

Spring 3100

February, 1941



Inspector Matthew J. McGrath

INSPECTOR MATTHEW J. McGRATH, greatest and most popular of all Olympic weight-throwing champions and one of the outstanding athletes of modern times, died of pneumonia on the morning of Wednesday, January 29, in St. Clare's Hospital, West 51st Street, Manhattan, after a four weeks' illness. He had been in poor health since last Fall, when he entered the hospital to undergo treatment for a liver ailment. He was released on December 9 and went to his home at 2477 Elm Place, the Bronx, on sick leave, but suffered a relapse and was readmitted to the hospital on January 2.

At sixty-four he still held a few of the twenty-one national championships won over a period of thirty years, and only the fact that war prevented the holding of the Olympics at Finland last year kept "Matt" from toeing the mark in his fifth try for fame and glory in this most strenuous of international competitions, he having taken part in previous Olympics from 1908 through 1924. In 1912 at Stockholm he threw the sixteen-pound hammer 179 feet 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches to set an Olympic record which stood until the Berlin games of 1936, and his American record throw of the 56-pound weight—40' 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ "—has never been touched in the 29 years since he set the mark at a meet in Canada on September 23, 1911.

Born in Nenagh, Tipperary, in 1876, McGrath came to this country at the age of 21, became a patrolman in 1902, and after advancing in the ranks to the post of deputy inspector, in 1930, was six years later promoted to a full inspectorship, on December 12, 1936.

He was twice during his nearly forty years of service decorated for acts of personal bravery, receiving honorable mention for the rescue of a man from drowning in the Harlem River, on May 28, 1906, and a second award of honorable mention for arresting, on March 10, 1913, a man who, with revolver blazing was fleeing from the scene of a shooting committed by him a few minutes before.

Mayor LaGuardia with Commissioner Valentine, Chief Inspector Louis F. Costuma, Borough President James J. Lyons of the Bronx, former Police Commissioner Edward P. Mulrooney, and the board of governors of the New York Athletic Club, led by President Henry W. Ryan, headed the many notables, fellow athletes and brother policemen at the solemn mass of requiem offered on the morning of Saturday, February 1, in Our Lady of Mercy Roman Catholic Church, Fordham Road and Marion Avenue, Bronx, and of which the Rev. Patrick A. O'Leary, pastor of the church, was the celebrant, with the Rev. Daniel M. Gleason, a former patrolman of our Department, serving as deacon, and the Rev. William J. Brady and Rev. Joseph Scanlon as sub-deacon and master of ceremonies, respectively.

The Rev. Joseph A. McCaffrey, Catholic chaplain of the Police Department, delivered a eulogy in which he said he was disregarding the Catholic precedent of "letting good deeds speak for themselves," and ignoring the police custom of eulogizing only members of the Force killed in action.

"The moral, spiritual and physical giant that was Matt McGrath," declared Father McCaffrey, "was a credit to the Irish race, to America, to the Catholic Church, to the Police Department, and to athletics.

"He was kindly, courteous, considerate and courageous, and gave his full share to make our Department loved and respected by right-thinking people and feared by law breakers."

Interment was in Calvary Cemetery. Inspector McGrath is survived by his widow, Mrs. Loretta Smith McGrath, and Bobby Low, the eight-year-old Chinese boy he adopted several years ago.

A tribute to "the great, kind giant who at 51 barely missed making the Olympic team as a weight-thrower," printed editorially in the New York Herald-Tribune in its issue of Thursday, January 30, follows:



MATT McGRATH

"THE MAN who held the world's hammer-throwing record for twenty-four years, the great, kind giant who at fifty-one barely missed making the Olympic team as a weight thrower, is dead at sixty-four after two-score years on the New York police force. Hero of four Olympic games, one of the finest craftsmen in the none-too-finely taught science of throwing weights for distance, Matt dived into ice-cold rivers to rescue would-be suicides, subdued a gunman by heaving a dinnick at him, fought many a fight under what he called "the Marquis of Kilkenny" rules and in the sunset of his professional life as a cop rose to the high rank of inspector. He still held the world record for tossing the fifty-six pound weight (he threw one forty feet in 1911) and his hammer throw of almost 180 feet has been bettered fewer times than the fingers on one hand, unchallenged at all until 1936 at Berlin. An expert on how to untangle a fight crowd on Eighth Avenue, this 240-pound Tipperary cop will be missed by every sports writer who ever talked to him and by all of the police and news men who hang out for a living along Centre Market Place. As much for keeping alive the tradition of Irish strong men (it is said they were the basis for early fairy tales of prodigious English giants) as for being an honest and decent policeman for forty years, Matt McGrath slips away, leaving a trail of good will and friendly recollection seldom left by any man."



In Memoriam

Insp. Matthew J. McGrath	1 Dist. Tr.	Jan. 29, 1941
Lt. William E. Mahony	Harbor Pct.	Feb. 3, 1941
Sgt. Joseph M. Pembroke	Boro. Hdqts. Sqd. Man.	Jan. 17, 1941
Sgt. Joseph H. Resch	114 Pct.	Jan. 25, 1941
Sgt. Francis X. Hickson	66 Pct.	Feb. 6, 1941
Ptl. Edward F. Maher	Tr. C	Jan. 14, 1941
Ptl. Daniel L. Piselli	88 Pct.	Jan. 31, 1941
Ptl. Patrick J. Frawley	Health Sqd.	Jan. 30, 1941
Ptl. Thomas Connor	Tr. I	Feb. 5, 1941
Ptl. Joseph P. Thierry	Emer. Ser. Div.	Feb. 6, 1941
Ptl. William P. Riley	Tr. F	Feb. 7, 1941
Ptl. Joseph A. Jungerman	94 Pct.	Feb. 9, 1941
Ret. Capt. Daniel F. Cashman	50 Pct.	Jan. 30, 1941
Ret. Lt. William A. Ryan	4 Div.	Jan. 14, 1941
Ret. Lt. Robert J. Schroy	105 Pct.	Jan. 18, 1941
Ret. Lt. Richard J. Pierce	22 Pct.	Jan. 22, 1941
Ret. Lt. Cornelius O'Donnell	61 Pct.	Jan. 24, 1941
Ret. Lt. Charles J. Salch	Old 69 Pct.	Jan. 28, 1941
Ret. Sgt. James Curran	18 Pct.	Jan. 18, 1941
Ret. Sgt. Robert W. Smith	Old 47 Pct.	Jan. 16, 1941
Ret. Sgt. Otto C. Schasberger	Old 94 Pct.	Jan. 30, 1941
Ret. Ptl. John S. C. Kelly	3 Pct.	Jan. 9, 1941
Ret. Ptl. James McKenna	Old Bridge Pct. A	Jan. 12, 1941
Ret. Ptl. George Gernand	Hdqts. Div.	Jan. 14, 1941
Ret. Ptl. John W. Szpantowicz	Old 159 Pct.	Jan. 18, 1941
Ret. Ptl. George W. Drum	Old 98 Pct.	Jan. 24, 1941
Ret. Ptl. Anthony Reichert	27 Pct.	Jan. 24, 1941
Ret. Ptl. John H. Telschow	Warrant Sqd. 2	Jan. 24, 1941
Ret. Ptl. Dennis Sullivan	7 Pct.	Jan. 25, 1941
Ret. Ptl. William P. Dolan	68 Pct.	Jan. 26, 1941
Ret. Ptl. Thomas A. Troy	82 Pct.	Jan. 26, 1941
Ret. Ptl. John Kenn	Harbor Pct.	Jan. 27, 1941
Ret. Ptl. Harry Williams	Tr. B	Jan. 31, 1941
Ret. Ptl. Eugene Hickey	74 Pct.	Feb. 1, 1941
Ret. Ptl. George Koch	Old 61 Pct.	Feb. 7, 1941
Ret. Ptl. Theodore Goodenough	East 67 St. Pct.	Feb. 8, 1941
Ret. Ptl. Michael R. Malloy	114 Pct.	Feb. 8, 1941

