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Professor Facer

FR 101F 2019

11/15/2019

Frère Jacques

Frè - re Jac - ques, Frè - re Jac - ques, dor - mez vous? Dor - mez vous?

Sonnez les ma-ti - nes! Sonnez les ma-ti - nes! Din, dan, don. Din, dan, don.

Frère Jacques is a well known French nursery rhyme. In the U.S., most people probably know it better by its English translation (Are you sleeping Brother John). It is about a Catholic monk who is sleeping through his duties of ringing the matins (morning bells). The English translation is actually different from the French in the line that goes "Morning bells are ringing". You can see by the imperative command "Sonnez les matines" that he is being told to ring the morning bells. I suppose the difference just worked better for whoever translated it. "Ring the morning bells" does not fit the tune as well honestly.

I remember when my grandmother, Jeannine Williams, used to sing this song to me years ago. Her family immigrated to the U.S. from Quebec and settled in the New England area. I am not sure exactly which generation first settled here, but I know that her father was born in Canada and lived in Rhode Island with his wife and children during the 1940 census. Her family's name, Bonin, was given to me as a middle name, and I was named after her husband, my grandfather

Robert Williams. As far as genetics go, I mostly take after my dad's side of the family, except for my height. At only 5'11 (maybe 5'10 and a half), I am currently the tallest member of my paternal extended family (until one of my brothers outgrows me.) I am very proud of my French Canadian heritage and appreciative of my recent ancestors putting in the work to immigrate to the Land of the Free and provide a better life for themselves and their families. Now, whenever I hear the song Frère Jacques, I think of my grandmother and remember the innocence and peace of childhood.