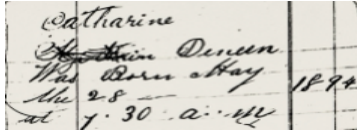


5. Catherine Cecilia Deneen—*Kate*

May 28, 1894—October 7, 1984

Grandmother



When Catherine was born at 7:30 a.m. on May 28, 1894, she brought the bustling Deneen household in Corning to seven, joining her older siblings: Jo, eight; Jack, seven; Mary, five; and Anna, one. She was named in honor of her maternal grandmother, Catherine “Kate” Sullivan Keohane, and her mother's sister, Catherine “Kate” Keohane Harrington. Like her sisters and brothers, Kate was educated at St. Mary’s School and later completed two years of study at the local high school, the Corning Free Academy.

After finishing her schooling, Kate lived at home. The 1913 city directory records her at age 19 working as a clerk at 46 E. Market Street, the offices of the Corning Glass Works. Two years later, the 1915 New York State census listed her as a glove maker. By the time her wedding announcement was published in 1918, she had transitioned to a position at the Cain-Bernkopf department store at the corner of Cedar and Market Streets. As Corning’s very first department store, selling everything from fine clothing to household goods, it was a central hub of local life, and Kate was right at the heart of it.



Catherine Deneen
Circa 1916



John ‘Jack’ Thomas Kelly
Circa 1916

Kate's social circle naturally revolved around her Irish-Catholic heritage and St. Mary's Church, which is where she crossed paths with John Thomas "Jack" Kelly. Jack had spent his early childhood roughly 80 miles north of Corning in Geneva, New York, before his family relocated to Corning around 1910. Census records indicate he completed school through the eighth grade, likely in Geneva, before beginning to work. Following in his father's footsteps, Jack was employed as a boilermaker by the time of the 1915 state census.

On September 26, 1917, at twenty-one years old, Jack was inducted into the United States Army to serve in World War I. He was assigned to Company C of the 303rd Engineer Regiment, a combat and construction unit.

However, his time in uniform was cut short. According to his son, also named Jack, he had *“a long history of heart difficulty evidenced by a murmur.”* While playing football

for the military camp team at Fort Dix, Jack suffered a severe blow to the chest that exacerbated his heart condition, resulting in an honorable medical discharge in late 1917 and a subsequent ten percent disability rating. While stationed at Fort Dix, Jack had written to Kate daily—and sometimes twice a day. Though the envelopes survived the passing decades, the letters themselves were lost to time, leaving the contents of their daily correspondence lost as well.



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This Al projection depicts what Kate and Anna wore based on the newspaper description.

"The bride in a reindeer-[colored] suit with hat to match and bridesmaid in a taupe-colored suit with matching hat."

Kate and Jack were wed on September 16, 1918, with Kate's sister Anna Deneen serving as her loyal attendant. Their local wedding announcement captured their standing in the community, noting that Kate was *"a very popular young woman and has a wide circle of friends,"* while Jack *"was well and favorably known in this city."* Following a celebratory wedding breakfast hosted at Patrick and Julia's home, the newlyweds departed for an eastern honeymoon via the D.L.&W. Railroad. A few months later, on December 30, 1918, Kate's maternal aunt wrote to Julia from her home in Carran, County Cork, Ireland, noting: *"I was glad to hear that my namesake got married. I hope she will be lucky."*

Kate and Jack began their married life in Corning, where Jack's career flourished as he transitioned from a railroad boilermaker to a talented salesman. A new job opportunity with Humphrey Radiantfire Water Heaters eventually prompted a move west to Buffalo. Over the subsequent decades, Jack proved himself a highly versatile salesman, successfully selling water heaters, automobiles, and utility services before eventually retiring from a long career with the John Hancock Life Insurance Company.



Kate and Baby Jim 1927

Their family grew with the arrival of three children. Their firstborn, Julia Mary Kelly, arrived on September 16, 1923, named in honor of her maternal grandmother, Julia Keohane Deneen, and her paternal grandmother, Mary Graney Kelly. As the very first grandchild, baby Julia became the absolute center of the extended Deneen family's universe. On July 13, 1927, they welcomed a son, James Francis Kelly, named after his paternal grandfather and affectionately called Jim. Their family was completed on May 2, 1932, with the birth of their youngest child, John Joseph Kelly, nicknamed Jack after his father.



Jim and Julia 1929

Hoping to give their children room to grow, Kate and Jack purchased a comfortable home on Villa Avenue in Buffalo.

This area offered a peaceful, almost suburban atmosphere with new houses and wide yards—a stark contrast to the cramped, older, industrial Irish neighborhoods tightly packed near the river.

However, the economic devastation of the Great Depression soon gripped the nation. While Jack managed to remain steadily employed, belts had to be tightly cinched to manage expenses. In the exact midst of this societal crisis, a deeply personal trial struck the household: young Jack was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Though the medical discovery of insulin a decade prior meant the diagnosis was no longer an immediate death sentence, managing the disease was still a primitive, high-stakes endeavor. The diagnosis instantly thrust Kate into a demanding, dual role as mother and round-the-clock nurse.

With no modern medical safety net, the grueling, manual routine of diabetes care completely dominated Kate's daily life. Before every single injection, she had to disassemble a heavy glass syringe and reusable steel needle,

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placing them in a pan on the kitchen stove to boil for sterilization. Because these steel needles were used repeatedly, they quickly grew dull and developed painful barbs. To spare her son unnecessary agony, Kate had to manually sharpen the needles on a whetstone right at the kitchen table.

The insulin itself—derived from cattle or pigs—was thick, unrefined, and frequently caused painful, red allergic welts on young Jack's skin. Because of the sheer thickness of 1930s-era needles, the medicine had to be injected deep into the muscle tissue, a terrifying and distressing experience for a young child. Until longer-acting insulin was finally introduced in 1936, Kate had to administer these painful injections multiple times a day, precisely timed with meals.

Monitoring his condition was equally arduous. There were no quick finger-prick blood sugar tests. Instead, Kate had to collect her son's urine several times a day, mix it with a chemical solution known as Benedict's reagent in a glass test tube, and boil it over an open flame or in a hot water bath. She then carefully analyzed the color change to guess his glucose levels: blue indicated a safe zone, while green, yellow, or a dark brick-red signaled dangerously high sugar.

Meal planning required the precision of a chemist. Kate could never simply eyeball a portion; every single ingredient had to be meticulously weighed on a gram scale before cooking. Diets for diabetic children in the 1930s were exceptionally strict, drastically restricting carbohydrates. Kate had to ensure her son ate exactly what was weighed out—no more and no less—to prevent a fatal imbalance. If Jackie became sweaty, shaky, or confused from a sudden blood sugar crash, she had to act instantly, force-feeding him orange juice or sugar water to pull him back from insulin shock. The entire household pivoted around this manual, relentless care regimen to keep their youngest alive. Because of Kate's unwavering diligence, young Jack survived, grew strong, and went on to live a life of profound service to his nation and community.



Little Jackie playing outdoors after the Blizzard of 1936 at the Villa Ave house in Buffalo.



Jack and Kate @1950

benefit, afforded them a comfortable, stable middle-class life in Batavia.

All three of their children graduated from Batavia High School, with Julia and Jim watching their older peers march off to the battlefields of World War II. Upon graduation, Julia pursued higher education in Rochester, New York, studying at the Rochester Dental Dispensary to become a dental hygienist.

A new sales job opportunity drew the family to Batavia, New York in November 1939. They initially rented a house on Redfield Parkway before purchasing the home at 39 Prospect Avenue, where they would spend the remainder of their lives. Monsignor Sullivan of Albion held the mortgage on the Prospect Avenue property, and Jack and Kate would regularly “take a ride to Albion” together to make their payments in person. To help secure their financial footing, a portion of the second floor was a small apartment and they rented it out. This supplemental income, combined with Jack’s commissions as a salesman and his small veteran’s disability



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Jim 1945

Following his own graduation in 1945, Jim joined the United States Army at the end of what was considered WWII. The massive shift from active global combat to the full-scale Allied occupation of Germany and Japan required a continuous draft of young men. Jim deferred his college until his military service concluded, afterward attending Niagara University studying biology. He furthered his scientific training at the University of Buffalo School of Dentistry, graduating in 1955 to become a dentist and dental surgeon.

Young Jack also stepped forward to serve his country, after completing his undergraduate degree at Niagara University, he served two years in the United States Army during the Korean War. Following his military discharge, he continued his education eventually earning a doctorate in education.



Jack 1955

To raise three high school graduates during the hardships of the Depression and war—resulting in two advanced doctoral degrees—was an extraordinary feat. Kate and Jack were excessively proud of the legacy they built.



Persistent health problems eventually forced Jack into an early retirement. At just fifty-five years old, following a severe heart attack, he applied for and was granted full veteran disability benefits. Even with these physical limitations Jack and Kate enjoyed a vibrant and joyful social life. Their days were filled with visits with friends and family, lively bridge games with lifelong friends, events at the Moose Lodge, and active devotion to their St. Mary's parish community.

Among their favorite shared pastimes was attending local estate auctions. Over the years, Kate developed a sharp eye for unique treasures, purchasing many lovely, enduring pieces. Among these finds was a beautiful set of Kittinger dining room furniture bought for their son, Jim. For decades, Jim and his family gathered around that very table, sharing countless

daily meals and celebrating milestones that bound the family closer together.

Jack passed away on April 17, 1973. His son later recounted that his sudden passing was caused by a heart attack, tragically brought on by the physical strain of washing overhead windows with a long pole, and compounded by a heartbreaking several-hour delay in receiving emergency medical treatment.



Kelly Cousins 1966

Front Row: Kevin, Barbara, Mary, Colleen, Daniel, Marie, John
Back Row: John T., Timothy on his lap, Margaret, Katherine, Maureen, Kate, Aunt Esther & Uncle Frank Kelly (John T's brother) ...wait someone *cool* hasn't been born yet...

Lots of happy times around the Kittinger Table. Pretty sure someone in heaven isn't happy I included his picture... "four on the floor and no dogs in the dining room!"...



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Navigating life without Jack wasn't easy for Kate; they had shared an exceptionally close, devoted marriage. She carried on with grace for eleven years before passing away at the age of 90 on September 17, 1984. Looking back on her journey through economic depressions, the anxieties of war, and the grueling daily battles of her youngest son's illness, she had triumphed over it all with an unwavering spirit. If she could send word back across the ocean to Ireland, she surely would have told her Aunt Kate that she did indeed live a life that was profoundly "lucky."



The Next Generation: An overview of Branch 5, the only grandchildren of Patrick and Julia, the three children of Kate and Jack Kelly.



1968: On the occasion of their 50th Wedding Anniversary

Seated: Jack and Kate Kelly
Standing: Jim, Julia, Jack Kelly

Julia Mary Kelly—Jule (1923-2007) *Aunt*

Julia attended St. Mary's Academy in Kenmore and graduated from Batavia High School in 1942. After completing her studies at the Rochester Dental Dispensary, she began her career as a dental hygienist in Rochester, New York, before moving to Ossining. She eventually returned to Batavia to live in the family home at 39 Prospect Ave.

She worked as an elementary school dental hygienist for several decades. She married and later divorced Blair Becker. Closely connected to her family, she was a daughter, niece, and aunt who frequently painted her niece's fingernails.

In 1990, she traveled to Ireland with her brother, Jack, to connect with Kelly, Deneen, and Keohane cousins. At home, she hosted a card club, played bridge, and lovingly was mother to two dogs, Amos and Shamus Kelly.

James Francis Kelly—Jim (1927-2011) *Father* 🇺🇸

Jim graduated from Batavia High School in 1945 and served two years in the U.S. Army at the end of World War II. He graduated from Niagara University in 1951 and earned his degree from the University of Buffalo School of Dentistry in 1955. He began his dental practice in LeRoy, New York, before moving to Albion in 1959, where he eventually established his office at his home.

He also served on the dental staffs at the Attica and Albion New York State Correctional Facilities. Professionally, he was a member and past president of the Eighth District Dental Society. He was a 4th Degree Knight of the

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Knights of Columbus and was married to Teresa Anne Marshall for 59 years. Together, they had **seven children: Maureen, Katherine, Margaret, Patricia, Kevin, Daniel, and Elizabeth.**

His personal interests included golf, Civil War and history in general, model trains, and building anything from doll houses to pool decks. He was a tinkerer, gardener, and fisherman who was known for his “long stories short” and ability to fix anything. *Boom!*

John Joseph Kelly—*Jack* (1932-2024) *Uncle*

Jack earned a Bachelor of Business Administration from Niagara University before serving as a special agent in the U.S. Army Counterintelligence Corps from 1955 to 1957. He spent his career in public education, earned a doctorate, and worked as a school principal and superintendent across multiple districts.

Ordained as a Catholic deacon in 1980, he served as a Pastoral Associate for over 40 years, including a longtime assignment at St. Michael's Church in Warsaw. He was married to Dorothy Phillips for 67 years, and devoted father of **six children: Colleen, Marie, Barbara, Mary, John, and Timothy.**

He was an avid golfer, artful storyteller and quite possibly gave the best most loving hugs ever.

Threads that Connect Us: Seanfhocail

As a child, I would often hear my grandmother, Catherine Deneen Kelly, recite little ditties around the house. During one visit, when I was about seven and she was eighty, I decided to memorize one of them. It was a simple, rhythmic chant:

*One two three four five six seven
All good children go to heaven
When you die the Lord will say
Where's that watch you took away
You will say I do not know
He will say go down below.*

Years later, I asked my dad about these rhymes. He told me that Grandma had learned them from her own mother.

This revelation sparked a beautiful realization: I had unwittingly become a link in a living chain of oral tradition spanning well over a century. The rhyme I memorized is a classic piece of Irish-diaspora folklore, blending a centuries-old counting rhyme with a cautionary tale about a stolen watch, designed to teach children honesty.

It is easy to picture my great-great-grandmother, Catherine Sullivan Keohane, rattling off these exact lines to keep her little ones entertained while she went about her arduous daily chores in Carran, Ireland. Her daughter, Julia Keohane Deneen, carried those words across the Atlantic Ocean, using them as a comforting piece of the homeland while raising her own family in the industrial landscape of Corning, New York. Julia, in turn, passed them to my grandmother Catherine.

Before the age of television and radio, these rhythmic seanfhocail (old sayings) and ditties were functional tools passed down from mother to child. By reciting them to me, my grandmother was echoing the voices of her mother and grandmother, weaving a vocal thread that stretches from rural Irish fields to modern America, ensuring their lives and language were never truly forgotten.

