

Death of Jackie Hearst

—King of the accordion

To the strains of 'Nearer My God to Thee' the remains of the late Jackie Hearst were laid to rest last week following ceremonies in St. Mary's Church, Chapel Street.

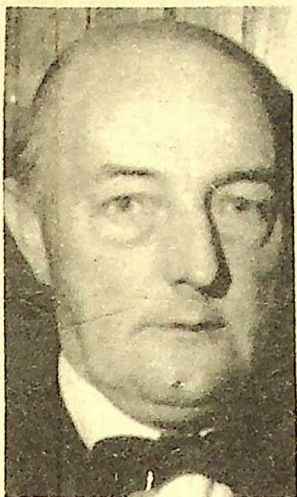
Jackie to all and sundry was the accordionist's accordionist, the King of Box Players.

God be with the old days during the forties when Jackie left his native Belfast and came to reside in Monaghan Street, Newry. It wasn't long until he made his name in the dance halls around the district. Indeed well I remember my own dancing days. They started in the old Dockers Hall in Soho Car Park. On entering the hall you came face to face with an almost vertical staircase which you climbed with your heart in your mouth. This led you to the dance floor on which every young lad was taught the rudiments of ballroom dancing with Jackie playing away. Having attended the hall and being put through our steps we were all set for the town hall and as usual Jackie and his band provided the music.

Another dance hall to the fore then was the Colimban Hall now the Labour Hall. Jackie used to play there every Wednesday, Sunday afternoon and Sunday night. It was packed to capacity every night.

During that time money was scarce and to gain admission to the hall someone offered to carry Jackie's accordion case. Dear God, it was as heavy as a bag of coal but that was your admission ticket and you really enjoyed yourself.

Jackie was known and loved throughout the length and breadth of Ireland. With the Jackie Hearst Trio his broadcasts were uncountable. He also toured England with various bands including the



International Ceili Band, He was indeed the doyen of accordionists.

He had hundreds of imitators but very few equals. Now alas he is no more. To those who didn't know him — you missed knowing a legend in his own time. May the sod rest lightly on his noble chest. To his nearest and dearest — may I offer my deepest condolences.

This tribute was compiled by Ted McLoughlin and the photograph was provided by George O'Hare, Glen.