



EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD M. KENNEDY

Interview 9

February 27, 2006
Washington, D.C.

Interviewers

James Sterling Young, chair
Stephen F. Knott

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TRANSCRIPT

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Young: This is the ninth interview with Senator Kennedy, at his home in Washington. The subject today is Ireland, Irish/U.S. relations, and the role Senator Kennedy has played in them. When we went to Ireland, Senator, we talked with Garret [Fitzgerald], John [Hume], the Foreign Minister up in Dundalk—and who was the other one?

Knott: Albert Reynolds.

Young: Sean Donlon was there.

Knott: Oh, Michael Lillis.

Young: Michael Lillis. It was a fascinating introduction to this whole affair for most of us, since we had not made a study of it. One of the things that impressed us was their comments about your role, your importance in the whole unfolding of events from the time you first met John Hume. I think that probably marked your first active involvement, didn't it?

Kennedy: Yes.

Young: You had made a trip to Ireland while your brother was President, but that was not for purposes of dealing with the outer situation. We read in the briefing materials that we should start right at the beginning with your consciousness of Ireland, what you saw of it, what you saw of the Irish and Americans, what you learned of them through your grandfather [John Francis "Honey Fitz"] Fitzgerald. Do you want to talk about that a bit? He also visited your mother in London, and you apparently went over there on a trip with him.

Kennedy: I think the history is going to show it was Eddie Moore. I talked to Milty [Milton Gwirtzman]. It wouldn't have surprised me if I had gone over there. It doesn't surprise me at all that Grandpa did come to London. Those are marvelous stories that we'll get to about Grandpa and his trips to London. I think it's probably appropriate to start with my grandfather, John Fitzgerald, who was the son of Irish immigrants who came in the late 1840s from Ireland. He was the son who was born here. He was the first immigrant who really made it politically in this country. He was elected to Congress in 1896 and elected mayor of the city of Boston in 1906. He was an enormously colorful personality. I think we talked about him on other occasions.

I had a special relationship with him because he was in Boston and I went to Fessenden School in West Newton, Massachusetts. It was a boarding school, and I was there in the early grades, fourth, fifth and sixth. I was very young at the time. This was towards the end of the war. My father was winding up business in London and just getting back and getting settled here. My sisters had moved back, but the family was pretty scattered.

The person who became a sort of extra parent was Grandpa Fitzgerald. We could get off on Sunday at lunchtime, and more often than not, I'd take the subway in to see him at the Bellevue Hotel in Boston. He was enormously interesting. I can tell marvelous stories about Grandpa, but we've covered him pretty well, so I'll just pick up about the point of his pride in his Irish ancestry and his deep love of Ireland. He also had an enormous thirst for knowledge and interest in people and a love of history and of the Irish tradition.

He was very sensitive to the prejudice and discrimination against the Irish, and he took steps to reduce discrimination against the Irish and other ethnic groups. He was the first Irish mayor who appointed a fire commissioner who was an Italian. Thousand of Irish appeared outside his house saying, "Appoint one of your own, Honey Fitz. Appoint one of your own."

He had this great, great love of Ireland and Irish history, Irish tradition, and he was the spokesperson for the Irish community. At that time, newspapers used to be a penny or a nickel, but most of the immigrants didn't buy papers. They'd always wait to see who Honey Fitz supported and say that was good enough for them. He was the leader of the community. So I had heard about Ireland a great deal as a child because that was something he was very much involved in and cared about.

There was a lot to do with Grandpa, but if you're talking now just about the Irish connection, I think we can leap from that to the fact that my brother [John F. Kennedy], after he was elected to Congress in 1946, took a trip to Ireland and hitchhiked around. He went down and visited the Lismore Castle, where we had family relations from my sister Kathleen [Kennedy Cavendish]. He hitchhiked to Lismore, and he had a very good time—I don't think a spectacular time, but he had a very good time, and he had stories.

Young: All alone, all by himself?

Kennedy: Yes. He met someone after a week or ten days and went to the Continent. He visited with friends of my sister Kathleen and spent time there.

Young: Did he talk to you about his hitchhiking trip?

Kennedy: He talked more about his hitchhiking trip after he was elected President, about the difference between seeing cars go by when he was hitchhiking and being President, when he had everybody standing around. He could relate to that from the time when he had to stand around and wait for cars to come by and pick him up and take him to different places. I imagine the next event was probably President Kennedy and his trip to Ireland in 1963. I went to Ireland in 1962 before I ran for the Senate, on a brief visit. I went to Israel and Greece and Italy, and then to Ireland very briefly. I went back to the homestead there just for two or three days. It was basically a political trip prior to the time I was running.

Young: Is that where you gave your St. Patrick's Day speech that upset the British?

Kennedy: I think that was when I gave my St. Patrick's Day speech. The trip was basically seeing some government officials. We were down to visit the homestead and then out to the west and Galway. I met a very interesting woman, Frances Cendell, who was the Lord Mayor of Limerick, and until very recently was still active in the community.

We had a very nice lunch in a hotel, and she said afterwards, "There's a crowd outside who would like to talk." We went up to the second floor and out on a porch, and an extraordinary crowd had gathered. They came from all over. She gave a magnificent introduction, and I was really challenged as to what my message was. I remembered my St. Patrick's Day speech, which I gave and they loved. But it was provocative in terms of the British. When I got back, my brother said something along the lines of it was interesting that I had my own foreign policy.

At that time, he had an Ambassador named Grant Stockdale, who was a friend of his, and we stayed there. I remember it being cold wintertime with snow on the ground. I wanted to ride, and it's incredible—as part of the tradition, if you want to ride, they bring the horses up to the residence. You go out riding and then get off the horse, go in, and take a tub. They showed up with the horses at 7:30 in the morning. I told him I was leaving that evening to go back. I said I was going to see my brother, and I asked what message he wanted me to give him.

Stockdale didn't ride, but for the first time in his life, he got out and got on that horse. The horse sort of trotted and he went along for about 40 yards and then over he went. He said, "You can tell your brother that I gave my all for the country," which my brother got a great kick out of. When I got back and talked to my brother that night, he called Stockdale and got him out of bed at 1:00 in the morning to tell him he was doing a good job. But that was basically for domestic political purposes.

Young: You were getting ready to run for the Senate.

Kennedy: Yes. I went back in 1963 after President Kennedy's loss. I went to Europe and visited some countries in relation to the Kennedy Library. I went to government houses, I remember. To the best of my knowledge, it wasn't '63, but was shortly after that.

They did a television program with Sean Lemass and tied into a kind of international hookup. He was the Taoiseach. It was a very brief trip. I had met Lemass when he was here at the White House. I went to only two official White House events: one was the evening of Sean Lemass, and one was for [Josip Broz] Tito. My brother wasn't wild about me being down there, and I wasn't wild about being down there either, looking like I was a plant from the White House. He was very nice in asking. He said I ought to come down for Sean Lemass because of the Irish association and tradition. He had a dinner for him in the West Wing, and there were probably only 60-65 people there.

It was such an enormous contrast to the next time I went to the White House, which was under President [Lyndon B.] Johnson, where they had 150 people packed in there. They opened up the back doors and wheeled the press in when they each made their toasts. You walk out, and everybody's in line going down the stairs to get into the East Room—where there's always sort

of crowded entertainment—and everybody standing in line for that. This one was just like a dinner party. It was casual.

There was the association with Seán Lemass. I don't know whether Seán Lemass' wife [Kathleen Hughes Lemass] was [Éamon] de Valera's daughter—there was some connection, which President Kennedy had a good appreciation of. As a matter of fact, Seán Lemass had a great interest in George Washington. My brother got George Washington's sword exactly duplicated using replicas of all of the original material in the sword and the handle, everything exactly the same. He had to make two of them in case one broke, and he gave me the other one, which is right above your head, hanging here in my house, with a lovely green handle. See the green handle and the scabbard there? Seán Lemass just loved it all worn down the way it had been from Washington's handling of it. I don't know if he ever used it, but it was all worn down.

That was the event on that occasion, and I think that it was from that kind of trip that the idea or seed about President Kennedy going to Ireland arose. That was 1963, and he had a terrific trip. I think we've talked about that trip. It was such a great success.

Young: We didn't talk very much about it.

Kennedy: It's less about the trip. The filming of it all was breathtaking. I always said that I thought it was probably the happiest time when he was President. You could see that and feel that after he talked to Mrs. [Sinéad] de Valera. He talked about the River Shannon, and she quoted poetry, and he tried to go back and write it down. Interestingly, he wrote a good part of that down after the dinner, but he couldn't get it all and called back from the helicopter. They called him, and he wrote it all down and used it in his departure statement. He was absolutely in touch with the country and its people, and they with him.

I think I told you, when we came back on that Friday night we showed the ABC/NBC/CBS films of his trip to Ireland, and all the family was there. Then Saturday night he said, "Who wants to see what film we're showing up at the house?" "What is it?" "It's the trip to Ireland." A few went over to watch it. Then Sunday night it was only my brother Jack and I who were over there watching it. By this time he knew every part of each of the half-hour films. I think I've described how we would go from one house to the other on Friday, Saturday, Sunday nights generally when he came up to the Cape—my brother Bobby's [Kennedy] house one night, one night at his house, and one night at our house.

Young: Sure.

Kennedy: I described the trip that I took to Europe when I met with Seán Lemass in Ireland and did the broadcast. That was in May of '64. We have March 3, 1970, a speech at Trinity College and September, 1971 is the health care trip to Israel and the UK [United Kingdom], and that trip is where I first met John Hume. This is just in the background of what we're talking about, and then I'm also including here the '76 Democratic platform, which included the references to Ireland. It's the first time that the Democratic platform—or any platform—referred to Ireland.

Young: Do you want to tell us how that happened?

Kennedy: I think it was me and [Bruce] Morrison, the Congressman from Connecticut, who was very involved in Ireland and Irish affairs at that early time. We were in touch with the platform committee to see whether we could get some language in the platform—I'll have to remember who was on the committee at the time. [Jimmy] Carter was aware of what we were doing. This was going to be different and controversial, but we had negotiations. I can remember for one reason or another being up in Boston at the time.

Finally they accepted some language in the Democratic platform. It said: "The voice of the United States should be heard in Northern Ireland against violence and terror, against the discrimination, repression and deprivation which brought about that civil strife, and for the efforts of the parties toward a peaceful resolution of the future of Northern Ireland. Pertinent alliances such as NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation], and international organizations such as the United Nations should be fully apprised of the interests of the United States with respect to the status of Ireland in the international community of nations."

It was recognition that this was not going to be a local problem. It wasn't just a British problem; it was going to be an international problem and an international issue, and the United States was going to be involved.

Young: That was controversial?

Kennedy: That was very controversial, obviously, because the British were very strongly against us. Within the administration as well—it's difficult for me to characterize it. It was because there were a number of us who felt very strongly. And although I was not in a very strong personal relationship with Carter, we worked it through his staff and his people to have that included. It was the first time any political party platform had recognized that this was going to happen, that the United States as a country was going to have an interest in Ireland.

Young: This was before the Four Horsemen?

Kennedy: This was before the Four Horsemen in 1976.

Young: So you were the prime mover?

Kennedy: Yes. I'd say so—with Congressman Bruce Morrison, who was also involved. At home, my mother certainly encouraged us to read the history and poetry of Ireland. [William Butler] Yeats was recognized and read, and my mother read *Trinity*, by Leon Uris, and urged us to read about the history of Ireland as we were growing up. I don't think there was a strong interest in this, but I think my focus and attention developed later in the early 1970s.

Young: That was when you really got into it, wasn't it? This would have been your second meeting with John Hume. You had met him earlier, but you hadn't discussed—

Kennedy: Probably in late '71, I had made a statement on the [Abraham] Ribicoff/[Daniel Patrick] Moynihan/Kennedy [Resolution] calling for the withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland and establishing a united Ireland. Then we went through the history of the Irish contributions, and there are a lot of parts in that speech that had a ring to them.

I got into that speech tragically, “The government of Great Britain fails to realize the presence of British troops in Ulster is compounding the violence instead of contributing to peace.” Where have we heard those words, in relation to what country? “Indeed, the government is moving blindly in the opposite direction, and rarely has there been a clearer example of the well-known truth that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” I talked a little bit about what was happening in Vietnam and also what had happened in the Algerian war.

Young: That was a very strong speech, and what’s interesting about is that it comes apparently before you met Hume.

Kennedy: That’s right. That was before I met John.

Young: Was the speech your idea?

Kennedy: It was. There was a new British policy of internment in Northern Ireland, and that triggered a good deal of reaction and resentment. Ribicoff had spoken about it, and I felt that I ought to speak about it. That’s what basically triggered it at that particular time—the internment policy.

Young: The timeline says that Hugh Carey had also been over there to look at the internment, and you met with him about his trip. Then came the health trip.

Kennedy: I made that talk in October of ’71. Well, you see, this was in September of ’71. I had gone on the health trip. I remember at that time the people speaking to me about what was happening over in Ireland, and when I came back, I gave that talk. That probably had as much to do with what triggered it. I think that was the sequence.

Now the next thing that happened is that in January of ’72, the marchers are killed, and there’s a dramatic escalation of violence in the North. The British dissolved the Stormont Parliament, and they would rule the North directly until a political settlement can be reached. The IRA [Irish Republican Army] exploded bombs in Belfast, on Bloody Sunday, and then in November of that year, I traveled to Europe and met John Hume in Bonn. I had called him—I think ’72 was when [Charles] deGaulle died. I was in Europe. I was coming back from the Middle East.

Young: That wasn’t for NATO?

Kennedy: I can’t remember. The trip to Bonn, I think, was for NATO. I guess I had called him several days before. I was someplace else in Europe and called him about meeting me in Bonn, and then we had a conversation. He came to Bonn, and I spent a couple of hours with him in the residence of the Ambassador or the chief counselor. I think that’s where John began the great education of Edward Kennedy about Northern Ireland and planted the seeds that grew and grew and grew into a wonderful relationship.

Young: He said when he got your call he didn’t believe it was you. He thought it was somebody playing a joke on him. And yet he borrowed money from his savings and loan to pay for his trip, and was put up at the Embassy, which is where you met him. How had you come to identify him as a person you ought to talk to?

Kennedy: I think he had established himself. He had certainly established himself on Bloody Sunday in Londonderry as a courageous political figure. He lay down in front of tanks—with his wife and his children standing there—and they moved to within a foot of running over and killing him. He never flinched, and that's what basically stopped it. So he was a charismatic figure who believed in non-violence and was principled, eloquent, and profound. I think he has always maintained those qualities, and was therefore convincing, sincere, and visionary in terms of what the future was going to bring.

You look through the different types of discussions that took place from '72 up to even now, and you'll find the resonance of Hume's sense about different communities, different traditions working together based on respect and non-violence. There were different formulations as time went along, but at the core of it was that different traditions ought to be able to work out their differences through mutual respect.

Young: And through politics, not through arms.

Kennedy: The political process rather than the bomb and the bullet. He lived that, and he was a very colorful figure as well as being enormously persuasive and eloquent. I've listened to him when he's talked to important groups, and he's eloquent and visionary. In casual or smaller groups, he has a lot of warmth and friendship. He's a delightful person. He mixes those elements to be an important political figure, and he's been recognized as such over the course of his life.

So his view of the situation and of how progress could be made made a very important impression on me. He certainly outlined a pathway that would offer the opportunity to help resolve the differences, and that was a pathway I basically embraced from that time on.

Young: He was a person who could see possibilities even in a bad situation.

Kennedy: Well, he had a bad situation with the killings in Londonderry—which are still very raw to the people there, because of the brutality and the firing on what they considered (and which I think were) truly unarmed civilians. It turned out to be more a massacre than a battle. Then the whole attempt to cover it up inflamed passions and has left them inflamed even to today. So that was 1972.

I left out the time I went to Ireland and spoke at Trinity College in 1970. I had been invited over. They hadn't had many who spoke at Trinity College because it was a bastion of conservatism. It wasn't really tied to the issues in terms of rule in the North at all. I think you get a sense from that speech that I was very interested in Ireland and what was happening there generally, but that speech was not focused on the political problems of the North.

Knott: Did what John Hume told you change your views in any way?

Kennedy: Yes, the answer is yes. He looked at this as a political process that was going to be built upon different traditions and mutual respect. It was going to be resolved in a political evolution rather than in unilateral actions by the political parties. How that was going to be done, as I mentioned, was going to evolve—whether they were going to get into questions of counteractions or changing and altering the police and the judiciary, then seeing reductions in violence—or whether a different framework was going to be suggested later on.

A process was going to be established that he believed could move the whole debate and discussion within a non-violent framework and could result eventually in some settlement. That's how he viewed it rather than the groups taking action. Some of us had suggested that they withdraw troops, and then there would be counteractions, movements toward unification and other kinds of actions. That was the significant change. And it certainly appeared to me that it was important to listen to someone who had suffered the way he had, and had shown the courage and determination he had shown, living on the ground as he was and experiencing the harshness he was experiencing. I believe it's important to listen to the ones who are risking their lives and are attempting to do it in a non-violent way.

In the early days with him was a fellow, Austin Currie. In these briefings is this picture that says, "On a hunger strike in protest against internment outside 10 Downing." This is in October, '71. "John Hume, Austin Currie, Paddy O'Hanlon burned at Dublin."

Austin Currie was a strong voice at that time. The Orangemen came into his house and grabbed his 12-year-old daughter and branded her on her breast with a hot iron, and he just boom! moved out of the area. That ended it for him, which you can readily understand. John had an innocent daughter who was supposed to be kidnapped, and they grabbed the wrong girl. These people were tough individuals who were risking everything and were still non-violent. And it seemed to me that their cause was going to certainly be my cause, and their views were going to be very persuasive. I was going to advocate and support. That was the beginning of that whole process.

So we've been back now to '73 where I outlined a different framework in the article on foreign policy that's still referencing the major kinds of challenges that were faced. But in that article, I point out, "The violence and terror must be ended. I condemn the brutality in Northern Ireland. I condemn the violence of the IRA. I condemn the violence of the UDA [Ulster Defence Association]. I condemn the violence of the British troops. I condemn the guns and bombs. I condemn the flow of arms or any funds for arms from the United States or any country to Northern Ireland. And I share the words of Cardinal [William] Conway, who spoke eloquently about the Ulster terror in his Christmas message, 'To kill a man deliberately, snuff out, is a terrible deed, and this is true no matter who does it, no matter what side he is on.'"

This was condemnation of violence on all sides. Then I went through the difficulties and perceptions in terms of the continued internment, and also the troops.

Young: You were consulting with or talking with Hume—or Carey Parker was—throughout this period, weren't you?

Kennedy: Yes.

Young: About major speeches.

Kennedy: Well, you know, the violence continued. I quote, "As former President John Lynch of the Republic stated, 'The only solution is united by agreement in independence and Ireland in a friendly relationship with Britain, and Ireland should be a member with Britain of the enlarged European community. I hold this view because I believe that there is no other way to dispose the continuing and difficult legacy history has left—certainly no way which will not compound the problem for our children.'"

That seemed to be the pathway of movement in that talk. This was a more comprehensive statement. I would say this was a refining of my views, and also a very strong plea for the rejection of violence. This is following the meeting with Hume in '72.

Knott: Was it a tough sell to convince Irish Americans that they needed to—?

Kennedy: Yes, it was very tough, particularly as it moved on from there. This is '73-'74. We had a very strong organization called NORAID [Irish Northern Aid Committee], which is the Irish American group that was very supportive of the IRA in terms of finances. They didn't like the criticisms of the IRA, but their principal opposition really developed a few years later in 1977, when we brought together what we called our Four Horsemen urging Irish Americans not to provide support for the IRA or engage in violence. After '76 we had a Democratic President increasing escalation or evolution of the fact that Ireland was a matter of interest to United States foreign policy. Our interest in Northern Ireland was always a source of antagonism to the British, who said that Northern Ireland was an internal British matter.

Young: And this followed upon the platform.

Kennedy: This followed on the platform.

Young: And Carter was brought to make a statement—it's included in our briefing materials—which was the first official statement that an American President had made, taking a position on the issue and also suggesting economic assistance if it came to a settlement.

Kennedy: I had seen John Hume in '73 in Brussels, and he talked about that time, the reform of the police that's still out there even today, the failure of Sinn Fein to be a part of police reform. Also there was a question of representation and who was going to be able to speak for the community, and some broader issues in terms of the relationship of—

Young: Could you tell me when in the course of these events or talks with Hume the difficulties posed to the peace process by not only NORAID but the pro-IRA sentiment among the Irish Americans in the Diaspora came up as an important impediment in the eyes of the people involved in the peace process? Was that discussed at all? There came a time when the Four Horsemen, you and others, took a major role in turning that sentiment around in support of the peace process and against the support of violence by the IRA.

Kennedy: I think it really was in '76, the Four Horsemen, and the continued statements and comments we made in each subsequent year. A number of events were taking place at the time as pointed out in my notes: "Hume mentioned that the European Commission on Human Rights has vindicated the Catholic position on torture and inhumane conditions in the internment camps. Although proceedings for the commission have not received much publicity, Hume finds it increasingly embarrassing to British politicians."

All of this was working at one time. That didn't have much impact in terms of NORAID, and Hume was talking about a time-phased withdrawal of the British, and reform of the local police. Even Hume had talked about the phased withdrawal because they can't be there, you can't have peace while having the troops present. And then there was the discussion about trying to find some common ground—getting away from your question—trying to find common ground and

begin to try to find ways they could work together. I don't remember—until the '70s with the Irish Four Horsemen—that we really were able to take on NORAID and the strong economic support that Irish Americans were giving to the IRA. That took a good deal of time, and it was controversial. We were finding out through the Justice Department that it was beginning to have some impact and effect.

Young: The reason I ask is that practically all the people we talked to in Ireland pointed out their growing awareness—after the government of Ireland was given a role in the process—that the sentiment or the feelings in the Irish Diaspora were not being helpful to the peace process. They were very concerned not only about the position of the United States government *vis-à-vis* Northern Ireland, but very concerned about the state of opinion among the Irish Diaspora and the credibility it gave to the raising of arms. Don't you remember they talked a great deal about that, and a great deal about how the Four Horsemen—you and Tip [Thomas Phillip] O'Neill especially—helped turn that around? I was wondering if this was pointed out to you.

Kennedy: It was very clear from what Hume was pointing out to me, certainly, that if we were going to have any success with a political process, we had to stop the flow of arms and funds for arms to the IRA from the U.S. I did that in the '73 article. Hume felt that that was the most important thing we could do for Ireland: urge Americans who were sending the arms and money to the IRA to withhold support. I guess the figures show that about 75% of the IRA funds were coming from the U.S., and NORAID was the principal organization for all of that.

It was very apparent to me that I certainly couldn't do it alone. If it was going to be done, it would have to be with a broader-based group of prominent Irish. We were able to get Tip O'Neill—who had just been elected Speaker at the time—and it was a confluence of events. Mike Mansfield left the Senate, and we had a good friend, Charlie Ferris, whom I had worked with when I worked with Mansfield, going over to the House and working with Tip. He was particularly responsible for this. And with my own conversations with Tip and Charlie Ferris—and I think with John Hume's conversations with Tip as well—Tip came on board, and after that it was easy to get Moynihan and Hugh Carey to join us.

We had a series of statements with a number of our Democratic and Republican colleagues in the Senate and with House members. But it was basically the four of us who initiated those statements, and to a great extent most of them were drafted by Carey Parker working with John Hume. We did a lot of work on that, in later years with Trina [Vargo] on my staff. This was getting us started on that first statement in '77. The theme was to get all organizations engaged in violence to renounce the campaign of death and destruction.

It was an obvious reference to the IRA, and I think we were getting some traction then. *Newsweek* magazine had a story about “forcing Irish Americans to consider the bloody use of their guns and money.” So even though the conditions in the North were not improving, at least we began the process. Then we had corresponding actions being taken on the British side. I'm not sure which year was Sunningdale [Agreement].

Knott: I believe that's '85. Is that the Anglo-Irish Agreement? There's one in November of '85 that gives the Republic of Ireland an official role in Northern Ireland.

Kennedy: Yes, that got stymied.

Knott: Senator, did you find that your own Irish-American constituents had a romanticized view of the IRA?

Kennedy: Oh, there's no question that they had a romanticized view of the IRA. There were a number of Irish who were coming in here illegally, and they depended upon the Irish community to get jobs and to develop relationships. There were thousands and thousands of Irish who came over here during this period. I saw it as the chairman of the immigration sub-committee. We ended up with the [Congressman Paul] Donnelly visas, but they tried to increase their ability to immigrate over here. So we had a force coming here illegally—some legally, but many illegally—and intersecting with the existing groups here, and that added velocity to the groups and their romanticizing about the struggle, particularly when there had been a good deal of violence in the wake of Bobby Sands and the hunger strikers.

That's probably when they hit their height, and we were coming right into the teeth of the gale on this, without very much progress to show for it. I think to the contrary, we were coming into a situation with [Ronald] Reagan winning in '80 and then Margaret Thatcher coming in and being very tough on it. Then we had the increasing emotional feeling with regard to the injustice taking place in Northern Ireland. It wasn't clear how all this was going to work its way through.

We had all the tragedies: in '81, as I mentioned, was the hunger strike at Long Kesh. In '79 the killing of [Lord Louis] Mountbatten was something that really startled a lot of people, the growth of violence. It was very hot here in terms of the politics of it.

Young: Why don't we take a break here?

[BREAK]

Young: When was Bill Shannon appointed Ambassador?

Knott: It would have been during the Carter years, '77. You knew Ambassador Shannon pretty well?

Kennedy: Yes, yes.

Young: Can we talk a little about how the Presidential and executive side got moved or didn't get moved to be supportive of the peace process? The first was Carter, who made the first statement that seemed to be supportive. I take it Bill Shannon must have been an Ambassador who was sympathetic to that, is that the case?

Kennedy: Yes. Bill Shannon was selected by Carter and was a very gifted and talented writer. He had followed Ireland for some time, and I think gets great credit in Ireland for his attention to policy. He was a very positive and constructive force during that period. Particular events don't

stand out, but there's no question he was a positive force. I talked with him—not an enormous number of times or in great detail—but I was in touch with him during the period.

Young: How did you (or whoever) move Carter to adopt this position?

Kennedy: The general evolution and escalation of the issue itself had come onto the political scene because of the series of events that had taken place prior to 1976. There were a number of different actions: Bloody Sunday and other actions had happened. There were comments and statements, the internment, Bobby Sands and the hunger strike. This was an issue that was evolving and shaping in terms of the public process.

Apartheid was moving along as well as an issue in South Africa. These were public policy issues that were emerging, and there were people who felt strongly about it. I can't remember now about Morrison. I remember Morrison being around there. He might have been an early Carter supporter. I liked Morrison a lot. I had worked with him when he was in the House. I had a lot of respect for him, and I had a very good relationship with him. I can't retrace exactly what we got in '76, but I don't think it was enormously complicated or difficult.

The Irish political leaders cared deeply about it and were able to get that across. I can remember having the language cleared with somebody who was working with Carter during that period.

Young: I'm trying to get at how events were moving to get the President's attention and the State Department and whoever. I'm trying to get at how it got on the President's agenda to do what he did about what was going on. I'm trying to find out if you had a role in that or you know how that was done. I think that's important. Did you work with Cy [Cyrus] Vance, for example, or was the State Department unhelpful?

Kennedy: I don't think from '76 to '80 there was a great deal of alteration or shift within the Carter administration. There wasn't really much initiative on their part.

Young: It was their early initiative.

Kennedy: The Horsemen were moving. Corresponding actions were taking place among the British during this period, and different leadership was coming on, and discussions, but I can't recall any important alterations or change. At some time—I think it was probably the first year after '80—we started having the Speaker's St. Patrick's Day lunch with Tip O'Neill. That became an important event. St. Patrick's Day began to change, and instead of just having a bowl of shamrocks given to the President, the President had to come to the Speaker's lunch.

A number of us persuaded the Taoiseach that this was the time for him to come to the United States. What I'm outlining now we perfected later, but we persuaded him to come over at that time to garner greater attention. Either the Taoiseach would have an opportunity to talk to the President about policy, or they'd have a chance to talk to him at the Speaker's lunch. All Reagan wanted to do was have jokes at the lunches. I don't think from '77 to '80 Jimmy Carter showed any interest. I might be wrong, but I don't believe there was any action by the administration during that time.

We had the prisons and the Iranian seizure in late '79, and I started to run in '79. I don't remember any action that was really taken or any leadership that was done. After 1980, we had President Reagan and very tough action from Margaret Thatcher, and a different phase of the relationship. We had the Speaker's luncheon, and then Reagan started to at least meet and have leaders from Northern Ireland come. They hadn't come before.

Young: That started under Reagan.

Kennedy: Yes. They started to come over themselves, and we started to get them involved with the Speaker's lunch. He could decide who he wanted, and that was worked out with the Irish.

Young: Was that a good thing?

Kennedy: Yes, it was enormously important eventually, because it gave some focus and attention to this issue. A fellow who worked under President Reagan—I guess it was William Clark—was the Northern Ireland contact. He showed a good deal of interest. He had some Irish roots, and he was willing to listen. I think the President had some conversations with Margaret Thatcher to try to soften her up a little bit—at least it was always thought that she softened up a little bit—and then Tip let her speak to a Joint Session of Congress. I don't remember talking to Tip about that in detail. We didn't see a great deal of change or alteration—some, perhaps.

Young: Was part of this trying to counteract the British position and the State Department's traditional position that this was an internal affair?

Kennedy: That's it, and that continued all the way through President [William Jefferson] Clinton. But this was not an issue back in '81. We had the hunger strikes and people starving themselves to death. This was not an issue that was going to go away. We tried a number of different interventions with Reagan to get him to appoint a special envoy for peace, but he was not interested in that.

I introduced a resolution for a new Ireland forum to establish institutional alternatives to British control. Margaret Thatcher was very strong in her rejection of anything and everything to do with it. That was the early '80s, '80 through '84. Then in '85 Thatcher signed the Irish Agreement with Garret Fitzgerald.

Young: Wasn't that a step of progress?

Kennedy: Very important, and I think that was the result of a good deal of work that Garret was involved in. I don't have the year that Sunningdale was moving along and collapsed, but there was at least an initiative on it. And then the right-wing labor groups in Belfast did a strike on that thing and ended it. I don't know what year that was, but that's an important date in this, because it showed that the leaders who were involved were at least beginning to talk about it. Fitzgerald and the '85 agreement were important.

Young: I'm wondering if Reagan played any role—or Bill Clark for Reagan—in getting Thatcher to reach this agreement with Garret Fitzgerald. Of course, the situation had gotten worse, and that may have also contributed.

Kennedy: That's right. But that I don't know.

Knott: Senator, in 1980 the Irish government talked about transferring Sean Donlon out of Washington. We had heard reports that you intervened with the Irish government to try to prevent that. Do you recall that?

Kennedy: [Charles] Haughey wanted to have his own person as the Irish Ambassador, and Donlon wasn't it. Tip and I had worked very closely with Sean and we were in touch with Charlie and able to keep Sean here for a period of time. The Irish groups, NORAIID and all, wanted to get Donlon out, but we had success in having him stay here.

I had seen Charlie Haughey on one of my trips when he was Attorney General. We ought to find this out. He had been under investigation for guns from the Libyans. I remember stopping off and seeing him, and this was just at the time that my nephew Joe [Joseph Kennedy II] had been on a plane that was hijacked in the Middle East. They had just released him. He was on a plane in Saudi Arabia for about three days. I was in Ireland, and that's why we have to find out the schedules.

I went by to see Charlie Haughey, and I mentioned that we had been in touch with the Algerians, who had been very friendly to the Kennedys since President Kennedy's speech in '57 about the independence of Algeria. They had been helpful getting Gary Powers out of the Soviet Union. I told him how we went to the Algerians to see if they could be of any help. Charlie Haughey, who had just been acquitted of involvement with Libya and running guns, said, "Well, if you run into this situation again, get hold of me. I have some friends in Libya who can help," which was a cute little comment.

I had a personal relationship with Charlie. It didn't turn out to be a big deal. I think he kept Sean on for a period of time, but it would certainly seem that he was on top of what was happening here. I think it made some difference in terms of the administration. In '81 we had the Friends of Ireland, so this built on the Four Horsemen issue via the Friends' annual statements, and Reagan endorsed that.

Young: He finally came around, didn't he, more or less, in the second term?

Kennedy: I think Clark had a positive influence on him. I saw Reagan on different occasions, and he would never bring up the Irish situation. We were always told when we went in to see him that we could talk only about the things we were scheduled to talk about. We were told not to get off on other things. So we didn't have a chance.

He certainly moved from just wanting to tell jokes. Over the time he was President, as he came up to those lunches, it had gradually become more substantive. The first time, everyone was told very clearly they were just to tell stories. He would tell a couple of stories, and Tip would call on people around the room to recall stories. He'd call on the Americans, Jimmy Burke or others, to tell stories. Then he gradually called on some of the Irish, and they would tell a story, but they would also make some little comments. Eventually those lunches turned into being about substantive kinds of issues—not profound, but at least the chance for people who came from different kinds of traditions to sit down at lunch.

And of course that format became the very significant and important framework where eventually, under President Clinton, all the leaders came over and stayed for three days. Most of the political leadership came to that lunch, and virtually all of those who were involved in the Good Friday Agreement were in the White House and would stay there for several hours. One evening they stayed there literally for four or five hours. The President went up to bed, and they stayed there talking and speaking on it.

So that framework was very important, and it eventually evolved that the Irish Prime Minister would come over and sit down and would actually have substantive talks with the President. The people who were interested in Ireland came to town for these receptions, and they would talk to people within the administration. All of this was an evolutionary process where the Irish issue became of much greater substance, and was really important and got a lot of attention.

Young: I think Garret Fitzgerald and John Hume met Reagan. Maybe it was at one of the lunches.

Kennedy: Yes.

Young: John Hume spoke of this.

Kennedy: I met Garret in Ireland before he came. I visited him when he was the Taoiseach. He then came down to Cape Cod.

Young: There's a piece in the briefing book about that meeting. Reagan took a trip to Ireland in his second term, did he not? Do you know if Sean and the rest succeeded in convincing him in his second term that he was, in fact, Irish?

Kennedy: Yes, in the second term.

Knott: Well, actually just in time for the '84 election. [*laughter*]

Kennedy: There was a lot of pulling and hauling and tugging. I'm sure you got the rundown about where he was going and what he was going to do.

Young: I did read in the paper that the Reagan museum out there in Simi Valley had just purchased an entire pub in Ireland that Reagan visited when he was there. They bought the whole thing lock, stock, and barrel, and are putting it in the museum. They're bringing the bartender over to show them how to pump the beer. [*laughter*]

Knott: I think he's from Ballyporeen, which is where Reagan's ancestors were from.

Young: And there was a picture of him with his glass raised, a crowd around, and Mrs. [Nancy] Reagan not looking very happy—not that this is serious oral history.

Kennedy: I think during this period, the '80s, the whole question about these negotiations—the framework and reforms that were going to be necessary in the North—also included the economic component: if they're going to work out and get some progress made, we ought to have an economic component. That was going to be the sweetener, because there were a lot of

hard economic times in the North, and this would be helpful and appreciated, particularly by the Protestant groups.

Young: So you were getting appropriations for an Ireland fund.

Kennedy: We were talking about trying to get appropriations as a sweetener to the conclusion of a framework. We went to work on President Carter to get economic assistance. Reagan had proposed \$50 million for five years, but most of it was all incentive for the private sector to come in. Tip and I wanted direct aid, and when we talked to Don Regan about that, he indicated he was prepared to get us the money if we were prepared to call off the dogs on the [Edward Patrick] Boland Amendment, which was to end the war with the Contras, in Nicaragua. It was sort of a *quid pro quo*, and we weren't going to have that.

Knott: Senator, were you involved in getting Irish American businessmen to invest in Northern Ireland?

Kennedy: We tried to get some of the large American corporations, companies who had branches in Northern Ireland, to see if we could work with them in ways that would be constructive and positive. We had people like Jack Welch, a whole series of successful, prominent Irish American business people, who came and we met, particularly during the Clinton period. We had a very significant number, several hundred, to try to see if we could get them to take some interest in making their various subsidiaries in the North a constructive force. We talked to the State Department and Treasury Department as well as the intelligence groups, but that never went anywhere. I think we could have done some things, but we never had any success on it.

I talked to a number of business people to see if that could be achieved, and also with some of the more conservative people. A fellow named [Thomas Michael] Jopling was the Minister of Agriculture under [John] Major, and he's a good personal friend from years and years ago. We went over to the Ditchley conferences. He's actually a very good friend of my sister Jean's [Kennedy Smith], and he was in Dublin when we went over to see her. He was very prominent in the conservative groups, and he poked around to see whether we could get any takers on this, but it just wasn't possible.

So moving along towards '88, that's when Hume told me he had been meeting secretly with the new head of Sinn Fein, Gerry Adams. He was making the argument that the violence wasn't working, and even if the British would get forced out, the Catholic community would be at the mercy of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the 8,000 members of the [Ian] Paisley Unionist Party. So he proposed that the IRA "give up the campaign of violence and agree to meet with all parties, hosted by the Irish Government, and if the settlement could be agreed upon, it would be put to a vote in both parts of Ireland, with Britain agreeing to abide by it." John's proposal, in broad terms, would eventually happen a decade later.

Knott: You're starting to hear reports that perhaps Gerry Adams is somebody who can be dealt with?

Kennedy: We've gone by the visit of Garret down at the Cape.

Knott: I have it as May of '85.

Kennedy: May of '85. Prime Minister Fitzgerald came to Cape Cod, a visit with Mrs. [Joan O'Farrell] Fitzgerald. I can still remember him pushing her wheelchair across the lawn down there. As these notes reflect, he mentioned three areas: one is security, the second the judiciary—how we were going to get confidence-building in terms of the judiciary. (He had a really complex proposal there.) And then the future role of the Irish government in the North and who was going to speak for the North, those kinds of arrangements, and how much authority and how much power they were going to have.

Young: That visit was before the Anglo-Irish Agreement with Thatcher?

Knott: Yes, that's right.

Young: This was in May of '85, and the agreement came later that year, did it not?

Knott: Yes, in November.

Young: I was interested in his report of how that was going, and your comment that Donlon thought it was a very tough situation.

Kennedy: He called it “a very tough negotiation” and said he “was not at all sure how it was going to all work out.”

Young: And the third issue, according to your notes, is the “future role for the Irish government in the process.” It appears that Fitzgerald was pushing for that as a precondition, as almost a precursor for being able to do much—to have the government of Ireland accepted as a player.

Kennedy: In the North.

Young: In the North. When he visited you, that had not yet happened. But in November, that was allowed for the first time.

Kennedy: That was very significant. There was the agreement between Hume's SDLP [Social Democratic and Labour Party] and the Irish government. One of them had to have the role, and the question was how much the role was going to be. Eventually he was able to negotiate that the Irish government was going to have a role. I don't know how the Anglo-Irish [Agreement] considered the political parties, the SDLP, how they included them. In that agreement, he also talked about the financial aspect—the importance of it—and we talked about talking with Tip O'Neill and also [Madeleine] Albright. I had talked to Democratic Senator [Robert C.] Byrd, who was on the Senate appropriations committee, and I also talked with Republican Senator [Mark O.] Hatfield about it, and they were open to helping. Without getting into the details of this, I always thought that it would have to start in the House with Tip, where we had the most leverage, and that these people were going to respond. I know that my son Patrick [Kennedy] was up there for this meeting as well.

Young: I think it was the Anglo-Irish Agreement that Fitzgerald negotiated with Thatcher. It also recognized, for the first time, consent as the basis for the government of North Ireland. That

was recognized in the language of the '85 agreement, which was considered at least a breakthrough in principle, some give on the British feeling that it was, in effect, their colony.

Kennedy: That was very significant and important. I remember Garret had spent a lot of time thinking through all of these multidimensional aspects of it and having a very good grasp of the interrelationships of these issues and what was possible. He had backup positions and a very comprehensive view. I think he deserves a lot of credit for the whole movement. It was a difficult time.

As I mentioned, he was there with Mrs. Fitzgerald, and then we had a social hour with some of the people I mentioned here, John Cullinane and I think it says Tom Flavin, but I think it was Dick Flavin. Dick Donahue, mentioned in here, “polished off three gin and tonics, but he had a good time and he was delighted to see we had the Irish flag. We couldn’t fly it, but we had it outside the opposite window. All the Irish Secret Service were on the running boards, even though there wasn’t anybody around for 100 miles who was going to be anything but delighted to see them. It was cool and overcast, not rainy.”

Young: Did you take them out on the boat?

Kennedy: I don’t think so, no. He visited, but he stayed over at President Kennedy’s house, had some downtime over there. He came to see my mother and had a lot of pictures taken, and then he left in the early evening, a little before 8:00. He mentions that Bill Clark had been very helpful. I don’t know whether Reagan had any interest in the public funding there. He was obviously concerned with what Reagan was talking about, private investment.

Young: I think he gives credit to Bill Clark, who is a personal friend of Reagan’s, for helping.

Kennedy: Then he talked about how they were going to try to soften up the IRA with financial incentives important to the Protestants. I don’t know what he was suggesting on the IRA. I guess he was talking about something to do with release of prisoners who were not involved in violence. I think that’s what they were talking about and that Protestants had that interest as well.

Knott: Do you have any sense of how it was that Margaret Thatcher came around? She was entrenched in the late '70s and refusing to budge an inch. But it seems at least by the mid '80s that she’s willing to make some concessions.

Kennedy: Not other than what Clark as able to do during this period, the general alteration and change within the administration. The longer the President stayed in office clearly made some difference, but I don’t have any particular insight into that. There are some notes here from the St. Patrick’s luncheon. The interesting part was Tip going after Garret about the Irish package. Tip said, “Cut the bullshit, Mr. Prime Minister. Is President Reagan going to go for the larger money or isn’t he?”

Well, Fitzgerald said, “This is a matter that’s going to have to be solved here in this country.” Tip was clearly irritated, and we sat down with Fitzgerald and talked about his general commitment to Ireland. He tried to say that he couldn’t get involved, but Tip wanted to get him very much involved. It’s interesting. Fitzgerald commented that Margaret Thatcher didn’t have a deep sense of history.

Young: Yes, that story about [Erwin] Rommel.

Kennedy: Her lack of a sense of history. It does appear, at least from these notes, that Fitzgerald said that Thatcher had been tough on the Unionists. She had become more involved in the Irish situation, and she'd seen Paisley and [James] Molyneaux, who had been very active. He said, "So you see from these that she is involved and engaged in what was happening up there in the North, and has some kind of feel. As far as her general alteration and change, it looked like she had as tense a relationship with the Unionists and Paisley as she did with the Catholics and Hume. There was always the thought that if the U.S. was going to do something, the Europeans were going to match it, and that's what was going to make a significant amount of resources available."

I can remember that was something they hoped for—contributions from the EEC [European Economic Community]. He continued to press that, and he said, "Part of the agreement supported early release for those who had been associated with terrorist acts, but they themselves had not been involved in terrorism. They had indications that this could be supported by both the Protestants and the IRA because both of them had people in jail." So they're already thinking about those issues.

Then they have the reference in these notes about Margaret Thatcher taking a nasty shot at John Hume for being in the Philippines, saying that he ought to be in Parliament. It's interesting, the Philippines—that was the election of Mrs. [Corazon] Aquino. Her husband had been in Massachusetts—this was after [Ferdinand] Marcos—and they were going back to run. They had been warned not to come back. He got out of the plane, and at the foot of the plane he was shot and killed. And then she ran. She was enormously courageous in the face of questions about whether the military was going to take over. They sent inspectors, and one of the inspectors was John Hume.

My son Teddy [Edward Kennedy, Jr.] went through there on the way back from China. They have some incredible stories about killing people. John Hume told Teddy the story about how they chased this strong supporter of Aquino down, and shot him in front of all his family. Teddy got so upset and bothered by that, he went out to the airport and got on a plane and came home. But he had run into John Hume. They had been in a bar, and he heard "Our town I love so well" across the place, and they went over, and there was John Hume at the end of the day, at the end of the elections.

This was an enormously important moment in terms of the whole democracy movement in the Philippines, and Hume was there. He went to some other places, too. [Reading from notes]: Hume was not at the meeting, he was out to lunch, and talking to the British that if the extradition treaty got tied to the aid—this is the reference to Nicaragua—the administration wanted to work us on a package that we would withhold our opposition on Nicaragua.

Young: Did you have any direct dealings with Alec Reid or Tim Pat Coogan?

Kennedy: I saw Tim Pat Coogan the time I went over there to visit my sister Jean. I had lunch with him. He was very strong. I had a long lunch with him. Of course, he's a controversial figure and a provocative figure, but he has great insight into the IRA, and he was convinced that Adams

was on the level about giving up violence. I've read his book on the IRA. He has real insight into that whole organization.

I didn't meet Reid, although I heard a good deal about Reid from both Reynolds and Coogan and some of the other people I saw when I was over there. Yes, Reid came down for dinner at my sister's, but I didn't get a chance to talk to him in the kind of detail that Reynolds talked about. They used the church in a very important way on the violence issues, but he did not get into that this evening. Reid came to Jean's one evening for dinner, and he told me he was convinced that Adams was not going back to violence and was committed to a peaceful path, and he was satisfied with it. That made an impression upon me.

Knott: Could we talk a little bit about Jean?

Kennedy: I think we probably should do that.

Young: We're getting into the Clinton years now, and that's a big part of the story.

Kennedy: In 1992, we have the election of President Clinton, and we have some interest on my sister Jean's part in being Ambassador to Ireland. At first I didn't know whether she was enormously serious about it, but she was. I pursued it, and we got on track fairly quickly and began to gain momentum. It was eventually accomplished.

Young: It was controversial, wasn't it?

Kennedy: It was somewhat, although not enormously. Brian Donnelly wanted this. He had been the author of the Irish visas, and he was from Massachusetts. There was a question about whether Tip was leaning that way. I talked to Tip, and he said, "You ought to go by and tell Brian that this is the way it's going to be," or something to that effect. Tip actually turned out to be a good supporter of Jean's. I remember talking to him in the very beginning.

I think Mrs. [Molly Boylan] Shannon was interested in it. She had followed Ireland, and Bill Shannon had been very successful, and she's very smart. She had been at Boston University and maintained some contacts. I think there might have been one or two other people involved in it, but it really moved very quickly with Jean. And I think once Jean became conscious that this thing was happening, she got very serious about it. She had been involved in the Very Special Arts; she had been in Ireland. She had a number of things over in Ireland, and she had traveled with my brother there in '63.

So she had maintained some relationships, particularly in the areas of the arts. Jean was very much involved in the arts. One of her great friends is Bill Whelan, who did Riverdance. He had been very supportive of—and did—the Very Special Arts program with a number of Irish actors and actresses. I forget the name of the movie, where they had the disabled person. It was a successful film.

Knott: *My Left Foot*?

Kennedy: Yes, *My Left Foot*. The people involved in that had been involved in her program. So she had really both demonstrated familiarity and interest and understanding, and had a good set

of credentials. She's a very bright, smart person, and she worked at the appointment process and did very well before the committee.

Young: How did the Foreign Service establishment feel about her?

Kennedy: I think they said—you probably have heard about it—that they were going to be quiet about it. It was going to be acceptable, but they were going to be quiet about it, and they quickly melted away. Any kind of opposition melted away, given her range of contacts, once they found that she was serious about it. They had so many people over there who weren't and hadn't been, who were more interested in horse racing than in Ireland. The officials were wondering whether she was really serious or if this was going to be something else. Therefore, since she hadn't had a lot of diplomatic associations, they weren't going to get involved.

The process moved ahead. In March, 1993 the President named Jean, and she went through the process and was appointed. There are some nice pictures. I remember being over there with President Clinton. He was very warm and enthusiastic about it. It was good.

In April of that year, Hume and Adams issued a statement calling for the start of a peace process.

Young: That was the culmination, wasn't it, of conversations between them? They had started talking—

Kennedy: It had been going on for a long time.

Young: Was that anticipated at the time?

Kennedy: No, I don't think it had been. Hume had been over here. I don't know whether he had talked there before, and certainly I would have suggested that Jean talk to Hume before going over. She's a hard worker. She went to see the previous Republican Ambassadors who had been over there, and went around a lot in the briefing aspects. I don't know what she has on that, but Major and Reynolds issued the Downing Street Declaration, promising self-determination in Northern Ireland. It says that Britain will negotiate only with groups that renounce violence. This was an extraordinary statement and comment.

Young: That was Prime Minister Major.

Kennedy: Major and Reynolds. It's useful to get into the ebb and flow of the conservative government at this time. That always has a rather interesting impact. When they got very close in terms of the Tories—and you had those votes in the North who could be conservative—the British government backed right off. It was always a historical phenomenon that Labour was always much more pro-involvement in Northern Ireland and for self-determination. But whenever they got in, they never did very much. This is [Harold] Wilson and a number of the others.

So that ebb and flow of the vote for the majorities in Parliament always had some impact. We don't have it here, but if you look back over this period, it has a real impact in more recent times—not going way back—because you had the whole process beginning now since the '70s on into the time of Clinton. That flow is not unimportant.

When she was over there, Jean was very active in a lot of different ways, and she also established contacts with people in the North, which upset the State Department. They indicated that this was a different jurisdiction, and that she didn't have a role there. The State Department got very upset. People in that Embassy got very upset, and they were very strong when I went over on New Year's of '94.

This was after my brother in-law Steve [Stephen Smith] had died. Jean was over in Ireland, and at New Year's, Vicki [Reggie Kennedy] and I went over to visit her for a few days. We thought it was going to be just a social visit. Once I got there, I found I was on a merry-go-round about Gerry Adams and a visa for Adams to visit the U.S.

I arrived and she said, "We have to set up an appointment for you to see the Prime Minister at noon." She and I saw him for an hour, hour and a half, and he talked about Al Reynolds and about Adams and the visa. I had been opposed to Adams having a visa because of what I considered to be his association with the IRA. Reynolds made a very powerful case. He showed me letters from people who had been on the Protestant side in the North, very considerable and thoughtful people, saying how they had seen the difference in Adams in very recent times.

He made a very powerful and well thought-out case. He gave assurances that he, as the Prime Minister, had seen the British intelligence, and since John Hume's announcement, everything had been positive and non-violent. He was absolutely convinced that Adams was committed to a course of non-violence. Then I spent two hours at lunch with Tim Pat Coogan. He had the same messages, and he is the person who knows more about the IRA than anybody else. We had a couple of other meetings. I think we had dinner with some of these people—Father Reid and several people from the North came down.

Young: John Hume?

Kennedy: John Hume came down that evening.

Young: Had Jean made up her mind on this issue?

Kennedy: She was strongly for it then. As I've said previously, the people who were on the ground and had a feel and understood this made a very strong case. I changed my mind about it. They thought it was enormously important that we get it done and get it done early.

It's now January of '94. I returned home with that in mind. There were some things later in '94—the IRA ceasefire going into effect, and the Loyalists joining in the ceasefire. I saw [David] Trimble here. I saw him in Northern Ireland, but that was later. I think this first meeting with Trimble was here, a very tough meeting. I took him around the Capitol, I took him everywhere. He was very tough.

Knott: Tough in opposition to the visa?

Kennedy: No, I didn't get into talking about the visa with him. Just tough about the Catholics and the movement and the leadership and the completely ridiculous thought of shared power and shared responsibility. He said it was never going to happen—it was deeply rooted, and people who thought it would work didn't understand the 400-year history. He was just unflinching and

ideological, uncompromising, and really quite formal all the way through. There was no way to get through. I didn't.

But then a number of things happened. I came back to the United States. As I mentioned earlier, Jean had actually stayed with the Humes in the early '70s and had been involved in the arts. Now we had a situation with the Clinton administration where my former staff member Nancy Soderberg had gone to the National Security Council. Madeleine Albright had bigger fish to fry with the expansion of NATO, and the Northern Ireland issue was being run from the White House. I got back here and began to call some of our colleagues, some of the Irish Senators. I remember talking to [Thomas] Foley, who said absolutely no. He called the White House right away and told them there was no way they could do it. I remember talking to Moynihan, who said of Hume, "Why are you getting along with that Socialist? I think he's probably a Communist. I won't interfere, but I don't think it's where you want to go."

I talked to [Christopher] Dodd, who was supportive. I think Tip was sympathetic to it. I remember Foley being so strongly against it, and I think I would have remembered if Tip hadn't been, but I don't remember him being involved one way or the other. Then I asked to see the President, and I went down with Dodd to see Clinton. This was about the time that Adams had been invited over to speak at the National Committee on Foreign Policy on January 5.

[reads] "The National Committee, sponsored by Bill Flynn, sent an invitation to Adams to come over." So the fat was in the fire then—was he going to be able to get the visa? I was just back, and the conference was going to be February 1. I didn't talk to Tip O'Neill because he was dying. We have the invitation coming, and Tip O'Neill dying, and then John Hume coming over and I'm having a long dinner with John Hume at Locke-Ober's in Boston about this. I'm sure I have notes on that too, which we don't have. But he was very strong for the visa.

Young: Were you fully convinced?

Kennedy: I believed that Hume had come down—he may not have come down for that dinner, but I had to talk to Hume before I was going to speak to the President about it. I either had to talk to him again—I'll have to find out who was on the dinner list, whether he came down—but I remember that I had to talk to him again. Before I was going to see the President, I wanted to have a face-to-face discussion with him. We went to Locke-Ober's and talked for two or three hours, and he was very strongly in favor of Adams. On January 14, Adams submits the visa application, and on January 15 I write to Clinton, supporting the visa.

Young: Had you spoken with him already?

Kennedy: I had not spoken to Clinton.

Young: So the first he heard from you was the letter?

Kennedy: The first he got, I think, was the letter. I was probably in touch with Nancy Soderberg, but that would certainly be the way I'd proceed. Now is the time that I speak to Foley. He was the leader. I also spoke to Moynihan, Dodd, [Joseph] Biden, Carey, and a number of other Senators. So there was some backwash from the members of Congress and Senate following the situation, but there was clearly a strong, solid base in the Senate that would support the President

should he make the determination. It was clear that it wasn't going to be made by the Attorney General or the immigration office. It was going to be made by the President.

Young: The Attorney General was not in favor, was she?

Kennedy: No. The State Department was not in favor, and the British government was strongly against it.

Young: They were lobbying like mad, weren't they?

Kennedy: They were lobbying like the devil. At some time—we have to get the date—I went down to see the President. I remember talking to him, and Chris came down and talked to him. Basically, I thought the argument was just overwhelmingly in favor of doing it, once you became convinced that the serious people in Ireland—Reynolds, the people in the government—were very much in favor of it. John Hume was strongly in favor of it, and a few other people we talked to. They believed that Adams was going to maintain his neutrality and give up the violence.

I thought it was just overwhelming. I didn't think it was a 55/45 or a 60/40. It was 90/10 once we met that criteria, and we had to meet that in order to get it. If it wavered at all, I think it was 90/10 myself, if I were going to take a chance on it. But once these views and support came in, it didn't seem to me that it was really much of a tough decision.

Young: But wasn't there a question about whether he would make a statement to this effect in advance of being given the visa? That was Niall O'Dowd or somebody, and he said no.

Kennedy: But that was sort of an add-on, to see if he'd get it. I never got the impression that Clinton was thinking he was going to make a statement. Others were wondering whether he was going to make a statement. I remember something about a statement.

Young: I think the issue was the visa, what they would do after and before.

Kennedy: The reasons were number one, this was going to give peace a chance. How could we turn down an opportunity when we had this kind of historical situation? We had this incredible background of the last 20-odd years—the hunger strikes and the violence. How could we possibly turn down giving peace a chance?

Two, we had the incredible constituency following this. This wasn't an issue of passing reference. The Irish in America followed this very closely because we had all the problems with NORAD, who were passionate about it. People had followed the Four Horsemen on the issue. So the communities were very involved in it, and the communities would never forgive us if we didn't give peace a chance. They would understand if we gave it a chance and it didn't work out.

The bottom line was how could we not do it when we've had the British talking to the IRA—and now they're trying to veto an opportunity for the United States to play a role in brokering the peace? So their argument about not giving peace a chance falls on its face in terms of what they've done over the years. They can't say, "You can't do this," because they've been doing it; they've had these negotiations going on for a period of time.

Finally, he's coming to a conference sponsored by Margaret Thatcher and Henry Kissinger and some of the other right-wingers, and this is where it was going. I didn't think it was even a close question. He asked a few questions—he's very good. I've tried to convince him of a lot of things, and I couldn't get to first base. But I never felt that he had much of an argument on the other side. I don't remember many powerful arguments of resistance. I left there feeling pretty certain that it was going to move ahead. I knew there was a lot moving against it, but I thought it was going to happen.

Then we had [Reginald] Empey. I guess it was later on when he came back from St. Patrick's Day about coming over and doing a fundraiser.

Young: That was another time.

Kennedy: That was another occasion.

Young: But on the first visit at the visa time, there were unarmed grenades found, supposedly in an IRA cache in California. That always had a ring of phoniness to me. He really hadn't disavowed the California thing. Somebody was trying to play a trick here, I think.

Knott: Then you had another visa situation shortly after that with Joe Cahill, right?

Young: That was a tough one.

Kennedy: Yes.

Knott: Jean was very much in the middle of that.

Kennedy: Yes. In order to be able to sell it, you needed a hardliner to be able to convince them. I can understand the politics of it. This is all against the background where we had people in jail here. I can't remember that fellow in jail in New York. Even Chris Dodd went down to see him. Families knew people at every level. This was a very personal kind of thing. Everybody's related in Ireland, and they're related over here. Having Cahill come in was very controversial. But it just made political sense to me that if you're trying to convince people here, the best way to do it was somebody they'd listen to, and they would obviously listen to him.

Young: Do you think it would have been much rougher sledding if the request had been for visas at the same time for the two of them?

Kennedy: Oh, I think so. It was the confluence of circumstances. The event—and it wasn't just a made-up event. The people in the previous year or two—that was sort of legitimate—Flynn was strongly encouraged in trying to find a solution, his organization was. But they had had other speakers who had been involved in it. So it was legitimate. It wasn't just a phony group that was set up. And he had worked cleverly in getting a broader kind of constituency involved in it. So that was all the political cover they needed, it seemed to me, this politician. As I say, I think this was a no-brainer myself.

But I could understand the resistance—people like Foley, who's a thoughtful person and whom I agreed with 98% of the time. He cared about Ireland and had visited Ireland and knew Ireland.

He had been to Ireland a number of times. This wasn't just some knee-jerk figure. Tom is a serious person. So there was some sentiment on that side.

Young: Somebody wrote that Clinton—when he decided to grant the visa—pushed a door that was already half open. I think it was an Irishman who wrote that. *[laughter]*

Kennedy: God love him. Well, he made the right judgment. There are a lot of times you don't, and I think he got clearly vested in Ireland, continuously vested in it.

Young: What was it about Ireland?

Kennedy: I think that he found out that this thing worked. I think he wasn't having a lot of successes in a lot of different places, and this was a process that was going through and that looked like it had some real prospect of making it. He appointed [George J.] Mitchell and had him go over, and it looked like Mitchell was making some progress. This is really very significant—you know, you're going to be able to work it here, and that raises the possibility that this could have an impact in terms of the Middle East.

Young: I was going to ask if he was really looking for alternatives or looking for models.

Kennedy: I think that's possible. We had just gone through—four years before probably—the end of apartheid. He had put the sanctions on, and then Reagan had vetoed the Anti-Apartheid Bill, and we had overridden his veto. Then we had two years of economic sanctions, and we began to see [Nelson] Mandela coming out of jail and being an extraordinary figure. There were some real possibilities in this, and he was smart enough to see that and understand it. I think that made a big difference.

Young: John Hume certainly waxed eloquent in our interview on the model, the approach, that could be adapted, how it could be used but wasn't being used in other places. He got to talking about Iraq, for example.

Kennedy: Well, it might have more, you're right, than the Middle East, particularly when you had Tony Blair and Clinton, and an Irish Taoiseach seriously and responsibly involved—and Hume, who is an unbelievable figure, and Adams, who is a very clever politician. A lot of the things he's done I agree with, although some I don't. Even Trimble, although he failed and was a difficult sort of figure, was a proponent for the viewpoint at that time. The eight or ten other minor figures, for the most part, were all fairly responsible. That's not the Middle East.

Young: No. I think he was speaking about the Middle East earlier.

Kennedy: Yes, but that's not the Middle East. My sister Jean ran into a lot of hard water after they got that visa—there were people over there who differed with her. But there's no question that just opened up all new possibilities, and I admire her willingness to stake out that position and see the moment and see the part in history—and the timing. I think it was a very key decision at a crucial time, and made an incredible difference.