EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH GARRET FITZGERALD

September 28, 2005
Dublin, Ireland

Interviewers
James S. Young, chair
Stephen F. Knott

Participants
Sean Donlon
Michael Lillis

© 2015 The Miller Center Foundation and the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate

Publicly released transcripts of the Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project are freely available for noncommercial use according to the Fair Use provisions of the United States Copyright Code and International Copyright Law. Advance written permission is required for reproduction, redistribution, and extensive quotation or excerpting. Permission requests should be made to the Miller Center, P.O. Box 400406, Charlottesville, VA 22904-4406.

To cite an interview, please use the following general format: [name of interviewee] Interview, [date of interview], Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia.

EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH GARRET FITZGERALD

September 28, 2005

Young: Why don't you start?

FitzGerald: I'm Garret FitzGerald, glad to welcome you here to our extended dining room. I added down to the far end a few years ago. We were a bit squashed at the table, being a large extended family, so that's why you're here.

Lillis: Michael Lillis, former Irish civil servant, now living in Brazil. I was involved in these matters especially in the U.S. in the '70s. I was press officer in '73 to '76 in New York, and from '76 to '79, I was political counselor in the Embassy in Washington and subsequently I was involved in Anglo-Irish negotiations. I was an advisor to Garret FitzGerald, who did not identify himself as twice Prime Minister of this country.

Donlon: Sean Donlon, former Irish diplomat, civil servant, Counsel General in Boston from '69 to '71, Ambassador in Washington from '78 to '81, Secretary General of the Department of Foreign Affairs from '81 to '87.

Knott: I'm Stephen Knott from the Miller Center, an Associate Professor there in the Oral History program.

Young: I am Jim Young. I direct the Oral History program and I thank you very much for giving this time to us. Do you need to know anything about the background and rules of the project?

Do you know that we have also done oral histories of the Jimmy Carter White House years ago, followed by a selected number of the [Ronald] Reagan people because President Reagan was already incapacitated for interviews by the time we started that fairly recently. This included interviews with Bill Clark. Steve ran the Reagan project for us. That was followed by a George H.W. Bush project, which has now been completed. We interviewed about 50 people for that. Now we're in the midst of the [William] Clinton oral history. This and the Kennedy project are the two most comprehensive, largest projects we've done; they're both six-year projects. So it's very exciting for us.

FitzGerald: Who are you seeing here?

Young: We saw Al [Albert] Reynolds yesterday. We're seeing John Hume tomorrow.

FitzGerald: Are you? We've had—

Donlon: He told me he was arriving today. It's important you should know that.

FitzGerald: He said he couldn't come.

Donlon: John is beginning to suffer a bit from—

Young: I know. I think Mrs. [Patricia] Hume will be with him.

Donlon: That's good.

FitzGerald: When did you hear he was coming?

Knott: Tomorrow at 10:30, here.

Young: It could be that there's been a change.

FitzGerald: I think there have been several—

Knott: We should give him a call.

Donlon: He's in Strasbourg. I spoke with him yesterday. He said, "Yes, I'll be here on Wednesday at 10:30." I said, "John, I think it's Thursday." "No," he said, "it's Wednesday." But Pat wasn't with him and he's not here, so—

Knott: Yes.

Young: The way we arranged it was that if it was not going well or if he got tired, we would just break off but reserve time on Friday if he wished to continue. We'll play it by ear. You'll be with him in that interview, won't you?

Donlon: If it's tomorrow, yes, I would hope so. I have to leave tomorrow evening to get back down to the west.

Young: I spoke with Jean, whom we've also interviewed for this project. We've interviewed the Ambassador, Jean Kennedy Smith. We interviewed Albert Reynolds was yesterday. Jean had asked me—I called her up last Thursday and I said, "You know, we're going to Ireland tomorrow." She said, "Oh really?" I said, "Do you have any last words of advice?" She said, "I certainly do." As a result I have calls in to Father [Alec] Reid—she wanted me to at least say hello to him for her—and Tim Pat Coogan. These are not for interviews. I think these are just people we ought to talk to. She knew we were talking to all of you.

FitzGerald: Anybody else?

Knott: We actually received an e-mail from Senator Kennedy's office this morning, suggesting that we get in touch with the current Foreign Minister, [Dermot] Ahern.

Donlon: For the recent stuff. I can certainly speak for myself; we're out of it for quite some time.

FitzGerald: Since '87.

Donlon: I was back in ’94 to ’97 with John Bruton. Without exception—

Young: What is the name?

Knott: Foreign Minister Ahern. We don’t know how to get in touch with him and we were wondering if—

Donlon: [*Gives phone number*]

Young: We don’t know what we will be doing Friday in terms of John Hume so we didn’t want to—I think this will probably be a short interview, but we wouldn’t want to discommode—

FitzGerald: If he’s coming tomorrow, you’ll get through it tomorrow with him here, so Friday you can do other things. Anybody else? Who have been our Ambassadors in Washington?

Donlon: Dermot Gallagher. Actually the thing to do might be to call Dermot Gallagher’s office. Dermot Gallagher is now the head of the Department of Foreign Affairs. The political head is Dermot Ahern; the Civil Service head is Dermot Gallagher. Dermot is an ex-Ambassador in Washington. So you’ll kill two birds with one stone if that’s okay, because Dermot will more easily be able to set up a meeting with Dermot Ahern than anybody else.

Knott: Perhaps we can meet with both at once.

Donlon: Exactly.

Young: Ahern called Senator Kennedy. That was what prompted this e-mail to us. “Could you squeeze this in?”

Knott: We may be at the peak of our capacity with this additional—Thank you.

FitzGerald: Well, try Dot [Dorothy] Tubridy and try Gallagher and Ahern. Right, so that clears that out of the way. Now we can start. You were just saying, Sean, about the first contact with Dot Tubridy, around ’68, do you think?

Donlon: Social contact rather than a political contact.

FitzGerald: But she would know about his visits.

Donlon: She would know about all of Ted Kennedy’s visits to Ireland, some of which had a political purpose but many of which, particularly in the early days, did not have a political purpose and there was, to the best of my knowledge, no contact with Irish politicians. I think that explains why, when the Northern troubles first grew up, roughly ’69 onwards, Kennedy was not in tune at all with what was happening. I have a quote from ’71—excuse my scribbled notes.

In September of ’71, following the introduction of internment in Northern Ireland, which was a particularly difficult and unsettling period, Kennedy issued a statement, and I quote just one small bit of it. He called for, “the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland and the establishment of a united Ireland.” To which the then Irish Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, responded, "He doesn't know what he's talking about." I mean, it will give you some indication of, in a sense, how out-of-step he was with Irish political thinking at the time.

FitzGerald: He was responding to the usual nice-making impressions that are always pro-IRA [Irish Republican Army] and hostile to the Nationalists. I was at a [inaudible] in New York, the one place in the world the Irish government was not recognized.

Donlon: But I think that was a key event, because Kennedy's office suddenly realized we'd better take Ireland a little bit seriously. Carey Parker had been appointed in 1970 as his legislative aide. Michael can go into more detail on this because he got to know Carey best.

Lillis: In the earlier days.

FitzGerald: Let me come in on that one. My recollection, which you have to check, is that after Bloody Sunday he spoke in terms of our unhelpful—and I remember—that was on the weekend, I suppose.

Donlon: Sunday. The last day in January '72 was Bloody Sunday.

FitzGerald: Well, it might have been Monday, then, during the week when Gene McCarthy spoke and he was very sensible, not to kind of hammer things down. I made it in my own mind, the sharp contrast in the two of them, frankly, at that stage. So I think despite whatever Carey Parker was doing between December of '71 and January '72, if you check the record—I could be wrong, but my recollection is that he was still more oriented toward the IRA and Irish government in January '72.

The next thing that happened was John Hume's first contact with—

Donlon: It was shortly after the Bloody Sunday. Hugh Carey, who was then a Congressman in Washington, and who was Chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, held hearings on Northern Ireland and he asked the Irish government and other people to send out witnesses to his hearings. One of the first names on the list was John Hume. But because it was in the immediate aftermath of Bloody Sunday and things in Northern Ireland were very uncertain, John didn't travel.

About two months later, Ted Kennedy was coming to Europe to some NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization]-related conference held in Bonn and he asked if he could meet John Hume in Bonn. Now at this stage John Hume wasn't by any means an international traveler. He went down to his local credit union offices, I'm sure he'll tell you. He borrowed the money to pay the airfare to go from Derry to London and London to Bonn and he met Ted Kennedy at the Irish Embassy residence in Bonn.

FitzGerald: The Ambassador put him up.

Donlon: The Ambassador put him up because he didn't have any money for a hotel. He might not admit to that now. I believe, and John believes—I've spoken to John in the last few days—that was his first meeting with Ted Kennedy.

I have a memory that goes back to my own days in Boston. John arrived out in Boston in 1970 or possibly early ’71, carrying under his arm a film that had been made by Muiris Mac Conghail. It was a movie called *John Hume’s Derry*. John had never been to the United States before and he arrived out in Boston, but nobody in the States knew him and it was generally an unsuccessful visit. But I do recall that at a meeting in a hotel in Copley Square in Boston, Ted Kennedy was there.

Knott: Copley Plaza**.**

Donlon: Yes, Copley Plaza Hotel. I think John showed the movie, but neither has John any recollection of meeting Ted Kennedy and subsequently, years later, when I asked Ted Kennedy about it, he had no recollection of the event. So maybe I’m mistaken, but I don’t think I am mistaken. At any event, it wasn’t a substantive contact. The substantive contact was in the spring of 1972.

FitzGerald: We believe it led to an evolution in Ted’s thinking on the subject. He might even at that stage have taken the Irish government’s side. John had great credibility in whatever he said but, you have to look at things, what the problems were in the IRA. I think Ted was taking it seriously. My impression is—but then I was in Opposition government—that from then on, he was closer to our position. But it was John who started that rather than our government. Our government was not effective, really, in these issues, externally, in foreign affairs, between ’69 and ’72. It was a very difficult period. There were internal problems in the government and Ministers were sacked and arms limitations and all the rest of it, so it was difficult.

My recollection is that the first serious attempt by our government to influence American opinion would have been late in ’72 with Jack Lynch and Desmond O’Malley going to America and starting to try to get across that things were not the way Irish-Americans were reporting. So the process of change, the Hume interview and possibly—we’ll have to track down that Jack Lynch and Desmond O’Malley met Ted Kennedy and that occasion. You were gone from there then.

Donlon: I was gone from Boston. I was back working on Northern Ireland here.

FitzGerald: Yes, we have to confirm that. I do recall that and how it was great to hear the government actually trying to take this thing on successfully. The government changed then in March ’73 when I became Foreign Minister and pursued these matters from then on, although I didn’t actually—I was in America at the UN [United Nations] in ’73. It wasn’t until ’74 that I got to Washington and he was there then and he was pushing me around, telling me what to do, what not to do. He wanted me to wear a green tie for St. Patrick’s Day or some occasion. I pretended I was not going to wear it just to annoy him, and teased him after that.

Knott: We have a photograph of you wearing it.

Donlon: Just to be clear, the system in Ireland is somewhat different obviously from the American system. It’s more akin to the British system. Michael and I, as civil servants, are apolitical, even in senior positions. In fact, especially in senior positions, you’re apolitical. So if there isn’t a clearly-stated government policy on Northern Island, which there wasn’t between ’69 and ’72 because there was turmoil, civil servants were basically unable to do very much. I mean, you can't articulate a policy that doesn't exist. We didn't even have the confidence—I recall from my days in Boston—we didn't even have the confidence to tell people not to give money to the IRA, and that should be remembered when people like Ted Kennedy were banging on the table for a united Ireland and Brits out.

FitzGerald: He was getting no advice and—

Donlon: Not only was he getting no advice, if he had looked for advice or looked for policy positions, he wouldn't have got it.

FitzGerald: Policy was evolved. We discussed this the week before last at this seminar in Sunningdale. It was evolved by civil servants being asked to prepare speeches for Ministers and putting in things that they thought might be useful for the Ministers to say. The Minister either left them in or took them out. If they were left in, that was the nearest thing you had to an Irish policy—a long letter, really, to the civil service-upwards because of the chaotic situation. That changed toward the end of '72.

Young: When did you detect a change in Ted Kennedy's attitude or approach?

FitzGerald: I think '72.

Donlon: As the year went on in '72, particularly through the influence—first of all through John Hume, and secondly through what I would call the organized ability of Carey Parker, who literally picked up everything from Ireland, even though he had never, I think, been to Ireland.

Knott: I think that's right.

Donlon: But somehow or other—and this is pre-emails and even pre-faxes—somehow or other, he'd pick up all the major statements made by players, north and south and he was able to weave into that and the various speeches that Ted Kennedy made, Carey Parker's own interests in some of the Irish poets. So you would notice frequently in Kennedy's speeches particularly quotations from [William Butler] Yeats, probably fed by you subsequently, because there were certainly interventions that would not have been in American publications, let's put it that way.

FitzGerald: I recall an occasion, but you can deny it, when there were speeches by the Irish Minister, and the American—whether it was Ted, I don't know—but John Hume wrote them all, I think.

Lillis: There was one occasion in the Waldorf Astoria, out in front during the Presidency of Jimmy Carter. The person who was being honored was [Thomas P.] Tip O'Neill and the following was inflicted on the audience—I was myself pretty bored—a speech by Tip O'Neill; a speech by Teddy Kennedy; a speech by [Anthony J.] Hederman, who was our Attorney General; Jack Lynch, Jimmy Carter—all of which were penned by the same hand.

FitzGerald: That's how we ensure consistency.

Lillis: We had to sit through this. I just want to say one word, to give my own view as to what happened, particularly in Kennedy's evolution, because his policy position evolved, but his actual effectiveness and influence evolved in a way which was unprecedented for us in our relations with America. Sean is the historian, at least of us two, Garret also, but if you go back to the 19th century, early 20th century, we never, in the United States, were able to have any influence outside of Irish-American power in Congress, which was important but never effective vis-à-vis the administration's policies.

John Hume had a lot to do with the evolution of the policy, but what happened in the '70s was Kennedy was extremely effective in this as well, working closely of course with Tip O'Neill. They were the two key figures. [Daniel Patrick] Moynihan was there, and Carey, but they were the two active people and their staff people were very important in this. It was not alone to rebalance the positions they were taking in relation to human rights in Northern Ireland, and anti-British policy and that sort of stuff, which was extremely important for us in all sorts of ways, but also to mobilize, which was a huge struggle, a forward policy by the U.S. Presidency in relation to Northern Ireland.

We'd never had that. Kennedy deserves an enormous amount of credit for the fact that we were able to pull that off through what was called the Carter Initiative. And ever after that the U.S. Presidency took positions on Northern Ireland. That really had a huge influence on—

FitzGerald: Especially with the British. They were terrified that America would be involved in Ireland in some way and they were quite stupid about it. Like the time when Clinton couldn't talk to [John] Major because of the visit by, was it—? [*Editor's note: Gerry Adams*] Major wouldn't take his calls. Must be the first time in history the British Prime Minister wouldn't talk to the American President. In fact, of course, the visit was quite important to the peace process. So there's always been a problem.

I remember one British Minister, a Foreign Secretary, David [Anthony Llewellyn] Owen, who said to me later that the one thing that always worried them was American intervention. And that was true back in '21. The British needed a loan from America at the time and one of the reasons why the truce came was because of worry about American attitudes at that time, besides the Irish politicians were having some influence in Congress then.

Donlon: The British, I'm not even sure to this day have accepted the positive nature of Kennedy's involvement, which is quite extraordinary.

FitzGerald: They still carry on.

Donlon: They never, ever fully understood what he was trying to do and in particular, as Michael has said, and I agree completely, what O'Neill and Kennedy did in the '70s was quite extraordinary in two respects: one, to influence the U.S. Presidency to develop a constructive policy towards Ireland; and two, to help to cut down support for IRA—

Young: For the arms.

Donlon: For the arms and the money.

FitzGerald: Forming the Four Horsemen in '77, the Carter Initiative.

Lillis: Seventy-nine the Carter Initiative, the Four Horsemen in ’76.

Donlon: No, no, no.

Lillis: That’s right, Four Horsemen ’77.

Donlon: Seventy-seven.

FitzGerald: By doing that, they blocked [Mario] Biaggi in the committee. I do want to point out, my impression from early conversations with you rather than direct knowledge, is that it was Kennedy who convinced O’Neill also to become more oriented—

Lillis: That’s correct.

FitzGerald: —in the approach.

Donlon: Well, I would qualify that by saying that O’Neill said to me on more than one occasion that it was Michael who had influenced him on Ireland.

FitzGerald: Michael in ’74.

Lillis: I think, just recalling his various conversations—

FitzGerald: That was in ’74.

Lillis: Actually he says that his children, who were very passionate about the Vietnam War—

FitzGerald: Tip?

Lillis: Tip O’Neill, yes—that they brought that to bear as well, you know, this kind of anti-violence view.

Young: Yes.

Lillis: For O’Neill it was a huge change in his position because he’d had a traditional, Irish-American from North Cambridge point of view.

Young: Possibly Ted Kennedy also may have been reflecting the standard Irish-American—

Lillis: No question about that.

Young: Then when guns come into it, you have an additional factor.

Lillis: That’s an interesting point.

Young: You’ll notice later on he has great trouble trusting Sinn Féin. He has to be persuaded that that is a concern, but I’m getting ahead of the game. I think it’s very interesting that there’s not only a change in Edward Kennedy’s initial response but then that involved changing the

Irish-American view of the matter in stopping, taking the positive road, to bring the Irish-Americans along with his transference, and money was not a good idea, was not helpful.

Lillis: It was a very intelligent policy in terms of the emotions of everybody who was involved here, because from a position of simply being, "British out; condemn the British," a Pavlovian kind of reaction, it moved on to being, "We're against violence and we discourage Irish-Americans from contributing to the IRA's campaign. At the same time, we are strongly critical of British policy and we are calling on them to do something." In order to get to the second point, you had to mobilize the government of the United States, and that was quite a big operation, which they pulled off with tremendous success.

FitzGerald: And we were fighting against the Irish-American thing anyway, NORAID [Irish Northern Aid Committee]. At the same time, we were fighting against British propaganda in Washington, very hostile to us in the English tradition, because although the Foreign Office at home had been a more positive influence, the Foreign Office abroad was very negative. We had a lot of problems, didn't we? We're fighting in Washington against the IRA on one hand and the British on the other, and the mobilization of Kennedy, O'Neill, and the others was very welcome.

Lillis: You guys are very familiar with the State Department and its special relationship with Britain. The State Department was the main defense against an Irish government effort to involve the U.S. government in a solution. Without Kennedy we wouldn't have been able to do it; it's as simple as that.

Young: Also, the State Department is protective of the executive prerogative—

Lillis: Sure.

Young: And not the congressional—

Lillis: That's the heart of it.

Young: It's interesting that Kennedy himself was never on the Foreign Relations Committee. This is all done outside his formal legislative responsibilities and his preferred legislative assignment, which is again one reason this becomes very interesting to us, because it's a case of a United States Senator having a very significant—

FitzGerald: Policy—

Lillis: Foreign policy—

Young: —use of his Senate position in terms of actual legislative authority.

FitzGerald: Do we know when Tip O'Neill first became involved in this support of ours? Do we know that in '74 he was already in support at that stage?

Lillis: He was kind of struggling with—

FitzGerald: Even long after that.

Lillis: It was a genuine struggle; it was not an issue of popularity. He was concerned. I'm sure you recall that.

Donlon: I got to know Tip best after '78, '79. When I was Ambassador in Washington I used to take a house on the Cape for all or part of the summer and he had a place on the Cape and that's where I found him at his most relaxed. He waxed lyrical to me on one occasion about the fact that Michael had basically solidified his position. He was coming to a certain point of view under the influence of quite a number of people: his legislative aide, the late Kirk O'Donnell; Leo Diehl to a lesser extent; his kids to some extent, particularly Rosemary [O'Neill]; and—

Lillis: His son, the Lieutenant Governor, Tommy [O'Neill].

Donlon: Tommy.

Lillis: Chuck Daly.

Donlon: And Chuck Daly, yes. But he did say to me that finally what pulled him over to our side, so to speak, was conversations with Michael, some of which he said were quite rough and took place on the margins of a poker game.

Lillis: Yes, I did supply him with Cuban cigars, which was my diplomatic prerogative—

FitzGerald: Subverting the entire American system.

Lillis: Subverting the Cuban embargo. Actually I was entitled—in those days we were. Today I believe you can no longer do that. What we can do is buy them at the—whatever the shop is at the UN in New York.

Donlon: So it seems to me that was—you went to New York in what year?

Lillis: In '73, but I got to know him in '74. I was in New York. Then I was moved down there in '76. I mean, the combination was perfect. I don't want to take anything from Moynihan, who was the most delightful character I've ever met, or indeed Hugh Carey, or their staffers. Moynihan's guy was Tim Russert, now a big star. All those people worked very hard on this stuff and it was all intellectually coordinated by Carey Parker.

FitzGerald: Is he still alive?

Knott: Oh yes.

Donlon: He's still in Ted Kennedy's office.

Knott: He's a terrific source—

Lillis: Kirk O'Donnell, who was the chief of staff in Ted's office—because Tip was the Speaker and there was this curious thing that you must have come up with in your Clinton investigations—the relationship between the Clinton White House and Congress was, you know, quite a story. Kirk was key to all that and he was able to use the leverage of the Speakership to move the administration, despite the most incredible obstacles placed in the way by the State Department and the Secretary of State.

Donlon: And be clear on how detailed that was. I was called into the State Department more than once. Eventually they stopped because I wasn't taking it seriously as Ambassador—that I should not be going directly to the Hill; that the channel to the Hill was through the State Department. I remember on one occasion having to bring forward evidence that in Dublin, officials of the American Embassy had direct contact with people in the Dáil and the Seanad.

This was taken very seriously for at least a year. They complained to me about Michael. When I arrived in Washington, Michael had been there for two years. Almost the first thing that happened was the State Department called me in to complain. I didn't even tell him because it would upset him so much.

Young: As a matter of ancient history, I did a study many years ago on early Washington, when the government first went to Washington, and I am here to testify in your favor that you have history on your side. The British legation there—we did not exchange Ambassadors at first; we didn't qualify. But they very soon learned that it was not sufficient to deal with the State Department. So through parties—

FitzGerald: Before or after the war?

Knott: This was right at the beginning.

Young: Which war? Eighteen twelve?

FitzGerald: Eighteen twelve. Was it before or after 1812?

Young: Both. John Quincy Adams, who was Secretary of State, got choleric about this bypassing of the State Department, but it didn't make a bit of difference.

FitzGerald: It's a bit like being in North Ireland, Foreign Minister up to the North. I just told the British I was going. They didn't like it at all. They were constantly expressing their dissatisfaction, but they never had the guts to say, "You can't go." They couldn't. What I was doing was constructive. In fact, at the end of my period as the Foreign Minister, I was actually in better contact with the Unionists than they were, because they had cut themselves out of contact, and I used to have to tell the British what was happening with the Unionists. But they didn't like it at all.

Donlon: But when talking about the key aides, Carey Parker, obviously; Kirk O'Donnell; and once Carter then became President we had Bob Hunter. Have you come across Bob's name? Bob was National Security Council and subsequently became Ambassador to NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization].

Knott: Bob Hunter, he's a Democrat.

Young: NSC [National Security Council]?

Knott: He was NSC under [Zbigniew] Brzezinski.

Donlon: Under Carter. He was second to Brzezinski.

FitzGerald: I'll tell you a story about that. I was out of office most of Carter, but at the beginning I was still there. It was St. Patrick's Day. I said, "I've got two cuttings here from two papers: one is the *Daily Telegraph*, the anti-Irish, British paper; one is the *Irish Press*, nationalist Irish paper. They both say, Mr. President, that you're supporting the IRA, that you told the IRA you're supporting them. We're worried about this." He said, "What? Is he one of yours, Zbig?" So Bob was sent out and he came back and said, "He is one of yours."

He introduced the system of having these girls sitting in the lower corridor of the White House. Then we'd come in and talk to them. It would be nice. Then we'd come in and the girls weren't there. I was always in favor, but that was that.

I met Bob then as Ambassador to NATO. I went to NATO to find out about the Partnership for Peace, which was being wrongly presented here. Then I met him in the [indecipherable] Center, was it last year? I was speaking there, and had a great discussion with the UN and ended up with him saying, "You have to take on the UN. You have to reform the UN. You're the only person who can reform the UN." Why he got this idea in his head, I don't know.

Donlon: But they were extraordinary people, when you think of people like Bob Hunter, Kirk O'Donnell, and Carey Parker, those three in particular. They were quite extraordinarily well informed. They simply didn't take what Michael or Garret or I said and accept it. They had contacts and very often they were ahead of people in Ireland in the sense that they had a complete picture, North and South.

I don't know how they did it. Carey Parker told me that he did it by regular phone calls. He would phone people like John Hume and Gerry [Gerard] Fitt and Austin Currie, and he would phone people in the South and he would take information from the embassy. He had a huge network of sources and Kennedy clearly came to rely, in my view, 100 percent on Carey Parker. Kennedy himself kept an interest—I don't want to skip forward too much, but Kennedy would come in and out of the issue. When he came into it, he came in with this background of a wealth of information.

He himself did interesting things, not very often central to what was happening. I remember on two events being asked to participate. On the boat in Cape Cod he had gathered together a group of psychiatrists. "What was the impact of the Northern troubles on children?" I suspect this was because somebody had put him under pressure, probably one of his sisters. But he had a very serious seminar.

Young: This is a serious interest of his. It goes into many other areas, too.

Donlon: Of course, one huge area of influence that he had in Ireland was the appointment of ambassadors. Don't forget, he was the one who basically appointed Bill Shannon.

Lillis: Bill Shannon, yes.

Donlon: And obviously he was the one who appointed Jean. There's no doubt about that. In both cases, be clear, against Opposition. In Bill Shannon's case, certain members of the Irish administration opposed the appointment. Bill Shannon was nominated and Carter went through some articles he had written in the *New York Times* and one of the articles Bill had written seemed to Carter to strike a discordant note with Irish policy.

Lillis: It was very mild.

Donlon: Bill Shannon was required, and he did it, was required to write an article—

FitzGerald: I had forgotten.

Lillis: Actually, you may not know this.

Donlon: Michael Lillis probably wrote the article.

Lillis: I wrote the article. He came into the embassy and he said, "Michael, will you write this damn article?" And it was published in the Sunday—

FitzGerald: He was then reappointed.

Lillis: Carter was extremely cross. It actually met every single—

Young: He was required to write an article to what effect?

Donlon: Basically to disown a previous article he had written where he had expressed some mild support for—

Lillis: He had specifically to disown, and mention the publication in the text. You probably didn't bother reading it, but it was all written for the benefit of your colleague, who was extremely annoyed at the fact that he had to withdraw his opposition.

Donlon: That was his appointment and then, of course, when it came to the appointment of Jean, I have no idea who was opposing it. Somebody had proposed the nomination of a Congressman from Massachusetts who went on to become Ambassador to the Holy See.

FitzGerald: Bill Flynn?

Knott: Ray Flynn.

Donlon: Absolutely right, Ray Flynn.

Lillis: Who was more open to AOH [Ancient Order of Hibernians] influence.

Donlon: I had left the Foreign Service at this stage. I was in private business and Kennedy got on to me himself and said this was something embarrassing but he had promised the position to Jean and it was important that she get it.

FitzGerald: Who was President at this stage?

Donlon: Clinton. This was in the aftermath of Jean having had a huge row with Ted because of what happened with Jean's son down in Florida, remember that?

Young: William [Kennedy] Smith, yes.

Donlon: Whoever was opposing Jean's appointment was doing so on the grounds that she was a woman and that the Irish were not yet ready for a female Ambassador.

Lillis: Even though at that time we must have had at least one female President.

Donlon: We had. Ted asked me if I would write him a letter explaining the role of women in Irish society. We not only had a woman President, we had two women at that stage in the cabinet, Maire Geoghegan-Quinn and, I can't remember who else. We'd had Gemma Hussey, we'd had Nuala Fennell—a string of women—women on the Supreme Court. I have that correspondence somewhere. Ted Kennedy finally wrote back to me, "Thanks very much for your letter. It was very helpful. I always knew you were an expert on Irish women." So I wrote him back a letter saying, "Dear Ted, You're just jealous." We're skipping forward, but that was another very important source of Ted Kennedy's influence on Ireland.

I believe that even in—there was some appointment made by Reagan that Ted got involved in helpfully. I can't remember who it was. We'd had one appalling appointment under Reagan, Bill Fitzgerald, who was well into his 80s when nominated. [*Ed. Note*: *George HW Bush appointed Fitzgerald in '92*]

FitzGerald: There was Daly.

Donlon: Daly was good.

FitzGerald: When he was here.

Donlon: When he was here, yes.

FitzGerald: He was involved—

Donlon: Daly was a friend of Bill Clark's. In fact, it was in that context—I mean Fitzgerald had been completely—

FitzGerald: Bill Clark also was involved in government, very willing to help. He said to me about Reagan at the time, he said, "Don't, for God's sake, send a telex over. It would be intercepted. Send Sean or somebody over to talk to me." I already had to respond to accusations after that, British civil servants communicating directly behind Margaret Thatcher's back. [inaudible] misses the Embassy. Manny was a true [inaudible] was sick at the time and it was sent to the teleprinter and [Sir Richard] Needham learned about this.

At that stage, a member of the Cabinet said, "Garret, I'd tell you what's happening in the Cabinet but only if you promise to send somebody over. So three times a week I'd send somebody over to get information so the British Minister—and also, civil servants were giving it privately so the British wouldn't find out about it, the deception. Then they complained that they couldn't find out what was happening in the negotiation because we weren't using the teleprinter any more and the British wouldn't tell them.

Lillis: Can I just come back—My own recollection when I was working for the Taoiseach here and Sean wasn't the Ambassador in Washington, is that for a long period after the failed Sunningdale Initiative, which was very important, there was no progress in Northern Ireland.

Donlon: None at all.

Lillis: Then Margaret Thatcher became Taoiseach.

Donlon: Prime Minister.

Lillis: She became Taoiseach. I'm entitled to use Irish taxonomy. She was going to be very difficult, because she was British Nationalist and very kind of—Garret knows all about Margaret Thatcher much more than I do.

FitzGerald: I'd been getting to know her some years before that. As Foreign Minister, I'd drop in from the Commons and have her to breakfast in the Embassy and talk about Europe and Northern Ireland and try to maintain a relationship with her.

Lillis: Under the leadership of Garret FitzGerald, the Irish government tried to get something going on Northern Ireland in a very serious way. She accommodated a process, let's put it like that. She appointed her most senior officials to be involved with people on our side and Sean and I were involved there very much, for a long period. But then this was interrupted sort of violently and I can't remember the date of the Brighton hotel bombing. It was following a meeting—

FitzGerald: Eighty-four. It was a hiatus.

Lillis: After that it looked as if the whole thing had collapsed, but actually the role of the United States became absolutely crucial to keeping that process going, or actually, should we say, more than reviving it really positively. Fortunately for us she actually visited Washington.

FitzGerald: In December of '84.

Donlon: Correct.

FitzGerald: She visited Clark. She got Reagan to raise the matter with her.

Lillis: I think Tip and Kennedy were involved there again. Clark was a blessing from our point of view.

Lillis: Clark was extremely helpful.

FitzGerald: She went to Tip.

Lillis: She went to Tip O'Neill's office. The previous year, a couple of years before that, he had been over Ireland. I tagged along with him. We found, I think there are actually real relatives of his, but we found them in this very remote part of Donegal.

Donlon: We have a small industry in Ireland to find relatives for American politicians.

Lillis: These people were terrific and very charming. She went into Tip's office and he brought her over to a photograph of this abandoned part of the Donegal coast, totally abandoned, actually—I don't think there are any relatives there at all—and he sort of explained to her how important this was to him. She took the point that if—and largely as a result of that, we got going again.

Kennedy was very much a part of it. I mean, this thing was virtually on the point of collapse, the result of—

FitzGerald: Well, now, you're exaggerating. I don't agree with that. But there was a hiatus. We had our meeting. It didn't go well. It went backwards, really, for a variety of reasons and when we were leaving she said, "Garret, you look depressed." I said, "I am depressed." Then she had a press conference at five o'clock. In fact, at the press conference she did a great job to be as positive as possible, up to the point it was twenty to 6:00, when our man there left to come and brief me. Then I turned on the radio, just as the headlines at 6:00, for my press conference. I couldn't hear a word because a pirate station was blocking out the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] in the middle of London.

So it wasn't the press conference, but all the journalists had been at the other press conference and heard her being asked a question about what different models of Ireland represented. She said, "No, that's out, that's out, that's out." Quite correctly. They had put pro forma on the table and it had been removed from the table four months earlier but the journalists didn't know that. Because of her tone of voice, and because of ignorance, they took this as being a huge setback. But it wasn't, in fact. It was interpreted that way. It was a bit of a shock because I'd been in some worse interviews in my life in that room in the Embassy, not knowing what the hell it was about. I didn't know what she said.

On the way home that night I said, "We're in a good position now because she's going to be in trouble with everybody, with her advisors and civil servants and members of the Cabinet, Foreign Secretary. They'll all be saying, "What did you do that for?" So we had an advantage. That wasn't the end of things. But by getting Ted Kennedy and/or Tip to get Reagan to raise it in December and say, "Well, you're coming in February. I'd like to know how things are happening in February." So it was put on the agenda, in a sense, for the February meeting. On the 21st of January we got a new proposal from the British and we started the whole process again.

Lillis: It led to the Anglo-Irish Agreement in November 1995, which was a key building block to where we are today.

Donlon: Just to hop back a bit for a minute, because we have jumped forward. Nineteen seventy-seven was a crucial year for American and Kennedy's influence in Ireland. First of all, in March of '77 Tip became Speaker, which gave him, obviously, much greater power than he'd previously had. On St. Patrick's Day in '77, mainly through Michael's activities, we got the first formal statement from the Four Horsemen: Kennedy, O'Neill, Carey, Moynihan. That was '77. That was key because the Four Horsemen became, in a sense, the engine for everything else that happened. The Four Horsemen were brought into play, for example, to try to persuade the White House to do things. The Four Horsemen were the public articulation—

FitzGerald: The senior members of Congress—

Donlon: That came later. That's a year or two later.

FitzGerald: I see.

Donlon: But also, what happened in '77, O'Neill and Kennedy began talks with Carter. "What will we do for Ireland? What can we do for Ireland?" That began immediately after the Four Horsemen statement. In June or July Kennedy made a major speech on Northern Ireland, which, in my view, is the first time that he came completely into the Irish government position. In that speech he basically centered his policy on Hume and on what Hume had been saying. He had a whole paragraph about Hume's bravery.

All of that was the preliminary to Carter issuing his Presidential statement in August in which he said for the first time: A) America is interested; B) If the people up there can get their act together, we in the United States will support it with money.

FitzGerald: Yes.

Donlon: That's why '77 is important, and Kennedy was central, with O'Neill. I would have said because of his role, because of his position, O'Neill was the public leader, but the intellectual leader was certainly Carey Parker.

Young: Yes.

Donlon: No doubt whatever about that, with Michael. Carey Parker and Michael probably drafted all the relevant statements.

Young: That was the first statement of an American President, wasn't it?

Donlon: The first-ever statement of what I would call intervention in Irish affairs by an American President, yes.

Young: And Carter had started out—

Donlon: Completely in support of the IRA.

Young: Yes, like Kennedy.

Donlon: In name only.

Donlon: What had happened was during the election campaign someone had trapped him in Baltimore—

Lillis: It was Sean McManus.

Donlon: Sean McManus.

FitzGerald: That's right, Sean McManus.

Lillis: What was the name of his press guy?

Donlon: Jody Powell.

Lillis: I called Jody Powell. I was in Washington at the time. I didn't even look for instructions here because I'm a bit notorious in that respect.

FitzGerald: But the government had changed.

Lillis: No, not at the time—so I said to him that he had an hour, that the Irish Embassy was going to issue a statement condemning Carter's irresponsible policy on Ireland within an hour. Mr. Carter phoned me five minutes later from a public phone somewhere in the South and I told him what he needed to say. He said it right away. That was where he got his tutorial on dealing with the Irish government.

Donlon: That's why the State Department never liked us.

Young: President Carter has said—he said this in an interview we had—he said, "I can always count on the State Department to tell me when I was wrong."

Lillis: I guess so.

Donlon: Incidentally, I don't think Carter gets enough credit for what he did for Ireland. I mean, if you remember, one of the themes of his Presidency was human rights, and latching on to that theme, he did a hell of a lot.

Now, obviously it suited him in terms of Tip O'Neill's being Speaker. Tip, we should never forget. Tip, from the day he became speaker, had this system of having breakfast with the President—I can't remember what morning, Tuesday morning probably. He would frequently phone you, I'm sure. He certainly phoned me when I was Ambassador. He said, "I'm having breakfast in the morning. Have you any new stories?" He always wanted to spin a new yarn. So you'd give him a yarn, and then he'd say, "And is there anything else I should say to him?" He did that with Carter.

Lillis: You know, the Carter Initiative, which you're correct to say was August that year—I was in Washington at the time, and it was very much Carey Parker. Kennedy, by the way, was following every inch of the way. This was his passion. O'Neill, Kirk O'Donnell, but the battle was actually between those guys and the State Department with the British pushing like blazes, including directly with Carter.

Young: Yes, exactly.

Lillis: Eventually we got it through with very pained reaction from the British.

FitzGerald: We were on their side in the thing. Ridiculous. It was so stupid. The next thing was, in ’79 the government changed because the Taoiseach changed, and I had gone over there with Jack Lynch. I went over to brief him, on the hand-over of government. I had two briefings with Jack—

Donlon: Hold on, what year was that?

FitzGerald: It was ’77. The changeover was ’77; it wasn’t ’79. I used to brief him and I told him to keep Sean in the department for a year as a carryover and then send him to Washington as Ambassador. That was all done. I used to brief him from time to time. I got up and went to see him. Then [Charles] Haughey came in and Haughey was more of an uncertain element in the administration. I went to Washington in January to make a speech somewhere, Sean asked me to. I said, “I won’t.” He kept on pestering me about it and finally he said, the Minister says it’s all right. I said, “I still won’t.”

I knew what would happen. Haughey would want me to stay. But I was asked to meet more people than I’d ever met before, a meeting of 45 people from 25 agencies to brief them on what Haughey would do. It astonished me. As Prime Minister I never met all these people. Here I was in Opposition and I’d just announced Haughey in Parliament. He was elected. It was a totally unsuitable procedure.

So they asked me what was going to happen. I said, “I reckon he’ll try to enter into negotiation with the British and establish a new relationship with them.” They all thought that was absolutely mad. Of course he did that the following May, so my credibility in Washington must have risen very sharply. I was known to be hostile to him and I said that’s what he would do and he did it.

Then, another thing, he was under pressure I think from [Neil] Blaney, who was a Republican, by the way. He was sacked from government. He was now independent. I think Blaney was putting pressure on him to move Sean because Sean was solid anti-IRA line. Blaney comes in for the IRA. Haughey needed Blaney’s support as an independent, and didn’t want to annoy him. Blaney, I think, pushed him to move Sean. And, indeed, Haughey said something not totally unfavorable about NORAID at the time.

Lillis: That’s right, I remember that.

FitzGerald: That’s the only occasion when John Hume intervened in domestic affairs. The Dáil Éireann Parliament and myself denounced the change and John Hume publicly supported us, which is fascinating. He never did any other time. Some contact was made with Kennedy and O’Neill. I won’t go into the question of who made the contact, but they made statements denouncing Sean’s move.

So here was an Irish Prime Minister unable to move his Ambassador because the country wanted to keep him. It was the most humiliating position to be in. He already had been shot down in the Dáil and had to reverse policy completely and had to pretend he wasn’t moving Sean at all. Sean was on his way at that stage to the UN where he was being posted, and Sean stayed on. That was a very unusual intervention by Tip O’Neill. I don’t think it’s ever happened anywhere else before.

Young: That is unusual.

FitzGerald: Anyone want to comment on that?

Donlon: Obviously I have a lot of details on that, but broadly, absolutely, that's correct. To focus on Kennedy's role in that: for some reason that I can't remember, I learned that I was being fired by a front page story in the *London Daily Telegraph* on the weekend of Saturday, whatever the Fourth of July weekend was. I was staying with Ethel Kennedy for the weekend on Cape Cod and obviously Ted was there. It was he who brought it to my attention. Presumably Carey Parker or someone had brought it to his attention. He said, "What should I do?"

I said, "It's probably better to do nothing, because this is a domestic matter, which has everything to do with the nature of the Republican wing of Fianna Fail, Republican in Irish terms. Better not get caught up in it." He mulled it over for a day or two. I stayed on the Cape with Ethel probably until Monday or maybe Tuesday. Kennedy was mulling it over and finally he came to me and he said, "I'm going to talk to Haughey."

I said, "How well do you know him?" Haughey had only become Prime Minster the previous December. He said, "I have known Haughey since he came to Boston in the '60s to establish fellowships at the Kennedy School of Administration in Harvard."

FitzGerald: Really? Ah. It was in '69.

Donlon: I presume it was in Haughey's day as Minister for Finance. As part of the Irish memorial to the late President [John] Kennedy there were a number of things done. One of the things that was proposed, and I don't think it ever happened, but anyway, Haughey went to Boston to talk to the people at the Kennedy Center and met Ted on that occasion. Apparently they did establish some sort of personal connection. So eventually Ted phoned Charley Haughey, who was by now at the Taoiseach, and said, "I don't think you should move the Ambassador, not because of any personal factor, but because he represents a policy that we've had great difficulty getting across in the United States. If you remove him, it will be a signal that that policy is ending." So I believe that while many others both at home and in Washington had influence in having Haughey change his decision, I think Ted Kennedy's—

FitzGerald: What was Haughey's reaction?

Donlon: Haughey's reaction was there was no question of my being moved.

FitzGerald: Ha.

Lillis: It was all a mistake.

FitzGerald: But wait a minute, why did he make a public statement then?

Donlon: That was before he made the phone call.

FitzGerald: What? He made—and then rang up?

Donlon: He made a public statement and then he rang up. I don't have the full story because there were people like you and John Hume and others were all—there were people all over the place. By the way, I've discovered under Freedom of Information that of the people who influenced him, the primary influence on him in having me moved was, of all people, the trade unionist called [Michael] Mickey Mullen.

FitzGerald: Oh, Mickey Mullen, that bloody fellow.

Donlon: It was Mickey Mullen, Neil Blaney—

FitzGerald: Close to the IRA.

Donlon: And Tony Cronin.

FitzGerald: Oh God, bloody poet.

Lillis: You agree with Plato?

FitzGerald: I knew him in college and never thought much—

Donlon: You knew Plato in college?

Lillis: Plato didn't want to have any poets in his Republic, Sean, as you may remember.

FitzGerald: You add anything to this?

Lillis: Just the attitude to Haughey. I mean, it's coming back. I'm sorry, we're moving on again just for one second. When the governments agreed, the Anglo-Irish Agreement, Garret FitzGerald with Margaret Thatcher in 1985, Haughey was leader of the Opposition and he very foolishly attacked it as a huge setback for the whole Irish Nationalist position. Nothing on that, but he sent his very popular Foreign Minister, Brian Lenihan, to the United States to talk to Irish-American leaders and to get them to equally condemn the agreement. Of course, these guys had been huge backers of it, had actually played a role in ensuring that we got it and they were extremely annoyed, putting it mildly.

I particularly remember, I had a phone message from Tip O'Neill—I'm sure Kennedy was in the same position—and I couldn't repeat to you what he said to me, certainly not while that tape recorder is on. But it was colorful.

Young: You can redact it later on, but I won't press you on the point.

Lillis: The whole Irish-American thing, and I would like to put Kennedy in the middle of it, has been difficult for us. Garret started off in a joking way, that this was just a joke: "I must insist that the Irish government is not recognized in New York." I think it is well-recognized in New York.

FitzGerald: It wasn't then.

Lillis: I'm sorry; this is just an endless conversation I have with my former boss. We've never properly understood, in my view, the Irish-American phenomenon. The emigrant phenomenon is a different thing from people who live here. They carry a lot of burdens, including that their country didn't support them adequately and forced emigration. Most of the people—it was difficult in the United States for people who emigrated more recently in the '50s, at a time of economic, well, underdevelopment in Ireland. They were people who didn't have a choice in the matter and they came from certain parts of the country where there was little opportunity.

FitzGerald: There were two groups in my view. Those who left after the civil war—because there was no future for them. In my father's papers there's a list of 800 people, a blacklist of public servants, because of the civil war.

Lillis: Including my father.

FitzGerald: They never lost that animosity to that government. Then even in the North we had emigration there and they were the loudest. So the combination of these older people with their memories of that and the North were the most active in Irish-American organizations.

Behind that lay the residual attitude of Irish-Americans who were always—the whole attitude was for Britain and that was there and established and easily activated. Plus the fact that you have this purely sectarian business in America, the parade in New York, which is Roman Catholic—the AOH is Roman Catholic—things that you would never believe possible here in our society. That complicates things as well. So I do understand how this arises but it's really irritating if you're—

Lillis: For somebody who spent 24 hours a day for years trying to see a way through with Irish-America, my conclusion was that Irish governments for generations had misunderstood or had not sufficiently given attention to the Irish-American phenomenon and they had been neglected, almost deliberately, and then we were all shocked and amazed and horrified that they supported the IRA. Well, it actually was an inevitable position for them to take.

FitzGerald: Nobody ever went—I mean, my father and [inaudible] went in '28 and my father in '29, but that was the end of it. Nobody else ever went there.

Lillis: It took terrific courage, enormous courage, in my view, on the part of Kennedy and O'Neill in North Cambridge.

FitzGerald: Swimming against the tide.

Lillis: All those guys, actually, the other two fellows from New York, to face this down and to take the position they did, thanks to Hume in particular. I was astonished, I have to say. I was working with others to try to ensure that it happened, but the fact that they came together and did it—I guess the fact of having the four of them, the four biggest names you could get in American politics of Irish extraction helped each of them to soft of, "If we all jump in together.…"

But this is the thing, and it had a very significant effect back here because Irish people in Ireland are used to this kind of [Ivan] Pavlov reaction from Irish-Americans. But to see that these big names, all of whom they'd heard of, particularly Kennedy because it's the biggest name here, I think it helped the Irish government.

FitzGerald: Oh, tremendously.

Donlon: I agree with that analysis. That's absolutely correct. Not only did we not seek out the support of people like Kennedy in the '60s, but Kennedy told me on one occasion, which I subsequently verified in papers, that his brother Robert [Kennedy], I guess when he was Attorney General, had tried to liberalize the immigration regime for Irish people and had been asked by Seán Lemass, who was the then Taoiseach, not to do so, that it was Irish government policy to do nothing that would encourage Irish people to leave Ireland, that there were already so many people leaving that we did not want to open any more doors.

While that's completely understandable in an Irish domestic context, I found when I arrived in Boston as Counsel General in 1969 that it was held against us to an extraordinary extent, because people who had emigrated, say in the '50s, were very resentful of the fact that younger members of their family could not legally come out in the '60s. There was something called an anti-Irish immigration movement in the United States located in Boston which, as Counsel General, I was not allowed to support by specific direction from the Department of Foreign Affairs.

So we had quite a gap between Ireland and Irish-America and obviously Kennedy belonged to Irish-America. The closing of that gap could not have happened easily, and I think would not have happened particularly without people like—Carey Parker had a great advantage in that he hadn't a drop of Irish blood in him. He could see things objectively. He could sometimes see things that we couldn't see. I think his only interest before he got involved in this was he was interested in Irish literature.

Lillis: Yes, very much so. Yeats was a big—

Donlon: He was quite a good scholar on Yeats as, incidentally, was Eugene McCarthy.

Young: He's never been a public—He's never been very visible outside of the Russell Office. He's very well known in the network but he—

Donlon: We tried to get him to come to Ireland, socially, politically, any way you want to come. I don't think he's ever come. Certainly to my knowledge he's never come. By the way, Eugene McCarthy, whom you mentioned earlier who seemed to have had a more inspired position—this is just a footnote—his party piece is reciting the poems of Yeats, word-perfect, backwards.

Lillis: That's why he lost.

Donlon: He claims to have used—was it the 1968 campaign? He said it was so boring he had to do something. The late Mary McGrory, who died, sadly, a year ago—Mary used to have these great parties in Washington where you just sat on the floor and you got lasagna and salad and wine but you had to recite a poem, sing, or dance for your supper.

FitzGerald: I was never asked.

Donlon: Gene McCarthy used to recite poems. He used to recite Yeats backwards.

Knott: That's great.

Lillis: They both deserved that richly, I think, including Yeats. Anyway, if you were a young diplomat as I was many, many years ago, you had the difficulty of the British government—You'll disagree with everything I'm saying now, Garret, as usual—they did not fully accept the sovereignty of this state. That was my—

FitzGerald: They'd admit to reservations.

Lillis: Those were the basic reservations they expressed. Irish-America did not realize that there was a state here.

FitzGerald: At all. They didn't recognize it.

Lillis: When the country was then engulfed with his horrific crisis, these were the two big problems, externally, for us. Our government was not—I can remember being at meetings with British Ministers and they just couldn't conceive of taking us seriously as a sovereign government. Garret made a big breakthrough there. On the American side, Irish-Americans didn't realize there was a state here. That was very largely our fault, by the way, the Irish-American side of it. I think that in the last years we owe our progress on that front very largely to Kennedy, who, since he kind of moved to a positive position, always gave prominence to the role of the Irish government. It helped us a lot.

Young: Could I go back to the Reagan years?

Lillis: Sure.

Young: On the American side of things, Reagan started out sort of "hands-off, this is an internal affair," with respect to Ireland. That was the British line, was it not?

Lillis: Sure.

Young: He came around, and I'm trying to get clear how he came around and the visible evidence of that.

FitzGerald: Sean's your man for that.

Lillis: This is the man here.

Young: Then, did he do something with respect to Thatcher?

Donlon: Reagan always believed that his ancestry was British. This suited him politically and it suited him socially so to believe.

Lillis: Nancy [Reagan] too.

Donlon: So did Nancy, particularly. Bizarrely, he had a basis for this because the documentation that he had showed that his great-great grandfather was born in London.

FitzGerald: His grandfather.

Donlon: His grandfather was born in London. I met Reagan through Bill Clark during the campaign for the Presidency in 1980. I met him out in California and in a social way just said to him, "By the way, what part of Ireland are you from?" Telling him that if he was a Reagan it's got to be maybe from Cork, or wherever, or Tipperary. He said, "No, no, no." I challenged him and he said he would send me a copy of his family papers. His brother, Dr. Neil Reagan, sent me a bundle of papers, which in fact showed that the grandfather was born in London. I got two sources to investigate that. One was the Office of the Chief Herald, is that what it's called?

Multiple: Yes.

Donlon: An office here, a semi-genealogical office.

Lillis: Very good, too.

Donlon: At the same time I got the Mormons in Salt Lake City working on it. The combination of both brought the information together that in fact his grandfather was born in London, but only as an accident of birth. His great-grandfather left Ballyporeen with his great-grandmother, who went into premature labor. The route they were taking was via London.

FitzGerald: No, because they were married in London in 1870.

Lillis: Maybe we're learning something now that we didn't know.

FitzGerald: Let me explain. Ballyporeen is a village, which has within it a town called Sceichin a'Rince, which means "the place of the dancing bush," because there was a little pool and there was a bush in it and when the wind blew it, it was dancing. It's a lovely name. There were two families there, FitzGeralds and Reagans. One of them was my grandfather. He went to London in the 1860s. I only found out all this last year, by the way. I knew nothing about my family. They married then in 1870 in London.

The Reagans also came from Ballyporeen and they must have known each other, and they must have left in the 1860s, I would think, possibly a bit later. Reagan's great-grandfather and my grandfather were co-equals. In fact I'm a generation older than Reagan, or half a generation anyway. Both of them were married in London in 1870. That's my recollection.

Donlon: Well, the information I had at the time was somewhat different to that. It was that they were married in Ballyporeen and had moved, decided to go to the States. She was already pregnant when they left Ballyporeen, and she went into premature labor.

FitzGerald: I see.

Donlon: The grandfather was born in London. Now, your information may be accurate. Moving on, that established the Tipperary connection with Ronald Reagan.

FitzGerald: I didn't know about my family at the time.

Donlon: So with great glee I went to Reagan with this information probably in September—the election was November—thinking he's going to make a big thing out of this. He asked me to keep it quiet. [*laughter]* "People will think that I'm jumping on the Irish cart and—

FitzGerald: Bandwagon.

Donlon: Bill Clark subsequently told me that evening, he said to me, "It doesn't fit in with the line and the image that he's projecting. He's a Republican. He's going for the WASP [white Anglo-Saxon Protestant] vote. There's no way he's going for the Irish-Catholic vote except on abortion." I was asked to keep it quiet and told that if I kept it quiet until the election was over, Reagan would acknowledge it by coming to the Embassy on St. Patrick's Day.

He won the election and he was inaugurated. His first Chief of Staff—I can't remember, there were so many of them, Mike Deaver or Ed [Edwin] Meese, one of them—

Young: Jim Baker?

Donlon: Jim Baker agreed with no difficulty because Reagan had obviously told the story. He agreed to come and acknowledge his Irish-ness on St. Patrick's Day. Then using Bill Clark, whose first appointment was as Deputy Secretary of State, which gave him a role, we reminded Clark that Carter had made a commitment to Ireland and that we would like this commitment continued. That was agreed.

Reagan, overall, in my opinion, was a constructive influence. Garret has talked about the intervention with Thatcher in '84. There was one occasion when he refused point blank to be engaged, which was when, in 1981, we had hunger strikes in Northern Ireland and the IRA people were dying. Again, this was a complete coincidence. Reagan was visiting the embassy for the second time because his step-father-in-law, Loyal Davis, was being conferred with the honorary fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, and because Loyal Davis wasn't well enough to travel to Ireland it was agreed that the College of Surgeons would travel to Washington.

FitzGerald: Not to Hollywood.

Donlon: They were persuaded to do it in the embassy. It was very hot. I think it was the month of July. The poor old mace bearer with his heavy robes and all the academics—it must have been July.

So I spoke directly to Reagan about, would he intervene with Thatcher to end this extraordinary hunger strike?

FitzGerald: There in fact had been a move to settle the strike and it looked as if we'd got some of the—a Catholic group associated with the British representative there, the Minister of State and the people in prison. As we understood it and discovered in June and July, the first time in July, an agreement had been reached. Then unfortunately Thatcher seems to have authorized MI6 [British Secret Intelligence Service] to approach the IRA, who were not involved in this, who immediately ran off the Catholic delegation and said, "Out of this. We're involved now." So the delegation went off to see the Minister. "What's this about? You told the IRA?" For whatever reason—perhaps he didn't know; perhaps the civil service didn't know—there was absolute chaos and as a result the visit to the prison to settle things was canceled. A prisoner died that night and the thing went on. I kept on for a month afterwards, hoping the British would change their minds and accept the kind of deal that had been worked out.

That's what we needed Reagan's support for, not to give in to the strike but to revive the deal, which had actually been informally agreed to on the spot, as we understood from the British Minister. I made the mistake of asking Sean to ask Reagan to—but it wasn't really fair to expect him. It was too complicated an issue. It involved getting the British about—a political thing and the IRA, and criminals—

Donlon: Reagan's point to me was very direct and almost heated. It was the first time I'd had a heated conversation with him. It had nothing to do with Irish affairs or Anglo-Irish affairs. He said, "As Governor of California I've had to deal with prison riots and I've had to deal with prisoners. There's only one way to deal with those guys. You say, 'No.'" He was very strong on that.

FitzGerald: We should have realized that.

Donlon: Yes, we didn't realize that at the time.

FitzGerald: It was a mistake, one of the mistakes I made. We didn't see it. Later on—

Lillis: I can't recollect this but I assume that Kennedy was trying to be helpful at that time.

Donlon: Yes, Kennedy, again Kennedy and O'Neill. Don't forget there was an excellent relationship between O'Neill and Reagan. Even though they were politically opposites, they had a very good personal relationship. I think at that stage O'Neill was probably more directly involved with Reagan than Kennedy, though Reagan on a number of occasions had actually done ceremonies in the White House in honor of the Kennedys, which surprised me at the time and I think surprised the Kennedys. I can't remember the details but I do remember being involved on at least two occasions, what I would call "Kennedy occasions," in the White House in Reagan's time.

Young: Yes.

Donlon: Other than that, on every other occasion that Reagan was asked to do anything for Ireland, he did it.

FitzGerald: He did.

Donlon: He spoke out from time to time. He visited Ireland. He paid a state visit here in '84 or '85.

FitzGerald: Eighty-five, I think. Let me tell you about that.

Knott: Please.

FitzGerald: I was asked to come to America. The tradition is that the little one goes first and then the bigger country then comes. We had a problem. Our public opinion was very alert to American intervention in Central America. Missionaries there had raised the issue at home and there was a strong opinion in regard to both El Salvador and Nicaragua, particularly El Salvador. I was sensitive to this and shared the view. This was not proper. I remember when Bill Clark came in December '81. I was walking around Dublin Castle with him, showing him around. He turned to—who was his aide at that time?

Donlon: Some woman.

FitzGerald: No, a man, a chap we knew quite well then subsequently. Anyway, he said to him, "We must tell these people the information you've given to NATO about all this, tell these people." This is in my presence, which was slightly odd I thought. There was obvious sensitivity. When I arrived at the White House I tried to say a little about Northern Ireland for about 10 minutes. He listened more or less, and then I got a 20-minute lecture on Central America, from notes. He had notes on that. Now if he couldn't even cover Central America without having notes, it seemed to me he wasn't on top of things, and I don't need a lecture.

Then we had the lunch. My wife was quite ill at the time; I don't recall what was wrong. She was at the Reagan table with [George] Shultz, Tip O'Neill, Sandra O'Connor, Maureen O'Hara and Reagan. On the way out I said to her, "How did you get on?" She said, "Terrible, Reagan talked football all the time."

Lillis: It was Tip's fault.

FitzGerald: Then he came here, an unpopular visit. He was very unpopular when he came here. Funny enough, I've been a member of the Seanad of the National University for years. I'm their Chancellor, and I was rung up by the then-registrar to ask would I ask the Seanad to give an honorary degree to him? It was the last thing I wanted to do but if I said no and it got out—I had to ask. As soon as I did, they announced that I had asked. They put the blame on me for the honorary degree. I went back to the next Seanad meeting and said, "Will you stop giving honorary degrees when anyone comes here; it only causes trouble." I had to parade around Galway and at a meeting here, and all the rest of it.

But, what was I going to say? Oh dear. Yes, there was a dinner, you see, so I had to devise a very carefully-worded speech, which dealt with Central America in sensitive terms and also welcoming. Afterwards, Shultz said, "Very interesting speech, Taoiseach. Can we have a copy?" And I got him out of the country without ever giving him a copy. Every time he asked, I said, "Oh yes, I'll get you a copy." He never got the speech. But despite the fact that we were obviously not being helpful on that, nonetheless, when it came to the Agreement later that year it was backed and Reagan made an effort.

Donlon: It's very important—Reagan himself had what I would call an emotional interest in Ireland. But the detail was always handled by Clark, whether he was Deputy Secretary of State, National Security Advisor, or even when he became Secretary of the Interior. I don't know if you know this—Bill and his wife married in Ireland. She was an interpreter for the U.S. after the war in Germany. She is German-born. That's where Bill met her. They married in Ireland. Years afterwards Bill bought a house in Ireland in Malahide, which is a suburb in north Dublin. He's still at counsel to McCann FitzGerald, the law firm, although he doesn't seem to come now as much as he used to. His ranch in California is called Hibernia.

Lillis: I thought you were going to say Hybrasil.

Donlon: No, Hibernia. He was certainly the key person. Jim Baker had some interest, but it wasn't—put it this way, he never blocked Bill Clark. He was informed in a semi-academic sense. Mike Deaver enjoyed it because it was a bit of fun. Mike Deaver came to Ireland to pre-plan the Reagan visit.

Kennedy's relationship with the Reagan White House I always found good, constructive. You're beginning now, I suppose, to move into a phase that other people will be able to help you more than we will. I have no doubt whatever that when Clinton came into the White House that Kennedy's influence came into its own. Whatever Clinton's personal involvement, which obviously became very close, initially he didn't have anything like the depth of background and experience. And don't forget that the person who went into the Clinton White House was Nancy Soderberg, who had been in Kennedy's office. She not only brought with her the accumulated folk wisdom, but I have absolutely no doubt that particularly in the early days she relied heavily on Carey Parker, with whom she had worked, so again you can see the Kennedy influence. It's quite extraordinary when you think of it. He's been through seven Prime Ministers in Ireland. Seven.

FitzGerald: We've had seven?

Donlon: Well, Jack Lynch, Liam Cosgrave, Jack Lynch again, Haughey—

FitzGerald: Me.

Donlon: Reynolds, Haughey, you.

Knott: Twice you.

Donlon: John Bruton and Ahern.

Knott: He's been through nine American Presidents, too.

Donlon: If you take all the players who have been involved in the Northern Ireland situation, since we usually take October '68 as being the starting point, there is nobody left in active politics except Ted Kennedy. John Hume is now out, formally, of all his political roles, and there's nobody else. John would be the second-longest serving person. So it's an extraordinary record and I'd love to see someday the files Carey Parker has accumulated.

Lillis: One of the things that always kind of intrigued me about this whole story, particularly about Kennedy, is when you think of President Kennedy's tremendous intellectual and every other type of relationship with the British, and then you come to Ted Kennedy, and he really has been excoriated almost without interruption in the popular British press, up to and including today. I saw something a couple of weeks ago, which was the same old stuff, as though he were just an active supporter of the violence of the IRA. They've never acknowledged his very brave earlier stances on this thing, much less his positive role in the meantime—

FitzGerald: Tip O'Neill too. The attack on Tip O'Neill in the *Telegraph.* I wrote a letter. And he'd been here, and it had been an extraordinarily constructive and balanced speech, not a national speech, Tip. That was the thing in the *Telegraph* as if he were an extreme nationalist back at the IRA.

Lillis: I was thinking in particular, you know, that the [Harold] Macmillan–Kennedy relationship was one of the closest Anglo-American periods. Then his brother, who carries his legacy, is just endlessly vilified because of us, because of this country. It's something we should acknowledge that he's had to put up with, because his natural tendency surely would have been to keep those relations going, the Kennedy legacy in British diplomacy and politics.

Young: Ted as a boy became very close to his grandfather [John F.] Fitzgerald.

FitzGerald: Really?

Young: The first Irish Mayor of Boston. It was really through his grandfather, I believe. When he was in boarding school in Boston he'd come down on Sundays, spend part of Sundays with his grandfather. He has this extraordinary memory—

FitzGerald: That's interesting—

Young: It was an introduction and a history lesson in Irish Boston. It was a story of the immigrants and the places they used to live, and his grandfather still had all these memories of friends from that time. I think the rest of the Kennedy children didn't have that experience.

FitzGerald: That's interesting. That helps explain things.

Young: So I think he was thinking this is more than politics; it was real people.

FitzGerald: How old is he now?

Knott: Seventy-three.

Donlon: I want to be careful about this—No, I won't be careful about it because I don't mind if it gets back to her. His sister Jean, as Ambassador here, certainly did not have the sure touch that Ted had.

FitzGerald: No.

Donlon: She became enamored of certain elements in the IRA. Now, I'm not underestimating the role she played in '94 in getting the whole peace process started, because certainly without her very active involvement, Clinton would not have authorized the visa for Joe Cahill. There's no doubt whatever about that. But having been out of government service from '87 to '94, and then I went back in as advisor to John Bruton from '94 to '97 when John Bruton was Taoiseach and Jean was Ambassador, I had some extraordinarily difficult times with her. That's putting it very mildly.

I should start it by saying she'd hardly been here a week—and remember back to what I said earlier on—Ted had asked me to write a letter to him explaining that being a woman in Ireland was no disadvantage. We'd gone through all of that. She arrived and she was two-and-a-half weeks in Ireland when I got a phone call from Ted's office, probably from Carey Parker, saying Jean is very lonely. She's thinking of chucking in the job and going back home. Would you ever phone her up and take her out? So I invited her down. I lived down in the west of Ireland, a place called Killaloe. She came down for a weekend and she confirmed to me that she couldn't take it.

She was living, if you know where the American Ambassador's residence is, in a big house in the middle of the Phoenix Park, no neighbors, no nothing. She knew nobody, or almost nobody. She was finding it very lonely. She had never been in the workplace before. She'd worked in voluntary things in New York but she'd never been outside in what I would call a professional situation. The whole thing was very difficult.

Lillis: Is it not true, also, that she had a difficult relationship with the State Department?

Donlon: She had a very difficult relationship with the State Department, an extremely difficult relationship. And she had an extremely difficult relationship with her staff in the embassy.

Knott: Oh yes.

Donlon: Very difficult.

Lillis: Almost in public, in fact, in public.

Donlon: But she somehow or other came into the fold of—well, she had been very friendly with Albert Reynolds, who was extraordinarily helpful to her in the sense that he knew she wasn't a professional diplomat and he was prepared to accommodate her. If she wanted a cup of tea at ten o'clock at night, she could get a cup of tea with Albert, at ten o'clock at night.

FitzGerald: Who was in office when she came here? I've forgotten.

Donlon: Albert.

FitzGerald: I see.

Donlon: And Dick Spring was in Foreign Affairs. But she established an excellent relationship with Albert Reynolds

FitzGerald: Rather than with Dick.

Donlon: Yes, rather than with Dick, exactly. But that worked very well. Then John Bruton became Taoiseach—

FitzGerald: More difficult.

Donlon: She couldn't fathom him at all. First of all, he did have difficulty with women, I think it's fair to say. John could never look at a woman when he was talking to her. He'd always look at the floor.

Young: Doesn't work with the Kennedys.

Donlon: Absolutely. But politically John also felt that she was far too close to people like Gerry Adams and others. Occasionally she would intervene in Irish affairs, according to John, by saying things. I would have to remind John that I had intervened far more in American affairs. I campaigned for Ted Kennedy. I have a photograph of this. Remember when Ted ran for the Presidency? What year was that?

Knott: Nineteen-eighty.

Donlon: I was Ambassador in Washington. Later on he said, "I know you're constrained in what you can do, but I need some help." We agreed that in the month of March I would coincide some of my St. Patrick's Day visits with some of his campaign visits, which explains why I ended up, for example, on the floor of General Motors somewhere out in the Midwest of America. I would stand up and say, "I'm here to tell you why you shouldn't support the IRA." Then I would lead into what a great man Kennedy was. The State Department called me in about that.

FitzGerald: Understandably.

Donlon: I have some good photographs of that campaign. Anyway, I had to say to John Bruton, years later, "Listen, she's an American Ambassador. They've been very broadminded in their approach to us, we'd better be broadminded." But I took the brunt of that difficult relationship. In fact, my relationship with Jean suffered somewhat over the years.

FitzGerald: John was even-handed with Unionists. He also never got on with the SDLP [Social Democratic and Labour Party, or John Hume. He went up one weekend to try to start a better relationship but came back much worse. He had a real problem with nationalism. Particularly since [John] Redmond died, I should probably mention, the Parliamentary Party is not Sinn Féin. It's very difficult to be Prime Minister now unless you're Sinn Féin in the old sense.

Donlon: But you will find she became very close to Tim Pat Coogan.

FitzGerald: Yes.

Donlon: Tim was the former editor of the *Irish Press*, as close as you can get without in fact being in the Irish Republican movement.

FitzGerald: One good thing was—

Donlon: What was that?

FitzGerald: Should we talk about the Agreement? [Francis Aiden Bernard] Hennigan, whom I met in London recently at the OBE [Order of the British Empire] at the embassy in London a couple of weeks ago. He's a journalist and a British Minister gave him advance information about the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Donlon: Needham—

FitzGerald: At the party conference. He was furious. He went to the embassy to complain about it. But he also had gone to his editor, Tim Pat, and they agreed that they wouldn't publish this until two days before. So they get the scoop, and they wouldn't undermine it. That's one patriotic thing he did.

Donlon: The other patriotic thing he did was, without Tim Pat Coogan, Jean Kennedy would not have settled into Dublin. She was used to the New York system where a woman on her own had a walker, somebody who would walk her out at night to the theater or cinemas or a meeting, which is a totally unknown tradition in Ireland. I mean, particularly, even ten years ago, a single woman on her own in Ireland, if she was seen out with a man at all it was assumed that they would be married in the morning or they'd be in bed that night. Tim, in fact, became probably her principal walker. That was fairly useful, because she had been very lonely.

FitzGerald: It at least kept her here, but it wasn't seen as a positive influence.

Donlon: Oh no, that was a negative influence.

Knott: Did you have the impression that the Senator or the Senator's office was aware of some of the difficulties she was having with her staff and with your government?

Donlon: Yes, in detail.

Knott: Was there ever an effort to work around her?

Donlon: Not particularly in the time that I was back in government with John Bruton, '94 to '97.

Essentially it was a process, or it was a difficulty that could be managed. With the exception of the role played by her in getting the visa for Joe Cahill, the American Embassy was never central. The American Embassy in Dublin was never a central player in what was happening. Even if you go back to Bill Shannon's day, and Bill was, in an intellectual sense, even in a professional diplomatic sense, probably the most active and best informed of the Ambassadors over the last 30 years. Because Bill basically had to report in to the State Department, he was probably neutralized. That would be the mildest way of putting it.

FitzGerald: Neutralized? Bill Shannon?

Donlon: Bill Shannon, yes.

FitzGerald: Neutralized in what sense?

Donlon: He wasn't able to bring all his influence to bear on Washington policy makers. I think he had more success when he left Dublin and he was back in the United States in the years before he died when he was a professor in Boston University. Certainly, I met him a few times in that era with Ted Kennedy and I think Ted had useful contact with him. And, indeed, after Bill's death, Ted continued that contact with Elizabeth Shannon. I don't know if you've talked to Elizabeth or not. Do you know Elizabeth?

Knott: We certainly know of her.

Donlon: For a while, to me, she seemed to be a constructive channel who knew what was happening in Ireland to feed into Ted. The number of social visits Ted has paid to Ireland is quite high. He's been down in—he's been with Chris Dodd and Carey. He's been with his new wife, relatively new wife. He certainly brought her to Ireland in 1994.

Young: December 1994.

Donlon: Yes, 1994.

Young: Vicki [Victoria Reggie Kennedy].

Donlon: Yes, Vicki.

Lillis: It was the para-Olympics thing—

Donlon: Through the Special Olympics, which is Eunice's special—Ted came back. Even before that became a major event, Ireland hosted the European swimming some time back in the '80s and, under pressure from Eunice, Ted came over for that.

Normally when he came he would connect politically, but sometimes he didn't. Haughey, certainly. When Haughey was Taoiseach he always hosted them. Once Haughey found out that Ted was coming he would offer him up to dinner, or whatever. He certainly did that in the '94 visit. I do think that relationship went back to the '60s. I'm never certain of how close it was. But they both had a roguish instinct.

FitzGerald: Some similarities.

Lillis: I don't think we need an interpreter now.

FitzGerald: I'm seeing him tomorrow—Haughey.

Young: Did Eunice ever figure in any of this?

Donlon: Not politically. In fact, I think Eunice's only connections with Ireland were through the Special Olympics. Now that brought her very much center stage last summer, a year last June when Ireland hosted the World Summer Games, which was a huge event. Eunice was very much center stage for that. But otherwise, I never had the impression that Eunice was that close to Ireland.

Lillis: Kind of a bird's-eye view, when he first became involved in '72, this country was, you could say—well, Garret is the best who could guide you on this. He's the economist here, but we were relatively underdeveloped. The economy here is now extremely successful. It's one of the most successful in the world. The impression I got, and you would know more about this because you have more contact, this development has pleased our emigrant community enormously, because rather than being slightly embarrassed about the land of your ancestors, it now has become a place where you could sort of say, “Well, they’re doing very well and this is terrific.”

My impression, from something I just can’t remember exactly, is that Kennedy was very favorably impressed by all of this. It’s sort of the nature of self-confidence of the people here has been enormously developed. Not the nature, but the actual level. I think that’s been helpful generally with Irish-Americans. It has clearly been very helpful vis-à-vis Northern Ireland because they simply can’t gainsay the fact that this is a different place from what it was. You could ask Kennedy about this, or ask Hume about this, but I think Kennedy has been, on a number of projects, helpful to getting investment here.

Young: Yes.

Donlon: Absolutely.

Lillis: That’s a huge part of why everything happened. We would not have the situation we have today except for the transformation of our economy. We’re now, per head, 30 percent ahead of the average situation in Northern Ireland. When I was a young fellow, they were 40-45 percent ahead of us.

Donlon: Yes, we’ve actually overlooked that whole aspect in focusing on the Northern Ireland side and the political side—certainly from the late ’60s, when we approached Kennedy, which we often did, on issues that arose in Congress which affected our economic development. The first one I remember, bizarrely, was Ireland has a sugar quota in the United States.

Lillis: I remember that.

Donlon: It’s the most ludicrous thing you could imagine. Sometime during or after World War II we persuaded people in America that we were sugar producing. We produced sugar from sugar beet, quite an economic—

Lillis: It had something to do with Speaker [John] McCormack.

Donlon: It was John McCormack who got us a quota. Every now and again—I can’t remember in which piece of American legislation—this quota had to be renewed. The norm was to go to John McCormack. But when John McCormack left politics, we were kind of stuck because we didn’t have anyone that we knew of and we’d go to Kennedy. Whenever there was a threatened change in tax law, and I’m not an expert on tax law, you may know, but there was some question of—the profits of American multi-nationals are not taxed here, and there was some question of their being repatriated to the United States—

Lillis: Yes, free of tax.

Donlon: Free of tax, and that’s always been threatened.

Lillis: It’s being threatened again.

Donlon: As long as the regime of American investment has been there. There's absolutely no doubt that Ireland's economic recovery would not have happened without American multinational investment, what we call foreign direct investment. Kennedy was well aware of that.

Lillis: It's the highest volume of any country in the world, bigger than the UK [United Kingdom], when you run it on a relativity basis.

Donlon: That's been a tricky one for Kennedy to support, at a time when parts of Massachusetts were in serious economic decline. But he has always done so. Then, individually, he has been extraordinarily helpful to Hume. Hume developed some relationship, was it with Boston or with Massachusetts? I've forgotten.

Lillis: He'll tell you all about that.

Donlon: He'll tell you. You can see it if you go to Derry. Ten, fifteen years ago when everything else in Northern Ireland was in decay, Boston investment in Derry, which came through a Kennedy-Hume axis, had the place thriving. Of course, Kennedy has taken into his office—most years, he'd have what you call in the States "interns."

Lillis: An important word in American politics the last few years, I think.

Donlon: He's had them. I think Mark Durkan, the current leader of the SDLP, has been an intern of Kennedy's.

Knott: Is that right?

Donlon: He's been extraordinarily helpful on every front: finance, culture, whenever there are big cultural events involving Ireland, the exhibition of early Irish art which rotated around the museums on the East coast. Kennedy opened at least one, if not two of those traveling exhibitions. He's been, my God, he's put himself out on Irish events.

Lillis: If you talk to the average person—we happen to have lived through enough of this as the main event in our lives, I suppose, but the average person here would say President Kennedy—and this is unfair, because the times were different—did nothing for us. Ted Kennedy was the man. That wouldn't necessarily be from the Taoiseach's view, but it certainly would be widely shared. It's unfair perhaps to the President, because there was nothing to do, but Kennedy has been assiduous beyond anything that we deserve.

Young: It strikes me that this is just one of his major projects.

FitzGerald: May I make one contrast?

Young: He has invested a lot of his own thinking and effort.

FitzGerald: Tip was very helpful too but there's not a word about it in his autobiography. It's never mentioned. I found that extraordinary. Totally internally oriented. I think if Ted wrote his autobiography we'd appear somewhere.

Donlon: But in the various biographies of Ted Kennedy there's almost no reference to Ireland either.

Lillis: There's been a good biography of Tip O'Neill came out three years ago, the *Boston Globe* fellow.

Knott: John Farrell.

Donlon: There's bits of Ireland in that one.

Lillis: They're good, and he fits it rather well with the whole Tip personality. I don't know enough about this because I've always kind of stayed away from it a little bit. When you met the two families, and you knew the Kennedy family certainly much better than I did, and I knew the O'Neill family fairly well, although Sean also knew them fairly well, but you guys are probably more sensitive to this. The guys include ladies in the United States—

FitzGerald: Here too. There's new meaning—

Young: We use it for all sexes.

Lillis: The sensitivities between those two families, especially in matters of local politics in Boston, New England, to put it mildly, are what you would expect them to be, both having Irish blood, so it's just the way we are. This is a remarkable feature about the whole Northern Ireland thing. It never, ever came into that. They worked together regardless of their opinions of each other. I've heard each talk about the other in less than glowing terms, let me tell you, but never anything to do with Ireland.

FitzGerald: That's a good point.

Lillis: They really surmounted that and kept a unity of purpose. Is that fair, Sean?

Donlon: I would absolutely agree with that. The other point I make to people in Ireland who don't always understand this is that both Kennedy and Tip understood the details to an extraordinary extent, sometimes better than Irish politicians. I've seen Irish politicians go to see someone like Ted Kennedy and it's almost embarrassing. The Irish politician will know less, because, again, the span of time that Ted has been involved—

FitzGerald: He's like the British monarch, you see.

Lillis: It's true, yes.

Donlon: The most extraordinary example of that was with Jimmy Carter. The morning after the American hostages were taken in Teheran, Jack Lynch, who was Taoiseach, happened to be on a visit to the United States, and the morning was scheduled for a two-hour meeting with Carter followed by lunch. I was instructed to tell Hamilton Jordan, or whoever it was, that Jack Lynch doesn't need the meeting, that the lunch will do fine and the photographs, because he genuinely felt that Jimmy Carter would be up to his neck.

We went in for the meeting with Carter. Carter insisted on going ahead with the meeting, partly because he said he wanted everything to appear normal. He didn't want to appear to be unsettled by this. We went in, and one of the first things Carter said to Jack Lynch was, "I have been reading a report of the Northern Ireland Fair Employment Agency last night. Could you explain to me employment patterns in Fermanagh?

FitzGerald: Oh dear.

Donlon: Jack Lynch had never heard of the Fair Employment Agency in Northern Ireland and certainly never read their reports, and knew nothing about employment patterns in Fermanagh.

Lillis: I bet he was never in Fermanagh.

Donlon: He was never in Fermanagh. Jimmy Carter, the night the hostages were taken in Teheran, had stayed up reading that!

Lillis: I don't know how you want to interpret that.

Young: I know him. I came to know Jimmy Carter. I still meet with him a couple of times a year and this is absolutely typical. He makes a commitment to a meeting and almost never will he change it. The second thing is he does his reading before the meeting. He never goes into a meeting unprepared, to a fault.

There is a story that [Thomas Bertram] Bert Lance—Carter was inviting the Congressional leaders up, there was some piece of legislation, and his point was to listen to them and to persuade them to do it. Bert Lance said after the meeting, "Do you know what you did? What you have just done to these people?" Carter said, "No." He explained his mastery of the whole thing. He said, "You have just told them that they don't know a thing and you know it all."

Donlon: There you go.

Young: So it's not even deliberate.

Donlon: But incidentally, let us never forget—we will never forget it on our side—Carter was the one who broke the 120-, 150-year barrier about American Presidents not intervening in Irish affairs. We must never forget that too, and we will never forget it.

Lillis: That wouldn't have happened without Kennedy and O'Neill.

Donlon: That's certainly true.

Young: But also, they mustered the facts in a way that made sense. That's the way you get to Carter. You make your case on the basis of the evidence, and he reasons from the evidence. He will factor the politics into it but not into the briefing. Not into his briefing.

Lillis: An engineer.

FitzGerald: Let me just—some practical issues at this stage—The Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs will not to be back tonight, but he can see you around lunchtime tomorrow. The Minister will be back but he'll be in Dundalk. He may see you in Dundalk, which is an hour north of Dublin, on Thursday or Friday.

Lillis: Then there's the Hume.

FitzGerald: The other person is Dot Tubridy. I haven't contacted her, but I could ring her and see if she can see you sometime.

Donlon: Not to interrupt you, Garret, but I suggest that we go to lunch as soon as possible because I have a meeting at three o'clock.

Knott: The only thing we'd be concerned about is the John Hume interview for tomorrow, which is set at 10:30. I don't know how much flexibility he would have in his schedule.

Donlon: I don't think he'd know either.

Knott: Maybe we should call John Hume.

[LUNCH BREAK]

FitzGerald: —person with any involvement that goes back that far, 1962.

Young: Maybe the parts that you knew most about.

FitzGerald: My course as Foreign Minister and then as Taoiseach. I remember when Tip—there was a dinner for him with a thousand people in Washington. We finally wound up, and I was the only non-American there with my wife and a couple of people from Foreign Affairs. The speeches were Reagan, Ted Kennedy, myself, and Tip. It was a great occasion. There was no person from outside the United States except for us. It was very interesting.

Knott: Do you have a particularly fond memory or particularly powerful memory of Senator Kennedy that you might share with us?

FitzGerald: Amazingly no, but in the '70s I did go to Hyannis Port one time. My daughter [Mary FitzGerald] had broken her leg in the Irish Embassy in London and discovered she was pregnant at the same time. My wife was also, at that stage, in a wheelchair and they wheeled them both around the White House. They [my wife and daughter] got there before I did. Nancy Reagan was doing some anti-drug thing when I was there. We went to Hyannis Port. We met Rose [Kennedy] on that occasion. We had quite a time with them there.

Young: Who was there when you were there?

FitzGerald: I don't remember now. Ted was. I'm not sure who else. I don't have a detailed recollection. Certainly there was Rose. There were others of the family there, but just who I couldn't be sure, perhaps some of Ted's children. He had five, I suppose, around then.

Knott: Would you say that both Tip O'Neill and Edward Kennedy played a fairly important role in terms of moving the peace process forward?

FitzGerald: I think a crucially important role. For us in Ireland to be able to have support in what we were trying to do in resolving our Northern Ireland problem from the United States was very important. Not just from Presidents, and some Presidents were indeed very helpful, but from legislators like Ted Kennedy and Tip O'Neill. Ted Kennedy, I think, probably is the longest person involved in the whole Northern Ireland process who's still alive. Everybody else has passed on. He has been involved in it since the late '60s. Nobody remains in Ireland, North or South, so long.

Initially I think he, like many Irish-Americans, didn't fully grasp the complexity of the issues in Northern Ireland. I think it was in 1972 after Bloody Sunday, when perhaps some people made more vigorous criticisms of British policy than were helpful, although perhaps they were justified at the time. He arranged for John Hume to come to Bonn to see him because he was going to Bonn for some thing with NATO. I think John Hume explained to him how complex the issues were. From then on, his approach was totally constructive. I think it was he— others were involved as well—who also brought Tip O'Neill along. Tip O'Neill found more difficulty in adjusting to a balanced policy in Northern Ireland. He had deep-seated views.

I remember at one stage the RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary] had been given revolvers to protect themselves, and he refused to allow revolvers to be sold. Pat was very annoyed about that. We tried to persuade him. I mean, the police ought to have revolvers to protect themselves; they're not going to shoot other people. Okay, larger weapons you could argue about, but he was quite strong about it. He wasn't going to shift on that. He was quite negative with Margaret Thatcher.

Ted Kennedy, when John Hume explained the problems to him in '72, found it easier to take up a balanced position. He was a great resource. Of course, both of them had wonderful support from their own people. The key person was Carey Parker in Ted's office, who had an extraordinary command of all the issues and kept in touch with all possible sources so that Ted Kennedy was one of the best informed people. It's been suggested that Irish people calling to see him at times have been taken aback because he knew more than they did, because of the good briefing from Carey Parker. The same is true of Tip O'Neill with—

Knott: Kirk O'Donnell?

FitzGerald: Kirk O'Donnell. The extent, the depth, and subtlety of the understanding of the problems, and the amount of research put into it meant that they were very well-informed people and we're not used to that. We can't expect people in other countries to be quite so well informed about our affairs in this island. They had that, so we had that kind of support.

This was important in two ways: First of all, we had a problem in Irish America because traditional Irish-Americans have been influenced by past memories of British rule here. Some of the key people in Irish America had left Ireland, perhaps after the civil war. There were no jobs. Those on the Republican side were very hostile to the Irish government of the day as well as to Britain. That was a negative factor. Then later, some from Northern Ireland left at the various stages of the troubles and they were very hostile. So there was a problem for us in the degree of supportiveness to the IRA within the Irish-American community. It was a major difficulty.

Our concern was to prevent arms from reaching the IRA. The IRA was, after all, an organization dedicated to making all of Ireland a socialist republic, overturning our democratic system by force as well as being active in all Ireland. That wasn't understood in Irish America. To have the leadership of Ted Kennedy, Tip O'Neill, and also from the others, Moynihan and Hugh Carey, which all came together in 1977 in Friends of Ireland in Congress, battling successfully with the pro-IRA elements—Biaggi, ad hoc committee, NORAID—all these people. That was very important. We needed that support. It would have been disastrous if Irish America had been uniformly hostile to our government or what we were trying to do in maintaining a democratic state here and trying to achieve peace in Northern Ireland.

We also were up against the fact that the British unfortunately found it necessary to propagandize against us at times, unhelpfully, although basically we had similar interests and were trying to pursue a common policy. But that didn't mean we didn't have problems. So we had British propaganda to be countered in Washington also. Of course, the British were very concerned that America would not get involved or intervene. They underestimated the capacity of American Presidents and people in Congress to play a constructive role in trying to achieve peace. They tended to confuse, I think, the pro-IRA Irish-America with these leaders.

I don't think that Ted Kennedy or O'Neill ever got the credit or understanding from Britain for the role they were playing. They were under pressure from other aspects of Irish-America. That leadership was terribly important to us.

Then there were times when in our negotiations with Britain we needed a bit of help to counter negative elements in British policy. We were able to call on that from time to time. I remember while negotiating the Anglo-Irish Agreement there was a bit of a hiatus at the end of 1984 and we were able to get President Reagan to intervene with Margaret Thatcher. He and Tip O'Neill actually worked closely together, certainly in the interests of Ireland. When we came to the Agreement, they were able to announce jointly that America was going to give us $250 million in assistance in Northern Ireland, which we had negotiated. They had just sent Sean Donlon, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and the British Cabinet Secretary over jointly to explain this to the leaders in the United States. We got that support.

So from every point of view, helping us occasionally with Britain, helping us to ward off the pro-IRA Irish-American elements, helping to counter at times British propaganda hostile to us, foolishly hostile to us, from all these points of view, the support we got was remarkable. I think Ted Kennedy was always the leader in that. He may have influenced Tip O'Neill to come with him at a fairly early stage, in 1972 and '74, I would say. He brought together the Four Horsemen with Carey and Moynihan. He helped to achieve the breakthrough when Carter became President, the announcement by Carter that if violence ended, America would give assistance to us, which carried right through to the Reagan position later on with Tip O'Neill's support.

Throughout that, he was so well informed, so committed, and had the leadership quality, that he was the key person in bringing all that about.

It seems to me that he's never gotten the credit he should have had for all he's done and for the length of time he has been involved, because it is right up to the present time he's been actively engaged. It's been over 40 years, as I said at the beginning, longer involved than anybody else in the whole process in Ireland or Britain.

Knott: Thank you. That's great, perfect.

FitzGerald: I guess that sums it up.