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The Social Network



Kevin Courtney
Sarah Geraghty

Author who lives life to the full after her near-death experience

We don't get many near-death experiences on our social rounds. Róisín Fitzpatrick had one when she was struck with a brain haemorrhage. In the intensive-care unit, she says, she had the sense of leaving her body and discovering that we are, in essence, made of light and energy.

"The topic of death is terrifying for most people, so that's why I phrase it as a near-life experience," said Fitzpatrick at the launch of her book, *Taking Heaven Lightly*, at the Westbury Hotel in Dublin on Tuesday night.

"I want people to leave here with a sense of empowerment, no matter what's going on, so even if they're facing a bereavement, or an illness, or a financial crisis, to know we're always part of something so much deeper.

"There's really no need to fear death,

and ironically that gives you the freedom to live life."

Fitzpatrick, a former businesswoman who became an acclaimed glass artist, is certainly living life to the full if the guest list at her book launch is anything to go by. Among the guests was the new US ambassador to Ireland, Kevin O'Malley, and the former governor of the Bank of Ireland Laurence Crowley.

"I was fortunate enough to meet Róisín a few weeks ago at a function not too dissimilar to this, and she told me about her journey, and I thought this was really very special and worth following up on, and I'm really glad to be here," said O'Malley.

Since he arrived in Ireland last October with his wife, Dena, O'Malley has hardly had his feet on the ground.

"I can honestly say that there hasn't

been any time off. Because there was a small gap between ambassadors I felt it was my responsibility to try and make up for it and try and get to as many events and places as I could, so I have made it my mission to be out daily."

O'Malley is close friends with Moneygall's most famous son, and he assures us that President Obama hasn't forgotten the old sod.

"He thinks about Ireland a lot and talks about Ireland a lot. So he's following how things are going here."

Crowley, who launched the book, is on the board of Aer Lingus, which is dealing with an approach from IAG, the owner of British Airways. He's following the banking inquiry – but not too closely.

"I don't think inquiries-stroke-tribunals achieve very much. And they've become a

big distraction and very costly, so I'm just not optimistic that the banking inquiry will achieve a great deal."

"I met Róisín in New York when I was doing a play there, and we became fast friends," said the actor Sean Mahon. "I respect her immensely, her courage, her honesty, her humanity."

Mahon is currently playing a rule-bending garda, Brian McGonigle, in TV3's new soap, *Red Rock*.

"We're in full swing now, and the storylines are really ramping up."

He has two films coming out this year: *The Legend of Longwood*, an Irish-Dutch production, and *The Murder of a President*, a US production set in the late 1800s, about the assassination of James Garfield, the 20th occupant of the office.

"We met at the top of a skyscraper in

New York, the Irish Consul General's residence," said the harpist Cormac de Barra. "I was over there with Moya Brennan, finishing a tour, and we all had a jam session. It was a bit of Ireland at the top of 32nd Street."

De Barra and his six siblings are performing at City Hall on Wednesday, the opening night of Temple Bar Tradfest. Expect to hear some heavenly harp sounds – but hopefully not played by angels.

■ From left: *Taking Heaven Lightly* author Róisín Fitzpatrick with Laurence Crowley; Grace O'Malley and Jeanne Sutton; Ann Boylan and Darbhaile Connell; US ambassador Kevin O'Malley and SDLP leader Alasdair McDonnell.

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