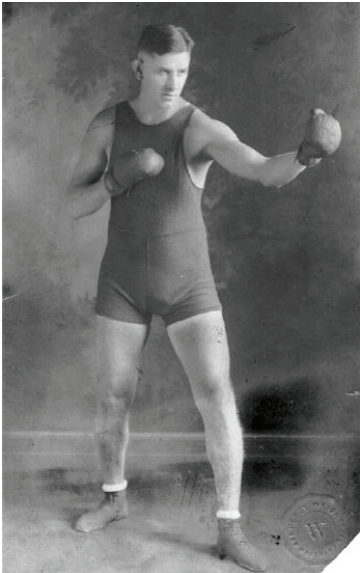


The Northampton Bear Cat and News from Fistianana Frank Philip Sheridan (1890-1945)

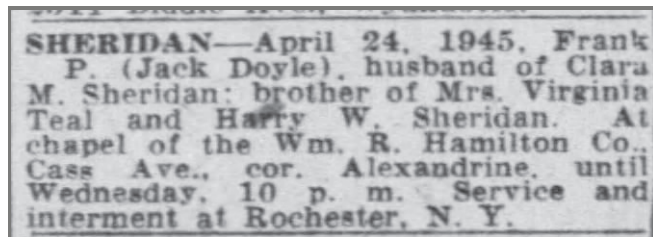
By Ellamary Joanne Sheridan Kane

Clearly, I'm not a student of the Sweet Science, like members of the IBRO. I come to my research of the boxer Frank Philip Sheridan as a genealogist. Frank was an uncle I never knew. Maybe that's better, as it helped me view Frank's short boxing career with a dispassionate view of his skills in the ring and more from the family history perspective as I tried to place him in the narrative arc of my father's clan, just one more poor Irish family that grew up in the coal fields of Pennsylvania. Throughout my research into Frank's life and boxing in the region around the family's home town of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania in the 1910's, a line from Carlo Rotella's New York Times article, written in 2016 about a fighter, not a boxer, nicknamed Kimbo Slice stuck with me. Rotella writes one of the most apt descriptions of what could have been Frank's boxing career when he ends his review of Kimbo's life with this...."For every nonpareil there's an army of guys like Kimbo who do what they can with what they've got, angling to catch a break from the fates." Frank's boxing career was short, you will see, and he never caught that break from the fates like so many other middling and great boxers of his age.



Frank Philip Sheridan in a classic boxing pose. Photo by Perry Wright Woodward

The end of Frank's life is the best place to start. Did my uncle really box under the name Jack Doyle as his obituary claimed? Family lore also had it that he did use Jack Doyle as his ring name, but hand-me-down stories are seldom as accurate as we'd want them to be. I also remember being told my uncle had a glass jaw, little did I know what that meant. At age 15, I remember attending Frank's wake, because like all good Irishmen there needed to be a wake for him, but never interacting with him as a child. Decades, later I found this brief bio in the Detroit Free Press:



Reading Frank's obituary created the spark for me to see what I could find on the relative said to have fought as Jack Doyle. But as best I could determine, Frank Sheridan never fought under the name of Jack Doyle, but he did appear in a number of matches, almost all centered around his home town of Wilkes-Barre. In 2020, IRBO members were kind enough to help our research by providing and this overview of Frank's boxing career. It assisted in exploring, much deeper than I thought possible, the arc of Frank's time in the ring.

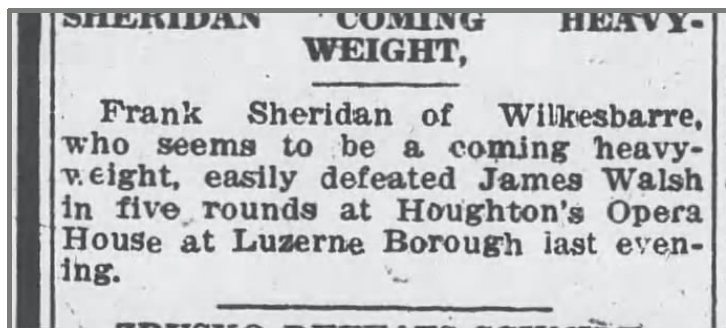
Frank Sheridan Wilkes-Barre, PA				
		1911		
Nov 20	Jimmy Walsh	Houghton's Opera House, Luzerne, PA	W TKO	5
		1912		
Feb 2	Dan Moran	Nonpareil A.C., Wilkes-Barre, PA	W KO	1
Feb 9	Bill Diamond	Nonpareil A.C., Wilkes-Barre, PA	L KO	1
Mar 25	Bill Diamond	Landmessers Hall, Wilkes-Barre, PA	W TKO	5
Apr 1	Yock Hayden	Nonpareil A.C., Wilkes-Barre, PA	Scheduled	
Apr 16	Steve Crosby	Nonpareil A.C., Wilkes-Barre, PA	ND	6
Apr 22	Charley Middleton	Luzerne Theatre, Luzerne, PA - Luzerne County Heavyweight Title	Scheduled	
Aug 9	Craig Baldwin	Douglas Athletic Club, Scranton, PA	ND	6
Sep 10	Young Hank Griffin	Hazleton, PA	L DSQ	1
		1913		
Jan 1	Packey Sheath	Easton A.C., Easton, PA	W KO	8
Jan 27	Bill McKenna	Elmira Athletic Club, Syracuse, NY	Scheduled	

THIS RECORD IS NOT COMPLETE

While it's taken me some time to complete my research, I was able to uncover the newspaper reporting and historical records of Frank's brief boxing career and that of his few opponents, only one of whom will be well known to IRBO members. Please allow me to share what I've learned about Frank and the sport of boxing.

Sheridan vs. Jimmy Walsh: 11.20.1911

Frank's first known bout was on November 20, 1911 at the Houghton Opera House in Luzerne, PA. He weighed in at 187 pounds and his opponent, Jimmy Walsh, was 175 pounds. As you can see, the papers said that Frank seemed to be a coming heavyweight who easily bested his opponent. They wrote that Walsh... *"took a terrible beating from Sheridan". And..."Sheridan carried the milling and had a big advantage. He showed a splendid defense and when the fight ended he left the ring almost unmarked."*

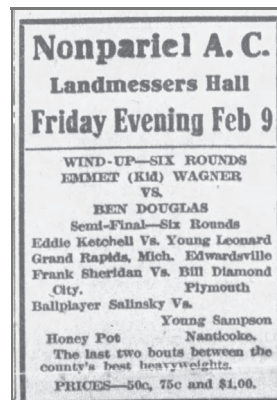
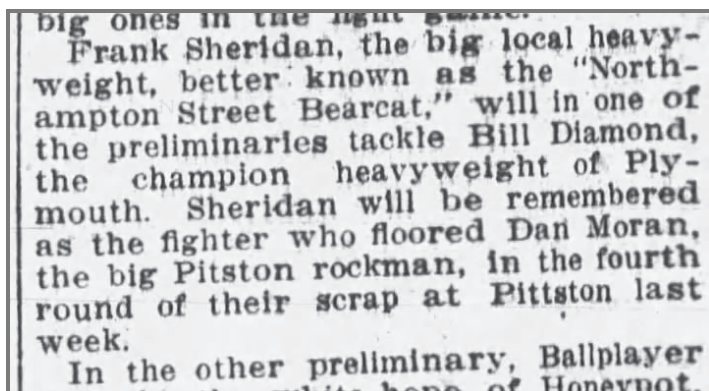


Sheridan vs. Dan Moran: 2.2.1912

Frank was quickly back in the ring at the Nonpareil Athletic Club in his home town of Wilkes-Barre for a fight with Dan Moran. Moran was originally slated to box Frank Zeigler but for unknown reasons, Zeigler was scratched and Frank stepped in to face Moran. A newspaper report said the fight was over in the fourth when Frank floored Moran, who they referred to as the big Pittston rock man. Most of these boys fighting were likely immigrants to the US, or sons of immigrants, and worked the mining fields in the region during the day and boxed at night. Little time was left for their professional training as boxers.

Sheridan vs. Bill Diamond: 2.9.1912

Just a week later, Frank was again in the ring at the Nonpareil Athletic Club and boxing Bill Diamond of Plymouth, PA. And after two wins, Frank had acquired a newspaper nickname, The Northampton Street Bearcat. Bearcat to the reporter but Northampton Street was where he was still living with his Mom and Dad and my father. The bout was the second of the night, and Frank didn't live up to his new moniker as he was knocked out by Diamond in the first round.



Sheridan vs. Bill Diamond: 3.25.1912

If must have been a long recovery for Frank as his next fight wasn't scheduled till March 25th, a month and a half later. Originally slated to box Hugh Ross, of Syracuse, Frank ended facing his old nemesis Bill Diamond that night.

The evolution of the fight itself is interesting in that it was set up to as a benefit for the M.J. Hannon Defense Fund. Hannon was the secretary and business agent for the local Bridge and Structural Iron Workers Union. He was one of the fifty-two structural iron workers indicted in Indianapolis for dynamiting conspiracy charges. Two promoters, J.T Lynn and William Gibson, took control of the fight but matters went woefully wrong for them and charges of fixing the fights grew loud and boisterous in the Scranton papers.

Apparently, some of those scheduled to travel to fight didn't show up and ringers were offered in their stead. And to Frank's likely embarrassment, the promoters wrote in the paper that...*"Ross refused to box with anyone when he learned Sheridan had disappointed the club"*.

We'll never be sure what the alleged disappointment was that my uncle visited on the local boxing club but a rematch with Bill Diamond was quickly scheduled for the crowd of 1,200. They were second on the card and soon began to pummel each other in the ring but to a different end. The paper wrote that Frank got ample revenge for the previous fight and by the fourth round Diamond was in bad shape. The fight was called by Charlie White at the end of the fifth and a TKO award to Frank. Another paper wrote that Diamond wanted to go through with the fight and so Frank was anxious to do so...*"but the copper had passed the word and the fans waxed indignant."*

It was one of the last solid fights Frank was to have in his ever shortening career.

**FIVE FIGHTS AT TOWN
HALL ON MONDAY NIGHT**

The promoters promise one of the greatest boxing shows ever billed in this part of the state on Monday night at Town hall. Several good local and out of town boys are billed to perform.

The fact that the profits of the show are to go towards the defense fund being raised by the C. L. U. for M. J. Hannon has enabled the promoters to secure the services of the boxers at a much more reasonable figure than if the profits were to go to the promoters. In fact almost every boxer in the city volunteered their services, but the management did not want too many exhibitions. Every bout on the card will be a real fight.

The opening go will be six rounds between Battling Haley, of Edwardsville, and Young Subloski, of Jersey. In the second bout Sammy Howell, the fighting Welshman, meets Young Leonard, of Edwardsville. The third bout will be between Kid Coaches, of Pittston, and Billy Simpson, of England. Simpson recently beat Phil Cross in New York and intends to make his home in this city if he beats Coaches. In the next bout Frankie Burke, of Wilkes-Barre, fights Kid Julian, of Syracuse, who is promised a bout with Champion Kilbane at Syracuse. In the next bout Hugh Ross, of Syracuse, who has beaten Mike Twin Sullivan, Paddy Lavin and scores of others, meets Frank Sheridan.

BOXING
HANNON DEFENSE FUND
ALL-STAR SHOW
Monday, March 25
TOWN HALL
MAIN BOUT BETWEEN
TOMMY CONNORS,
OF BELLEVUE, and
BATTLING LARRY RYAN,
OF NEW YORK.

Other Bouts—Hugh Ross, of Syracuse, vs. Frank Sheridan, of Wilkes-Barre; Frankie Burke, of Wilkes-Barre, vs. Kid Julian, of Syracuse; Kid Coaches vs. Billy Simpson; Sammy Howell vs. Young Leonard, of Edwardsville; Battling Haley vs. Young Sabuliskie, of Jessup. Charlie White will referee.

PRICES—25c, 50c, 75c and \$1.00.

Boxing, Town Hall
Monday Evening, March 25
HANNON DEFENSE FUND.

Tommy Connors vs. Battling Larry Ryan
Hugh Ross vs. Frank Sheridan
Kid Julian vs. Frankie Burke
Billy Simpson vs. Kid Coaches
Young Leonard vs. Sammy Howell
Battling Haley vs. Joe Davey

EVERY BOUT A REAL FIGHT.
CHARLIE WHITE, REFEREE.
ADMISSION—25c, 50c, 75c, \$1.

Sheridan vs. Yock Hayden: 4.1.1912

Just a week later, Frank was to box at the Nonpareil Athletic Club against Yock Hayden. And for this fight, Frank was described in the ads as the “new White hope”. But Frank’s participation in the match with Hayden was not to be. He sent word that he hand was hurt and he was scratched from the match. Bob Kilrain, of Forte Fort, was substituted for Frank and was beat by Hayden. Frank’s glass hand, if you will allow me that expression, had started to portend a truncated boxing life for him.

NONPAREIL A. C.
Monday, April 1
TEN ROUNDS
EMMET (Kid) WAGNER vs. MIKE DONOVAN, of Rochester.
SEMI-FINAL
 Young Reilly of Warrior Run vs. Kid Lewis of Edwardsville.
 Yock Hayden of South Wilkes-Barre vs. Frank Sheridan, new white hope.
 Tommy Burns of Plymouth vs. Francis Gallagher of the Heights.
ADMISSION 50 AND 75 CENTS
RINGSIDE SEATS, 4 ROWS \$1.00.

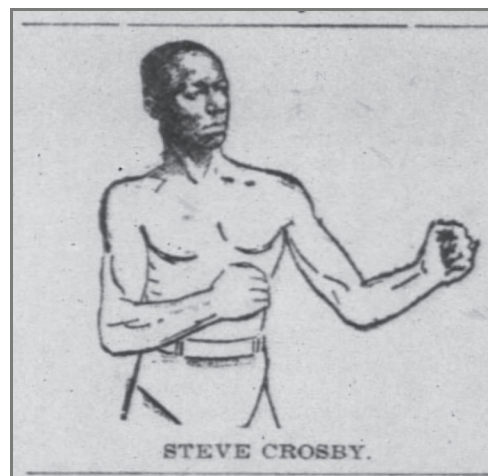
NONPAREIL A. C. TO-NIGHT
 Wind-up—10 Rounds
 Mike Donovan vs. Kid Wagner
 Rochester. City
Semi-Final
 Young Riley vs. Kid Lewis
 Warrior Run Edwardsville
 Yock Hayden vs. Frank Sheridan
 Tommy Burns vs. Francis Gallagher
 Admission 50c and 75c. 4 Rows Ringside, \$1.00

DONOVAN NEARLY RECEIVES KNOCK OUT FROM WAGNER
 Rochester Pugilist is Easy Picking For Local Fighter in Ten Round Clash
SHERIDAN DOESN'T FIGHT
 Sends Word That Hand Was Hurt and Couldn't Go on—Young Reilly Wins

Sheridan vs. Steve Crosby: 4.16.1912

IRBO members will certainly recognize the next man to step into the ring with Frank, which was Steve Crosby. Crosby had an illustrative career in boxing, accumulating a record of 54 wins, with 40 KO's, 13 loses, with 6 KO's, and 18 draws. Although Crosby was a welterweight and wanted to fight anyone regardless of their size, there were no takers but Frank. The two boxers must have had an inconsequential 6 round bout as it is technically listed as an ND for both boxers. Crosby would go on the next month to appear in an exhibition match but that seems to be the end of his time in the ring as no other fights are listed for him past this bout. Frank's ring time was quickly drawing to a close too.

NONPAREIL A. C.
Tuesday, April 16th
LANDMESSER'S HALL
8 30 P. M.
10—ROUNDS—10
HAAS McCARTNEY
VS. KID WAGNER
 Philadelphia Wilkes-Barre
 Winner to Meet Sailor Burke of New York.
SEMI-FINAL.
 Tommy O'Toole vs. Young Bate'son
 Buck Kelly's Champion
 Warrior Run's Fighting Machine
Steve Crosby vs. Frank Sheridan
 Of Philadelphia Local White Hope
 Crosby Has Fought the Best.
Bob Kilrain vs. Russell O'Brien
 Kilrain Boxed Yock Hayden Two Weeks Ago.
 Scranton's Best Heavyweight.
50c, 75c Reserved Ringside Seats \$1.00
 Tickets at Mose Hiestand's, on the Square and Old Fell House.



Sheridan vs. Charley Middleton: 4.22.1912

Quickly following the Crosby match, Frank was scheduled to box Charley Middleton of Lee Park, PA. in the opening contest at the Luzerne Theatre in Luzerne, PA. A newspaper article described the pair as the best of the local heavyweights. But nothing in the papers was written about this match and I assume that the bout was scratched. Frank was to have one solid fight left in his career but it was not to be the next one on his card.

Peerless Athletic Club
 LUZERNE THEATRE
TONIGHT TONIGHT
 10 ROUNDS 10
Al. Dewey vs. Johnny Glover
 BILLY BEVEN vs. BILLY WAGNER
 YOUNG THROPE vs. LEO LAVIN
 FRANK SHERIDAN vs. CHARLEY MIDDLETON
 FIRST BOUT 8:30
 Popular Prices: 25c, 35c, 50c, 75c, \$1.00; Stage \$1.50.

**DEWEY AND GLOVER
 IN TEN ROUND BOUT
 AT LUZERNE TO-NIGHT**

Al Dewey and Johnny Glover are scheduled to go ten rounds this evening at the Luzerne theatre for the purpose of settling an old argument. Several fast preliminaries are also billed and the fans should get more than their money's worth.

The preliminary contests of Frank Sheridan of this city, and Charley Middleton of Lee Park, the best of the local heavyweights, who will furnish the curtain raiser with a six-round bout.

"Young" Torpe, the Cardiff, Wales, lightweight, who stopped Helfrick the other night, will go on in the second bout with "Leon" Levin, one of Scranton's best.

The semi-final will bring together two of the best bantams in the two counties—"Billie" Bevan of Ashley, and "Billie" Wagner of Scranton. This bout will also be a hummer, as the boys are evenly matched and a great pair of scrappers. The first bout goes on at 8:30 sharp.

Peerless Athletic Club
 Luzerne Theatre
TO-NIGHT TO-NIGHT
 10 ROUNDS 10
AL. DEWEY
 VERSUS
Johnny Glover
 Billy Beven vs. Billy Wagner
 Young Trope vs. Leo Lavin
 Frank Sheridan vs.
Charley Middleton
 FIRST BOUT 8:30
 Popular Prices: 25c, 35c, 50c,
 75c, \$1.00; Stage \$1.50.

Sheridan vs. Fred Gorman: 8.5.12

This fight at the Douglas Athletic Club in Scranton PA., is probably better left off any list of ring side challenges for both Frank and his opponent Fred Gorman of Philadelphia. While the report of the fights that night led off with the headline, ***Local Fighters Make Good Showing*** this did not apply to the Sheridan-Gorman match-up. The boxing reporter said that the bill wasn't without its touch of humor, allegedly supplied by Frank and Fred. He wrote that... *"they fought like two chambermaids but when the crowd became accustomed to their style and Referee Douglas had prodded them a bit they gave the crowd a good laugh if nothing more."*

Best to leave any additional description, or speculation as to why they fought like chambermaids, alone.

Sheridan vs. Young Hank Griffin: 9.10.1912

Frank's next climbed into the ring to box with Hank Griffin, an African-American boxer from Utica, New York. But, first allow me to digress because this is an important distinction, this was not the famed Hank Griffin about who Jack Johnson wrote about in his biography saying that he received the most punishment in the ring from the hands of Griffin. That Hank Griffin had retired to Ann Arbor and died in 1911.

This Hank Griffin, who was called the Young Hank Griffin, was fearsome in the ring too. Newspaper reports from that year, using the best of the boxing descriptions for another of Young Griffin's fights, wrote that...*"Martin Burns' white hope ambitions were brought to a sudden close when in the second round he went to sleep under the influence of a powerful opiate handed to him by Hank Griffin...it was in the second that he caused him to take a little nap"*. Young Hank Griffin, by August 1912 was in the ring with Joe Jeanette. IBRO members know it was Jeanette who, in April 1909, bested Sam McVey in a Paris slugfest lasting three-and-a-half-hours, and 49 rounds. But Young Hank Griffin's time in the ring with Jeanette was much shorter as he was knocked out in the third round.

And it was to be just one round that Griffin-Sheridan were to be in the ring together, with much different results than any of their other fights.

The match was part of a card promoted by Billy Gibson whom one paper described as...*"a natty little fat man who has been getting the public's money now and then...he pulled off a fizzle show"*...with Griffin and Sheridan. Other newspaper articles were equally outraged by the match stating that Hank Griffin was in a fake match and the two of them were engaged in a suspicious affair.

It's difficult to capture the writer's outrage without quoting from his article. About the match he wrote... *"papers say that the fight was rawest farce ever pulled off in that town and Hazleton fans fell for like mice for cheese"*. The writer went on to say that first round was barely over when the fighters clinched and leaned against the ropes. Somehow the ropes broke and the boxers fell to the ground with Frank on top of Griffin. Frank must have reinjured his hand as he left the floor for the dressing room. Griffin went back to the ring and waited, in vain as it turned out, for Frank to return and finish the match. Frank was scored as losing the match in first round by disqualification.

Sheridan vs. Tiger Sheetz: 1.1.1913

Frank Sheridan's last known fight was to be on New Year's Day 1913 against Tiger Sheetz of Lebanon, PA. Tiger's real name was Herman H. Schies, but Tiger seems more of an apt name for a boxer doesn't it? And, maybe in the intervening four months from the fiasco of the previous fight Frank's hand healed?

Whatever the case, the Sheridan-Sheetz fisticuffs were explosive. The unnamed newspaper reporter wrote of that... *"local exponents of the fistic art gave a good account of themselves"*. And of the Sheridan-Sheetz fight itself *"The end of Mr. Sheetz (sic) came in the eighth round when Sheridan snuffed his candle with a wallop on the jaw. Sheridan led Sheetz (sic) all the way, flooring the "Tiger" in the first and third and final rounds."* Another paper seemingly put to rest any doubts about Frank's glass hand when they wrote that...*"it proved to be a bloody fight for five rounds, when the bout was stopped, Sheetz's nose being broken"*. While it appears that the boxing reporters seemed to have witnessed two different matches, one lasting 5 rounds and another writing it lasted 8 round, Frank was awarded the win with a TKO.

Sheridan vs. Bill McKenna: 1.27.1913

This was to be Frank's last scheduled fight in the United States. He was slated to fight Bill McKenna of Boston at the Elmira Athletic Club in Syracuse, for 10 rounds, but it was not meant to be. Harry O'Rawa, Frank's trainer, was to accompany him to the out of town fight. The advance publicity for the fight was good and stated.... *"Sheridan is a big six footer, weighs 180 pounds, and has two corking good hands. He is but 20 years old."*

Yet Frank was scratched from another card by the promoter. Bill Scott was substituted for my uncle. The reason for Frank's withdrawal from the fight is unknown, but I suspect that his glass hand led to the close of his career. It was a sad for the Northampton Street Bearcat, ending without even stepping in the ring. Like so many young men from the coal fields of Pennsylvania, his boxing career was a short one.

Later Life

In March of 1913, the newspapers reported that Frank was sending letters to their boxing reporters stating that he was anxious to set up a match with Joe Yorke of Archibald, Pa. And knowing his history of being scratched from the card, or falling out of the ring and heading to the dressing room, Frank offered to post what he called a forfeit if the fight was to be scheduled. Apparently, there was no fight with Yorke as by the end of the month the papers were stating that Frank was back to training after being sick, and he was willing to take on Joe Yorke or ... *"any 170 pound man that the promoters can get."*

Later in 1913, the management of the Olympia Athletic Club in Philadelphia approached O'Rawa, who had opened a boxing training facility in Wilkes-Barre, to help set up a Philly-WB match. And O'Rawa named Frank Sheridan as his representative in the Commission weight class for the big match. But nothing seems to have come of this planning as no additional fights for Frank Sheridan in the United States could be found.

After this, newspaper references for Frank fade but for one mention that he was boxing in Canada. However, nothing could be found of his fistic adventures to the north. Frank would move with his mother to Detroit and become a special officer at Ford's Motor Company. Later my father and grandfather would move to Detroit too. Frank and my Dad were patriotic, and like so many other millions of young men across the United States they signed up for the WWI draft when called to do so. On the second page of his draft card was the clue to the end of his boxing career. When asked if he had any disabilities, Frank told the registrant that he had a... *"deformed right hand caused by a break."*

There was the glass hand explained, just four years after his last boxing match.

Frank Philip Sheridan never caught a break from the fates that Carlo Rotella wrote about.

Ellamary Joanne Sheridan Kane is a long time genealogist living in Midland, Michigan. She was assisted in the writing and production of this article by her daughter Michele Kane, son James Kane, son-in-law Joe Findlay, her niece Sandy Sheridan Lewis, and Rebecca Campbell. Ms. Kane would like to extend a special thank you to the IRBO members who were patient in working with the family to help develop this profile of Frank Phillip Sheridan.