# John Joseph "Jack" Hennessy

Upon entering Jack Hennessy's house in South St. Louis, three things dominated the scene: a large icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, a rally towel from Game 6 of the 2019 Stanley Cup Finals, and photos of his late wife, Gini.

### Vital Statistics

Born October 2, 1925 Died January 3, 2021 (95)

Sacraments: Baptism, Holy Communion, Reconciliation, Holy Matrimony, Extreme Unction.

Eldest son of immigrants from Ireland (Mike Hennessy) and Germany (Helen Schneiders) and the longest surviving of 7 children:

Margaret Mary Jack Jayne Jerry Geraldine Jim

Jack and Gini were married for 68 years, bringing four children into the world: Mary Patrice (Tee), Margaret Suzanne (Sue), Michele Ann (Mickey), and William Thomas (Bill), and grandchildren (including great- and great-great-grandchildren) Scott, Hank, John, JoAnn, Carrie, Virginia, Amie, Jack, Ben, Patrick,Samantha, Jordan, Daniel, Will, Kate, Amber, Brandon, Nichole, Samantha, Cody, Jeramiah, Colton, Grace, Morgan, Kaiden, and Isaac. (And at least one on the way.)

### Husband

For seven years, from 2010 to 2017, Jack Hennessy drove from his home on the western edge of South St. Louis to Beauvais Manor nursing home on South Grand to care for his wife, Gini, who suffered from Alzheimer's. Jack fed his wife lunch, cleaned her, kept her company, and helped the staff fold and store laundry. Jack also provided help and companionship to the patients who had no one to visit them.

"Isn't she beautiful," he would say to everyone who asked how Gini was doing.

When Gini died in 2017, the staff of Beauvais felt they'd lost two friends that day.

Jack was just as devoted to his four children as to his wife. He worked at least two jobs from the 1950s to the 1980s, even while working 24 hours on/24 hours off with the police force. When his police shift ended, he drove to Stout's Tool and Dye company.

He left the police force in the 1960s for better pay and better hours at Sunnen Products Company in Maplewood. He retired from Sunnen in 1986 but continued to work, designing and building custom wood furniture which he continued until Gini's declining health required his full attention.

When asked what they remember about him, the first thing his children and grandchildren mention is "ice cream cones." Jack loved spoiling kids with ice cream. Even in the time since Gini's passing, you could not visit Dad's without being offered ice cream. And though 95 years of service had rendered his body weak and full of nagging pains, Dad insisted on rocking himself out of his beloved recliner to serve the ice cream himself.

### Love of Those Who Serve

Jack made a weekly visit to his bank, escorted by his daughter, Sue. His 95th birthday happened to fall on his "bank day" last October. The staff of the First Bank branch decorated their lobby to celebrate the occasion and honor their customer who always treated servers, cashiers, and tellers as if they were his customers.

Jack served at Holy Mass from childhood at Epiphany to the Traditional Latin Mass at Queen of the Holy Rosary in the 1980s. Growing up, his children quickly learned that the cure for every minor inconvenience, disappointment, or little scrape was to "offer it up."

Jack had a special devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. He lit candles and prayed the Rosary for everyone's needs.

### Neighbor and Host and Partier

Jack and his friends (and brother Jerry) might have inspired the movie *Wedding Crashers*. Before he met Gini, the group would look up weddings in the paper, put on suits, and hit the receptions. No one ever realized they didn't belong, and Jerry Hennessy was frequently the life of the party.

Jack's house on Scanlan Avenue, just steps from Epiphany of Our Lord parish, was the center of the block's social life for years. The pool was always open to the neighbors, as was the large front porch. No one needed an invitation.

His children remember coming home in the family car to see the porch crowded with neighbors and coolers waiting for their return.

It was fortunate that two of Gini's brothers were senior members of the St. Louis Fire Department, because Jack and Gini's frequent parties at least doubled the occupancy limits of their house.

Jack's brother Jerry or our family friend Jack Nagel would play the piano while 30 people stood around and sang. When Uncle Jim got a player piano, many of the parties moved to their house, but with the same cast of characters, music, singing, and laughter.

### Father & Grandfather

Jack worked. Constantly. His kids remember the Friday night he came home from work, changed clothes, and, without warning or explanation, took a sledgehammer to the wall of our kitchen. Over the next three months, with our (unwilling and grumbling assistance which we were to "offer up," of course.) In three months, Jack transformed a 1930s-style kitchen into an enviable 1970s chic, complete with a breakfast bar open to the dining room, a new door into the dining room, and a remodeled bathroom.

Saturdays in the summer meant high work on the Hennessys' 2.5 story house. "Hold the ladder," Jack commanded to a 9-year-old child or grandchild as he mounted the rickety wooden ladder propped haphazardly against a cedar-shake wall, his hands and shoulders weighted down with hammers, nails, lumber, a saw, and a bucket.

The kids helped him replace the 100-year-old house's electrical and plumbing, top to bottom, over 20 years and two generations. When his kids moved out, the grandkids took over the "hold the ladder" duties. The rewards their labor were "Peps" (Pepsi) and "mice cream."

### Things Remembered

Sing-alongs, taking him to get coffee and donuts every morning at 5:00 a.m., his devotion to his wife, and his ever-present smile. (Everyone remembers him smiling.)

Holding the ladder, "his fork" (Jack had his own special fork that no one else was allowed to use), and listening to Jazz with Charlie Menees on KMOX while waiting in the car for Grandma to get off the evening shift at St. Mary's Hospital.

Vacations and weekends at Sunnen Lake, a perk he obtained for his family by working at Sunnen Products.

### Other Biographical Facts

Jack survived his wife of 68 years, Gini (Mahon) Hennessy, his daughter, Tee, and two grandchildren. He graduated from Epiphany of Our Lord Catholic Grade School and Ranken Technical School. He was a life member of the VFW and the American Legion.

He helped organize numerous fundraising events for the Epiphany CYC and drove countless kids to and from soccer, hockey, baseball, softball, basketball, football, and volleyball games.

Jack was a diehard St. Louis Blues and Cardinals fan. His children and children thank the Lord that he lived to see the Blues hoist the Stanley Cup in 2019.

Jack's life was a life of service to others. His mother, Helen died when Jack was only 11 years old, his youngest brother, Jim less than one. Their father, Mike, owned a tool and dye company near the Cathedral Basilica which left the job maintaining the house and caring for the younger children to Margaret, Mary, and Jack.

He joined the Navy in 1942, as soon as he was old enough serving in the Atlantic Theatre until the war's end onboard several ships, including a Destroyer Escort and an aircraft carrier.

After the war, his brother-in-law, Bob Freeman (Jayne's husband), asked my dad to join the Naval Reserves. Bob needed two pairs of Navy boondockers to be eligible for a job with Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. By joining the reserves, Dad would get a new pair of boondockers issued, which Bob was willing to buy. (Wartime rationing made work boots all but impossible to obtain.)

Dad joined the Reserves. He was recalled to active duty when the Korean conflict broke out.

Between the wars, Jack married Gini Mahon on the night they met. Bob Freeman drove Jack and Gini to Hot Springs, Arkansas, to elope. The next day, Jack presented his bride to his father, Mike Hennessy. Mike was not pleased.

"Tell the girl 'goodbye,' Jack. Tomorrow, we'll go see Father English [the pastor of Epiphany at the time] and make this right."

After Korea, Jack joined the St. Louis Police Department, serving more than 10 years, mostly in Third District.