

## MY BRONX IRISH CATHOLIC ROOTS

*Q: When and where were you born?*

QUINN: I was born in New York City on May 26th, 1942, at Jewish Memorial Hospital in Manhattan; however my parents, George K. Quinn and Marie T. Quinn, lived in the Bronx. I am the oldest of three children. I have two sisters, Patricia Marie born in New York City in 1949, and Kathryn Mary, who was born in Bloomington, Illinois in 1954. My Mom and Dad were both Irish, so I always considered myself 100% Irish. I recently did a DNA analysis with Ancestry.com, and was a little surprised that it came back as my being 85% Irish, 12% British, 2% Scandinavian and 1% split between West Asian and Pacific Islander.

*Q: What do you know about where they came from?*

QUINN: On my Dad's side, they were kind of red-haired Irish, so maybe there was a little Scots-Irish in their DNA, which may account for my British ancestry. His mother and father were both born in America and I think even his grandparents were born here. His great grandparents were said to be from Scotland.

*Q: In the New York area?*

QUINN: In New York City. On both sides of my family they were all from New York City. I think my Dad's father, Charles Francis Quinn, had reached a middle class level. He was involved in the sport of crew, and I have some rowing medals that he won at the New York Athletic Club. His family was in business.

*Q: What kind of business were they in?*

QUINN: I am not sure. He may have been in the insurance business. Someone in my Dad's family, perhaps on his mother's side, had a business about selling lighting fixtures.

*Q: How about your father, what was his profession?*

QUINN: My father graduated from high school in the Bronx and then worked in insurance and then later in the retail clothing business. As I remember, he worked for a WT Grant department store and then another retail store named Genung's. He was working in the shoe department when I was about five year's old. I remember going with my Mom and him fitting me for shoes. I recall the excitement when he was promoted to

the position of Floorwalker, where he went between departments solving problems. This was all in the Bronx where we lived in the immediate post-World War II 1940s. When I was 10-years old, he somehow got a lead about a job so he could manage his own store, something I think he really wanted to do. But, the job was in La Crosse, Wisconsin. He accepted the job and went first to La Crosse. He then came back and in the spring of 1952, packed us all up and we took a taxi to Pennsylvania Station. We got on the Broadway Limited and went overnight to Chicago, and from there we took the Burlington Northern to La Crosse. I got off in a very different world.

*Q: What was different?*

QUINN: Well, I recall learning to speak with a Swedish inflection along the way. My Dad said we had to say things like, "That's for sure," with a high rising accent, and "Ya" rather than yes, and phrases like that.

*Q: What about the background of your mother.*

QUINN: My Mom was a black-haired, blue-eyed, probably more French Irish. Her father's name was Michael Farrell and he was born in Portumna, County Galway Ireland in 1885. He arrived in America in April 1905 on the ship Oceania having sailed from Queenstown. Her mom, my grandmother, Mary Davin, was born in America. They married and he then became a New York City policeman. He died during the influenza epidemic of 1918 when my mother was only two years old.

My parents were both left without a father figure in the home. My father's father also died at an early age in 1925, when my Dad was just 11. It was very traumatic for my Dad when it happened. I remember him talking about waking his father at home laid out in the bed. My Mom's mother married again. She married another New York City policeman named John "Jack" Donahue. I remember him as my "Grandpa Jack." So I have some New York City police "blue blood" in my veins.

*Q: Did she graduate from high school?*

QUINN: She did. Both of my parents graduated from high school. And she went one year to college.

*Q: Where did she go?*

QUINN: I am not sure. It may have been Mary Mount or something like that. My Dad

went to Evander Childs High School, which is up near White Plains Avenue and Gun Hill Road, where we lived right before leaving for Wisconsin.

*Q: How old were you when you went to La Crosse?*

QUINN: Ten. I was in fourth grade.