

Panic on Pine Street!

By Mary Jane McCormick

My resume by age 15 read as follows: *Middle child of 15 with extensive infant and childcare experience. Available for day, evening and over-night baby sitting at \$1.50 per hour. References upon request.*

I was totally focused on getting to California after high school graduation for my last fling before entering the convent. Baby-sitting for families of three or more kids was my specialty. The Corrigan family was my favorite. Their brood of four, ages 4 through 10 was a handful but I was up to the task. The call came for my first overnight sitting job that included a big bonus.

One week before reporting to 1879 Pine Street a murder of a young girl at the hands of her boyfriend had occurred at 1869 Pine Street. I had become obsessed with the story reading every detail in the *Aurora Beacon News*. I would replay the scene over and over pretending to be the detective on the case. After all, by now I had read every Hardy Boy and Nancy Drew mystery and was a budding sleuth.

My parents were reconsidering allowing me to baby-sit in that neighborhood but I convinced them I would block the incident out of my mind. Besides Mr. and Mrs. Corrigan had a wedding to go to and would probably not be able to find a replacement on such short notice.

I was picked up at 9 AM, given instructions and emergency phone numbers for every possible scenario and then Amy, Billy, Rachel, Tommy and I waved goodbye to Mom and Dad.

Things went smoothly for the first few hours. We played hide-and-seek in the gated backyard. Billy scraped his knee, which was a daily emergency at my house. I went inside to get a band aide and told Amy to keep an eye on Tommy. On my return, I did a head count and 4-year-old Tommy was missing. "Amy, where is Tommy?" I shouted. Her face was clueless. The opened side gate threw me into a panic. After a thorough search of the back yard, I gathered up the three kids and ran to the front of the house yelling, "Tommy, where are you?" All I could think about was the murder less than a five houses away. The yellow crime scene tape still hung across the front door. I began frantically knocking on the neighbors' doors soliciting help to look for Tommy desperately trying not to think of the 'worst case scenario.'

The fifteen minutes that passed seemed like an eternity. After covering the entire cul-de-sac, we made our way back to the Corrigan residence. I intended to call my parents for help. As we passed the neighbor's garage the door began to open and there sat Tommy sitting on a rocking horse giggling and saying, "Getty up horsey! Getty up!" Turns out, Tommy had slipped out the back yard and into Mrs. Phillip's garage just as she had carried her last bag of groceries inside and closed the door.

Grabbing Tommy, I gave him a big hug. Of course, he cried as I lifted him off his horsey. Me, I cried from sheer relief, hoping my heart rate would turn to normal within the next century. "Kids, let's have some lunch," I said hesitantly knowing I would not be eating anything soon, at least not until my stomach returned to its normal anatomical position.