

Death Comes to Member of Our Family

Dorothy Day

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Summary: Obituary for Jack Simms who died as the result of a fire. Describes his helpful nature and the tragic circumstances of his life. (DDLW #651).

Jack Simms was a big man, fifty three years old and he had asthma and a bad heart. As a result of the fire described by Tom Sullivan in his column, he died Friday morning at Bellevue Hospital. He had been living with us for about three months, and he used to wait on table. He was a good and kind man and everybody in the house liked him. He went to daily mass and to weekly Communion, and aside from Church he never went any place else, but used to sit in the library with the rest of the household when what jobs he could do to help out were done.

That was all we knew about him, except that before he came to us he had been at Graymoor for six months, helping out there. And being helped of course. But he was the kind of man that was used to serving, and he earned his way.

We found out more about him from his widow later and she said she would not mind if we would put this short obituary in the paper. Here is the bare bones of the story, which for her began when she met him years ago. She was nineteen, and had lost her mother and was working as a typesetter at the Loose-Wiles Biscuit Company in Broooklyn. He was the policeman on the payroll and one day he sent a note to her asking for a date. She'd never had a date before, so she asked her father and he asked his brother who was also a policeman. So they started to go together and later they were married. She never knew he drank until their honeymoon because I guess he was the kind of a man that just broke out occasionally. Anyway, they stuck it out together for sixteen years and there were four children. After they separated he continued to support the children, but a cop's salary is not enough to maintain two establishments, so she went to work too, as nurses' aide in various Brooklyn hospitals. There was a sick daughter and much money was needed there. (The son is in the air force). And then, after twenty seven years on the police force and very shortly before he was to be pensioned, he was brought up on charges and fired. The charges were serious but just the same, if a man is counted worthy to hold down a job on the police force for that length of time he deserves a better treatment than that. There were those long years of work, there was his work with his parish church where he was usher at Sunday Mass and a member of the Holy Name

Society and the Knights of Columbus. And then suddenly, his whole life wrecked. The rest of his days to be spent, not with the respectable Christian but with those one considers derelict. A year of this carrying of the Cross, and he met his sudden and tragic end. A man of fifty three has usually another ten or fifteen years to live. His was a sudden death but he was ready for it. He was anointed when he entered the hospital. Ten members of the Catholic Worker household gave their blood for him and many more volunteered. The last thing he said to me before he became unconscious was, "It was a good thing we got it, not the women."