



1 2 3 4 5 6 7

As a child, I often heard my grandmother, Catherine Deneen Kelly, recite little ditties around the house. On one visit, when I was about seven and she was eighty, I chose one to memorize. 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 the rhymes. He told me Grandma had learned them from her own mother. I did not think much more about it, but for years, whenever I heard that sequence of numbers, I would smile and remember the chant.

When I began digging deeper into our genealogy, the chant took on new meaning. I was thrilled to find Julia Keohane Deneen's handwriting recording the births and names of her first six children, and I was just as moved to realize that, through my grandmother, I had been hearing echoes of Julia's voice—and perhaps her mother's—all those years ago.

That discovery helped me see that I had become part of a living chain of oral tradition stretching back more than a century. The rhyme I memorized is a classic piece of Irish-diaspora folklore, combining an old counting rhyme with a cautionary lesson about honesty.

I can easily imagine my great-great-grandmother, Catherine Sullivan Keohane, reciting those lines to entertain her children while she worked through her daily chores in Carran, Ireland. Her daughter, Julia Keohane Deneen, carried the words across the Atlantic as a small comfort from home while raising her family in Corning, New York. Julia then passed them on to my grandmother Catherine.

Before television and radio, rhythmic *seanfhocail* (old sayings) and ditties were practical tools passed from mother to child. When my grandmother recited them to me, she was echoing the voices of her mother and grandmother, weaving a thread from rural Irish fields to modern America and keeping their lives and language alive.

