Diana Michele Doyle Mallon
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My full name is Diana Michele Doyle Mallon but to friends and immediate family members I am known simply by my shortened name "*Dee*." My mom chose the name Diana because there was a flower shop on the corner that she had to pass by every day that was called Diana's Flower Shop, hence the reason for my name. Doyle was my maiden name. I know little or nothing about our family history. I do know we've been here for many generations. My maternal and paternal grandparents were all born in America. My father's parents died when they were much younger and therefore unfortunately, I never got to know either one of them and there was an age difference between my mother and father that factored into their disparity too.

I'm living in Bohemia now and like most people who get to be my age, the house in Brentwood got to be too big. I always loved Brentwood and I got to make such great friends in the hamlet. I still have them although many are leaving today and moving to Florida. I rent in Bohemia, it's a condo and it's very nice but I still miss Brentwood and I come back to visit as often as I can. I'm still active in the Knights of Columbus and St. Anne's. I've worked Bingo there as long as they've had it. I kind of think of it as my roots, you know? Where I am now in Bohemia, they're all old like me. When I first moved into Brentwood, it was all young moms -- you know, and coffee clutches.

I have two sons and a daughter. The boys, are "Irish twins" if you will,

born a year apart. I moved here (to Brentwood), when the second one was three months old. They are Kenny and Michael, with Kenny being my oldest. Six years later I had my daughter. They went through Catholic school *because I wanted to punish them the way I had been punished.* But in those days, that's what you did – at least in my family. You sent the kids to Catholic school for the education of Catholicism. They both went to St. Anthony's. They're both married. I have one grandchild. They're a little slacking in that department. Michael (the second one), gave me the grandchild. He lives in Connecticut, but when I heard he was moving, again, when I thought of how far it could be, I was blessed with Connecticut. I'll take it. Meagan, my grandchild is now twelve years old. So, I'm waiting for her to make it to her teenage years and if she's anything like my daughter, she'll go through that mom thing, but her mom will be there for her.

Well, Michael wanted to be a Social Studies Teacher at a time when there were no Social Studies openings. He runs a trucking firm in Connecticut and is a kind of all around man, -- a dispatcher and everything. Kenny, works for IBM and was excessed when they went through their thing in the early nineties. Then he worked for Cablevision and everybody knows how that blew up – so he's finding himself again. He was working as a limo driver for a while, and he may buy that business. The owner unfortunately had a heart attack and he's a very young man so he's trying to figure out how he can swing that because the business is located on Long Island. So far so good! There are a lot of hours involved with that kind of work. He's optimistic about the prospect. The oldest boy is me and the younger one is his dad. That should answer any question about how they're different. Kenny is more outgoing and seems to enjoy life more and is willing to take chances with the Limo Business and Michael is like his dad, more conservative. My daughter is a lot like my mom. She is excellent with people, is warm and loving and the boys temperaments are more like their dad in that they're fiercely loyal – they're just good kids. My daughter Meagan, is living right now in Massapequa, it's relatively close to us and we visit as often as possible.

I was born January 1941, in Flushing, Queens but I moved with family to Jackson Heights as a kid eleven months prior to the advent of World War II. My earliest memory is being out on the street with all of my friends. There were all the apartment buildings and just having the freedom to come and go as you please and always having someone to play with. It was a good time growing up. You know, mom would yell from the window. The neighbors would yell down and make you go to the store for them; throw the money out the window. It was a very peaceful, nice time. It's good to remember it as it was but "*you can't go home again.*" It's different. Although, I'll drag anybody who's available through it to show anyone the *Blessed Sacrament* where I went to school and the Church where I was married, but it's different. "*The Monsignor won the car"* were words I will always remember. Many chance books and fundraisers that's what I remember because that was how they kept the schools open. Dad was a bit older than mom. There was ten years difference between them. He was deferred from being drafted because when the war started my folks were already married. My uncles all saw service but he didn't.

My mom was a big movie fan and her idols became my idols so I turned into the same thing. I remember people and things that people will ask," *Why do you like her"? That's before your time".* Well, I just picked that up. My favorite old time movie was, "Gone with the Wind". Wasn't it everybody's? I remember talking with Harriet Hellman about it. With most girls; most women my age, it seems to be the overwhelming favorite. I followed my father and mother on that too. There's twelve years difference between my age and my husband's age. His mom died when he was two. Then he had a step mom and she died when he was twelve. I never knew how she died. My father was that strong stoic type who didn't talk about things much. And his dad had died when I was still a little one so I never got to meet either of them. I know that his father died of cancer but I believe his step mother did too but what happened to his mother was always very blurry. We came from a Welsh background and we know we had miners in the family and when they came here they settled in Pennsylvania because that was where the coal mines were. My earliest memory of my father is going to the park with him and him trying to teach me to play handball.

There was only my sister and myself in the family and there was a difference of six years between us. There again, how different people lived, we were in an apartment and it was two and a half rooms. It was my mom and dad, my sister and I and grandma moved in with us for five or six years because there was no one to care for her after grandpa died. And you didn't think anything of it because people had four or five kids in three rooms. We were elite because we had an elevator and an incinerator; big time. We were on the fourth floor and eventually when grandma came to live with us we got three rooms and moved to the second floor.

My sister lives now in Wantagh. She had two girls as I had two boys a year apart and then a couple of years later she had two boys. She's always been a stay at home mom and has arthritis so she's always been active in that. She runs a group thing and is on a Board for it so she's involved herself in volunteer work for that. As the years have gone on she's taught me that no matter how bad things may get, she always maintains her smile. With six years between us and me being the elder one she will forever be my baby sister. I think my grandparents were very much like most people of their generation – they worked very hard in their own area. Grandpa ended up working for Railway Express, had those strange hours on the road, and it was just all about our home life and visiting the kids on Sunday. They'd either come to your house or we'd go to their place and I'd have to leave my dress on until they came. My experience growing up in the family was nothing short of wonderful.

I had a maternal uncle who was my godfather and also my mother's brother. He was in the service. I remember him as being very tall and he was "*the soldier*". He lived in different places and I remember seeing him over the years. We visited him when he was based in Virginia – because he made the military his career. I remember when I met my husband I told him about my Uncle Jerry and how tall he was, and what a wonderful man he was. My husband told me he might be a wonderful man but he said, "*I can eat peanuts off his head".* He told me he wasn't tall at all. Maybe his hat and my youthful memory had distorted my perception.

The word College was never mentioned in my home. Neither of my parents attended higher education and I was never encouraged to give it the slightest thought. Our neighborhood was blue collar and mom had gone to St. Vincent's Secretarial School in the City, and she'd worked for an attorney. I followed her example. I worked for General Motors for a number of years before deciding to have children. What I actually became was a Bill Collector. I was the person who called on you if you neglected to make your monthly car payment on time. I started out with refrigerators. They used to own a division called Frigidare. That's how they trained you. If you could get $3.50 out of the customer for the refrigerator that was in the apartment, multiply that times twenty and eventually I'd have a couple of dealerships and I'd call the customer and have to contact an outside man who'd come and re-posses it. When I think now what I did at twenty-one, I can't believe it. I heard some incredible stories. And there was a way that I could extend the loan and I would try to do that because I felt badly for everybody. In those days the neighborhoods I had was the Bronx and Harlem and everybody had a sad story. I remember somebody coming in with a bushel of strawberries. Another guy thanked you with three leather handbags and that was the way they thanked you. Of course, you shouldn't accept it because I didn't know how they even knew where the office was. But they would find you and that's how they would show their appreciation. Most of the stories broke your heart because they were true.

In High School, I went to St. Jean the Baptist in the City which again -- think about it, --putting a child on the subway in Queens, on a couple of subway trains. I think she was the first lay teacher I had because before her, I always had nuns. She was a beautiful young woman, Miss Mangen, who taught Latin and I didn't know anyone who liked Latin. But I excelled in it because I wanted to be just like her. And then she left. I don't know why. Second year Latin wasn't nearly as good and I didn't do half as well.

I was a reader as a child; Nancy Drew and the Bobbsey Twins. My father and mother were both readers. There was no TV. We were late getting one anyway. Our lives were mostly spent outside. We played every game imaginable --

hide and Seek, Ring-a-levio, Red-Rover, tag, jump-rope, marbles, games with lots of running. A few of us had bikes, some may have rented bikes. 50 cents for two hours, roller skating in the street – I broke my arm once. That was a big decision whether or not to lie to my mother when I shouldn't have been in the street. I was supposed to do that on the sidewalk, and making wooden scooters out of old steel roller skates.

My uncle used to send me birthday presents from the different countries he was in at the time. I remember a cuckoo clock and a Hummel – even though I couldn't appreciate it then when I didn't know what it was. I remember Christmas at home when things were rough money wise, and getting a doll and trying to keep my baby sister away from it. Finally, when I did get a second-hand bike that had been freshly painted and I remember when we went to the Deli and you could charge your purchase and Dad would stop by on his way home to settle the bill. I remember blackouts and the day the War ended. I was a very little girl during the war years but I do remember the tokens that were used. I remember going to buy Lucy's at the store for mom – you could do that then.

Besides the baby sitting that I did, my first paying job was working in a shop. The high school I attended had split sessions. That wasn't unique as I found out when I moved to Brentwood. I worked in a dress shop for two elderly women who had owned that business for many years and they were then in their seventies. It was on Junction Blvd right on the dividing line between Jackson Heights and Corona. My husband was from Corona. We met at a wedding of two friends. When he called me the first time at work I was kind of seeing somebody and I told him I wasn't there. We knew pretty quickly that this was for real, some might even have called it love at first sight.

The first most important thing to do after school was attend to your homework. You had to get homework out of the way in Catholic school and everybody had to read it over. Only then could you go out with friends and to the movies on weekends. You'd take back the deposit bottles to get the money to go

to the movies on Sunday. I think English was my favorite subject in school. I wrote more stories than poetry. My sister would have been more inclined to write poetry. Math would probably have been my least favorite subject. I love summer, without doubt it would have been my favorite season of the year – then and now. And for the sheer beauty of changing of the leaves and the colors alone, I would have to add the beauty of Fall for making it next in line as a favorite season. While it's not an aroma that triggers a memory for me Pansies always remind me of my mother because they were her favorite flower.

I had no Kindergarten. The first school I attended was on the opposite side of the street from our home at that time. That was the School of the Blessed Sacrament. Then I went to St. Jean the Baptist in Manhattan at 68th and Lexington Avenue. While I was attending that school it was two years academic and two years commercial. I was more interested in the Commercial part because I wanted the steno and the shorthand, the typing, that sort of thing and then while I was there they switched it to strictly academic which would have meant college and you know, I just didn't see that happening in our economic circumstance at that time. You, know, money wise. So I left St. Jeans, and went to the neighborhood school and it was Newtown High School and that was where I graduated. That was a very big high school and I walked, twenty miles each way, uphill. It was easier than getting on two busses. It had to be 40 to 45 minutes each way. Now, I must say my proudest moments today come to me as a result of my children's accomplishments.

I came to live in Brentwood, never dreamed I would have a house, because I didn't know anyone who had a house. Both my husband's brothers lived on Long Island and we decided that's what we would try to do. General Motors had a stock option savings plan. And you don't realize it but in five years the stocks had gone up in that time and it hasn't happened for a while now I had accumulated all of two thousand dollars. And it was enough for a down payment on a house in those days. "*My husband always said he married me for my money".* I had had my

own apartment before we were married. So I had some furniture, you wait eight years for the dining room furniture, but that's how I moved in. After that I was a stay at home mom. And then the boys went to school and as Linda got older, my husband was a Fireman, so I decided with a friend to try to find work. We had a couple of options but we decided to try to become Aides in Brentwood. I learned they deserve combat pay. I did that for a little while. I was in the cafeteria and then I was a TA (teachers assistant), and a sub for a couple of days, until they threw rocks at me in the playground and then I decided that wasn't my calling and coming back into the building I was in was Northeast School. One of the Secretaries was absent and her name was Pat Sappercone and there was another girl at the desk. I said*," I haven't seen you before*" and she said *"Oh, I'm a sub clerical"*. So, that was what I was and how I started. It was a great time. It was about 1977 and I subbed in the school when my husband was home because he worked different shifts and he would get off for three days and subbing was great. I got to know everybody in Brentwood. I worked for Dave Holt, so many memories, the old memories. In the beginning I used to try to change my persona for whatever building I was in depending upon the Principal and the Office. It could be Herb Fishman one day and Gary Mintz the next day. After awhile I was feeling like Sybil with all these personalities. So I decided I just better be myself and I had a great time. I worked for a lot of people in a lot of buildings. I worked in Payroll with Joan Lalond, Pat Troy, so many, Helen Parker. As my daughter went to Kindergarten I took a job for three and a half hours, in the Freshman Center which is now the Tenth Grade Center which had just opened. I met Mike Welsh who became my mentor. I had worked with him when he was the Continuing Ed Secretary and I worked with Gary Mintz when he took it over. So I worked three and a half hours making phone calls for absentees. I worked in a closet with Moe Greene. He was the attendance teacher. I did that for I guess, about two or three years and then I took a five hour job. It was a great job for someone who was trying to raise children. You know, the five hours was the school day – in the library and then a ten month job opened in South Middle and I went there. Mike Welsh was there and I got that job. That's where I spent the rest of my career.

Eventually I went up to the Senior Clerk and the Principals Secretary. What great people! I'll tell you, teachers, I'm not one of those people who said, *"I love children."* Individually, I love them all, -- up to five. And when people say teachers make too much money, I defy them to do what you do and what you did. It takes an *extraordinary person* and even more so today in Brentwood with the problems that the children face. At any time working with twenty-five to thirty kids has got to be tough.

I used to tell the teachers when they would complain about their classroom full of kids always moaning and groaning and the difficulty of keeping them all in line, how I understood because I had a hundred teachers I had the same problem with. They were all great. If there were ever more than three in my life that ever made me feel I was just a secretary, most of them were colleagues and would come to me for advice and I met some great people. I could feel the role description of 'Secretary' *morphing* into broader areas of responsibility to become an executive secretary, office manager, teachers assistant especially as the enrollment went up and the teachers job was overextended and everybody was trying to pick up the slack to take on things that even the Assistant Principal couldn't handle any more and in some cases even the Principal. It just became easier to do it for them to sign a release rather than have them do it themselves. There were times when I saw the Clerical Staff stepping up and taking over the actual running of a building when the burdens of responsibility at the top became too much for those whose job it was to make decisions securing smooth transitions from one mode of conventional operation to another. They just seemed to know things that made the process continue to smooth the way and in that way a good Secretary eliminated the little problems to save the big ones for the bosses to figure out.

The first person I met in the District was probably Mike Welsh. After working with him for a while he asked if I would work on the Advisory Board for Continuing Ed. which I have been on now for, I guess, about twenty five years.

I probably shouldn't still be serving on it because I'm out of Brentwood now but honestly, they're having a hard time finding replacements for people who leave. Dennis Bracco is the new Continuing Ed person and we haven't yet met with him but I'm sure we will in the Fall.

I was assigned to work with Dave Holt for a brief while when I was in a Sub Replacement role. The nature of that experience was a week here and a week there. Unless I was in for a poor lady who was having a hysterectomy then I'd be in for six weeks. I worked for herb Fishman for six weeks and when I first walked in I thought we weren't going to make it because we were both so different. But what a nice man he was. You couldn't smoke there and that was – you know everybody smoked, even teachers smoked in their classroom though they weren't supposed to. Secretaries certainly smoked. Gary Mintz hated smoking too. Things have certainly changed.

I know you're trying to think of how to ask me the question and oh yes, I do have lots of funny stories. There are so many that I don't even know what to say. I ended up working with a great gal and we laughed for ten years. We could just look at each other and we kept saying, "*We should write a book."* Between the teachers, the parents, the kids, it was a ball. I was blessed with wonderful Principals who all had a sense of humor and with whom I could laugh. Part of my role on the telephone was to act as a kind of gatekeeper through which only the most essential calls got through. That's absolutely true. There were so many strange occurrences and bizarre exchanges that took place, there were so many in fact, that I can't even begin to discuss or share even one with you due to the personal nature of the stories or the intimate circumstances of content involved. Suffice to say they were an essential counter balance to the unspeakable degree of sadness and stories of human tragedy to which many public servants in Brentwood Schools are exposed on a daily basis. Yet, they are the very kind of stories that enable them to keep hope alive and to sustain their indomitable resilience in the face of such unspeakable inequality in society and culture to still be able to face life tomorrow with a smile in their heart.

I sensed everybody's lockstep commitment to a finite idea; an intuitive support of a handful of singular goals and principals. Everybody from Tony Felicio to Ruth Rosenthal spoke the same language. I don't think a day went by for example without Ruth saying something nice about the Secretaries. The Principals I worked with, Mike Welsh, Ann Rooney with whom I became close friends. I ended my career with Kevin McNicholas. His mom taught my kids in St Anne's so it kind of came around full circle. In was great and Mr. Israel Lloyd who was always there is retiring this year; a great man too. I loved what I did. I can't tell you how many times I took the Principal Secretary's test because you never knew what was ahead. I scored 100% last time. Anytime the job was posted I even went once to interview with Carmela Criscione, but my heart wasn't in it. I really didn't want to go. So after that I said, the money was a little more, there was a little more prestige but if you're happy where you are is ten thousand dollars a year more going to change your life? No, it's not. Then why give up where you're happy. That's the decision I made. I was a little nervous when Ann left. That's why I took the test again because you never know. Then Kevin came on and I was fine.

My job certainly had a job description but talk about multi-tasking. I would definitely be on two phones at the same time especially with the intercom, and the regular telephone, and a parent at the counter, and the kids. I kid about it but I couldn't take twenty-five of them, whether it was a personal problem or a discipline problem, they were all individuals and they all had needs – I cared for them too, and yes, I saw a lot of politics going on – that didn't change.

With the Union I was Parliamentarian for a number of years and that sometimes was a little difficult – the Brentwood Clericals; Terri Wolfe was the President and did an excellent job of it. She wasn't as tactful as maybe she could have been sometimes, with some people while everyone agreed that she did an excellent job there was always a little tension running around so I always carried a little bat that was how I kept things under control --- because everyone talked at once and we wanted to keep it calm. But it was great. So far as District Politics went, I think Secretaries were and remain the front line of knowing what's happening. Once security was brought into the District, if we were the Scouts

then they were the Advance Scouts in terms of having ears on the ground. Given my background with subbing had put me in touch with a lot of people. As the focus of media attention, Brentwood has always swung between the extremes of positive and negative. I remember some late nights stuffing envelopes during the times of Jerry Arthus and a disruptive Brentwood Board of education. Politics has changed following the loss of Tony Felicio. I suppose it yet remains to be seen how it will evolve in the future.

I don't consider myself much of a leader. I don't mind doing the grunt work but I don't see myself as being ready to take command. I guess part of it coming from my long term identification with of the fifties is seeing myself as being a little too anxious to please. I don't do well with confrontation and that would have to go on if I was a Union President.

I believe Gary Mintz was one of the most unforgettable characters I have met in Brentwood. In summer school there was a teacher who was the first one every day to leave the building and make it across the parking lot. He would regularly beat the busses and the kids to his car and be the first to leave the school grounds. Gary rigged up a black and white checkered finish line racing flag and stood behind the door to jump out at the last minute to flag this person as he did what he always did every afternoon.

He did crazy things and he had a sense of humor. Ann became a lifelong friend and Kevin was a doll and both teachers with whom I've made lifelong friendships. Mike Welsh was a great help to me in the beginning and then I became good friends with him and his wife Edie.

I retired last year in July of 2004, I got the schedules started and because I knew the girl at the second desk Donna Fazzio, was going to move to my desk and I loved her like a daughter and a friend all rolled into one -- I wanted everything to be right. Leaving at the end of June everything can be really chaotic. I think I was

ready to retire. I'd thought about it the year before when I was sixty two and would have gotten that big bonus but I wasn't quite ready and because of Donna she hadn't taken the test yet for Senior, so I went the extra year. By the time I decided to go I thought there was going to be a big adjustment but by the time I left I was ready. I was a little nervous about it but it has had turned out fine.

When the boys went to college we had an idea that because he was eligible to retire a while back before the Fire Department offered Social Security he was going to get a job to build up his Social Security but then his mother came to live with us. She was a lovely woman who needed care giving and I would have to have stopped working. She was ill with an advancing case of Alzheimer's disease and somebody had to be with her at all times. So I started to work full time twelve months all day every day while he stayed home with his mom. He was a New York City Fireman that was retired for quite a while and had his own routines. What happened was my husband required some minor surgery, I was working, his brother and wife were going on vacation and they placed my mother-in-law in an adult assisted facility and it was only supposed to be until my husband had recuperated but she completely went to pieces. Suddenly she needed to be in a Nursing Home and she ended up being placed upstate near Utica because there was a grandchild up there who now had young children. That was where she spent her remaining years and my husband would go up to see her once a week and his brother would go up the next week. Not that she knew them any longer but she hung on anyway until she was ninety-five and then she died. He was okay with my retirement and since we both have our own interests to pursue; he has his love of sport; golf and softball and I have my love of the theatre and Broadway and my friends. I love to travel. He and I do one big trip a year, but strictly within the United States because he tried Europe where they talk funny and have funny money so that didn't work out too well. If I go to Europe I go with girl friends, or my daughter and daughter-in -aw and I and my girlfriend and her three daughters are going to Ireland in September and we're having a mother and daughter trip. My daughter-in-law has living relatives in Dublin so we'll be meeting up with them when we arrive.

I think I did a good job at South for the years I was there with Ann Rooney. I think I more than did my 'bit' and meant it sincerely and enjoyed it. I think I've made a lot of friends. I think I'm a good friend and I care about people. I stay in touch with as many people as I can or they keep in touch with me. While working in Brentwood I was also involved with a number of service organizations in the community. I was the treasurer for example of the Columbiettes. I did money counting for Bingo at St. Ann's Parish. I was active at St Ann's when I was there. I was also a lunch mother.

If I was going to do it over I think this time I would have gone to college and gotten a degree. I think what I would like to have done as a result of working in the dress shop was to have been more involved in merchandising. I would like to have become a buyer or something like that. I like fashion, you know,

I remember when JFK was murdered in Dallas and I was working at my desk. I was employed by General Motors back then. A group of girl friends and I left the office to walk down the street to the nearest Catholic Church where we made a visit to kneel and offer our prayers for the President.

Once again I was at work at a different desk in a different office when the Challenger exploded and I called my husband at home to tell him to turn on the television.

History repeated itself when the Towers came down on 9/11 and I called home to tell who ever answered to watch what the news was covering in Manhattan just as those events were unfolding before us.

I'm not going to miss having to get up every morning at 5:30 to go to work or driving there to arrive on time when snow is already falling and is starting to stick and looks as if it will soon be drifting on the road in front of my house.