

€46k for 15-month-old who fell out 'low' window

A CHILD who tumbled more than three metres (11ft) from a window in the apartment where she lived has been awarded €46,000.

Róisín Byrne, who was just 15 months old at the time, had been temporarily living in the one-bedroom flat in Dublin with her parents Ronan Byrne and Chloe Murphy.

It is believed that the child, now five years old, had been chasing a ball when she fell out a 'faulty' window.

Barrister Martin Fitzgerald told the Circuit Civil Court that she was playing in a room in the flat, at Newtown Avenue, Blackrock, when she fell out of the large Georgian sash window.

The youngster landed on an emergency fire casing, fractur-

By **Saurya Cherfi**

ing a rib and puncturing a lung. She also suffered cuts and bruises to her body, and was taken to Our Lady's Children Hospital, Crumlin, where she was kept for several nights.

Through her mother, Róisín, now of Balbriggan, Co. Dublin, sued the family's former landlord Enda Woods for negligence.

Circuit Court president Judge Raymond Groarke heard that the girl's parents had complained to the caretaker about the window, which was more than a metre (4ft) wide and two metres (7ft) high, and was only 53cm (21in) off the floor.

Mr Fitzgerald told the court that the complaint had been that the window was too low to

the floor and its bottom part had no security mechanism. The court heard that Róisín's parents had tried to block it temporarily with furniture, but had opened it on the day to air the apartment in August 2012.

Judge Groarke heard that liability was an issue in the case and following a Personal Injuries Board assessment, the defendant had made a €46,000 damages settlement offer.

The judge also heard that Róisín had made a full recovery but that her wounds had left a scar on her forehead.

Approving the offer, he said that the child's accident had been very frightening.

'One has to be very grateful that she has made a full recovery,' he said.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

When they ask about Papa the memories come flooding back

OUR middle son asked: 'Do I have any great-grandparents?' He enquired because two of his friends have great-grandmothers who recently received letters from the President and Queen Elizabeth. 'Do you know that one of them is 104 and the other is 102? That means they get a few euro!'

Beneath the smile, I could not help noticing the slight look of sadness on my son's face. I could see that he, too, wanted to boast about his great-grandmothers to his classmates. Last year, he seized every available opportunity to tell his class about the life and times of his grandparents, how they make him happy and proud.

The love that unites the young and the old is a thing of rare beauty. Children love their grandparents with a spontaneity which causes the universe to beam. It is the purest love and a model for us all to emulate.

Grandparents allow children to be themselves. The pressures of parenthood often result in our little ones having to live within strict parameters. But with their grandparents they have the liberty to abide in perfect joy. They stand at the two extremes of life, yet they are united by a bond that transcends time. The old and the young reaching across the years to embrace as one. It is a tender union from which the most magical memories are formed.

How else but through this timeless love can the generations unite together? In our sad world, where the old are so often neglected or considered a burden, the affection between grandparents and grandchildren is a benediction. It is a beautiful reminder of how the old ought to be treated.

The great lessons in life are not learned through theory, but simply by observing the little things. A grandmother hugging her grandchild as though it were her final act here on Earth. A grandfather playing football with his grandson as though he were young again.

Those are the precious moments which show us why life is not simply a mechanical process of birth, growth and decay. It is a journey of love in which we learn from each other the harmony of the heart. Simply by spending time with her granddaughter, a granny teaches so much about those things which make life a thing of wonder.

Ultimately, we exist for love. There is not a person on the planet, no matter how hard or heartless, who does not yearn to be loved. For many, the first taste of that sweet affection is found in the arms of Papa or Granny.

Today, many hard-pressed parents are forced to leave their children in the care of their grandparents. This is

not to be regretted, for what child can lose out by being looked after by those who love them without measure? Conversely, what grandparent will not gain in joy what they lose in time?

The old have so much to offer, so much to give by way of warmth and wisdom. To neglect or disrespect the elderly is a moral indictment of any society. It is to cut the cord to our past and to set adrift the very people without whom we would not exist.

Children instinctively love the elderly because they long to belong. My children are forever asking questions like: 'Where did Grandad come from?' Their grandparents are a living link to a time beyond their own. To sever that link is to sink into a state of amnesia. It is to forget your roots, your people, your history. It is to think that we can live without the guidance of the past.

It was before dawn when I would creep into the kitchen. My grandfather was always there reading some big novel. 'Tell me about the war again,' to which he would respond with great stories about Mussolini, air-raid sirens and how they coped with the rations.

He taught me about politics, how he and his family survived the events of 1916, and how, as a young man, he befriended a deer in the Phoenix Park. Together, we watched Jimmy Carter beat Gerald Ford in and US presidential election of 1976. Together, we laughed out loud at Laurel and Hardy. Each night, he would stand in silence as they played the National Anthem on TV. Each morning, he would shine his shoes and dress in his best. Merely by being in his company, I learned so much about myself and the world.

ON a cold night in 1982, my grandfather was struck down by a massive stroke. For the next four years, he lingered on partially paralysed and without the power of speech. My one great regret was that I did not visit him often enough during those dark years.

And yet, even then, our bond was unbreakable. Sitting in his wheelchair in the sun, he cried when he saw me coming. He couldn't speak but nodded vigorously as I told him all about school, my friends and the family.

I vividly remember the moment he was released from his awful agony. As I bade him 'goodbye', I somehow knew this man could not die so long as I lived. He opened up to me a way of life which made everything appear more bright and meaningful.

'Do I have any great-grandparents?', my son asked.

He looked at me looking lovingly at him, and, in the silence of that moment, he got his answer.

—mark.dooley@daily@mail.ie—

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