

Man and woman die in separate road crashes

TWO people have been killed in separate crashes on our roads over the past two days.

A man in his 40s died yesterday morning when the car he was driving collided with another car shortly before 9am on the N80 on Summons Mill Cross Road in Co. Laois.

A woman and a child in the second vehicle suffered minor injuries in the incident and were taken to Portlaoise General Hospital and Crumlin Hospital in Dublin, respectively.

In a separate incident around 12 hours earlier, a 68-year-old woman was killed when the car she was driving collided with two other vehicles 20km out-

By Jane Fallon Griffin

side Roscommon town.

The three-vehicle accident happened at about 9.45pm on Monday at Ballinaboy, on the N63 Lanesboro to Roscommon road.

The woman was pronounced dead at the scene and her body was taken to the mortuary at Roscommon University Hospital.

The drivers in the other two cars were injured in the crash and were brought to the Ballinasloe and Tullamore hospitals. Last night, their injuries were not believed to be life threatening. Gardaí are appealing for witnesses to both road acci-

dents to come forward.

The latest deaths bring the number of people killed on our roads so far this year to 122, which is a decrease of eight fatalities from the same time period last year.

So far this year, drivers have made up the majority of deaths in road incidents, followed by pedestrians and passengers.

Irish roads were the fourth safest in the EU last year, according to the European Transport Safety Council.

However, the Road Safety Authority here has said that the country still has a long way to go in order to achieve its goal of reducing annual fatalities to 124 or less by 2020.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

I say farewell with a joy in my heart, so thank you all

IT is nearly ten years since we first met here, and what a joy it has been ever since. This column has given me so many gifts, so many memories and, most importantly, so many friends. Each week, you followed my life and allowed me to enter yours.

That this is our last meeting in this context is not, however, a source of sadness. For I gaze back across the years with a sense of thanksgiving for all the happiness this column has given me. I gaze back without a single regret.

You have journeyed me in my role as a father of three wonderful boys. You have watched them grow up in 'real time' and, I hope, learned something of one man's struggle to preserve their tender innocence. This column is as much their story as it is mine.

Despite all its challenges, life is such a beautiful thing. To wake up and watch the sun rise, to take that first tantalising sip of your morning brew, to hear the simple sounds of a family greeting the new day – all this is the stuff of wonder. Shining a light on those little miracles of everyday life was such a great privilege.

That so many of you responded with such kindness through the years proves that we hunger for light and love. We yearn for the things of the heart because only they can provide glimpses of eternity. The eyes of a child and the smile of your beloved contain the whole world.

We mourned the dead and gave thanks for their beautiful lives. We gave new life to people long forgotten and to those whose stories stirred our sympathy. We did all that together and I am certainly the better for it.

Those of you who wrote, and who have since become dear friends, I thank you. You are the greatest gift this column has given me. That writing can generate such friendship, can lift people's hearts and relieve their suffering, is surely proof of its moral power.

Few columnists have had the honour of writing a column each week for ten years. I am one of those who has been blessed to do so. I have been blessed because so many of you continued to turn up

week after week. You did so, I think, because the things that make life worthwhile are rarely spoken about today. We have turned away from beauty, art, love and the glories of nature. Our poor world is beset with darkness beyond description.

But we possess an inner light that can cast aside the gloom. We can laugh and love, hope and heal, despite the darkness. We can sing in the face of sorrow and smile away the storms.

We can look upon the winter as a time of discontent, or we can see it as that season of the soul when the light of love binds families together. How we experience life depends on how we view it. Smile at it and you will find it invariably smiles back.

We have travelled so far together, but, now that our journey nears its end, I want to thank all who made it possible. My beloved family, who were so often the subject of my musings, deserve my deepest debt. My editors, who gave me the freedom to make this column my own, warrant special praise.

TO all who wrote with suggestions, encouragement and support, I shall never forget you. In so many ways, the body of work that constitutes 'Moral Matters' is your monument. It is my tribute to the wonderful readers of this paper – people who have shown me the true meaning of humanity. Everything ends. Things come, and things go. Such is the nature of life.

But we have our memories which will always defy decay. Stored in our hearts, we have those precious moments when we shared a smile, shed a tear, or when we simply found solace in talking about the summer sun. We have those moments because we kept a date every week for a decade.

Fortune brought us together and I, for one, am eternally grateful for it. Writing for you was much more than an occupation: it made me into a far better human being.

And so, I do not say 'goodbye'. I do not say it because you will always occupy a very special place in my heart.

It is a place that time cannot touch – a place where life and love last, not for a day, but forever.

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