

## Christmas Morning 1952

By Mattie Lennon

Can one ever really relive a memory or successfully re-capture a feeling? Yes, I think so, if only fleetingly and infrequently.

It was Christmas morning 1952. I was being let by the hand to early Mass in Lacken. Why did my mother have me by the hand since, in the words of Patrick Kavanagh, I was “six Christmasses of age”? It was partly because my mother considered me “wild”; although in later life I would always claim that I was an eejit but didn’t tick any of the boxes that would constitute “wild.”

Rural electrification was just arriving in Lacken and the surrounding area but had not yet been switched on. Post- dawn it would be possible to see poles which had stood, complete with insulators, all summer, sentry-like across the countryside and now strung with high-tension cables. An ESB official, one Mr Heevy from Naas, had called to the school to complaining about the number of insulators which had been the victim of stone-throwing. The schoolboys from the townland of Ballinastockan were the prime suspects. Not because they were more destructive than the rest of us but they were young marksmen with a stone or any small missile.

If you stood close to an ESB pole and looked up it appeared to be falling, something to do with an illusion caused by the rolling clouds. The term opto—kinetic movement would have meant very little to a young mind. Not every house opted for the “lectric light”. This was mainly out of economic necessity and the “cups” on the chimney became somewhat of a status symbol. The switching-on ceremony would be performed in The Parish Hall, Vallemount, in January 1953 but for now the valley’s illumination was confined to candles in windows. Conversation in the area was dominated by several fanciful theories and adult Mass-goers spoke of the well- dressed men in Ford vans who were travelling the district selling everything from irons, to kettles to Electric fires.

# Writing Raw

*All work appearing below is copyrighted by the author.*

---

An ESB official, on Mr Heevy from Naas, had called to the school to complain about the number of insulators which had been the victims of stone-throwing. The young schoolboys from the townland of Ballinastockan were the immediate suspects. Not because they were more destructive than the rest of but they were all young marksmen with a missile.

A feeling came over me that morning. Would it ever be repeated? Yes. On Saturday 29th September 1979 I was living in Blanchardstown and working as a Bus Conductor in Conyngham Road Garage. Pope John Paul 11 was arriving that day and it meant an early start for many of us. As I drove down Knockmoroon Hill at 5AM, while the endless line of tail-lights ahead of me barely moved, it came back. That feeling. It was once again Christmas morning 1952.

The End

**Mattie Lennon bio:** I have written a play; And All his Songs Were Sad, which was produced by the Pantagleize Theatre Company in Fort Worth, Texas. I have written a one-act, We Have a Wolf, by the Ears which hasn't been staged to date. I write articles for Ireland's Own and Ireland's Eye. I have a webpage; mattielennon.com. Along with John cassidy I am producing a DVD/ TV Documentary on a less well-known aspect of the Irish Potato famine. I produced a DVD Sunrise on the Wicklow Hills. I am a part-time storyteller. I am a Competent Communicator with Lucan Toastmasters and a member of Irish PEN. I am working on a Memoir, the working title of which is The January Fair.