ORIGINAL

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913–21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 442

Witness

Frank Fahy, T.D.,
Bellevue,
Dundrum,
Co. Dublin.

Identity

Captain 'C' Coy. 1st Battn. Easter Week 1916.
Member of Dail Eireann since 1918.
Ceann Comhairle Dail Eireann since 1932.

Subject

Comment on article entitled "Allegiance" by Robert Brennan in Sunday Press of 25th September, 1950.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

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CORRECTION BY FRANK FAHY

"Sunday Press", 25th September, 1949.

The Memoirs of Robert Brennan.

Page 9, Column 5 - re Barney Mellows

Barney Mellows was one of those engaged in the attack on the Magazine Fort, Phoenix Park, on Easter Monday, 1916. From there some of the attacking party, including Barney Mellows, came to me in the Four Courts, and from that day until the surrender Barney acted as my Aide-de-Camp.

I had written some dispatches to Connolly, and had carbon copies of them in the Four Courts; luckily for me, Barney Mellows burned them just before the surrender.

SIGNED Frank Fahy

DATE 30 · X · 50.

"The Sunday Press"
25th September 1949.

"ALLEGIANCE" is a somewhat abridged version of Robert Brennan's memoirs, which he intends publishing in book form next year. Copyright by the author.

Allegiance!

Third Instalment of
The Memoirs of ★ ★ ROBERT BRENNAN

LAST week Robert Brennan wrote of the gathering together of strange comrades in Dublin—physical force men, writers, poets, newspapermen, men of labour . . . and the coming of Sinn Fein. Rebels all, in Dublin in the years before the drama of the Rising began.

e day I went to the Gaelic eague offices to see Sean T. 'Kelly. He was out for the ioment and I sat down to ait. There was an earnest ooking young man sitting at desk, absorbed as if thinking hat to write. He jotted omething down on a slip of aper. Then he looked up and sked me if I spoke Irish. I id "a little" and he handed e the slip of paper. The ords on it were:

eanam lorg na Laochraidhe."

you understand it," he sked.

s," I said, "Let us follow the footsteps of the heroes."

n't it grand," he said and I greed. He was writing an rticle on this topic for the Claidheamh Soluis," the Gaelic eague organ. When Sean T. ame and fetched me, I asked ho the man was and he told e it was Padraig Pearse.

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ed To Resign

ITH Sinn Fein matters went from bad to worse, while ie Irish Party's fortunes conued to rise as Home Rule emed to come nearer. riffith had put up a Sinn Fein ndidate for a parliamentary acancy in North Leitrim and id taken a heavy defeat, ough Griffith called it a oral victory. Years afterards I heard Gerry Boland y, "I'm sick of these moral ctories. After every one of em I'm in jail and in debt." the support for the Party creased, their attacks on us doubled and this at a time nen our numbers were get- ig fewer and fewer.

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intry Reporter

E position of Wexford corespondent of the *Enniscorthy ho* became vacant and the itor, Mr. William Sears, who as with us in the Sinn Fein ovement, agreed to give me e job and pay me one pound r week. Una and I made t a budget and found that, ter making all allowances r rent, food, clothing and all ntingencies, we would have npence over from my one und at the end of a week. re enough, we had tenpence t over at the end of the first ek but we never had it afterards, at least not till very any years later.

r the arduous work I had d surveying four hundred les of roads on a push cycle, mostly in the depth of e winter, I found life as a porter very comfortable. vented a quaint detective aracter called "Crubeen tch" for *Ireland's Own* d he was an instant success. wrote well over one ndred short detective stories three years. I used to start ch story on Thursday even- , when my last dispatch to *Echo* had been sent off and, iting continuously, finish about four in the morning d then go down town to post it at the G.P.O. before the 5 a.m. collection, so as to be in time for publication. As each story contained about seven thousand words, it will be seen that this was hard work. The series, according to Nick Murphy, the traveller for the magazine—long afterwards superintendent of the Garda—sent the circulation up from thirty thousand to eighty thousapd, but I was paid at the same rate all the time, namely half-a-crown a column, which amounted to twenty-five shillings for seven thousand words.

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Fianna Eireann Go To Drill

ONE Sunday in 1911, Una and I were on our way to Mass down Summerhill, when round the corner from Hackett's Spout a little band of boys in green uniforms came marching. They were the Wexford troops of Fianna Eireann, which had been started by Sean Sinnott a few months before.

I had, of course, seen them marching before, but this time there was something in their bearing which sent my heart beating a little faster. In front of the column with Sean was a boy with a crop of unusually fair hair. When they came abreast of us, Sean halted the column and brought the stranger over to us. I experienced an unexpectedly strong handclasp and found myself looking into the blue eyes of Liam Mellows, full of good humour, enthusiasm optimism and comradeship.

The boys were bound for the mountain on a route march. Later that day they came in to us for tea and thereafter Liam stayed with us nearly every time he came to Wexford. Our place was an ideal one for him to drill the boys and he took full advantage of it. Liam's father had spent his life as a regular soldier in the British Army. Intending Liam for the same career, he had sent him to school to the Hibernian Military Academy.

The old man had been badly cut up the day Liam told him that if he was going to fight, it would be for Ireland and on Irish soil. Liam was now giving the benefit of his military schooling to the boys all over Ireland. To some of us who had been many years in the I.R.B. the prospect of a rising seemed remote, but Mellows' optimism was infectious. We would get our chance soon, he said, when England and Germany would go to war.

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Mellows Of The Light Heart

ON the parade ground Liam was a stern, rigid disciplinarian. He drove the boys hard. Off duty he was a lighthearted, harum-scarum, practical joker, and he was an inveterate punster. I give two classic examples of the puns of his later days, when the Black and Tans were on the rampage in their Crossley lorries, raiding the countryside. Liam and I lay side by side in a house one night when the lorries rumbled nearer and nearer and slowly passed. He whispered: "When I hear any lorry I lay me down and dee." A few days later, the district we were in was surrounded by the raiding Black an Tans. Liam said: "Solomon in all his glory was never in a raid like one of these."

We often stayed at the Mellows' home in Dublin and, I must say, that if ever there was a happy family, it was that of the Mellows' in those days. They lived in a small, but very comfortable house in Mountpleasant Avenue, near Dolphin's Barn. Hanging on the walls there were many group photographs of British soldiers, in all of which the old man appeared. Concerning the treasonable activities of his family, Mr. Mellows was puzzled but tolerant. The mother, however, declared that since she was a Wexford woman she could be nothing but a rebel. In the evening Liam would tramp in in the heavy hobnailed boots he always wore and give us a lighthearted and lively account of the day's doings. After tea, Liam, Barney, Fred and Jenny, the only girl, would play quartettes — piano and strings—always arrangements of Irish airs. Fred and Jenny died before the Rising and the father and mother visibly grew older, but they bore their sorrows very bravely and never complained.

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The Man Who Was Broken

ONE day after the Great War started, I journeyed up from Wexford, and Liam and his father met me at Harcourt Street station. As we emerged into the street, a battalion of British soldiers were marching past. We stood on the footpath with hundreds of others to watch them. "Now don't you see," said the father to Liam, as if resuming an argument.

"Yes, of course I do," replied Liam testily. He was immediately aware that he had shown some temper and he turned to me with a grin.

"Father thinks the Volunteers do not put on as good a show as the British."

"You know well they don't," said the old man, "they haven't the precision, the order, the bearing or anything else. Look at the way these fellows walk."

Liam patted him affectionately on the shoulder.

"Wait till you see the way they'll run," he said.

The old man was about to explode. He turned to me gravely.

"Don't make the mistake," he said, "of under-estimating the British soldiers."

"He's afraid we are going to beat them," said Liam with a grin.

The old man must have found it strange when the Rising started and his two remaining children were out with the rebels, one away in Galway and the other with his company in the South Dublin Union, within a stone's throw of his house. Barney told me later, when we met in Newbridge prison, that the old man managed to reach him on Wednesday or Thursday of the fight when the garrison of the South Dublin Union was being sorely pressed. He had crossed the canal under fire and came to say to Barney that his mother was bearing up well under the strain.

"That's not what you came to say to me," said Barney.

His father regarded him thoughtfully for a while.

"Why don't you enfilade those fellows?" he asked.

"How?"

"If you send half a dozen men with rifles across the canal to such and such a position you can turn their flank."

"Good old Dad!" said Barney. "We'll do it." And they did.

The old man was broken, however, and he died before Liam, who had escaped to America after the Rising, had returned.

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Larkin's Men On The Run

ONE day during the great Dublin strike of 1913, Liam Mellows came down and asked us if we could put up two Dublin-men who were fugitives from justice. We knew, without being told, who the fugitives were because the papers had given very full accounts of their depredations. They were the two men who had thrown a policeman into the River Liffey and had hurled a barrel in after him. They were two of Larkin's men and the Hue and Cry was out for them. The affair had occurred during one of the numerous clashes between the police and the strikers and as the policemen had been rescued it seemed to me that there was much ado about very little.

We were told, however, that they were dangerous men and that the police had it in for them. We, of course, agreed, to take the two men and to try and arrange to have them smuggled on a Wexford schooner to England. In due course, the men arrived. One of them, Stephen Hastings, was a big fellow, not unlike Larkin himself.

He had, indeed, been requisitioned at times to impersonate Larkin so as to lead the police on a false trail. After a couple of weeks, we managed to smuggle him on board a schooner and get him away. The other man, Higgins, remained on our hands and, to our dismay, he developed a troublesome cough which threatened to betray his presence in the house. We had to keep the men in one room all the time because we had sharing the house with us a family who were not at all friendly to the cause. For several weeks we waited, and though Mike Morris, the captain of the schooner Edith May, was willing to take him on his boat, he could not sail as the weather was unfavourable.

"Just like the Armada," said Mellows, who was now on the scene frequently, "the wind and the waves are fighting for England."

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"Chop the Head Off Him"

FINALLY, we thought it safer to send Higgins to the country for a while and Larry De Lacy found a house for him in Oulart, his native village. He placed him in the home of a bachelor, right in the village. It was the first time the little Dublin man had been in a house in the country and it was all very strange to him. His bachelor host entertained him for some time, but when night came on, the former remembered that the circus was paying its annual visit to the village and he did not intend to miss the circus for Higgins, or Larkin, or any man in Ireland.

Higgins was terribly upset when he heard this.

"But what am I going to do if they come in for me?" he asked.

"They won't come in for you," said the other, "no one knows you are here and there will be no one coming in anyway."

He completely forget that he had a lodger—the local schoolmaster — and that the latter would be coming home while he was at the circus.

As Higgins still protested, his host handed him a billhook and put him sitting on the stairs facing the door.

"Now," he said, "if anyone comes in, all you have to do is to chop the head off of him with this."

So off the bachelor went to the circus and he was enjoying it thoroughly when he suddenly remembered the schoolmaster. He stood up in his seat and crying out, "Oh, my God, the schoolmaster!" he rushed across the ring and out, nearly taking the tent with him. He ran all the way to the cottage and, bursting in, nearly got his own head off.

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We Join the Volunteers

WE brought Higgins back after a while and managed to get him away to England, but he was arrested shortly afterwards. He got a ten years sentence.

When the Volunteers were formed in 1913, we all joined up. We had about fifty recruits to start with and the numbers gradually increased.

(Continued Next Sunday)

In Dublin rebels all

—and men strike for justice!