

The Hickey home, family

One of the most joyful occasions in our life, was when Dennis said Mass and gave the homily for our daughter Nancy, the night she said her first vows in the Sisters of Mercy, in 1978, at the motherhouse.

... Dennis has been described by former parishioners as humble. I thought that over. Humble can mean a lot of things, but Dennis was truly humble in a Christ-like fashion. He was reserved, yes, but very friendly. He was so concerned about the people in Dansville. He was here last spring, had lunch with some of us. He looked wonderful. He just seemed to beam. He had Mary Kay (Hammond) drive him through the hills of Dansville.

He was always there when we had some special occasion, or when I might have needed comfort, advice and help. Dennis liked to come and reminisce. He did like to reminisce. When he came last May, at that point he didn't know he was ill. In our eyes, he died too young.

Beth Burke Kelly of Dansville, widow of Bishop Hickey's grade-school chum John W. Kelly (Sister Nancy Kelly is now assistant principal and director of admissions at Notre Dame High School, Elmira.)

The last time I talked with him was in June when my mom passed away. I called him before she passed away and asked him to keep her in his prayers. He said a special Mass for her in June. I really am going cherish that last conversation.

My dad, Lawrence G. Rowe, John W. Kelly and he went all through school together. They were always very good chums.

... He was Dansville's boy and we always looked forward to any time he came here ... whether for confirmation or just to say hello.

His sister Kay and her husband Nick were godparents to my sister, Julie Rowe Dougherty.

At (almost) 85 I guess I could say it's a good time to go, but I'm just going miss him. It's like the end of an era is happening this year, it's very hard. I had that connection to Dad (who died in 1972) with him.

I'm glad he's at peace and also feeling somewhat happy he's with all those guys now, that whole group. Now they're all together again.

Priscilla Rowe Howe of Dansville

Dennis Walter Hickey was born to Walter M. and Aloysia Sullivan Hickey in Dansville, N.Y., on Oct. 28, 1914.

Aloysia ("Allie") Sullivan, named for her birth on the feast of St. Aloysia, was one of five children. Walter M. Hickey was one of 15. Both were natives of Bradford County, Pa. Walter and Aloysia later had two daughters: Helen in 1916, and Katherine (Kay) in 1918.

Walter Hickey worked as a station agent for the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad, sparking for his son a lifelong fascination with steam engines.

Mary Campbell Caldwell, daughter of the bishop's sister Kay, recalled her uncle as a great dancer who shared his love of dancing with his sisters.

"They learned to dance by walking on his shoes," she said. "But he had to start out dancing from a corner because he learned to dance left foot, right foot, left foot."



Dennis with his mother.

"He played clarinet in high school, and his dog, Skipper, would 'sing' along."

The performance "sounded like something awful out of America's Funniest Videos," his niece reported.

The Hickey siblings all enjoyed doing crossword puzzles in *The New York Times*, and fought over the paper until Dennis began buying a copy for each one on Sunday. No longer forced to compete for control of the puzzle, they instead vied for the fastest accurate solution.

"My Aunt Helen always won," Mary Caldwell recalled. "She did hers in ink."

Dansville natives have fond memories of the Hickey family. "Let me put it this way, the Hickey family

was always a very fine family," observed Beth Burke Kelly, whose late husband John W. Kelly, was a schoolmate of Dennis Hickey's. "Every one of them had a very good sense of humor. They were very joyful to be around."

"Mr. and Mrs. Hickey were very gentle people, very considerate of all of us. The children, who were all older than I am, were very well-mannered and refined," she added.

Priscilla Rowe Howe of Dansville said Dennis Hickey, John Kelly and her father, Lawrence G. Rowe, "were like the Three Musketeers" during their days at St. Patrick's School. "They were good at pulling practical jokes, minor little things," she said.

Young Dennis "was a very bright boy," Beth Kelly said. "I don't know exactly what grade, but Dennis was pushed ahead a year."

Dennis Hickey later attended Dansville Central High School, where he graduated in 1931. The "Danua" yearbook that year printed his picture, with the nickname "Chief" and the phrase, "He speaketh not — and yet there lies a conversation in his eyes."

He had been president of the sophomore class, a member of Latin Club for three years, treasurer of the senior class, manager of track in 1931, a member of the dramatic club, an actor in the senior play and also was on the staff of *Searchlight*, the high school paper.

Printed beneath all this information was his apparent

future calling: "truant officer."

He then went on to Colgate University in Hamilton, N.Y.

Bob Hart, who served for 43 years as Dansville town supervisor and for 23 years as chairman of the Livingston Board of Supervisors, recalled Bishop Hickey working during his college years at the local Brae Burn golf club.

"It was one of his summer jobs one year, mowing the roughs. They let them grow a foot high back in those days, not like the manicured courses of today. He didn't have the modern machinery in those days. He used a horse and cutter bar."

Hart said his father, Frank A. Hart, also worked at the DL&W Railroad, where Walter Hickey was in charge. The elder Hart eventually bought the Dansville and Mt. Morris Railroad in 1950. "The two of them were railroad people who knew each other very well," Bob Hart recalled. "I guess they played a lot of cards at the Knights of Columbus."

Eloise Dolan, who now lives in Geneva and whose late brother John was a contemporary of Dennis Hickey, described the bishop as "a dead ringer to his father, always has been. He walks the same way, the whole thing. He had a cousin Joe Hickey. They were three peas in a pod. They were gentle men, gentlemen. All tall and slender. They had the same gait, the same bearing."

Dolan recalled the young Dennis Hickey being a Boy Scout and an altar boy at St. Patrick's Church. He worked summers driving the DL&W coal truck. She said the Hickeys were "very quiet people and reserved. Mrs. Hickey was a small slender woman. I don't think she enjoyed robust good health. His two sisters were sophisticated, well poised women."

Dennis Hickey was always spiritually inclined, Dolan added. "You'd think, well he'll be a priest."

In fact, the extended Hickey family has produced several vocations to priesthood and religious life. Aloysia Hickey's brother was Father Daniel Sullivan, co-founder of Seton Hill College in Greensburg, Pa. Father Sullivan was very involved in women's education, noted the bishop's niece. Father Sullivan's work is probably the reason Aloysia Hickey went to normal school, even though it was very unusual for a woman to do so at the time, Caldwell said.

Three of Bishop Hickey's aunts were nuns, and three uncles were priests: Among them were Father James Bustin, who served as pastor of St. Mary's Church in Corning (1896-1918); and Father Dennis Bustin, an early worker in the Catholic Negro and Indian Missions, headquartered in Mt. Vernon, N.Y.

As a teenager in Dansville, young Dennis Hickey considered the priesthood and the prospect of enrolling in the Rochester seminaries. But upon graduation from high school, he instead chose to enroll at Colgate, the alma mater of two of his priest uncles.

He majored in history and government, earning a bachelor of arts degree in 1937.

When he later began seminary studies at St. Bernard's in Rochester, his cousin Bernard Hickey was among his classmates. Father Bernard Hickey became a highly decorated chaplain during the Korean War. Dennis' sisters migrated toward New York City.

Katherine Hickey married Nicholas J. Campbell, who became president of the Esso-Europe Corporation. The couple resided for many years in London and later in Crestwood, Westchester County, N.Y. Nicholas Campbell died in 1978; Kay Hickey Campbell in 1990.

Mary, their only child, and her husband, Patrick Caldwell, have two children: Nicholas, 16, and Alison, 15. The Cawdells reside in Washington, D.C., and County Roscommon, Ireland.

Helen Sullivan Hickey, who worked for the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency in New York, never married. She moved from Crestwood to Rochester in 1990 to be near her brother, and died in 1993. The Hickey homestead on Clinton Street was purchased by William Kelly — brother of John, Dennis Hickey's school chum — after the family left Dansville in 1955. Beth Kelly remembers their departure.



High school graduation, 1931.



Dennis played clarinet in the Dansville Central High School band, organized in 1930. (Photos provided by family members.)

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