

**The Three “Ps”
Policeman, Politician, Priest**

Jack Jennings
The Clare
Chicago, Illinois
March 16, 2022

Table of Contents

1. Employment and Education	Page 4
2. Three Ps' Affects on My Brother and Me	7
3. My Father and Me	9
4. Our Two-flat	10
5. Two Then Five	13
6. Grandparents	15
7. Uncles and Aunts	17
Uncle Charlie	17
Uncle Mark	19
Other Uncles and Aunts	21
8. The Big Move	21
9. Our Lord and Hippy	22
10. Dating	24
11. A Religious Life?	27
12. The Benediction	29

The 3 Ps

“The Irish cop” is a stereotype. Not every policeman in the United States is of Irish descent, nor is every person with Irish forebearers dressed in a police uniform.

Having said that, we must admit that there are a lot of Irish names on the police rolls. Further, there were times and places where it seemed that every policeman had an Irish name. One of those occasions was in urban areas in the United States in the middle of the 20th century.

Having grown up at that time in one of those urban areas--in Chicago, I observed that many males of Irish descent in our neighborhood thought that the best jobs were to be a policeman, a politician, or a priest. I call these the three “Ps.”

The Three “Ps”

The words—policeman, politician, and priest are meant to be symbolic of certain areas of the job market.

“Public safety” is the broad term that includes policemen as well as firemen, emergency medical technicians, and others.

“Religious workers” includes priests and other ordained ministers, nuns, religious brothers, lay preachers, and related others.

“Public service” includes elected government officials, as well as appointed officials, civil servants, contracted employees, and others.

In being guided by the 3 Ps, these boys in my neighborhood were generally not aware that they were limiting themselves in terms of jobs. They simply looked around them and saw what their fathers, uncles, and other relatives were doing working for a living. Then, those young men followed in their footsteps to get a good job.

This approach of concentrating on one or several areas for employment was also used by other ethnic groups when they immigrated to the U.S. An example is seen in Washington, D.C where Korean new-comers found jobs in dry cleaning stores and related factories owned by their country men who had emigrated earlier. First generation and second generation Korean-Americans seem to be following the same pattern as the Irish-Americans.

This short report focuses on the Jennings-Walsh family as they spent their lives in Chicago during the period 1940 to 1980. John B. Jennings and Frances Walsh were my parents. The experiences of my family will provide us with a better understanding of how the 3 Ps affected them and the context for the lives that they led.

1. Employment and Education

John and Frances came from families where their siblings overwhelmingly chose public safety and public service—two of the Ps, as their preferred areas for employment. The priesthood was considered but not chosen by any of the Jennings or Walsh siblings of that generation.

Siblings around 1940

Jennings Family

Joseph
Martin
Winifred
John
Anna Mae
Mark

Walsh Family

Arthur
Francis
Nathaniel
Charles
Mabel Frances

In the Jennings family, Tom as a teenager, was killed in a bicycle accident. In the Walsh family, Ruth died at a very young age.

My father and two of his brothers, Joseph and Mark, became policemen. This meant that three of the four Jennings brothers chose police work as their life's employment.

Martin, the 4th brother, became an accountant, after a brief stint with the Chicago police force. Anna Mae was a secretary in a local insurance agency and Winifred an employee of AT&T, the telephone company. At that time, AT&T was a monopoly more akin to a government agency providing a basic service than to a business.

On the Walsh side of my family, there was the same inclination as there was among the Jennings siblings for employment in the public safety and public service sectors. Only one person on each side became a professional: Martin Jennings as an accountant and Francis Walsh as a medical doctor.

In the Walsh family of five children, my mother was the only surviving girl. Frances, her preferred name, worked as a mother for her own five children. She was a college graduate, which was quite unusual for that time. This background may be the reason she taught her children how to read and to write before each of us entered kindergarten.

Of her four brothers, Charles became a policeman, Nathaniel a postal office employee, and Francis a medical doctor. Arthur was an official and then mayor of a suburban village. So, this meant that three of the Walsh siblings worked in the areas of public safety and public service.

To top it off, the father of these siblings, my Grandfather Frank Walsh, was a sergeant in the Chicago police force. His counter-part, Grandpa

Martin Jennings, was a trolley car conductor. Again, the areas of employment were public safety and public service. There was not a store owner, a salesman, factory worker, or many other job areas represented among them.

With regard to education, the Walsh siblings were ahead of the Jennings off-spring. All five siblings on the Walsh side received a college diploma, and Frank (Francis' nickname) went on to finish medical school and the internships associated with becoming a doctor.

On the Jennings side, only Martin of the six received a college diploma. He then went on to gain the training needed to become an accountant. Of the remaining five siblings some took a few college courses but none graduated from college.

In sum, a tendency to look in the employment areas represented in the 3 Ps was certainly evident among both the Jennings and Walsh sides of the family. They were employed as policemen, politicians, postal workers, and in other public safety and public services jobs.

The Walsh side of the family was better educated than the Jennings side, but that didn't lead to the Walsh family members looking for employment in other job areas than the public safety and public services areas favored by the Jennings family members.

Business and commerce are the largest parts of the American economy. But, reading of the Jennings and Walsh families' experiences, it's as if those job sectors didn't exist.

It is possible that their ancestors in Ireland did not see much business or industry since England treated Ireland as a colony and didn't encourage industrial development or exposure to business which might

be competitive with the United Kingdom's own businesses. What the Irish didn't see did not become part of their life experiences.

2. The 3 Ps Affected My Brother and Me

In Chicago in the 1960s and 1970s, it seemed that there were those three career paths many Irish-American youth followed. As I mentioned, I called them the three Ps—public safety, public service, and religious work.

As Pat and I were growing up, our mother forbade us from talking about becoming a policeman. She said she had sat by the window too many nights waiting and praying that our father would come home alive and uninjured.

So, the first P was removed from consideration. Now with the second P, Pat and I tried the religious life. It did not fit well with us or us with it. (A fuller explanation appears on page 27 in chapter 11, ***A Religious Life?***)

The only P left was politics. Earlier in this paper, this P was defined broadly to include lawyers, elected officials, politicians, and government jobs. Pat and I made our careers in law and associated politics, fitting comfortably into this category.

After working in a law firm for a while, Pat accepted a position with the Illinois state government. I worked for the U.S. Congress and for a policy think tank that I founded in Washington D.C. It was indeed the third P for the two Jennings boys.

It is great today that youths have a greater range of employment possibilities. Before they are forgotten, though, the three Ps ought to be acknowledged for the good they did. They created clear pathways for youth to transition from school to work. Very noteworthy was that

they helped many immigrants and their children to enter the middle class in the U.S.

In listening to the Jennings-Walsh family members for decades, I knew that they considered themselves hard-working middle-class people. My relatives were proud of the jobs they held, and were happy to be doing police work and the other duties they had in the public safety and services sectors.

The following nine vignettes are meant to describe some important ways that people like the Jennings Walsh family lived in the period of the 1940s to the 1980s. The 3 Ps were simply accepted as a part of their lives.

To help in understanding better these little stories or commentaries, these are the siblings in the family.

Siblings in the Jennings Family
around 1990

Anne Marie (known as Nancy) born October 1941

John (known as Jack) born December 1942

James Patrick (known as Pat) born January 1946

Loretta (known as Lori) born May 1950

Maureen Bridget born March 1961.

In January 2012 Pat Jennings died prematurely.

3. My Father and Me

When I was a newly born, my father and I shared an experience that influenced his view of me for the rest of his life. Since I was a baby, the account of this experience relies on its telling by my relatives.

According to family lore, it was a funny situation, but not recommended as the best way to first engage with the second most important adult in your early life. Of course, one's mother has the most important influence on one's upbringing.

My parents were married in 1940 in Chicago. The two of them, their parents, and almost all relatives were members of the local community of people of Irish descent. As happened at that time, like many other people of Irish descent, my parents produced a large family—five children, including me.

With such large families then, there normally were many participants at family gatherings. So, it was when my parents brought me home from the hospital. For that event, their apartment was jammed with people and a goodly supply of beer. Relatives from both the Jennings and Walsh sides of the family were included.

My parents were happy. They now had two children, one a girl and me—the boy. They were ready for the party! My sister, Nancy, had been born fourteen months before my arrival into this world. Nancy, and I were almost “Irish twins.” That title meant that the second child was born nine months, or so, after the birth of the first child.

As the party progressed, I needed a change of diapers. My mother put me on top of the dining room table to do the deed since that was the nearest flat surface in the crowded apartment. My mother opened the diaper to clean me up. Then, a few relatives including a few of my

father's brothers, began a beer-induced chant: "John, John, change the diaper."

Others joined and the noisy demand became louder and louder. Finally, my father smiled, shook his shoulders and asked my mother to step aside so that he could do the work.

My father leaned down to finish the task of cleaning me up. Suddenly, my little penis shot out a strong stream of pee, aimed directly at my father's face. Out of surprise my father froze, and the stream was unstoppable.

My mother's first reaction was to giggle, and that turned into loud, body-shaking laughter. The mass of relatives did the same. My father unfroze with all the merriment. He even put on his wettened face a weak smile, trying to be a good sport.

For the rest of his life, my father would look warily at me, as if to ward off an unwelcome surprise. If you are a pregnant woman, softly tell the growing person-to-be in your belly to be polite to his father, especially in the beginning.

This vignette is a reminder that policemen as well as nurses, parking attendants and others with service and safety jobs are human. All of them can laugh and cry. Too often, they are looked through or ignored by others as they protect and provide services to the public.

4. *Our Two-Flat*

Chicago is famous for its brick, two-floor residential buildings, called "two-flats." From the 1930s through the 1950s, hundreds, if not thousands, of these buildings were constructed all over the city.

Buying a two-flat on Mango Avenue in the northwest side of the city was a courageous step by our parents. They were purchasing a substantial residential building in a nice middle-class area on a young policeman's limited salary. They fortunately had some help.

My mother's oldest brother, Frank, a very successful medical doctor, agreed to provide a loan for the down-payment. This aid was much appreciated by my parents at the time, but over the years my father grew increasingly resentful of having to make payments to his rich brother-in-law. During this period the doctor was becoming richer, and my father was increasingly strapped for money with a family that grew to five children.

An attractive feature of the two-flat was that each floor was a living space unto itself. The owner could live on one floor, and rent out the other floor to pay for the mortgage. My maternal grandparents sold their house in Chicago's west side and moved to my parents' two-flat, providing that income from the second floor to help pay the bank and my uncle—the rich doctor.

As my grandparents were settling in on the second floor, the Second World War ended. Two of my mother's brothers, Nathaniel and Charles, served in the war and returned home to move into the second floor with my grandparents.

So, there we were with three generations living together. It was a tight squeeze on both floors. At that time people did not expect as much living space as many people enjoy today in 2022. But, even by the standards of the period, it was close.

The configuration of most of these buildings was the same. A living room and the accompanying dining room were the largest areas. They were also the least used rooms.

The living room was for important occasions such as graduations from school, and Christmas. The dining room was used more but not often enough to justify its proportion of the living area on that floor. The most regular use of the dining room was the large mid-day meals on Sunday after mass.

Those Sunday suppers at about 1-130 p.m. were the weekly gathering of family members living on the two floors. My mother would cook a serious roast beef or a large ham as the principal dish. The side dishes would always be mashed potatoes and various vegetables. Mother followed the Irish tradition of serving well-done meat and mushy vegetables.

Two other traditions developed. My father presided at the head of the table, saying the prayer of thanks for these gifts from God, carving the meat offering, and asking key questions about our schooling and friends.

He was the provider for the family and so expected to be seen as the leader of the clan. In fact, he was a very good provider. At one point he had two side-jobs in addition to his regular policeman's work. He pushed himself foregoing sleep and rest to support his children and wife.

At the Sunday suppers, the other tradition was that my father's toast was invariably followed by another toast offered by my Uncle Charlie (more on him soon). That wording never changed: "Here's to those that are here, and here's to those who are not. May God bless them all."

Our father would grit his teeth at Uncle Charlie's intervening in his toast, but there also seemed to be something else going on. Later, my mother told me the reason for the hostility. When my father was

wooing her, Charlie told him that the marriage would finally raise a member of the Jennings family from being shanty Irish to living as lace curtain Irish like the Walsh family. One can imagine father's reaction!

Apart from the Sunday feasts, the living and dining rooms were not used often enough to justify occupying about half of the floor space of the apartment. The other half was the kitchen, two bedrooms, and the bathroom. These were tight quarters when the other children arrived. Naturally, there were back-ups for use of the one bathroom, and little privacy on any phone conversation. The one phone was located next to the bathroom and the cord was barely long enough to reach the doorway to the dining room.

5. Two and Then Five

When we moved into the two-flat, Nancy and I were the only kids. We slept in the second bedroom next to our parents' bedroom and across from the bathroom.

After Patrick was born, he slept in our parents' bedroom. When he outgrew babyhood, he moved to the second bedroom where Nancy and I had been sleeping. With the addition of Pat, a bunkbed (two beds with one above the other) was bought for the two boys, while Nancy remained in a single bed.

When Lori was born, our parents decided to buy another bunkbed. Four beds for four children---in one bedroom

As the children got to be a little older, my parents began to wonder if the boys and girls should be separated. The decision was hastened when the three older children made Lori "walk the plank" which was a wood board placed on the top bed of one of the bunk beds.

Nancy, Pat, and I had just seen a pirate movie where the pirates blindfolded their hostage and made him walk a plank to fall into the sea. Lori didn't drop into an imaginary sea; but, after she got on the plank, she fell to the floor with the board. That is when the blood started to flow from her nose. The stream began small and fast grew to a torrent.

Nancy ran to tell my mother who called our father. He told her to put cloths in Lori's nose, and he would come home. After filling Lori's nose with cloths, Ma began to say the rosary. Neither the prayers or the cloths put an end to the bleeding.

Fortunately, father arrived home and took Lori to the hospital. When he returned from the hospital with the non-bleeding but bandaged Lori, he gave us his opinions on the subject. It was similar to what our religious training had taught us would occur on the Final Judgement Day.

In a booming, god-like voice, he measured our worth and then meted out the punishments: no more cash allowances, the imposition of more chores, no money to go to the movies, and more time studying. We meekly accepted these reprimands because there were no other possibilities.

Father also marched upstairs to talk to Grandfather Walsh about the need to separate the boys and the girls. Grandpa agreed to give up his living room for night-time usage by Pat and me. We slept on a pull-out bed that was part of a couch.

Grandpa Walsh did not mind the nighttime shrinkage of his apartment because Grandma Walsh (his wife) had died shortly after the move into the two-flat. In addition, one of the two sons living with him got married and moved out. Grandpa Walsh and Uncle Charlie, a bachelor, were left on the second floor, with my brother and me being the night-time sleepers.

A big advantage of this housing arrangement was that the members of the three generations living in our two-flat got to know one-another more than we would have if we had lived separately. I especially took a liking to my Grandfather Walsh.

6. Grandparents

Next to our house was a large plot of land that was undeveloped. We used to call unused lots “prairies,” evoking Illinois’ reputation as a broad, flat expanse of land.

Grandpa Walsh and I created a fairly large garden in the middle of this prairie. We raised corn, beans, tomatoes, melons and other vegetables. We also grew flowers. The gladiolas were my favorite. Grandpa Walsh taught me many things he had learned over his seventy plus years.

For instance, he said that Indians walked in a straight line with one foot behind the other so as to leave the least evidence of their presence in case of danger. He also said that Milwaukee Avenue had been an Indian trail before the Europeans came to America, and that it was made a major street in the new city because it was laid out exactly as it should have been given the topography of the area. Grandpa wanted me to understand that the native Americans were not primitive peoples but sophisticated in a different way than Europeans.

Grandpa was the son of a ship captain whose vessel carried goods from Niagara Falls to Chicago and then back to the Falls. Since his wife had died, he put his son—my Grandpa-- in a private boarding school located near the Niagara Falls. He felt that would be best for his son because he and his ship were always on the move between the Falls and Chicago.

In school my Grandpa learned to love poetry. Throughout his life, he was able to recite by memory many poems. I still have his favorite books of poetry.

Grandpa Walsh told me that he had met his wife, my Grandma, while collecting rents from some buildings owned by his father. Her family name was Burns and they had moved to Chicago from St. Louis. Supposedly, my Grandma's father had owned two plantations in Louisiana and after Emancipation, he became a river boat gambler on the Mississippi. Far from any such life, Grandpa Walsh spent his working life as a sergeant in the Chicago Police force.

Grandpa Jennings was one of the nicest people you could meet. He always greeted his grandkids with a smile that welcomed them. He didn't say much, but he had the air of kindness.

His wife, Bridget, was of course my Grandma. She emigrated from Ireland in 1900 as did Grandpa. They met in Chicago and married. She was a driven-woman because she wanted her children to succeed. As her children got jobs and made some money, she bought two costly, room-sized oriental carpets as a sign of having made it.

Few knew her secret: when she got to the U.S. the only job she could find was as a maid. She did that for a few years, and then married Martin. He had a good job as a conductor on the Chicago Avenue trolley line which went from Lake Michigan to the city limit at Oak Park.

Once established in marriage, she had her husband and everyone else who might know, pledge to keep this maid's work as a secret. No one needed to know that.

Her determined nature explained to people Martin's eager "exile" for sleeping to the upstairs of the house. One of the boys had left, and that

opened up a bed for him to use. Bridget was taking no chances on having yet another child.

Near the end of her life, she had stomach cancer and almost died three times. After the second attack, her family thought she was gone. Waiting around her bed for the last rites, one of the boys asked Grandpa whether he had bought his suit for the funeral. He said he had. Bridget was not quite dead, heard this exchange, and rallied. No one was going to presume the time of her death.

After his retirement, Grandpa walked to the park every day. He also would go to his small room in the basement where he kept his alcohol, his tabaco and his corncob pipe. Grandpa did not say much, but he lasted until he was 101 years old.

7. Uncles and Aunts

Since both my father and my mother had several siblings, we had a number of uncles and aunts as we were growing up. On the Jennings side, there were 5 and on the Walsh side four.

My favorites were Uncle Mark and Aunt Winifred, both from the Jennings side. From the Walsh side, Uncle Charlie and his weekly toast have already been introduced.

Uncle Charlie. The uncle we knew the best was Charles known as Charlie Walsh. After the World War ended, he lived with his parents on the second floor of our two-flat and was hired as a teacher at the local public high school. That career did not last. Charlie became a Chicago policeman.

In 1960, after the death of Grandpa Walsh, our parents sold the two-flat, and bought a single-family house in a nicer part of the parish. Charlie was given a bedroom on the first floor, and our parents took the other bedroom on that floor. Pat and I shared a bedroom on the second floor. Nancy and Lori had their own bedroom on the same floor.

Eleven years later, this harmony was potentially threatened by Maureen's birth. At first, Maureen slept with our parents, but where to put her when she outgrew babyhood?

Things took care of themselves. Nancy took advantage of an opportunity to receive training at a residential school for nurses. A few years later, I moved to be nearer my law school at Northwestern University.

The result was that Lori had her own bedroom, except for Nancy's return for short stays during recesses at the nursing school. Pat had his own bedroom when I moved out for Northwestern. Finally, everyone living there had breathing room.

Our father made more space by enclosing and weatherizing the back porch. This expansion of livable space led to our getting a bigger TV and using the porch as our "TV room." This is where Charlie again comes into the picture.

Charlie thought of himself as a humorist, often making jokes at someone else's expense. His jokes were frequently juvenile and silly. When he was living in the back bedroom next to the porch, he used the TV room as his stage. His audience was whomever wanted to watch TV.

In warm weather, he often sat watching TV in his underwear, and liked to jump up and block the TV screen with his body and by pulling his underwear out on both sides. While doing this, he would sing: "Ja ditty

jadig, you can't see the TV." After several minutes of joking like this, he would go back to his chair and continue watching TV.

His jingle made no sense, but we got to repeating it at odd times. An example would be if one of our friends acted strangely or said something uncouth, our response would be "Ja ditty jadig, you can't see the TV."

For 20 years, Charlie dated the daughter of the neighborhood pharmacist, and refused to consider marriage. After a decade of Sunday afternoon dates, she gave up in frustration and married someone else. Charlie did not talk about her either before or after the break-up. He would rather massage his scalp while watching TV and advise the kids that massaging was the best way to maintain your head hair.

Uncle Charlie's silliness was finally too much for my father. He and mother decided to sell the house on Monitor Street. They bought a nicer house on Ozark Street in a good area abutting the suburb of Park Ridge. One could not buy a residence closer to the city limits than this house.

Despite pleas from my mother, Charlie was not asked to come along to the new place. He spent his final years at a suburban YMCA. He had been a Chicago policeman for most of his career, and at the end of his life he was a watchman in a county building.

Uncle Mark. Similar to Uncle Charlie, Uncle Mark worked as a policeman on the Chicago force. Also similar to Charlie, Uncle Mark remained single his whole life. I believe that he was a closeted Gay.

Rumors among my generation hinted at that. Rumors also said that my father, as his closest brother, had to pick him up at some bars because he had had too much to drink. My father possibly could have drawn a

conclusion about him being gay from the nature of those bars, the other customers or possibly from Mark himself. At that point in our country's history, being gay or lesbian was not discussed.

Uncle Mark was known in the family for his perfect lawns. He lived most of his life with his parents on the west side of Chicago, in an old wooden house that had in front a couple of yards of ground for planting and a somewhat bigger piece in the back yard. He put in these small plots of land, Creeping Ben, the type of grass used on golf courses at the holes. It was gorgeous and no one, even people walking by with their dogs, would think of violating the purity of Mark's lawns. He had the makings of a perfectionist.

Mark was a very kind person, but also very formal. He wore suits to family baptisms, confirmations, and other family events. As a teenager, I asked him to be my sponsor when I was confirmed, and I took his name as my confirmation name. Later, after Steve and I moved in together, he always asked about Steve, and gave us a shamrock medallion for good luck which he always gave to nephews and nieces when they married.

As a young man, he served as a soldier in World War II, and was captured by the Germans in northern Africa. He was in captivity about four years, first in Africa, then moved to Italy and then to Germany. Uncle Mark would never talk about these experiences, which could have been terrible.

Near the end of his life, on one occasion, he began to talk to me about being a prisoner of war, but he was vague. After that family party when we spoke, I had to return to Washington, and he was dead by the next time I came in to Chicago.

Other Aunts and Uncles. Aunt Winnie (Winifred) was a gem. She was very religious and knew lots of Catholic priests in Chicago. She also had a little money from the death early in her marriage of her husband who was a longtime union leader, and from investing in AT&T stock where she worked.

Winnie, Mark, and Anna Mae were very generous. They sent a joint birthday card with cash in it to every niece and nephew.

Anna Mae was the family photographer, and took grief from other family members for waiting a while before clicking the shutter in order to get most people smiling. She shrugged this off and proceeded on. We didn't have much contact with other aunts and uncles only seeing them at family occasions.

8. A Big Move

During the years after the war, Uncle Mark lived with his parents and with his sister, Anna Mae, who was also unmarried her whole life. My father would refer to Anna Mae and "her lesbian friends," who were volunteers at the Chicago Lyric Opera. My Grandfather, Anna Mae, and Mark wanted to stay in their house the rest of their lives. Grandmother Jennings had died in 1964.

Their intent to stay was made impossible by unscrupulous real estate agents who ruined the neighborhood for both whites and blacks. They told white homeowners that the blacks were coming and that these owners had better sell their houses fast or they would not get anything for them later. Then, the real estate agents would tell prospective African-American buyers that they had better move fast and buy these nice houses. The houses were in a good neighborhood and would all be sold soon.

That atmosphere of panic created by the agents led to exactly the outcome they wanted. White owners sold their houses for a cheap price, and the African American buyers paid a premium. The area changed almost over-night into a black section of the city.

Grandpa Jennings, Uncle Mark, and Anna Mae were living in the old family house on Laramie Avenue. They wanted to stay there, but some bad eggs came with the panic. Grandpa was hustled for money in threatening ways when he took his morning walks to the public park. In her bedroom, Anna Mae ran into a woman going through her dresser looking for something to steal. So, reluctantly they left for an apartment farther north in the city.

9. Our Lord and Hippy

While Grandpa, Mark, and Anna Mae were having their problems on the west side of the city, our mother and father were up-scaling our living conditions in the north-western section of the city. The two-flat had been replaced by the house on Monitor, and then came the house on Ozark.

Like most families of Irish descent at that time, our family was firmly Catholic. My mother used to tell us our allegiances which were in this order: Irish Catholic Democrats.

Reflecting that heritage, my parents bought a large oil painting of Jesus Christ which they hung in prominent places in their houses, generally in the living rooms. That was a place of honor since that room was the largest in every house they owned.

That space was also the least used in daily life since it was reserved for family gatherings such as Christmas morning gift opening, picture taking before school graduations and weddings. Despite his loneliness, Jesus was noticed every time one of us were to use the stairs to go to

the second floor and occasionally to leave the house through the front door.

Jesus depicted in the painting was a handsome man. He had bronzed skin as if he had just come from a tanning studio. His hair was brown with a slightly golden sheen. Draped over his shoulders was a white robe, simple but tasteful.

In addition to this good skin and flowing locks of hair, Jesus had a slight, Mona Lisa type smile. He seemed more like a rock-star than god-like.

Lost in this rendering of Our Lord and Savior was any allusion to his Semitic lineage. According to the Bible he was Jewish; but if he was Jewish and looked like the man shown in this painting, he must have spent some time in a Jerusalem version of Beverly Hills working in the entertainment business. In that case, his beauty would have come from plastic surgery, and he would have had to change his name to Lance or Kevin. "Jesus" was too much to handle.

It came to me one day: no, he was not Jewish; rather, as shown in this painting, he was a Kennedy. He looked a lot like President John Kennedy. This was a time before the news media began to write about the assassinated President's overworked libido. Jack Kennedy was still the fallen Irish-American hero.

The painting showed a Kennedy, but not one who went into politics, rather one who went into religion. Even that act of dealing with the spiritual would not make up, though, for one major failing of this painting.

The times of the events being discussed here were the 1970s and 1980s, and the family home was on the far northwest side of Chicago. Since the city required its workers to live within the city limits, our

neighborhood was chuck-full of city policemen, firemen, teachers, and others.

These groups especially the police and firemen were not known for their liberal social or political views. Young men who had long hair were called beatniks, hippies, and worse. In a policeman's eyes these "long-hairs" were part of the rabble that ruined the 1968 Democratic convention and Chicago's reputation as the host city.

During that national convention, Mayor Richard Daley instructed the city's police in strong terms to bring law and order to the areas where demonstrations were occurring. The police were more than willing to abide by those orders. This resulted in the national TV networks news programs showing Chicago police clubbing unarmed youths.

For years after that event, the city's reputation suffered. Since the city's citizens were sharply divided about the conduct of the demonstrators and the police, it remained a hot issue for a long time.

The supreme irony of my parents' painting of Christ was that he is depicted as a long-hair, a hippie. My father and the fathers of most other families of this area of the city would not let their daughters date such a liberal, police-hating person. Yet, Our Lord and Savior was a hippie, a long-hair!

The inconsistencies we live with every day, and don't realize it.

10. Dating

As will be explained later, I was out of the mainstream during the formative teen years. Our sister, Lori, was almost ten years younger than Nancy and me. I missed much of her teen dating years since I left home when I began law school. Maureen, our youngest sister, was born

more than twenty years after the “almost-Irish twins,” and we were all gone by the time she was dating.

That is to say that my recollections of home life during the teen dating years were observations of Nancy’s and Pat’s love lives. Those were tumultuous years for all involved. The scenes I remember most were the “discussions” between our father and Pat or Nancy when they came home late from a date. The sites for these debates were in the house on Monitor since Nancy’s and Pat’s dating began then.

Our father was a large man; and, he seemed to be even bigger when were young. He had a deep, baritone voice, which he didn’t use much because he didn’t talk easily; but, when he did say something, it was wise to pay close attention.

Nancy, as the oldest, naturally began dating first. She and my parents had a different sense of time. Nancy felt that one rounded up the numbers so that a deadline to be home by 10 pm meant one started to think about going home about that time. Our parents were more literal and thought that ten pm meant just that.

A rift also existed about the location of the end of the date. Nancy preferred the parking area on Lake Michigan. Our parents liked the idea of parking in front of our house while saying good night to the datee.

Naturally there were also differences about type of clothing that was appropriate. Nancy preferred the style of the times, which meant short dresses and tight blouses. Our parents thought more along the line of the long dresses that nuns used to wear.

These differences collided most when Nancy came home after the deadline—10 pm or whenever. Nancy liked to come home through the

front door; and, as the appointed time approached, our parents would move to the living room from the back of the house where the TV was.

If Nancy was late, there would be strong opinions expressed and loud arguments about time, fashion and how good girls get into trouble. On one occasion, when father was in a fury, he swung his right arm around and broke a large lamp. If our father really raised his deep voice, our mother would begin to say the rosary.

Hearing all of this from my 2nd floor bedroom, I didn't know whether she was praying for the last rites for Nancy or whether she hoped the Blessed Mary would help to control my father's temper. Jesus on the wall didn't do much good. He just continued to smile with his good skin and long hair.

Pat's late arrivals were even more dramatic. Pat preferred the back door for his entrance home. This was a chancy route because it went past our parents' bedroom on the way to the staircase that led upstairs to the bedroom Pat and I shared. So, if our parents got tired of waiting in the TV room, they could go to bed and still hear the creaking of the floor boards as Pat passed with his shoes off and on his tiptoes.

For these encounters, our father started out loud and became even louder. He accused Pat of being drunk whether he was or not, and yelled at him that he was hanging around with the wrong crowd.

In one of these encounters, Pat made a big mistake: he challenged our father physically. Our father told him to come out of the house and to put up his dukes. Facing each other outside, our father gave Pat a quick one-two punch sending Pat down the back stairs to the basement door.

While all this was occurring, our mother was saying the rosary and prayed louder and louder matching her husband's rise in voice. In the

case of the two punches, she must have been praying to save Pat's soul as his earthly body went tumbling down the stairs.

The rosary wouldn't work today to save our father from a possible child abuse charge; but those times--the 1960s and 70s—were different than today. Then, a father was supposed to discipline his children. That is what our father did.

We were not made of delicate glass, and so we survived. The same ritual played out in the hundreds of households in our area where the policemen and firemen lived with their families. Our family's particular contribution to this ritual was the addition of the rosary. Nice touch, Ma!

11. A Religious Life?

My mother wanted one of her five children to become a religious person such as a priest or a nun. I was chosen to be the priest.

I was not unwilling. In fact, it was very attractive as a 14-year-old to go to Quigley Preparatory Seminary in downtown Chicago. This was the high school/college that young boys attended if they showed an interest in becoming a priest.

The time was the 1960s which turned out to be the golden years for Quigley. First year enrollments were more than 200 students aspiring to be priests. These boys were an average of 18 years old.

At that age, I was becoming more aware of being gay; and this separation from girls and immersion in a male-dominated world appealed to me.

At Quigley students went home every night. The school though had a longer and different schedule than other high schools. This was meant to limit students' contact with girls who might lure them from holy orders.

For the first three years of Quigley, I was a good student. I liked the Latin and old Greek. We used the old Greek to read the 4th Gospel and Acts which were written in that language by the Apostle John. Also, history and religion/philosophy were interesting.

Then, in the 4th and 5th years, I was pulling stupid pranks, showing a dissatisfaction with the way my life was going. Finally, I realized that religious life was not for me. I finished Quigley and went to Loyola University of Chicago to complete the course work for my college degree.

My mother did not take well to my decision to get off the path to the priesthood. One day she was crying, and my brother Patrick became so distraught for her that he said he would become a Christian Brother. Pat had attended St. Patrick's High School which was run by the Christian Brothers, a religious order whose members generally taught.

My mother was happy—one of her children would enter the service of the church. So, Pat packed his suitcase and went by train to St. Louis where the Christian Brothers had their training facility.

At the beginning of the initiation into the religious order, Pat's group was instructed that in the first days of the training the candidates would be completely silent—no talking whatsoever. This practice was to teach obedience and humility.

The next day Pat was on the train going back to Chicago. Pat loved to talk, and was good at it. No one told a better joke than Pat. It was once

said about Pat that he would talk from the time his feet hit the floor in the morning until his head hit the pillow that night.

Because he was so talkative, the family thought Pat would make a good lawyer. That was the path he chose. This route was well-travelled, especially at that point of time by Irish-American young men.

12. The Benediction

At the end of the mass, the priest blesses the congregation and tells them to “go out into the world.” I hope that these vignettes give a realistic view of some aspects of the world of an average family who lived in Chicago in the latter half of the 20th century.

The three Ps were a presumed part of that world, continuing to have an effect today. Many people are members of the middle class because of help from family members and family friends who had jobs in the areas of the three Ps.

These little stories tell of the hopes and frustrations of the Jennings Walsh family which reflect the experiences of many other families in the same situation. Clearly rooted in the employment areas of public safety and public services, and drawn to the religious life, they tried to be good citizens and to have good lives.

Our father was a prime example of someone who got ahead using the three Ps tracks. He started as a young policeman directing traffic. At the end of his career with the Chicago Police Department, he was one of the most important officials in the CPD. After retiring from the Department, his good reputation gained him an appointment to a high position in the government for Cook County, the largest county in the state of Illinois. He did well for himself.

Mother saw the returns on her insistence that her children be well-educated when we all received college degrees and then more advanced degrees, leading to good jobs.

The off-spring of John and Frances Jennings thank them for their guidance in navigating through this tricky world.

March 16 2022 Copyright protected but available for reproduction with the permission of the author. Web site: jackjenningsdc.com. Jack Jennings wrote this report with the assistance of Nancy Zima, the oldest of the three Jennings sisters. Lori Leska and Maureen McKenna, the other two Jennings sisters, also reviewed the text. Thank you to all.