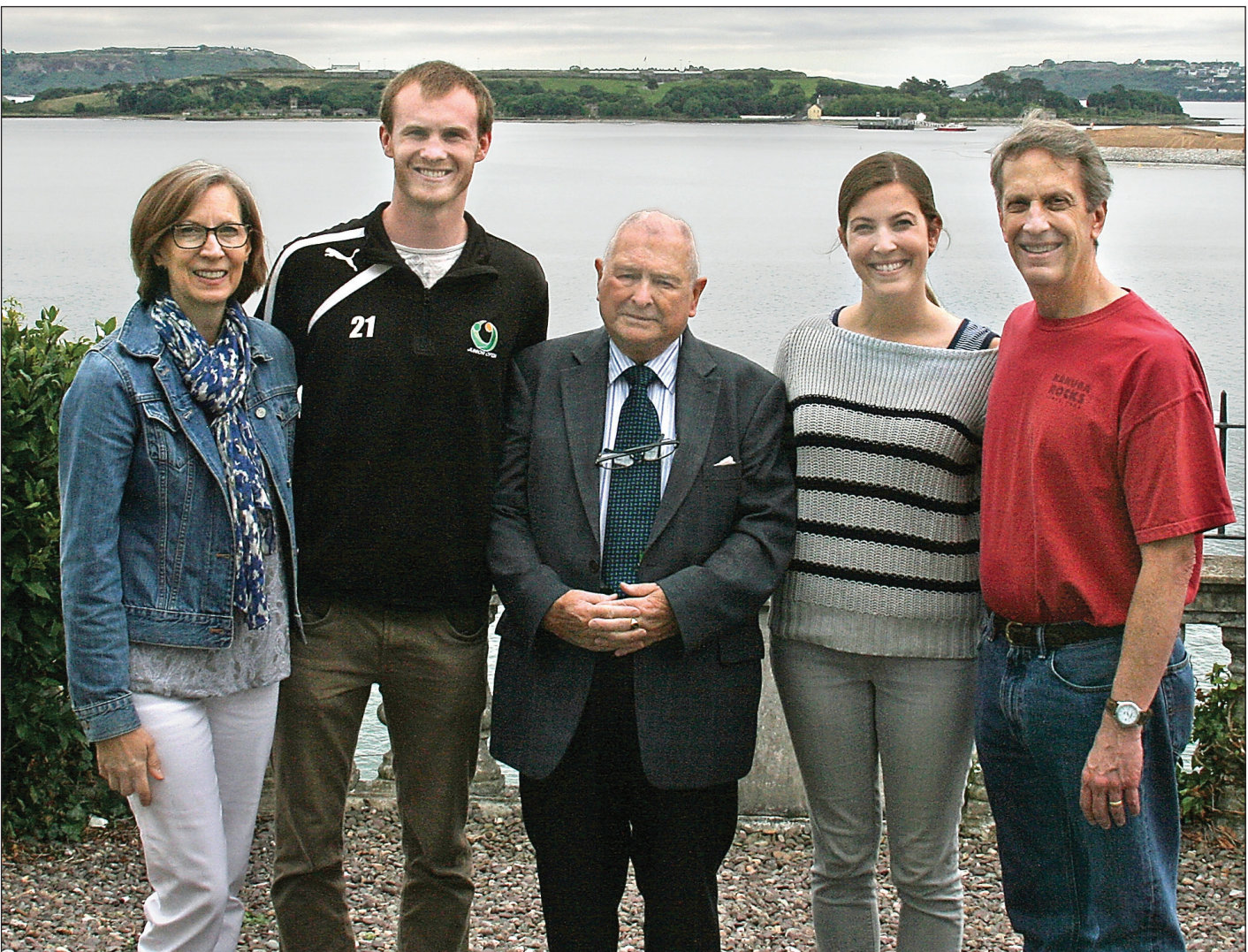


American Press

SUNDAY TALK



Cobh is a tourist seaport town on the south coast of Ireland. Lake Charles and Cobh signed a twinning charter sister city initiative agreement on May 23, 2008.



From left, Jackie Carleton, Cian O'Brien, Former Cobh Mayor Paddy Whitty, Ellen Carleton O'Brien and Mike Carleton in Cobh, Ireland in August. During a visit to Louisiana several years ago, Whitty spoke at both houses of the state Legislature and, while in Lake Charles, sang at Downtown at Sundown.

SISTER CITY

Across the pond

Local attorney Michael Carleton pays visit to Cobh, Ireland



A monument commemorates the lives of those who died in 1917 when the ocean liner Lusitania was sunk by a German U-boat. Many who perished in the sinking are buried in Cobh.

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Photos Special to the American Press

Ten years after Lake Charles first established ties with Cobh (pronounced Cove), Ireland, the bond continues to strengthen.

The two cities signed a twinning charter sister city initiative agreement on May 23, 2008, encouraging exchanges in the fields of cultural, tourism, social and economic affairs and the development of mutual understanding, respect and friendship between the residents of both municipalities.

Like Lake Charles, Cobh — a tourist seaport town on the south coast of Ireland — shares a common reliance on maritime activity facilitating economic, cultural and recreational purposes. Cobh has the second largest natural harbor in the world and Lake Charles is the 11th-busiest port district in the United States based on cargo tonnage.

Local attorney Michael Carleton, who visited Cobh in August,

said the sister city agreement came about thanks to former state Rep. Dan Flavin.

He said his understanding is that the Flavin family was researching their family history and visited Cobh with a group of about 45 other local people, many of whom were of Irish descent.

“They had a great time there and invited then-Mayor Paddy Whitty back,” Carleton said. “He came and they did a limo for him and he spoke at both houses of the state Legislature and sung, apparently, at Downtown at Sundown. He had a great time.”

Carleton, whose daughter met her now-husband while studying abroad as a student at LSU, was planning a trip to Ireland to visit the couple when he thought to ask the city if he could deliver anything on their behalf to Cobh’s leadership.

“Cobh no longer has a mayor, they have a council governing body that we were able to meet with,” he said. “We met with Paraig Lynch (the municipal district officer for the Cobh County Council) and exchanged certificates and gifts from Lake Charles.”

During his visit to Cobh — which has a population

of about 12,800 — Carleton said he learned the town was the last port of call for the doomed ocean liner Titanic as it headed for New York in April 1912. Many Irish emigrants from Cobh were killed in the disaster and there is a Titanic museum to recognize that.

The town is also where many of the survivors of the ocean liner Lusitania, sunk in 1917 by a German U-boat, were taken. Many of those who died in the sinking are buried in the old church cemetery in Cobh.

“The downtown area has a small road through it surrounded by all these painted buildings and shops of different colors with hanging baskets of flowers,” he said. “After a while, I started trying to look the next two or three roads over to see if there were any poorer sections with broken down housing, but I never really saw any. A lot of these smaller communities have developed their own economies.”

He said everyone he met was friendly.

“It seems to be a pretty homogenous society,” he said. “Everybody seems to

get along. We enjoyed it — and they have a lot of great beer.”

Carleton said Cobh relies on the cruise ship industry to fuel its economy.

“They have about 60 cruise ships that dock in Cobh and they’re expecting 90 next year,” he said. “A lot of tourists will take excursions through the area. They also have a good bit of marine activity with tugboats and larger ships.”

Carleton was also able to visit with Whitty during the visit.

“He just wanted to tell us about his great trip to our area,” he said. “He was fascinated by the limo and a blue light that was inside. He had also ridden in an airboat and said he just had a great time with it.”

Carleton said when the *American Press’* Our Past column featured Whitty’s Lake Charles visit in the 10 Years Ago segment, the Flavin family sent the article to Whitty who got a kick out of it.

“He really loves Lake Charles and while we visited he just wanted to relay some of his great experiences here with me,” he said.

A view of Cobh from the water. Cobh has the second largest natural harbor in the world.

