

YOU COME FROM HIGHBRIDGE

604-605

By James Collins

New York City in the late 1950s had a population of eight million people distributed over the five boroughs of the city. Four of the boroughs are islands while the Bronx is the only borough attached to the mainland. At that time, the Bronx had a population of 1.6 million people. The Bronx is roughly double the size of Nashua New Hampshire, which at that time had about 23,000 people.

Like Nashua, the Bronx is divided into roughly two dozen different neighborhoods each of which hold approximately 85,000 people. A single block, on a typical Bronx Street in my neighborhood, would hold about 2000 people. Three subway lines serviced the Bronx and went out like a series of fingers to get to the outer limits. The Bronx alone held three times the population of Boston. The grand Concourse divided the Bronx in half and the housings were numbered east or west from the Concourse. I lived on the west side near the Harlem River while my wife came from Fordham, an upscale district that encompassed Fordham University on the east side of the Concourse.

My fiancée and I were engaged about three months in 1961. On a particular Sunday, I had driven to her parish, about three miles from my house, so we could go to mass together and review details for our upcoming wedding. As we left church, Eileen was busy introducing me to many of her friends and Associates. One fellow about my age was very pleasant and as he shook my hand, he stated,

"You come from Highbridge."

"Do I know you or have we met before?"

"No we never met; I've just seen you in the neighborhood."

"Did Eileen tell you I come from Highbridge?"

"No I haven't seen her for a long time. This is the first time we met in six or seven months."

"How do you know I come from Highbridge?"

"I spotted you coming down the street several times at night probably after you drop Eileen off. You walk like all the men from that neighborhood. When you are on the sidewalk, you walk far away from the building walls, the alleys and the entrances. You spent a good part of your walk out in the middle of the street. Everybody I have ever met from Highbridge walks like that. You also cast about left and right and you stop and look behind you on a regular basis. All the fellows from Highbridge walk like wolves. You act like someone may be chasing you."

"Sometimes they are."

THE END