

What's Your Story, Doreen Cronin?



I grew up in Merrick, New York, which is on Long Island. It's not far from the beach – and that's where I spent an awful lot of time, no matter what the season, or what the weather. When I was young, I spent days there with my family (Mom, Dad, Big Brother, Little Sister and Little Brother), and when I got old enough, I took the bus there and went with my friends. It wasn't just a summertime thing, we raced down there to see what the beach looked like in the snow, in the rain, and during

storms. I have sat on the same patch of sand thousands of times at Jones Beach – it never looked (or felt) the same twice.

Besides the beach, I loved school, I loved the library, and I loved riding my bike around my hometown. There were a ton of kids on my block, so we all spent a lot of time running around the neighborhood, throwing crab apples at each other, riding our bikes, swimming in my neighbor's pool (the only one on the block) and occasionally getting into trouble with snowballs and ring-and-run! We played running bases, the girls watched the boys play street hockey, and often we'd ride up to Carvel for some ice cream cones and flying saucers (kind of like an ice cream sandwich). We were more like a pack of fooligans, than hooligans.



People always ask if there are other writers in my family. The real answer is I'm just the first one in my family to write my stories down! My father was a great storyteller – specializing in funny, laugh-out-loud stories. Some of the stories were about his childhood, some were about his job (a police officer), and a lot of them were stories about us! My house could get kind of noisy, so I would often go into the closet in the room I shared with my sister, close the door behind me and read with a flashlight. I read in the basement sometimes, too. I wish I was one of those people who could read



anywhere – but I get distracted easily and really need some peace and quiet to concentrate! My grandparents gave me a set of Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys books when I was young. I loved those books and have a very clear memory of sitting in the basement on an old piece of furniture and devouring those mysteries! Maybe that's where the very first seeds for JJ Tully Mystery Series were planted.

The Original JJ - Doreen's Dad

What kinds of things did you get in trouble for?

Drawing on the walls (constantly), being mean to my sister, having a smart mouth. I no longer do two of those things.

What's the hardest part about writing a book?

The first word. Blank paper is very intimidating. When I start a book, I write the first thing that comes to mind – even if it doesn't make any sense. Even if it's the most boring or ridiculous or obnoxious thing I can imagine. It gives me a place to start – and I am no longer staring at a blank piece of paper (or a blank screen.)

Did you have a best friend? Who was it and why were you best friends?

Maria Tilocca was my best friend. I think it was our mutual love of pogo sticks and Oreos. Her grandparents lived with her – and I always thought that was really cool.

What one thing can you tell readers that nobody knows?

Before I throw anything out, I take it apart – whether it's a chair, a pen, an old pair of shoes, or a couch. I like to see how things are put together. Oddly enough, the best way to do that is to take it apart.

If you weren't a writer, what would you like to be?

A police officer, a prosecutor, or a carpenter!



Abby and Julia as Cave Children!



Doreen with her girls!