

TD 'hurt as she scaled Shannon Airport fence'

CLARE Daly tumbled and hurt herself while using a rope ladder to scale a fence at Shannon Airport as she tried to inspect US military aircraft, a court has heard.

The TD was arrested along with fellow independent Mick Wallace on July 22 last year after they breached security and made it on to a grass verge next to an area known as taxiway 11.

Mr Wallace, of Clontarf, Dublin, and Ms Daly, 46, of Swords, Co. Dublin, were charged with unlawfully entering a restricted zone at Shannon Airport.

Ennis District Court heard there were two US military planes on the ground they wanted to inspect. A rope ladder said to have been used by the TDs was shown to the court.

Garda evidence to the court

By Ed Carty

revealed Ms Daly had been bleeding from her lip, that she had injured two of her fingers and that one of her wrists was swollen before she was detained by security and later arrested.

The court was told the TD fell as she climbed over the fence on the rope ladder.

Ms Daly declined medical assistance but took up the offer of a cup of tea while in custody at Shannon Garda station.

Still photos from airport CCTV were shown to the court which identified Ms Daly and Mr Wallace wearing high-visibility jackets on a grass area next to the taxiway.

Sergeant Noel O'Rourke told the court Mr Wallace made a statement to him immediately

after his arrest in the airport's immigration suite.

'His words were that they entered the airport in order to make a political statement regarding the use of Shannon Airport for military purposes and to bring it to the attention of the minister because the minister is not listening,' the officer said.

Witnesses were called as part of the TDs' defence.

Patrick O'Toole, who worked in Shannon for a year in 2003 refilling catering trolleys, said some US military flights were treated differently than others.

'We called them rendition flight planes. They always landed at night-time,' he said.

Judge Patrick Durcan adjourned the case until March 10 to hear evidence from the TDs.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Children need to play to learn true friendship

MY generation is the last to have known a world without technology. Growing up, we had no computers, mobile phones, tablets or iPads. We were without the abundant means of communication possessed by our children, yet we all knew what it meant to genuinely communicate.

When I recently pointed this out to our eldest, he asked: 'What did you do on the holidays?'

This is a boy who loves culture, reading and music, and yet even he could not comprehend how we could live without our gadgets. I responded that we played, read and enjoyed the fruits of our imagination.

Thinking back to that time, I am struck by how inventive, creative and resourceful we were. We made the world our own simply by belonging to it. Beyond the hall door was a natural oasis where we found action, adventure and excitement.

My son made the assumption that because we had neither tech toys nor thousands of television channels, we must have been bored to death. As it happens, I don't ever remember being bored as a child.

Today, however, I see boredom everywhere.

Why is this? Why is it that when every recreational desire is fulfilled at the push of a button, people are so bored and discontented?

It seems clear to me that you can only find true fulfilment by actively engaging with the world and those with whom you share it.

We are addicted to play and yet we never really play, at least not in the sense we did as children. We engage, but only virtually. We connect with our 'friends', but never truly commit to them.

Commitment: a beautiful virtue without which we cannot endure. However, when we cease to engage with others, when we forget what is involved in making a friend, we have lost the capacity to commit. It is then that I fail to find fulfilment in anything outside myself.

The true purpose of play is much more than the promotion of good health. It is to teach children how to negotiate their way around the world. It is to foster creativity, competition and companionship. Without real play, where children forge lasting friendships, society simply crumbles in to 'the dust and powder of individuality'.

Play binds children to the world and to others. It teaches them the value of commitment, of honour and courage.

In the playground, on the street or in the garden, they acquire the affirmation and skills needed to develop into well-adjusted adults.

There is no easy road to commit-

ment. It demands work, effort and enthusiasm. To think that you can get commitment on the cheap is to misunderstand it.

At its best, commitment involves a promise to be faithful come what may. If true friendship demands such a promise, it is because friends must know they can rely on each other even in the darkest times. That is why friendship is not found but made, built up over time and cemented in trust.

Without our gadgets, we knew how to make friends. We also knew how to commit to a cause, a creed and to someone for life. Tragically, to my children's generation, the idea of committing to anything for life appears alien.

We played, we lived and we loved. In everything around us, we found some source of enjoyment. The entire world was our playground and it never dawned on us that, one day, it would be reduced to the size of a games console.

That, however, is where we are, which is why offering an alternative to our children is not an option but a duty. We can do so simply by providing an alternative vision of life, one that is rooted in lasting attachments. Let them see the beauty of real friendship, of lasting love, and they will discover why lifelong commitments are the only true source of earthly joy.

TODAY, Mrs Dooley's parents celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. Ponder that: a promise made between two people, one that has endured every day for half a century. A commitment made on this day in 1965 which has never been broken.

For my children, this is a glorious testament to the beauty and consolation of commitment. It provides certainty and comfort in a world otherwise emptied of both. In their grandparents, they can see why, without promises and commitments, we will never flourish as we should.

As my mother-in-law often inquires: 'How many of the current generation will make it as far as we have?'

It is a good question and one that only time will answer.

What I can say is that unless our children learn to know and trust the world as we did, unless they learn how to really live and love, they won't stand a chance.

'What did you do on the holidays?'

I put away my school bag, went outside and walked in the sun. I rode ponies, made lifelong friends and lasting memories. I sat on the grass, talked for hours and listened for even longer. I gave myself to life and it eventually led me to love.

And that love, which is the source of all I possess, would never have been mine without a 50-year-old commitment made by two wonderful people to whom I am proud to dedicate this column.

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