

O & A with Celia Lee of The Churchills

What was the relationship like between Jack and Winston?

Answer: Winston was just over five years older than Jack, and a much stronger, more boisterous, personality. Inevitably, Jack was somewhat in awe of his elder brother. The brothers loved each other dearly throughout their lives.

Why was Jack overlooked by history?

The fiery path that Winston carved through the political life of his country, and the world, inevitably makes him the centre of attention. It has to be said that in his memoir, *My Early Life*, Winston plays down Jack's part in his life. Most extraordinary is his referring to Jack as 'another boy' in the incident of the near-drowning in a Swiss lake when they were on holiday!

How did Jenny's behavior influence the two brothers?

Winston and Jack did not, for instance, know about Jennie's affair with Count Kinsky until they were grown men. To them he was just one of a number of male visitors who were friends of his father.

Her gambling at the casinos in Monte Carlo was of concern to both Winston and Jack in adulthood and they both wrote letters trying to stop her. As a diversion from her gambling Winston advised her to set up the Anglo-Saxon Review to fill the void in her life.

She deceived them over the terms of their father's will until Jack had to settle her financial affairs in 1913-14 when she was divorcing George Cornwallist West, her second husband. It was then for the first time that Jack got hold of their father's will.

Both brothers adored their mother and they failed to take a strict line with her but there was little they could do as she controlled the purse strings.

How important were Jenny's marriages to Winston and Jack's careers?

Both the Churchill brothers were influenced by their father, Winston in following politics, and Jack in wanting to study for a law degree at Oxford to become a barrister, which career was denied him because Jennie was squandering his inheritance on herself. Randolph had a Law degree from Oxford. Neither of Jennie's later marriages to George Cornwallis-West or Montagu Porch had any effect on the brothers' careers. Winston and Jack got on well with George but by the time Jennie met Porch both brothers were long since married with wives and families of their own.

Would Randolph have been proud of Winston and Jack?

Lord Randolph would have been very proud of both his sons. He berated Winston for not getting on with his school work but he was pleased that he was doing well at Sandhurst RMC just before he died. There is debate as to whether Lord Randolph would have tolerated Winston's entry into politics if he had lived. I believe that he would, after Winston had fulfilled an army career. One has to take into consideration that Winston was very determined and what he wanted he really went after it.

If Lord Randolph had lived he would have seen to it that Jack continued with a suitable education and he too could easily have entered politics. It was Jennie's drive to make him a stockbroker to, as she put it, "make millions" that determined Jack's career. One of Jack's strengths where Jennie and Winston was concerned was that he invested their money wisely and kept them abreast of the economic situation. Money was required to succeed in politics and, although Winston worked and earned money, his investments were crucial to raise the money to, for instance, purchase a home. It was Jack who kept the Churchills finances in good order.

If there roles had been reversed, could Jack have become a great statesman?

Jack was by far and away the more academically gifted of the two boys and his tutors all admired him. At Harrow he was groomed for Oxford University or the army. He would have been much closer to his father than the badly behaved Winston and could well have been influenced into pursuing a political career. If Jack had been allowed to join the regular army in 1899, he would have served as an officer for some thirteen years before the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, and could be reasonably expected to have achieved some degree of success. His time in South Africa as an officer in the Boer War showed him as a brave and resourceful regimental officer and his careful nature would have made him an excellent senior staff officer

Given their undeniable influence on Britain's politics and culture, why do you think there has been so little emphasis on or inquiry into the Churchill family thus far?

There has been no lack of books on the Churchills but these tend to concentrate on one of the more powerful personalities of Lord Randolph, Jennie or Winston. Many take all the assumptions of *My Early Life* (1930) and elaborate upon them to make a point.

Bringing Jack into the picture forces us to radically re-assess the family dynamic, particularly in dispelling the myth that Randolph and Jennie were distant and uncaring parents. Jack's 300 school boy letters, and letters as an adult written mainly to his mother during the Boer War and the First World War provide a clearer insight into the true nature of Churchill family life.