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## Building up the Irish

Peter Martin designed the R.I. Irish Famine Memorial Website.

Peter Martin may have retired as a public servant, but only officially. A train conductor, a former state representative and a Renaissance man, Martin, who will be 77 in May, unofficially retired 15 years ago, but he continues to serve the community, especially the Irish community.

"Having the skills of a website developer, I realized the local Hibernian group needed a website," he said. "My brother was a member and I had time, so, as a favor to him, I developed a website for them. I pulled apart another website and built it in 2003."

This happened years before Martin began, and ended, his three-term stint as a state representative, and decades after he began learning computer codes.

"At one time, I learned 14 computer languages. I'm a nerd... A lot of people are using tools to build websites and they are very inefficient websites. I do my own html coding. I'm expert in that. I write them at that level, and they operate more efficiently.

"When I was in the State House, I was accepted by the Nerd Club as one of them."

At an age when many senior citizens are just learning how to use a computer, Martin was named the most technically proficient member of the General Assembly.

A member of the Hibernians for the past 10 years, he has also designed websites for the Newport Museum of Irish History and the Rhode Island Irish Famine Memorial, serving on that organization's board of directors.

"I'm retired from politics," said Martin.

It is the only thing he has stopped doing publicly, however. Carrying a bag of harmonicas from gig to gig, Martin plays with his band, The Geezers. "But I'm the only one old enough to be called a geezer," he said.

On Wednesday, March 14, he will play a 2 p.m. concert at the Rhode Island Veterans Home in Bristol, before racing down to Hibernian Hall to collect tickets for the one-time performance of the legendary Irish trio, The Wolfe Tones.

"These guys have been playing together for 54 years," Martin said. "This is a stop on what may be their last great tour. They are all in their early 70s. To me, they are youngsters. Those who know me think I want to play harmonica with them."

Anything for a cause, he added, especially an Irish one.

In 2011, Martin was instrumental in convincing Governor Lincoln Chafee to pardon John Gordon, a young Irish immigrant convicted of murdering a mill owner in Cranston in 1845.

He saw Ken Dooley's play, "The Murder Trial of John Gordon," and worked with the playwright to get Chafee's signature on a pardon after a formal hearing was held. "We proved, without a doubt, not that he was innocent, but that he was given an unfair trial," he said.

Martin met three times with Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny, including in 2014 when Kenny came to the Rhode Island Irish Famine Memorial and thanked Chafee and related parties for their work on Gordon's behalf.

The luck of the Irish continues to follow Martin. He recently won the grand prize at a fundraiser held by the Famine Memorial committee: a free week's cottage stay in Galway, Ireland, which he will enjoy with daughter, Christine, in July.

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