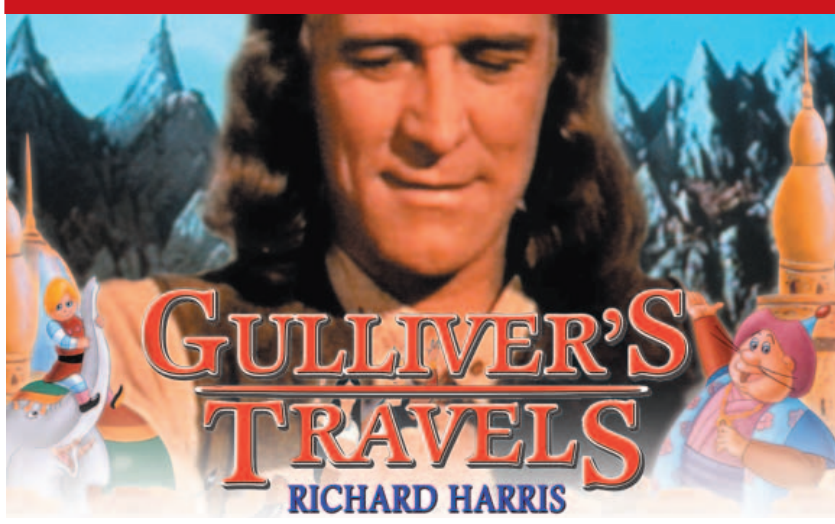


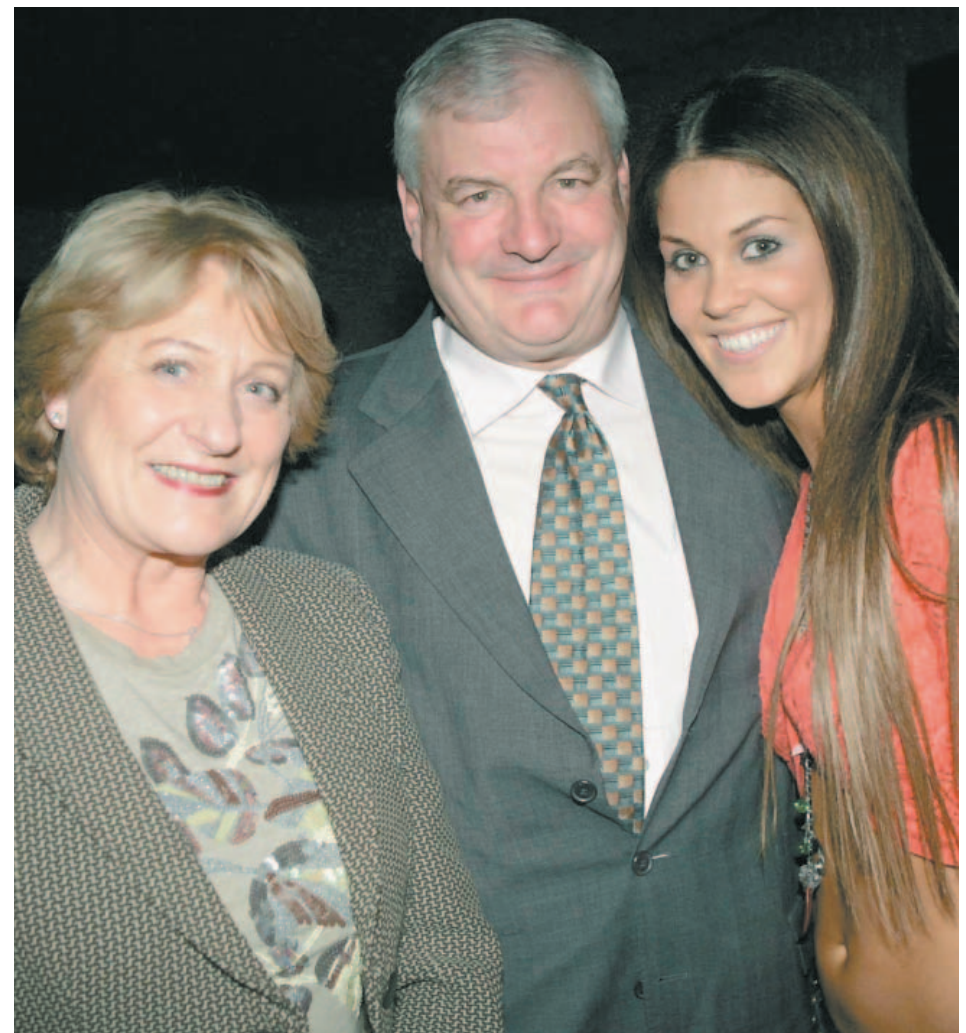
Sunday Independent

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FAMILY MAN: Liam Lawlor with his wife Hazel, left, and niece, model Glenda Gilson

BARRY EGAN

To whom one mustn't tell the truth?

My deepest feeling about politicians," wrote poet WH Auden, "is that they are dangerous lunatics to be avoided when possible and carefully humoured; people, above all, to whom one must never tell the truth."

I bore Auden's words in mind when I had lunch with Liam Lawlor last October. We met with the understanding that he might slip me the odd story for the diary I do on his old cronies in Fianna Fail occasionally. But I was lying to him: the real reason I arranged to meet him was that I hoped I could persuade him to do an interview.

He came straight from the tribunal that day to De Murfo's Cafe beside the gates of Dublin Castle where he was being grilled daily. It didn't seem to be getting to him. From the good-natured

mood he was in you could have been forgiven for thinking he had come straight from the betting shop where he'd make a killing.

It was lashing rain and both of us were soaked to the skin. He appeared neither dangerous nor a lunatic. He was charming and witty in a very sharp Dublin way (he was educated at Synge Street and it showed).

He had a bowl of soup and a cup of tea; and was generally extremely funny and warm. If this was supposed to be one of toughest politicians, he showed his soft side in De Murfo's that day.

He laughed at my lame joke about whether he wanted a sweetener for his tea — a reference to Lawlor quitting FF and saying an Ahern ally had offered him "an €100,000 sweetener". (He claimed that one of the Taoiseach's political cronies was the go-between who offered him €100,000 to sup-

port a proposal for a €35m casino in the Phoenix Park.)

He was not hard to like. He was personable and charming. I could see how he would have gotten up and played guitar and sang at his niece Glenda Gilson's birthday party. He agreed to an interview in the near future. We tentatively talked about meeting up in New York the following month where he was going with his family for a birthday celebration.

When I couldn't go he rang me with the details of the party and arranged to have pictures of the soiree emailed over. He was supposed to come to a party I had a few months ago but at the last minute had to go to Prague. I would get the odd text from him from time to time. I had told Glenda that her uncle was a gas character altogether, and she agreed. Three weeks ago in the Ice Bar I met his daughter and asked her to pass on my

regards to her father. I hope he got them.

When I got up to pay that day in De Murfo's, Liam told me it was on him. Noticing that it was still raining cats and dogs outside, he insisted that I take his umbrella — as he only had a short walk back to his public interrogation in Dublin Castle and I had to get across town. I still have the umbrella.

It's ironic that Liam Lawlor's last act to me was one of generosity.

Perhaps those who savaged him when he was alive will be kinder to him now he's dead. It is perhaps fitting that Liam Lawlor passed away on the day the men who didn't stand by him in Fianna Fail were down in Killarney trying to give the kiss of life to the party he was thrown out of.

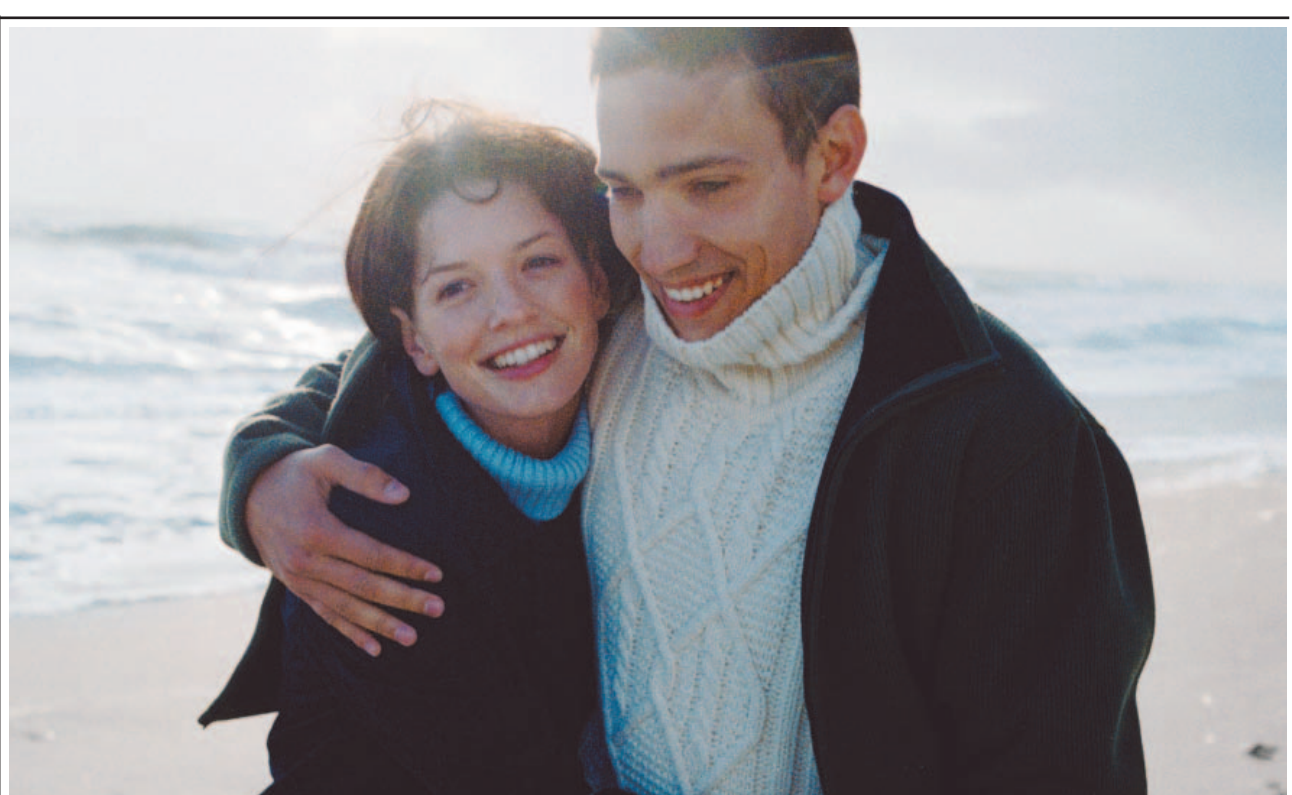
"The Ard Fheis will now be remembered for Liam dying," a Fianna Fail member told me yesterday.

Enclosed in today's **Sunday Independent** is your **LIFE** magazine and a free DVD of the movie **Gulliver's Travels**. In the unlikely event that your magazine or DVD is not enclosed, please call our Customer Service department on Monday at (023) 32879.

Vol. 100 No. 43 City Final
9 177079 1 687070 42

THIS SECTION	BUSINESS	SPORT	LIVING
Weather	4 News	1 Soccer	1-5 The big read
Crossword	39 Markets	2 Rugby	8-11 Interview
Worldwide	22 Interview	3 GAA	12-13 Hugh Leonard
Comment	32 Appointments	5 Racing	114-152 Dear Pat
Obituaries	37 Shane Ross	16 Results	6 Travel
			7 Diary
			16

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