When we heard that 5 assorted family members were going to Ireland we said, "We want to go too!" So plans were made to meet in Dublin.

We all arrived in Dublin on different days. Walking to meet the last to arrive and the mini van with a chauffeur who had picked them up at the airport, we heard a horn honking and looked up to find several hands and heads sticking out of the windows, waving and calling to us. Their plane had arrived early, so they were ahead of schedule and found us as we were walking toward our arranged meeting place. We stowed our bags in the back and piled into the van, trying to hug and kiss everyone over the seats. We were siblings, in-laws and cousins in a mini van with a singing, story telling retired Irish cop as our hired driver.

Now 7 different opinions of where to go and what to do could have been a problem, but we all recognized that very first day, on the drive from Dublin to Blarney, our first stop, that our driver Jim knew every little corner of the counties that we wanted to explore. Without even discussing it, we all turned the trip over to Jim and he never let us down.

Jim led us to some great restaurants for delicious lunches after mornings of sightseeing, and he knew all of the best pubs to stop in for refreshments when our eyes were tired from seeing green rolling landscapes and stone castles. In one of the many small out of the way villages that we visited, he met someone he knew when we were walking down the street; a pub owner wouldn't you know. And when we had spent too much time visiting an old church and exploring the cemetery, he called the Jameson distillery to hold the last morning tour for us, so we could taste some of Jameson's finest before we went to lunch. After the second day, we started inviting him to have lunch with us, and by the end of the week we felt like old friends. When he dropped us back at our hotel in Dublin, we were all sorry to see him go. We are spoiled now, and the next time that we go on a trip we might call Jim and see if he wants to come along.

It was a memorable vacation. Our hotels were both wonderful, we never had a bad meal, and our traveling companions were family; what could be better than that.