

## The Sunday Independent: Maureen Kenny - Pioneering owner of Bookshop...

Published March 30th, 2008

A vital part of Old Galway disappeared with the passing of Maureen Kenny last Tuesday.

Aged 89, she was the face of Kenny's Bookshop, which is now an art gallery, but remains top of the lists of must-see places for visitors to the City of the Tribes.

Up to a few years ago, she continued her regime of taking her place behind the counter on the six working days of the shop within the nooks and crannies in High St.

She lived out the last few months of her life at the Pointe Boise Nursing Home in Salthill, barely 100 yards from her family home.

Maureen Canning of Mohill, Co.L Leitrim, had come to Galway in 1937 to attend the local university. In Galway she met and married Des Kenny, son of a local journalist and one of the founders of the Connacht Tribune.

Three years later, at the height of the Second World War, they took the seemingly absurd decision to open a bookshop. Initially they sold second-hand books, before graduating to new publications.

The business began to grow, not least as a result of her personal attention to customers and their reading needs, She somehow managed to divide her time between her beloved bookshop and the task of playing mother to six children.

As the bookshop expanded, an ancillary business of showing works of art also began to grow. Initially displayed at a gallery at the Kenny home in upper Salthill, the second string to the family bow eventually moved to the rear of the High St bookshop and took on a life of its own.

She was also equally at ease with international writers and actors who came quietly to browse and almost inevitably ended up signing portraits which have decorated the shop for decades.

In more recent times, Kenny's took the practical decision to concentrate on book sales through the internet. It was the second bookshop in the world to offer books for sale on the information super-highway.

In the latter years, Maureen Kenny received honorary degrees from NUI Galway and the National Council for Education Awards.

Among the concelebrants of her funeral Mass at St Augustine's Church in Galway city were her nephews, Fr Walter Macken and Fr John O'Brien.

Maureen Kenny was predeceased by her husband Des in 1991. She is survived by her sons Tom, Des Gerry and Conor and daughters Jane (Hogan) and Monica (Rigney).

Reproduced with the kind permission of The Sunday Independent