

KATHERINE P. KENNEDY

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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[This interview was not edited by Ms. Kennedy.]

Q: We are not related, but we are next door neighbors. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. This interview is a little atypical in that Katie is working as a contractor on... What would you call it, peaceful resolutions?

KENNEDY: Conflict resolution.

Q: Conflict resolution and that sort of thing, and particularly with emphasis on the Irish thing. She has worked with the State Department on that. We will get to that. But first, let's get your background. Could you tell me when and where were you born, and something about your family?

KENNEDY: I was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1955, on the Ides of March in a blinding snowstorm.

Q: March 15th.

KENNEDY: I'm one of two children. I have an older sister. My Dad was a Boston fireman. My mother was a housewife.

Q: Were they both of Irish extraction?

KENNEDY: They were. Although my grandfather Kennedy was born in St. John's, Newfoundland. So, he was considered an Irish American in Boston, a "two-boater." People who didn't have as much money got as far as Nova Scotia, or Newfoundland. People who had a little more money could get the boat fare all the way to the shores of the states. So, he was considered a "two-boater."

Q: What part of Boston did you live in?

KENNEDY: I grew up in a suburb, eight miles north called Melrose.

Q: Was this a mixed suburb, or was it Irish mainly?

KENNEDY: I would say that primarily there were three kinds of people: Irish American, Italian American, and people who would proudly proclaim they had ancestors in the Mayflower group, Massachusetts Puritan Wasps.

Q: As a kid, how did you find it? Was there much of a mix?

KENNEDY: Not really. As I said, I went to a parochial school, associated with my parish church. Everybody I knew was either Italian American or Irish American, with a few exceptions.

Q: What about the Irish-Italian mix?

KENNEDY: That was fine. There were a lot of intermarriages. My parent's friends would intermarry. I went to the public high school in Melrose. It was a big school, probably about 1,500. There were two African-Americans, and that was it, and a couple Chinese. It was very, very white.

Q: What were your interests when you were in elementary school?

KENNEDY: I loved animals. I used to walk my dog. We lived on the malls in Melrose line, and there's a park called Kleinbank's Park, that had a small zoo. I spent a lot of time at the zoo. I was in a children's theater from third grade through eighth grade. I played Peter Pan in the fifth grade.

Q: Very good. How about reading?

KENNEDY: I was a voracious reader. My mom and dad would take turns every night of our childhood. One would come in as we got settled into bed, and one would read to us. As we got old enough to read ourselves, we had to do half an hour of silent reading, not related to our homework. So, we are voracious readers, the whole family.

Q: Did Ireland crop up much, in the life around there, the troubles in Ireland, or whatever it is?

KENNEDY: No, and that's the interesting thing I thought about a lot over the years, as I've gotten involved in working there. My family, like many in that part of the world I grew up in, would be very interested. Maybe it was because their ancestors were closer. I was like third generation, fourth generation. We were proud to be Irish, but as far as understanding the politics or following anything like that, no not really, which is interesting.

Q: Was it the Irish neighborhood that one thinks of, with the church and the local tavern or the pub?

KENNEDY: No, Melrose is dry. It remains so to this day.

Q: Oh, my gosh.

KENNEDY: If you wanted alcohol or a bar, you had to go down the street to Malden. It was very, very residential. But as far as the church, absolutely. There were a couple of parishes, and the Baptist church was incredibly active. There was a wonderful Episcopal church, Methodist church. So, it was church-related. Then, I remember, when I was about 15 or 16, a synagogue came to Melrose.

Q: What about politics?

KENNEDY: Yes, we were fascinated with politics. My dad wasn't really interested in politics, but my mother was very, very interested in politics. That came from my grandfather, her father.

Q: I take it that it was very Democratic?

KENNEDY: Absolutely. My grandfather would roll over in his grave if I ever pulled a Republican lever.

Q: When you were in high school, what were your interests?

KENNEDY: I was on the ski team. I played basketball, I think, my sophomore and freshmen years. It was a crazy high school, because we went on double sessions. It was so overcrowded, while they were building a new school. My last two years, I went from 7:00 to 12:00 in the morning. Then, in the same building, all the teachers and students had to vacate, and then it became a junior high school. The last couple of years were kind of crazy.

Q: I can't exactly remember when, but was there the heat of integration - when the busing took place?

KENNEDY: The busing crisis was happening in Boston part of that time, absolutely. It didn't hit the suburbs. Eventually, a few years later, they developed what they called a "METPRO Program," and I can't exactly remember what all the acronyms mean. They brought students. There were a couple busloads every day, mainly African-American students, some white, that would come from poorer neighborhoods in Boston, to the better schools in the suburbs. Eventually, we became part of that program.

Q: But, this is afterwards?

KENNEDY: Yes, it was afterwards.

Q: What about courses? What courses did you particularly like?

KENNEDY: I loved Geography, I loved History. I did well in Math, but I didn't particularly like it. I wasn't that great with science. I liked English, because I liked to read. I liked literature.

Q: How were your teachers?

KENNEDY: I had some wonderful teachers.

Q: Who were some of them?

KENNEDY: Clayton Kahn was an amazing teacher. He was my sophomore English teacher. Arthur Harrington was a wonderful English teacher. My History teacher was a real character named Tony DiPesso, who was also the athletic director. So, he ran his classroom like a team. I had some good teachers. I was in advanced placement. I was in the honors classes.

Q: Were you planning to go to college?

KENNEDY: Yes, I wanted to, and that was an expectation both in my home and my school.

Q: Had your parents gone to college?

KENNEDY: No.

Q: My parents hadn't either. We represent a generation on the cusp, I think. After us, most everybody went, within reason. While you were in high school and before that, how strict was your Catholicism?

KENNEDY: My dad died when I was 13. I would say he was very religious. My mother was religious, and still is, but... I think that's where I get this streak of questioning authority. Faith is very important, but there was always questioning of church policy. I can remember a big debate on the just warfare on the Jesuits, because of the sister in Vietnam. My mother was against the Vietnam War right from the beginning, and really was the solo voice in her social group and family group.

Q: In Massachusetts, from what I've heard and read, the Catholic church was very Irish run, was very conservative.

KENNEDY: Absolutely.

Q: You're going to go to hell if you eat meat on Fridays, and that sort of thing.

KENNEDY: As I say, they went to church every Sunday, but they questioned things. For instance, I remember at Lent, at that time, you weren't supposed to eat three big meals. You had to eat a couple snacks, and only one meal. I remember my dad, who was a Boston fireman, with the kind of work that he did, he would eat normally. They were religious, but they weren't conservative in their church orientation.

Q: Well, when you were getting out of high school, where were you thinking of going and doing?

KENNEDY: My mother wanted to push me to go away to school, because of my family situation. My dad died when I was so young, and she thought emotionally, it would be very good for me to go away. So, I went as far away as an hour.

Q: Oh boy.

KENNEDY: I went to the University of New Hampshire. I lived at the dorm.

Q: So, you were away.

KENNEDY: I was away, and I experienced life on campus. I didn't go home that often, but I knew I could if I wanted to.

Q: So, you went to the University of New Hampshire from when to when?

KENNEDY: 1973 to 1978. My mother had cancer, so I took a semester off to help her, in 1977.

Q: You mentioned that in high school, you were very young, so you wouldn't have gotten involved in the Vietnam protest. It was beyond you.

KENNEDY: Yes, I was a little too young for that, but I was very aware of it. As I say, I remember heated discussions between my mother and some of her friends, even between my mother and my father. He had served in World War II. She was just against the war completely.

Q: It would pertain later on in conflicts. Because of the demographics of where you lived and all, were you removed from the black/white conflict?

KENNEDY: Yes. I wasn't aware of it at all. Only what I read about it, a little bit. I remember in either my junior or senior year, having a course in reading Wounded Knee, and about the Watts riots in Los Angeles. I lived in a very loving, but sheltered, and really parochial Bostonian suburb at the time. I didn't know anybody whose parents were divorced. One of my mother's friends worked, but all the other mothers were home. It was a very sheltered, parochial, happy area. The rest of the world I didn't know.

Q: Well, you went out into the wild west of New Hampshire. What was the University of New Hampshire like when you went?

KENNEDY: Fun. I made friends quickly in the dorm, and in my classes. The first couple of years, you do your general ed requirement. I took a lot of political science courses, and decided I wanted to be an education major, which is my undergraduate degree.

Q: At the University of New Hampshire, were most of the students from New Hampshire?

KENNEDY: I would say half to two thirds, I'm guessing. There were a lot of people from Connecticut, Massachusetts. At least half to maybe two-thirds.

Q: Did you get a feel for the culture of New Hampshire?

KENNEDY: Yes, it was different. It was very, very different. One of my roommates was from the Berlin, New Hampshire area, the paper mill area. Going home with her for the weekend, her lifestyle was very, very different. There was the conservative politics, the Manchester Union Leader.

Q: Which came into prominence every four years.

KENNEDY: Absolutely.

Q: When there was a primary there.

KENNEDY: Yes. That was actually fun. Being so interested in political science and taking so many courses, people came through.

Q: You would have been there for...

KENNEDY: Jimmy Carter.

Q: Jimmy Carter, yes. Was the school conservative?

KENNEDY: I would say it was a mix. But, my political science mentor, and my faculty advisor for a couple years too, Chuck Reed, was very liberal. My main education professors, one special ed and one regular education course, were very liberal. So, it was a mix.

Q: Well, you were getting your degree in education, what does that mean?

KENNEDY: My formal major was special education, teaching the mentally retarded.

Q: Did they have teaching where you went into schools?

KENNEDY: Yes, we had to do all kinds of clinics and internships, and student teaching at the very end. But, all the way along, every semester, you had to do something with some schools.

Q: I take it you got some skiing in?

KENNEDY: Oh, absolutely. I was a good skier, and I loved it.

Q: Where did you go skiing?

KENNEDY: New London, New Hampshire, Waterville Valley was my favorite,

Q: Well, you graduated in 1978, what were you up to?

KENNEDY: What did I do then?

Q: Yes.

KENNEDY: Well, I was trying to decide whether I would go to law school, I was accepted to law school. I was accepted to an MSW and clinical social work, and I had been offered a couple teaching jobs. I had no idea what I wanted to do. One day, about a month after I graduated, I was teaching in a summer program on the campus. I walked along and saw this bright green sign (green is my favorite color, of course) that said "Peace Corps Recruiting Here Today." So, I walked into the library and the woman at the desk said, "Well, we are mainly interested in education majors." I said, "Well, I just graduated." So, six months later, I was in Kenya in the Peace Corps. That's what I did.

Q: Okay, so you signed up for the Peace Corps. You were in the Peace Corps from 1978 until?

KENNEDY: 1980.

Q: Did you have any choice of where you would go?

KENNEDY: Well, on your application, you are supposed to number your preferred areas. So, I said, number one, Africa, number two, South America, and number three, Asia. Your next question is going to be "Why did you pick Africa first?" I have absolutely no idea, but I did.

Q: How did they train you?

KENNEDY: We had about a week of what they called orientation, in Washington, DC. I remember doing the cultural simulation. You get oriented on the country a little bit. I remember the Kenya ambassador came to speak to us, because we were a mixed group, from different backgrounds. But, we were all going to Kenya. Then, when we got there, we had six weeks where we all lived in a residential hotel. It was Karen Blickson from Out of Africa. It was actually part of her original plantation. They rented it out. They had some regular guests who would come for a few days, but most of it was long-term. So, for six weeks, we had Swahili language and cultural training.

Q: You get involved in this much later on, what sort of things stuck in your mind about dealing in Kenya with culture?

KENNEDY: Well, there were a lot of gender warnings, to be careful, and where to go. The differences in the American female culture, and expectations in perhaps the Kenya male culture. is what strikes me.

Q: I know Kenya is broken down into basic tribal things, Kikuyu is the one one thinks of, but there are others. Did you know, kind of where you were going?

KENNEDY: We didn't know where our placements were going to be until probably halfway through, or maybe almost the end of the six weeks in-country training. My first placement was in a school for mentally retarded children in Nairobi. I was very disillusioned and disheartened because I hadn't been out of New England. When we took a vacation, the family went to the Cape or New Hampshire, or Maine. I had never been out of New England. Idealistically, going to the Peace Corps, I was young, sincere and wanted some kind of a cross-cultural experience. Most of these handicapped children were driven in chauffeured limousines to the school. I wished them well, and I wanted them to thrive, but it didn't seem to me that's what...

Q: Did you have the feeling that the elite children with problems were getting the attention, and those who didn't have the family financial backing, were sort of discards?

KENNEDY: Well, actually, I think there were only three special ed schools in the country for the mentally retarded at that time. The Salvation Army had quite a network of schools for physically handicapped, and blind kids, but the mentally retarded schools were new. This project in Kenya was actually the very first special ed project that the Peace Corps ever did in the world. Christina Kenyatta, the daughter of Jomo, came and did a masters of special ed at Lehigh. When she went home, she said to daddy, "Let's create something," and so he did. We were ahead of our time, and weren't ready. Christina Kenyatta died very soon after I got there.

Q: How did you find you were received at this facility?

KENNEDY: There were some Kenyan teachers; there were a couple British teachers, and then a couple of the Americans, who were living there full time. We were accepted and welcomed. I am the one who wasn't happy.

Q: I have no idea how this works, but was there a sort of accepted international way of dealing with the mentally retarded, or were there different theories?

KENNEDY: In the U.S. at that time, the mainstreaming, bringing kids out of sheltered classrooms into the regular classrooms, had just become in vogue, and they were just developing the theories and practice on that. In the Kenyan culture, families say "up country" and certain villagers in that part of the country, wouldn't even admit they had a mentally retarded child. It was a shame. The stigma was there. That's an interesting question because what I ended up doing, after being there for about a month, was I went to the Peace Corps director and said, "This isn't the Peace Corps. I wish these beautiful children health and happiness, and develop as much as they can, but to be chauffeured?" It was strained. For the rest of my time, I ended up working for the Kenya Society of the Mentally Handicapped. Actually, in 1979, they had the world conference on mental retardation in Kenya. One of the main things I did was to help organize that. So, going back to your question about different theories, and how people approach it, they literally had people from all over the world. It was fascinating.

Q: Did Kenya have an established cadre of people interested in mental health and helping children?

KENNEDY: I think it was a small group, but it was growing. By the time I had left, it had grown more. Some of us did some seminars together at the University of Nairobi, on theories: institutionalize and formal life, teacher training, in that area. It had just developed.

Q: Were there any other volunteer agencies that were working in this field that you were coming across?

KENNEDY: No, except for the Salvation Army volunteers.

Q: But that was for physical disabilities.

KENNEDY: And the blind, but no. As I said, mental retardation services were practically nonexistent. It was because of the president's daughter's interest.

Q: Did you deal with her at all?

KENNEDY: I worked with her a lot the first year. Her father died not long after I got there, within months. She still stayed in that position for another year, year and a half. But eventually, she got married and left. That was the other thing, her offices were in the UN conference center.

Q: Did the politics of Kenya intrude at all? Was this something you were aware of?

KENNEDY: Just vaguely, I remember in the back of my mind, when Daniel Arap Moi came to power. I remember there were rumblings because he wasn't from the main tribe. I do remember starting to hear about Kikuyus, and the different tribes, a little bit.

Q: Did you have much contact with the other volunteers who were out teaching?

KENNEDY: There were a few of us based in Nairobi, but most people were scattered in other parts of the country. But, the good thing about the job that I had was that I would spend two weeks a month in Nairobi, and then two weeks a month somewhere in the country. So, I saw every single part of Kenya many times. There were two of us, and we would go to the district education officers in that part of that country. They would take us to do some evaluations on children. We went to people's huts, people's homes. We went into schools. We worked with teachers. Then, we would go back to Nairobi for two weeks, so it was a back and forth.

Q: Was there much effort to coax the people to produce their handicapped children?

KENNEDY: Absolutely.

Q: I would think that was the biggest problem.

KENNEDY: As I mentioned a few minutes ago, many of them would just hide them, deny they existed. I remember having a meal in somebody's hut one night, and there would be a child in the next room. They never even admitted the child existed. Yet, they didn't rush us off. They were happy to have American visitors around.

Q: What about life in Nairobi? I've heard people who have lived there concerned about crime and all that?

KENNEDY: At that time, it was just beginning. I shared a wing of a house with another Peace Corps volunteer, who was also a special ed teacher. They had a security guard at night. Unfortunately, it only got worse. That was just the beginning. But, after that, all would have security, whether they were working for government or business.

Q: We mentioned expats. These were British. How did you find them?

KENNEDY: Pretending or trying to pretend they were still in Britain. They were arrogant, condescending. The owners of the house that we lived in were Greek. The house man was Moses, and the way they treated Moses used to break my heart.

Q: How did you find the staff of the organization you were with?

KENNEDY: There was one American man, so they got along well with that culture. That was great. Then there were two Kenya women; one of them was an administrative assistant, and one was a paraprofessional. We were based in the office of this very rich Kenya businessman. I sometimes wonder if the Kenya mafia was building that. There were all kinds of comings and goings in his part of the office, which we never quite understood. He had a mentally handicapped son. That's why he gave office space to this non-profit.

Q: What did this conference that came about consist of?

KENNEDY: Panels of experts talking about various teaching techniques, diagnostic teaching. They had medical doctors, and they had teachers, psychologists, literally from around the world. They had parents' panels. The Association for Retarded Citizens had a very large arc network in our country. They had a large delegation there.

Q: Being in the Foreign Service for as long as I have, I would think something like this would probably wipe out any office for a couple years, as far as getting ready.

KENNEDY: Absolutely. I probably spent half the time on that. When I was in Nairobi, 100% of my time was working on that. Then, when I would go up country, I would work with the teachers in the district education offices, kind of identifying students.

Q: When you identify students, what happens then?

KENNEDY: We try to give suggestions on how to help them. It was hard. It's interesting because I think that my interest in cross-culture communication and my long struggle with the efforts of international intervention in all kinds of areas, mainly started from that. In so many ways, what we were trying to do was culturally inappropriate, imposing. We were young, sincere, naive. We were getting this mandate from the Peace Corps, from Christine Kenyatta. How much we actually accomplished or how much we were trying to accomplish that was helpful, useful, and appropriate, I still question.

Q: Just to get a feel for this, what was appropriate or inappropriate? In fact, what was happening to these?

KENNEDY: Well, for instance, because the great theory that was just being developed, the mainstreaming, getting these kids out of self-contained classrooms and putting them in regular classrooms... These poor kids who were shamed in the family, culturally, that weren't even acknowledged by their families, and all of a sudden, they are pushed into a regular classroom situation, it just didn't work.

Q: I would imagine there would be an awful lot of finger pointing, laughing.

KENNEDY: Humiliating.

Q: It would make them miserable.

KENNEDY: Absolutely.

Q: Were you beginning to question why you were there?

KENNEDY: Oh, almost from the very beginning. That's why I couldn't stay in the chauffeured driven school. From the very beginning, I questioned.

Q: Well, you were getting close to your conference and all that, were you thinking about what you were going to do next?

KENNEDY: I think I was ready to go home. Two years was enough. On some level, I always felt the project was a failure. I wasn't a failure, but the project itself wasn't really appropriate, so I always questioned that. I was ready to leave, but it was my time in the Peace Corps that really began, formally, my interest in other countries, and cultures. It was really the first step and others that led me to do what I do, my work in the international arena.

Q: Well, you left in 1980, where did you go?

KENNEDY: I went back to the suburbs of Massachusetts, and taught third grade for one year.

Q: Where?

KENNEDY: Chelsea, Massachusetts, a regular classroom. I came back in August, and two weeks after I got back, I got offered this job, so I took it. Very mixed group of kids, poor socioeconomic. I always say they were my reentry saviors. They helped me come back to the states. It was fun, and I loved it.

Q: You did that for how long?

KENNEDY: I just did that for a year. Then, I actually taught in Melrose, in the public school system for two years, in a special ed, junior high school class.

Q: What was your impression of special ed, at that time, as done in Massachusetts?

KENNEDY: They were trying to pass the law about funding. It was a big, political hullabaloo at the time. But, I mainly just focused on the kids. I taught with a male teacher, which was great, because we had different styles. We worked really well as a team. The kids we had were not mentally retarded, they were emotionally troubled kids.

Q: Were the problems mainly family?

KENNEDY: For many of them, it was family, drugs. Everybody would deny there was a drug problem. That was a big problem. They had a lot of family problems, and some learning problems. I'm flashing on one kid, Richard, who in today's terms would be attention deficit disorder, hyperactive. They didn't have that label then.

Q: Were you thinking about getting another degree?

KENNEDY: I started to do that. After I taught at the junior high for two years, I went back to Vermont to the Experiment in International Living School for International Training (SIT).

Q: Where is that located?

KENNEDY: That's in Brattleboro, Vermont. The experiment claims to be the oldest international exchange organization, founded after World War I and Sergeant Shriver was in the second group of the experiment endeavor, and went to Germany. In one of his books he writes about that. When he became the first director of the Peace Corps, when they were looking for language in cross-cultural training, he went to the experiment to do the programming. From that, eventually it became an accredited graduate school. So, I went there.

Q: You were there a couple years?

KENNEDY: Actually, the way the program goes is it's a year there, and then they require six months to a year of an internship. It can be a paying job or a volunteer situation, outside your native culture. In my class, there were 35 people. Twenty people were Americans. We had 15 people from other countries around the world. I think 14 of the 15 non-Americans did a work experience in the states. All the Americans were required to go outside the states. We had a French woman who went to Kuwait. She had a Kuwaiti boyfriend.

Q: Where did you go?

KENNEDY: I went to Belfast, Northern Ireland. That was the beginning of my time there.

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 been 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 New 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.

Q: I'm familiar more with Yugoslavia, and the church has a great deal to answer for.

KENNEDY: Absolutely.

Q: In 1984, you went back to Boston. What did you do?

KENNEDY: What did I do? The first six months, I had to complete my degree. I wrote a paper on my experiences, doing that project.

Q: This obviously moved you out of the child development work into peace negotiation.

KENNEDY: As I was writing out my master thesis, my sister was in a bookstore with a friend. There was a gentleman signing a book, a guy named Padriag O'Malley, The Uncivil Wars, was the name of the book on Northern Ireland. So, she bought it for me. I read it. He was based at the University of Massachusetts in Boston. So, I tracked him down and called him up. I was having cross-culture reentry. I was writing up my experiences, and reentering and figuring out what I was going to do next. I went to meet with him and he said that he was part of the committee of people based in the Boston area who were working with the JFK presidential library, hosting a series of conferences on Northern Ireland. They were bringing political leaders from different parties here to the States. The first one was in the form of a political conference, which was open to the public, and the politicians were able to present their views, etc. It was held at the JFK library. Then, the remaining two, we actually did down here at the Airlie House in Warrenton, the conference center. Those were not open to the public. Eventually, by the third one, in a mid-formal representation from British ministers into Northern Ireland, people from the Irish government, the Doyle political leaders. We had Ian Paisley, not himself, but his deputy leader, people from his party. So, we had a whole spectrum of political leaders.

Q: This is in what?

KENNEDY: 1984. That was 1984, 1985. So, we had three conferences.

Q: You were doing what with this?

KENNEDY: Well, I was helping do all the logistics, helping to take care of everybody. I had a very informal role, but for me, it was an amazing, amazing experience, because it's a question that still remains with me, in political conflict resolution, not just in Ireland. That is: "When and how can a political leader make changes and concessions without being viewed as a traitor by their community?" How do they bring the community together as one? When I was doing the community level work in Northern Ireland, people would always criticize all the politicians, across the board, cry for political spectrum. "They aren't doing anything, and we'll never get out of this." Then, as I helped with these three conferences, and got to know... Driving John Hume to the airport from Warrenton to National, 45 minutes in the car, and getting to know these people as individual human beings, it came out formally in those conferences and then in a lot of ways in informal conversations. They felt they couldn't make any political changes or initiatives, or moves because their community wouldn't allow it. Yet, at the same time, the community was saying, "We want them to make changes." So, the disconnect between the political and the community level, I don't think has changed at all now.

Q: Is it that there is a driving group of minorities that really in a way dictates... The hardliners?

KENNEDY: Yes, right. That will dictate a lot of the non-movement. But, Peter Robinson, for instance, the deputy of the democratic union, even the Paisley party, I have had a number of conversations with him, over about 15 years. He wants to make some changes, but doesn't feel his community would go along with them.

Q: Was there American involvement in this conference that went on in 1984? Was this strictly outside the government?

KENNEDY: Absolutely. To track two diplomacy, so to speak.

Q: What was your feeling, and what was your philosophy at that time, about the track two?

KENNEDY: It was right at the beginning, and not viewed well at all by the State Department. They tried to block visas for some of the political attendees. It was delicate. "Who do they think they are?"

Q: It was almost the church medal, rather than feeling that this might screw things up?

KENNEDY: Yes. I would guess, probably.

Q: Well then, you're sitting there looking at this. Was this sort of a good lesson for Katie Kennedy, and the dynamics of... I won't even say peaceful resolution, but a peaceful hint, with tensions.

KENNEDY: It was priceless. Absolutely. I'm flashing on now an exchange between two politicians from two political parties, of the same tradition. Both were Protestant, but they were standing, literally screaming at each other. It was right before it was ending, going back to the airport. But, people's perceptions of each other changed. I believe that they were humanized to each other. Not everybody felt better about everybody else, but there were moments. I sincerely believe that those series of conferences and other initiatives by some other people as well, laid the psychological ground for what eventually happened, leading up to the Good Friday agreement.

Q: Were there any attempts by... I keep coming back to my alma matter, the State Department, to intrude or to get involved, or were they deliberately turning their backs on you, or how did you feel about it?

KENNEDY: The very last conference, I can picture the gentleman, he was an attendee, an observer, part of the audience - a small select invited audience group, was a State Department official. But, he had no formal role. I can't even remember his name.

Q: How did you see the result of this thing? Was this a getting acquainted time?

KENNEDY: Well, getting acquainted time, and humanizing each other time, on one level. But what we didn't know was that three months after the last conference in August 1985, the Anglo Irish agreement was signed by Garret FitzGerald and Margaret Thatcher. The substantive body of that work was done at our conference, unbeknownst to us, formally by the official representatives of the British/Irish governments. Chris Patton, who eventually became the last governor of Hong Kong, was the main person for the Brits. Dick Spring, who ended up being the deputy prime minister in Ireland, did the work. Part of the material that eventually went in it was hashed out in the arguments in the "panels" of the opposing politician.

Q: This agreement did what?

KENNEDY: The Anglo-Irish agreement established the first formal body of deliberations and consultations about Northern Ireland. That was very controversial in Northern Ireland, because the Catholics felt that the south, the Irish, were betraying them, going into a formal alliance with the Brits. Then, the Protestant unionists equally felt betrayed. "You were going to eventually sell us down the river, and make us become part of them."

Q: Was there the feeling that you were picking up... We're talking about this being in the early 1980s... That the British government...

KENNEDY: They wanted to get rid of Northern Ireland.

Q: ..."Just go away..."

KENNEDY: Absolutely, they wanted it to go away. Clear, clear, clear.

Q: There was no, sort of, solidarity?

KENNEDY: Well, they were representing Carter's United Kingdom, and trying to help sort it out. The thing that has always bothered me about the British attitude to Northern Ireland is, "You bloody people, you crazy people. We have to come in and solve you, and straighten you out." When, going back to what I said a little while ago, they are part of the problem. It is north/south. It is internally Northern Ireland, and it's Anglo-Irish. They are part of the problem. That's why there are so many bumps in the road and the final implementation of the Good Friday agreement hasn't occurred, but it never could have happened without Tony Blair and the formal British influence, commitment and time to get it as far as it went.

Q: Well, did you feel that Margaret Thatcher advanced things?

KENNEDY: She did, in her own way. I'm trying to remember what year the Brighton Hotel bomb took place. You know, the IRA plant that literally came through her bathroom window. She almost lost her life to the Irish. Because of her own emotional reaction, she was much less involved and more obstinate after that. Of course, then what she did in the hunger strike was awful, morally or politically, in every way.

Q: She just let it go.

KENNEDY: She created it in so many ways.

Q: Well then, you have this conference, and you saw that something came out of it.

KENNEDY: Absolutely.

Q: The Anglo-Irish accord came out of it. What happened with you? Were you now attached to this group that was dealing with this?

KENNEDY: Yes, there was this small committee in Boston who had helped run these conferences. So, I worked formally with them. The experience of those conferences is really what lead me to then go on to do my Ph.D.

Q: So, when did you get your Ph.D.?

KENNEDY: In England, at the University of Kent.

Q: Well, before I leave Boston, what was your impression of ... I'm not sure if I'm pronouncing it correctly - N - O - R - A?

KENNEDY: Noraid. Northern Irish Aid.

Q: Could you explain what they were, and what role you saw them in, at that time?

KENNEDY: They were, and still remain, although not to the same extent, suppliers of weapons and ammunition to the IRA. They would raise money. In order for the IRA to buy weapons, they would actually buy and export them from here. The Valhalla ship that went down in Boston Harbor...

Q: I always found that when you get into Irish politics, our kinsmen, Edward Kennedy and company, don't seem to come out very well. Maybe it's because of Boston politics, but I sense a certain ambivalence about it.

KENNEDY: I would say that was true in the 1980s. That is not really true now. Ted Kennedy and other Irish American politicians have been much stronger against violence and organizations that support violence. They weren't in the beginning, but they are much better now. The one who is actually quite ambiguous about it right now is the Republican, Peter King, from New York.

Q: You went to the University of Kent for two years?

KENNEDY: I was there for three years.

Q: You got a Ph.D.?

KENNEDY: Not in three years, as I came back to write it up.

Q: Well, you had to write your dissertation and all that. But, anyway, you ended up with a Ph.D.?

KENNEDY: In International Relations.

Q: International Relations. How did you find the university? Here you are, in the Ivy Towers in the heart of Kent, which is as far removed as you can get from Ireland.

KENNEDY: Well, I went to the University of Kent because I had met a man named John Burton. John Burton was the foreign minister of Australia during World War II, and one of the signatories. He was one of the founders and signatories to the United Nations. He then settled in London. For many years at the University in London, he really was the godfather of conflict resolution political work. He started his program in London, and then, eventually moved to the University of Kent. I met him at a conference, and ended up in a conversation about these conferences that we had run. He had actually been hired by the British government and the community relation services in Northern Ireland in the 1970s to try to get some insight into the paramilitaries. He had met with all sides, and anyway, he handed me his private... I guess you are going to end up with here, a transcript of all this stuff. He just gave it to me. Because of that trust, I read it and we became good friends. God Bless him, his health isn't very good. He is back in Australia. He's like 87 now. Anyway, in his last academic post in England, he was head of this program at the University of Kent. In the Department of this National Relations, he founded this concentration on what he called "political conflict resolution." It was focused on longstanding, intractable, ethnic, sectarian kinds of conflicts. He had done a lot of work in Cyprus, Malaysia and in the Middle East. He had done a little work in Ireland..

So, with my background in cross-culture theory and work, I thought that I would practice what I preach. I decided now was the time for another long-term experience, living and working while I was a student, in another culture. Also, because of Northern Ireland, the Protestant unionists would always say, "I'm British, I'm British, I'm British," and my question was, "Are you, because I don't think you are, culturally?" I had been to London, but I didn't know the British culture. Just like I found out that the northern Catholics had more in common with their Protestant neighbors in the north, culturally, than they did with Catholics in the south. I thought that that same motherland affiliation isn't true for them, either. I thought the best way is to live in that culture, to try to understand it. Because I already had a master's degree, the British system requires a longer, more intensive dissertation and less course work. That also appealed to me. So, that is why I went there, because of John Burton. I made an assumption that the faculty would be in agreement with his orientation to conflict resolution. Many of them were not. In fact, they thought he was a crackpot, and disagreed with him on everything. I was the only American, and the only female student in the department.

Q: Well, when you get into the academic world as a student you often get caught in the crossfire between the professors.

KENNEDY: Absolutely.

Q: Cultural battles.

KENNEDY: The British system, in particular, has its own unique element of that. Then, this department specialized and many of the faculties had done practical, sort of intervention, conflict resolution work, in these areas of conflict, in these hot spots, but let's not touch Ireland. Let's not even talk about Ireland, because it was too close to home. None of them had ever done anything. So, then they get this woman from Boston named Katie Kennedy who lived in Northern Ireland.

Q: What was your dissertation?

KENNEDY: I looked at the Mourning and Political Conflict Resolution, the Northern Ireland Case. I was looking at the role grief plays in these conflict situations, since it affects, the psychological, societal and political levels.

Q: Of course.

KENNEDY: Continuing grief over loss of identity and territories is why historic grievances can be passed down from generation to generation.

Q: Also, you were catching it at a time when we were beginning to look at the stages of mourning grief, and all this, and death. And, looking at it in a much more, almost structured way, I think.

KENNEDY: But, in a British culture, they thought this was crazy. Nothing to do with international relations, nothing to do with politics.

Q: Did you find you were sort of out on the periphery?

KENNEDY: Oh, the periphery of the periphery, yes. I mean, I actually lost my self-esteem in that process. I really got beaten up pretty badly. I have regained it, but it was painful. My ideas came from real experiences, living there and doing the community level work, this high political level stuff, too. Then, it was all being discounted.

Q: Were these people supporting their theories which kept them...

KENNEDY: Real politics. The only theory that exists in international relations, in part. Then, my faculty adviser who was supporting my research was involved in the politics between of the Department.

Q: I've known a lady who did her dissertation on one theory of linguistics, and it turned out that the board disagreed with her professor, so she was caught between a professor and the certifying board.

KENNEDY: Then, they said, "Well, you have to get at least 50 interviews to prove there is anything to this." So, I set it higher for myself. I said I would get 100. I actually ended up with 126, including Margaret Thatcher, and Garret FitzGerald.

Q: How did you find Margaret Thatcher on this?

KENNEDY: When I interviewed her, it was after the experience with the bomb. So, she would agree with me, but then she wouldn't agree with me. Of course, she wouldn't admit she made any mistakes with the hunger strike. I tried to talk to her a lot about it.

Q: Whom were you interviewing?

KENNEDY: I interviewed across the spectrum. I interviewed unemployed people, business people, educators, clergy, politicians from every political party across the spectrum. I interviewed paramilitary from both sides. Again, when I think about going into some of the places I went and meeting with some people who told me what they did.

Q: Well, looking at this, were you trying to prove something, or were you doing it to see what came out of it?

KENNEDY: Well, I was trying to prove that unless people doubt what I call the "psychological task of conflict resolution" and deal with the issue of grief and how it effects change. The sad thing about the Good Friday Agreement is that there has been no final implementation. People always identify the issues as police reform, de-commissioning (getting rid of the weapons), and the demilitarization (getting the British army out of Northern Ireland). But, I would argue it's not going under because of those issues; it's all about how identities are changing and the lack of trust. It's the psychological issues and tasks that have not been dealt with.

Q: Well, how can you deal with these things? While you were doing your dissertation, did you have any suggestions?

KENNEDY: We did some of this kind of stuff at the Airlie House conferences. You need to have more informal track two, out of the public eye, without any political pressures to make stuff public. I also think you need to have individual work with different political people, almost semi-counseling, not from a psychotherapist, but from a conflict resolve cross-culture. I had amazing conversations with people who helped look at some of the issues and act on them.

Q: In doing your interviews, did you find the British, again, trying to say, "These are the bloody Irish."

KENNEDY: Absolutely! They dehumanized them and spoke of them as second-class citizens.

Q: One senses an awful lot of this in the Arab-Israeli thing, on the part of the Israelis.

KENNEDY: Absolutely.

Q: Well, you got your Ph.D. when?

KENNEDY: 1991.

Q: What did you do then?

KENNEDY: Well, when I went back to Boston, I had a fellowship at Harvard. I was at the Center for International Affairs, and I was the only non-student of a man named Herb Kellman, who was a professor of social psychology at Harvard, now retired. Anyway, he founded this institute, so we were sharing our research with each other; we were supporting each other. We also had a number of meetings with Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians. Some of the work was done in the Middle East, and in some of the work we brought groups from there to Harvard.

Q: This is out of Harvard?

KENNEDY: Right.

Q: Well, then, you are still a fellow. So, when do you sort of get out of being a student?

KENNEDY: Well, I was teaching part-time. I gave different courses and was starting to do some training workshops in mediation negotiation, cross-culture communications. So, when I actually finished, I decided that I liked it and I didn't want a real job. So, after I graduated, I still taught as an adjunct. I taught courses at BU (Boston University), at Emmanuel, at University of Massachusetts and at Harvard, on these subjects. Then, I started doing consulting in those areas.

Q: At some point, you got involved with the State Department, didn't you?

KENNEDY: Yes, I've done a number of contracts for the State Department.

Q: What sort of things were you doing with the State Department?

KENNEDY: When I was finishing the thesis I had a contact with the Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs at the Foreign Service Institute, when they were in Rosslyn. A guy named John McDonald headed that. I helped organize and facilitate a series of meetings on conflict resolution. We would have different conflict areas; we would have Cyprus, in the Middle East, and we did one on Ireland. We did one on the former Yugoslavia; we did a couple related to the break up of the Soviet Union. Then, I've done some negotiation training here at the Foreign Service Institute for diplomats.

Q: When you are training somebody to negotiate, what are you looking at, and what are you trying to promote?

KENNEDY: The course that I taught here and at other places, is not about political, diplomatic negotiations. It's really the nuts and bolts of negotiations; i.e., how to look at concession patterns, find your own position and your bottom line. You need to learn about the issues and work in a team.

Q: What was your impression of the State Department people you were working with? Were they sort of leery of this theory, or not?

KENNEDY: Some were and some weren't. They got into it. I never had a problem with that. Then, I've done work for U.S. Information Agency.

Q: Doing what?

KENNEDY: Doing some of their conflict resolution programs related to Ireland and then the State Department. It's not USIA (United States Information Agency), but it's another pocket of money. There's a current program called The Walsh Visa program that I've done work for. I'm actually going to be doing some more work for them, with State Department money. One of the centers is going to be up in Boston. One of the most interesting things I've ever done for the State Department was for the Division or the Department of Anti-Terrorist Activity. I have an affiliation at the Medical School of the University of Virginia. They have a center on conflict resolution from the psychological perspective. The head of it is a Turkish Cypriot psychiatrist. So, the State Department was paying for John Jay College of Criminal Justice to go down to Guatemala to train and reform the police. The next country after Guatemala was going to be Turkey. They wanted Turkish experts: Vanik and Turkish historian, Norman Ischowitz, and I was a third member of the team, as the cross-culture expert, to evaluate if the John Jay program that was so successful in Guatemala could be helpful and useful in Turkey. So, we had a few meetings here at the State Department. Then, they took us to Guatemala. We observed a three-day program of John Jay, which was useless and totally inappropriate for Guatemala. It would not have worked in Turkey. Then, they ended up doing it in Haiti. I don't know who at John Jay had the political connection, but he had all these Guatemalans sitting there. Of course, it was simultaneous translation. You talk about cross-culture perception, but the American instructors from John Jay thought it was a raving success. Two of them sincerely thought they were doing a great job, and they were meeting the needs. At night, one of the participants said to my two colleagues and me, "Do you want to see a police station?" So, he took us to a police station, and we observed them beating the crap out of a prisoner. Then, we wrote our report. The State Department was not happy with our report at all, and tried to get us to change it. That was a very interesting contract.

Q: What was this John J. thing? Was this somebody with sort of an idea of everybody getting together?

KENNEDY: It was supposedly to reform police. Police who had been accused of human rights violations and brutality, and make them normal civil Fairfax County policemen. The whole thing was bizarre on so many levels. It was a fascinating experience.

Q: Other people must have been saying, "This plane ain't going to fly."

KENNEDY: Actually, the head of the antiterrorism activity at the time, a guy named David Epstein, was against it. That's why he thought if he got a cross-culture expert and Turkish expert, that that would be the end of it, and the kibosh. But, it wasn't. They ended up going anyway. So, there is a sub-political level of power somewhere in the bureaucracy.

Q: This is the thing, I think, that anybody in American foreign relations should understand, and that is that there are powers within powers within powers. There are people with theories who sell them to somebody. These may be good-hearted souls, but they have been sold a bill of goods, and there are all sorts of teams going out, and trying to use "American methods" on a culture where it isn't appropriate. It may never be appropriate within the filter, but certainly not within the economic restraints of where it is.

KENNEDY: Well, that is one of my greatest concerns about the field of conflict resolution. Trying to push people together who have had hundreds of years of animosity and live in that culture could be doing more damage than good.

Q: I sort of keep going back to the Turkish Anatolia experience, and Sudeten Deutch, which is essentially separation. This is a professional Foreign Service officer, not dealing with these problems per se, but I think at a certain point, there is no point in trying to put them back together again. Yet, you keep looking around at that. In the Middle East today, the Israelis are trying to live in Palestinian territory. At one time, it was considered a protective device, but it has turned into a colonial war. It's not going to work. In the long run, I think that Israel may have gone so far that one doubts the existence of Israel in the next 50 years or so, unless they change. In Yugoslavia, I think we have kind of moved toward a partitioning off, but we haven't quite accepted it yet.

KENNEDY: How long were you in Yugoslavia?

Q: Five years when it was all Yugoslavia. I studied the language. From 1962 to 1967, I was all over the place.

Let's go back to Ireland, which is sort of the main theme. In the last decade, what have you been doing with Ireland?

KENNEDY: Well, for the last three years, I have been doing an ongoing project with a woman named Mary Boergers. She served at the Maryland state legislature for 16 years, ran for governor against Parris Glendenning for the democratic nomination. Of course, she lost. But anyway, she is the Director of Political Management in Leadership at George Washington University. We have been doing this ongoing project with the women elected political leaders of the Northern Ireland Assembly, after the Good Friday Agreement was signed, and the local legislature of the Assembly was set up.

Q: You better explain what the Good Friday Agreement is. Somebody might not understand what it is.

KENNEDY: The Good Friday Agreement, which was signed in April, Good Friday, 1998, a political agreement that gave back political power to Northern Ireland so the people there could govern themselves. It broke the formal link of the British government overseeing Northern Ireland. There was a legislature set up. There was an election, and people ran for what would be just like our House of Representatives. People ran and there was an election They had been up and running, although in a couple of weeks, the next deadline loomed, and so they may be [inaudible] by the 23rd of September. But, anyway, Mary having served in the Maryland legislature where there were very few women, and knowing the Irish culture, wanted to do something to support them. She wanted to help them develop as politicians and as leaders. So, we have been doing an ongoing project and we have had representation from every political party except for Ian Paisley's. There is a woman from his party who refused to participate in anything we've done. But, we have been bringing the women together from the different political parties, trying to help them build... Well, first of all, get to know each other as human beings. We also give them leadership training, political training; Mary does that. We have done some conflict resolution and negotiation training, and we have done stress management for them.

We were going to have a retreat for them this past June, but with hoof and mouth disease postponing the British general election, which was also the representation in Northern Ireland, we couldn't do it. Instead, we did have a conference at the Parliament buildings at Stormont, and we brought together community leaders from different parts of Northern Ireland, representing different issues, who would want to lobby their elected officials on these issues. We had them together for half a day. Then, the women political leaders hosted a lunch for them. Then, they stayed for the second half, where the community people presented what their issues were, and then there was a dialogue. It was just an amazing, wonderful experience to help facilitate and observe. The growth in confidence of these women as leaders, as politicians, as individual human beings... You know, the Shin Fein IRA woman who is agreeing with the official unionist woman publicly in front of people, representing all sectors of the community and the political divide, and their growth. The support that we have given them, and the structure that we have given them... It's interesting, because with the whole third party issue, so many times we heard, while we were there, that they wouldn't have gotten together without us. So, there is still a need for an outsider to kind of help; the third party. It is fascinating.

Q: This is the thing that fascinates me, as I look all over the United States, (I'm using the role of the United States, not the State Department) and the world, with as you point out, why wasn't a Norwegian doing this? The Americans, you might say, in both the public and the private sector, seemed to be the catalyst. It doesn't always work, a lot of times it doesn't work, but there is nobody else doing that really.

KENNEDY: No. So often there is the expectation of the rest of the world that we need to be the catalyst. Like now, in the Middle East, we haven't done anything, and other parts of the world are very upset.

Q: Well, you've been in this conflict resolution business, off and on, outside official business circles, but obviously dealing with the process. Have you sensed a growing role of this type of thing; say within the European union, or elsewhere?

KENNEDY: Absolutely. The growth in the role of non-governmental organizations is just phenomenal, world wide. For instance, at the Conflict Institute of George Mason University, a very close friend of mine, a professor there, is doing this project in the Ukraine, for the last three years. The growth of non-governmental organizations is just amazing. Increasingly the NGOs are having more power, and they are pushing society and they are pushing politics. I had a Fulbright scholarship in 1995 in Portugal. There were six NGOs in the country; six total in the country. That is only six years ago. Now, there is a register of over 300.

Q: With these NGOs, are they coming from all over, or is the United States still a major contributor?

KENNEDY: I think the United States has modeled what kind of issues NGOs can be organized around. I think that's one of the goals. The State Department, is bringing groups to see so many of our NGOs.

Q: In your particular line of conflict resolution, do you see any others that are sort of following different lines? You don't have to worry about conflicts, you have conflicts all over the place.

KENNEDY: There are groups, associated with academic institutions worldwide that are doing it. The Quakers, the Mennonites, Eastern Mennonite University, in Harrisburg, VA has a very large conflict resolution institute, and they have been doing all kinds of work in Guatemala and El Salvador, over the years. They have a project right now in the Basque country. The Methodist Church does a lot of very interesting work and so does the World Council of Churches as well as the Loyalists Committee for Human Rights. Sometimes the groups will specialize in a certain part of society or a certain issue in society. But, the NGOs are doing all kinds of work.

Q: I always think of the European Union being the biggest body. Are there quite a few coming out of there?

KENNEDY: Absolutely, particularly in Austria and Germany.

Q: Do you always speak the same language? I'm not talking about...

KENNEDY: Conflict resolution jargon?

Q: Or is there a decided difference?

KENNEDY: There is some difference in the application of some concepts or need to adjust things culturally, but I would say that the concepts are pretty universal. These are North American culturally bound. In some parts of the world, they don't work. It's interesting, but one of my colleagues at Harvard was a Canadian woman, born and raised in Toronto. Her research was on a native American Canadian tribe, bordering Montreal. She was looking at their internal healing processes, ways of dealing with conflict, some of the stuff we were all working on together. She got her doctorate at Harvard, but would never work there. Yet, she adapted part of the facilitated dialogue approach, the problem solving workshop pioneered by Herb Kellman there. Part of it would work, but she had to incorporate the truth and the cultural values and processes. I think there are four UN universities, one of which is in Northern Ireland, at the University of Ulster. The mission is to promote exchange of theory and practice of conflict resolution world wide. There is one in Central America, in Oscar Arias. What country was Oscar Arias from? He was a Nobel peace prize winner, former president. I'm going blank.

Q: Would it be El Salvador?

KENNEDY: It wasn't El Salvador, and it wasn't Guatemala. It was Costa Rica. One of them is in Costa Rica, and one of them is in Japan. I forget where the fourth one is.

Q: Well, looking at this in 2001, all this effort that has been going on and you've been involved in one way or the other for so long in Northern Ireland, do you see it moving toward anything?

KENNEDY: That's a hard question. Yes, of course. But, it's a hard question looking at it today.

Q: Today is not a good day.

KENNEDY: Exactly. If you had asked me when I lived in Northern Ireland in the 1980s, I would have said "no." I'm 46 years old, and I'm an optimist. I'm not the glass is half full, I'm the glass is 99% full. I am an optimist. I never thought that they would have even gotten to that. So, the fact that they have gotten to that, and these changes have happened on the ground, and people's attitudes, and people's psyche's, and the structure of the society, a civil society, in the normalization of so many parts of education and business, and outside investment, and yet they are still stuck on these three last issues, too.

Q: But, you were saying that those aren't the real issues anyway.

KENNEDY: Exactly, because it's the psychological. So, I guess I would say is that what needs to happen is a lot more informed small group work, track II work, and one-on-one work with some of the political leaders. I tried to tell George Mitchell this.

Q: George Mitchell is the main mediator in this. Is he going back?

KENNEDY: No, he said he wouldn't go back again. He did an incredible job, but he didn't understand the total job. He didn't understand this other piece of what needed to happen. The reason why it hasn't been fully implemented is because this other focus was not dealt with, and still hasn't been. But, the society has changed so much. I have one wonderful, wonderful anecdote. This last trip in May and June, I had lunch with the private secretary of David Trimble, the leader, a man named David Labry, who is a very close friend of mine. It was a two-hour lunch, and he was giving me all the scenarios. I came away from that lunch exhausted. I was emotionally drained. My colleague, Mary, had had a meeting with a group of political women. One of the women from that political party was from downtown Belfast. She was coming back to pick me up. So, I came downstairs, and in the main hall entranceway of the Stormont in the Parliament Building, you always have about a dozen security people. You have to go through the X-ray and all that. So, I was standing there for about 10 minutes or so, and one of the security people came over and said, "Can I help you? Can I get you a cab?" I said, "My friend is coming to get me. I already had lunch. She'll be here and I don't mind waiting," because my head was spinning. He was very outgoing, very friendly. He started to talk and said, "Well, what do you do?" So, I told him that Mary and I had come here to do this conference with the women assembly leaders and the other meetings we were doing on this trip.

Then he started talking about the political process. I started to kid him and I said, "I bet you have stories to tell. You're standing here, which is the only way you can get in the building. You see everybody, employees, visitors, like me. I bet you have stories to tell." So, he said, "I do." I said, "Well, tell me what the most interesting thing is you observed since you have been in this job." He said, "Well, Barton McGinnis..." "He just admitted in the last few months that he was the commander of the IRA during bloody Sunday in Dairy, 30 years ago. Now, he is the minister of education in the Northern Ireland government. He said, "He got out of his car with his chauffeur the other day. He was coughing, he had a terrible cold or bronchitis, and I got him a glass of water." I said, "Well, why is that so interesting?" He said, "You have to understand. I am a retired policeman. I was stationed on Falls Road, which was the most difficult part of Belfast during the hunger strike. I've done some things I'm not proud of." I said, "Well, what do you mean, were you one of the police who collaborated with the paramilitaries?" He said, "Yes, I was, and I could give that man water. He talks to me when he comes in. I talk to him when he comes in. It's hard for somebody from the outside to understand the culture that he grew up in, the part of Northern Ireland where he grew up. His brother, actually, was an elected party member from Ian Paisley's party. He said, "My brother was coming through one day, and he saw me talking to one of the women assembly members (one of my friend's)." So, somebody like Larry to come from where he came from, as a retired policeman and the kinds of outside stuff he was involved in, now he is a security guard.

He said to me, "Martin McGinnis is doing a great job. Martin has really reformed the education system. It's going to affect my grandchildren." Then, he started talking about his grandchildren and how he wanted it different for them than how it was for his own kids. It was just an amazing conversation. How he has grown as an individual human being. As a policeman, for his own survival, they had to be his enemy. He had demonized them to shoot and to do what he did. But, the way that he came through it, and the way he has grown, and the normalization and the good things in the society since the Good Friday Agreement has happened. He could see the effects, not only for his grandchildren, but for himself. He also could see the effects for the society at large. It was an amazing conversation. So, when I think of that, there is hope. Even if the assembly fails to begin on the 23rd of September, which it looks like it's going to, there still is...

Q: It's still on the way.

KENNEDY: They cannot go back. They have come so far. It can't go back to where it was. I'm just hoping they look over at the Middle East and...

Q: Were you seeing any difference in the church, both Catholic and Protestant churches?

KENNEDY: Well, the Catholic churches came out in support of the police reform bill, which is one of the parts of the stumbling blocks to one of those three issues... Again, if you asked me a year ago if they would have done that, I would have said, "No." They are giving their support to the state. That is just an amazing step forward. So, the churches are making progress, too.

Q: Well, Katie, I've put you through the grill...

KENNEDY: I don't know what I said...

Q: For two and a half hours here. Thank you very much. This was great.

KENNEDY: You are very welcome.

End of interview