

# St. Patrick's Day... Celebrating the luck o' the Irish

By Dana Elise Smith  
CSJFTC Public Affairs

John Bruton, former prime minister of Ireland, said, "Irishness is a comprehensive and inclusive thing, ancient and forever changing. Irishness is a growing thing. It does not stand still."

Perhaps, Bruton's idea holds some truth. According to [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov), a total of 36,278,332 Americans reported Irish ancestry in the 2008 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. An additional 3.5 million people claimed Scots-Irish ancestry.

St. Patrick's Day occurs on March 17 and during the last 250 years has become a holiday that is celebrated world-wide. It is called a day in which "everyone is Irish," even though St. Patrick, himself, was not Irish.

Maewyn Succat, was a spoiled teenager in the 5th Century and belonged to a wealthy Roman-British family when he was suddenly kidnapped, stowed away to Ireland and sold into slavery. For six lonely and miserable years, he loathed the Irish people who held him captive. The only friend he had was Christ and it was he who led him through the Wicklow Mountains to a boat setting sail back to England.

After his homecoming, he entered the priesthood. As he began to learn more of Christ, he forgave the Irish and came to love them. Having learned the customs and the language of the Irish people, he felt he was the only one that could take Christianity to them and felt that Christ was leading him back to the land of his captors.

At that time the middle-aged, Maewyn began his campaign to convert the Irish countrymen to Christianity. The people loved him and without much bloodshed, many began to convert to Christianity. Maewyn's followers called him Pádraig, (modern day Patrick) meaning "noble patriarch." Through time, the Irish Catholics began to celebrate the patron saint of Ireland on March 17, the anniversary of his death.

St. Patrick's Day is widely celebrated as a day of revelry no matter what nationality one belongs to. But like the potato plant, many traditions of the day are rooted not in Ireland, but in the United States of America. And those who were responsible for starting these traditions were Soldiers.

Wearing green, pinching someone who isn't garbed in green, dying rivers green, drinking green beer, and of course, marching in St. Patrick's Day parades are all traditions started in the United States.

According to <http://nycstpatriksparade.org/history>, the New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade will celebrate its 250th anniversary this year. The first parade was held in New York City in 1762 by homesick Irish Soldiers serving the British Army in the American Colonies. They celebrated by speaking Irish (Gaelic), wearing green, singing Irish songs and playing Irish tunes. To this day, the parade route is led by a military unit and for the past 150 years, members of the National Guard's 69th Regiment have led the parade route.



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Spc. Nora Stone, an administrative assistant for the Directorate of Logistics at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, keeps some of the American-made traditions on St. Patrick's Day.

"Growing up I would always pinch people if they did not wear green on St. Patrick's Day and sometimes my Family would eat green food," said Stone.

Spc. Luz Almenas, a member of the 504th Puerto Rico National Guard, was interviewed on St. Patrick's Day two years ago while she was in the demobilization process. She described what St. Patrick's Day was like in her home, the commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

"It's a Family celebration with some religious significance that gives you good luck. Later on I lived in Chicago where a lot of people are Irish and they celebrate it like it is Thanks-giving. There's a parade, everyone dresses in green, goes to Irish pubs and drinks Irish beer, and it's pretty cool."

Almenas said that despite her lack of Irish ancestry, she has been carrying around an Irish good luck charm most of her life - a leprechaun.

Perhaps Bruton's statement that Irishness is forever changing and growing rings true.



Photo by Maj. Deidre Musgrave, CSJFTC Public Affairs

**TRANSPORTATION MARDI GRAS PARADE...** A friendly competition led to a good old-fashioned Mardi Gras celebration as members of the Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center Transportation Office showed off their skills during the homemade float display and competition March 8. CSJFTC Commander Col. Steve Parham, CSJFTC Executive Officer Training Lt. Col. Brad Smith and CSJFTC Executive Officer Mobilization Col. Timothy Damico were the honorary judges for this competition. Transportation Shift 1 won the competition and received a King Cake for their creative efforts. From left, Debbie Hollis, Mary Howard, Pam Massengale, Angela Fowler, Becky Beach, Janet Sullivan, Melissa Henley, Renee Clark and not pictured Cynthia Fleming.



**EXCHANGE OPENING...** Jon Griffin, Keesler Air Force Base Service Operation Assistant, above left, assists Lt. Col. Anita Easley, Director of Information Management, with questions regarding the variety of the digital cameras offered by The Exchange. Above right, Maj. Gen. Bruce Casella, Commanding General Army and Air Force Exchange Service, left, along with Mississippi Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. William L. Freeman, Jr. stand in front of the new Exchange Store during the grand opening. See story on Page 1.

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