IRELAND

COUNTRY READER
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ROBERT M. BEAUDRY
Secretary of Legation
Dublin (1946-1948)

Robert M. Beaudry entered the Foreign Service in 1946 after serving in the U.S. Army during World War II. His career included positions in Ireland, Morocco, Switzerland, and Italy. Mr. Beaudry was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: You came in in 1946. What did you start doing? Did you get some training?

BEAUDRY: Well, we all had a month. FSI at the time was up at the Lothrop mansion at Columbia Road and Connecticut Avenue. It was a good group. Mac Toon was there and Frank Meloy, and Dean Brown. Everybody was in or out of the military. Bud Sherer was there. Most of the people were around 30 years old. I was a 23.

We did that and then we had our first assignments. Mine was to Dublin, at the Legation. I am one of the few people you will run into who was a third secretary of legation. It was split. There was a consulate general in Dublin, but they had nothing to do with us. We were stashed away out at the Residence at Phoenix Park--almost two miles from the nearest bus stop. That cut down on the casual visitors.

Q: Was anybody interested in it? What kind of relations did we have at that time?

BEAUDRY: The first thing was that the Minister was David Gray, who was married to Maude Hall, who was Eleanor Roosevelt's aunt. But everybody in the world was interested in Ireland it seemed. They all came...all the politicians, including John Fitzgerald Kennedy. He was then a congressman.

Ireland had been neutral during the War, yet they got in on the Marshall Plan. The doing of that and the fights with the people who wanted to penalize them for being neutral made the work interesting. So that was good for a couple of years.

Q: What were you doing?

BEAUDRY: Everything. It was a three man post. David Gray, the Minister, was a writer. He and Somerset Maugham had collaborated prior to World War I, so he did the heavy writing. Then we had Montgomery Holiday, then Vinton Chapin and Jack Poole, who were the senior...we would have called them DCMs in a later day. So I did political, economic, admin, everything except consular.

Q: While you were dealing with this was the understanding always that you really had to watch out because of the Irish vote and Irish political influence within the States? Was this a major factor in how one looked at anything there?

BEAUDRY: Nobody got very excited about it. One of the things that was interesting though was that Dublin was on the Israeli circuit. A lot of Israelis came through in those years because they were carrying on an urban guerrilla warfare against the British themselves, and they thought the Irish had written the book on the subject. They used to come and consult, but not with us.

Q: At that time it was Palestine.

BEAUDRY: That's right.

Q: How did you find dealing with the Irish authorities?

BEAUDRY: Congenial. When dealing with traveling American statesmen out of Congress, they would give them the blarney treatment. It was my first experience with the future President Kennedy, and I was fascinated because he would not put up with that nonsense. They would give him all this business about his ancient relatives and he would say, "But Minister, why did you let the teachers' strike go on for nine months?" I figured that he was a cut above the average.

Q: So essentially, two people would be carrying on most of the work?

BEAUDRY: Pretty much. The other big issue was visas because there hadn't been any visas issued since 1941. The consulate General had a backlog of 6,000 active cases and the filing system was such that the files were in boxes sitting around the consular offices. You could tell when a case was coming up for decision by whether the file was within three feet of the door.

Q: But you didn't get involved in that?

BEAUDRY: No. I don't know why, but I didn't.

Q: After that...you left there in 1948?

BEAUDRY: The very end of 1948, like December 30th.

Q: Oh, one other thing, did you get involved with the IRA...was it doing much at that time?

BEAUDRY: No. They had been active in the early days of the war, but they were tainted by having had German connections. The Germans were obviously going to exploit them for whatever it was worth. The Irish, also, during the war interned the IRA types. But that was also in the past.

In FY 49, the budget was tight so some 40 or 50 of us were blanketed into the Information Program which was in State, of course, but which had its own budget. I was sent off to Casablanca to be the public affairs officer there.

CLARENCE S. GULICK
Marshall Plan Aide
Dublin (1948-1951)

Clarence Swift Gulick was born in Brooklyn, New York, and raised in Milburn and Maplewood, New Jersey. He received a bachelor's degree in economics and political science from Swarthmore University and attended graduate school at Harvard University. In January of 1943, he began active duty in the U.S. Navy. His Foreign Service career included positions in India, Ireland, Pakistan, and Nigeria. Mr. Gulick was interviewed by W. Haven North on February 1, 1996.

GULICKSo I worked on that for several months-but meanwhile I had gotten very interested in the Marshall Plan and, of course, the Marshall Plan legislation was working its way through Congress at the time. Interim aid had already started-I guess that started in the fall of 1947 as such, maybe earlier. The Marshall legislation was passed in April of '48 and almost immediately I got a job in the Marshall Plan Organization in the UK and Ireland, Iceland Branch.

Q: *Why did it appeal to you?*

GULICK: I just thought it was important. Actually I had taken the Foreign Service exams when I was in the Navy more or less as an idea this might be a way to get out of the Navy faster at the end of the war. But I didn't have my heart much in it, because by the time-I guess I had passed the written part, but when I got to the oral part I didn't really want to do it. In any case I did not succeed in getting into the Foreign Service if I had wanted to. Possibly my attitude had something to do with that, because I was already back in school. By the time the orals came around I was already out of the Navy. But anyway I thought of taking the Foreign Service exams again, but I really got more interested in fiscal policy and controlling depressions and that sort of thing during my graduate work and didn't do much -didn't do anything; had no international trade or anything. But I did get interested in the Marshall Plan because I thought that was very important and so when the chance came... I started exploring that as soon as I got to Washington and got on their lists. Immediately when they started hiring people for ECA I was probably one of the early ones to be hired from outside.

Q: *What was your first job?*

GULICK: I was in the UK/Ireland/Iceland branch-of course most of our work was on the UK. We had one young fellow who sort of specialized on Iceland on the side, and I specialized on Ireland on the side. I guess it was that fall they began to set up missions-maybe during the summer, yes during the summer they began to set up missions-in the European countries. The Mission to Ireland came later. I believe this is right, this is what we heard: One day someone called Paul Hoffman's office - Hoffman was the head of ECA - and said, "Who is going to be the Mission Director in Ireland?" and the secretary who took the call, called back and said, "We are probably not going to have a Mission in Ireland, we'll handle that from London." It turned out that it was Representative McCormack's secretary (McCormack was the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee) who had called and by that evening we had a Mission Director nominated for the Mission in Ireland. The idea of handling Ireland from London was just intolerable to people like McCormack. The Mission Director that was selected was from Vermont; Joe Carrigan who was Dean of the School of Agriculture of the University of Vermont and head of the extension service in Vermont. He-I guess simultaneously-acquired a special assistant who was Bill Taft; Senator Taft's son who had been teaching English literature at Yale

with a specialty in middle Irish. So they were going to the Mission in Ireland and they wanted to get them over right away. I was the one who had to brief them, of course, and before they went, Carrigan decided I should come along and be there on temporary duty while he got set up in Ireland, so that's what happened. I got there a day or so after he and Bill Taft did.

Q: *What was your function? What were you trying to do?*

GULICK: Well, we were trying to figure out what we might do that would be helpful to Ireland. Of course, the big thing was the dollar deficit which we were financing. I remember I was working in Washington on it, we had sort of figured out that the simplest thing to do might be just to let the British handle it- the British aid covered the whole sterling area pretty much. The British needed dollars to convert for people who held sterling and had sterling earnings and Ireland of course fit right into that. But it was decided that it would be better to handle Ireland's dollar deficit directly. Ireland, although it had not suffered any war damage-actually it did a little bit, but hardly any war damage-was sort of neutral against the British. There had been some attitudes like that, but they actually cooperated very well with the British on economic matters. A lot of Irish entered the British services, but the country didn't itself actually get involved in the war. Anyway they had a huge dollar deficit. They always had had, because their exports mostly went to Britain and it got much more so during and after the war. They needed all sorts of essential things like tobacco from the United States. So we ended up right away deciding-the ECA agency did-to provide dollars directly to Ireland. It was quite a large amount for a small country. As I recall our first quarterly program-we had quarterly programs for the first months of the Marshall Plan-was based on an estimate of $140,000,000 for the first year. The actual amounts-I think they got $120,000.000 in the first year, I can't really remember the figures and it went down rapidly-were substantial.

Q: *Were you raising any policy issues with them or...?*

GULICK: Not at first, no. They were pretty responsible fiscally. We never really had any problems with them on domestic policy, but we had some problems with them on what they were using their dollars for- although our efforts to eliminate less essential items were not always successful. My boss, in particular, when we were figuring out our first figures, struck out tobacco. When we got to Ireland the first thing that happened was we got taken in tow by the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture, who explained how absolutely essential the tobacco was to their entire fiscal and monetary program and so on and so on. Meanwhile we also heard from the Hill that this was not a very wise idea. So we tried to figure out what they would really need and scaled down the dollar import requirements. We also looked into where they might need some technical assistance in helping rekindle their economy, which had suffered quite badly during the war from lack of supplies of all kinds of things.

Of course, Joe Carrigan being an agriculturalist-and Ireland being predominantly an agricultural economy-was interested in the country's agriculture, and he very quickly identified the need for a major liming program. Their biggest "crop" was cattle. The fields tended to be very acid and they had good limestone deposits. That was the thing we devoted the most effort to in terms of encouraging and assisting; the Irish always knew they needed to do that. There wasn't much we could do money wise. They didn't really need money for it except their own money.

We had several other interesting technical assistance activities. Probably the most significant one was that they had a resource-they had no coal to speak of but they had a resource of peat, which was used already, of course, by the peasants. There was an Irish Turf Board which had some fairly large scale operations. This was fairly important, since they were dependent on imports for most of their fuel except for what they got from peat. We did support the Peat Board with our counterpart funds and some of its projects and also they hired Bechtel to help them with some major studies of improved methods of processing and combustion of peat. That was probably the most interesting technical assistance that I worked on. I also worked on some dollar export things which were mostly just surveys and junkets and that sort of thing. Bill Taft got interested in the mining of which there was some and industrial productivity.

Q: *So you had some latitude for dealing with specific development issues.*

GULICK: Yes, it was very small in money terms, like the big money would come strictly out of these...

Q: *That wasn't in a form of just plain cash transfer; it was ,of course , hidden in products...*

GULICK: Yes, but not really much. It was all relatively few commodities that we financed and we sort of leaned on the total requirements, but we had no fault to find really with the way they were managing things.

Q: *The funds were limited to imports from the US?*

GULICK: Yes, I guess substantially. The Inter European Payments Plan was being set up, of course, along in there. There was, of course, a lot of conditional aid for extending drawing rights to the other members who needed internal aid. But the Irish had all these sterling reserves they built up during the war so they didn't need any more like that, and I guess they didn't contribute anything much like that. Their main surpluses were with Britain; it all washed out in the sterling area. They did participate a little in a major study that Larry Hebbard and his gang in London-Joel Bernstein was involved-did of the sterling area and the likely impact of devaluation. We contributed some stuff on what the effect would be in the Irish part of it which of course is very small, but that was very interesting.

Q: *Did the devaluation take place?*

GULICK: Oh yes, it took place while we were there and the pound no longer was at $4.03; it was dropped overnight to $2.90. One of the things they tried to do and we tried to do, was to estimate what would be the effect on trade with the United States and the distribution of Irish trade. We found in retrospect, as they did generally, that the effects were quite a bit more on exports to the United States, dollar exports generally, than you could arrive at by estimating commodity by commodity which you knew about, because all kinds of things came out of the woodwork when the rate changed.

Q: *Was there a large acceleration of exports?*

GULICK: Oh yes. Even meat products we would have never even considered would be going to the States instead of going to the continent and Britain. Anyway, I got, if I needed it, more enthusiasm for market mechanisms as a result of that than I might have had before.

I finished there after a couple of years. The Irish Marshall Plan program was short lived and really was pretty much over in two years. It did continue a little.

Q: *Was there a lot of congressional pressure from the Irish representatives?*

GULICK: I don't remember very much. There may have been but it didn't strike me particularly. I used to go back and forth to Paris a lot, because I was the Program Officer and the Trade Officer and the Finance Officer and the Small Business Officer and the Dollar Exports Officer and each of these roles had a whole little unit in Paris and they all had frequent meetings of their people from all the Missions. I always used to go with the Mission Director when he went for his meetings, so I could have spent most of my time in Paris if I had gone to all the meetings I should have, theoretically.

NICHOLAS SHAPIRO LAKAS
Principal Officer
Island of Cork (1951-1953)

Mr. Lakas was born and raised in New York City and educated at George Washington University and the University of Wisconsin. Entering the Foreign Service in 1948 he became a specialist in Foreign Commercial and Economic Affairs and served in Washington with both the Departments of State and Commerce, Mr. Lakas had assignments in Egypt, Ireland, Scotland, Kuwait, Libya and South Korea. Mr. Lakas was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: So you went to Cork, and you were there from 1950 to 1953?

LAKAS: Exactly. I became the principal officer of the Cork office in 1951.

Q: In the first place, you were sent to do a case. What was the case?

LAKAS: There was a suit in the United States. The person who was being sued had taken refuge in Ireland. He was of Irish background. The lawyers had asked the State Department... and had given them a list of questions. As for us, at the consulate, it was our job to get this man into the office, to sit down and reply to those questions.

Q: It was a deposition.

LAKAS: A deposition. Then, we sent that back to Washington. What was done with the case I have no idea, but we did what we were required to.

Q: How big was the post in Cork?

LAKAS: Enormous. If you're talking about the physical size, we were at 32 South Mall Street in Cork. We were above the Bank of Ireland. We had three floors, and the top floor had been the residence of a consul in days gone by. For a long, long, time, Cork and Cobh, where it used to be, were one of the principal exits for the Irish immigrants to the United States from 1848. The old record books were still in the safe, in Spenserian penmanship. Each one was detailed as to how many boarded the clipper ship this, and the clipper ship that, by name. Later, it became a focus for the handling of social security checks being sent to Irish Americans who had been in the states, resolving the estate cases, dealing with visas, immigrant and non-immigrant, but eventually immigrant visas were given to the embassy in Dublin. We just handled non-working visas. There was the matter of American citizenship. If you voted, at that time, in the local election, we were deprived of American citizenship. There were a number of cases where we had to deal with that. We had American seamen. It was the first time I saw the power of the Catholic Church.

Q: Oh, yes.

LAKAS: I would be summoned by the Archbishop at 7:00 or 8:00 at night, up to his palace, and he would say, "We have a concern here. I would like this person out of here by tomorrow morning." It wasn't Lord Mayor speaking to me, and it wasn't the president up in Dublin, it was the Archbishop.

Q: Would this be an American who was causing trouble?

LAKAS: Yes.

Q: Things have changed a lot. How would you get rid of someone? How would you move an American citizen who was trouble making or maybe getting involved with the wife of a...

LAKAS: Or molesting a nun.

Q: Oh, yes. They did to a nun what shouldn't be done. How would you get rid of them?

LAKAS: With the police, we would apprehend the man. They would hold them in temporary custody. They would hear from the Archbishop's office also. Then, we would escort them to Shannon Airport, and put them onboard the plane. We would alert the police in New York City, to make sure he got off the plane, and went on his way. Of course, he was on the black list almost immediately.

Q: There wasn't any, "I want my lawyer."

LAKAS: He knew he was guilty, or whatever. He had to get out of there as fast as possible.

Q: How many people were involved in our consulate?

LAKAS: I was the sole American officer, FSS-10, at that time. There were six, very fine Irish employees, local. That was it. We handled tons of work, particularly the beneficiaries of veterans' payments, social security payments, millions of dollars coming in through our pouches, every other week, which we simply put into the local mail. If we found American citizens incarcerated in institutions for the insane, for example, if we got word of it, I would go down personally to see what the situation was. Eventually, I would inform the family, or make sure they came over and took him back to the states. If a person died in the county of Muenster, we would collect his belongings, and seal the casket, and send it back to the states. I would get called down to make speeches, for example, to the Irish Countrywoman's Association, in some backward village. My theme, generally, for the speech I delivered, was to focus on the miracle of the United States; this diversity which lead to unity. They were very, very eager. I just returned from Ireland Sunday. I attended a conference. That hospitality, that feeling for America is still very, very strong. You can do no wrong.

Q: Did you feel the embassy in Dublin breathing down your neck?

LAKAS: No. They were very good at that time. They gave me the feeling of being semi-autonomous. I could report directly to Washington, with a copy to them. I was able to persuade Ambassador Matthews to come down and pay an official visit for the first time, in a long time, to the city of Cork, Ireland's second city. There was a good rapport between us. I would be summoned to Dublin to participate in a country team meeting. They would do it, say at 3:00 in the afternoon, and they would tell me they would want me up there by 6:00 that afternoon. Our people would call the railway people and say, "Mr. Lakas has to go to Dublin, would you kindly hold the express until he gets onboard?" That was the kind of rapport we had, "Hold the express!"

Q: When you were there, did the troubles in Northern Ireland have any resonance where you were?

LAKAS: It was very peaceful. They hardly touched on the subject. They would talk about the troubles of 22, more they talked about Cromwell.

Q: Oliver Cromwell, yes.

LAKAS: That's right. But, aside from that, it was a very peaceful, semi-rural second city of Ireland. It had a great port. All the big time steamers stopped in Cove. There was transportation to England, and vice versa, from Cork itself. One of our actions has lead to the creation of the international airport at Cork. That was because we had our very first visit by an American destroyer. I guess it was 1952. One of the sailors that the captain thought had been malingering, turned out to be a real case of appendicitis, dying. So, we rushed him off to Ban Say Core Hospital. The nun said they didn't think he had a chance to live. I said in my full brash New York attitude toward the world at that time, "He's going to live, because I said so." Stupidity, first-class. He did live. How do we get him out of there? He was still in a very precarious position. So, I called the embassy in Dublin, and they said, "Well, maybe we'll call the embassy in London. Do you have a place for a C-47 to land?" I said, "Certainly, it's a sheet metal, up at the top of the hill." They said, "You better be sure of what you're talking about Nick, because

this could mean your career. Just be sure of what you're doing here." I said, "No, I have assurances from the Lord Mayor and other authority that this is a place where a C-47 can land." So, the next day, everything has been arranged, and the sock was put up to determine the wind. Here comes a C-47, circles the field once, circles it another time, and comes down and stops within 50 feet of the fence. The pilot gets out of the plane and says, "Who is the son-of-a-bitch that brought us in here?" I said, "I'm the consul, sir." "Oh, sir." We put him onboard the plane, and I've been receiving a card from him every year, from Maine.

Q: With all these social security checks coming and other federal benefits of one kind or another, did you find yourself going out and investigating, and making sure that the money was being spent properly, or that the person was indeed entitled to it?

LAKAS: We would spot check twice a year. We would pull names out of a hat. Never did we find, in the three years I was there, a malfeasance. They went to a spot, they stayed there; it was their home, their family in some backward village (backward, in the sense of geographically), but beyond that, we never had any problems.

Q: How about the man who went to the United States, was on the police force in New York City, for 25, 30 years, got a pension, and came back. Did they fit in? I served in Germany, and the Germans who came back had a problem. They were full of American "piss and vinegar." It didn't go over well in the small doffs in Germany.

LAKAS: In the 1950s, it was easier for them to go back and fit into the old country, because our country still had not moved up. There was very little difference from when they left Ireland, in the 1940s, and what they found later in Ireland. The difference began to be seen, as I'm told, as you got into the 1960s and 1970s. But, given what I saw and heard, they were very proud to be American citizens. They retained their citizenship zealously. They wanted to be sure they were invited to the July Fourth reception. They would come once in a while to my office just to chat. I don't recall ever having a single problem with these people. They always got their checks on time. But, that was back then. I don't know what it is like now.

Q: I was in Yugoslavia, some years later, and a social security team came in. We had to spend quite a bit of time looking at it. They were checking on federal benefits, fraud, in both Yugoslavia and Greece. Oddly enough, Greece was much more of a problem.

LAKAS: I would expect so.

Q: Yugoslavia had some, but it was usually very close to the Greek border, where they were having problems.

LAKAS: What you described was very apparent in the 1960s and 1970s. Some people went down to Greece to enjoy a holiday. They went down with the purpose of helping to build a church, or bring in water to the village, or marry. They apparently simply were what they were. They had been very hardworking Greek Americans in the United States, who put in 14 hours a day in restaurants, which they owned. So, they go down to Greece, and they find the old lifestyle, which was taking it easy.

Q: Particularly guys, would sit around the café, and drink Greek coffee while the women...

LAKAS: So, when the Greek Americans would say a few things about this, they would resent him. "Who and the hell are you? Just because you went to America and made some money." They didn't ask how hard he works, or what he did to do this. No. There was resentment. I am told today that there is some rudeness in Athens, for example, but I also get from Greeks themselves, that this is normal in a place like Athens.

Q: But, anyway, in Ireland, you didn't. At this point, there was practically no such thing as American tourism, was there?

LAKAS: Not really. When an American came in, we would be delighted to receive him. There was so few in number that we were happy to see them come to the office. If they called on a Sunday to get a special assistance, we were glad to help them. We were able to move out of the consulate, and not live with my wife and child up on the top floor, so we would get some privacy. We found a rental that we kept for about two years. So, I can just picture the old time consul sitting there for years and years, after living on the top floor; calls would come in Sunday night or Monday morning, or Saturday afternoon, or whatever, the door bell would always be ringing.

Q: What about if you had to locate somebody? I would assume you would find the church was probably the network that knew where everybody was, and what they were doing, and all.

LAKAS: And the "guarda," the police. Very, very effective. They could go right down to the roots of a village from Cork, and trace, effectively. They would do it willingly and happily. Then, say to me, "Well now, your honor, it is time for a wee bit of whiskey."

Q: Did you find drinking a problem?

LAKAS: I didn't see it on the streets. St. Patrick's Day, as I saw it in Cork at that time, was a religious holiday. Everything shut down tight, including bugs. Following the military parade, the archbishop would have a five-hour lunch for the dignitaries, and there would be copious quantities of sherry, and long speeches, from everyone. That's what I saw. They drank, yes they did. They still do today. I was in a restaurant in Galway last week, in the evening having dinner. I was surprised to see a table of six girls next to me; some were married, some were not, and the bottles were stacked up on the table. But, if I lived in Ireland, maybe I would like to have a few drinks myself.

Q: Well, you left there in 1951. You were still a staff officer. You certainly had responsibilities that would equal... In other words, there really wasn't any difference.

LAKAS: No, except my passport read "special" which amounted to being treated very well by the authorities. I was under the Civil Service. Some of the benefits of the FSOs were not mine. There was a degree of elitism, a degree of special feeling about being an FSO, as compared to being a staff officer. I should add that one was never sure whether you would continue in the

career as a staff officer, or whether this was a temporary assignment, and then you would be told, "This is finished, go on and find another job."

Q: Well then, in 1951, where did you go?

LAKAS: I was appointed officially principal officer of a consulate at Cork. In 1953, my mother died, and I called the embassy to send down, which they did, an assigned officer. I caught the plane out of Shannon. I knew I wasn't coming back. I left my wife and child in Cork to pack up and follow me. I arrived in Washington, and did what I needed to do. I had a temporary assignment in the Department of State. I arrived in May, and by November, I was on my way to Alexandria, Egypt, as the deputy principal officer, out of a consulate general. It was one of the biggest we had there at that time.

WILLIAM H. TAFT III
Ambassador
Ireland (1953-1957)

William Howard Taft the third was born in 1915. He was the grandson of William Howard Taft, the 27th President of the United States, and Robert A. Taft, a United States Senator. He served as the U.S Ambassador to Ireland from 1953 to 1957. Ambassador Taft was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on April 30th 1987.

Q: Today is April 30th, 1987 I am interviewing Ambassador William H. Taft, III regarding his period as Ambassador to Ireland from 1953 to 1957. This interview is on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Mr. Ambassador, considering your family background and its focus on domestic politics, what led you down a different path with an interest in diplomacy?

TAFT: It was perhaps somewhat accidental as many of these things are. I not only had a Yale degree but a Ph.D. from Princeton in English Literature, and I was all set to be an English teacher. Indeed, I did teach before the Second World War: a year at Maryland University out here beyond Washington D.C., and a year at Haverford College, and then after the War three years at Yale. I enjoyed it very much but decided that I wasn't really cut out to be a serious researcher. That deficiency would be a handicap in a University career. So, I joined the Marshall Plan which was just starting at the time in 1948, and I found myself as a young man assigned as Special Assistant to the small Marshall Plan office in Ireland. I can talk a little about that, but it led eventually, not so long after I came back here in 1951 to a larger assignment; in 1953 I was appointed Ambassador to Ireland. I ran, perhaps, on the experience platform.

Q: What type of work were you doing in the Marshall Plan in Ireland?

TAFT: It was a grab bag of activities. We only had a Chief of Mission and two, three, then later, four officers. I was the general assistant to Joseph Carrigan, an agricultural expert, who had been

Dean of Agriculture at the University of Vermont, a very appropriate assignment in Ireland. I was among other things the Information Officer and generally explained our program. The people in Ireland, I think, ought to have known about the Marshall Plan further. I went around the country and told them what the activities and interests were and also the problems. I did go to Paris a lot, Mr. Harriman was in charge there. But the Irish program was a small one, and in fact, I have always wondered, except for the political process, why the Irish deserved even a small program? After all, they had been neutral during the War. The ultimate argument was that they were an agricultural country which could assist starving Europe. But during the War, they lacked fertilizers, they simply could not get enough to retain their past abilities to grow food; they needed money to buy lots of fertilizers after the War. Also, the Marshall Plan in Ireland was political; there is no harm in saying that the Irish seemed to have conceived over all the years that they have a closer connection with the United States than almost any other country., Like the Israelis and unlike other countries, up till lately anyway, they have spent their time as a diplomatic unit, I think, more on Capitol Hill than they have in an orthodox way in their connections with the State Department, which is supposed to be the avenue of diplomacy.

Q: But not the real avenue in practical terms.

TAFT: Yes, the Irish have certainly been active even in Marshall Plan days early on to generate American sympathy and assistance as they are still doing. I don't hold this against them, but maybe further remarks explain more of this point of view.

Q: Did you find when you were working with the Marshall Plan in Ireland that you got a good taste of the American-Irish politicians pressure on the government. Did you feel that Congressmen from Boston, for example, were playing a bigger role than probably was necessary?

TAFT: To some extent the shoe was on the other foot. The Irish moved through Capitol Hill and made friends as indeed now they have done in recent years where you have a scheme to pay money to the Northern Irish to generate better approaches to Irish people living together, the Catholics and Protestants, and by making any new U.S. loans to industry up in the North contingent on fair employment for all people. So it's not the White House really which generated this activity except that they think- and I think- it's a good thing. It really comes from the Congress, and, of course, their large Irish constituency here among the Congressional districts. Anything favorable like that to improve the political climate in the North and feelings between the North and the South is a good thing. But I'm not sure that if these matters were put to the American people generally, they would subscribe to lavish assistance.

Q: You mentioned that when you came back to the United States in the early 1950s you decided to wait for the position of Ambassador to Ireland, but how does one run for an ambassadorial position?

TAFT: Again, it's a very political thing and I discovered it early on. I knew a lot of Irish-connected politicians here, especially in my own state, which was then Connecticut, where I knew the senators.

Q: Who were the senators?

TAFT: One was Prescott Bush. He was my friend and I'm sorry to say I have to check who was the other one. I keep forgetting names, but Prescott Bush was a good friend of mine and of my father's [Senator Robert A. Taft] too. I went to him early, and I always thought it rather amusing because I asked him whether he would support me for ambassador - you had to get your senator's interest and support. He said: "Well Bill, I'll think that over, but I believe that I will be in favor of your interest if you get the support of three judges who are based here in New Haven, in the general area, and they will have to send me letters of recommendation." I said that was fine. Well, I didn't tell Mr. Bush that I belonged to the Graduate's Club rather than the Faculty Club, a normal place for an English instructor, because I preferred to lunch with lawyers, other people than academic people, at least some of the time. I was at the lawyers' table and these three judges -important to me- usually had lunch there. They had become good friends of mine. So, it was very easy to get very nice letters from them. I think that's how my campaign began.

Q: Were these judges of Irish extraction?

TAFT: No, not necessarily. They were all eminent judges. One was a Judge Clark who happened to be at the time the head of the Yale Law School. Then there was Judge Hinks, and another very fine judge, Judge Swawn.

Q: What role did the lawyers play in the political process in Connecticut?

TAFT: Well they didn't. But I think that Prescott Bush just wanted their assessment. He probably thought it might be difficult for me to meet them and get to know them and explain my interest. They were eminent people and their recommendations meant a lot to him. My acquaintance was largely luck.

Q: So we are not talking about getting the stamp of approval of a political machine?

TAFT: No, a character approval, and then, of course, one had to know something of the Irish organization in this country, which I did, simply because I lived in Ireland for three years. I had a publicity activity and naturally got to know them. The Irish people in New York at the time were very important and they were important in giving advice to the President in the White House and so forth. You really needed their recommendation.

Q: What Irish organizations were particularly significant?

TAFT: Well there was one called The Irish Historical Society in New York, which isn't well known by the world at large, but seemed to have the ear of the White House. It's an intellectual group, and I went up and talked to them and got their recommendation. A friend of the family, Roger Faherty, a Chicago lawyer, seemed to have lots of influence and he pushed my candidacy. Then, I had to write a lot of letters, it was almost like running for a more conventional political post and this, I'm sure, although I don't know the details, is usually true even today. Whether it goes on for many other ambassadorships, I'm not sure. But where you have a particular country with large numbers of people in the United States and their descendants here, it's important to get them in your camp. One of my advantages was not only having been in Ireland but getting a head

start. As I told you I had my two Senators behind me. There was another man in Connecticut who was an agricultural man--so he said--who came out for the job; he lined up in his behalf, to my surprise, the head of the House Foreign Relations Committee. Luckily the House didn't have the clout in this matter, so I got the assignment. There was a number of other much more important people in the sense of their political connections with the Republican party who wanted the honor of the position. My father obviously played a role, although I think he tried to stand aside in large degree. But I always felt that I won the job for two reasons. One, I could claim experience which meant something. I also had studied the Old Irish language and literature, and secondly, there were so many inexperienced would-be candidates for the post that they canceled one another out.

Q: When you were writing these letters did you just write to Irish Americans saying I'm a candidate to be your ambassador and I would appreciate your support?

TAFT: Yes, I said in fact that I was hoping to become Ambassador and doing my best to become such.

Q: Did you get many people who said: "What's your Irish background" ,and things of that nature? That usually seems to be one of the major criteria.

TAFT: Yes, of course; I could cite my grandmother's family name, Herron. The Herrons came from the County Tyrone in the North, but other Irish ancestors there were none. However, it seemed to me, and it still seems to me, that the Irish might prefer a non-Roman Catholic person, who hasn't been steeped in the conventional Irish background, on the assumption that he is more objective and represents a voice unprejudiced to the White House.

Q: You were mentioning how the Irish didn't particularly care for people who came full of Irish lore and were of Irish extraction?

TAFT: I don't want to seem to contradict myself, but I think there is an appreciation by the Irish of somebody who has of course a great interest in Ireland, and I did, but also they have interest in knowing someone is very close to the President and not merely an Irishman. He can speak up in an objective way in their behalf and may be more influential sometimes.

Q: Did you know the principal actors on the Foreign Affairs situation in the United States, mainly President Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles?

TAFT: I knew them. I was introduced to President Eisenhower when he won the nomination from my father and we had a considerable talk. I had seen him since and after I became Ambassador several times. It was a little more informal then, and you could as the President's appointee call on him and talk with the President. It might be harder to do some people to do that nowadays.

Q: You didn't have the feeling there was a gatekeeper who was keeping you away from the President?

TAFT: No, and I knew John Foster Dulles fairly well. I just happened to know him even before he was Secretary of State.

Q: When you went out to Ireland did you go out with any instructions or was it "Here it is"?

TAFT: There were no very important instructions about my being ambassador there, partly because in those days, 1953 through much of 1957, life was somewhat calmer and more informal than, unfortunately, with the IRA troubles today. It was a place where Barbara, my wife, and I could live in a very nice Embassy with the children and have no problems. We didn't have, as I believe they now have to have, policemen at the gate; also, they are wired for possible break-in difficulties. I think I have heard that the Ambassador has to go a different route by chauffeured car to the Embassy office downtown each day. There must be certain care taken, where as we had a lovely, casual time and indeed we could go out and see our friends in my wife's Morris Minor in the evening if we went out to dinner - just by ourselves. We did have a chauffeur and a car, and we used it occasionally, but it was not obligatory. So, we had a very happy time in Ireland with our four children there. They grew up incidentally without television, a very good thing for four formative years. They had good schools; at least the boys did.

Q: What was the principal focus of American policy towards Ireland during that period?

TAFT: I think it was simply to be friendly. We had a little reporting about the incipient IRA business which was going on and the local politics, but it was generally peaceful; we did have negotiating matters concerning, for example, whether or not Pan American or TWA would have the right to come to Dublin Airport rather than Shannon. That was certainly a lower scale of difficulties. Then, one always active interest that the United States has in Ireland as elsewhere is to get its Government to vote and support United States positions, not only in the Marshall Plan of the day but in the United Nations agencies. This took some doing and explaining. I had the pleasure also of being there during the Marshall Plan, knowing most of the people in the two Governments that alternated, Fianna Faile and Fine Gael. Marshall Plan activity included a small sum nowadays, about three million dollars which was to go to programs, to start an agricultural institute there, to assist dairy agencies, and to assist Trinity College in certain ways. There were other projects, but when I left the Marshall Plan office these things were still being worked out. Mr. DeValera, who was Prime Minister when I arrived the first time in 1948, didn't want to do a number of things that we thought were necessary in using this money. And then I came back only a little less than 2 years after departing in 1951 as ambassador with these matters still not resolved. I must confess we found Mr. DeValera's Government a little more difficult to parlay with than John Costello's, who was Prime Minister in Fine Gael days. DeValera was still there when I arrived the second time, still the head of government; unfortunately, these matters had not moved. There were counterpart moneys still to be allocated.

Q: These were counterparts funds?

TAFT: Yes, and all these things had to be moved and I didn't approve much of DeValera's wishes how to utilize them. So, I just held out for a year and then DeValera's government fell and John Costello came back and we were able to advance these programs previously recommended very easily.

Q: During the election of 1954 when John Costello came back in, because of the large number of the Irish-Americans and the fact that many Americans feel that Ireland is their second home, did you find there was any political interference or was it difficult to stay out of the election fire at the time?

TAFT: No, I don't think our Irish-Americans go that far. They don't influence elections over there.

Q: One of the factors that often enters into Irish-American politics is the Catholic church. Did you find Archbishop Spellman as a leader of the Catholic Church of the United States, or other Catholic leaders play much of a role in Irish-American relations?

TAFT: I don't think so. The hierarchy of the Irish Catholic Church in those days and perhaps even today is a force unto themselves. One of the interesting things is that for much of the history of the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S.A., at least, after they achieved importance, most of the hierarchy here have been of Irish descent and orientation. They were Irish-Americans but I don't think they had any influence in Ireland because their American Catholicism is far more liberal, less rigid in operation than what goes on in the Puritanical hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Ireland. In fact, the head of the Irish Church in those days when I was there was Archbishop McQuaid. He was ever so much more puritanical than the Papacy and they were rigid in talking about the politics in Ireland. They had both their noses and feet in Ireland's politics. They still do to a certain extent, but they have gradually liberalized themselves but haven't caught up with the American hierarchy, whether it is of Irish descent or otherwise.

Q: As Ambassador did you find you had to touch base with the Irish Catholic church from time to time to make sure that you were going to gain support or to explain why we had such and such a position?

TAFT: No, we didn't do that. Occasionally, I went to a diplomatic religious service. I knew Archbishop McQuaid but I had no dealings with him and I don't thing he would have expected me to have had. In the Phoenix Park, where the American Embassy is located, there are three houses only: the American Embassy, the President's House, or Palace, and the Papal Nunciature. Much of the time I was there, there was an Archbishop from Philadelphia, O'Hara, a very nice man indeed, who was our neighbor. He was the Nuncio and we enjoyed him very much. I certainly knew him much more intimately than I knew McQuaid, but we used to go to occasional so called diplomatic services at the pro-Cathedral downtown at the invitation of Archbishop McQuaid. I remember once--we always brought in some of the officers from the Embassy--the wife of the air attaché happened to be there, and there was a lot of incense and movement around the church. She had never been to a Catholic Church before, I suppose, and she said: "My goodness. I have never until now understood where the term Holy Smoke came from."

Q: Going back to some of the American interests with Ireland, I noted that sometimes the issue of Ireland not being a member of NATO would come up. Did this play any particular role, did we want Ireland in NATO while you were there or did we care?

TAFT: I think we would have always wanted them to be in NATO, but there wasn't any chance. The history of modern Ireland includes the fact that during the Second World War the British were not allowed to use naval bases in the South. DeValera kept out of war. He had German and Japanese Embassies, which at the least were valuable listening posts, generally speaking, DeValera, compared to people like Costello and the Fine Gael Party, was so anti-English that he never cooperated with England nor would he enter NATO as long as England was an influence.

Q: Even with the change of government between DeValera and Costello, there really wasn't an opportunity for us to persuade Ireland to join NATO?

TAFT: No, I think anyone who wanted us to persuade Ireland it would have been my duty and probably was, as I recall, from time to time to explain how difficult this was and not a productive move. It wouldn't have moved the Irish significantly in that direction.

Q: I know that in March of 1956 you went with the Prime Minister, then John Costello, on a visit to the United States. Did you find this kind of trip very productive or was it just for show?

TAFT: Well, I think the Irish appreciated it, and they have come from time to time to the United States. The President came while I was here, Sean T. Kelly, and Costello at a later time when I was ambassador. So I came twice and we had White House functions and so forth. Mr. Costello, when he came-- at the appropriate time--Saint Patrick's day, March 17, I was assigned a political role: to keep Mr. Costello next to me the whole time, because in his going up to New York to the parade and so forth, the Republican Party seemed to feel that there was a danger he might be kidnaped by the Democrats. What would have happened I have no idea, but that was a concern and I did my best to stay with him. When there was a motorcade, I leaped into his car rather than being shunted behind anywhere. I remember we went to Mr. Harriman's house for some kind of function...

Q: This is Averell Harriman. Was he Governor at the time?

TAFT: No he was not. But he had been head of the Marshall Plan and so forth and he had elevators in his house down below and there was a vast crowd getting into his party and before I knew it, Mr. Costello was pushed into the elevator in a crush and the doors shut. I thought "Heavens I'm not going to see him again for several hours", but luckily I was able to get into the next elevator and I found him without difficulty. I was young enough to feel this was a very important political assignment and I didn't want to botch the job.

Q: I can't figure anything more daunting than trying to keep an Irish Prime Minister away from the Tammany Democrats in New York.

TAFT: That was the point, I think I did fairly well. They didn't like it.

Q: I'm now speaking as an old consular officer. Were visas an important part of the embassy's work?

TAFT: They were very much so in the American Embassy. We had at the time two consulates, one in Cork and one in Limerick, both important as visa arranging offices. Even at that time the State Department was pinched for money and trying to save it by closing consulates; indeed, while I was there the Limerick consulate was closed. There was much hoopla about it and all the people in the west of Ireland didn't like it all; we did manage to keep the Cork consulate. I remember that it was between consulates in Bergen , Norway or Cork, Ireland and Ireland won out.

Q: This I take it was because there were more Irish in New York that there were Norwegians in Minnesota.

TAFT: I believe that has something to do with it.

Q: These decisions are usually made on such a basis. Did you ever use the visa function as a support for your work by saying if you want something from someone I'll put in a good word for your cousin?

TAFT: I was rather stern about that and I tried to see to it that I was not influenced by politics. There were at times, I don't think it's true nowadays, situations where Irish husbands and their American wives had to decide if the American wife would became Irish, especially if she voted in Irish elections. Going around the country, there were a number of these poor ladies who used to come and beg me to do something about it and retain or recapture their American citizenship. They didn't have very good cases in line with the rules. I don't think I was ever able to change that.

Q: The citizenship laws were much more rigidly enforced in those days before a series of Supreme Court decisions pretty well nullified the loss of citizenship provisions. It is very difficult to lose one's citizenship now.

TAFT: I might say that these matters in the Embassy required considerable work, but life was not all that active, and that was one reason I came home after four years, in 1957. Even though Mr .Eisenhower kindly asked me if I wanted to stay on, and indeed I wanted to, I felt being still a young man--I was in fact the youngest Ambassador, I think, that they had had anywhere for a long time--when I went there I was thirty-seven although there must be a lot of younger people nowadays. There was not all that much to do, and I thought it would be a bad thing for my continuing moral fiber; I enjoyed my golfing afternoons too much.

Well as I was saying, one had a lot of pleasant, leisure time. There was one example, I had two military attachés. One Army, and one Air. They didn't have much to do and I remember one of them in particular, the nice military attaché. His name was Buck Spinks; he came to me one day and said: "Mr. Ambassador, I admit I don't have very much to do. Can you give something special. It needn't be military but if I can help out in the Embassy, I would like to do so." I didn't know what to say but -I said: "Buck, I'm falling down on the job in one respect at least, and that is, I don't like to go to the races and almost every Irishman seems to go to the races and my wife likes it. She usually goes on Wednesdays. If you would care to do so, would you be her escort?" And he was delighted by this. Life looked much better to him and this was an assignment that

both Barbara, my wife, and Buck Spinks could appreciate, whereas when I did go to the races, it was usually in protesting mood. The track was a nice place to go, where you met the Chief Justice and other important people, but I was not a success because I didn't know or care much about horses, and standing around between races seemed very dull to me. I didn't do well at it at all; my wife noticed it, so she gave me a hollow cane for Christmas. Into the cane one poured brandy. There was a little cup on top and I took it to the races and immediately became popular. But these were little details about the fact that you had to be genial. I played golf, which was important to Irish people, and also I was perhaps more intellectual than many of our ambassadors to Ireland. All nice people, I would say, but not concerned with the Irish language, or things of that sort which I just happen to be. So, I had my own particular constituencies. I think every ambassador has a different crowd.

Q: Were you involved with Trinity University?

TAFT: Trinity College. Yes. I knew many of the professors and I used to go there and make talks. Perhaps, some of our ambassadors do that now, but I think I was closer perhaps to the intellectual community and the other Universities, such as University College Dublin than our other ambassadors. I think I can comment on most of them going back to the War. There was a Minister--we didn't have an Ambassador at the time--named Grey, who during the War was an important figure. He was, I believe, an in-law of President Roosevelt during the War. And he became rather unpopular, naturally, because he was trying actually to push the Irish to make concessions, but he got nowhere. He was perhaps the most compelling figure among our representatives along the way, because he had something very important to do. Since then that has hardly been the case. It has remained more a post in which one is a friendly representative and doing one's best to improve relations when minor difficulties come up.

Q: Did the Irish government, or Ireland as such, when you were there, have a particular agenda they were pushing with the United States other than good relations?

TAFT: Usually not. They had the sometimes terrible problem of a divided Ireland, I think lately President Reagan and Capitol Hill in instituting their plan to improve industry in the North and in doing so to improve understanding and relations among the people, whether they be Catholic or Protestants, is a very good thing. It's a matter of human rights, where, as I understand the matter, loans are made to industries needing them, but only on a basis that they will be fair, Roman Catholics will be in fair measure hired, whereas this is not usually the case; industries are owned largely by the Protestants. Not only will Catholics in the new order be hired, but they will be fairly promoted just as in this country. We will have examples in Northern Ireland of a fair approach to fair employment.

Q: You were in Ireland during the time of McCarthyism. Did this have any effect on your work there?

TAFT: It did in a way. I didn't mention that we were concerned always with the press and often its anti-American approach. The rise of McCarthy and the bad publicity that he got did not assist us, so that we had to be doing as much as we could to deny too emphatic or unfair interpretations of the United States which often occurred in the press. Sometimes, one couldn't do anything, in

fact, if you protested to the press you tended to aggravate their approach in the wrong direction. I think that some of our Ambassadors, as I have heard, have been too much concerned about press coverage and up to a point it's best to say nothing.

Q: Was the press anti-American mainly because Ireland is a relatively poor country and it made good publicity to talk about our follies or was there more of a political reason?

TAFT: I don't think it was political. There were just a lot of very liberal and rather attention-seeking editors, columnists and others. It's very easy even for the Irish to bash the United States through their newspapers. But, in a way if one makes speeches as an Ambassador one is able to do and treat these problems in an intelligent way, you make a little headway in the publicity game. That, I think, is an important part of the Ambassador's role over there.

Q: What did you feel were your principal accomplishments when you were in Ireland?

TAFT: Simply generating good will on all sides. I think I did a good job there. I seemed to have gained a reputation, if I do say so myself, for being a friend of Ireland despite not being an Irish-American. It's a little difficult to say what more one does in that post.

Q: As you have described it, it may be it's to keep relations on an even keel.

TAFT: I told John Foster Dulles more than once that I conceived my role to be one of keeping Irish matters off his schedule. Why be bothered by something that was less important than so many problems around the world.

Q: Did you have any sort of frustrations while you were there. Things that you would like to tend to that you couldn't do?

TAFT: No, I don't think so. When we went there to the Embassy we had, Barbara and I, a great advantage because we had already lived there three years. I, a relatively minor officer, we had made a great many friends so that we had many friends before we came back and in fact, although I was rather brash, perhaps, being young, when I got to the Embassy I knew a good deal more about Ireland than many of my State Department officers and in those informal days we could go out to dinner ourselves. We were relatively poor at the time. We got some entertainment funds but such were rather few, specially considering our magnificent residence where one wants to give parties; there had been a tradition of the Fourth of July party, which is right in the middle of the summer and all the American tourists came, even in tourist buses. I observed the first Fourth of July, we had a big party and when we got through, on July the 5th--the fiscal year then began on July the 1st--all our money was gone. It made a few Irish people a little annoyed when I changed all this by having our big party for what it should be, to entertain the Government and other important people in Ireland. I switched it to January the 1st, when there was hardly an American in Ireland from this country and I think the tourists in July became a little annoyed with this practice, but it meant that we were spending our money not on Americans - we didn't have very much - but on Irish people, as we should have been.

Q: How did you find the staff of the Embassy?

TAFT: Some of them are among our dearest friends still. They've all retired now but we see some especially who come down from Massachusetts. Two will be here on Monday. That is a couple who were in Ireland when we were there the first time, when I was in the Marshall Plan. He was a young officer in the Embassy and I got to know him very well then. One problem with embassies is that sometimes the Ambassador doesn't quite know what is going on when he comes into a group of officers never seen before. They may be very helpful and friendly, but I had a feeling that I didn't know enough what was going on in our various offices; little problems which I might have solved were under the rug, but there was no way for me to learn much about them. So, this good friend of mine who had been there previously I got the State Department to send him back. He was by no means a snooper, but I felt that I did know more about the inner workings of the Embassy once he was there. That's a problem, maybe, of the higher officer in any embassy. There are a lot of people around that are very deferential and very polite and most of are wonderfully helpful but at the same time you're not quite sure what they're thinking about. We had to get rid of one or two people. I did.

Q: These were Foreign Service Officers?

TAFT: One, for example, was an Information Officer having to do with USIA/USIS. He, poor fellow, said he had to go out to the west of Ireland for two weeks to make a lot of speeches and just generally shake hands with people and it seemed his business; so off he went, we thought. He was unfortunate in that we discovered he had not gone to the west of Ireland. Instead friends of mine spied him in London at the theater and so forth. Even his poor wife didn't know that he had gone to the U.K. for a spree. So, I immediately got rid of him. We had a few other domestic problems. There are always those. The Marines were fine, speaking of Marines these days [reference to a sex/spy episode in Moscow involving Marines made public at time of interview] The only difficulty with Marines was that they kept getting married to Irish girls. In those days it wasn't a matter of concern with the enemy and that was perfectly all right except that often the Irish girl turned out to be much better educated than her Marine and at the end of his term he would come back to the United States with her and she would discover that he was a cook rather than a lawyer, something of that sort. A little hard on the Irish!

Q: Regarding your transfer back to the United States you had asked for that in 1957? It was enough time at that point?

TAFT: That's right. I felt that I would go to seed for four more years and after all I was only in my early forties by that time.

Q: How did you feel about being replaced by Scott McLeod?

TAFT: We forgot about that, of course he was a--is it too strong a word--a hatchet man of McCarthy's.

Q: He was so regarded and detested by the line Foreign Service because of this.

TAFT: I was disturbed that he was coming and it made a hoopla in the press which I mentioned, and it was very hard to defend him, but that was my job.

Q: There must have been a considerable disappointment among your friends too in the Irish society, Government and all?

TAFT: Maybe so, I don't know. It created an embarrassing two months in some ways before I left but I had to spend my time saying he wasn't as bad as the press reported and so forth, and perhaps he wasn't. I think when he got there, he was a relatively reasonable person, but he wasn't faced with many problems.

JAMES E. HOOFNAGLE
Deputy Chief of Mission
Dublin (1965-1967)

James Hoofnagle was born and raised in Virginia. He attended the University of Virginia. He entered the Foreign Service and held his first post in Germany in 1952, he later held a post in Ireland. He was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1989.

HOOFNAGLE: The first ambassador was a Democrat from the city of Chicago, a real estate man. He was 73 years old, so when he saw how I was working he immediately gave me authority to run the Embassy. He didn't know anything about government, and less about the Foreign Service.

Often he would call me up in the morning and say, "Jim, do you think it's all right if I don't come in today?" He had only one instruction for me in terms of operating the office -- "Don't get me in trouble."

We had a problem that was only going to give him trouble. I was under instructions before I even left Washington that we had to have landing rights for our airlines in Dublin, Ireland. We were giving the Irish landing rights in this country and they weren't giving us anything but Shannon.

So here was our ambassador saying, "Don't get me in trouble". So what I had to do was just work slowly, but not create any furor. I think the Irish finally caught on to what I was doing, and it was the ambassador who was holding things back.

Anyway, Ambassador Sheridan left and John D.J. Moore, a Republican, came in and then we started to work to get the airline landing rights changed and we did get that done. We got landing rights in Dublin.

Q: What was it -- the Irish were not letting the American lines land there or that we were not letting the Irish lines land in New York?

HOOFNAGLE: They would not let us land in Dublin. We had to stop in Shannon.

Q: I see.

HOOFNAGLE: Shannon was the only place where we had landing rights. Of course, the reason for that was that that would be taking business away from the Irish airlines. In those days, if you wanted to go to Dublin on an American airline, you flew to Shannon and picked up the Irish airline.

Anyway, that was the biggest battle there. It was a marvelous time -- I mean, pleasure. It was no hard job. It was fabulous, the things you did there -- the horse shows, events of all kinds. You could just go day after day with pleasure to all these events. It is a nice cultural town, too. So we really enjoyed Ireland.

ROGER A. SORENSON
Economics Counselor/Deputy Chief of Mission
Dublin (1969-1974)

Roger Sorenson was born in Utah and graduated from Brigham Young University. He joined the Foreign Service in 1960, serving in Italy, Canada, Switzerland, Ireland, and Washington, DC. Mr. Sorenson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

Q: In 1969 you were assigned to Dublin.

SORENSON: I was assigned there originally as the economic counselor.

Q: How did that assignment come about?

SORENSON: Initially as part of the regular assignment process, so far as I could see. On the other hand, Ireland at the time was in the process of joining the European Economic Community, which meant that there would be a gradual realignment of Irish trade away from traditional trading partners in favor of those within the European Community. Since I had been working on trade matters, the assignment seemed to be a good fit on that score.

In addition, the United States and Ireland were deeply involved in a long-standing dispute having to do with airline landing rights. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Irish had negotiated a treaty with the United States that was extraordinarily favorable to Ireland, allowing Irish airlines to land in Boston, Chicago, and New York while restricting American airlines to Shannon, which of course is not where the Irish population is. The result of this arrangement was that the bulk of the traffic was with the Irish carrier. We were determined to change this arrangement, that is, to renegotiate the agreement to get landing rights for our airlines in Dublin as well as Shannon.

Q: Were you involved in the airline negotiations?

SORENSON: Very much. It was one of my major fields of activity while I was there.

Q: How does one go about...I mean, if the Irish have got a favorable agreement, how do you get them to alter it? What do you use?

SORENSON: The Treaty itself contained a clause that allowed either side to give notice of termination. The only thing you can do in a situation like this, then, is threaten to invoke the clause of termination if the other side is unwilling to modify the agreement. However, it was tough. Our government had been trying without success to renegotiate the treaty for several years.

And the reason that our negotiators had failed was that the Irish were especially skilled in mobilizing the Irish- American lobby in the United States where there are a good many people who are still proud of their Irish descent. They had played the State Department off for years by the simple tactic of agreeing to discuss the treaty a year later, the year agreed to always coinciding with congressional elections at which time congressional candidates from districts with large numbers of Irish-Americans would unfailingly signal the State Department that it was an inopportune moment to try to change the treaty.

It took us five years, but we finally broke their pattern of maneuvering to negotiate only on election years and succeeded in getting the treaty rewritten. I was on the inaugural flight of the first TWA plane to land on a scheduled flight to Dublin.

Q: Once again, how was this accomplished?

SORENSON: Not to put too fine a point on it, by playing hardball. First, by breaking the pattern of negotiations so that treaty reviews no longer coincided with U.S. domestic elections, then by threatening their rights in either Chicago or Boston at a time when congressmen with large Irish-American constituencies could afford to ignore the issue. It was an interesting experience. Between the Ambassador and myself, we deliberately agreed to play differing roles to ease the process, that is, to be at once tough but not too destructive of Irish-American relations. My role was to be the unfeeling and unbending representative of the Department, ruthlessly pressing its demands, while the Ambassador's role was to be that of the peacemaker, whose aim was to find an accommodation that everyone could live with. By making extreme demands and by making them public through the media, we created an atmosphere that allowed the Irish government to acquiesce to a less extreme outcome or settlement, one that we had already determined would still be satisfactory in terms of U.S. interests.

Q: While we're on this, could you talk about the role of the Irish constituency. Because, in many ways the oldest pressure group, really, in the United States has been the Irish one. I mean, a contentious one. One hears much about the Israeli lobby, but the Irish lobby is much older. How effective did you find the Irish lobby to be both in Congress and outside of Congress?

SORENSON: Very effective, to say the least. As I think I've suggested, the landing rights issue had gone on since the Second World War and was not finally resolved until the early seventies, due entirely to the effectiveness of this lobby and the skill of the Irish government in mobilizing it. There were, therefore, roughly twenty-five years during which they fended off every effort to do anything about it, even though what we were trying to do was in our own national self interest.

And this was not the only area where the lobby had looked after the "auld" country. I found, for example, that Ireland had benefitted from the Marshall Plan even though it was not one of the belligerents, had suffered no war damage, and had remained neutral....

Q: In fact, somewhat to the side of the Germans -- as much as they could be.

SORENSON: Certainly, they've always had a love-hate thing with the English. In any event, when it came time to rebuild Europe following the war, Congress guaranteed that the Irish would be among the beneficiaries of American largesse, notwithstanding their lack of involvement in the war. Thanks to the Irish lobby, they received a fairly substantial loan. It would be unfair, however, to suggest that the Irish lobby always acts at the behest of the Irish government. In particular, the support that the IRA receives in the United States has been a source of considerable and genuine embarrassment to the Irish government. Unfortunately, much of the money that keeps the IRA going comes from Irish- Americans who still think romantically of the old IRA and its role in the Irish Rising.

I remember attending a meeting in Seattle where the Irish Consul from San Francisco argued all evening with IRA supporters from the Irish-American community, imploring them to discontinue supporting the IRA, noting that the continuing terrorism and killing in Ireland and the UK is largely financed by the Irish-American community. The Consul's pleas fell largely on deaf ears.

There was a great deal of violence during my tour of duty in Ireland, and inevitably members of Congress would arrive demanding to go wherever they thought there might be a photo opportunity, usually to a funeral, a demonstration, or sometimes even to the border to be photographed looking at British outposts. On occasion, their activities were directly contrary to the wishes of the Irish government, which made its views known to us while turning a blind eye to the offending activities of the congressional member. It was the way the game was played, but it was certainly a demonstration of the power of the Irish-American vote in the United States as perceived not only by members of Congress but by the Irish government as well.

In short, the Irish government could mobilize this constituency for its own purposes in certain areas; in other areas, however, they contravened its interests.

Q: Of course a power in Congress was, and still is today, Senator Kennedy. Did you find his hand laid heavy on relations with Ireland or not?

SORENSON: Not really. Senator Kennedy visited Ireland while I was stationed there. The Irish adored the Kennedys. Several presidents have been of Irish extraction, but Kennedy was the first who was also Catholic, which carries with it a tribal identification in Ireland. This was the reason

that John Kennedy ignited a such a flame there. If you traveled in the country you'd find in humble cottages a picture of the Pope, one of the sacred heart of Jesus, and a third of President Kennedy.

Q: When I was in Yugoslavia, you'd find pictures of Tito and Kennedy. Roger, what was our attitude at the embassy while you were there towards the troubles in Northern Ireland?

SORENSON: I don't recall ever receiving instructions on this difficult issue from the State Department, which wisely wanted to remain neutral. I became DCM after I'd been there about a year, so I would have been in a position to see everything that came and went out in the way of instructions and reports.

The ambassador, John D. J. Moore, was an extraordinarily decent man, and he himself was of Irish extraction. Indeed, his father had met de Valera when the later visited the United States on a fund raising trip early in the period just after the Rising. I should note that de Valera was President of Ireland during the first part of my assignment, so that it was a significant experience for me to have been there and to have dealt with one of the founders of the Irish state.

More importantly, Ambassador Moore was very well connected, not only with de Valera but with several others in the Irish government who were the fathers, one might say, of the modern Irish state -- men who had been present at the founding of the state and had worked to bring about the revolution. I mention this to illustrate that Moore had enormous sympathy for Irish aspirations, but he also understood that the Ireland that they had created was one which recognized the division of the country on the basis of which the predominantly Protestant counties of the north had remained at least for the time being within the United Kingdom.

This division was part of the settlement between the Republic and the UK, but the fact of the settlement remains to this day a major source of contention within the Republic, and its major political parties have their roots in the ideological views they held at the time with respect to the settlement. It would ill behoove a foreign government to involve itself in this internal debate.

Q: Was it not even the basis of their civil war?

SORENSON: Indeed, the two major political parties in Ireland -- the Fianna Fail and Fine Gael -- have their origin in that historic conflict. And to give you some notion of the intensity of Irish politics, consider for a moment that, at the time I was stationed in Ireland, the fathers of some of the party leaders who were sitting in the Irish Parliament, or Dail, had actually put one another before firing squads during the civil war. One could therefore understand that their sons still felt deeply about the political issues that continue to define the two parties, which was all the more reason for us to remain aloof.

The one point that both parties had agreed to, happily, was that the only way to settle the long outstanding problem of the North was through negotiation, not by violence, as advocated by the IRA.

This is not to say that Ambassador Moore did not occasionally dream of trying somehow to play a mediating role, especially when the violence became particularly appalling. I remember his recalling to me one day the role that Teddy Roosevelt played in arbitrating the Russian- Japanese War...

Q: The Treaty of Portsmouth, I think.

SORENSON: That's right. I recall his referring to Roosevelt's role and wondering whether there weren't some way that the United States, as a friend both to Britain and to Ireland, could play a similarly mediating role.

My advice was that this was a tribal conflict that had gone on in one form or another for several hundred years, at least since the invasion of Strong Bow. Essentially, it was a struggle between two tribes. In its present form it was a continuation of the religious wars of three centuries earlier, which had also been expressions of political and/or tribal identity. The last thing that the United States should or could do would be to become involved, especially since no national interests of our own were at stake. To involve ourselves would have been the ultimate in folly.

Q: How did we view the IRA?

SORENSON: The Irish government itself viewed the IRA as an illegal organization, and still does. We could hardly view it otherwise.

Q: I mean, what did you feel were the motivations and the driving force behind the IRA?

SORENSON: Of course, the original Irish Republican Army had played a crucial role in the struggle for independence, and a number of the older Irish political leaders whom I knew, such as de Valera, had been IRA officers. He still attended almost weekly the funerals of former comrades in arms while I was there. The modern IRA broke off from the original group, took over its name and the aura of its history, and has continued a militant struggle against the settlement that came out of the civil war.

Q: Was it a problem with ties to other terrorist organizations at that time?

SORENSON: Indeed it was. Interestingly, it was split into a number of splinter groups, some of which had a strong Marxist orientation. Clearly they were tied as well with other terrorist organizations around the world, even operating joint training camps in some cases.

I might note that the IRA group that identified itself as Marxist was quite hostile toward the United States. Since it obviously thought of itself as a liberation movement, it was especially active in its opposition to the United States, particularly because of what it saw as our imperialist role in Vietnam.

For me, it was an interesting period. Like other American embassies around the world, we saw frequent antiwar demonstrations. In our case, the IRA crowd on one occasion poured pigs blood over our steps. Even so, we fared better than the British embassy some blocks down the street

and around the corner, which they burned to the ground after three days of demonstrations over incidents in northern Ireland.

More seriously for us, we had an American sailor shot in Dublin during the visit of a small naval group. Beyond this, the media was definitely opposed to the Vietnam war, which made for an unpleasant atmosphere at times. Finally, while members of the government were personally friendly, they too made it quite clear that there could be no sympathy for the American course in Asia.

Q: Were you able, as an embassy, to transmit this back to Washington, or was it difficult for the ambassador to allow this type of reporting to go out? Was there such a mist of nostalgia about Ireland that no matter what one said about it, nothing would penetrate the fact that Ireland and the United States always seemed such close friends and allies?

SORENSON: Not really. All members of the embassy staff were surprised on occasion to encounter deeply felt negative sentiments with respect to the United States among certain groups of people. And to give Ambassador Moore the credit that is due him, as soon as he recognized that these sentiments were fairly widely held, he moved vigorously to counteract them in two different areas.

First of all, he insisted upon expanding the embassy staff to include a USIA public information officer who would have direct responsibility for initiating programs to better explain US policy, to cultivate media contacts, and to reach out to the cultural and intellectual communities. Secondly, the Ambassador sought private funding for and ultimately succeeded in establishing a permanent chair of American studies at the University of Ireland. These were substantial policy initiatives taken in frank recognition of the problems that we found.

Q: How did you become DCM? Normally, one isn't moved up to DCM.

SORENSON: The DCM who was there decided to retire about a year after I arrived in Dublin. To my pleasant surprise, Ambassador Moore requested the Department to make me his DCM, and the Bureau of European Affairs agreed.

Q: How did he and you divide the work?

SORENSON: Obviously, since he was Ambassador, he made the basic decisions. Each morning about ten, after having digested the incoming traffic, I would meet with him for perhaps 45 minutes to review the issues that confronted us and decisions that had to be made. When appropriate, we called in other members of the staff to get their views on matters of immediate urgency, and of course we met with them weekly on a regular basis in country team meetings.

Ireland had a very active program aimed at promoting foreign investment, so we had a large number of American businesses located throughout the republic whose representatives frequently sought our advice on various problems that might arise with the Irish Development Authority or with Irish labor unions. We were, thus, continually involved in interceding or working behind the scenes to promote commercial ties and American direct investment.

Q: You mentioned Irish labor unions. What was the problem?

SORENSON: In Ireland, the labor movement is highly fractured. That is, it is divided into numerous, rather small union organizations, any one of which can bring work in a company to a halt. There was a separate union for elevator operators, for example, and even though a company settled its differences with all the other unions with which it dealt, the elevator operators could bring work to a halt it they chose, as could the union that represented truck drivers, or janitors, or electrical workers, etc.

In the United States, if a company once settles with the federation representing these different trades -- the AFL- CIO, for example -- the business can depend on the overall agreement being adhered to for its duration, which is usually two or three years. Not so in Ireland. Some small group of workers in a plant were always closing things down, holding the whole operation (including their fellow workers) hostage to their own narrow demands.

Perhaps even more outrageous, because the redundancy pay that workers could expect when companies folded their operations was extraordinarily generous under Irish law, one not infrequently encountered labor problems where some particular group had coldly calculated that they would put a company out of business in order to collect the redundancy pay rather than continue to work. I confess that there were occasions when the situation struck me as unreal.

Q: It would seem like, as the embassy, you'd say to an American firm: Stay out of here.

SORENSON: Certainly, American firms had to know how to operate when they went there and what to expect. The Irish mentality was not an American mentality and there were a number of American companies who became disillusioned and left.

Q: In a way, there is almost a moral dilemma for you, isn't there, as an embassy? Part of the idea is to encourage American investments to this country because you want to strengthen ties, but at the same time you might be encouraging an entrepreneur to come in and lose his shirt. How did you feel about this? How did you handle this when people could come in?

SORENSON: The only way one could handle the problem was to be absolutely honest, which meant warning them of the hazards. I should mention that the Irish government through its Development Authority encouraged foreign investment through a program of substantial subsidies and other inducements. This included the establishment of duty-free zones from which to penetrate the European community which Ireland had just joined, generous cash grants, free training for workers, and tax-free status for an initial period of up to seven years. We tried to point out that these inducements had to be balanced against certain disadvantages, particularly those having to do with the labor force, especially in rural Ireland.

Q: What were some of the attitudes that would impact on a business in rural Ireland?

SORENSON: There is a peculiarly small town attitude at work in Ireland where, even in the larger cities, everyone seems to know everyone else. Much of Irish humor is based upon this

quality in the Irish people; they like to cut one another down to size; pretentiousness can be deadly; so, however, can success, because it quickly generates jealousy.

For example, I knew an Irish entrepreneur who had worked for an American food company and who then returned to Ireland to develop a highly successful mushroom-producing facility and a greenhouse operation producing tomatoes -- products that were not then grown in Ireland, except seasonally in the case of the tomatoes. At some point, someone -- perhaps one of this man's employees or a neighbor -- put chemicals in the water supply and destroyed his entire crop. It was sheer local jealousy and a wish to "cut him down a notch," as they would say, that led to it. Worse, it may well have been done by people who purported to be his friends. American firms ran into this same sort of pettiness if they weren't careful.

Q: Was Walter Curly there when you were there?

SORENSON: No. I met him, but he came afterwards.

WALTER J.P. CURLEY
Ambassador
Ireland (1975-1978)

Walter J.P. Curley was born in Pittsburgh and educated at Yale University. He served as Ambassador to Ireland and France as well as advising George H.W Bush on his campaign and diplomacy issues. Ambassador Curley was interviewed by Richard Jackson on November 30th, 1998.

Q: *So the Lindsay period ended. You went back to J. H. Whitney, and then on from there to Dublin in 1975.*

CURLEY: Well, here again, I don't know how much detail you want.

Q: *As much as you want.*

CURLEY: Well, let me comment on my appointment as ambassador, how it happened. To me at least, this is an important point: among a lot of people - and probably including yourself because you couldn't help it, as a Foreign Service officer - there has always been sort of a feeling among you career people about interlopers, political appointees or so-called non-professional ambassadors. I take some exception to that view. I know your point, and I understand and sympathize, but I take exception with the use of the word or phrase *non-professional* because a lot of the political appointees are certainly non-career but they're not non-professional. I mean I considered myself in the business world a total professional. So we like to think that when we're tapped to do a job in the government that we don't come as non-professionals. We like to bring whatever professional qualities that we have learned. So *non-career* as a phrase is okay; *non-professional* I don't like.

At that time, I was not involved in politics in any way. The only financial contribution I ever gave was a local thing, both to Democrats and Republicans. My friend, John Lindsay, from a Republican, had become a Democrat, and I gave him a little help in his campaign, but nothing, no serious money. As far as my nomination for ambassador to Dublin, I knew my subject, the subject of Ireland, because in 1958 my father and I had bought a house in Ireland. And, very importantly, back at Yale, my senior thesis was written on the subject of "The Influence of the Irish on American Politics," and the part two of it was "The Problems in Northern Ireland." So by the time of, say, 1974, while I was still at J. H. Whitney and Co., we had already lived in Ireland for a number of years. And my wife is an historian. She knew Anglo-Irish history. I did, too, and my interests went back to my Yale days. I did know my subject. The incumbent ambassador, appointed by Nixon, who'd been there for six years, was Moore, John D. J. Moore - came to me. I knew him well as a friend. He was older than I was, he was an older Yale grad, and a fellow member of my Yale Senior Society. I knew him in that sense. And I knew his family. He came to me one day at J. H. Whitney. He said, "I'm going down to Washington next week to tender my resignation. I haven't told them yet." He said, "My wife has died." One of his daughters had also just died, both in Ireland. He said, "I want to ask for an immediate leave of grief followed by my resignation and retirement." But he said, "I'd like to put your hat in the ring." I said, "Well, John, that's really nice of you." He said, "I won't do it unless you're interested, because they won't like it. They won't proffer it if they don't expect a definite 'yes.'" I said, "Let me check with my wife," which I did, and she said, "Are you out of your mind? It would be wonderful!" I asked Jock, who had been ambassador to the Court of Saint James, and he said, "Don't miss the opportunity if it arises." So I said later to John, "Sure, put the hat in the ring." But I added, "I have no political strength. I am a Republican, but I've done no political work. I haven't contributed anything." Well, it was right after Watergate, so Moore said, "That's all the better." I was approached soon after we met, and asked to come down to Washington. Henry Kissinger, whom I did not know, interviewed me. He said, "Vhat [What] are your political contributions, Commissioner?" And I said, "Well, this may be the end of the interview, but as far as any contribution goes, basically none at all." And he said, "Very good, very good." In those days, just after Watergate, that was the way it should be. Kissinger said, "We want clean-as-a-hound's-tooth here." So I was a political innocent in that sense, and eventually got the job and got to Dublin. That's how that happened.

Q: *That's fascinating. You probably went through some period of preparation in Washington, through a course with other ambassadors.*

CURLEY: I did. It has become a more formalized and broader process now, that "Charm School," so-called, that all ambassadors go to, whether they're career or non- career, whether they've been ambassador before or not. In 1974-5-6, the same period I was in Ireland, we had that program in Washington, a very thorough one, but not quite as structured as it is now. But it was good. It was very good. I did that program prior to leaving for the Dublin post. It was definitely useful.

Q: *Dublin you find a small but very effective embassy, professional-*

CURLEY: The first question a lot of people ask is: "Oh, you were ambassador to Ireland." Big smiles spread over their faces. "So you've been on a three or four year picnic." It was intriguing for me because I knew the subject, as did my wife, Taitsie. Ireland is a very interesting place, as

you know, historically, intellectually, and politically. Dublin was stimulating, made all the more so, in our time, because of the revolving presidency of the EC. Ireland had the presidency the year I got there as ambassador, which turned Dublin into more of a cosmopolitan place. We had a fascinating time there - not only for that reason, but that was one of the reasons. Also during my time, 1976, our Bicentennial Year, and the Irish, as you well know, have a lot of transatlantic affection. So that Bicentennial Year became a big deal. Also, at work there at that time was a new phenomenon that wasn't helpful. That was the Irish turn of face.

The Irish had been turned historically towards the New World - all those immigrations, the immigrants that went from Ireland to the United States by the millions - and the United States was where the Irish looked to for help and inspiration and protection and familial ties. Gradually that changed into practically an about-face, when the Irish turned to Europe and were more and more considering themselves as not an extension of the UK or America or even of themselves, but really Europeans. They were Irish first, but they were very much recognizing and relishing the fact that they were European, not American-oriented. That was an important thing that was happening to the Irish at that time.

It was also the Cold War and my dealings with the Soviets were tricky. The Soviets had a big, big embassy there, and the riveting question was why did they need so many in Dublin? In those days, U.S. embassy personnel in Ireland totaled about 60 - only 20 of whom were American. The USSR embassy had about 100 - and they were all Russians! Well, you can imagine why. They had all kinds of nefarious activities going on in that embassy. It was an espionage center and clearinghouse. I used to try, and succeeded a little bit, to kid my Soviet counterpart: why does he have such a great, big embassy there? How many Soviet tourists are there a year that come to Ireland? And what's the trade balance between Ireland and the Soviet Union compared to tourism and trade with the United States? That used to make him smile, but he didn't like it. There are 33 million Americans of Irish extraction. How many Russian-Irish are there? It was a difficult time, during the Cold War, for our relations with the Soviet Union in Ireland. Also, the Irish would try to dance their way through the tricky competing interests of the Soviets and the United States and had a tough time doing it. That made it a complicated scene there, plus the problems of the North. Since 1969, they'd gotten worse. By the time I was there, the bad days were back, and they hit an apex of pain when my best friend, among the diplomatic community there, the British ambassador, was assassinated. His name was Christopher Ewart-Biggs. He had been DCM in Paris before that, a very able diplomat and a nice guy - a good friend of mine. He was blown up by the Provos, by the Provisional IRA, in his car with his driver, by a bomb. Sad and disgusting.

So Ireland - back again to our long answer to a good question about Dublin - did we enjoy our time there and what was it like? It was fascinating; it was difficult. I like the Irish; I like the way they think. There are many different kinds of Irish, all kinds - Irish-Irish, Anglo-Irish, Norman-Irish, Protestant Irish, Catholic Irish, all kinds. It was a most interesting assignment. Let me mention my own house there - my father and I owned it fifty-fifty. When he died in 1970, I got his half. The house, built in the early 18th century, is on the West Coast, in County Mayo near Westport. It's on the Atlantic. So when we had time we would try to escape the rigors of duty in Dublin and go to our house in Mayo. Garrett Fitzgerald was the foreign minister during my posting in Ireland. He eventually became prime minister. The president at the time was a man

called Cearbhall O'Dalaigh, who was an academic, and the prime minister was Liam Cosgrave. They were good men - and we had good, effective years there.

Q: *You had a lot of interest in Ireland from Washington. There were senators and a very important constituency for Irish-American relations. We had Senator Kennedy, theoretically under Helms.*

CURLEY: There's a lot of Washington affiliation there, at least ethnic affiliation, or heritage. Senator Kennedy came. I wouldn't say often, but he was there. I would see him. And his sisters came often. Jean Kennedy Smith, who eventually became ambassador to Ireland, was there. And Pat Lawford, whom I knew years before - I knew Jean before, too - they would come. Speaker Tip O'Neill, who was the epitome of an American Irish official, never, never came. But one time I heard he was heading to Poland with a Congressional delegation, and I sent word back, "It seems to me that you ought to drift by." So he came and brought his delegation, had his daughter with him and his wife and others. They came to Dublin, and I was really glad to see him. He said, "I'm embarrassed to say I've never been to Ireland. I give a lot of speeches, and I play the role of an Irishman in Boston, and they all eat it up. But now I can go home with my head up because I've been actually here." So we had the joy of that, plus a round of golf together at Portmarnock.

We also had the lack of joy in dealing with what were perceived to be a lot of money being received by the IRA from Irish-American sources. The U.S. monies that were coming in were buying arms. And the arms were being bought from Libya; they were being bought also from Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia; wherever they could find them, they were buying. So, surreptitiously the British Secret Service, the FBI, the CIA, the Irish intelligence service, the Irish military - and, of course, myself - we all colluded to find out exactly how much money was coming in. There were ways to do that, not all successful. But we tried to apply some effective restrictions, and I think it worked pretty well. We did it for about two years, and at the end of the two years - there were ways of measuring these things, but it was not a fine science - I figured that the flow of money to the IRA was reduced down to a million dollars a year, and then it dwindled more after that. So I think we got it down to less than a million.

Q: *There've been periods of tension between the embassies in London and in Dublin at different times. In your time, how was that relationship? Were there slightly different interests, or were you on the same sheet of music?*

CURLEY: Very happily, serendipitously. There were three American ambassadors in London while I was in Dublin. There were Elliot Richardson and Anne Armstrong, who were good friends of mine, and there was Kingman Brewster, who was a close friend. So I had their ear at all times, and they certainly had mine. If we had any kind of problems, I'd be on the phone. It was very helpful to have that connection. The strains between the Irish government and the UK, I'd say, were just chronic, but not extraordinarily so. The assassination of the ambassador, of course, was an anomaly in some ways. Right after I left, as you know, the Queen's kinsman, Lord Mountbatten, was assassinated, so these violent flares were symptomatic of the problem, but I wouldn't say that they escalated onward after that; they were sort of spikes of violence, and then it went back to just the plain, old-fashioned level of violence. I don't men to sound cynical or calloused.

Q: *Did you have a decent staff? You had a DCM that worked well with you?*

CURLEY: I had a DCM whose name was Jack Rendall, and Jack Rendall, a career Foreign Service officer, was first class, *first* class. And happily, not only professionally did we get along, but personally. We were a good team. He had a very good sense of humor, he had an analytical mind. He was a varsity smoker. He made Humphrey Bogart look like a non-smoker. And he was a total gentleman, too; always very well dressed, very well spoken, very articulate. He could drink more vodka martinis than you could possibly imagine and never turn a hair. His eyes were never bleary. His speech was never slurred, nor was his mind ever slurred. He kept that vodka well under control. But his capacity for smoke and martinis was a mere footnote. He did a fine job.

Q: *Mr. Ambassador, all good things come to an end, and you then left Dublin after three years, is that right?*

CURLEY: I did. After President Carter was elected, we could hear the *swoosh* of departing ambassadors of any Republican tinge. Anne Armstrong left immediately. They all left. I was waiting for the other shoe to drop, and it didn't. I waited and waited, and I made a few surreptitious calls to Washington: "No, no, no, hang on there, you never know, you never know," said my informants. And so I said to my wife, "What if we were asked to stay on?" And she said, "Well, that would be fine, but I don't think it'll happen." I said, "Well, I don't either." It went on for about five months, and then I thought, "God! I've slipped under the wire here; they haven't noticed!" We were almost euphoric in our anticipation, and then, *clunk*, the other shoe, but all very nicely. It was done with a scalpel, not a sledgehammer. I's the way it goes.

RICHARD L. STOCKMAN
Communications Officer
Dublin (1977-1980)

Richard Stockman was born in 1940 in Kansas City, Missouri. He went to seminary at Cape Girardeau in Missouri, and was then drafted into the U.S. Army in 1963, where he spent most of his tour in Germany. Mr. Stockman entered the Foreign Service in 1966 as a communications specialist. He served in Brazil, Honduras, Singapore, Togo, Switzerland, Ireland, Saudi Arabia, Canada, and the Soviet Union. Mr. Stockman was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: *And then you moved from Geneva to what strikes me as being rather interesting but marginal post, Dublin.*

STOCKMAN: Yes it is. It is very difficult to understand Dublin, I think, for one particular reason, not being of Irish extraction with a name like Stockman. I think the first words spoken to me at least in that embassy kind of set the tone. "What is a person like you with a name like Stockman doing in our embassy?"

Q: *I take it was very much an Irish enclave.*

STOCKMAN: It certainly was. Tom Kelly, the administrator, was eventually replaced by another non-Irishman called John Dieffenderfer. He helped break the ice. Once John came I didn't have any problems.

In terms of importance, of course, on a scale of one to ten, I think you would honestly have to put Dublin somewhere in the category of 2 to 4. As they say sometimes and not very complimentary, small potatoes in a big patch. But it did have the uncanny way of rising to the top from time to time and there are a few examples that I can cite.

As you remember in those years, terrorism in Central America, and particularly El Salvador, was getting entirely out of hand. And, of course, Ireland being Catholic and interested in that part of the world had its own mandate to pursue. Well, ironically again, as things happen, the Archbishop of Shannon was in El Salvador when they were installing a new bishop when a massacre occurred in the cathedral and killed Archbishop Romero. Well that set off protests like you have never seen and Ireland was going to lead the pact and condemn this and US policy and everything that went with it, for right or wrong. Perhaps they were absolutely right as we know from things that have been revealed to us later on.

The other example that really and truly affected communications in a very important way at the time was the Iranian hostage crisis. Now Ireland happened to have the Presidency of the EEC at the time. This was in the beginning of the crisis...

Q: *November, 1979 was when they took it over.*

STOCKMAN: And somewhere in the end of this thing, of course, as you recall, the hostages were finally released and Ireland played another role there in that the Prime Minister at the time convinced the Ambassador, Ambassador William Shannon, who had come from the New York Times world as a political appointee, to assist in letting the plane touch down in Shannon on the way home. This was obviously for political motives. He was up for reelection one more time. What better mileage could you get than welcoming the hostages home using Shannon airport for refueling purposes, of course, and a chance to get off the plane and rest a bit. Well you know they were quite anxious to get home. They would have rather gone directly home and stopped all the PR, but that was one example of high power politics.

Another incident happened in the course of that tour where former President Ford was passing through Ireland with a group called Charter Oil, he was on the board. We were asked to support that visit. It was the first of ten worldwide stops with this group. Well, the site was up near the North Ireland border in definite IRA country, so it was going to require quite an extensive effort, primarily on the part of security, let along logistics, to support a visit by a former President in that part of the woods. They had never seen communications in that area ever. They had no telephones. Therefore, one had to find working contacts quickly and get it done. It got done. It worked, it was primitive. We didn't have much Department support at all, but we got it done.

Q: *How did you find Ambassador Shannon? You know all these political ambassadors seem to be Irish. Right now we have deceased President Kennedy's sister as the Ambassador to Ireland so things haven't changed. But how did you find Ambassador Shannon?*

STOCKMAN: Well, one on one I think one could say he was a very congenial, dry humored man. He was certainly the academic type who was quite content to come in during business hours, quietly sit in his office and do his think pieces and politicking or whatever he was there to do. It was a well known fact that he communicated directly with the White House. Bureaucratic channels could do what they may, but for the most part he turned things over to the DCM whose name was Charles Rushing, a career diplomat who did not have an easy task. The embassy staffing was one of a kind, with two consular officers. It was primarily a consular post as you can appreciate. Therefore, most of what the Ambassador did was on the PR level making contacts, etc.

Obviously, though, the IRA was a very touchy thorn in the side for both governments. There were numerous protests in the streets in those days. There were attempts to bomb some of the British at the embassy and in the streets of Dublin. Other incidents as I can recall at the time, there had been a very painful strike of civil servants, particularly the PPT, Post, Phone and Telegraph, right before we got there that summer. There were fuel embargoes or scarcities while we were there. They had had a major snowstorm like they hadn't seen in 50 years. So the unpredictable happened in the course of those three years. I think the economy was quite fragile. US investors would set up shop, get their tax holiday etc... Of course, in EEC fashion, bureaucrats were all over the place, wages were out of proportion to production and inflation was quite high.

What did we get out of the tour? Well in different shapes and forms I think it was a very fulfilling tour. One met wonderful people there. The restaurants and the food were so-so. But our boys made a wonderful group of friends. The education was as solid as could be expected, very much in British fashion, although they wouldn't admit it. I would say overall it was a very enjoyable tour. Not particularly career enhancing though.

ROBIN BERRINGTON
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Dublin (1978-1981)

Mr. Berrington was born and raised in Ohio and educated at Wesleyan University Harvard Universities. After service with the Peace Corps in Thailand, he joined the Foreign Service (USIA) in1969. During his Foreign Service career Mr. Berrington served at posts abroad in Thailand, Japan, Ireland and England, variously as Public and Cultural Affairs Officer. He also served several tours at USIA Headquarters in Washington, DC. Mr. Berrington was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: Well, in 1978, you had a rather unusual move didn't you?

BERRINGTON: Yes, I was in the inspection tour of Italy. I will never forget this; I was in Milano, and I had a very bad cold, and I had stayed in bed that day rather than do whatever the team was doing. The phone rang, and it was a friend of mine, in fact a person who I had known from Peace Corps days. He was in Thailand the same time I was. In fact, he and another woman and I all happened to wind up at Harvard University during our postgraduate work together. He was in education, she was in Chinese, and I was in Japanese. The two of them started flirting, and in the meantime, he joined USIA through the regular system, and I went off on this special thing to Thailand. While I was in Thailand, he was assigned to Laos and they got married. She came out, they had a big wedding ceremony in Laos. I was best man at their wedding. So ever since Peace Corps days we have kept up this relationship, you know, graduate school, USIS, marriage, so forth and so on. Well, he eventually returned to Washington and became a personnel officer in USIA.

So, the ambassador in Ireland, William Shannon [July 1977 to June 1981], had had a very hard time with the people USIA wanted to send to him as PAO. He had been a columnist for the New York Times. He was a political appointee by Carter. On paper he looked like an absolutely ideal candidate. He had written books on Ireland, was very knowledgeable about Ireland, very learned, well educated man, a lot of friends in Ireland, a perfect assignment. Well, he wanted a family friend assigned as PAO. He didn't want just a routine foreign service officer, so every time USIA nominated somebody for him to review, he would turn it down. This went through 11 candidates believe it or not. He kept saying what about this friend of mine who it turns out was a person at NASA or something, who he thought would be best for public affairs. USIA, John Reinhart was the director at that point, and the story I heard was, Reinhart didn't tell me this directly, but I heard this through my friends that Reinhart literally said, "Look. We have been sending you terrific candidates. This next one has all the qualifications you're asking for. He is good in cultural; good in political, good in, you know, he is a planner, blah, blah, blah. He has no background in Ireland but he is well versed in other parts of the world." That was me.

Q: Unbeknownst to you.

BERRINGTON: Well, yes, unbeknownst to me. Reinhart said, "This is the best we can do. And he is young." One of the other things most of the others had been older candidates, and he kept saying he wanted somebody younger. As we will eventually find out he wanted these special traits, no Ireland young and all of that because he wanted to bully and control whoever this person was going to be. But anyway, so Reinhart told him, "If you don't approve this guy, we are not sending anybody. We are just going to shut the operation down and USIS won't have anybody, because in so many words you have unreasonably turned down every candidate we have sent you so this is the last one." So he said, "OK." At that point they called me up and said, "Would you be willing to go to Ireland?" I said, "Tell me about it." This is my friend who called. I was sick in bed in Italy, and I didn't, "Ireland?" I was expecting to be assigned to some African place or Latin America or whatever. I thought about it for about a half an hour and called him back and said, "Yes, why not?" I won't need any language. It should be fun. They said, "The ambassador is a difficult person. You are going to have a hard time with him." But you know, I was young and full of myself so I said, "Sure. I can manage." So I went off to Ireland in the summer of 1978.

Q: Today is 2 June 2000. Robin, it sounds like this is going to be an Irish saga. Okay, you were in Ireland from when to when?

BERRINGTON: I was there from 'the summer of 1978, don't ask me exactly when, July or August, until very early 1981.

Q: And who was this difficult ambassador?

BERRINGTON: The ambassador was a political appointee by the name of William Shannon who had been a columnist for the New York Times. He had written a number of books on Ireland. He was certainly knowledgeable about Ireland, and of course compared to most political appointees in Dublin, he knew something about the country, the politics, the social, the religious, economic history and of all the difficulties there. Most Irish American and every ambassador to Ireland has been Irish American. Most Irish Americans that were appointed to go there, of course, their sole claim to fame was the fact that they were Irish Americans and that they were probably contributed to a campaign or were somehow involved in the party.

Q: What had Shannon done politically wise?

BERRINGTON: Oh, he had supported Carter of course. He had come out in favor of Jimmy Carter. Carter was kind of pulling a leaf out of the page of Jack Kennedy in that he was trying to appoint, just as Kennedy had appointed say Ed Reischauer to Japan, I think Carter was trying to appoint equally knowledgeable people that were going to their post assignments. I'm sure that is why he picked Bill Shannon. Shannon's political instincts were pretty much pro-Carter anyway, so it was a natural fit. On paper I am sure everybody thought it was the ideal assignment. As we found out later that was not the case.

Q: OK when you get there, in the first place what was sort of the situation Ireland-America wise or just in Ireland? I am sure that if you are in Ireland, Northern Ireland is part of your beat in a way.

BERRINGTON: No it is not.

Q: Maybe not technically but what happens there has to effect on what you do.

BERRINGTON: OK well first of all just to clear that up. Northern Ireland is part of the UK and of course the embassy in Dublin has no diplomatic accreditation to Northern Ireland. That could lead to the occasional problem. But in terms of the issue, the problem was of course, Northern Ireland, so almost everything that happened in the south in the so-called republic. Everything that happened in the republic was impacted by various Northern Ireland issues. Whenever we would talk with the Irish government, invariably there was a northern element to positions.

Q: Well what was happening in Northern Ireland in 1978 when you arrived?

BERRINGTON: Well, things were no better or worse than they had been in previous years, meaning the IRA was still in full bloom. The IRA was still very much in the business of terrorism and intimidation. Of course the Protestant extremists were equally in the business. It was very much a tit for tat. In the three years I was there, you know, there were constant shootings, assassinations, knee-cappings. It was always very Byzantine who did it. You know, did the IRA do it to implicate the Protestants. Did the Protestants do it to implicate the IRA and make it look like the IRA had done it? Did in fact the IRA shoot their own? Did the Protestants shoot their own? Were they just shooting the other side? I mean it was more convoluted than a basket of fishes. You could never tell what was really the story. Then in addition to that of course, occasionally the IRA would send their parties of organizers south to recruit, or in more extremist tactics, to rob banks to pay for their activities up north. Even though the south had no terrorism, there was no threat to any of us, Irish or American in the south, unless those things like forays south to rob banks or whatever would in effect contribute to a tense atmosphere regardless. There were of course, this was at the time when the British were cracking down even further on the IRA. So the things like those movements in the H Block, the prison. The called it that because it was in the shape of an "H". The H Block where so many of the IRA prisoners were incarcerated, they would do hunger strikes. Some of them would do such things as take their own feces and spread it over the walls of their cells. It was just a time when feelings and tensions were constantly high and it took very little of any kind of spark to set off something which usually happens about once a month or once every other month. A spark meaning something a bit bigger than your typical knee capping or shooting some guy in a bar.

Q: The violence in Northern Ireland probably dominates most people thinking, but for the Embassy in Dublin, what was the political scene in the Republic of Ireland?

BERRINGTON: Well of course, Ireland was one of the few west European countries that was not part of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). So, anything that had a security element to it, we were always eager to get the Irish on our side even though they were neutral. So if you had things like the cruise missile question brewing, we always wanted to brief the Irish government and make sure that the Irish media and other opinion leaders at least knew about the issue so that even if they didn't agree with us, they could argue it intelligently, not from the basis of fiction or rumor. There was also at the same time, late 1970s early 1980s, this was as you may recall, things in Central America were heating up, and there were many Irish missionaries, Catholic missionaries, in Central America, who tended to be extremely sympathetic to the peasant elements or the rebellious elements in El Salvador or Nicaragua or whatever. So there was a constant issue there with the Irish government. Probably I would say when you talked to most of these guys, they would understand what our problem was in the American backyard, but that because of the extreme vocal opposition of the Church and the Catholic missionaries who would come back to Ireland after two or three years and loudly talk about how they saw the United States as siding with the right wing or the establishment or the forces of oppression or whatever, they would usually cause problems for us in the public affairs area over our policy in Central America.

There were the basic trade issues. Ireland was if not a member of NATO, it was a member of EU (European Union), and whenever there were any trade issues, we would get involved with that as well. Those were on the international side.

On the domestic side, probably our biggest constant issue was the problem with immigration and just how many Irish could go to the U.S. and under what terms and the whole business of getting a green card and working in the United States and those kinds of consular issues that you would understand very well. They were constantly in the forefront. These were not major concerns, but the newspapers would always blow these things way up out of proportion. Irish students stopped at Kennedy Airport, strip searched blah blah, that sort of thing, headlines in the papers. So we constantly had to put out small brush fires like that as well.

Having said all that of course, the Irish American government to government relationship was extremely cordial, extremely friendly. The foreign ministry was open to me. In fact it was easier for me to get into the foreign ministry that it is to get into the State Department - even then. It was not unusual at all for Irish government officials to call us in and tell us exactly what they were going to say and why they were going to say it and try to keep us from being blindsided on whatever governmental pronouncement would be coming up. It was as close a relationship, I think, as you could have.

Q: Were we using, I mean was Dublin thought to be a good post to monitor what was going on in the European Union, or then it was the European community?

BERRINGTON: Not really. The only times we could really take advantage of the Irish position in the EU was those once every how many years, seven years or whatever at that time, when they were the president of the union. As you know the presidency of EU rotates among each of the member states, something like once every six months

But when they would be the president we should have access to their thoughts, their ideas and information about how other EU states thought and ideas as well. Outside of that our recourses geographically so far from Brussels that it wasn't exactly the best place to monitor what was going on in the EU itself. Our efforts to lobby the Irish like the Americans would just lobby another member state of the EU, a member state that was different in that not a member of NATO and very much prided itself on its neutrality.

Q: How about the Irish media from your point of view as far as wanting to give a good picture?

BERRINGTON: Well the Irish media were like the media every place I suppose. They were extraordinarily frustrating group to work with. Like most of the Irish on a person to person basis, they were very friendly, very cordial. I spent many an evening, since I was the PAO, a one person operation, I was in effect the press officer, the cultural officer, you name it, everything. Since I regarded my press work as far more important than cultural work, I tended to spend much more time with the media than with the cultural side of the business. So I spent a lot of evenings out drinking with various friends in the media. These were all people with whom as I say, I had a very good personal relationship with, but that did not always translate into a tangible result the next day in the newspaper. The papers were very, how should I put it, they did not necessarily follow the same standards of journalistic ethics as we would like to think the best American papers do here. The idea of having a story coming from one source and then waiting for a second or third verification before printing it which is pretty much standard practice in the U.S. The Irish

just don't care about that sort of thing. If just one person comes in and says the sky is falling, that is a banner headline the next day, the sky is falling. There was one paper, probably the most prestigious paper called the Irish Times, which was probably the paper that made the most of a strident effort to show that it was not pro American. Not that it was anti American, but just that it was not necessarily pro American. It tended to reflect this in its editorial stance and in so many other reports that they would bring out. The other papers were largely tabloids. There is a very strong tabloid nature to the Irish press.

One that has stuck in my mind for years which could have been in a tabloid anyplace in the world was a story about a very tragic airplane crash in San Diego. On the front page of the paper was this huge picture of the plane going down in flames going out of the tail and all of that. Huge banner headline says, "Irishmen Killed in Air Horror." Two Irishmen or one Irishman, killed in air horror. The very small sub headline underneath said 130 others also died. The whole point of it was that one or two Irishmen had died. To them, you know, and they would always put the most lurid details. Then again, usually on the second page of the paper, there would be naked girls.

Q: I was going to ask about the Church in those days. Things have changed considerably, but what was the role of the church?

BERRINGTON: Well the Church and the media of course, were two totally different things. The Irish have always had a very kind of schizophrenic attitude about the Church, and it depends on which Irish you talk to. In a big city like Dublin, largely the Church was kind of a peripheral element. For most of the intelligentsia, for many in the government, for most of the media, the artistic community, the business leaders, few of them really let Church policy shape their own thinking or their own view or behavior. But once you got out into the villages and the small towns, then the priests or the local bishop could have an extraordinary influence. As a result you had this incredible conservatism about the Church still really having a strong effect on the way your average Irishman felt back then. Now this isn't to say that the government or intelligentsia or others made a point of thumbing their nose at the Church. Oh of course not. They would all go through the kind of motion of saying they follow the Church's teaching. But on the personal level, in fact most of them had nothing but disdain for the Church's teachings about birth control or divorce or homosexuality or whatever. All of which at that time in Ireland were outlawed. Censorship largely based on the conservative attitudes of what they used to call the hierarchy, the Church hierarchy. Censorship was terrible. I can remember that of example, there was a Monty Python movie called the Life of Brian, a satirical film about Christ. It was never allowed to be shown in Ireland. Kramer vs. Kramer, a film about divorce, that movie was never allowed to be shown in Ireland. People had to go to London to see movies like that, which of course, made it a joke. Irish got across all the time. Girls, young girls wanted to have an abortion, they would have to go to London to have an abortion.

Q: Did this impact on your work say on the cultural side or anything else? Were there issues that came up, American type issues that came up that conflicted with the Church or was this something that...

BERRINGTON: Not really. Not on the cultural side because as I say, most of the people I was dealing with again it was largely a target audience group that I was dealing with, a small very identifiable number of men and women in the political, media, academic, artistic, etc. communities.

If you were thinking nationwide, and if your total target audience nationwide was 100%, then I would estimate that probably 75 or 80% of our target audience were right in Dublin alone. The other 20% or whatever were in Cork, Galway, and one or two other small communities. For example, one that was not in Dublin, it was about 30-40 miles east of town, so in effect in the countryside, was a place called Maynooth. Speaking of the church, St. Patrick's College at Maynooth was the training center for priests. Maynooth also happened to have one of the best American studies centers in Ireland. So I was often going off to Maynooth to talk to the priests/professors and to the students. I had extremely good relationship with all of them out there. Some of my most pleasant evenings were sitting around the fires on a cold Irish winter evening talking about various issues with these scholar priests. It must have been what it was like back in the middle ages. But never did we start talking about abortion, because those were not issues between Ireland and America. If they ever did come up, of course I would speak my personal mind, and they respected it.

Q: While I guess your successor really had it in spades as far as Central America was concerned. Under the Carter administration Central American issues were not...

BERRINGTON: Well remember that Bob Weisberg was in Nicaragua, and he was having a hard time even then, so it wasn't just clear sailing under the Carter administration. Certainly the Irish attitudes in opposition to American policy were building up full steam. I can remember it was not unusual to have groups of people demonstrating out in front of the embassy holding their placards, "Americans out of El Salvador" or "American sympathy for X regime is immoral." It was not unusual for a number of those demonstrators to be nuns and priests wearing their habits and their uniforms. Then very often, and here is where it used to get to be fun, because they often wanted to present a petition to the President, they would come in. One representative would be allowed inside the building, usually a priest or a nun, and of course who would be the person that would meet with them? Me! Do you think the ambassador would do this? NO way! Once this person got into my office, it would usually be a half hour harangue. I would just sit there and let them run on and on. When they got it all out of them, I would say, "Thank you very much. I will give this to the President," show them out the door, let them leave, and of course the petition or the letter got no further than my desk. I am sure that is not news to anybody. But no, so these issues didn't affect the cultural side of our business as much as they did the press side and the foreign policy side.

Q: Before we get to the ambassador, I am saving that for last, what about, but I would like to turn to the Irish American connection in terms of support for the IRA. The bars of south Boston with the contributing...

BERRINGTON: Correction, not bars, pubs. Of course that was a constant problem. Because for most Americans, and you really should say Irish-Americans, because very few other hyphenated Americans contributed to NORAID, the Irish Northern Aid Committee. For most Irish-

Americans, the "Troubles" up north were a British problem. They never saw it as being an Irish problem. When I say a British problem I mean it was the British fault, the British trouble that was forcing the issue. Most Americans had a very naive idea at best and ignorant, uninformed at worst, attitudes about the IRA or any of the so-called nationalist parties that favored expelling the British and restoring Northern Ireland to the republic. For example, the IRA, which a lot of Americans still don't realize, its antecedents are basically very Marxist, socialist approach to government, democracy, human rights. If most Americans had known that, of course, they would have been horrified because most of the Irish-Americans that supported these causes were among the more conservative Americans here in the United States. They had no idea the IRA and its allies were quite left of center and quite proud of being left of center. They didn't dispute that identification. Needless to say they didn't talk about this when they were in the U.S. They meaning IRA or their surrogates when they were in the U.S. NORAID and the others that raised funds in favor of these groups just of course, played all the stereotypes and all of the anti British tunes as loudly as they could and didn't try to make anybody more aware of what was really going on up there. As far as most Americans that attended these fund-raising dinners or contributed to the pubs in south Boston or whatever, the whole thing was the British oppressors and you know, the poor and suffering Irish. You would have never thought that the Irish had assassinated or shot anybody on their own. It was the British that were causing the problem. So the Americans who contributed to most of these causes didn't really have a clue of what was going on, and despite the efforts to inform them, they did not accept this. Of course we had a great close relationship, we the U.S. government had a very close relationship with the Irish government; we had an even closer relationship to the British government. So as far as the U.S. government image to most Irish-Americans, we were seen as part of the problem because of our close alliance with the British. So, anything on our part to try and inform or open up the issue so there was a better understanding was seen as suspect or propaganda or pro British fiction. So we were constantly dealing with this problem, the whole image of the Irish.

Q: I suppose with the visiting Irish Congressman and Congresswoman you would go into what you just said, explaining some of what the IRA was and all. I imagine you didn't get very far.

BERRINGTON: Exactly. Of course the smart members of congress whether Irish-American or not, knew perfectly well what was going on, but for various political reasons might not have expressed this vocally in public forum, in order to retain the support of their Irish-American constituencies. They might very well sit on the fence and not really come out and criticize NORAID or the other pro IRA groups. Others were braver and more courageous and did speak up and say wait a minute, let's really talk about what is going on here. Of course, then you had the Irish-American businessman or you know, Joe and Jane Doe on the street who would visit their homeland. They, of course were probably among the most ill informed and naive about what was going on. They were constantly eager to go into the embassy and talk to us and tell us so that they knew what was really going on. Yes, one of the problems I think in an assignment like Dublin, and I hear it is not that much different in Italy or Israel or other countries where there are large second or third generation immigrant communities is dealing with the Americans who come back to the homeland and want to have some impact there. Particularly Ireland, the Americans tended to see Ireland in a, I don't know if you remember the old John Ford movie The Quiet Man. That is very much a fictional portrayal, romantic kind of green idea of what Ireland is. Most Americans tended to buy that line hook, line, and sinker.

Q: Well they say every American has an Irish grandmother. Were there any issues where we as the government would like to take one stand and we find that for Irish reasons we couldn't do that? I wonder if relations with Ireland are as influenced by domestic politics as people describe relations with Israel; the friends of Israel are influential and very supportive of Israel. Did we have that type of relationship with Ireland?

BERRINGTON: No not really, and of course I think we probably saw the Middle Eastern problem on a much larger magnitude, an issue that in fact could at the time, and still even today I suppose although not as much so, could put the question of international peace in some doubt. You know, that was when the Russians were very much the Syrian's protectors and all of that. The Northern Ireland thing never really achieved that kind of international status as far as attracting the Soviets or other competing world powers. It was basically an English versus the Irish issue, and as far as we were concerned the only times that it had an effect on our dealings outside of the Irish per-se was occasionally it would be an irritant or a you know burr in the saddle of some issue with the British. But no, none of the other issues like a trade issue with the EU or a cruise missile issue or something like that. The Northern Ireland issue never really got into that and affected how that was seen.

Q: Well now on your issues, the public affairs level, were you in touch with our embassy in London? Sometimes the embassy in London and Dublin, because of the ambassador's personalities, might have coordination problems, but I was wondering at your level.

BERRINGTON: Yes. I was, of course, I am sure the ambassador and the DCM (Deputy chief of Mission) and the political counselor were in touch with London a lot too. But for many of my issues, for me and my activities as well as issues, for example American studies I referred to, the Irish Association of American Studies is an island-wide association. It includes Northern Ireland. So, I would go up to Belfast every now and then if there was something happening there. I would always get in touch with my friends, with my colleagues in the American embassy in London to let them know I was doing that. I would also get in touch with the American consulate in Belfast to let them know I was coming up as well. So there was that kind of communication. The post in Dublin was a very small one. It is not a large embassy, and because it was basically me and two local employees, later on in my stay it became three, but that was cut back eventually so it was usually two, because it was just mew and two Irish employees, very often I had to call up London for consultation or advice about how do deal with X or Y maybe on the administrative side of the business or if such and such a speaker was coming through the area and was stopping off in Dublin as well as London, I would have to get in touch with London to find out how the speaker was handling himself and that sort of thing. So I was on the phone to London fairly often. Usually with my USIS counterparts, not with State people.

Q: Well speaking of speakers and things, women's rights was a hot topic in the U.S. How was the American version of women's rights translating for the Irish? How were they responding to speakers on this topic?

BERRINGTON: I will probably say this a number of times before we are finished on Ireland. It depended on who you talked to. If you were talking to the Dublin intelligentsia, the Dublin

media, the Dublin academic community, the business people, if they were on the more progressive forward looking group, they thought women's rights and all of that was terrific. There were a number of women who were active in politics and there were two major parties and sort of one minor party. There were others as well, but two majors and one minor. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael were the two major parties and then Labour. The division of parliamentary representation was sort of like half and half and a third. But the women senior political types in Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael or Labour were all very supportive of the whole issue of women's rights and wanted to see more of it come to Ireland and all. Now of course if I had gone out and talked to the hierarchy and the people in the church or the village types, they must have thought this was horrible. This was the worst thing they could imagine.

Q: What was, I was thinking of the Carter administration came in touting human rights and other things that would go with that. Were there anything in particular to that administration of its outlook didn't translate terribly well in Ireland?

BERRINGTON: Oh goodness, there probably were. I just can't think of them anymore. The whole business of human rights of course, was very caught up in what was going on in Central America and all of that. There were always, these are kind of small carbuncles on the body of the relationship, always issues like so and so is going to be executed in a penitentiary in Pennsylvania or Texas or some place, and the Church would always get up in arms about that. There would be demonstrators out in front of the embassy about that.

Q: How would you deal with that?

BERRINGTON: Usually we would just let them do their thing and accepted the letter or petition as I alluded to earlier. There really wasn't much point in making a press release about it. We had information to give out if people wanted, if they didn't understand that the federal government has nothing to do with capital punishment in each of the states, we would have an information sheet to give out to people if they were interested enough. We didn't go out and just start handing these out because people would just tend to toss them aside because the cameras were there. But most of the people we felt really, that counted in the media or the government or business academic community, this was not a major problem for them. There are lots of things that happen in the relationship between two countries. You know, you have got your special interest groups demonstrating about whatever you can think of. That doesn't mean the embassy has to get out there and make a statement about it or make any kind of a positive countermeasure in response to that. If you did, you would be constantly worrying about all these peripheral or special interest issues rather than the really big things that count.

Q: Well on the cultural side, you mentioned a movie that couldn't be shown. Did you get involved in books, magazines, movies, TV programs, any of this sort of thing?

BERRINGTON: No. There is the American Motion Picture Association headed up by Jack Valenti that would deal with the motion picture problems. If they wanted the embassy to make some sort of a demarche or whatever to whatever the ministry was that was dealing with this, sure. We would go and say, you know, we are sorry to hear that this has been not allowed in the country. American policy stands for freedom of expression blah blah. You know the usual

boilerplate. But no, if there was that sort of a problem, we wouldn't get involved with it. The cultural program that we did do was geared to address the problem of the Irish view of America. Do you remember that old New Yorker Magazine cover that characterized the New York resident's view of the United States? Manhattan and the famous buildings are in the foreground and off in the distance is the Hudson River. Between the Hudson and the Pacific Ocean, there are only one or two things.

Now for most Irish, America was very much like that. There was the Irish-American community, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, and that loomed extremely large in how they saw America. After that, yes, there were pockets in Chicago, San Francisco, you know, one or two other places, but to Irishmen America was the east coast, and largely the Irish-American communities within that east coast. So I saw my task as showing to those Irish that we thought were important to understand this that there was much more to America than just the Irish communities and only the east coast. I would frequently try to bring in the speakers that could talk about things happening in other parts of the U.S. Or if they were talking about an issue that maybe had a social context to it, show that it wasn't just the Irish-American Congress, the Tip O'Neills or the Governor Careys of New York, Ted Kennedy who were the four horseman for leading Irish Americans in the Senate and Congress. The point was these were not the only people that counted. There were others in America that were making decisions and affecting how American policy or domestic events progressed, and the Irish should know about this. Usually these were received very well. I think the Irish were hungry to know more about America. Many of the shrewder ones knew that their points of view were distorted largely by the Irish-American filter, and that they welcomed things like this.

There was also an Irish tendency to see American theater or music or dance or whatever through the prism of again Irish-American theater or music, so I would try to bring performers or writers or other creative intellectuals that would show some other aspect of America. I remember one time we brought in a person, and Indian American poet from the west. They never even thought there were native American poets, and took him around to the universities and gave him an opportunity to do his thing with students and faculty there. I mean that was an eye opener. So we were doing that sort of thing on the cultural side.

Q: You mentioned Tip O'Neill, Patrick Moynihan, Ted Kennedy and George Carey, the Irish-American politicians. Did you find yourself becoming an adjunct to their campaigns back home? I mean they would come over and you would make sure they would get the proper pictures taken there, the Blarney Stone or whatever?

BERRINGTON: No, not really. Irish-Americans were constantly passing through. I can remember one time Tip O'Neill headed up a CODEL (Congressional Delegation) that came to town. There was an Italian-American from Boston, Conti. There must have been about ten or twelve, most of them Irish-American, a few of them were not Irish-American. I think they probably thought it would be a kick to with Tip to Ireland. They would come to the embassy for an hour or two for a briefing. Invariably there would be a lunch that the ambassador would host. But most of the time these guys were out playing golf, meeting their own contacts, doing their own thing with very little input or guidance from the embassy. Ireland and England are very similar in that because everybody speaks English, because the Americans sort of assume they are

just like us, it is very easy for the Tip O'Neills or anybody else in Washington to just pick up the phone, or have their staff person pick up the phone, and call directly to so and so. You know they say I want to get in touch with the Taoiseach, the Prime Minister. They could just phone right on through, and, given the stature and position of these people in Washington, for the PM to get a call from somebody like Tip O'Neill, of course he would take it. So if these people wanted to have their appointments set up with members of the Irish Dáil which is the parliament, they would just do it directly. They didn't necessarily work through us. It was, of course, a source of constant frustration for us, because we wanted to keep tabs on what our people were doing. We wanted to at least, if not to shape or tell them what they could and could not do or say, we wanted to at least be present so we could find out what was going on and pick up the information and learn more about it. Some congressmen or some officials would be very good about this and would welcome our presence. Others whether to opposition or just indifference would not include us. So we were not necessarily reduced to just kind of advance men or kind of camping issues for these people. Of course, what they did in Ireland did have a political aspect to it, but it wasn't through us. They could have done it on their own. And when many of these people came to Ireland it wasn't always policy issues they were interested in.

Q: I can understand, congressmen wanting to see the Israeli Prime Minister, but is there really an interest in calling on the Irish Government?

BERRINGTON: I am not quite sure I would agree with you there. There probably is value with having their picture taken with Jack Lynch or who ever the prime minister is at the time. Most of my time it was Jack Lynch. Jack Lynch [Fianna Fáil Party; July 5, 1977 to December 11, 1979] and Charlie Haughey [Fianna Fáil Party; December 11, 1979 to June 30, 1981] were the two prime ministers while I was there. Yes, they wanted that, but the Jack Lynches and Charley Haugheys probably were not as well known in the United States as Israel's Golda Meier would have been. But there was a lot more golf and shopping and sight seeing. That was a much larger part of any Irish itinerary. I don't think they really took as much pains to conceal that as in other countries because I think most of the Irish-Americans understood why they were going there. If they were going there, they would want to play golf too and go shopping. So it wasn't seen as much of a negative of the trip as maybe in other places.

Q: Well, let's talk about the embassy, internal relations and all of that.

BERRINGTON: Well as I said before, the embassy was a very small place. I was the only American in USIS. There was one ambassador, one deputy chief of mission, one person in the political section, one person GSO, one agricultural attaché, one econ person. The consular section was the biggest section in the whole embassy. The consular had two or three people in it. One defense attaché. Gosh who am I leaving out, oh, one labor officer. And the Marine Corps detachment. There were four or five of them as usual. That was pretty much about it. Considering how much Ireland loomed in the American consciousness, not a terribly huge embassy largely because the issues are not that great other than the northern issue. A lot of the northern issue, there wasn't much we could do in terms of embassy officers. So, it was a very small, very close embassy, and relationships were very good within the embassy. I had easy access to the DAO. the defense attaché, or my colleagues in econ. The ambassador would have meetings two or three times a week, and it was practically for everybody. It wasn't like the

country team and then the others. I mean that was pretty much it. The building was a very round kind of doughnut shaped building with a hole in the middle. Have you ever seen it?

My office was on the first floor very close to the main entrance. I had two local employees. There was a huge number of local employees. The consular section again had the largest number of local employees. The economic, defense, agriculture, and administrative offices had their local employees as well. The ambassador had a driver. I mean it was the usual complement for a small embassy like that.

Q: How did the ambassador operate?

BERRINGTON: Well, Shannon was a very enigmatic man. I mean I knew this was not going to be an easy job because of his difficulty in finally settling on a USIS person. In my briefings going out from both USIA and State, everybody told me he is a very smart, a very shrewd, a very knowledgeable guy, but that he is a total neophyte in the diplomatic business, and also he tends to be rather opinionated. I didn't quite realize though how private he was. He was not a man to communicate very easily his ideas and thoughts. You really had to draw it out of him. He was not a very gregarious or outgoing person. I guess you would almost describe him as an egg head intellectual. I am purposely choosing a derogatory term, in his social skills and style because he was soft spoken, few words, and sometimes uncomfortable in the social settings. But this is not to say he was incapable of going out and doing things, no not at all. He was constantly going out, giving speeches, which he was very good at. He would usually write his own speeches with very little help from the rest of us. He assumed that he knew more about the issues than anybody else. He was an extremely self confident person, so he didn't always, like many ambassadors would, he did not necessarily rely on his staff for information or advice. Rather, he tended to be the one who gave us the information or advice and very little of a two way street. But he was good at going out and giving speeches. He was good at attending events. Even though he was fairly introverted and shy, he realized this was part of the job, and I think he enjoyed it, and he was I must say, pretty good at it. To some the Dublin community consisted of the president of Ireland, the prime minister, the archbishop in charge of the hierarchy, and the American ambassador. That's right there in the top people in the country. So, the American ambassador was constantly getting invitations. Bill Shannon's problem, of course, was deciding which events to go to.

We in the embassy had very clear ideas of what were the things he should be doing, and even though we would let him know, he didn't always, maybe I should say seldom, followed our advice. He had his own ideas about what needed to be done. And in some cases he was right, and in some cases he was wrong. But he was not a person who took you in and who developed a cordial working relationship. He would always keep you at a distance. You were never sure what your standing was with him. As a result he became a very, he was cool to the point of coldness, and you just, he was not the kind of person that developed warm familial feelings for the embassy. The close relationships we had within the embassy were in spite of the ambassador, not because of the ambassador. I mean I have worked with other ambassadors in the past who would go out of their way to have people over to the residence and develop kind of embassy esprit de corps, and particularly in the small missions try to be a much greater sense of collegiality. Bill Shannon didn't do that at all.

Q: I would think one of the problems would be, and this is true of both career and non career ambassadors, at what point to you listen to your staff and when do you follow your own head.

BERRINGTON: Yes, that is quite right. Shannon was no dummy. He was a very clever, very smart man, but he did not have experience in the business of diplomacy. There were some things that he just, even the best of men could not have immediately understood some of the vagaries of dealing with foreign governments or this or that. He was not one that was willingly bringing us into his decision making process on this. So it made for a difficult relationship. It made for a particularly difficult relationship, and I won't put words in his mouth, he will have to speak for himself, the deputy chief of mission who was a very capable. His name was Charles Rushing. Charlie had a very tough time because he knew there was this problem among the mission as a whole, the problem of feeling left out of the ambassador's thoughts and ideas and very few of us having many warm feelings about the ambassador, but yet Charlie knew that he had to be the deputy chief of mission. The chief of mission was the ambassador and so Charlie had to satisfy him as well as try to make us feel that we had somebody who was arguing our case as well. If I thought my assignment in Dublin was difficult, Charlie's was probably even more so. I had extremely good relationships with Charlie, and I was very happy with Charlie's support on many of the problems that came up.

Q: What was Ambassador Shannon's background, not just where he came from?

BERRINGTON: I think he was Boston. I don't even remember his university. I think he probably had a Ph.D. but basically it was his time with the New York Times and he was writing novels. Many of the writings and columns that he did were on Europe. Then as I said, he wrote a couple of books about Ireland. But I would have to go back and do some homework. He was married of course. I have forgotten to mention this. His wife, Elizabeth, was a kind of an equal element in all of this. Elizabeth was a much more outgoing social kind of person, yet she tended to keep her distance as well. She was also difficult to figure out as how you stood with her. I tend to be a fairly outgoing gregarious kind of guy. At parties I tend to be very outspoken, candid in saying things. I would be this way with Elizabeth or with him, and I would never get much feedback. Ha, ha, that is funny or kind of Mmmm. It was always kind of neutral reaction. They were both very puzzling people.

Q: Was his Ph.D. and background in European affairs, did he seem to take much of an interest in the European Community and all that or was he really sticking to his Irish interests?

BERRINGTON: From my vantage point I would have to say no, but maybe Charlie Rushing or the political and economic person have different views. But no, he was like most of the ambassadors there, pretty much a one issue person: first, what was going on up north and second, the Irish-American relationship. And you know, if I were in his shoes, I would probably be pretty much the same way because that was such an overwhelming concern for all of us.

Q: You left there in '81.

BERRINGTON: Early '81, and of course, this is sort of one of the key experiences of my foreign service career. I suppose I might as well go into this right now. I was due to be leaving in I think

it was April or so. Sort of a strange time to be going but because I was single and didn't have to worry about kids and all of that, I think they thought it was a good time for me to. You know, my successor and all that. So I was supposed to be out by late spring, and it was gosh late January, early February.

Well I should preface this by saying I do what many Foreign Service officers do, every end of the year which is write a Christmas letter. My Christmas letter is something I type up myself. It is something I Xerox myself and stuff the envelopes myself, and stamp and mail myself to my you know my 50 or 60 friends around the world and the U.S. that I have been keeping up with over the years. It is usually a catalogue of what happened the last year. We are all familiar with this. That year because it was my last year in Dublin, I figured it would be appropriate to do a kind of summing up of my time in Dublin and how I saw things. My Christmas letters have usually not been and, Oh, Uncle Harry and Aunt Harriet visited, and I had a nice home leave at Lake Winnypoopoo or whatever. I mean I would go into some of the issues and things we deal with in the Foreign Service. Well that's what I did. Since this was a private matter going to friends who I didn't think would reveal any embarrassing confidences, I was fairly frank about a lot of what had been going on in Ireland. Not inside the embassy. I must say my relationship with the ambassador is not something I would like other people to be aware of. A lot of people were aware of this because the problems had been occurring for a few years, people in Washington as well as elsewhere, but it wasn't something I would write on. So I did the letter, sent it off, and I was going out to a party one night, and I had a phone call from a friend of mine who was the editor of something called Business and Finance, I believe. It was things going on in business. This was an Irish business journal. He was an Irishman. Actually he was an Australian, but had been in Ireland for so many years that he was an Irishman at that point. He said, "Robin, I think you should realize that I received a mailing from you today which contains what looks like a personal letter from you. It has got all these comments about Ireland in it, and I don't know why you sent this to me, but I will send it back to you so you know what it is; it has gone out in your name." I didn't have a clue what he was talking about.

I went off to the party and I thought about it. Then maybe about 10:00 at night I recalled Hmmm, I wonder if he got a copy of my Christmas letter. If he did, how in the world could that have happened? Well, besides trying to figure this out, I didn't pay to much more attention. I woke up the next morning, went in to the embassy, and there spread across the front page of the January 28, 1981 Irish Times is a big story, not the banner headlines but about halfway down the front page, a big story with my picture, "American Diplomat Tells All About Ireland," or something like that. It then goes on to say that the Irish Times has received a copy of this letter and wanted to show how the Americans view Ireland and how the embassy talks about the Irish-American issue. It made a point of lifting things out of context, quoting certain things that I had written in my letter and portraying all of this in a very critical manner. That was the Irish Times which was the paper of choice. That was the morning. By that afternoon, the tabloids started running it, and they were with banner headlines, "American Embassy Diplomat says We Irish Are Small Potatoes" or something to that effect. That day, I think that was a Tuesday, all day Tuesday I was just inundated with phone calls. The ambassador, of course, immediately wanted to know what was in this. It was at that point very clear that it was my Christmas letter. I went up to him and I explained that I don't have a clue how this got out. Yes, it is accurate, but it is not a letter that I sent any of these people. By the next morning, Wednesday, it happened to be about the same

time that there was a major political issue in the Dáil, the Parliament, and by that time the Dáil had superseded the Berrington news, and we thought it was just going to be a 24 hour wonder, because the ambassador and I in spite of all the calls from the newspapers and all that, we just said, "We have nothing to say; there is no comment." I think the ambassador said something to the effect of I am not privy to Mr. Berrington's private letters. If this is about Ireland, that is his personal problem not, you know. Trying to distance himself from all of this. By Wednesday we thought it would all be over. No! AP in the meantime, picked this up and sent it to the United States, put it on the wire services that goes around the world. By the time the American press took this up you know, "American Embassy Official in Dublin Says Embarrassing Things About Dublin. Irish All Upset. Here Are Copies of the Headlines." What we thought was a 24 hour wonder in Dublin suddenly became even more of an issue in the United States because the Irish-American community said, "What is this guy in Dublin, our government representative saying all of these horribly critical things about Ireland?"

Q: What sort of things did the media highlight?

BERRINGTON: Well, one of the things, one of the disputes between me and the ambassador for a number of years is because I saw our mission there as so small, I wasn't sure that we needed a full time USIS presence. This was the time of Carter, zero budgeting and all that. There were cutbacks in waste, looking at ways for imaginative restructuring of missions and whatnot. The ambassador, of course, would have no truck with this. So, because apart from my press work I felt there wasn't that much for me to do to keep busy all the time, I had described my job as small potatoes. Well, then this was lifted out of my letter and started running in the press, it became Ireland is small potatoes. That was something that was constantly repeated again and again and sort of took on a life of its own. Also I commented about how the weather and Irish food were well matched with each other, grey and dreary.

Q: Which is true.

BERRINGTON: Oh, yes. And you know, I made some negative remarks about the IRA and oh gosh, it is hard for me to recall it all.

Q: In other words of no really derogatory. These were just personal.

BERRINGTON: Clearly negative derogatory comments but done in a light humorous bantering kind of way which anybody who saw this letter would know. In the meantime, as I say, the Americans picked up the story and started running with it. Apparently my mother was ironing one night and suddenly heard American diplomat Robin Berrington and she looked up and there I was. Peter Jennings was reading parts of my letter on ABC TV. Almost every American paper covered it.

Q: I recall something, I mean now that you are saying this, I mean it couldn't have gone anywhere without noting this.

BERRINGTON: It was on the cover, well not the cover, the front page of the February 1, 1981 New York Times. You know, it just took on a real editorial life of its own. Once the Americans

picked it up, then the Irish felt, “Oh we have to look at this again.” So it was kind of like one side of the Atlantic suddenly energizing another side and this sort of back and forth as far as what was a dead issue at one point suddenly takes on a new life again. By I would say, Wednesday night, Thursday morning, I was told that the State Department wanted me out of the country, that I had become so much of a point of controversy that it would be best if I left and was out of there so that there would be no more concern about this. Well, the idea that I was suddenly being called back to Washington started a new wave of interest, “Irish American diplomat being called back to be chastised, to be fired.” “American diplomat being called back…” for whatever the press decided the point they wanted to hit best. Many of the people at that point were saying "Wait a minute. What did Berrington write? He didn't really write anything that most of us don't joke about ourselves anyway. There is nothing new here." Suddenly a number of Irishmen, journalists, started saying, "Wait a minute. Aren't we making more of this than deserves to be made." So kind of another wave of support developed for me. For example, a friend of mine who is the editor of the Independent got a copy of the entire letter and printed it verbatim from beginning to end to show that this was clearly a personal letter and not as the Irish Times portrayed this in follow up stories the next day and afterwards, you know they were trying to say this was really an in house document and it was an example of the kind of reporting that the embassy sent back to the Department of State. This shows that Berrington was really an intelligence officer. The Times was just going berserk with this because the Times was the paper that broke it was starting to get a lot of criticism from the other media. Why have you done this to this poor guy when it was clearly if anybody had any smarts they would realize it was just a personal kind of end of the year holiday letter. Anyway, in spite of this backlash of support, the National Union of Journalist, for example, sent a telegram to the White House saying Berrington has been the best foreign service officer we had here in 50 years. He is the only one who calls a spade a spade. We can trust him. Why are you firing him or taking him back to the U.S.? Letters to the editor just went for days saying Berrington, attributing to me greater virtues and positive traits than I ever thought of myself. Anyway, I had to go because the Department was not going to change policy on this. So I left Dublin Airport on a Saturday, 48 hours. I was given 48 hours to go.

Q: This was by the State Department.

BERRINGTON: Yes. I was not PNGed (declared persona non grata). The Irish government, well there were a couple of ministers of state who huffed and puffed for the first 24 hours to try and get political advantage from it. You know, 24-36 hours after they all kind of chuckled at how silly this all was too. So I had 48 hours to leave the country. It just got so bizarre by that time that there were so many Irishmen thinking there must be something more to this, because why does the State Department call him back. I can remember one night, I went home,…I was still trying to follow my usual schedule even thought it was increasingly difficult to do so. I went home and there was a guy waiting at my door with a camera man to take a picture of me and to try to interview me. I was out for lunch one day and I was just walking down the street from the restaurant, and a journalist walked up to me and said, "Are you Berrington? We would like to find out what really happened." So the newspapers had clearly assigned people to follow me around. When I left Dublin Airport, we had arranged with Air Lingus for me to sneak in through the back door. I was wrapped up in a scarf; because this was early February it was cold. I was wrapped up in a scarf with dark glasses and a hat pulled down, and I had to sneak through. In the meantime, we asked a friend of mine in the embassy, a colleague, to go to the desk and check me

in. Everybody was all prepared for this. Meantime there was a huge group of photographers and reporters waiting to waylay me at the airport. They waylaid him, and in the meantime I snuck onto the plane. It was that sort of silliness. It was astonishing that the Irish media turned this into the circus that they did.

Q: A little of this happened to me in Greece one time. I got quoted on page 23 of the Christian Science Monitor which I was quoted that "Balkan justice is not American justice." The next thing you know, this was headlines. What Americans think about a small country is important to them.

BERRINGTON: Yes. But the problem is not just attitudes in Ireland. Clearly if it had been left just to the Irish themselves, as I say 24 hours later this would have died down. I would have been clearly something of an object of some ridicule or derision. But I could have made the remaining two or three months I had in my assignment.

Q: I take it the ambassador wasn't taking a very strong stance.

BERRINGTON: Well, now to understand this we have to backtrack a bit. As I had said earlier, the ambassador was not terribly enthusiastic about having me come in the first place. Again not me, but me as USIS officer because he wanted somebody else to fill the job. He had his own candidate, allegedly somebody from NASA. But anyway, there I am, and for most of the three years plus that I worked with him, he would, I think it is safe to say that his interest in public affairs, press work, well you know, a lot of ambassadors take more interest in PAO than they do in a lot of other embassy officers, because we can do more for their public image and all of that. So he was constantly after me to do this or do that. Sometimes which I just couldn't do because of the nature of his demands and because it was incapable for any PAO to have done some of the things that he wanted done. There were at least two times when I had heard from Washington that the Ambassador, he never said it to me. As I said, he was not a terribly communicative person, but I heard from Washington that the ambassador had called up Washington and expressed very grave disappointment with my performance and that if things didn't improve, he wanted me out of there. There was also one time when, I frankly don't even remember the circumstances, but I had been off on a trip to Cork or Galway or someplace, an official trip. When I got back there was a series of notes that the ambassador had written and left for me. It was clear, you could see from the writing, the handwriting on the notes that he was so upset and so angry that his hand was shaking as we was writing. As I said, he was a very close, kind of introverted kind of guy. I think when his emotions really did spill out, they never spilled out in moderation but in kind of the extreme if you will. He was writing things like if I didn't do things differently or if I didn't improve on this or that, I would be out of there in 24 hours, and I better change my ways or else.

I showed this to Charlie Rushing, and Charlie said he had never seen anything like that in his whole career for an ambassador to write those kinds of things to an officer over what was clearly not much of an issue. As I say I have even forgotten what it was that prompted this. So you have to realize there was this background of him being unhappy with USIS forcing him to take a PAO, and then once I was there, since I was the embodiment of the PAO, there was unhappiness with me constantly. You know, looking over my shoulder, telling me what to do, never being satisfied, constantly carping about this and about that, and trying to get rid of me. In fact the only reason

he didn't get rid of me was the fact that USIS had made it clear that if he loses me, he is not going to get a replacement. When this incident came up, his reaction must have been Aha! I was right, Berrington is incompetent. He is incapable of doing the job as he should. People should have listened to me. So his official reaction was to distance himself from this as soon as possible, and he did it in not a terribly offensive way. But within the embassy, he immediately called a meeting that morning in which I was pointedly told not to attend and in which he told everybody else in the mission they were not to have a thing to do with me.

Q: Oh my God!

BERRINGTON: I had gotten myself in my own trouble, and I made my bed; I would have to lay in it. People then from that meeting came back and told me you know, the ambassador... Of course there was great sympathy for my position in the mission because my relationships with most of the other people, not everybody, but most other people were pretty good. So I knew I couldn't get much support. The DAO, with whom who I had a particularly good relationship, said at one point, “If Berrington goes; I go. I am not going to allow this kind of nonsense to shape the way our personnel are seen at this mission.” I told him, "Bill, Don't put your career on the line like that." So I knew that I could not count on any support from the ambassador. I have learned since that one of the reasons why I got called back by my own government was that the ambassador had in effect called in to Washington and said, "I have no confidence in this man anymore, and there is no need to keep him here. If he is sent back to the U.S. that would make me very happy, and others as well." So that is in effect why I got called back.

Q: Did you ever find out how that letter got out to people?

BERRINGTON: No, I never have found out, and of course this is one of the really great mysteries of my career. I have my own ideas. Once this happened, of course, it was clear that it was an inside job. In fact it was a coincidence, but on the day that this happened, we had security people in from the mission in London. The security officer is responsible for Ireland as well as England. They met with me immediately because I had said, "Whao, something is very fishy that this letter gets out."

Q: Particularly going to your friend who you wouldn't have sent it to.

BERRINGTON: I will go on about that. But anyway, I said, "No this was a personal letter." I showed him how I typed it myself. I Xeroxed it myself. I sent it out myself. I said, "Even the original which I Xeroxed from was in my safe." I kept all my personal things; I was very good about keeping things in the safe which I had in my office, a secure safe. The security representative from London was so concerned about this that something had happened that shouldn't have happened. I mean not, the issue was how it got out.

Q: How did this happen, because it looks like somebody was trying to compromise you.

BERRINGTON: So he went to the ambassador and said, "Look there is clearly been somebody has access to Berrington's safe which shouldn't have, or somebody has done something to sully the image of the mission. I think this has become a security issue as well as a public relations

issue, and I want to look into it." The ambassador wouldn't let him. The ambassador said, "No, I won't allow you to investigate." So the ambassador apparently wasn't interested in getting to the bottom of this himself. Anyway, in trying to figure out, and my colleagues at the embassy have since I left. I mean there really wasn't much time for me to do much asking and checking around because once I learned I had to leave, I was busy trying to pack and prepare myself for departure. But, in the weeks after I left, I heard, you know I got letters and things from people. The consensus seemed to be, and this is only the allegation, not proof, was that my secretary, an Irish woman, was the one who was responsible for this.

Let's hypothesize just to give you some idea. Let's say I was working on this letter in my office, and I was suddenly called out of the office to go out and see the ambassador or somebody else. Let's say the secretary walks into my room, which she would dozens of times every day, would happen to notice this, suddenly think, Hmmm, this could cause a little bit of fun, and choose to send it out. Because my secretary and I did not get along. We had a very stormy relationship, although I should add she had a stormy relationship with everybody in the office and with many people in the building. Her temperament, her emotional stability was such that I had at one point recommended that she seek therapy. What I didn't realize was that in Ireland, when you suggest this it is like suggesting the absolute worst thing.

Q: Yes, it means you're crazy.

BERRINGTON: Yes, and apparently she was gravely offended by my suggestion that she have some therapy or talk about her problems with a professional, that she was my enemy ever since then. So she had a motive to perhaps do this. If she was the one, and I am not saying she was or not. There may have been someone else that I didn't realize who might have done it too, maybe to sully the embassy not just me personally. But, whoever did this I think probably didn't realize it was going to develop into the kind of international story that it did. I think whoever did it probably thought it would cause a little bit of mischief, 24-36 hours and be done with, because that is the way most things are done. But, we found out afterwards, it had been sent out to about 12 or 13 people, and only 12 or 13 people in the Dublin political journalistic columnist world. In other words, whoever did it knew exactly what kind of audience they were sending it to.

Q: Of course, your secretary would know because that was her milieu.

BERRINGTON: Would know, exactly. If say the person called me up and was friendlier with me than some of the others and said, "Look, I go this and I am going to send it back to you and not do anything with it." So if maybe one or two work out that way, given the number of people it was sent to and their position, there must have been two or three who couldn't resist. Here is a story. Look at what this American diplomat has written. Of course, that is in effect what happened. Now because the ambassador refused to allow any investigation and because once I left, the topic as far as something within the embassy, officially within the embassy the door was shut, case over, nothing was ever done to find out what really happened, and that was the end of it. Anyway, I came back to the United States.

Well, first I went to London because congressional law requires us to use American carriers and the direct flights back are from London. So I went to London, spent about two days in London

staying with friends, kind of decompressed. Needless to say the three or so days after the story broke in Dublin and before I left on that Saturday were hell on earth for me.

You can imagine. I can remember one night I came home from a dinner or whatever, and the phone rang and I picked it up. It was some talk show person from Chicago. "Are you Robin Berrington?" "Yes." "Well, we are on the air, Robin. We want to find out what you really did and what do you think about..." I just hung up. It was that kind of constant attention, I was getting. I started getting mail in Dublin, some of the most abusive mail that you could ever imagine. I mean saying things you wonder why people would write and say these things to total strangers

For the first time in my life I began to realize what it must be like to be a celebrity and get this kind of mail all the time. That continued long after I was in the States. Now the upside to this was the reaction from the national news journalists and from a lot of other Irish friends and others who totally supported me and were ashamed and embarrassed at the way the Irish media had handled this and that I was being forced to come back to the U.S. as a result of all this. I had some absolutely wonderful letters. If this had never happened and I had just left Ireland a few months later, I probably wouldn't have had nearly the file of testimonials and great letters that I have today. Anyway I went to London. There were a couple of cartoons in the English press on me. There is one cartoon of me standing at a travel agent's desk and up on the wall were posters for a bunch of countries. It had Ireland, and the travel agent was sort of holding his hands up against the Ireland poster and was sort of saying, "Now where do you want to go, Mr. Berrington? We can recommend something."

Finally I got back to the U.S. I had no idea, I mean, since my communication from Washington had been extremely vague, just get back here. They didn't say what I had to get back here for. When I arrived in Washington, and went to USIA headquarters, I didn't know if I was going to be fired; if I was going in to have my hands slapped. I mean my assignment, my ongoing assignment after Dublin was already set for Japan. I was going back to Tokyo. I didn't know if that assignment was going to be broken. It was, you know, total mystery. As it turned out, when I went in to the office and by that time, more and more people started to realize what had really happened. As they put it they slapped my hands and said, "Don't you ever write anything like this. Stop writing your Christmas letters. Don't send any more of those bloody things out." They said, "Look, lie low and come back in a month or two, and we'll get you off to Tokyo."

I thought that was the end of it. In official terms, that was the end of it. But I have to say kind of like the Supreme Court Justice that talked about obscenity. "I don't know what it is; I don't know how to define it, but I know it when I see it." I forget who it was. He said, "That quote is going to haunt me for the rest of my life." In a way that letter has haunted me for the rest of my life. I can remember years later going to maybe a hotel bar in New York or Hong Kong or whatever, and you strike up a conversation. People would say, "What do you do?" I would say, "I am foreign service" "Where had you been?" "Oh, I have been to Tokyo, Thailand, and Dublin." "Oh Dublin. Were you there when that guy got in trouble? What kind of a guy was he like?" I would always say, "Oh, he wasn't a bad guy." I continued to get mail that was forwarded to me from all sorts of people. I mean that went on for about a year afterwards. It is funny, just about three or four days ago, I got an e-mail from a friend who had just purchased a copy of Cassell's Dictionary of Quotations or some such title, and I am in there. One of my quotes from that letter was in there.

He said, "This is apparently a new edition that has come out. Did you really..." I had no idea. So this thing has followed me. Not as it turned out, not negatively.

Q: You have entered Irish folklore.

BERRINGTON: In a way I have entered Irish folklore. Two years later I went back to Dublin. I was on my way home from Tokyo. I went the other way around the world as I often would do to Europe because it is more fun that way than just going across the Pacific. I stopped in Dublin. I stopped there to say good-by. I had to leave there so quickly there were a lot of people I didn't see. The econ officer who was a very good friend of mine who was there when I was there threw a big party for me. I saw a lot of great people. It was you know, really fun. At one point, some guy came up to me at the party, and said, "Are you Robin?" I said, "Yes." "You don't know me, but my editor has told me to come to this party and ask you the following questions." I said, "I think you should go. This is a private party, and this is not appropriate." He was clearly there to write another story. There was a guy taking pictures of me even two years afterwards. I mean as I came in and out of the embassy somebody was posted there to take pictures. I just don't know what it is that that sort of thing continues to be such a big issue for me. But, anyway, I came back to the U.S.; I lay low, and I went back to Tokyo.

One final thing. As I said, this issue has not been a total negative experience for me. Before I arrived in Tokyo, the ambassador there was Mike Mansfield, a man who I must say was totally different from Bill Shannon. Some embassy person got wind that I was coming to Japan, and said, "Mr. Ambassador, do you know that this man Berrington who got in so much trouble in Dublin is now assigned to come to Tokyo? You know, if he has gotten in that much trouble in Dublin, is he really the sort of person you want on your staff here and you really ought to rethink this." This person said this in front of a couple of other people. One of the other people who was there was a friend of mine. He said, "Well, I got a copy of Berrington's letter, and I didn't think it was so bad." Mike Mansfield said, "Let me see a copy of this letter before I say anything, I want to read what this guy actually wrote." So Mike got a copy of it, and read it. He said, "Hmmm, anybody that can write this well, I want him on my staff." Ever since then my relationship with Senator Mansfield was probably one of the closest relationships I have had with any ambassador in my career. He was Irish-American, but he knew exactly what the problems were and how the Irish reacted to these kinds of things, and he was not going to let something as silly and trivial as this letter and the brouhaha over it stand in the way of my career. Thereafter in Tokyo Ambassador Mansfield told all embassy officers that all writing, ambassador speeches, toasts and all that should be sent through Berrington for him to look at. Thereafter I became one of the ambassador's close associates in everything he did. It really put a kind of stamp to any kind of official attitude about whether Berrington was a very good officer or not. As much as I have certain feelings about Bill Shannon, I have equally strong warm feelings about Mike Mansfield.

Q: You were telling me about the aftermath of this incident. As far as you know the secretary whom you strongly suspect was the agent provocateur was still there. But what happened to Ambassador Shannon?

BERRINGTON: Well, a very strange development as it turned out. But like many American ambassadors, he had close friends on both sides of the political line, opposition as well as

government ruling party. There was a sudden call for an election about three or four months after I left, and because the ambassador was very close to the opposition party candidate for prime minister, he went out campaigning with him. [Editor's Note: The Irish general election of 1981 was held on 11 June 1981, three weeks after the dissolution of the Dáil on 21 May. A Fine Gael–Labour Party coalition government came to power with Garret FitzGerald becoming Taoiseach.] Obviously, if you are the ambassador accredited to the country, one of the big no-no's is you don't go out campaigning with the opposition party candidates. You don't go out campaigning with any candidates. Interference in internal affairs with some particular politics like that is something you don't do. However many ambassadors have a tendency to feel about Ireland as though it is their own personal fiefdom, or like that it is almost the 51st state. The normal rules of diplomatic conventions don't apply, so he went out campaigning with this guy. His name was Gary Fitzgerald, of the Fine Gael Party. In fact, he later he did become prime minister as a result of that election. But the government party was so outraged that the American ambassador was out appearing on the platform that the opposition party's candidate that they PNGed him. He left Ireland on June 7, 1981, almost as much under a cloud as me. That was the fate of poor Bill Shannon.

LARRY COLBERT
Chief Consular Officer
Dublin (1978-1981)

Mr. Colbert was born in Ohio in 1940. He attended the Universities of Ohio and Missouri. After a tour in Turkey with the Peace Corps and a year as an assistant on Capital Hill, he entered the Foreign Service and was sent to Viet Nam as Regional Advisor. His subsequent postings, where he served as Consular Officer include: Ankara, Turkey, Oran, Algeria, Dublin, Ireland and Manila, Philippines. At Tijuana, Mexico, Madrid, Spain, Ciudad Juarez, Mexico and Paris, France Mr. Colbert served as Consul General. Mr. Colbert was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November, 2006.

Q: Today is the 20th of November 2006. Larry, what year are we at now?

COLBERT: 1978.

Q: 1978.

COLBERT: And I am leaving with my wife and two early elementary school age children to go to Dublin.

Q: In a way Dublin is fine, but in a way it's not fine. Did you feel that going to Dublin is sort of moving yourself out of the main walk?

COLBERT: No I don't think so because I was I think a brand new 02 or a soon to be 02, I forget which. I had never been a section chief before. I was going off to run my own shop, which is

what everybody wants to do. I was going to the country of my father's family's birth. I always felt more Irish than Welsh; my mother was of Welsh extraction and my father was Irish. I was going to a historic place, and I went with great enthusiasm. For those people who have not been to the embassy in Dublin it's a giant three or four story doughnut. There is an open atrium in the center that goes all the way up and the offices are on outside rings. The consular section then comprised about four-fifths of the ground floor ring. Years later because of the change in the law and the increased number of immigrants coming because of the so called visa lottery program the consular section was moved down the street to another building which was a shame.

When I arrived indeed we were just on that first floor. I arrived and had barely found where I was supposed to sit when the only other consul who had been there by herself since the departure of my predecessor handed me a signed leave slip and said she was going away for six weeks. So I found myself running this consular section, which had an IV (immigrant visas) section obviously, an NIV (non-immigrant visa) section and ACS (American citizens service) section and an enlarged federal benefit section as well on my own. . In self defense I sort of found myself running from one processing area to another like a chicken literally with its head cut off but I had great FSNs (Foreign Service nationals), and when I got to know my punitive deputy better I quickly realized that I was better off by myself anyway than having this particular lady who caused problems that I then had to then resolve behind her. She was very rigid with the public, rude even, and she terrified the FSNs, who were I think among the nicest people that I had ever been privileged to work with. So when she left several months later I was not unhappy. Another lady came and this lady had a sense of humor and a nice work ethic and she got along well with people. It made life much more pleasant. Jane Parker was the second lady and she subsequently retired to, I think, to Hilton Head.

My first interesting story of Dublin occurred when I had been there a week or so and I got in the elevator to go upstairs and a distinguished gentleman in a dark suit got in the elevator. I said, "May I help you?" He said, "No." I said, "Well I am Larry Colbert, how do you do. I am the consul." He said, "I am Ambassador Shannon." I had not had the privilege of meeting the man at that point and I had been at post for I don't know six days, seven days, two weeks and I hadn't even seen him.

I subsequently got to know William B. Shannon. I think he was a nice man, his wife Elizabeth equally so. He was very Irish-American, he got the job because he was the first newspaper person to endorse Jimmy Carter for president when Shannon was on the editorial board of the New York Times; His reward was to be ambassador to Dublin. A nice man who really had little or no interest in what I did which is fine. I mentioned earlier that the first lady that I worked with who gave me such heart burn I had been there about…I think she had just left to go on this prolonged vacation when I got this outraged call from the ambassador and he wanted to see me. He was in a terrible state. It turned out that his wife's best friend's daughter had been refused an NIV. Well, you think so what, those things do happen. But this was a very upper class, upper middle class family, and the daughter was an Aer Lingus international stewardess. I mean that's sort of an oxymoron, how can you refuse a stewardess who had been flying on international flights and who is fully employed, obviously something that one can correct but that was my first introduction to the ambassador. He was unhappy, because his wife was unhappy, and everybody knows when ambassador's wives are unhappy the ambassadors are unhappy too.

But no, I got to know him and liked him very much. The first DCM, his name unfortunately does not come to mind, was an absolutely marvelous individual. Unfortunately, I only overlapped with him for a little while. I thought he was just an absolute prince but he had an absolute fear of flying. He also had a taste for the sauce so my last recollection of him was when he was fortifying himself one drink after the other in the Jurys Hotel when we went to see him off, so he could get on the airplane. That said, I think he was just an absolutely superb person and loved by everybody. He was succeeded by another DCM who was competent, a little bit pretentious and so on.

One of the ironies was that all the section chiefs, Bill Kelley who was admin, Kevin McGuire who was econ, a gentleman who I can't remember who was political and I all had Irish backgrounds and we all had Irish names and I think speaking for all of them we went there as Irish-Americans and we left as Americans. That's to say I found many, many people that I liked in Ireland. I liked the country, but I found out that really they were they and we were we and there were differences and one came away with a perspective that perhaps one lacked when one went.

It was a very pleasant three years; there were lots of things that happened when I was there. Everybody in the world knows about the famous Robin Barrington incident. About a year…

Q: I interviewed Robin.

COLBERT: Robin Barrington?

Q: Yeah, would you explain what it is, was.

COLBERT: Robin was the only USIS officer at post and it was a very small post. I think there were perhaps two FSNs, at most three. Two things were going on. One, the program money that is to say the money for doing things as opposed to the admin money was being cut back and here we had one American and three FSNs running a program which had less program money than perhaps it had before by a significant margin. Second of all, I had mentioned that the ambassador was Irish-American. Well he was so Irish-American that in country team when he said 'we', we didn't know which 'we' we were talking about, whether 'we' were the Irish or 'we' were the Americans. I remember early on in my tour going in the secure conference room and the senior FSN was sitting there. It was different, I had never been to a mission where an FSN was in the secure conference room. We had no post security officer; we had an admin officer who was de facto the RSO . So afterward the meeting, I went over and said, "This is a little different." He said, "That's the way the ambassador wants it." This is a post where the military attachés secretary was Irish so you get…it was a unique post.

Well one of the unique aspects of the post was that the ambassador thought we should use program money for sending Irish performers to the States or helping promote Irish culture rather than the normal thing of promoting American culture. Now one could argue I think whether one needs to do any of that because the Irish and the Americans are so inner linked anyway, but cultural programs are cultural programs, you've got them everywhere. So I think Robin was

frustrated. One, that his money was being used inappropriately by the ambassador, not illegally, inappropriately and two, there was less money than there should be. For his Christmas/New Years letter he wrote this very chatty letter about things and he made a few what he thought were funny remarks. He talked about the city was falling down into the Liffey River - meaning it was very poorly maintained and that was true. He said a few other clever things, and one thing he said was that in terms of embassies and foreign affairs Ireland was small potatoes. Well in fact it was small potatoes, but he left a copy or the original copy of his letter in the Xerox machine and sent these Christmas or New Year's letters off. Somebody then provided copies of the letter to several Irish newspapers. Well most of the Irish newspapers had the class to ignore it,-it was private correspondence but The Irish Times, which is sort of pretentious, and heavy and sees itself as sort of The London Times and The New York Times and Le Monde of Dublin published it.

Initially there was a big hue and cry by the Irish but after a day or so they really with their great sense of humor just laughed it off. But the ambassador didn't laugh it off at all because he thought in my view that he thought that Robin was saying that the whole mission was small potatoes and by extension perhaps the ambassador's work was small potatoes. So Robin was asked to leave. This all happened very quickly, because my wife and I were having a large cocktail party. Robin came to the party. There must have been 200 people; we had a big house and this was a big party, a nice sampling of Dublin society, small d, small s, but anyway a nice sampling of the diplomatic community and the movers and shakers were there. Robin came and the ambassador came too. The ambassador was in one-room and Robin was in another, and they sort of passed in the night, never speaking, never acknowledging one another. Wherever one was the other one was not and then Robin was gone the next day. So we entertained him his last night. People were very sympathetic but you make a mistake and you pay for it.

I think my feeling is what happened is one of his FSNs thought her job was going to be abolished or her prestige was going to be lessened, and the FSNs were somewhat at war with him because he was saying well given this little amount of money we really don't need the office or something. So he was got at by an unhappy FSN. I don't know if he sees it the same way as I do but that is how I see it.

Q: I think I can't remember what he said but he said he described it. Well did you find that this kind of sour you on the ambassador or the people around you? Because there is such a thing as loyalty up and loyalty down and this must be the case of not much loyalty down.

COLBERT: I think it was regrettable. In point of fact you really have very little to do with the ambassador on a day-to-day basis and even in a relatively small mission. He did his job; I did my job. I dealt mostly with the DCM. The DCM was funny in a way he was so totally different than the fellow that we initially started off with. He was very taken with his own importance and had lots of mannerisms, which drove other members of the so-called country team crazy.

I remember once he called me up on the phone and he was most agitated because the outgoing cables from my large federal benefits unit, (Social Security, etc.…I mean we had all of them miners, black miners, black lung disease, everything because it was Ireland) He was very agitated because the cables going to Baltimore- the cables going to Social Security - were not

being written in Standard State Department English; and this was disgraceful he told me, that the quality of the things we were using in these cables was unacceptable In those days it wasn't all on line like now, I mean you had to send a cable and then the cable was transcribed. So I tried to explain to him that that was the language of Baltimore and this was Social Security verbiage/shorthand. No, no he wanted everything written out in real words and full complete sentences, not any of these strange things. So I went down to see the head of the federal benefits unit (FBU), Bernadette Collins who was a direct descendant of Michael Collins, the famous Irish minister of defense during the War of Independence. I said, "Bernadette, we have to…" She said, "We can't do that, that is not the way that that's supposed to be done." I said, "Yes, I understand that but he wants it done this way." She said, "Baltimore is not going to like this at all." I said, "I know, that's why we are going to do it." So we then for several days sent cables written out in clear King James' English though I guess you can't say Kings English in the Republic of Ireland, but in good Irish prose, only to get this bomb back from Baltimore saying, "What moron is doing this? This is totally contrary to standard, long-standing instructions." Then we could go back up and show him that perhaps this was not a good idea and he backed out.

That reminds me of another story because you can't be a section chief without being contacted about a visa not issued of interest to somebody. The same gentleman called me up very agitated that this girl had been denied a visa by the vice consul. So I looked at the case and she was a young woman from a middle class family, so I just issued a visa a So, one more Irish twenty-five year old gets or does not get a visitors visa to the United States from a middle class family, it's a flip of a coin. So time goes by and I get a visit by DEA (drug enforcement agency) agent based in London. He wants to talk to me confidentially in my office. He said, "You know, could you pull the file on let's say Bridget Shanahan, I am just making the name up. I did so and looked at the file and asked why it had been issued, explaining she had been arrested as a drug mule in NYC.

I said it had been initially refused by a vice consul (we now had a third officer in the section) that there had been a public relations issue, and that I had reviewed the case and overturned the refusal. I did not mention the pressure from the DCM. The agent took a copy of the application and left, not before telling there had been previous indicators of prior criminal activity and that she had been caught by drug sniffing dog

But from my point of view this was really wonderful, the DEA guy went back and the young woman languished in jail presumably somewhere in the States for a while and I went up to see the DCM with this application and said, "You must remember Ms. so and so." "Oh yes," he says. "Well," I said, "unfortunately there has been a slight twist." And so I told him what happened and you could see that he was turning several shades paler as he sat behind his big desk. But the nice thing was from then on he never ever interfered in another visa case in my entire time there, so I think that was probably on the whole a good thing. You remember these things as you think about it.

If I could talk a bit about the FSNs.

Q: Yeah.

COLBERT: They were really, really fabulous. They were more colleagues than employees, we did things together, I had total confidence in them as people and I liked their judgment. I mentioned earlier Bernadette Collins who headed FBU and then there was a Carmen Burn, who was the NIV chief, a lovely, lovely lady, very competent who supervised five or six FSNs very well. Then there was a lady named Noel Finnegan who was the ACS FSN chief, there were two passport and citizen persons.

Q: ACS being?

COLBERT: American Citizen Services, I beg your pardon. She took care of the destitutes, the crazies of which we had a number and that sort of thing. They were really, really superb people.

Speaking of ACS cases and one comes to mind, if I may. We often parked them in the rotunda, this open area; if we had a such person we just parked them there while phoned family, authorities. In these days of post 9/11 they probably park them in the parking lot three blocks away.

But this lady had entered the United States through Dublin but then she proceeded into the UK (United Kingdom). There is a common customs barrier. If you are in one you are in the other. So she entered the British Isles from Dublin but then she went on to England. She then took a boat to the Channel Islands where she announced that she was the Queen of the Channel Islands and asked to be so recognized – totally loony tunes, but a nice little old lady. But, since she had entered from Dublin…the deal was she got sent back to where you entered from so the loony toon lady became my problem when the British police turned her over to the Irish police who in turn brought her to me and I had this lady. So we had put her up in a bed-sitter, that's to say we put her up in a little room and got money from the Department to do this with while we tried to repatriate her. She would come in everyday and knit while we waited for authorization to ship her back. I hadn't quite learned that then that I could make a phone call and get the fiscal data and cheat the system, I was still leaning my job. So we essentially played it by the rules probably for the last time. Anyway, in due course this lady who came everyday and knitted got the money to go back to the States and we wished Her Majesty well, took her out to the airport and put her on the Royal flight home and off she went.

In due course we got the nicest letter back from her son who thanked us for handling his mother. He knew she was difficult, he knew that she was problematical and we had handled this thing with compassion. It was a heartwarming letter and it was signed, sincerely so and so, prince heir apparent, so he was as nutty as she was.

There were so many of those cases. Ireland sort of for American tourist brings out the loony tunes. I don't know whether it's a combination of the people coming back to Ireland and being so excited or forgetting to take their meds when they come. We had so many crazies, so many crazies.

I remember one of my most gallant moments was chasing down a young female American who had taken all her clothes off who was running down one of the main boulevards nude. The police would do nothing because under their rules it's OK to be crazy as along as you are not harming

yourself or anybody else. For many of the people in the streets this was a nice show, I mean a nice young woman running down the street nude. So I had to chase her down and put a coat on her and put my raincoat on her and get her back to a hotel and ship her back.

We had another person who came over and felt that he had been wronged by Aer Lingus. His suitcase had been misplaced or something at least in his mind. His solution to that was to rob a bank. He picked the only bank in Dublin that was under active surveillance by armed police; most police in Dublin aren't armed, but they were expecting the IRA to hit this bank. So he picked a bank that was under surveillance by armed police, and when he went in with his gun to rob the bank the bank teller was so irate she hit him with her umbrella and chased him out of the bank. It turned out that he was crazy and had been crazy for years and had been released from institution in Chicago. When his case came to trial, we worked out a deal that they would allow him to go back under medical escort avoiding putting him up on their nickel; he would instead go back and stay on our tax nickel. But he was very persuasive and attractive I guess to the opposite sex. He was sort of a movie star type looking person. We had arranged for a psychiatrist to go back with him and when the psychiatrist got to New York, the HEW (health, education and welfare) people excused the doctor and said that they would take charge, adding that he wasn't needed any more, he could go back to Dublin right away. Then it turned out that somehow this crazy American managed to convince the Immigration and Customs people that he was the sane person and the HEW was the crazy person. So they actually arrested the escort, the HEW (health and human services person) and the crazy man stole a car and got away. That was really wonderful because the psychiatrist was perfectly happy to escort him all the way to the asylum but Health and Human Services knew better and to my knowledge the young man was never seen again - certainly at least he never came back to Dublin on my watch.

Life was like that. I mean we never knew what sort of problems we were going to face. It was a very busy place. I had really good deputies, Jane Parker and then followed by Kevin Herbert who recently retired and perhaps would be a good source to interview. We traveled all around the island as a family, we really enjoyed our three years there, and we lived in a very old Georgian house. When we first arrived we could find nothing, no place to live, and we were staying in Jurys Hotel in a very cramped situation until we on our own found this place.

I made several trips to Northern Ireland; probably in the most foolish or perhaps the most wisest thing I did while I was there I took my family from Dublin up to Belfast during the weekend of the Orange Marchers and we watched…

Q: This is the famous marchers…

COLBERT: The Battle of the Borne.

Q: Orange men get out.

COLBERT: It's medieval; it's very hard to describe but we actually watched the march. We talked to Irish Catholics, we talked to Irish Protestants, and we wandered around the city with small children. It was quite interesting. Whether in retrospect it was smart I don't know. We were young and we wanted to see it.

Q: Prior to going there how Irish did you feel? I mean was this the sort of thing that you would sit around and weep over the Irish cause and that?

COLBERT: No, no, no. I knew that my grandmother was proudly Irish. I knew that on my father's side I was Irish. I obviously rooted as a child for Notre Dame, but I had no e fix on the Irish situation, and in fact sort of came away kind of sympathetic to the British of today in that they had themselves in the situation that they inherited, not unlike perhaps current history and they're trying to keep people from trying to rip each others throats out. No, I thought the Irish were charming, nice people. Obviously doing the job that I was doing I got annoyed occasionally when the people thought they had a God given right to go to my country because they were Irish and Irish had a special relationship with us, hence the rules don't really apply. I am talking about visas obviously.

I remember a member of the Doyle, the parliament, calling me on the phone once because an Irish gentleman had been sent back, I don't know if it was voluntary departure or deportation but he had been living illegally in the States for a number of years He had been sent back, and he wanted a visitors visa to go back to resume his life in America, clearly an impossible situation if we are going to abide by the law and do our jobs. So this man who had applied several times had been refused appropriately each time. Well this member of the parliament who often called me - I mean the prime minister called me more often than he called the ambassador because I had a product, the ambassador just had a mission. He said, "How could you not give this person a visa? He's a good citizen of your country," which you just want to grind the dentine off your teeth because obviously you're talking past one another and you can't take a member of parliament and rip his heart out as much as sometimes you would like to be able to do.

That aspect of it was annoying, the sense of entitlement. I remember this mother superior came in to see me about something, whether it was a visa for her or for a visa for somebody else. For one reason or another, the person didn't qualify. She had to wait maybe 15 or 20 minutes before she could see me because that was the nature of the beast, there were just two of us and lots of people wanting our tender mercies. So when I went to see her she said, "Young man, efficiency is a Christian virtue." It had been a long day and I said, what did I say back to her, something like, I said, "As is patience."

No, all in all it was a very good three years.

Q: Could you just explain what was the visa situation particularly unique to Ireland?

COLBERT: Well, the current boom, which we don't know about now, was because of factories and good economic management and investment Ireland is booming. At that point of time, unemployment was high and a lot of unskilled people fender-benders and worker type people wanted to go to the States and thought really that that was their God given right because they were Irish and Irish are traditionally gone. When Senator Kennedy and others changed the Immigration Act in the '60s, as I recall, and got rid of national origins and the quota system. Prior to that time if you were Irish or Italian there was such a large quota that you could virtually just come in and say I want to go and it was a relatively easy process. When or got rid of that and

gave every country an overall limit which I think when I was there was either 20 or 28 thousand and you had to qualify based upon family or employment it became much more difficult because there weren't that many close relatives who were Irish close enough to petition so there was frustration.. They simply wanted to go; there was high unemployment, and historically they were used to going and yet they couldn't just go. So obviously they used the most old fashioned way of getting there if you are overseas, they would get a visitor's visa and over stay. They had a terrible over stay rate, and if they didn't get a visa then they obviously went to their member of parliament who would call you on the phone or the Bishop or somebody else, so there was great pressure to issue. This is not to say that there were not qualified applicants, there were, but there were a lot of people who weren't qualified who wanted to go. This was one of the reasons why they had a few years later Senator Kennedy and a congressman from…with an Italian background came up with the so called…

Q: Visa Lottery

COLBERT: Yes, so called lottery visa, which was supposed to be crafted so that it only applied to countries who had been negatively affected by the change in law. What they really meant was Italy and Ireland, but in fact they couldn't say that and when they didn't say that then they opened it up to a lot of other people. So it became an albatross, which continues today. It's one of my least favorite subjects.

When I was there there was no lottery visa and there was great pressure. Legal emigration was probably no more than six or seven hundred maybe less than a thousand cases a year. In terms of immigration, having been a CG in Tijuana where we did IVs and a consular officer got a branch chief in Manila and been consul general in Juarez I'm used to numbers like you are from Korea of thousands upon thousands. The IV unit when I was there consisted of just three women and IRs and work-related visas were most of it, that's to say spouses of U.S. citizens, very, very few and some employment based. But many Iris simply couldn't qualify because they didn't have the relatives to petition from who were close enough and that's why they came up with the lottery system.

Q: Did you feel the hand of the Irish-Americans in Congress, not particularly Senator Kennedy but others?

COLBERT: Oh yes, I mean when you refused a visa of interest to a Senator Kennedy or a Tip O'Neil or those folks you heard about it. We tried to be as forth coming as we could consistent with our responsibilities. I mean we would talk to them and when we could issue we did issue but sometimes you simply couldn't.

You bring up a good story. We got a new vice consul; we went from two officers to three, great things. This Irish specialty cook, sort of oxymoron when you think about it, had been voluntarily departed back to Ireland. He had been living and illegally working in Massachusetts, but he no more got back than an approved H petition came. This was before, now of course H-1Bs are not subject to Section 214B but in those days they still were. That is to say, you could refuse this person. He had been living in the States illegally so the vice consul was very excited and said, "This is awful how can they approve this petition. How can they do this?" He was young so I

said, “Well why don’t we just call back to Boston and ask to talk to the district director about this?” So we did. This was a different age when you do this sort of thing. So I called the district director who I know and I said, “I’ve got this vice consul who is really upset that this H1B was approved for this specialty cook who you just sent back on voluntary departure. How can this be?” He said, “Well can I talk to the young man?” “Sure.” He said, “Well George,” he said, “may I call you George?” “That’s fine” George said. “Why don’t you just refuse the visa and we’ll see what happens?” So George went back and refused the visa and again it was still possible then to do it. That was a Thursday, on Monday we had a call from Kennedy’s office and a call from Tip O’Neil’s office and we had a call from H (Congressional Relations) and we had a call from somebody else, all of them were calling about this particular case. It was not one that you really could refuse, because everybody in Boston wanted this person back. So there was a bit of that but on the other hand sometimes you could win, sometimes. It seems that all these good folk, including the district director ate regularly in the Irish pub where the applicant worked.

There was a case of a young woman who was living in Boston illegally with a journalist. The journalist was married with two children but he had left his wife and two children to move in with this Irish girl who was younger and quite attractive but she was VD’d (voluntary departure) back, that’s probably a bad choice, let’s say she got voluntary departure back; she was sent back to Dublin. Then tremendous pressure was beginning to build for us to issue a visa for her to go back. I knew I just knew that we would get a phone call from Tip O’Neil, because these people from the Boston Herald who were all lobbying on behalf of their reporter friend would get to Tip O’Neil. So I decided I would preempt it. I called Tip O’Neil’s office and got his number one boy and said, “Look, we have this situation now. This is it. Now really we are in a bind here. We know that she was there illegally but she is also wrecking a home of one of your constituents, so maybe one of your constituents wants her to come back but I don’t think the wife and the children want her to come back.” I said, “From my point of view, it doesn’t look good for me to be a home wrecker and it would probably look even less good for Congressman O’Neil.” He said, “Don’t you worry about it Larry, don’t worry about, we’ll cover you do what you have to do.” So we did the right thing and we said no. The phone subsequently rang and it was some civil servant moron from H, I mean only you would know what I mean by civil servant, giving me this high and mighty tone about what I had to do. He said, “Congressman O’Neil wants this fixed immediately.” I said, “Why don’t you give Congressman O’Neil a call? I think he will see my way rather than your way.” I never heard from him again. So sometimes you win, sometimes.

Q: How about the IRA (Irish Republican Army)?

COLBERT: That’s a good subject. When I was there if you were in the provisional wing of the IRA, if you were Provo and you were going to the States to…

Q: Provo being what within the group?

COLBERT: Well the IRA dates back in various gyrations into the 19th century under various names. In the 20th century the IRA was in the republic those people who did not agree to the founding of the Irish Free State and signing an agreement with the British, which lead to the founding of the state. They didn’t agree with the terms and they thought it was a sell out, and they then tried to undo the agreement and the so called Irish Civil War began which lasted and

was bloodier, lasted maybe four or five years and was bloodier than the fight against the British which preceded it.

Over time the people who opposed the Irish Free State became the opposition party and got into power under De Valera, and there was in term yet another a splinter group that came into being which continued to be the armed opposition. These people who were opposed to British influence and the terms and their relationships existed in both sides of the border, the six northern counties, four or six I don't remember, the northern counties and the southern counties, which comprise the republic. In both states it was considered a subversive force. There were more IRA people in prison in the Republic of Ireland than there were in Northern Ireland, which was controlled by the British. The Provo's, the Provisional IRA, is a split off from the bigger IRA and it comprises the violent folks. When I was there the Provisional wing of the IRA were considered to be the fellows who were you know shooting the place up and robbing banks and shooting soldiers and killing policemen and so on.

There was the party IRA, which was called Sinn Fein, and then there was the armed group, which was called the IRA. We had lists of names of people who we were not supposed to issue visas too either because they had committed crimes or because they were professional fundraisers and criminals. What would happen would be a person coming in for a visa, and he would either be in our look out system or more likely we would get a tip from the Irish police that he would be coming in, then take down his particulars and send a cable in to report that say Shane McBride, a very famous one, had come in to apply for a visa. He would apply for a visa in the south because if he applied for a visa in the north he would have to go through the British police to get to the consulate and they would probably grab him. So he would come in and we would send in a report saying that he so and so forth and then try to get the visa office in the State Department to agree that we shouldn't issue him a visa because he was going to do fund raising or try to get arms and all that kind of nasty stuff.

Often the State Department blinked. Their track record was so so. They kept wanting a smoking gun. I would go over to the special branch, that's to say the equivalent of the FBI in Phoenix Park because they wouldn't come to see me I would have to go and see them and I would take over this case. "Yes, he is a Provo, he's a killer, he did this, this and this. But you can't quote us; you can't quote me Commissioner Hugh O'Brien." "Why not?" "Well you see if you tell them in Washington that I told you this then I'll get killed." "Why would that be?" "Well, your FBI is just a sieve," he said. "Don't trust the FBI at all, it's full of Irish-Americans, it leaks like a sieve, we don't trust them." So I would have to say 'Sources told me this persons is a bad guy." Then they would come back and say, "Well we want the file. We want this." Then I would have to say, "Well it's unavailable." They would show it to me but they wouldn't let me send it back because they didn't trust the FBI and that was an on-going problem. The FBI as far as the Irish Special Branch it was just hopelessly compromised, too many Irish-Americans who had this romantic idea about the lads. The lads were killers and thugs and they weren't nice people at all in my humble view.

Q: Did you run across oh I don't know, blow hard American, Irish-Americans who would come in? You know I was thinking…

COLBERT: Well there are two kinds of…

Q: Well I've got a touch of Irish in me too and the guys that go into a bar in Boston and how they are going to do this.

COLBERT: More typically you get the newly naturalized American citizens who comes back who comes back as an American citizen who was originally Irish. They were much more of a challenge for me and for my FSNs and particularly for their fellow former citizens in the sense that they wanted to lord it over everybody else. A lot of people came back looking for their roots, we had a hand out; we didn't do the roots thing. But people always wanted to go back and find their relatives and hopefully prove that they had done better.

One case in point comes to mind. I had to do a deposition, that's to say the federal court asked for witnesses to give their testimony before me and it concerned the nephews of an Irish-American. This fellow had gone to Boston, no to Chicago, as a young man and he had made his fortune by having a very successful saloon. He got to be very rich, very rich indeed, and at some point after he became successful he went back to his particular Irish county, shipped his big American car back, this is probably in the '50s or early '60s and quite showed off his wealth and was wined and dined and taken care of by his relatives and then went back to Chicago, made more money and never came back again. But then he died and he left all his money to his nephew Shaun. Unfortunately, he had two siblings who had children named Shaun, Shaun being a very common name. So both branches of this family thought the money was their Shaun's. So I had in my largish office on one side one family branch with one Shaun and another family branch with another Shaun and several lawyers each. This deposition went on forever for the benefit of the district judge in Chicago to decide which Shaun got the money. I remember one of the lawyers took me aside one afternoon after this had gone on interminably and said, "The only people who are going to get the money in the end are us, the lawyers. Now if they had decided to divide the money down the middle and say OK you are going to be the Shaun but you give me half that would have been OK but this thing had been going on for years.

Another case an Irish lawyer friend of mine came in to see me and said would I take a deposition outside the office. I said, "I don't like to do that, don't even like to do depositions, they are too time consuming but for you I will do it." I said, "Where?" He said, "Well I will come and pick you up." So he came and picked me up and he took me to a cloistered convent, really cloistered; women in there were not allowed to talk, and they certainly weren't allowed to go out. So we come in, I shake the hand of the Mother Superior, who doesn't say much and she takes me over and there is this little window that looks like a teller window with bars, pulls up the blinds and here's this absolutely beautiful, gorgeous, young woman, maybe 25 year's old, exquisite. She was the only surviving heir of a wealthy American relative who had left her $15 million; this is in 1980s now, say 1980. That's real money $15 million, and she had been given special dispensation by the Vatican to see me and to speak to me. She showed me her passport; I asked her if she were Sister Bernadette, aka (also known as) whatever. She said, "Yes." She then signed the deposition and guess who she gave the money to? The same people who gave her permission to speak. I went back to my wife that evening and I said, "Dear, I seriously thought about cutting through those bars absconding with her and giving you half." She said, "It would have been a deal."

So life in Dublin was always interesting, always fun. Our children did well in the only integrated school in Dublin. How was it integrated? Well it had boys and girls; virtually all the schools were segregated by sex. It had Catholics, Protestants and Jews, I don't think there were any Arab Muslims, but there certainly were Catholics, Protestants and Jews. Most schools even public schools are segregated by religion there so it was quite unique but it was loosely Episcopal but it was a great school and they did very well there. We had lots of friends, I think three years was about right and that's about all I want to say about Dublin unless you have a question.

Q: You were there at a time when Dublin was still you might say Dublin was not the swingingest city in the European Union, which I think has become now. I wonder if you could comment a bit about what you saw of Irish society, relations between men and women, the classes and then also the role of the church. I mean, your personal…

COLBERT: That's interesting. There's a formality about the Irish that is to say one of my neighbors who was an accountant, chartered accountant as they say, was a gardener and he did his gardening in an old suit jacket and a tie that was how formal he was. A very nice man and I think exceptional from my point of view in that he actually invited us to dinner in his house. The Irish are very warm in a public way, that's to say they greet you warmly, but they don't tend to bring you into their circle. I think they tend to be a bit standoffish. There is a superficiality of their friendship. You really have to know them very, very well to be included. I don't think we had that many Irish friends that we considered to be close friends. We had lots of acquaintances.

They have this from my perspective interesting way of doing their weekends. On Sunday a married couple goes to his parents or her parents on alternate basis, every Sunday. So you go to Mass, then you go to Sunday dinner, heavy lunch whatever it is with one set of in-laws and then the next the other. That's a ritual you just do that. You tend to be friendly with the people that you went to school with and you tend to stay in the same orbit. I think that's true. I think there is a strata there; there is the establishment group, and then the worker bees and they are very conscience of that. I think they are very friendly and very nice, I don't know that they open up as much as some other countries that I've been in.

Q: What about the role of women while you were there? Did you see that changing or how accepting?

COLBERT: Women were in the professions, women were doctors, and women were lawyers. I remember when I was there there was one woman who was a senator and she had a twin. The lady who was a senator sort of had the press and the publicity, the one who associates here - on a somewhat reduced level – that I would say Hilary Clinton has that's to say everybody knew this lady because she was the woman senator, she was the woman politician. She had a twin sister. We knew the twin sister very well; she and her husband were social friends of ours; they were both maybe in business or something. They weren't prominent, they were nice people but they weren't famous or anything. I remember once we went to the Abbey Theater, which is one of the more famous theaters there. We came in and sat down. I think probably since I was the American consul people knew my face. This lady as I said had clearly seen me before or maybe we had met at a reception or something. She said, "How do you do?" or "Aren't you Larry Colbert?" I said,

"Yes and aren't you the sister of …" and I mentioned her less famous sister. That's to say it would be like meeting Marilyn Monroe and saying to Marilyn Monroe aren't you Joan Monroe's sister? I didn't do it in a catty sort of way since I knew the sister. So I said, "Aren't you the sister of so and so?" rather than saying, "Aren't you the famous, wonderful, grand, senator, so and so?" She sort of looked at me for a minute and smiled and said, "Yes." That was all and I didn't acknowledge her as being senator so and so. The next day the phone rang and her sister called me up and said, "You're my friend for life." It was just one of those things that happened.

I think they are very nice people but as I said earlier I went there as an Irish-American and I left there as an American.

Q: What about, well I had a friend, Dean Azikies, I don't know if you ever knew him but…

COLBERT: I met him I think.

Q: He was a consular officer but Dean came from a great family and he said when we were in Greece he said he used to get in the habit of pouring a little wine on the ground as an offering to the Gods that his parents had gotten the hell out of the Peloponnesus and had gotten out to southern California.

COLBERT: I don't know what the ethnic economic origins of my parents on my fathers side were since my grandfather on my father's side was a coalminer I have to assume that his predecessors weren't well off or he wouldn't have been working as a coalminer. So I have to think that we were blessed in the sense that we did end up in Ohio and my father worked his way through college and allowed me to end up where I did.

Q: What about the church?

COLBERT: The Irish are very strict Catholics, those that were Catholic, as opposed to those that were Protestant. The church plays a very big role. When I was there social policies were about where ours were in the 1940s or maybe the 1950s in terms of issues like birth control and all that.

Birth control was illegal up until a group of women found a young woman who had given birth several times out of wedlock who was not too sane, maybe just a little bit weak in the head. They sent her up to Belfast in Northern Ireland and put some birth control packets on her and put her on the train back down and alerted the police. The police had to arrest this poor woman who was carrying condoms in her purse. It became a big scandal because they were pointing out the ludicracy of the law. I think the church had a stranglehold on central policy…I'll quote my father on this issue. My father was a very devote Catholic but when he didn't like what the Pope had to say he say, "He a no playa the game, no makea the rules."

Q: Yeah.

COLBERT: And I think the Irish may have played a good game in terms of pretending to follow the priest but they pretty much went their own way when they had to.

Q: Did they interfere at all with your operation or I mean did the priest come in. I used to get this in Yugoslavia. I would get the Orthodox priest would come in to vouch and as soon as the priest came in you knew it was a bad case.

COLBERT: I think that an Irish priest would have just about said anything to get me to issue a visa, sure. But there was this sense of entitlement and obligation that's to say if poor Shaun needed to go to America to wait on tables in Boston, why are you standing in his way? He's Irish, don't you understand? He's Irish. I think that same sense of entitlement applies to a poor vice consul in Tel Aviv has to try to say no to somebody.

CHARLES E. RUSHING
Deputy Chief of Mission
Dublin (1978-1982)

Charles E. Rushing was born in Illinois in 1929. He received his bachelor's degree from Augustana College in 1951 and his law degree from Duke University in 1954. He served in the US Army from 1954-1955. His career included positions in Italy, Eritrea, Southern Rhodesia, Congo, Laos, Liberia, Denmark, and Ireland. From 1985-1991 he served as an ambassador to the UN in Geneva. Mr. Rushing was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in July 1996.

Q: *Where did you go after Copenhagen?*

RUSHING: When it was time (after four years) to look for another job, I noticed that the DCM job in Dublin was opening. I bid for it as did approximately 75 others and ended up on the "short list." This personnel process corresponded with the Danish six-month term of the EC presidency. I served as the primary interlocutor between Washington and the Community during that period. In that capacity, I went to several of the EC capitals including Dublin. I met the ambassador, we talked, and he chose me for the job.

Q: *Very good. What was the ambassador like? Bill Shannon was it?*

RUSHING: Yes. Ambassador Shannon had been a journalist with the New York Times. He and his lovely wife were very successful with the Irish. They had contacts with all elements of Irish society. He had a phenomenal memory and was himself a historian of Irish affairs, having written at least one book on the subject.

Q: *How did the ambassador divide the work with you? Sometimes ambassadors want the DCM to run the embassy, sometimes they want to do it themselves, sometimes they want to only be involved in high-level representation.*

RUSHING: Basically, I ran the daily affairs of the embassy. That's the way the ambassador wanted it. This is not to say that he was uninterested, particularly in personnel matters. He, of course, was very apt socially and did reporting himself on some occasions. However, most of the

reporting came out of the political and economic sections. Occasionally, I would turn something in, but not normally. I think it generally went quite well. In fact, the embassy received a sterling report from a team of Foreign Service Inspectors.

Q: *What was the size of the embassy staff?*

RUSHING: Very small. The American personnel, the ambassador, DCM, a political officer, and economic/commercial officer, three consular officers, two in administration, a USIS officer, a Defense Attaché, two communicators and three secretaries.

Q: *What were the problems you found at the embassy?*

RUSHING: Aside from relatively mundane ones, including internal administration and visas, there were only one or two. One involved the ambassador's, in effect, campaigning with the leader of the opposition in an election period. Another was the ambassador's firing of the USIS officer because of his "Christmas letter" which leaked to The Irish Times and which contained both unflattering and flattering remarks about the Irish. The Times only published the former.

Finally, the subject that permeated every aspect of the relationship among the British, the United States, and the Irish was the Northern Ireland problem.

Q: *Did the embassy have any contacts, official or otherwise, with the IRA?*

RUSHING: No, the embassy had no contacts with the IRA.

Q: *Were you personally able to travel to the North?*

RUSHING: I was, but only got there once. Our consul general in Belfast would come to Dublin frequently because he didn't have any classified secretarial or cable facilities. So, in order to get his encrypted stuff out, he had to come down to us.

Q: *You were there for the Papal visit in '79?*

RUSHING: Yes. It was a spectacular success, of course. Our ambassador's residence overlooked the vast plain where the Pope and thousands of people were celebrating Mass.

Q: *You got an eagle eye view.*

RUSHING: Actually, I wasn't there. I stayed in the embassy with a communicator in case there was an emergency. Via television, I think I saw more than the people in the Park did. In any case, other important classified matters were transpiring at the same time.

Q: *What was the effect of Irish membership in the European Community? Did that tend to galvanize Ireland or not?*

RUSHING: I think its been a terrific plus for the Irish. Ireland is probably the major beneficiary of the EC's Common Agricultural Policy, one of the keystones of the Community, and of the first part of the glorious schemes of the European Union that has really been put together and codified. The Irish were getting back a lot more from the Community than they contributed to it.

Q: *Were there any threats against the embassy or against Americans while you were there?*

RUSHING: The embassy frequently received telephone threats. Then the question was, "Do we evacuate or not?" I was the one that had to make that decision in most cases. We never evacuated. Sometimes one could hear "pub noises" in the background of the caller. Once such threats resulted in an evacuation, they would only increase.

Q: *One of the awful decisions a DCM is called on to make.*

RUSHING: We had demonstrations as well.

Q: *What were they demonstrating against?*

RUSHING: Against what they regarded as American opposition to unifying Ireland.

Q: *Were you swamped with American visitors a lot at the embassy?*

RUSHING: We had a lot, mainly Irish Americans. I remember one time when the ambassador was out of the country, and I was chargé. There was a call from the receptionist saying that there was a gentleman there who would like to see me. I asked, "Who is he and what does he want?" She said, "He's from America, an Irish American. He's never been in an American embassy and he's never seen an ambassador." I received him, took him around the embassy and, I think, made him a friend for the Foreign Service. Senator Moynihan came by fairly frequently, as did other Irish-American politicians, including Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill.

Q: *Is there anything else we should say about your time in Ireland?*

RUSHING: The job was very interesting. I was chargé d'affaires for almost a year because of delays in identifying and clearing appropriate ambassadorial candidates in Washington.

KATHERINE P. KENNEDY
Manager, Northern Ireland Exchange Program
Belfast (1982-1984)

Ms. Kennedy was born and raised in Massachusetts and earned degrees from the University of New Hampshire and the University of Kent in England. After a tour with the Peace Corps in Kenya, Ms. Kennedy taught briefly and then went to Northern Ireland, where she became involved in searching for a solution to the North/South Irish Problem. A large part of her career thus far has revolved

around the subject of Conflict Resolution, both in teaching assignments and work with governmental and private organizations. Ms. Kennedy was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: *You were in Belfast when?*

KENNEDY: I landed there in January 1982.

Q: *Did you feel that you had been thrown back in a briar patch?*

KENNEDY: Again, I think I was really naive. I met a man at a conference who was a presenter who ran this organization doing exchanges between Northern Ireland and the south. He was a retired businessman. He was a beautiful man. When I met him at this conference, I told him that part of this degree program I was doing requires an internship. I asked him if his nonprofit organization was looking for any help. That is how it all happened. The headquarters were in Dublin. I expected to go work in Dublin. Then, they said, "Well, would you like to manage our project in Belfast?" I said, "Sure." That was about eight months after the hunger strike.

Q: *You're talking about the hunger strikes at... What's the name of the jail?*

KENNEDY: The Long Kesh, H Block. That had happened less than a year after I arrived.

Q: *Had you be*en *following the troubles up there?*

KENNEDY: A little bit, but I was sweet and naive. Seriously, I was. I went there to work with this nonprofit. They did a lot of work with the Quakers. They have had a long presence in Northern Ireland.

Q: *I would like to get the dates. You were there from about 1982 to 1983?*

KENNEDY: Yes, almost to 1984.

Q: *What was the organization doing?*

KENNEDY: The organization was called Glencree Centre for Reconciliation. They have a residential facility in the Wicklow Hills, County Wicklow, about 10 miles outside Dublin. One of their board members at the time was a Presbyterian minister. He kept saying, "If you're interested in reconciliation, you really need to do some things in the north." Another Presbyterian minister donated this house. He was a missionary at the time in Zimbabwe. He donated this house for people to live in and use to bring people from both sides of the community together. I mainly worked with women in youth groups. We partnered with an organization called Corrymeela Center for Reconciliation, which is in Northern Ireland. I would help organize, plan and facilitate these exchanges between Northern Ireland and the south. One month, we would bring the same group together in Northern Ireland for people who would come up from mainly the Dublin area to the north. The next month, the same group would get together down at the

Glencree Centre in the south. It was always a mixture of north and south, and Protestant and Catholic, and different socioeconomic groups. It was as mixed as we could possibly make it.

Q: *I'm wondering, as you're talking about this, I've never dealt with this, therefore I'm ignorant with my questions, but I would think the real problem wasn't so much to get the southerners involved in the north, it was to get the northerners involved in the northerners.*

KENNEDY: We all had assumptions that were constantly working, and particularly in cross-cultural situations. I remember being fascinated and surprised when I realized that after about eight months of doing these groups, the northerners, the northern Catholic and Protestants had more in common than the northern Catholics had with the southern Catholics. The northern culture and the southern culture are so amazingly different. Even to this day, and the peace process in the last six, seven years, southerners will go north. But, people wouldn't go north. There were people on the board of directors of this reconciliation center that was founded in order to improve the whole mission between north and south relations and peace work, and the majority of the board members had never been over the border themselves to the north. I was probably there for eight or nine months, and had been down to the headquarters for a meeting in Dublin and on my way back up north, they asked me to drop somebody off at the international airport. I remember it was an American woman from California. I didn't know who she was or why she was there. Anyway, I dropped her off at the airport. I had been down in Dublin for about a week, and went into the International News Agency in the Dublin airport and looked for a Belfast Telegraph. I couldn't find one. They had Lamonds, they had German newspapers, they had four or five British newspapers. They had some from Hong Kong. So, I went to the cashier and I said to the woman, "I'm looking for a Belfast Telegraph." She said, "We don't carry them." For me, that was one of the most critical incidents of my own cross-culture adaptation. To this day, I feel guilty, because I almost yelled at the woman. I wanted to say, "What do you mean you don't carry northern papers? I suppose you want a united Ireland?" For me, it just encapsulated the whole relationship at that time. Unfortunately, it still exists, to a large extent.

Q: *How were you received when you got up there? Did you find this to be another world?*

KENNEDY: Absolutely. There were checkpoints...

Q: *You were saying that you were searched.*

KENNEDY: You were searched, padded down, going into grocery stores, department stores. The army patrol would be down the street. Part of it was where I lived, where this house was located. It was on what they called one of the peace lines, peace divides. So, there were three or four streets in between very segregated neighborhoods. On my street, there were probably about 50, 50 Catholic, Protestant people living on it. But, one corner down the street, and turn right, it would be a Protestant neighborhood, and you go left, it would be Catholic. In the last couple of days, I don't know whether you've noticed, there's been some coverage of some rioting there near a girl's school. I lived two blocks from that school.

Q: *One thinks that there is progress, but we are talking about 2001. A pipe bomb was thrown at some policemen escorting little children going to a Catholic school. This is today, or yesterday.*

KENNEDY: No, it happened again today too. It was repeated this morning.

Q: *Going up there, full of American optimism and all, did you find everybody was trying to figure out where you came from?*

KENNEDY: Absolutely. Katie Kennedy from Boston. One of the questions you asked me in the beginning was whether my family was very interested in the political situation over there, and they weren't. But, people made assumptions that they must have been, and that I must have certain political leanings. I honestly didn't. I really didn't. I could understand the Catholic religion, because that is how I was raised, but as far as the politics, and how the religion mixed with the politics, I hadn't a clue. I went there as a trainer in conflict resolution and mediation and cross-culture training, which is what I had gained in my on-campus portion of the program at SIT.

Q: *Just a little side - in 1954, I had just gotten out of the Air Force, and I took my GI bill and got a master's at Boston University. My name being Kennedy, I was interested in girls and all, and I would find that people immediately would begin to ask me what religion I was. You could see this was important. To me, it had never been important at all. Even in Boston in those days, you fell to the right or the left.*

KENNEDY: It's interesting because people in our culture think the name "Kennedy" is the most Irish/Catholic names since President Kennedy. But, when I did the research on my family roots, the original Kennedys were Scottish/Presbyterian. So, Kennedy in Northern Ireland actually, more so than a lot of names, can be either Protestant or Catholic. Also, Katherine is a Protestant or a Catholic name.

Q: *What were you doing there? In the first place, how did you find the society? Were you sort of getting into the guts of the problem?*

KENNEDY: On some levels, I was. Political level, no. Some of the kids I would bring on these exchanges, I would go to their youth centers, to their church, boys and girls club, so I saw where they lived, I could understand the societal problems in links to the poorer areas. Some of the more upper-class schools we worked with, and the women's groups - the impact of paramilitary on their lives, the impact of fear, and the lack of trust in their lives. Many, many people were paranoid. At the same time, people got married and celebrated birthdays and went to school, and cooked dinner. So, there was normalcy, but there wasn't normalcy. At that time, the term that was coined by one of the British secretaries of state in Northern Ireland, that there is an acceptable level of violence. That was the term that everybody used. I remember at a sort of peacemakers dinner, I was sitting next to a wonderful man named Cannon Bill Arlow. He was the rector at the Episcopal Belfast Cathedral, Church of Ireland Cathedral. Anyway, he said, "Come to see me sometime when you feel lonely, when you feel that because you are out of your culture, you don't understand anything, come talk to me." I went a couple times. I remember talking to him once and he said, "This may seem like a terrible, terrible thing to say, but people here haven't suffered enough. Some people have suffered terribly. It has happened to everybody

in a society, and it all leveled." I actually had that phrase in my mind as I watched the Middle Eastern crisis over the last year. When is it that enough people have suffered enough?

Q: *Well, I think this happened in Bosnia. All of a sudden...*

KENNEDY: Enough people suffered enough.

Q: *Again, you are looking at this as the new girl on the block. I always think of it as having some rather crafty types who are both getting money and rather fanatic in their beliefs, setting things up, and going down to the local pubs and recruiting the tough guys, hard men, on both sides. I think of it as the male activators, but maybe the female people who are carrying the hatred. What is the source of this hatred?*

KENNEDY: It's historic grievances passed on to generations. People need to have an enemy. People demonizing the other side. It's partly the perception of history, and it's how events are interpreted and passed down. It's the prejudices, the fear. People would say outrageous things. Near the end of my time there, I felt comfortable enough with some people on both sides, and got friendly with some people on both sides. I would say, "I wish you people would be half as nice to each other as you all are to me." Mitchell wrote about the Northern Ireland culture. I don't think his book was very good, but he could write about the humor, the warmth, the liveliness of the Northern Ireland culture, both Protestants and Catholics. There is a culture that is shared. They are just wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, generous beautiful people. How can I say that and then view what they do? It's crazy.

Q: *I would think there would be an attempt to say, "For God's sakes, you people just sit down, be sensible, and be reasonable.*"

KENNEDY: Right. But, the issues that are at the roots of the problems, over hundreds of years, center around emotions and psychology. It's partly identity issues. For some reason, in the human psyche, there seems to be a need to differentiate from the other. There seems to be a need to create an enemy, a need to have an enemy and an ally. We do it in our foreign policy all the time in our own culture. Who is our enemy now? After Russia fell, the Soviet Union...

Q: *... making China an enemy.*

KENNEDY: Exactly.

Q: *It's disturbing, because you can end up creating something you don't want to create.*

KENNEDY: Exactly, and why do we need to do that?

Q: *We don't, but...*

KENNEDY: It's irrational. There are some psychological tasks to conflict resolution. Those are the hard ones, and those are the ones that we haven't gotten right yet.

Q: *What were you doing?*

KENNEDY: I helped to organize these exchanges between women in youth groups from north and south, as I described. Part of it was organization, and then when we actually got together, a lot of the times I would be the facilitator of discussions, and we would pose a question. We would do experiential exercises in cross-cultural training, looking at the issues of perception and identity, which then would trigger a lot of discussions.

Q: *I'll come back to one of my initial questions, is it really a north/south problem or a north problem?*

KENNEDY: It's both.

Q: *I mean, what was the south doing?*

KENNEDY: At that time, politically, or policy wise, they weren't doing anything at all. Both formally and in the government ranks, and in the people's ranks, they wished the whole place would just fall off into the Irish Sea. They weren't doing anything at all.

Q: *Were we doing anything to cross-cultural people who were living across the street from each other?*

KENNEDY: Yes. This particular project I was working with was really a north/south thing. But, in that, we had people from different communities in the north, so some of that was being done. But, there were other organizations that were doing things cross-community wise, absolutely.

Q: *Well, let's take Paisley & Company first...*

KENNEDY: Well, hold up. Just one more thought about "is it a northern problem, or is it a north/south problem?" I believe, on a psychological level, it's not only a northern problem, north/south problem, but also an Anglo Irish problem. The politics of the division of the six counties of Ulster. Of the formal relationship, I mean, people who carry a British passport, it says "Passport of United Kingdom and Northern Ireland." Every human being who carries a British passport has it. So, that's formal political reality as well. It's also an Anglo/Irish problem.

Q: *During the time you were there, 1982 to 1984, what was your impression of the Paisley types, the extreme Ulsterites, and all?*

KENNEDY: To be honest with you, I didn't have very much contact with them at that point. I have had a lot of contact since then. At that time, I knew of them. We were dealing with the nice Protestants, and the Catholics.

Q: *The Cannon of the Anglican Church.*

KENNEDY: They were all just beautiful human beings. In context, being that short a distance from the end of the hunger strike, the kinds of people that would come on programs... I was

helping to organize some of the other cross-community work, on one level, you were speaking to the converted. The people who would self-select, who would agree to be involved in these sort of initiatives, weren't the extremes, so I really had very little contact with them.

Q: *What about mother's groups? Was this becoming a powerful force?*

KENNEDY: Well, being in the Church of Ireland, the Anglican Church, the mother's union was very powerful. There was a lot of great work in their own parishes and their own communities. Then, there were a lot of support groups for young mothers in the poorer neighborhoods. To this day, too, the neighborhood has been in the news a lot for the last few days. Most of the visible violent, paramilitary activity on both sides happened in the poorer neighborhoods.

Q: *Was the IRA sort of a submerged organization, or were you aware of the IRA?*

KENNEDY: I was aware of it, sure.

Q: *In what way?*

KENNEDY: Which pubs were IRA pubs? With meeting people, you just knew. The same thing on the other side; where I lived as I described in these few mixed streets, about a half mile down the road, you were in the heart of the Shankhill, which is the real heart of working-class Protestant unionism. I did a lot of work, and had a lot of contact with the Boys and Girls Club and the Anglican Church's youth group there. So, I knew. I actually went into a pub. Once there that I quickly knew. It was Protestant paramilitary. You knew.

Q: *Which brings up something, on a cultural thing. Here you are, a young girl wondering around Ireland. It seems as though the Irish culture doesn't really like women until they become an elderly mother, whom they can worship or something like that. How did you find working in that?*

KENNEDY: I never had any problems. I think probably, again, I was naive. I think that my naivety protected me sometimes. I truly do. But, then also, being an outsider, being American gave me a freedom of movement. I would go anywhere in Northern Ireland. I would go anywhere in Belfast. At night, by myself, at certain times, I wouldn't, of course. Just like I wouldn't here. But, in the daytime, I went anywhere I wanted to go. I didn't feel afraid to go into any neighborhood. As soon as you walked into certain neighborhoods, they knew you were an outsider, instantly. Instantly. People would watch. That was an eerie feeling sometimes. I got kind of used to it.

Q: *Did you sort of let them know who you were?*

KENNEDY: You were taught quickly. As soon as you heard an American accent, the level of tension or apprehension would be reduced. They still wanted to know what your agenda was, and who you were, and what you were trying to do. Northern Ireland is a very small place. Belfast is a small place. I got known quickly. Everyone gets known quickly. There is a network of informants, literally. I remember once, after being there a year or so, I met this solicitor, an

attorney, at a group event that the peace people were organizing. This gentleman was one of the founders of the Human Rights group, the initial, pioneering, civil libertarian, human rights groups in Northern Ireland. He had just come back from some international lawyer's conference in Boston. He heard I was from Boston. He said, "Oh, I stayed at..." I can't remember now the name of the hotel, but he told me he walked here and there. I remember feeling my stomach starting to get knots in it. I said, "You went where?" It really struck me. He and I talked about it then. I thought a lot about this incident many times over the years. He walked and went into neighborhoods in parts of Boston, that to this day, I would never go in. Yet, here I was, 27 years old, going all over Northern Ireland, and doing everything. The question is: When and how do we learn our fears? Should I have been afraid? Maybe I should have, and maybe I was naive. Should he have been afraid? Maybe he shouldn't have been afraid. But, we learn our fears.

Q: *At that time, how much did you feel that it was an economic problem, fighting for jobs?*

KENNEDY: Economics was a huge portion of the problem, absolutely. In the two levels of people I was working with, so many of the people in the neighborhood I lived in, there were two, three generations, of Catholic families in particular, who had never had a job. Seventeen, eighteen-year-old kids didn't have a job, didn't have hope in getting a job. Mother and father never had a job. Grandparents never had a job.

Q: *How did you feel the Catholic church was responding to the problem?*

KENNEDY: Terribly. I stopped going to church. The church that is in the papers, Holy Cross Church, was my parish where I lived. I remember two or three times when I first got there, I didn't go every Sunday, but I would go fairly regularly. I would go in there and the venom that was spewed off the altar... There was violence, sometimes, and there were riots in that neighborhood. There were incidents, and there were killings. This passionate order of priests who integrated... Maybe a year or so later, I used to go to church sometimes at the Newly Center at the University of Queens, but it was both sides. They had a hell of a lot to answer for. Absolutely. It was terrible.

SARAH HORSEY-BARR
Desk Officer for Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Iceland
Washington, DC (1984-1986)

Mrs. Horsey-Barr was born in Maryland into a Foreign Service family. She was raised in the Washington DC area and abroad and was educated at Georgetown University; and Loyola University in Rome, Italy. Her service with the State Department took her to several posts in Latin America dealing with both consular and political/management affairs. Her last assignments were with the Organization of American States, where she served in various senior capacities with the U.S. Mission. Mrs. Horsey-Barr was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: In '84 you went back to Washington as Irish Desk?

HORSEY-BARR: Yes, I went back to EUR. Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Iceland were my domain.

Q: You did that from what, '84 to when?

HORSEY-BARR: '86, two years.

Q: How did you find that? I would think with the Irish one you would get caught up in Boston politics.

HORSEY-BARR: Oh, you did, very much, very much, Boston politics and the White House. State Department didn't run anything, as far as I could make out, on Northern Ireland, which is all that Ireland's about, Ireland and Northern Ireland, and it was all done from the White House. It was all domestic politics, generally Boston, who ran it. Nonetheless, it was an interesting experience. The Irish ambassador would always call up the White House, wouldn't have anything to do with us. But it was interesting to have that insight into American politics. Margaret Heckler was the ambassador.

Q: She had been a Congresswoman from Massachusetts. What was your impression of her?

HORSEY-BARR: A most unpleasant lady, most unpleasant, very much prima donna without too much of the social graces. Barbara Watson may have been a prima donna and probably was a *prima donna* but she at least had social graces.

Q: She was a lady.

HORSEY-BARR: She was a lady, exactly. I don't know. Margaret Heckler and I have never quite saw eye to eye on pretty much everything, so the care and feeding of her was difficult. I was glad not to be a DCM, however. The thing I found interesting was I just could not believe that these people were really fighting, they had been fighting for over 1,000 years. I remember just being aghast when I went to Belfast one time and a principal officer had a lunch for me and there were the two sides present, and they started arguing about it over lunch: "When you all did this back in 1492," or whatever it was and blah-blah-blah. I have never been involved in the Arab-Israeli thing, which must be fairly similar, but I was just amazed that people would be thinking back that many hundreds of years. For me, seeing all the signs of militarization and such was not a big deal having come out of Central America, seeing machine guns and camouflage and barriers on the road, but I remember being impressed when I was taking a train up to Belfast from Dublin and they had blown up the line. We had to get off and get bussed out, and everybody on the bus was oohing and aahing as we passed the guns and the camouflage guys and the tanks and whatever. "What is their problem? This is normal." For them it was all normal. That was an interesting and sobering experience to see what had become normal for me after those three years in Central America, and it was just a way of life to see machine guns around.

Q: I guess it's NOAD, or whatever it is, that's sort of the money-collecting arm of the IRA in the United States, isn't it?

HORSEY-BARR: That's what we thought anyway. They were disputed, going to mothers and children working and things like that, but that's what we thought. In that period of time it had a lot of bounce and had a lot of involvement by Americans in Northern Ireland.

Q: When you say involvement, these Irish Americans...?

HORSEY-BARR: Financial, and quite psychological. I don't recall any actual involvement in the fighting over there.

Q: You sort of have the feeling that there are an awful lot of elderly gentlemen in the bars of south Boston fighting the war with their mouths.

HORSEY-BARR: Yes, but there are an awful lot of younger illegal Irish immigrants in the Boston area who, depending on what persuasion, would be feeding those fires. That was the other revelation to me. Of course, one could come up with the statistics and figure it out, but the idea that Ireland was really just like Central America in terms of being a poor country of Europe and having a per-capita income so far below the rest of Europe that it's major export was still people in the 1970s/1980s was again a real eye opener. You can read about these things, but to me it's the first-hand experience that makes them come alive, and that was just astounding to learn how people lived, the poverty level of people in Ireland and Northern Ireland when they're in fact part of Northern Europe. I had never really focused on the fact before that there were all these illegal immigrants from Ireland just as there were from anyplace south of the border.

Q: Did you have the feeling that these were being treated with a very light hand?

HORSEY-BARR: Oh, yes, because they fit in. I don't know if that's true all over the country but certainly in the Massachusetts area they were welcomed. They weren't treated the way others were.

Q: On the Irish desk, did Senator Edward Kennedy...

HORSEY-BARR: He was one of the good guys, as was the former Speaker of the House, O'Neill, Tip O'Neill. They used to call them the four horsemen, Kennedy, O'Neill, Moynihan - I can't remember who the fourth was - who were reasonable, reasonable people, obviously pro-Catholic but reasonable, not radical. They led any number of ventures in the Congress to try to provide assistance. I must say one of them I thought was a bit egregious and where they set up an assistance fund out of the AID budget, which I think persists today. It was supposed to be an inducement for peace, but it obviously never had that effect.

Q: Was this sort of a pay-off?

HORSEY-BARR: It certainly wasn't anywhere close to that in terms of the amount of money and it wasn't quite that obvious. The idea was, if I remember correctly, it was going to be set

up.... The fund was to create jobs, the theory being that, if you got more Catholics in jobs, that would dissipate a lot of the tension, because the unemployment rate for Catholics was extraordinarily higher than it was for young Protestants, and so the idea was to create industry in Northern Ireland, which was not actually exclusive. Their primary focus was on the Catholics and you would lower the tensions and things would dissipate. But the fact is nobody wanted to build a business in Northern Ireland with the risk of being bombed being too great. I'm not sure if it originated in the Congress or if it originated in State, the idea of taking the Sullivan principles that were applied against South Africa or against businesses in South Africa, and applying them into Northern Ireland, and that has limited success.

Q: You came essentially, I guess, out of the Catholic, Italian Catholic Church, didn't you?

HORSEY-BARR: You mean personally?

Q: Yes, personally.

HORSEY-BARR: I suppose, just because I grew up in it.

Q: That's what I'm saying. Did you get a good look at the Irish Catholic Church?

HORSEY-BARR: No.

Q: I was wondering because, of course, things have changed but...

HORSEY-BARR: But it's still very much a looking-backwards kind of church as is, or at least was, the Italian Catholic Church at the time, and very conservative. They're both very conservative. I would say actually that the Irish Church was more conservative than the Italian Catholic Church. I guess it's something about proximity to the Vatican that makes you more liberal. "They're right there; they'll save us in the end." But the hand of the Catholic Church in Ireland is something that you didn't see in Italy, and certainly in Italy it would exist at the village level, the power of the priests, but in Ireland it went up much higher in society and wasn't confined to the village.

Q: They sort of laid down the law before they got there. Did the American Catholic church play a role when you were desk officer?

HORSEY-BARR: I didn't see any of that, but maybe they didn't have to when then had Moynihan, O'Neill, and Kennedy, and Reagan in the White House. They didn't have to worry.

There was always a lot of explaining, there was a lot of correspondence explaining to people just what it was we were doing or not doing or what was really going on over there or not. And then we can't forget that, you know, there was also Iceland in my portfolio, and we had a number of issues with Iceland, first of all the base and probably even more important at that time was a huge shipping dispute. Iceland, perhaps still today - I don't know - controlled all the shipping in and out of the country. I can't remember the details of this case, but it was Rainbow Navigation. It was this little upstart company, US company, called Rainbow, and Rainbow somehow found

some loophole in the Icelandic law and started shipping to Iceland at much reduced rates. I can't remember the details now, but it rapidly became a major issue to the point where it was, in their case, at the prime minister level and went on easily for a year or year and a half. It pitted the unions on this side and so on, and that consumed a lot of time because it also had ramifications for the base and all the surveillance that we were doing on that base. So that took up a lot of time. So the days were not quiet by any means.

Q: How about visas as far the IRA and all? Was that beyond your pay grade, or did you get involved?

HORSEY-BARR: No, we didn't give them. Every year around St. Patrick's Day there would be some that would come up as an issue and people would test the waters and such, but they weren't that big a deal. I'm trying to remember. There's something you said that reminded me. Well, I can't remember. Have to think about it and bring it up next time.

Q: Did we have a pretty good file on the IRA people? Would the visa office check with you?

HORSEY-BARR: Yes, and now I remember what I was going to say. We also had a fair number of people - and it would come up in the visa process - who would say that they had renounced their IRA connections, and those were very interesting. If I remember correctly, the policy or rule was that they had to have done equally as much against as they had done for, something to that effect. I always found that kind of interesting, looking at that - what had they done before, and what did the Agency think they'd done before versus what had been done after? But those were the more interesting of visa questions.

Q: What about the Protestant side, the Ulster group? Was there an equivalent barring of people who belonged to Ian Paisley's group?

HORSEY-BARR: I would say no, but by and large they didn't need to be as nasty as the IRA because, of course, they had the Royal Ulster Constabulary, which could be very nasty in its own right. Now, it did so with the force of law. And they didn't have financial support from within the United States, and I suppose they didn't bomb people and what have you, but they could be fairly nasty. I think the volume of the kind of IRA activity on the Protestant side was less. Certainly there was terrorist activity going on, but they didn't have much reason to come over here anyway, so we didn't hear about them in terms of visas. They certainly weren't getting much support out of the United States.

Q: Were there any cases of IRA people caught here during your watch?

HORSEY-BARR: Not that I remember. I remember hearing of some, but I don't think they were on my watch. I don't have any recollection of having to deal with them. I'm probably thinking about that movie. You know, there was a movie a few years back about an IRA guy that comes to America and gets blown up or something. By mistake he is killed.

Q: With Iceland, were we concerned about Iceland moving out of NATO? Iceland was sort of the cork in the bottle as far as...

HORSEY-BARR: Not while I was involved. They were still very proud of their involvement. They were very worried about getting too close to Europe and too close to the United States, but that was more in an economic and cultural sense than a political/military kind of approach. When they would rattle our cage about the base, it was generally on cultural or economic basis, if you will.

Q: We were doing lots, radio, TV...

HORSEY-BARR: Precisely, yes, we were bombing, and we needed to help them figure out a way to cut off the airways so that the screen culture wouldn't become part of, this worldwide American culture. So they'd rattle our cage about the base, but the prime motivator was not get out of NATO.

Q: I may be wrong, but I think the Reykjavik conference took place after you left.

HORSEY-BARR: Yes.

Q: How about cod wars or that sort of thing? Was fishing a thing, or was that between the Brits and...

HORSEY-BARR: That was between the Brits and the Icelanders, exactly. We weren't dealing with that except to the extent that we were affecting these folks in their shipping and fishing industry, this Rainbow Navigation issue.

Q: I guess you wish it had gone away.

HORSEY-BARR: Yes, well, it did in the end. Somehow it got solved. I don't know what the solution was, because it was after my time.

Q: Were you sitting there watching any sort of disputes between our reporting from London or from Belfast to the American embassy in London and our embassy in Dublin? Were they sort of on the same side?

HORSEY-BARR: No, they were all pretty objective so there wasn't much carping about what the other was reporting. There was obviously a different slant, but it seemed to be pretty objective. The Consul General in Belfast at the time was a guy called Sam Bartlett, and Sam was having a great time. He really loved the place and seemed to be loved by all. But in my conversations with him he could see things fairly objectively. Now, the guy in London was a fellow called Peter Reams, and he was fairly happy-go-lucky. He's still in the Department. I think he's going to retire in a couple years. I saw him the other day.

Q: I'm supposed to call him after this meeting about his mother, who was a secretary to two Secretaries of State.

HORSEY-BARR: Yes, and his father was an FSO, too. In fact, Peter and I talked. We were both on the selection boards last year, and we talked about it. I hadn't realized about his mother. I don't know if she's alive or not.

Q: I think she is down in Florida.

HORSEY-BARR: Well, I'm sure Peter will be interested in this sort of stuff, because he told me that, if I remember correctly, he had done a lot of work with his father, but maybe it was with both of his parents, in terms of recollections about the Service. In fact, he told me how to get my dad's records if I wanted them. Anyway, Peter was in London at the time. Peter's not one to get involved emotionally or what have you, so I don't think he lost his objectivity about the whole thing. And, of course, Dublin's hopeless because Dublin's always encumbered by one of these political-appointee ambassadors of the Margaret Heckler or Kennedy family ilk.

Q: In a way they're sort of a write-off, aren't they?

HORSEY-BARR: Yes, right. I never paid that much attention because you knew what was going to come out of them anyway, but you could count on Sam and you could count on London not changing what Sam had to say, and you could count on Peter because both of them are level-headed, objective people. And our office director was another very level-headed person, Martin Wyneck. I don't know if you've talked to him. Marty's very level headed. So I think we were getting the straight scoop, not that we could necessarily react properly because of the politics.

Q: On some of these cases, something that matters dealing with Israel, you have sort of within the political process sort of true believers in the Israeli cause, usually of Jewish extraction, in Congress as staff aides and all. Did you have any true believers of the Irish cause that caused problems?

HORSEY-BARR: No. I mean there were, like the Congressman from New York who got defeated last fall. What is his name? De Mata. De Mata must have a lot of Irish people. He was always fairly vocal. And there were one or two others, but they were minor players when you consider Moynihan, Kennedy and the speaker. They controlled everything. Without them things didn't move up there, so there wasn't much in it for anybody else.

Q: Was there sort of an Irish issue the way that moving our embassy to Jerusalem as every primary season that becomes a cause that all the candidates have to pay obeisance to and then they forget about it?

HORSEY-BARR: No. St. Patrick's Day and then the end of July or August, right about now, is the marching season in Northern Ireland, and you just knew people were going to blow up bombs and have counter-demonstrations that turn violent and what have you, but that was not generated in this country.

Q: While you were here on the Irish desk dealing with trying to settle the Irish problem...

HORSEY-BARR: Oh, we weren't trying to settle it. We were just going along for the ride.

Q: Did you cause your own union at this point? Did you get married?

HORSEY-BARR: Oh, yes, I guess we did get married then. We got married in '85, so, yeah, it was right in the middle of all that. We got married in '85 when Al came back from Honduras, because he stayed on a year after I did.

Q: What is your husband's name?

HORSEY-BARR: Al Barr, Alfred Barr.

Q: Alfred Barr, okay. He's an FSO?

HORSEY-BARR: Yes. He retired in '93.

Q: I think this might be a good place to stop. We'll pick up the next time in '86. Where'd you go after the Irish desk?

HORSEY-BARR: I went to Consular Affairs, the Executive Office.

ELEANORE RAVEN-HAMILTON
Consul General
Belfast (1985-1987)

Ms. Raven-Hamilton was born and raised in New York and educated at Rosemont College and the American University of Beirut, Lebanon. After working in the Visitors Center in New York City, she joined the Foreign Service in 1957. Shortly thereafter she was required to resign her commission upon marriage to a USAID officer in 1957. Mrs. Raven then accompanied her husband on his assignments to New Delhi, Beirut, San Francisco and Paris. In 1974 she rejoined the Foreign Service and was posted to Teheran, The Hague and Belfast, where she served as Consul General. She also served several tours at the State Department in Washington, DC. Ms. Raven-Hamilton was interviewed by Edward Dillery in 2009.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: My next assignment was actually to Belfast. Belfast, a major UK ship building site, had been badly bombed by the Germans during WW II, and forty years later, areas around the port were still in a bad state. The situation was made worse by the sectarian conflicts and riots. There was a lot of effort to bring people together, but strife was a fact of life, and there were some bad periods of bombs exploding, riots and other violence, and heavy army and police patrolling. The city was divided by a "peace wall" intended to keep the religious factions apart. The Belfast "peace wall" is still there, but now there are openings in it -- physical openings as well as emotional ones.

Q: Tell me a little more of how that assignment to Belfast occurred.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Well, as I said, I was working in the Visa Office on the management of consular operations at the European posts. I was appointed head of the consular section in Belfast and would be the deputy to the Consul General. It was an interesting assignment politically, and I had also done a lot of work on terrorism, mostly Middle Eastern, but still…..

Q: So it was a good fit really.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: It was a very good fit. In addition, by this time I was married to someone who had been born in Northern Ireland, but had left. When I told him about the great job in Belfast, he pointed out that he had emigrated from there and did not want to go back. But, we finally agreed that I would apply for it, and Mike would take a year long sabbatical and join me. After a year in Northern Ireland, Mike said that if Belfast had been in 1949 the way it was in 1985, with the gradual breakdown of religious animosity, he probably would never have left. We go back nearly every year and see friends. It was good for him to tie those loose ends, see people he had known and the few cousins he still had.

When I arrived in Belfast in the summer of 1985, politicians had been struggling over next steps in the dialogue between the British government, the Irish Republic, and the leaders in Northern Ireland. There had been some steps forward, but then Prime Minister Thatcher had broken off the process because she felt it would compromise UK sovereignty. There was also a great deal of suspicion in some circles that the Irish government would make a grab for Northern Ireland. Not likely, I thought.

After that debacle, some very forward looking people agreed that an Anglo-Irish Agreement was the only way to go, and the dialogue was resumed. The Irish government and John Hume, who was the head of the SDLP (Social Democratic Labour Party-basically a Catholic party), and others worked out another draft agreement, in which the British government invited the Irish government to "share in the burden of administering the troubled province of Northern Ireland." The Anglo-Irish agreement was signed in Dublin on November 15, 1985, by Margaret Thatcher for the UK and Garret Fitzgerald for the Irish Republic. The agreement was an umbrella agreement and was very European in structure in the sense that it was an over arching framework agreement and not too specific.

I was Acting Consul General in Belfast at the time and hastened to report to Washington about the reaction to the agreement in Northern Ireland. This was an agreement between the UK and Irish governments, and Northern Ireland political leaders had not been involved in drafting it.

Reaction in Northern Ireland's political parties reflected their sectarian character. The Protestants were divided. They did not want any diminution of their power in Northern Ireland. Many in the North did not like the structure of the agreement and its lack of specificity.

However, supporters of the agreement, who came from several countries and several interest groups, including churches and reconciliation groups in Northern Ireland and abroad, had helped prepare the ground for this breakthrough agreement. The Anglo-Irish agreement was the first

really successful agreement between the Irish Republic and the British government, which had control over Northern Ireland (also referred to as Ulster).

Of course, Embassy London was also informing Washington, but few people from the embassy had been in Northern Ireland. There was really a dearth of interest in Northern Ireland across the UK and in the embassy too. Embassy London had a lot of other issues on its agenda with the British government.

Q: It was not on their regular circuit.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: No, it wasn't. When we asked for volunteers to come to Belfast to help out -- I was acting Consul General again -- and I needed help for a month, only two Foreign Service Officers, both women, volunteered. They enjoyed their two week TDY's in Belfast, but it was not on Embassy London's regular circuit, although the Consul General in London, Ed Kreuser, used to visit us and we had a few other visitors.

I think it should have been on the embassy's regular circuit. Northern Ireland was being governed from London, by Parliament, and the situation was literally explosive. There really were bombs going off, and there were police checks in stores and checkpoints on streets. The British army was rolling through the streets in armored cars or personnel carriers and patrolling on foot. The army did not bring in tanks, which would have looked really bad -- and would have torn up the streets too.

Q: But how about you? Did you have to be careful yourself because of that? What kind of security precautions did you take?

RAVEN-HAMILTON: One of the things I did was to link my garage and my house. I had a machine installed to raise and lower the garage door from my car. Then, we broke through the garage wall into the adjacent kitchen. I could go directly from the locked garage into the house, which was wired with an alarm system. We had blast protected windows, which were effective when there were bombs in the neighborhood.

Actually, Northern Ireland was one of the very few places that I had ever been, where no one was going after Americans. In fact, I felt fairly safe, even as a woman. My husband was working in Washington for more than half of my tour, so I was generally on my own. When I would leave dinners and drive home across the countryside late at night, I would be more worried about drunk drivers than about terrorism, but I knew there were bombs, sometimes, set along the roads, generally placed by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) or one of its affiliates. One could be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Q: And would people know that you were American from your car?

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Well, I drove a car I had bought second-hand in London, so I actually had diplomatic license plates rather than consular plates, but the British just let me keep them. The United States was the only country with a diplomatic presence in Northern Ireland -- our

consulate in Belfast. The French had had a consulate in Belfast, but after their consulate was bombed, the French closed it and had a local French citizen act as Honorary Consul.

But, as I said, I really felt safe, except from drunk drivers on a dark, maybe rainy, night, when I was driving back to Belfast. I drove all over the province, often alone. I reminded myself that I couldn't do this in some parts of America late at night. It is true that the Irish can talk for half the night, so I was often out late.

Q: I know that, and you do too.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Yes. That is the Irish still in me. Serving in Belfast was a very good experience. I had a wide range of responsibilities. On the political side, I usually covered the SDLP and the Alliance party, which is a nonsectarian party, a very moderate, middle of the road party, and also several smaller groups.

Q: How many Americans were there?

RAVEN-HAMILTON: There was a consul general, a deputy also responsible for consular operations (my position), and a junior consular officer. The Visa Section was run very effectively by experienced, really outstanding local employees. When I was there, the three American officers actually divided up the other duties of the consulate assisted by several of the local employees. In a small post, lines of responsibility are not set in stone. We just worked together.

The consulate handled the various exchange programs sponsored by the United States. In addition to the usual programs, such as leader grants for travel in the U.S., there were extensive programs in Northern Ireland sponsored by American groups to bring together Catholic and Protestant young people. These young people were invited to vacation in the United States in the summer as guests of American families. Catholic and Protestant students went together to their host families in the hope that young people who made friends "across the religious divide" would help bridge that divide at home. The American hosts were so generous, and the young people were often given amazing experiences.

After I had been there about a year, the consulate was asked to do more outreach to encourage cultural links with the U.S. The cultural side of the consulate's work became important, and we were asked to introduce people from Embassy London to cultural leaders in Northern Ireland. I arranged a dinner for a visitor from the cultural branch in Embassy London with a group of poets and writers to discuss ideas for cultural links. Ideas we heard aplenty, and at about 1:30 in the morning, I had to press our guests to go home, since my colleague from London and I had meetings in Derry/Londonderry the next morning. It was a great evening, really stimulating, and it did lead to greater interaction, including travel to the United States by Northern Ireland theatre groups, the Ulster orchestra and various other cultural institutions that were very good but not known in the United States.

Q: What about visa problems?

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Well, yes. We had the usual refusal of visas to people we believed were emigrating to the U.S. by using tourist visas or planning to work here for a while. We also had a number of visa applications from people who had or had had connections to various Catholic and Protestant paramilitary groups or groups believed linked to the paramilitaries. The United States took a dim view of some of these organizations. We had to look carefully at these applications and refer them to Washington as prescribed under U.S, law.

Other applicants had been convicted of violent acts or of supporting violence, so under American visa legislation, we had to reject their applications. We did not normally second guess the verdicts of foreign courts operating under recognized legal systems, but we still considered the applications very carefully and referred them to Washington. The applications are handled on a case by case basis. The consulate was sometimes under intense pressure to issue visas to some who were believed to be closely involved with paramilitary groups, and we would not issue the visas but referred the case to Washington.

The situation has changed a lot with the creation of the power sharing government in Northern Ireland, where people considered to have had paramilitary connections have now renounced violence and are leaders of the new government. I left before the power sharing government was created. I don't know how these visa applications are processed, except that the U.S. media sometimes reports on visits and has indicated that individuals, such as Gerry Adams, reportedly a leader of the Provisional IRA, had been issued a visa.

Q: Were our relations about equally good with both sides?

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Our official relations were with the government, which was the British government that had instituted direct rule from London in the face of the violence in Northern Ireland. There were even British troops in the streets. The British government had set up a Northern Ireland Office in Belfast, and we dealt with that and with security officials, who were mainly British. We also saw Northern Ireland political leaders who were not connected with the violence.

The Consul General and I divided covering the political parties, and the Vice Consul, who did the visa interviews, also met sometimes with political leaders outside the visa interviews. He also obtained political and economic information. The politicians in Northern Ireland at that time just didn't have any power; people used to joke that the politicians were mainly responsible for garbage collections. But there was a lot of jockeying for power. The Irish are very political.

Q: I was just wondering if you were received by Catholics as warmly as by Protestants or vice versa.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Yes. I got to know the leadership of the SDLP, and I became friends with several SDLP politicians and party officials and with John Cushnahan, head of the nonsectarian Alliance Party. I also used to see Gerry Adams, head of Sinn Fein, a Catholic party, which has been linked to the Irish Republican Army (IRA), in church a lot, but we studiously avoided each other.

I used to see people from the Ulster Unionist Party (Protestant) too. I had one special contact there, who would talk to me, unlike some of his colleagues who boycotted us because the U.S. had strongly supported the Anglo-Irish Agreement from its beginnings and the Unionists were strongly opposed to it. My friend was a bit on the outs for a while with his more rigid Unionist colleagues. There were a lot of businessmen behind the Unionist party, and the Consul General usually took the lead in following them, although the Vice Consul and I both had contacts among them.

We also occasionally saw people involved with small political parties on both sides, who represented groups in Northern Ireland that had eschewed violence.

My friends, the people with whom I spent my time, spanned the political spectrum, but tended to be moderates who had long supported the various peace movements. Some were journalists, professors, or political writers. They were Catholics and Protestants, more Protestant perhaps given the makeup of Belfast. Several of the Protestants, I discovered, had Irish, not British passports, and one of our closest Protestant friends has moved to the Republic. Many of my friends' children also moved there. The Irish resisted pigeonholing.

Q: Yes. How many consuls general did you have?

RAVEN-HAMILTON: I served with two consuls general in Belfast, and Ed Kreuser, Counselor for Consular Affairs at Embassy London, wrote the reviewing part of my performance evaluation. Ed was one the few in London particularly interested in what we were doing. He came to Northern Ireland several times.

Q: So really in essence a good part of the time you were it while you were there.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Well, part of the time. In the beginning, the consul general was on home leave. He was gone quite a while. Then he left Belfast, and there was a gap before the new consul general, Bob Myers, came.

Bob and I worked very closely together. He generally covered the business oriented part of the Unionist Party. I used to meet with the Presbyterian leadership at their Church House in Belfast; they played a major role in Northern Ireland. They elected their leaders, annually rotating between a conservative leader and a liberal. It made for interesting changes in policy. I used to bring American Presbyterians to meet with them. The conversation was quite different, depending on whether the Presbyterian leader that year was conservative or liberal. I also had good talks with Catholic clergy and lay leaders in Belfast and Derry, especially those actively working toward reconciliation.

A lot of people were trying to improve the situation in Northern Ireland. Bob and I met with human rights commissions, fair employment officials, and union leaders. I spent an afternoon with a remarkable man in Derry, who had been active with a paramilitary group but had decided to work for peace and was now working with at-risk people.

Equal housing was an issue. The British government decided it was responsible for housing, so it began clearing the worst slums and replacing those houses with houses that had indoor plumbing and indoor toilets. The quality of the new housing was very high because the government wanted to minimize repair of the housing stock. Better housing improved morale in all the communities. People in the conflict areas could now have front doors with large glass panels and take pride in their front gardens. The changes in Belfast have been tremendous.

Q: Yes.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: One of the interesting things about serving in Belfast was that I had to visit all the prisons, because we had to report on the conditions in the prisons.

Q: Oh yes, the human rights report.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Yes and other reports too. Conditions in the prisons were of great concern to many in American, who went over those reports word by word. I made very interesting visits to all of the prisons. I have been to the Maze and all of the different maximum security prisons for men and for women. I have been all over them. I never expected to be in so many prisons.

I rewrote the human rights report after big battles with the embassy. People resisted changing a word because, as they say, every word had been blessed. I insisted on rewriting it to throw out many words and start all over again to reflect the changes in Northern Ireland -- to reflect the reality of the place.

Q: London did not know that.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: I think people just wanted to get the Human Rights report written and out on time. They did not want to rock the boat. I did. I finally managed to do that and write an accurate human rights report that covered both progress made and progress still needed.

Q: Had anybody ever done that before you?

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Yes. The human rights reports were very carefully written. In some situations, like in Northern Ireland, every word would be examined and the slightest change would be noticed. So, when language had been accepted one year, there would be some reluctance to make changes the next year that might unleash a storm of controversy, unless there was good reason to do so. People preferred to make small changes that were needed, but keep most of the wording intact. So, the reports became very set, and the slightest change was noticed and created a problem.

Q: You didn't have any record of earlier reports anyway.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: I only remember seeing recent reports. One issue of concern to us was strip seating of women prisoners. I would go to the women's prison, to talk about conditions, especially strip searching. It had become a really explosive issue in a culture where many

married women were said to change into night clothes in the closet, not in front of their husbands. Modesty was very high, so it was traumatic for many of these women.

Q: Now would these be political prisoners?

RAVEN-HAMILTON: There were two kinds of prisoners. There were prisoners, who could be defined as political, but some of them had done very bad things, and so therefore they were criminal in a way. Women were sometimes carrying bombs and weapons. There were some dreadful stories of women carrying bombs in baby carriages with a baby in there too. So there could be paramilitary activity involved too.

Then, we had what they used to call the ODC's (the ordinary decent criminals) who were not involved in para military activities. They had committed ordinary crimes.

Q: Interesting.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Many Irish-Americans wanted to see what was happening in Northern Ireland, so we had a really active consulate especially once Bob Myers arrived.

One thing that surprised me was the number of mixed marriages in Northern Ireland. A mixed marriage was a Protestant-Catholic marriage.

Q: Since you were in one yourself.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Since I was in one myself. When I first arrived, I was invited to dinner by a group of couples. They had contacted me through an acquaintance. It turned out they were all Protestant ministers with Catholic wives. Perhaps five or six couples. They asked me if I would like to join their group. I said I didn't think I had better because I thought that would be a little bit too much -- too political for me to be doing.

Q: Although Michael would have fit the…

RAVEN-HAMILTON: It would have been fine had I not been at the American Consulate. Mike came later for a year and did a lot of work with both Catholics and Protestants. But I thought that was a little too political for me to do.

However, even in the roughest parts and most difficult conflict areas, where there were murders and intimidations, we might find a Catholic-Protestant marriage. Sometimes, the couple had difficulty finding areas where they could live, although there were many middle class mixed neighborhoods.

One time, we had the visit of the brother and sister-in-law of one of the paramilitary leaders, a really nasty piece of work, very violent. The couple were in a Catholic-Protestant marriage and decided it was too dangerous for them to remain in Northern Ireland. Bob Myers talked to various people, and various things happened and various steps were taken to protect this family.

Q: A thing you have to do on occasion. That is real diplomacy.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Yes, and a sort of responsibility not to just send them out and say we couldn't do anything for them. Bob pulled all kinds of strings and managed to do something for them. He was very good.

There were positive developments, such as the opening of "integrated" schools, i.e. nonsectarian, and the rewriting of the curriculum in the schools, especially the history curriculum. The study of History in Northern Ireland had been quite sectarian and reflected the religious divide. A one sided view of the past was helping to keep the communities divided and all this violence alive.

Q: Totally segregated schools.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Well, all the public (state) schools were basically Protestant. And they taught Protestant viewpoints.

Q: And so the Catholics didn't go, of course.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: No, Catholics hardly ever went to those schools. But the Catholics had their own schools, and the Protestants would hardly ever go there.

Q: All right, they just weren't public schools they were essentially church schools.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Well, the state schools were fairly, but not completely, sectarian and so that helped perpetuate some of these struggles. Students only knew other students as "the other." People lived in sectarian neighborhoods, so people of different faiths rarely met -- except, eventually young people could meet in downtown places where they shared an interest in music like reggae once the level of violence decreased.

That is why the integrated schools movement was an important development. Several of these schools had been opened by the time I arrived in Belfast. They drew students from both communities, and they were struggling along. One of their projects was to write a new nonsectarian history of Northern Ireland.

It was hard to write new history books that would help bridge the divide because there were wrongs on all sides. The Protestants were on the top, and there was a tremendous amount of anti-Catholic discrimination. It was very hard for Catholics to get jobs at the shipyards or in a lot of the other industries, and Protestants would not want to work in a Catholic establishment.

But things were changing slowly. The reconciliation community had an impact, and the integrated schools. People were traveling abroad. The British government, which governed Northern Ireland, put in Fair Employment and Equal Opportunity laws. They have also demolished slum areas, including the old war damaged areas, and built very nice housing in the conflict, rough areas. People all over have well-tended gardens, once the hallmark of a Protestant working class or a middle class neighborhood, with hanging plants and glass panels in the doors. We would say "gentrification."

Q: What is the actual proportion of the population which is either, roughly?

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Well I am not sure. It was roughly becoming 60-40 -- 60% Protestant and 40% Catholic, but the Catholic population was creeping up because a lot of Protestants were leaving. Many did not return after university outside Northern Ireland.

Change seems to have come rapidly since I left in late 1987. Some of the children of my Protestant friends moved to Dublin, which was then a booming and "cool" city. This made Dublin 'the place to go." Some of my older Protestant friends moved to the Republic too, as have some Catholic friends.

Movement across the island of Ireland has become much easier. In fact, at this time, the border between the two parts is rather hard to find. It used to be heavily guarded, but now the strongest indication of crossing from one side of the island of Ireland to the other is that signs are in miles or kilometers and prices are in Euros or sterling.

Q: And there are enough other kinds of people there by that time?

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Yes, even earlier than that. In addition to young people moving to Dublin from Belfast, with the free movement of people in the EU, many other Europeans found jobs in the Republic. They were scattered across the island during Ireland's "Celtic Tiger" period. I imagine many have gone back home with the decline in the Irish economy.

While many young people seemed to have decided Dublin was more fun for them, I enjoyed Belfast, which had its own wonderful theater, as well as visiting troupes from Dublin and elsewhere. There were excellent concerts -- a lot was going on in Belfast.

Jeff was in Belfast for two summers working at the Consulate. He used to go to the city center at night with a Protestant friend. As violence decreased in the city, the whole center of Belfast was open to everyone. Young people like them would go to night clubs. There was a big reggae crowd there, for example.

Q: We should make a point that Jeff is your son.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Yes. Jeff is my younger son, and he was finishing architecture school. He did his senior project on Belfast, using urban development and architecture to bring communities together. He has done a lot of work in this area since Belfast. He worked in the South Bronx and the Middle East and various places. He loved Belfast. I really enjoyed it immensely myself.

My husband, Michael Hamilton, an Episcopal priest, would often work in the conflict areas with inter-religious groups. He worked, especially, with a Catholic priest from a church on the Falls Road, a militant Catholic area, and a Methodist minister from another militant area. The Catholic and Protestant had made a practice of going to call on the parents of people killed in the sectarian violence on both sides. One of the Protestant families from East Belfast, whose son was involved

and had been killed, gave the Catholic priest a crucifixion painting his son had done. The priest put the crucifixion painting on the altar of his church on the Falls Road. A number of people were surprised to say the least, but the painting stayed on the altar. That is where Gerry Adams and I went to go to church.

These two clergymen were among those working hard to bring about a rapprochement between the communities. The Presbyterians had a wonderful center for reconciliation on the north coast of Northern Ireland -- Corrymeela. It was a center which would bring people from the different communities together, such as couples who had lost children or people who had been living in terribly unnerving circumstances, maybe had even been burned out of their houses. They put Protestants and Catholics together. They used to have a mixed group help make dinner and wash the dishes. The center did not put in a dishwasher, so everyone would have to work together. However, even if people became friends at the center and were able to have deep discussions that even opened old wounds, it was very difficult for the families to meet after they left this protected area. That was unfortunate.

Q: Nice but not totally satisfactory.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: Well, it actually did help bring down barriers and sometimes the families could communicate by phone when they returned home. Gradually as things opened up, it would have been easier to find a neutral place to get together.

In addition, scores of children went to the U.S. each summer in programs to live with American families -- a Catholic and a Protestant child to each family. These were children from deprived communities often experiencing violence and in neighborhoods where the vision of the world was narrow. When couples married, they often lived very near their parents and grandparents. So this was an amazing experience for these children.

Then charter flights came to Belfast, and people from Northern Ireland could afford charter flights to warm sunny lands. People started traveling and discovered the big world beyond their tightly woven communities. They started meeting new people on these trips, just as the children in exchange programs were doing. Perhaps, this was a slow change of heart or a broadening of minds rather than something that bore fruit right away. I mean that this was diplomacy, patiently doing things, in the expectation that eventually it would work out.

The decline of traditional industries in Northern Ireland had helped stoke sectarian tension. There seemed to be a feeling in some quarters that any kind of progress in one part of the population had to lead to loss in the other part. There was a lot of unrest and sometimes riots in blue collar areas as people who were once almost assured of good jobs faced competition from the other community. The competition was exacerbated by the decline of traditional industries, such as the linen and rope industries. The shipbuilding industry was once famous and the source of many jobs, particularly for the Protestant community. The Titanic and other well-known ships were built in Belfast, but that industry has really closed down, despite government efforts to bring contracts to the shipyards.

Q: Right, very famous, those shipyards. But there is nothing happening there now.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: The Germans bombed them pretty badly. Then, some shipbuilding resumed for a while because of increase in demand for vessels. But those kinds of jobs, like factory jobs, have gone.

In recent years, many jobs demanded workers with a high level of technology. Some of these formerly prosperous blue collar workers found it very difficult to make that kind of adjustment. They are reasonably well educated for the kind of work they have always done, but they were hands-on workers used to factory work which gave them their special identity. You see this situation in a lot of countries, including the U.S., with the technological revolution.

More Catholics were going to universities. Many Protestants went to university too, but

a lot went to Scotland. As a result, the universities in Northern Ireland became over 50% Catholic. Students who don't go on to higher education risk being left behind because so many of the old skilled labor jobs are gone. Now Northern Ireland seems to be overrun with lawyers.

Do you want to stop now?

Q: No, how about you?

RAVEN-HAMILTON: I am all right.

Q: Let's keep going. At least for a while. We have been doing it for an hour and 45 minutes. How about 15 minutes more anyway?

RAVEN-HAMILTON: When I arrived in Northern Ireland, I found both communities were not particularly open to enhancing the position of women. I was acting Consul General, and our secretary received a phone call about celebrations for the 350th anniversary of the Port of Belfast. There would be a big black tie dinner to which they wanted to invite the Consul General. When told that the Acting Consul General was a woman, the reaction was that at least one hundred men would be attending. Our secretary told me that she thought I would not really want to attend, but I said I thought that ratio was fine. They did send me an invitation and found another woman, who headed the British Airways operation and who should have been invited anyway. They gave us corsages and were very welcoming.

It was an important event at which the new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Tom King (later Defense Minister), made his maiden speech. The waiters started passing around port and cigars. I only took the port. A waitress asked us if we wanted to leave and "powder our noses." Although we weren't sitting together, we both decided independently we were not going out the door, because we might never be allowed back. I think I was the first woman to be Acting Consul General. There have been several women Consuls General now.

Q: Very good.

RAVEN-HAMILTON: I made some good friends whom I still see. We go to Belfast every year or two. My friends and I used to go to the theater and to concerts, and I also explored Northern Ireland with the aid of material from the Tourism Office. One couple, a newspaper columnist, and his wife and I used to go for long drives almost every weekend. They were delighted to do this, because for so many years they had not been able to travel freely in Northern Ireland because it had been too dangerous. We had great fun despite picnics in the rain with the windshield wipers going, or sometimes sitting outside with an umbrella.

My other son, Rob, who lives in California, came to visit, and as we were getting ready to go for a picnic, he said, "It is raining; we better wait." Everybody laughed. It was always raining sometime during the day. We traveled all over with him, including to Donegal, which is in the Republic of Ireland and is where my family is believed to have lived. Soon after his visit, I left Belfast and went back to Washington.

WILLIAM H.G. FITZGERALD
Ambassador
Ireland (1992-1993)

Ambassador FitzGerald was born in Massachusetts of a US Navy family. He graduated from the Naval academy in 1933 and served briefly in the US Navy before resigning to study law at Harvard University. He rejoined the Navy in World War II, after which he entered private business concerned with the metallurgy and naval equipment. He worked with the US International Cooperation Administration (ICA) from 1957 to 1960 and with the Atlantic Council of the United States from 1976 to 1994. He was appointed Ambassador to Ireland in 1992 and served there until 1993. Ambassador FitzGerald was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1994.

Q: *You went out to Ireland from '92 to '93. As you got ready to go out, obviously you read up on it and went to the State Department and all that. Could you talk a little about the preparation for going out to be an ambassador?*

FITZGERALD: That is a subject in which I am most interested. I've told Steve Low how much I appreciated, enjoyed and valued the indoctrination training at the FSI.

Q: *He was head of the FSI at the time.*

FITZGERALD: Yes. Also I told a friend of mine, who was in charge of the indoctrination, Ambassador Brandon Grove, that the staff did a splendid job. I said I would recommend a perhaps more intensive effort on the part of non-career people. There are a number of people (I know them, and you do, too), political appointees, who thought that whatever job they were appointed to they could do and were not particularly interested in the training or preparation. I recommended to Brandon and also to Steve Low, "to set up a training program recognizing that over a period of time, there'll be at least 25, maybe up to 50, percent of the ambassadorial

appointments that are political. This training must prepare these people properly as it may not be easy for non-career people to become diplomats. The Department cannot devote enough time in preparing these people. If this program required financial support, I'd be willing to help."

Q: *For the record, it's interesting to note that the real impetus behind developing this course, in the beginning, was Shirley Temple Black, who started this. Could you describe a little about some of the areas covered in this course?*

FITZGERALD: The program emphasized the need to know the key people in the government to which they are to be accredited, particularly the people with whom they had to do business, to know them thoroughly as the ambassador has a message to bring to that country from the United States. I felt that I should develop this rapport immediately as soon as I arrived in Ireland. My first objectives were the minister of foreign affairs and the ministers of industry and finance. Hopefully, in the embassies you have good staff who have experience and knowledge of the important members of the host government. The ambassador is the leader of the team and representative of our president and must develop a personal relationship, if possible, with the heads of the government, and through that personal relationship, transmit his interpretation of United States policy so that it is well understood by the leaders of that host government.

Q: *When you went out to Ireland, were there any particular issues on your plate? What were the main concerns the State Department had with our relations with Ireland when you went there?*

FITZGERALD: Well, number one, we looked on the problem of unemployment. Basically, my mission was to develop a US industry investment interest in Ireland. I organized a program (through our Department of Commerce, which has about 67 offices across the United States whose sole purpose is to develop domestic and international business). I attempted to energize those offices, helping them to recognize that there is a universe of corporations in the United States, whose sales range from 50 million dollars to perhaps 100 million dollars a year, which have never exported. Good product, well managed, well financed, never exported. My argument was, "Here is an opportunity in Ireland." With the fall of the Berlin Wall, hordes of businessmen, lawyers, US Government officials charging into Eastern Europe and Russia where there are no laws yet and it's going to take years before the laws are established and are tested in the courts for repatriation of capital, protection of investment, private property, unfair labor laws, and many other unforeseen problems. Language barriers exist in all of the Eastern European and Slavic nations. I said, "Here we have Ireland, where the people speak the same language and operate under the same English common laws tested over the generations in the courts. We have about 45 millions of Irish-Americans in our country, a strong bridge. Don't look at Ireland from the standpoint of three and a half million population. That's not your market. Ireland is a member of the European Community, and you can use Ireland as a conduit into the largest consumers' market in the world: 370-plus million people." That was the message.

And I pushed it. As a matter of fact, we now have over 350 US corporations now operating in Ireland, selling to all markets outside of the United States. Being a banker by trade, I went to the banks and related some personal experiences. "I've talked to a number of young people graduating from the universities, and I asked them what they plan to do after graduation." One said, 'Well, I think I'm going to get a job in government.' Another one would say, 'Well, I think

I'm going to pursue the law.' A third would say, 'Well, I think I'm going into accounting.'" None of those jobs would create employment. I would reply, "Well, why aren't you going out and starting a business?"

"Well, I can't get any money. Nobody'll give us the money to start a new business."

I then went to the banks, to the Allied Irish Banks, the Ulster Bank, the Bank of Ireland, even the Chase Bank representative in Dublin and repeated the story -- "Young college graduates tell me they can't get any money."

The frequent banker's response was, "Well, nobody comes in with a good idea for us to finance."

My reply was, "I'm a banker. Now what do you mean by a good idea? You'll loan somebody $100,000 providing he will secure it with some property of equal value, or compensatory deposits of up to 20 or 25 percent? That isn't loaning money. That's not helping business. What you should be doing is setting up a small department in your bank for venture capital. Look what we do in America. I've been in a venture capital business in Silicon Valley -- the center of venture capitalists where seed money goes to somebody who has an idea. You help them organize the business. And then, when you see the idea is successful, you help the person or persons with public financing."

Unfortunately, in Ireland, they have a phobia of being a failure for if you go bankrupt in Ireland, historically, you'd never be able to borrow more money.

You know what I did?

Q: *What?*

FITZGERALD: I saw an article in Forbes magazine about people who had gone bankrupt in the United States and who had become millionaires. I made copies of the article and gave it to the Irish government officials in the Ministries of Commerce, Industry, and Finance.

I impressed on the Irish government as to what happened in the ''80s in the United States. We provided more new jobs than all of Europe put together, about 15 million jobs. Where did they come from? Eighty to 85 percent came from small business. Small business. That should be your thrust here in Ireland. With US capital coming in, working with the Irish experts developing the niches in the European market, and American business know-how you've got to be successful." As a result, I've learned from Dermot Gallagher, the Irish Ambassador to the US, that Prime Minister Reynolds announced that the government was setting up an entrepreneurial fund in Ireland to help people start small businesses. Amen.

Q: *How did you find Irish trade with the United States? This was a period when we were making, as we have at other times, complaints that there were unfair trading practices. How did you find it?*

FITZGERALD: The problem with Ireland was mostly with agricultural products, which they export to the United States. They're operating, of course, as you know, in the European Community, where they receive very heavy subsidies. They're part of the fusion group, which is Greece, Portugal, Spain, and Ireland. Those four nations are considered developing countries under the European Community mantra, which provides them with heavy subsidies. Presently, Ireland receives more subsidy than all of the others.

Q: *Was this something that we could deal with, while you were there? These subsidies, did this make a difference in trade?*

FITZGERALD: We couldn't touch any of the subsidies going to the Irish government. Those were coming from the European Community. And so that was helpful, very helpful, to the Irish. But, the Irish were very afraid that we were going to penalize them when we had this European Community brouhaha with the GATT. We threatened to cut off the agricultural products, casein which they produced from milk among other dairy products, which were important to them, but certainly not important to the United States.

I think that the thrust is through US investments in Ireland and through developing small business which is going to impact on the unemployment situation.

I never was involved in the North-South Ireland situation, excepting as an amicus curiae (friend in court). I visited Northern Ireland and had the good opportunity of convening the four leaders of the four political parties in one room. Of course, I did this all with the knowledge of London, because relations with Northern Ireland is the US Embassy in London's responsibility. I visited Belfast because I wanted to at least know the feelings of these Northern Ireland leaders. They all wanted peace but the question was how to get to that point. I suggested that perhaps a little give on either side might help. I knew very well the people who were negotiating, for the Republic of Ireland, and how anxious they are to settle this controversy which has bedeviled both nations for over 50 years.

I hope, now, that they will have some kind of a rapprochement, a working agreement, over a period of time. Remember, since 1922, the Ulster government has been repressing the Catholics. Now that they see the shoe can be on the other foot, they're scared to death that the Irish Catholics will just give the same to them. The most important fact is that the issue is no longer religious, but economic. The United Kingdom has been pouring billions of dollars into Ulster for years. How long this government can continue, I cannot forecast but the issue is more critical as time passes.

After I met with the heads of these four parties, in one room in Belfast, I went over and had luncheon the next day with Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who has total responsibility for the negotiations. I advised him of my meeting and the different opinions received. My question to Sir Patrick was, "How long can Westminster continue to support these one and a half million people at such extraordinary levels?" Of course, I was briefed on all U.K.-Ulster relations before my trip to Belfast. Great Britain is pouring in about six billion dollars a year into Ulster containing one and a half million people. Out of that six

billion, they estimate about two billion is for military occupation. One of the strong points in any negotiation is that the U.K. holds the purse strings and could force a settlement if necessary.

My hope is that ultimately it will be one island. This geographic fiction which was created in that northeast corner of Ireland, Ulster, was mostly for wartime security to begin with and also to appease the Protestant population. Great Britain gave Dominion status to Ireland, and this was the quid pro quo. At the time Great Britain's policy was, "We'll keep our boys up there in Ulster. We'll pour the money in and build up industry there, and we will have a Protestant stronghold. Of course, they were always remembering, as you recall, World War I, the neutrality of Ireland, the opposition against England. Ulster was a foothold in Ireland, where the U.K. could have ports, including Londonderry, for shipping and commerce, and maybe for security.

Q: *Basically, it was denying. Because, during World War I, the Germans made pretty good inroads into the Irish.*

FITZGERALD: Yes, they did.

Q: *You talked about the 45 million Irish-Americans. How did you find the Irish politics played, as far as your job was concerned?*

FITZGERALD: That is amusing. All my forbears are Irish, and I'm from a part of the Desmond Clan. Desmond, in Gaelic, means South Munster, and South Munster is Limerick area Kerry and Cork. When I first arrived, I was not an unknown quantity, and I became identified pretty quickly, so I was able to talk with Irish government officials not as a stranger.

Over the years, there's been a strong anti-American bias in the press. The press has been controlled completely by the English up until recently, when Tony O'Reilly is attempting to break in and control some of the Irish press. However, the British control the Irish Times, the Irish Independent with British money. As a matter of fact, the first Irish managing editor ever to be appointed was on the Irish Times when I was on post.

Q: *Good God.*

FITZGERALD: Think of that. The first Irish managing editor ever to be appointed to a newspaper in Ireland.

The Irish, at times, are petulant, they're emotional. They feel that the United States owes them something for sending over from Ireland about 45 million people. It's an interesting love-hate relationship and we're constantly trying to combat this feeling.

For instance, when Mrs. Robinson, the Irish president, made a great to-do about her concern about Somalia, the government arranged for her to go over to Somalia, with all kinds of photo opportunities such as reaching over and speaking to a starving Somali child, and how wonderful it was that she recognized the importance of Somalia and so on. Well, the United States had been pouring millions of tons of food into Somalia for two years before Mrs. Robinson went to Somalia. I reminded the Irish government of all the aid we were giving, and providing Marines

as well to protect the shipments of food to the country. Ireland did not send any food and little else and scarcely mentioned the US aid.

There came the time when the United States said, we can't do it all and the European Community support is needed.

Q: *This was the Somali operation.*

FITZGERALD: I went to the Irish minister of foreign affairs, spoke to him about aid to Somalia, pointing out that we had given hundreds of millions, and wanted to know what the Irish were going to do about it. His reply was, "Well, I will have to refer this to the treasury." Bertie O'Hearn was Irish finance minister at that time. When the word came back, the minister of foreign affairs didn't call me, but his deputy did, and said, "Mr. FitzGerald, as you know, we've done a lot for Somalia. We've allowed transport of American food going through Shannon Airport without charging any commercial airport fees."

To this statement I said, "Yes, of course, and you do realize that when all these Americans are pouring through there, they're spending thousands and thousands of dollars shopping in Limerick and in Shannon."

There was silence. And then he said, "Well, we've finally decided. As you know, we're very tight in money now. We'll contribute $250,000.

I didn't say a word and waited a bit, then I said, "$250,000?"

He said, "Yes."

And I said, "Thank you very much. I'll notify President Bush immediately as to your generosity."

The Irish see us over here, rich, and they consider us also arrogant. As I said, it's this love-hate relationship, where they feel that they want to be part of our prosperity, and yet they want to be independent.

Q: *It reminds me a little of the peasants dealing with their rich landlord, always trying to put something over, get something. It's that mentality, in some ways. How did you find dealing with the government? Albert Reynolds was the prime minister at that time?*

FITZGERALD: Oh, yes, I got along very well with him. He's, I thought, a very adept politician. He was a successful businessman, to begin with, before he came into government. He managed to rise in the Fianna Fail Party, over a period of time, and then became prime minister and was elected and reelected.

In the last election, two years ago, the Labor Party made unusually strong inroads in the Dail parliament. In past years, they generally controlled ten to 12 seats, and now they're up to 32 seats. As a result, of the opposing parties, Fianna Fail had 66 seats, Fine Gael had 43, and the Labor Party obtaining 32 seats. Reynolds needed the Labor Party as the swing vote.

Dick Spring, who is a very ambitious young man and who is the leader of the Labor Party, went to Albert Reynolds to discuss control of the government. In my opinion, I think Albert Reynolds gave away the store in order to make this coalition with the Labor Party. He allowed Dick Spring to do something which never had happened before, to become deputy prime minister, and minister of foreign affairs!

He forced out David Andrews, who was a first-class minister of foreign affairs with whom I became very friendly, into another cabinet job, which was fisheries and defense. Reynolds asked Andrews to take that job over. Andrews told me, "Well, this is a job where I'm going to become minister of fish and chips." Fish and chips. A wonderful man. You've not heard the last of him in Ireland.

But Reynolds gave away too much authority, in my opinion, and Dick Spring is very ambitious and wants to become Prime Minister. He has now uprooted the government. He has caused Reynolds to resign -- and Bertie O'Hearn has come in as head of the Fianna Fail Party. I'm sure that O'Hearn is going to have to work out another coalition arrangement with Dick Spring. Dick Spring is the dog in the manger, and he's not good for that government.

Q: *The Irish are going through a big hoorah about the problem of abortion. That is, of course, a major issue in the United States. Did one keep as low a profile as one could on this controversy?*

FITZGERALD: The Catholic Church is very strong in Ireland, but losing strength because of this abortion issue, and the divorce situation as well. It's a difficult problem but Reynolds, of course, is anti-abortion and anti-divorce. Dick Spring is not and wants to have open abortion, to have divorce allowed. I don't know what's going to happen but I think there's going to have to be some kind of an accommodation between the two men.

Q: *I'm talking about the time you were there. Was this the sort of thing where you, as the ambassador, would just keep out of the line of fire?*

FITZGERALD: We couldn't get involved in the issues of abortion or divorce. That is a no-no.

Q: *Did you have to sit on your staff to keep them from getting involved?*

FITZGERALD: That was the word I passed down, and I, being Roman Catholic and a Knight of Malta, was most careful to avoid such discussions.

Q: *How did you find the staff of the embassy?*

FITZGERALD: First class. I was very pleased. However, when I arrived in Dublin, all I had was a deputy chief of mission. The political affairs officer had been relieved, and had departed. The administrative officer, the consular officer, and the economics officer all had departed from Dublin. I was shorthanded for about one month but as the relieving officers arrived, one by one, I was able to fill in the holes in the operation.

Q: *Good God.*

FITZGERALD: I also had a USIA man on the staff. As I understood it, there's always a turnover, about one-third every year, but this time the turnover was about three-quarters of the key officers. It was one of those administrative shortfalls which occur.

Q: *Aberrations that happen.*

How about emigration?

FITZGERALD: Oh, God, that was a sore spot. My predecessors, several before me, had allowed the emigration eligibility law to be interpreted very liberally. There were people traveling to the United States -- students and Irish citizens going over on tourist visas -- who never came back. We got to the point where people, knowing damn well they weren't coming back, were getting members of the Parliament, of the Dail, to guarantee their return to Ireland. When I arrived in Dublin, there was heavy pressure on our consular people who knew that these Irish citizens were not going to come back to Ireland and were very reluctant to issue visas.

There was a great brouhaha, with the newspapers and Dail members stating that the minister of foreign affairs is going to straighten this thing out with the ambassador and so on and so forth.

I promptly arranged to meet with David Andrews, the minister of foreign affairs, and looking over the record, I said, "Do you realize that about 20% of the people who are going to the US on tourist visas or student visas do not return? We are operating under an illegal situation, where your members of the Dail are guaranteeing the return of some of these students and tourists. Where in the world, on emigration, can a third party guarantee a second party, both of them non-American nationals? It doesn't work, and I'm going to stop it right now. There are no longer going to be any guarantees as they are not necessary. Your members of the Dail are jeopardizing their careers, their reputations, by guaranteeing questionable people going to the United States. All we're doing is creating a problem with all kinds of difficulties. No more guarantees. We don't accept a guarantee from anybody. Period."

Inside of about two weeks, after the usual rumblings and grumblings of "My Uncle Pat has to get to America," and that sort of thing, it stopped.

Q: *Good for you. I speak as an old consular officer, knowing the problems. Did Senator Edward Kennedy loom rather large in whatever you were doing, because of his Irish connection and all that?*

FITZGERALD: I've known Teddy Kennedy since he was literally in diapers, and I've known the whole family for 55 years and, as a matter of fact, I was one of Kathleen's many admirers when she was in Washington during the war. She was a wonderful girl. And, of course, I've known Joe, Jr., Jack and Bobby and all the girls, but Jean I didn't know at all well.

Q: *She's the present ambassador to Ireland.*

FITZGERALD: She's there now. I knew her husband, Steve Smith, who was in the brokerage business in New York for some years.

But Teddy has had quite an interest in the IRA and what they were doing, and he's been trying to help.

I think the classic example just happened last year, with Ethel Kennedy's daughter, Courtney, who married this terrorist, Hill, who was convicted of killing a British policeman. Teddy Kennedy went over to Belfast as senator of the United States; Jean Kennedy went up to Belfast as US ambassador to Ireland; Joe Kennedy went over as congressman from Cambridge, Massachusetts; and I don't know how many other members of the Kennedy family appeared in Belfast as character witnesses for this man Hill. The British government went ballistic on this event, and our embassy in London as well. That, to me, was one of the most outrageous violations of protocol and diplomacy that you could think of. Yet they did it, and they got this man out. He's on probation now, but I am not certain of his status.

Q: *Is there anything else that we should cover on this time in Ireland? Any other issue? We've covered quite a bit.*

FITZGERALD: Well, I can say that I worked that country from north to south, east to west. Everywhere, I was there, like Kilroy. I enjoyed it tremendously.

One of the parting shots, I guess for me amusing. I was having luncheon with Dick Spring, who had become the new minister of foreign affairs. And I said, "Dick, you know, I'm one of your constituents. I am a Kerry Man."

He said, "You are?"

I said, "Yes."

He represented North Kerry.

And I said, "Good, God, yes. All you have to do is look in the books, Dick. Our family properties covered from Listowel up to the Shannon." His district. Let's say he had part of that area. Listowel to the Shannon.

And he said, "Oh, yes, yes, oh, I know..."

And I said, "However, you know, quite a number of us, quite a number of the FitzGeralds emigrated."

And he said, "Where did they emigrate to, America?"

And I said, "No, County Cork."

We were friends from there on.

Q: *Well, Mr. Ambassador, I want to thank you very much. This has been both very useful and enjoyable. Thank you.*

ANN B. SIDES
Chief Consular Officer
Dublin (1993-1996)

Ms. Sides was born in Massachusetts and raised in Connecticut and Florida. She was educated at Broward (FL). Junior College and the University of Florida. Joining the Foreign Service in 1988, Ms. Sides specialized in Consular work, serving abroad in Niamey, Oran, Dakar, Belgrade (twice), Dublin, and Athens. In Belgrade and Athens Ms. Sides was Consul General. She also served two tours at the Department of State in Washington. Ms. Sides was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2010.

Q: OK, today is 1 December 2010. This is another interview with Ann Sides. Ann, when we had left you, you were getting out of the garden spot of Zagreb, and you were off to a rather difficult duty in Dublin. This was what, '96?

SIDES: This would be 1993. What had happened was that my assignment to Belgrade was curtailed in June of '92 when our relations with the old Yugoslavia were reduced. I was sent to Zagreb as a temporary assignment, but it ended up lasting a year and a half. It was probably the most tumultuous year and a half in my life. So imagine my delight when I got my first bid, which was Dublin.

Q: You were there from when to when?

SIDES: I was there from 1993 to 1996.

Q: OK, before we get to where we are up to, let's talk about what were the state of relations-- I hate to say it; we did this with every country-- between Ireland, Southern Ireland and the United States.

SIDES: Our relationship with the Irish state goes back to its independence. We were one of the first countries to recognize the Irish Republic, the Irish state as opposed to Northern Ireland, which belongs to the United Kingdom. What surprised me about Ireland was that although we did have a good working relationship with Ireland, our interests and theirs were far from identical. I also found that there was a good deal of anti- Americanism among the Irish as people. It seemed to me perhaps more so than in the early 70's, when I lived in Ireland as a private citizen and worked there as a not-very-successful free lance correspondent. When I arrived in Dublin in September of '93, frankly I was expecting a pretty pleasant time. I was quite delighted to go back to the city I lived in as a younger woman and where my father was born. I saw it as a reward for the very difficult circumstances I was in while in Zagreb. My assignment was to be

chief of the visa unit. Little did I know that I had stepped into the biggest cow pie in Western Europe. I don't want to exaggerate because there were awful things going on elsewhere, but it turned out to be much more difficult than I anticipated. It had a lot to do with visas. The ambassador, Jean Kennedy Smith, was a very difficult person to work for.

Q: Ok, in the first place, you were in Dublin from when to when?

SIDES: I arrived in September of 1993 and departed in August of 1996.

Q: When had Jean Kennedy Smith been nominated? When did she go to Ireland?

SIDES: As I recall, she took office in the early summer of 1993. So she had already been there for several months before I arrived. I was surprised to find myself at a really demoralized embassy.

Q: She was a sister…

SIDES: She was a sister of the late President Kennedy and the late Senator Robert Kennedy, and the very much alive Senator Edward Kennedy. Of course she was the daughter of the former ambassador to Great Britain, Joseph Kennedy.

Q: All right, well, let's talk about her. In the first place what had you heard about her before you went there?

SIDES: You know, I was completely absorbed by my work in Zagreb and I didn't pay much attention to what went on at other posts. However, I asked around, and had been cautioned that it was going to be difficult working with her; that she was a political appointee, that she had never been in charge of anything or anybody before other than her charitable work and her household staff, and wasn't good with handling people. I heard also that she appeared to be channeling Senator Kennedy and his views on what role the U.S. should play in the Irish peace process, which were not necessarily consistent with long-standing U.S. policy. So I was somewhat prepared. Political ambassadors come along in one's career. I figured that the President sent her for a reason, and I was pretty confident that I could work with whomever I was assigned to work for. I knew Ireland very well as a country, having lived there, and my family coming from there and so forth. I thought I had a lot to offer the post and I was a pretty good visa officer. I was kind of glad not to have the responsibility for the entire consular section, just doing visa work for awhile. I was still very burned out from my experience in Zagreb. We arrived quite happily in Dublin to find it looked pretty much as we had left it in 1973. However, we lived in much more comfortable circumstances than we had 20 years before, as we discovered when we were delivered to our embassy-assigned town house. It was way better than the bed-sitter we lived in during the 70's. So for me, it started out rather well. Jim Callahan was the consul general. Jim and his wife invited Randy and me to dinner. He was an experienced officer, very professional, but he seemed anxious about the ambassador and felt that she had an agenda that she wanted to fulfill very quickly, and which would not be possible for us to do, involving the extension of the visa waiver to the Irish, the granting of a visa to Gerry Adams, and somehow finding a way to grant immigrant visas to a large number of Irish people who were living and working illegally in

the United States. All of these were very popular measures with the Irish, and must surely have been key objectives of the Irish government in terms of their relationship with us. It appeared to me from what Jim said that she saw no difference between the interests of Ireland and the interests of the United States. I don't recall what Dennis Sandberg, the DCM, told me when I reported for duty, but I saw immediately that he was in a very difficult situation. Many of the people at the post despised Dennis and thought of him as Mrs. Smith's toady. He did tell me that she was distrustful of the Foreign Service, so he was trying to create an atmosphere of confidence between him and Mrs. Smith. He gave me the impression that if I ran into difficulties with the ambassador over visa matters, I couldn't count on him to run interference, as DCM's normally do. It didn't take me long to realize I was in for a rough ride.

Q: Did you have a meeting with Ambassador Smith?

SIDES: No, I don't think she met with the new people. I may have been introduced to her briefly. I don't recall ever having any substantive conversation with Mrs. Smith about anything. My impressions of her were from meetings I attended and what she would say and do, and also on things other people said about her who were in a position to know. I learned very quickly to stay away from her for very good reasons, because she had all sorts of ideas about things she wanted done and she would kind of ambush you in the corridor and assign you to go out and have a thousand Christmas cards printed promoting some charity or something like that. Many of the things she wanted to do couldn't reasonably be done under the State Department's regulations.

Q: What was your visa section like?

SIDES: At the time, we had a relatively large visa section because we were also doing lots of immigrant visas. Around the time I arrived, a new immigrant visa program went into effect which had been created uniquely for the Irish. It certainly demonstrated their political influence in the United States! The Irish had gained had gained the affections of a congressman called Bruce Morrison. He was neither Irish nor Catholic, but he wanted to do something nice for the Irish, I guess. He created something called the Morrison Visa, which was a lottery-based immigrant visa, only it was a lottery one couldn't lose. I recall that something like 25,000 immigrant visas annually were set aside for the Irish and nobody else. The take-up rate by those initially selected was much lower than the total number of Morrison immigrant visas available, so the Visa Office just kept drawing names until everybody who entered the lottery "won." All you had to do was apply for one, and then come in to the embassy and fulfill the normal visa requirements, and you got it. There was a generous waiver policy for those who'd been in the USA illegally. To get all these visas issued, we had a number of contract employees working for us as well as the regular immigrant and nonimmigrant visa staff. We also had a rather busy American Citizen Services section, for which I sometimes performed services on a backup basis. We had spacious offices across from the Chancery in a bank building. It was well suited to its purpose because it had teller windows. As I recall, we had six officers and probably 25-30 FSNs. The section greatly reduced in size when the immigration laws changed and the Morrison visa program ended. I was chief of the visa section, both immigrant and non immigrant, so it was quite a busy place in 1993.

Q: Well where was Congressman Morrison from?

SIDES: As I recall, he was from New Haven, Connecticut. I daresay he had a lot of Irish constituents. But it was an extraordinary thing to do for them. Ireland had really been in a stagnant state economically in the 70's and 80's. Lots of Irish people had gotten visitor visas and had gone to work in the United States illegally. Because of that, we were pretty careful who we issued visas to. There thousands of them in America, and the Morrison visa was supposed to legalize them. It was thinly-disguised amnesty, available only to Irish illegals and not others. The Irish had no shame about immigrating illegally. They used to say things to me like, "We built the United States. We created it. Why can't we stay?" Although I was an Irish-American, I was embarrassed by the degree to which the Irish community in the U.S. facilitated illegal immigration. The fact that the Irish are white and blue-eyed surely had something to do with getting the Morrison visa program past Congress. Can you imagine what would have happened if Morrison had tried to gain support for a similar program aimed at Mexicans or Haitians?

Q: You mentioned sort of the not overly friendly feelings towards the Irish to the United States. Describe that.

SIDES: Forget the leprechaun and shamrock stuff. The Irish are in many ways typical Western Europeans, except they don't belong to NATO. The Irish had a long standing supportive relationship with the Palestinians, and they saw the Palestinian situation as analogous to their own, a little helpless country occupied and oppressed by a powerful one. So they tended to buy in to the pan-Arab interpretation of world events and the U.S. role. The strongest factor likely was our long-standing alliance with Britain, which was engaged in Northern Ireland in a struggle to suppress the IRA. I'm not saying the Irish government supported the IRA, or that most Irish people did. But reunification of Ireland was a principal objective of the Irish government, and Irish people tended to have a reflexive dislike and suspicion of Britain. There were historical reasons for that, well-founded ones. The U.S. generally supported Britain, although we deplored some of the human rights abuses in Northern Ireland. The anti-Americanism among the Irish was about politics; it was never personal, in the sense of being directed toward individual Americans. Most Irish people had relatives in America.

Q: While you were there what were some of the big developments that were related to what you were doing? How about the Northern Ireland peace process? What was going on?

SIDES: The Northern Ireland peace process had begun to unfold over a period of years starting with the civil rights movement in the late 60's. But there had been a long period of really ugly conflict, a three way struggle between the Loyalists, who were the Protestants, the Nationalists who were the Catholics, and the British in Northern Ireland. Some of this had spilled over into the south of Ireland. People in the south of Ireland were, by 1993, not very sympathetic to the Nationalists in the north. Many of the combatants on both the Nationalist and the Loyalist sides had gotten into kidnapping, hijacking, drug dealing and other things made their causes look a little less than pure. Most of the IRA's material support came from the USA, where the second-generation Irish were living in the sentimental past and oblivious to the present reality.

Q: There was a strong Marxist element too.

SIDES: There were two IRAs. There was the Official IRA, which was Marxist, and then there was the Provisional IRA, which was Catholic nationalist in orientation. There had been a lot of attempts at a negotiated resolution, and some sporadic cease fires. Every time peace seemed about to break out, the conflict would be reignited. Many of the leaders of the hostile factions were making a lot of money out of it. The Irish Government was looking for a way out, a way to wind down the conflict without being seen as capitulating to Britain. The Brits also wanted out of Ireland, but didn't know how to do it without being seen as selling out the Loyalists, who were tied into the Conservative Party in Britain. At the time when I was there, the Irish Government was trying draw the Nationalists, the IRA, more deeply into the peace process and put in place a disarmament process. The Brits were working on the Loyalists to disarm. It was a very complex process, with many setbacks and disappointments, but slowly inching forward. State, as I understood it, considered it not necessarily in our interest to get deeply involved in this; it was Ireland's and Britain's problem. The NSC and the White House wanted to engage much more deeply in the Irish peace process. Nancy Soderberg—whom the Irish rather cruelly called "Nancy Soda Bread" — and Tony Lake ran this account. Senator Edward Kennedy was also very much engaged with the Irish peace portfolio. The Irish authorities who were working on the peace process tended to deal with these three on substance, rather than the State Department. The Irish Government pushed the idea that the U.S. Government should grant a visa waiver to Gerry Adams, who was on our terrorist watch list and ineligible. The idea was that he'd promote the peace process to the Irish American community, which provided material support to the IRA. They were also trying to draw Gerry Adams and the Provisional IRA into legitimate politics. None of this was a bad thing, but to grant a known terrorist a visa waiver seemed—at least to me—to compromise a fundamental principle of our security policy, and without any gain to U.S. interests. Mrs. Smith, of course, really wanted this done.

Q: OK, well let's talk about some of the visa measures; you mentioned these Morrison visas.

SIDES: The Morrison visa program was, frankly, bizarre. Why the Irish and not others? Doris Meissner, who was the Immigration Service Commissioner at the time, and Senator Kennedy were said to be very close, but why Bruce Morrison got involved in this, how the United States benefited from it, it is still hard for me to figure that out. Perhaps Morrison was fronting for Senator Kennedy.

Q: When I came into the foreign service in 1955, one of my first jobs was doing the refugee relief program, which was designed to allow people who had fled because of WWII from Eastern Europe to camps in Western Europe, to get them out and give them visas. It sounds fine, but all of a sudden we found there were people who lived in the Netherlands and in Italy were getting refugee visas. Well when you think about it refugees from what? Well it so happened the two heads of the committee of the house that dealt with immigration matters in the house, one came from an Italian background and one came from Holland, Michigan. So I mean one learned that politics played a big hand in visa matters.

SIDES: That was certainly the case, and what was particularly stinky about it was that these applicants for the Morrison visas were often people who had lived in the United States illegally and in some cases had incurred ineligibilities. I had instructed the officers I supervised with that we would go by the book. That meant we were refusing a lot of applicants. Jim Callahan, the CG,

called me into his office and said, "You know the INS wants us to issue these visas. They actually want us to use them all up. You need to show a little flexibility." So we backed off a little bit. One of the requirements of the Morrison visa was that you had to have a job offer in the United States. Well, for the people who had already been living and working in the United States illegally, of course that was possible. But many of the Irish who lived and worked in the United States never bothered to take up the Morrison visas at all, never bothered to go back to Ireland to apply. So what you were getting as the program went on were applicants who had never been to the United States before coming in with fraudulent job offer letters, something that was to later get me in a lot of trouble with the ambassador. The bogus job letters were on European format paper and were signed "Yours Faithfully," the standard complimentary close used in Irish correspondence. The job offers were supposed to be from an American employer! We felt we had no choice but to refuse these applicants on grounds of material misrepresentation. We were soon instructed to give the applicant a chance to withdraw the letter and bring in a real one—a better forgery, I suppose. So for about a year we were issuing visas by the ladleful to anybody who applied.

Q: Were you getting any feedback from the Visa Office or were they keeping their head down?

SIDES: VO didn't contact me personally. I usually got my guidance from Jim Callahan, the CG. I did not know, because Jim didn't confide in me until pretty late in the game, that Jim was in the shithouse with the ambassador. That is not a nice thing to say on tape. He was really under a lot of pressure.

Q: But it is appropriate.

SIDES: Not long after I got there, Jim and the Public Affairs Officer, John Treacy, and two other officers, I think it was the political officer and the defense attaché, had written a dissent cable about the Gerry Adams visa question. Mr. Adams had applied for a visa several times in Belfast and had been refused. They expected him to apply again and try in Dublin. Their understanding was that Mrs. Smith wanted this visa issued, that she was looking for a way to do it. So they sent a dissent cable in. Dennis Sandberg was on vacation at the time and I think either Jim or John Treacy was the acting DCM. Anyway, they sent in a dissent cable, and when she found out about it, she hit the roof. She began from that point to marginalize Jim Callahan and John Treacy and to find ways to get rid of them. So this was all going around in the background. Jim was being extremely careful avoid conflict with her or Dennis Sandberg. She was very keen on the Morrison visa program. Maybe she saw them all as potential voters for Senator Kennedy, because it seemed to me that she saw much of what she did in Ireland in terms of U.S. domestic politics. In general I probably swam in the same stream that the Kennedy family did politically. President Kennedy was a great inspiration to me in my youth as he was to many of the other people you have interviewed. So I was really disappointed to find myself in such an invidious situation.

Q: Just in a context for somebody who doesn't understand, an ambassador cannot issue a visa.

SIDES: No. She was very disappointed to find out that she couldn't.

Q: This is a firm rule.

SIDES: Yes, and there is supposed to be a certain separation between the visa function, which is governed by statute and can be performed only by consular officers, and the pursuit of policy objectives. Which isn't to say political considerations never influence visa decisions, because exceptions can be made when the national interest is involved. But when the national interest is invoked, which is rare, it's done in a very consultative way, and not in pursuit of any individual agenda. I followed Jim's guidance and tried to do the right thing. I never knowingly issued a visa that was clearly improper. However, overall it was not good practice to be going through pro-forma interviews en masse with people who were in many cases misrepresenting themselves.

Q: Well, did you have problems with the visa officers that you were supervising? You know visa officers are given a certain amount of instructions about what you can and can't do, and then…

SIDES: They all understood the position we were in. We really liked and respected Jim Callahan, our CG. We became aware of how vulnerable he was to Mrs. Smith, and tried to be as supportive of him as we could. My instructions to my vice consuls were that we wouldn't do anything that was clearly illegal, and pursue fraud and ineligibilities where we found them. However, we'd try to avoid unnecessary confrontations or conflicts.

Q: Well you know at a certain point, problems at the embassy and Ambassador Smith became public knowledge.

SIDES: Yes, they did. The newspapers got a hold of it.

Q: When did that happen and how did this…

SIDES: The Foreign Service Journal did a long article on the Dublin dissent cable in July, 1996, and the retaliation that Jim Callahan and John Treacy were subjected to. However, the dissent issue was part of a general problem caused by Ambassador Smith's leadership and managerial style. She was definitely used to getting her own way. I think she came to the job with a very negative image of Foreign Service people, and expected the worst from us from the very beginning. At the same time, she was extremely susceptible to what Irish people said. One of my staff told me that other Irish local employees would complain about their supervisors to the ambassador's chauffeur, and he'd badmouth them during long drives with her. Many officers, particularly in the management section of the embassy, curtailed their tours. And Dublin was a place where people used to try and extend their tours!

Anyway, she apparently decided to try and get rid of Jim Callahan and John Treacy. John's tour was nearly up and he managed to hang on until his scheduled departure. Jim Callahan had another year or two to go. He had children with specific education needs. Ireland had what his family needed. So he wanted to stick it out. He showed me his EER draft, the one Dennis and the Ambassador did. It was outrageously bad, not the subtle damn-with-faint-praise approach, but a total hatchet-job. I thought perhaps Dennis Sandberg drafted it deliberately that way to please Mrs. Smith, but also to signal the promotion panel that Jim was having difficulty with a vindictive political ambassador. The EER certainly didn't reflect the hard-working, very

professional officer I knew. I think the same thing happened to John Treacy. They filed grievances, charging retaliation for the dissent cable. Jim curtailed and went to London as deputy section chief.

Subsequently, a team from the Inspector General's office appeared at the embassy. I think both John and Jim had been gone by the time they arrived. Also, Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Mary Ryan came out to try and smooth things over. She was very protective of her people. She tried to work with the ambassador a bit. I don't know how that went. Mrs. Smith was not an easy person to talk to, apparently. I don't mean trash Ambassador Smith. She worked very hard. She had functions in her house almost every night. Sometimes she'd have two, back to back, in one evening. We worked them in rotations. We would get one crowd out and another crowd would come in. She attracted really top-drawer guests. At her house I met Eric Holder, Warren Buffett, Bill Gates—who argued with me about visas for foreign workers—and the entire cast of "Riverdance." However, she sometimes invited people from Northern Ireland that were rather unsavory. We had to watch them very carefully because they would steal stuff. You know, souvenirs from the house and things like that, Kennedy family photos. She also got the admin officer to hire some handicapped people to work in the embassy; a guy in a wheel chair and a mentally handicapped woman, and so on. Some of them are still working there today. I really respect her for that. The State Department's a pretty cautious, change-averse environment; it has its checks and balances, and we work with our colleagues and contacts professionally, whether or not we have a personal affinity for them. She, I think, viewed us all as either with her or against her. Perhaps if she had been more willing or able to explain what she wanted and why, and was prepared to accept counsel from her diplomatic staff, we would have been able to help her find ways to do what she wanted that wouldn't get her or us into trouble. As it was, we did our jobs conscientiously, but it was a really scary place to work.

When Jim Callahan left, I ascended from visa unit chief to being chief of the consular section in Dublin. That exposed me much more to her. I heard from a good source in the Consular Affairs Bureau that she was inquiring about replacing me. I decided to try and curtail. I made some stabs at that with my career development officer, but at the time there really wasn't anything available that was appropriate to me. The OIG inspectors came to Dublin in response to grievances filed by John and Jim, and in connection with some administrative irregularities. From them, I found out why she was trying to get rid of me. I'd pursued a fraud investigation, which led to an employee of one of the Irish universities. The employee was misusing official stationery to provide false documents for immigrant visa applicants. John Treacy and I had gone to see senior officials of the university, laid out the evidence, and asked the official to put a stop to his employee's activities. The university officials had had no idea what was going on. We didn't ask that anyone be prosecuted; just that the activity be stopped, which it was. After we finished the meeting, John said to me, "You need to write this up as a memo and send it through Dennis Sandberg to the ambassador. She knows these people, and she has said that whenever we meet with somebody she knows, she wants a memo about it so she is aware about what has been said and done." The meeting took place on a Friday afternoon before a three day weekend, and I submitted the memo the following Tuesday, the next working day after the meeting. Then I forgot all about it. Neither she nor Dennis Sandberg every mentioned it to me. When the inspectors came, maybe six months later, they said she was really shocked I hadn't discussed the meeting with her first. She, or Dennis, claimed I'd sent in the memo six weeks or two months

later. She thought my conduct improper and wanted to replace me. Fortunately, I had a copy of the dated memo, my appointment book, the lot. And the inspectors understood that, except in unusual circumstances, the ambassador would not normally be advised in advance of a routine meeting to discuss a cheesy little fraud. I was pretty shocked. I always treated her with respect and tried to understand what she wanted from us, but it was a very uncomfortable relationship. As time went by I think it got a bit better. The administrative section, however, had the worst of it. She wanted to do many things for which there were no funds. The management officer curtailed, the GSO officer curtailed, and the DCM and incoming management officer got in trouble for authorizing projects she wanted. And then, of course, there was the nonimmigrant visa waiver.

Q: You might explain what a visa waiver was.

SIDES: OK, at that time, in 1993, Irish citizens required a visa to travel to the United States. They had to come to the embassy and apply and be interviewed, unlike the citizens of many of the other countries in the European Union, who benefited from our visa waiver program. Ireland had a weak economy, and there was a high rate of illegal immigration to the United States. Mrs. Smith, influenced, I expect by the Irish government, wanted the visa requirement for Irish citizens lifted. By the 90's Ireland's economy had begun to take off, but in 1993 Ireland did not meet the established criteria for participation in the waiver program. The visa refusal rate was well above the two per cent threshold for participation in the waiver program, and the overstay rate was also well above the legal legally-established threshold. The third criteria Ireland failed to meet involved what we used to call "border bounces." A border bounce was a denial of admission to the USA at an airport or land border. Even if a traveler has a visa, an immigration officer can deny entry if there's evidence that the traveler intends to immigrate illegally. Lots of Irish young people would arrive at JFK with huge heaps of luggage, cards in their handbags wishing them a happy life in America, letters offering jobs, and so forth. And they'd be bounced.

Through Senator Kennedy's efforts, Congress modified the criteria for the waiver in order to make it easier for Ireland to qualify. The threshold for refusal rates was re-set to 2.5%. We came under a lot of pressure to push down our nonimmigrant visa refusal rate to the 2.5% level. I reviewed the refusals and overturned some, but apparently not enough. The rate still hovered around, as I recall, five percent. And we were being very, very liberal. Eventually the Visa Office, also under pressure, decided to redefine the way they counted visa refusals and refusals overcome. They cooked the books—and I don't say that lightly— to make it appear that Ireland had met the new threshold for visa refusals. The immigration service, as part of this deal, agreed to set up pre-inspection stations, one in Dublin Airport and one in Shannon Airport. Instead of having the shame and humiliation of being bounced at John F. Kennedy airport, the Irish got stopped before they left Ireland. The pre-inspection stations, I think, are still there; very prized assignments for the ICE border officers. Eventually Ireland did get on the visa waiver, and my last year was spent downsizing the section. The Morrison visa craze was over. We had given an immigrant visa to every Irishman who ever even thought they might like to go to America.

Q: Well now, as we speak today in 2010, Ireland is going through a devastating downturn, whereas not many people have been from Ireland, now it looks like there is going to be a steady flow outward again. Except the United States doesn't have much to offer.

SIDES: Well, the immigration controls in the United States are a lot stricter than they were then. A lot of things are beginning to box in illegal immigrants, like the inability to get driver's licenses, employer sanctions, and so forth.

Q: The Kennedys are out of business.

SIDES: The Kennedys are not engaged with this any longer. Bruce Morrison, heaven knows where he is. Because Irish people can live and work anywhere in the European Union, I think many of them are going elsewhere. During Ireland's gravy days when the Celtic tiger was roaring, there was a huge in-migration of people from Poland, Romania, and Latvia. A lot of Chinese and Nigerians also migrated to Ireland. Many Irish people sold their farms to developers and bought villas on the Costa del Sol. I've heard those housing estates now lie empty and abandoned in the wake of the economic downturn in Ireland, and the eastern European migrants have gone home. Poor Ireland!

Q: Well, tell me how did you find life in Ireland? Irrespective of your problems at the embassy, how was living there?

SIDES: Apart from the work, Randy and I really enjoyed our time in Ireland. We traveled around a lot, and also got re-acquainted with my relatives and their community. Apart from those extended family members, however, I was rather careful about letting people know I was Irish, since I was there as an American diplomat. One of my jobs as head of the visa section was going around to monitor the panel doctors. Panel doctors are physicians authorized by the embassy to conduct the medical examinations and administer vaccinations required for immigration to the U.S. During the Morrison visa era we had four doctors in different regions of Ireland. They did quite well out of the Morrison visa program. We would do a tour of their clinics, review their procedures, visit the labs where the analyses were done, go to lunch and perhaps tour the local hospital. I could use these trips also to call on local government officials, or meet with Americans living in the area. We also took some time off and traveled up to Northern Ireland with our pals Charles and Maria Jones. Charles was a General Services Officer at the embassy; a guy who had had a very colorful career in the Foreign Service and was up for anything. He was fed up with working for Mrs. Smith and planning to retire soon. We decided to check out Northern Ireland. At that time, there was a cease-fire in place, so it was less scary than when we went Belfast to buy the condoms in '72. We were able to travel around a bit in Britain and Scotland as well. My husband is of Scottish origin, so we also visited Scotland. We had such a nice time, outside of work. That's one of the reasons why I was really reluctant to curtail; because my personal life was quite happy. I just hated my job.

End of Reader