

I stand here before you today deeply honored and humbled that I was chosen as this year's 24th Trenton St. Patrick's Parade Grand Marshall. I would personally like to thank the Parade Committee for this honor. Over the past several months I've gotten to know good number of them. They have been nothing short of being an outstanding dedicated group who year after year do a Herculean task of putting this all together and for that they should be recognized by a round of applause. To be mentioned in the same breath along with the names of the past living and deceased Grand Marshall's is truly an honor of words that are just indescribable in being selected in that company. Writing speeches is not one of my better qualities so bear with me if you will. This year's theme for the St. Patrick's Day Parade is to honor the Irish-American worker whether they're a blue or a white-collar worker. I am extremely proud to represent my brothers and sisters in the building trades. For those of you

who are unfamiliar with me I'm a Steamfitter by trade and a member of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local Union No. 9 for 31 plus years. Currently I am the Local Union's Business Manager, Financial Secretary. I cover both the blue and white-collar themes for the parade. The Steamfitter part of me is the blue collar, the Business Manager part of me is white collar. Having said that, how does one begin a speech for being a Grand Marshall? I will start on what was and still is important to this Irish-American. For me in my world anyway, growing up on the Trenton/Hamilton border everything as a child revolved around the Church, everything. It seems as though every decision my parents ever made revolved around the Church. And my Church was and still is St. Anthony's where the parade just happens to begin. It seemed as a child that St. Anthony's was the center of our universe. I went to both St. Anthony's Grammar and High Schools. I served as an altar boy there, I shoveled the snow, I

raked the leafs, I watched the rectory answering the phones; it played a huge part in my upbringing. And it seemed then that a lot of people associated with St. Anthony's were Irish, the priests, the nuns, a good number of the students in school and the neighborhood. For those of you that are unaware St. Anthony's is located in the Villa Park section on the Trenton Hamilton border. There was a time that this was the Irish part of Trenton. With names like Kelly, Callahan's, McDonough's, Brennan's Masterson's, Hutton's Henry's, Morgan's Rouche's and Maloney's just to name a few seemed everywhere. My father was from Villa Park. He was born on 24 Pierce Avenue to Irish immigrants. He also attended St. Anthony's Grammar School. His parents, my grandparents settled after marrying into Villa Park. His mother my Mom-Mom, Margaret Kelly was born in town called Castlegar in County Galway in 1899. She along with her brother, my Uncle Pat immigrated to America in

1921. She landed in Philadelphia and my Uncle Pat in Ellis Island. My Pop-Pop was born in 1889 in Rosegreen Rathscalla section of County Tipperary. Obviously my grandparents are no longer with us but to hear their brogue once again would be heartwarming. Their last remaining child, my father's brother Jim, my Uncle, is here today with his wife Helen. Thank you Uncle Jim for attending. Now on to my Mom, my mother was born on Melrose Avenue in Villa Park, she also attended St. Anthony's Grammar School and she is here with me today. I would like to recognize her today the Good Lord certainly broke the mold with her. Every son and daughter loves their mommy and I am no different, "love ya Mom". Her father, my Grandpop was born here in the United States in 1896. My grandmother was born in 1896 in Montreal, Quebec Canada but her father, my great grandfather was a Civil War veteran and he was born in Ireland. Let me take you back to St. Anthony's Parish even

the priests that the Diocese would send us seemed to be all-Irish. We had Father Daily, Father Toomey (pre Monsignor), Father McGovern, Father Hollup, Father Fitzpatrick, Father Monogue, Father Cahill and lastly we had Father Bonsack; he I can assure you he was not Irish. He was Hungarian but he could have been anything he wanted to be, the man was massive and strong as a bear. He played for the Notre Dame College football team on the bomb squad; that's the same place Rudy played you know the movie that was out not to long ago. I miss the man he died a young man at the age of 39. The nuns were from the Order of St. Francis I believe. We had Sister Marie Patrick, Sister Michael Anne, Sister Shawn Terress, Sister Serinia, Sister Claude Anna, Sister Gerald Eileen, Sister Josephine Marie, Sister Charles Marie, Sister Immaculate, Sister Ulrick, Sister Epiginia, Sister Leslie, Sister Marguerite O'Brien to name a few. It always seemed I was forever in trouble with them; all trouble of course

was self-inflicted. So I kind of new them all on first name basis. As I stated before, I grew up in your typical Irish-Catholic household with pictures of Pope Paul VI, President Kennedy, Hubert H. Humphrey and George Meaney adorning the walls. Every room it seemed had a crucifix in it and names like Ara Parsigan and Dan Divine were like Great Uncles. It seemed my father talked to them all the time on game day for Notre Dame College football. It also seemed as though Vatican II hadn't been adopted in my house anyway; Friday's nights it seemed that Lent rules were in effect 52 weeks of the year and were mostly spent at Bartolini's or the Hudson Beer Garden for tomato pies. Life was good then with a sense of innocence. As we are all aware of this year's parade theme is about the Irish-American worker. Let me briefly talk on that issue. The one priest I did not mention before was Monsignor McCorristan. And what I'm about to say I mean no disrespect to any living or deceased

priest or to any Monsignors or priest present. When we were kids there was only one Monsignor as far as we were concerned or even knew of. Monsignor the one and only Iron Mike was our Cardinal our Bishop. He was as close to seeing a living Saint as there was, he was our Sheppard to his flock. When as kids or teenagers we would be playing around in the school yard behind the Church (to the local people it was know as the courts) when Monsignor was present either driving in his car or walking to the many buildings on the property everyone would just stop to observe and watch him; he commanded that much respect but he was just a very simple man. The theme for this parade is to honor the Irish-American worker one has to look no further than him. He was without a doubt one of two of the hardest working human beings the Good Lord ever put on the face of this earth. I was an altar boy for many years and served his masses hundreds of times. There is part of the Mass the “Liturgy of the Eucharist”

when the priest cleanses his hands with a towel and as altar boys you give it and receive it back from the priest. When you got his towel back it looked like a man who had worked his fingers to the bone. He was one of my inspirations on how one works in life; he was example to live by. Lastly, I dedicate my being honored as the Grand Marshall for the Irish-American worker to my late father. My father was my world, my universe, like all fathers are to their children I hope. I followed in my father's footsteps and became a Steamfitter for Plumbers and Pipefitters Local Union No. 9. Again I will come back to the Parish of St. Anthony's it was there that I began to learn my trade. My father was Monsignor's plumber and heat man. My father would have walked through the gates of hell in a gasoline suit for Monsignor. With him I spent countless hours upon hours in the bathrooms and boiler rooms of the Church's property. That included the old Church, the new Church, the old and new

Schools, the Rectory and Convent, the old Kindergarten Building and High School on Leonard Avenue. It seemed sometimes that we were always there. In that time I had two of the finest teachers on work ethic that a boy could have one being Monsignor and the other my father. My father worked liked a man whose life depended on his work from the time the bell rang until it was time to go home. You know a lot of people don't know this or have forgotten about it but my father was one of maybe a dozen or so men who built the High School Convent on Leonard Avenue in Hamilton Twp. voluntarily every night and weekends. My father volunteered his time there for a solid 2-years. My father was a worker and one of the many many Irishmen and women who have labored through the years. I am proud to have followed in his footsteps and only if he could be here to march with me on the 14th of March that would have been special. I would also be remiss if I did not mentioned

another Irish plumber who preceded me many years ago as a Grand Marshall. Charles “Chuddy” Whalen he was the original Grand Marshall for the Irish-American worker and may God have mercy on his soul. The Irish as we know are known for their fierce work ethic throughout history. If we read, as we all should on our heritage you’ll learn who dug the world’s canals and laid the miles and miles of railroads in this country. You should also learn what the words meant of “No Irish Need Apply” when seeking work. We must educate ourselves on our past history no matter what nationality we may be. Just as much as we know our American history and who Thomas Paine or Patrick Henry are we should know our Irish history. One has to ask themselves why am I here in this country and what made my parents, grand parents or great grand parents leave the country of their birth and come to States. Why did that happen? If you’re Irish you probably have that insatiable desire to read and

if you do explore your Irish history learn who Brian Buroe and Theobald Wolftone were and why was Charles Stewart Parnell labeled the uncrowned King of Ireland. Who were the Molly Maquire's. Read about the risings of 1798, 1867 and 1916. Know what the names of Padrick and William Pierce, Arthur Griffith, Thomas Clarke, Sir Roger Casement, Eamon DeValera, Michael Collins, Bobby Sands and Gerry Adams mean to its history. A couple of years ago former Grand Marshal Patrick Ryan mentioned reading certain books on Ireland and its history. I will repeat that. Arguably one of the greatest books about Ireland was written by a man of the Jewish faith, his book Trinity is one of the greatest ever Published about Ireland. Read the life stories of Michael Collins and Eamon DeValera written by Tim Pat Coogan. Don't just say your Irish know why you are!

Thank Toni and Justin and Jason

Introduce my family

Mention Miss St. Patrick Margaret Walsh (Pierce Avenue connection it seem as though we were destined).