



## 2019 Walks of Life Honoree Veronica "Vera" Casey

Veronica "Vera" Casey was born in Cong, County Mayo, to Frank and Florence Holian. The 3<sup>rd</sup> oldest of 9 children, she had to drop out of school at age 13 to help raise her siblings when her mother died suddenly. In 1949 she went to London in search of work and was "never bored, always broke." In London she married her childhood sweetheart, Tom Casey, of Carrick, County Galway, on St. Patrick's Day in 1952. Vera and Tom set sail on the Queen Elizabeth in 1956 and ended up in Cleveland where her sister Birdie lived. For years Vera and Tom traveled back and forth to Ireland with their four children—Maureen, Patricia, Tom and Kathleen—but a call from her sister in 1975 about a nearby house for sale prompted them to settle once and for all in Lakewood.

Vera went to beauty school and owned hair salons in both Ireland and the United States. In 1985, Vera decided to expand her Cleveland hair salon business and add Irish Imports. Casey's House of Beauty and Irish Imports was soon established. Easing out of the salon business, she opened Casey's Irish Imports in its current location in Rocky River in 1988. In 2012 when her husband Tom was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, she transferred ownership of the shop to two of her daughters, Maureen Casey and Kathleen Casey Proctor. Casey's celebrated 30 years in business this past October.

Tom, her beloved husband of 62 years, passed away in 2014. Vera is "Nana" to nine grandchildren and two great grandchildren. She has one brother, Mike Holian, residing in North Olmsted. Her sister Bridget "Birdie" Davern of North Olmsted is deceased. Her other remaining sibling, Mark Holian still resides in Cong, Co. Mayo.

Vera has always been an active member of a number of Irish organizations, selling tickets; buying tables, sponsorships, and ads; donating items; and faithfully attending events. She belongs to the West Side Irish American Club, The Ladies Ancient Order of the Hibernians, The Mayo Society of Greater Cleveland, and The Cleveland Gaelic Society, and was a founding member of the Irish Heritage Center. She has always been involved in parish life, whether at St. Clarence, St. Angela, or St. Christopher.

Vera was chosen as the Irish Mother of the Year in 2012 by the United Irish Societies of Greater Cleveland. In 2016, Vera and Casey's Irish Imports were awarded the Celtic Warrior Award by North American Celtic Trade Association for outstanding merchant and member. In 2018 the Rocky River Chamber of Commerce presented Vera and Casey's with The Quality Business Award. Casey's Irish Imports has also been named best gift shop on the Fox 8 Hotlist. In addition Casey's sponsors a contestant each year for the Rose of Tralee.

Vera always says the keys to her success have been due to the love and support of her family and friends and her faith in God. Vera never forgot the last piece of advice her father gave her back in 1949 as she was boarding the train in Ballinrobe, County Mayo: "Vera, always stay close to Jesus and Mary and all will be well through life."

2019 Walks of Life Award of the Irish American Archives Society, Cleveland OH.