



## Transcript of Doris Kearns Goodwin Forum

Moakley Archive and Institute

[www.suffolk.edu/moakley](http://www.suffolk.edu/moakley)

**Title:** Doris Kearns Goodwin: “The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys: an American saga,” at Ford Hall Forum.

**Recording Date:** July 28, 1988

**Item Information:** Doris Kearns Goodwin: “The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys : an American saga,” at Ford Hall Forum. Ford Hall Forum Collection, 1908-2013 (MS113.3.1, item 0016) Moakley Archive, Suffolk University, Boston, MA.

**Digital Versions:** audio recording and transcript available at <http://moakleyarchive.omeka.net>

**Copyright Information:** Copyright © 1988 Ford Hall Forum.

### **Recording Summary:**

Transcription of a Ford Hall Forum that featured biographer Doris Kearns Goodwin discussing her book "The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys: an American saga" at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston. Goodwin goes behind the lace curtains of two families which gave rise to Camelot in America -- the Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys. She also describes her previous book project on Lyndon Johnson.

**Transcript Begins**

[00:00:26]

**DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN:** Thank you. There's probably no place that is better for me to be than here. It's like coming home, as it was said, because so much of the research over the last ten years took place not only in this building, but in the old days when the Kennedy Library was still storing its materials in Waltham, in what is now the Federal Records Center there, that's where I really began. And to be able to come and actually talk and finally know that it's done, so I don't have to answer that question I've been asking— for ten years people would say, "When are you going to be done?" I'm done, and here I am! So I'm very glad to be here.

[00:00:40]

But I thought before I talked a little bit about the research and the writing of *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*, I'd give you a sense of the context in which I started this book ten long years ago because a lot of the kind of materials that I wanted to concentrate on came out of that experience. I had just finished then, my biography on President Johnson and was really trying to come to psychological terms with the whole experience of having been close to that man for the last five years of his life. He was probably the most powerful person I have ever met in my entire life. He was a man who should have, in his retirement, had everything to be grateful for; his career in politics had reached its culmination in his becoming President of the United States. Or as he preferred to call himself, Leader of the Whole Western World. He was in good health. He had all the money he needed to pursue any leisure activity. He had several houses, cars, apartments, boats, a pool with floating phones and Muzak, and floating sandwiches on floating trays. He had a movie theatre and any movie he wanted to see. He had servants and the opportunity to travel.

[00:01:42]

And yet, the man I saw in those last years was a man who had been so immersed for so many years in the pursuit of power and work and individual success that he really had no emotional resources left to commit himself to anything, not even his family, now that the power and the presidency was gone. In fact, he could barely get through the days. It was almost as if those muscles of enjoying family life, reading, travel or recreation had gone unused for so long that he

couldn't call on them at the end of his life. And I'm convinced that as his spirits continued to sag, his body finally deteriorated until he slowly brought about his own death, spending his last days sadly and literally counting how many people were coming to visit his birth house, how many people were coming to his library. He so wanted more people to come to his library than came to his library in hopes that it was a signal somehow that he wouldn't be forgotten after all.

[00:02:38]

In fact, there were times when I imagine if he ever knew that the next book I worked on was one on the Kennedys after him [laughter], and that it was longer than the one on him. He'd be sitting there counting the pages and saying, "It's not fair, how could you have written 400 more pages on them than on me?"

[00:02:54]

But that experience of watching him, I think, really affected the central question that I brought with me to this new book. My fascination with the Kennedy family stemmed not so much with a single individual, but rather with the dynamics of that extraordinary family structure. I was a young mother myself during these last ten years and I kept coming back and back to the question of what it was that seemed to keep the bonds of this family so strong, despite a pursuit of power that was equal in intensity to Lyndon Johnson's, despite a drive for success equal to his, and despite an uncommon brush with tragedy. So that's really what I wanted to try and find out in the historical research for this book.

The experience with Lyndon Johnson affected one other sense of the way I did this book, too, because I think the kind of historical research that makes up the texture of the book was something that I knew I wanted to do because of all the time I had spent with him. After all, he was one of the greatest storytellers, Lyndon Johnson, of all time. The problem was that half his stories weren't true. [laughter] And I learned that more and more as time went on. So I was determined to do as much research on my own before interviewing all the subjects that I was going to talk to for this book so that I could bring a texture to my interviews and have some check on these stories

[00:04:07]

I think the funniest story of that with Lyndon Johnson had to do with one day I was swimming with him in the pool, which was an incredible experience because of all these floating trays and floating sandwiches around; you sort of worked your way around it. And you side stroked up and down the pool. And I had just finished reading a book on him by Hugh Sidey, and in the book Sidey had this wonderful paragraph in which he talked about the fact that Johnson had given a very rousing speech as President to the troops in Korea; he'd gone over to visit them. And he talked about the fact that his great-great-grandfather had died at the Battle of the Alamo. And Sidey said it was a wonderful speech; there was only one big problem and that was that his great-great-grandfather hadn't died at the Battle of the Alamo. [laughter] It was just that he wanted him to have died there. [laughter]

[00:04:46]

So I said to him as we were swimming through these trays, I said, "How could you say that if it didn't happen?" And so, he turned to me and he said, "Oh, you journalists, you're such sticklers for detail." [laughter] And then he said, "You'd make me remember the color of the wallpaper in the room where I first made love." And then he goes on to say for a wonderful half-hour, he said, "As a matter of fact, my great-great-grandfather died at the Battle of San Jacinto. And then I got a great lesson in the history of Texas on how that battle was much more important than the Battle of the Alamo. And by the time he finished, he was so persuasive, this man, that I was sure, well, maybe he's right and Sidey was picking him up on a little detail. Until when I did my own biography on him and did my own research, his great-great-grandfather had died at home in bed and hadn't seen San Jacinto either. [laughter]

[00:05:27]

So that experience, along with many others, convinced me that memory has a way of tricking all of us, especially people in public life who've been telling stories for such a long time they get used to the effect of the story being more important than the truth. And with people who've been interviewed so many times, they really forget, I think, what really happened. It's true of all of us to a certain extent, but much more true when you've told the stories more often.

So I discovered that the best check on individual memory, even though memory brings a book alive, so you want those interviews, is really the stuff of history – documents, letters, maps, old newspaper accounts. And I discovered in the process of going through all that stuff of history that I absolutely adored historical research. So much so that the real problem in finishing this book came in how to get myself out of each different era so that I could get into the next era, because it started way back in 1863, and I somehow had to get up to the inauguration.

[00:06:21]

I can still recall the excitement at the various discoveries along the way that I'd like to share a little bit with you today. That's the pleasure of being an historian, when you discover something and you know it's going to be something you can use. For example, I can still remember the day when I was sitting in the old City Map Room in the Boston Public Library and found in that room old plot plans and actual dimensions of what the tenement houses looked like and the size of them on Hanover Street in the North End in the 1860s where Rose Kennedy's parents were born and where they came from. Those figures allowed me to see that in the rear flats of these tenements, which were four or five stories high, they looked out onto adjoining buildings equally high, only four inches away. As a result, anybody who didn't live on the top floor, there was absolutely no sunlight coming into those rear flats.

And that gave me an understanding of a comment by a young girl that I'd read in a book by Jacob Riis, a classic work on poverty, in which he quoted a little girl saying that all her girlhood she had dreamed of one thing, of living in a flat where sunlight would come directly into her face. When you see those dimensions, I suddenly had a sense of what it might have been like to live in those tenements at that time.

[00:07:32]

Then, too, I can remember as if it were yesterday the first time I walked into St. Stephen's Church on Hanover Street, a church built by Bulfinch, an absolutely beautiful church. And I knew that it had been restored by Cardinal Cushing to look exactly as it had looked in 1863 when my book opens with the baptism in that church of John Fitzgerald, Rose's father. As soon as I saw the majesty of that place and was able to contrast it in my mind with the filth and the

ugliness of the surrounding slums, I understood more deeply than I had before the magic of the immigrant church. It was in fact a bulwark of beauty and order in an otherwise chaotic world of the slums, opening up to the immigrants an inner world of sounds, of smells and of privacy in such contrast to the noisy neighborhood in which they lived.

[00:08:21]

Then I remember another day the pleasure of discovering a handwritten diary by a Catholic priest in the 1860s that described the fragility of life in immigrant Boston. Every night, he said, in a somewhat irritated tone, he would be called out to administer last rites to feverish children. "I can never sleep," he said, "because the parents keep assuming their children are dying, even when they're not dying." But as one looked at the medical understanding of that time, most parents had seen one child die. As a result, when another child got sick, there was no way of knowing that child might get well.

[00:08:53]

The state of medicine was so primitive, there was so little understanding of the cause or the cure of most of the diseases that descended upon the cities, from cholera to tuberculosis. In fact, when I think of the panic that AIDS has produced in us today, one can imagine what it must have been like to live in an era where disease after disease came upon a neighborhood and there was absolutely no understanding of why it was coming or when it would go.

[00:09:16]

Medical practices were so primitive. I remember the day I found in the Rare Books Room of the Harvard Medical School some old papers of doctors, and they were complaining about this new practice of cleanliness that was being introduced into operations and how inconvenient it was. And as I saw some of the descriptions of how they were beginning, reluctantly, to put it into practice, if a doctor or a surgeon dropped an instrument on the floor during the operation, he would pick it up, blow on it, and then return it to use. So one can imagine what was going on in those days.

[00:09:45]

In a lighter vein, I remember the delight when I found an old set of materials on the peddling profession. Rose Kennedy's father John Fitzgerald, his father in turn, her grandfather Thomas Fitzgerald, the first Irishman who came here to America, was a peddler at the beginning in the North End. So this is what happens. As an historian, I started finding all sorts of books on peddling. It gives you a great excuse to read whatever you want to read.

And my favorite piece of this book had to do with the fact, they were telling the story of a Richard Sears who was a telegraph operator in Minnesota. And one day a shipment of watches came in to his train station and no one picked them up. So he decided to peddle them and see if he could make money. Well, he sold them all and made a good profit, so he decided to become a peddler full-time; and he did mostly watches. So then one day he decided he'd better put an ad in the paper to get someone to repair the watches. And he did, and the ad was responded to by Alvah Roebuck. And that was how Sears and Roebuck was eventually formed. And you just sit there, and it's so exciting to find it out.

[00:10:44]

Or even now, when I walk past the corner of Beacon and Park Street, right across from the State House, I know that is where John Fitzgerald, Rose's father, stood as a newspaper boy for two years when he worked full time between high school and going further on to school. I can imagine his delight – and I heard him tell Rose; I mean, he told Rose about it – when he first saw the world of Beacon Hill for the first time from that corner. He talked to his daughter about seeing silk-hatted coachmen for the first time; women with fur robes in their carriages and fur muffs on their hands. And he told her that it became a sight that he craved for the rest of his life. He wanted his children to have that kind of world, to have the access to it.

It's one of the special things about Boston. What was then the tenements of the North End were so close to what was the Beacon Hill and the Brahmin world that one could see and get visions and dream as a result.

[00:11:34]

I remember another day laughing aloud in the library out in Holy Cross where Rose Kennedy's father John Fitzgerald's papers were, some of those were out there, at discovering the story of his relationship with a woman by the unfortunate name of Tootles. It was hard to imagine her as an intellectual companion to Mayor Fitzgerald with this name of Tootles. The story is a wonderful story in Boston history because it turned out that Fitzgerald was a far more substantial mayor than I had realized. He was in his second term. He was actually a much more substantial figure than Curley was at that time, James Michael Curley, and he wanted to run for a third term. But Curley wanted to run for his first term as mayor, and he was very upset that Fitzgerald was going to run. Because all the equivalent of polls – which weren't polls, but people and leaders in those days – said that Fitzgerald would win hands down.

[00:12:21]

But for the fact that Curley found out that Fitzgerald liked to go to this Ferncroft Inn in Danvers where this young lady named Tootles was a cigarette girl and he had a sort of thing with her. So Curley sent a letter to the Fitzgerald household with a black-bordered envelope around it, threatening him that, if he ran again, he would expose this relationship.

[00:12:40]

But still, Fitzgerald stayed in the race until Curley finally decided he had to take more public action. Sometimes I walk around and I see posters for lectures and I picture these. He decided to have a series of public lectures contrasting ancient and modern times given by a professor at Fordham. So the first lecture was going to be corruption in ancient and modern times. And he had the professor at Fordham describe how in the old days the Roman senators used to divert the waters from the aqueduct into their own homes to use so they didn't have to pay for water. Well, so, too, he claimed, all of John Fitzgerald's brothers– Fitzgerald had nine brothers, and just like the Kennedys later – it was a wonderful echo – they were all involved at city hall so that the newspapers kept talking about the imperial Fitzgeralds and the Fitzgerald dynasty. And he claimed that they all had their water meters taken out of their house and they weren't paying their water bills. [laughter] So a lot of people came to this lecture, evidently.



But then the next one had the posters up. And the next lecture was entitled, with posters all over, "Great Lovers in Western History." [laughter] And the subtitle was, "From Cleopatra to Tootles." [laughter] I gather as soon as Fitzgerald saw these posters, he decided that the wisdom would be to back out of the race, which he did. And fascinatingly, he never won political office again. Curley then went on to become *the* figure in Boston politics.

I remember one day when I was talking to Mrs. Kennedy, when she was about 90, she still had that feeling of anger toward Curley, saying, "You know, if it hadn't been for him, my father would have been the one of the last hurrah, the one they were all writing about." But they got back at Curley later on, believe me.

[00:14:09]

But I guess perhaps the greatest delight in this whole process came, which John alluded to, in the ability to use this 150 cartons of previously unused material. After I'd been at research for a couple years, it turned out that the Kennedy family had had all these boxes of things they had saved all these years, Joe and Rose Kennedy, in the attic in Hyannisport, in Joe's Park Avenue offices in New York. They finally sent them to the library for safekeeping, though they weren't yet opened for ordinary research.

[00:14:35]

I got permission from Senator Kennedy to go through them. And precisely because they hadn't been catalogued yet, so that everything was chaotically mixed together, you really felt that you were getting an insight into the way a family lived. Everything was there. They had saved memos from the old days in all the businesses Joe was in. Old report cards from Joe and Rose's days in school. Letters from old boyfriends, Joe and Rose's. Thousands of letters to their children. Stockbroker sheets. Ticket stubs from plays they went to. Dance cards. Even one day Gloria Swanson's income tax statements popped out of a folder on something else. [laughter]

And the documents were so fascinating in their own right and did, in fact, give me a spate of new discoveries. Again, I can remember one day when I was going through the 1920s and trying to discover what it was like for Joe to be a stockbroker in the 1920s. And it's so interesting, in those

materials, we talk about insider trading today; well, in those days they could simply, without the SEC being even in existence, write one another, the guys on the top, and say, "I hear you're getting a new business, or you're going to acquire a new company. Shouldn't I buy stock before you do so?" And the guy would write back, "Oh, yes, do it tomorrow and then no one else will know." This was all in letters, written.

[00:15:41]

But then you read about the impact that that insider trading has on all the people who don't know what's going on, just as it happens today, who put their life savings in assuming the market is fairly fair. And you read about it, but I didn't understand it emotionally until one day I came upon a letter and it was huddled somehow in a folder on the Bronxville house mortgage. And it was actually a death threat to Joe Kennedy from a man who had put all his life savings in a stock in which Joe Kennedy and his friends had built it up – they used to form pools in those days – and then they all would get out when the money got high and leave all the people in at the bottom to lose their life savings. It was a standard practice at the time of the insiders.

[00:16:19]

Well, this man wrote: "You have your Rolls Royces, you have your cars, you have your servants, but we now have nothing. And I just want you to understand that you've destroyed our lives, and some day I'm going to get you." And why he saved that all that time, what it meant– just emotionally I can remember the feeling I had, that I finally understood something about the inequity of the system in the 1920s when these people would be destroyed when the people on the top were able to make their money.

But I suppose the funniest moment in this whole business of memory and documents came over the issue of Gloria Swanson. I was able to go down and see Mrs. Kennedy quite a lot during the time when she was 88 – she was young – 90, 92; she will now be 97 this summer. And in those years, she was acute in her memory of the far distant past, and she loved to talk about her days and her girlhood days in Boston. And I think the pleasure I had and the pleasure she had in our conversations came from the fact I'd done so much research. All these years of sitting in the library meant that when she brought up something about Boston, I could keep the conversation

going. She'd mention something to me, partial memory, I'd go back and do more research. The next time I saw her, I could bring her an old clipping from a newspaper, or bring her a picture, or bring her some copy of one of these things, and that's what would stimulate her memory all the more.

[00:17:35]

And I can remember at nighttime we'd go out and take walks together. She was athletic, even then, it was incredible. She was still swimming, taking long walks at night. But she did seem frail and I was always so afraid that she'd fall and something would happen to her, and I'd feel terrible. She meanwhile was constantly worried about me falling in some pothole, and she'd say, "Dearie, be careful, there's a little pothole over here." She had her flashlight and she took complete charge of the walks.

But given that kind of a relationship, which was really formed as an historian talking to an older woman who loved talking about the past, there was just no way that I really had the chutzpah to say to her, "Would you like to talk to me about Gloria Swanson?" I'm not Barbara Walters; there were times when I thought I needed a little Barbara Walters in me, but I didn't have it.

[00:18:17]

And so, I just knew it was going to have to go unasked and unanswered, even though I knew from Joe's papers that he'd had a very long, working involvement with Gloria. I knew from Gloria's memoirs that they had had more than a working involvement. I knew from all the people I'd interview in Hollywood that it was clear that they'd had a relationship. And I did understand the impact of that relationship on the family's life.

You can imagine my surprise when one day Rose turned to me at lunch and she said, "Oh, I'd like to talk to you about Gloria Swanson today." I thought I was going to faint. And then the story she told me was so wonderful; it was just such a great image of two older women later in their lives battling for something, even though Gloria was already dead by then.

[00:18:51]

Gloria had written her memoirs in which she said that the three of them had taken a trip to Europe together on a boat, which was in the late 1920s. And on the boat she said Joe was so attentive to her. They were going over because Gloria was producing a movie in France, which Joe had backed for her. And Joe was so attentive to her that she said she couldn't understand why Rose wasn't furious with her. But instead, Rose was always solicitous, graceful and charming. And Gloria concluded either Rose was naive, a saint or an even better actress than she was.  
[laughter]

[00:19:21]

So then suddenly Mrs. Kennedy started saying, "I'd like to tell you about this boat trip on the way over to Europe. Poor, poor, poor Gloria." And I said, "What do you mean, poor Gloria?" And then she described how on the way over Gloria found out because a letter came to her, it was supposed to be addressed to her husband who was the Marquis de la Falaise of France, but it came to the wrong gender, marquis instead of marquess, or something like that, so it got to Gloria. And it was a love letter from Constance Bennett to her husband, Gloria's husband. And Gloria was so sad and so upset that she cried the whole way over.

And I could really see a little relish in Mrs. Kennedy's voice [laughter] as she told me how "I had to put my arms around her, and Joe and I had to comfort her the whole way over. I felt so badly for her." So I thought this is incredible; one woman 90, the other 84, telling this very different tale.

[00:20:05]

And so, I decided I would describe the boat trip at length. So I went and I found out it was the *Ile de France*, and I knew it was the first stock ticker. Irving Berlin was on the same trip. They used to print passenger lists in those days. And then I can remember one day, I was here in the library to find evidence that they hadn't even been on the same boat together. I thought then, what is going on? And the story actually had an answer to it, which was that Gloria deliberately wanted to remember they were on that boat going to Europe together because she then used it as a conclusion that she lost her husband because of Joe's attentiveness to her. The husband felt very

bad, but she'd rather lose the husband because of her actions than some woman from the outside coming in, right?

[00:20:40]

And so, they hadn't gone over together. She had found out about Connie Bennett when they were in Europe. And they came back on the boat together. Not a huge discrepancy, but one that both women remembered the same way, for some reason. And I think it was just such a great, wondrous way of understanding how memory serves the purposes, because for Mrs. Kennedy, she then said, "Because Gloria felt so bad when we got to Europe, all the photographers were going to take pictures of us getting off the boat. But I was so exhausted from taking care of her the whole time that I stayed in the stateroom and Joe went out on the deck with her to try and keep her together. And that's when those photographers took pictures, and that's when all those silly stories started."

So we all have ways of remembering the past as we want to.

But in these documents, what I found, they were scrapbooks and pictures, I found pictures of Mrs. Kennedy at age 17 when she was the daughter of the mayor. And it was clear from these pictures that she went everywhere with her father. There was a look of defiance, of beauty – she was a beautiful young girl – even of sensuality in her face that I'd never really seen before. She'd be with him at the christening of a ship. Her mother hated politics, so she became the father's hostess. She would be the one going with him to throw out the first ball at Fenway Park. She'd be the one going to the opening of Symphony Hall. A jaunty confidence in this young girl, as if she had a world without limits. Which indeed she did seem to have.

[00:21:56]

She was very smart in high school. I remember she told me she was almost number one in her class, but she just couldn't beat Tom. And she said that again with a real emotional memory, as if, "Darn Tom, I wish I had beaten him out." But she didn't think the world ever understood that she was intelligent as she had been. And she had gotten into Wellesley College in her junior year in high school and was all set to go, two weeks away from going, in fact. And she told me one

day when I talked to her and asked her about her regrets in life that this was one of the things that made her saddest all of her long life, the fact that two weeks before she was ready to go, her father came home and he simply told her that she was going to go instead to the Convent of the Sacred Heart.

[00:22:35]

And what happened was, he had met the Cardinal of Boston on the street corner, told him Rose was going to Wellesley. The Cardinal was very upset that his daughter was being sent to a secular school. So the father, to please the Cardinal, decided to just shift her to the Convent of the Sacred Heart, which wasn't a college system then. It later became one. And as a result, she went here in Boston. And then the following year, she was sent off to the Convent of the Sacred Heart in what was then Prussia, a very strict convent where you had silence for five hours a day, where you had to wake up at five in the morning without heat because they were trying to teach you certain things like nuns would learn.

In the letters she wrote home to her girlfriends, who did go to Wellesley – her three best friends went; they were all going to go together – suggested a terrible sense of loneliness and a real understanding that her life was not what it would have been had she gone to college. My own sense in looking at the sadness she was still expressing at age 90 was that she felt betrayed by her father even more deeply because she had always thought he loved her, which he did, but she had to understand that he was putting his needs before hers.

[00:23:32]

The interesting thing, however, is that it was in that convent system that she found her faith. I had always thought she'd been born as a nun, but in fact she really hadn't. It was during those years that she became such a good student of the Sacred Heart that the faith came into her. And it was that faith, as we all know, that gave her the strength to get through life's ravages.

[00:23:50]

And it also was interesting that the fact that her father had not allowed her to do this, I think, gave her the courage later to turn against him and marry the man she loved, Joe Kennedy.

Fitzgerald never quite thought Joe had enough prospects for his daughter Rosie, and he kept her from marrying him for eight years. But finally, after a long courtship, I think she was able to say yes to this man she loved, even though her father didn't want her to, because of that sense of disappointment in her father early on. And yet, never again, I think, after that experience was she quite as radiant, quite as much filled with a sense of limitlessness and her own independent ambitions as she was at 17.

[00:24:27]

But all of that drive and ambition that she'd had as a young girl I think got turned toward her family. It was probably the source of her determination to create within her family the love of politics and ritual that she had experienced every day in the Irish neighborhood of Boston. It wasn't so easy to do in Brookline in the 1920s. It was an era when the immigrant church as a whole was losing its force. Political parties were no longer as dominated by the ward bosses in the neighborhoods where politics had been an essential part of these immigrants' lives. Politics was no longer the same source of entertainment that it had once been.

[00:25:01]

But she decided she was going to build these things into her family, even if it wasn't happening in the larger world outside. In fact, she had for a while felt so isolated in Brookline and so frustrated at being home all day with Joe out to work and not having that exciting world she'd once had – three kids, a fourth on the way – she actually left Joe for a period of time, went home to her father in a way of trying to sort out "what am I going to do?" And that's when she came back determined somehow to build all the things she loved into her family.

[00:25:29]

So from then on, she started taking the kids on historical tours every day. I can imagine her dressing them, dragging them out. They'd go to Bunker Hill one day, to Concord another day. She would then have things to talk about with Joe when he came home, things that she had enjoyed. And it was then that she up the rituals at dinner, that they would not only sit and eat at dinner at the same time every night, but – incredible to me, having two little kids; it's enough to

get them to do that – she was going to put on bulletin boards the discussions and the issues they would discuss that night at dinner. [laughter]

[00:25:55]

It was then that she was certain that the Church was going to become a part of everyday life, not just something to go to on Sundays. And yet, it's so fascinating to see the patterns over generations because, here, when Rose grew older, when her daughters started growing up, when they got to the choice of whether they would go to college or the Convents of the Sacred Heart, despite the fact that she had been so hurt by that decision, she absolutely insisted that every daughter go to a Convent of the Sacred Heart instead of to college.

[00:26:22]

And so, too, though she had finally gone against her father's wishes and decided that love won out to marry Joe, when her daughter Kathleen fell in love with the Duke of Devonshire's son, Billy Hartington, she could not give her any acceptance of that marriage because he was a Protestant young man. It was really the first great family crisis. She and Kathleen had been so close; they were like mother and daughter– more than that, like sisters. They'd traveled to Russia together, they'd traveled to Europe together. And Kathleen so wanted her mother's support when she married Billy in 1944.

[00:26:56]

It went back and forth. They tried to get the Vatican to give some sort of dispensation so they could get married, but Billy couldn't bring up his kids Catholic because he was in the Church of England. And when there was finally going to be no technical way to do it, Kathleen went ahead and married him anyway, but still hoping that her mother would send some note that said she approved. But instead, a cable came to Kathleen right before she married: "Heartbroken. You've been wrongly influenced. I'm sending Archie Spell" – who was Cardinal Spellman; they had to have codes in their telegrams – "sending Archie Spell to talk. Anything done in the name of Our Lord will be rewarded hundredfold."

[00:27:29]



But the breach was never healed between mother and daughter because she had to marry Billy then or it might have been years later because he was going back to the war. So she did marry him, and then four months later Billy was killed in World War II. And Kathleen always believed somehow that her mother believed that it was God's will that Billy be killed because it allowed Kathleen back into the Church again.

So that love of the mother and daughter was really hurt by the very thing that Rose had gone through in her earlier life, but wasn't able to change around when it came to mother and daughter later on.

[00:28:01]

I think the most difficult moment in my interviews with Mrs. Kennedy surrounded the whole question of Rosemary, the retarded daughter. I remember one day we were in the house and we passed a picture of Rosemary, and she said to me what I didn't understand then, she said, "You know, the day Joe had that operation done on Rosemary, she went all the way back, after all the years I spent, trying to give her tutors, trying to make everything okay for her." And it turned out from later research that what she meant by that was that Joe had found out in the 1940/'41 period about a new operation called a lobotomy, which promised to bring relief for people like Rosemary who was becoming more and more frustrated as she reached her early 20s with the limitations that her retardation had brought about on her, so much so that she was reacting violently to the people around her.

[00:28:44]

And this operation, incredibly enough, promised that if you took out a certain part of the brain, the part that controlled anticipation of the future, you could still function day-to-day because that was a different part of your brain. So with an ice pick, either through the eye or a saw that went through one's head actually, they cut that part of the brain out. And somehow, they had all these case studies that claim that people would wake up on the operating table suddenly feeling great. And the guy won a Nobel Prize for this operation.

We now know how devastating it was. And in Rosemary's case, it was even more so because something actually went wrong, even more than usual and she couldn't even speak after the operation was finished.

[00:29:23]

And when Rose told me about the fact that Joe had had this operation done, but hadn't shared the knowledge with her that he was going to do it, then I saw, for the only time really, a bitterness in her towards her husband, whom she absolutely adored. But obviously, that sense— she said, "I might have even gone along with it, but I didn't get the chance to have the knowledge that it was happening."

[00:29:40]

Joe Kennedy was an extremely complex man, with enormous strengths and enormous weaknesses. The documents in the Kennedy papers provided new insights into him as far as I was concerned. I think I understood more the source of his continuing drive to make his kids succeed. It really was in the unfulfilled longings that he had experienced growing up here in Boston. Had he come as an Irishman to another city, it might have been different, but here he kept banging his head against all the Protestant establishment. He wanted in to that world. Most people didn't care, but he cared about not getting into the clubs at Harvard, about not getting into a golf club in Cohasset. So he made a decision early on, I think, that he was never going to give loyalty to any institution or any organization because he'd been so hurt by Harvard, by the clubs, beyond his family. But he was going to make sure that his family got to walk wherever they wanted to go. It was really that sense. A lot of people, when they reach positions of wealth and power stop; they don't need to keep striving. But he still had to strive because there were these unfulfilled longings in him.

[00:30:38]

And yet, the interesting thing is, though those kids were part of his own dreams, he also loved those kids more than I had understood. There was a single-mindedness in his approach to that family that produced in those kids an adoration of their father, unlike any I've really ever seen in public life. The letters that he wrote to his kids, which numbered in the hundreds upon hundreds,

revealed a far warmer, shrewder, much more tolerant father than Rose was even as a mother. And the children adored him.

[00:31:06]

I think the key was that he always gave them love, whatever they did. But he held out his respect for them as something to be earned depending on how hard they worked and how well they did. And the thing is that most children of powerful parents, especially a powerful father and his sons, they're stunted by growing up in the shadow of that great oak. These kids grew beyond their father, and I think he deserves the credit for that more than I had known.

[00:31:30]

I guess the thing that was the hardest to try and understand was the emergence of young John Fitzgerald Kennedy within this family structure. He had so many more difficulties to overcome than I had understood. Because within the family, it was clear that Joe, Jr., the eldest son, was indeed the golden child. I'd always heard that, but these papers made it even clearer than I knew. He was so handsome, even more than we remember John Kennedy. My research assistant had his picture all around her wall for the last ten years, to the dismay of her boyfriend, hundreds of pictures of him because he was that good looking.

[00:32:00]

He was disciplined. He was hard working. The model child. He was reverent. His mother's favorite, as well as his father's. He had so completely internalized his father's ambition and drive, the thing that happened that was so ironic was that when the father mellowed out and wanted to call some of that ambition back, it was too late. It was too deeply engrained in this young child. Even at Harvard, for example, when Joe was a senior he had hurt his leg very seriously and his father didn't think he should go out for football to get his letter, even though the father had always encouraged him to do that before. But even though he wrote letters to Joe saying, "It's not worth a mangled knee; just play around and have a good time, but don't hurt your future," Joe wrote back and he said, "I've got to go out for it, I've got to do this." And he did, and he hurt his knee and he had to have an operation.

[00:32:42]

Much more tragically, when Joe got into World War II, he was a pilot in England, he had completed all the missions he needed to in order to come home. And he was ready to come home. But he hadn't really done anything great, as he used to. Most of his life, he had always been very special – in school, in camp, everywhere he went. But it just happened that the missions he had done, they had done their job, but nothing had happened on them. So he kept volunteering for more and more, almost as he were driven by some internal machine to do something great. Perhaps it had something to do with the fact that John Kennedy, his younger brother, had by then accomplished his great feats with the PT-109. Perhaps it was that he was in love with a woman who was in England. But nevertheless, his father kept sending letters to him, letter after letter, "Please, Joe, just come home. I love you. Don't tempt the fates, just come home."

[00:33:29]

And yet, Joe kept volunteering. And a week before he was ready to come home, they needed a volunteer for a very dangerous mission. They had discovered one of the places where Hitler was supposedly launching the V2 rockets from, which were causing immense damage in London because they were the first times they [used] unmanned rockets. And the only way they could get at this bunker, which was a concrete bunker, absolutely fortified – it was in northern France – was to fill a plane with explosives, guide the plane toward the bunker, have the pilot parachute out, and then let the whole plane with all these explosives go into the bunker, hopefully destroying it.

Well, Joe was in this plane. He volunteered to fly it. And before he got to the bunker, he was supposed to parachute out. But something went terribly wrong with the wiring in the plane the explosion took place while he was still in the plane. And not a single trace of his body was ever found.

[00:34:18]

When I saw the letters that what happened is Joe had written his father right before he died telling him, "I'm on another mission, Dad. But don't worry, it's nothing dangerous at all," that

letter came to his father after he died. And Rose told me that the result was that when Joe opened that letter and saw it, that's when he completely fell apart. One can imagine seeing a letter from your child after you know the child is already dead.

[00:34:40]

The devastating impact on Joe, Sr., was so great that the scar never really healed. I found much later a letter that he wrote to his friend, Walter Howey, in 1958, when Howey lost his wife. Howey was a newspaper editor in Boston for the *Herald*. He was also the prototype for *The Front Page*, so he was a real character, evidently, of an editor. But he'd been married to his wife for 50 years and she died in 1958, and Howey was devastated by the death. And Joe wrote a letter to him in which he said, "Walter, I know what you're feeling right now. My life has never been the same since my son, Joe, died." – and this is now 14 years after that – There's a scar that has never healed. Rose had her religion, so she got by. But I fear, Walter, you're more like me than like Rose. So I know what you're going through, and I just want you to know that a friend understands your pain." And Walter died a month later, and people said it was heartbreak out of the loss of his wife.

Well, once you could understand that bond between Joe, Sr., and Joe, Jr., it gave a certain lie to the stereotype that we've always heard, that he turned at once to Jack and said, "Okay, now take your brother's place." In fact, obviously, that couldn't have been so. Indeed, the father and the son circled around each other for years, in my judgment, before a new emotional bond was forged between them.

[00:35:52]

As I said, Jack's childhood had been much more difficult than I had realized. For one thing, his battle with ill health was a much more courageous battle than we ever knew. The Addison's disease that was finally diagnosed in his late 20s had probably had an impact on his earlier life because he kept having a series of mysterious illnesses all through school – ranging from malaria, to jaundice, to hepatitis, to anemia. He was out of school continually. He was sloppy at home, unlike Joe. He was disorganized, rebellious. He performed less well in school even though I think he was smarter than his brother Joe. And worse, as far as Rose went, he was irreverent as

well. There's this wonderful scene where she had all the kids kneel down to pray for a happy death. And he was instead caught praying for a puppy dog. [laughter]

[00:36:37]

But I'm convinced that it was his way of surviving in that family structure. He became like the Pied Piper to his sisters and brothers, always on the edge of almost breaking the rules, filled with vitality, filled with humor and wit, with the self-deprecating humor that we all came later to love so much. He found his source of self-confidence in the love of his brothers and sisters, his nurses and governesses; and then, in larger and larger numbers, his kids in school, his PT-109 buddies. He knew somehow when he was with people how to make them feel that that was all he cared about, was them at that moment, that kind of intense vitality. And it was that charm that anyone who knew him remembered all their lives.

But when his brother died, he suddenly had to rethink who he was. He could no longer be the Pied Pieper, sort of on the edge of breaking the rules, not having to have this same serious purpose in life. He did agree in 1946 to run for the Congress, but I think it took longer than that before he realized that maybe politics was what he really wanted for himself, not just to salve his father's wounds. I think he finally came, after years in politics, after his sister Kathleen died, after his Addison's disease was diagnosed, after his Grandfather Fitzgerald died, to really understand that there was a world out there that politics reached to. And that he could somehow do something about that, that there was a world that could be conquered and cajoled, just as he had done with all these smaller groups all of his life. There was a certain bond that I think he was looking for in that larger world that was going to help to make up for some of that sadness of his childhood.

[00:38:02]

The interesting thing Hemingway once said is that everyone is broken by life; but in the end, some people are stronger in the broken places. I'm convinced that's the magic of John Fitzgerald Kennedy that he was stronger because of the hurts, and he became a very strong adult man. Perhaps it was true of all of us in the early 1960s, that because of whatever it was he projected, we felt in that decade a little stronger and a little younger than we had before.

[00:38:29]

For I think there was a sense in which the story of the three generations of Fitzgeralds and Kennedys came full cycle in Kennedy's presidential campaign. For one thing, John Fitzgerald Kennedy possessed a profound respect for the power of symbolism, the appeal of pageantry and ritual. I think it had its antecedents in the days when the rituals of the Catholic Church and the Saints' Day parades were a welcomed relief from the terrible struggle of daily life. And that sense of occasion was an important source of John Kennedy's political strength.

[00:38:58]

And then too, there was the triumph of the first Catholic elected to the presidency, not simply a personal victory for Joe Kennedy's sense of exclusion; much more importantly, a barrier broken that would affect all sons of immigrants and all religious groups previously denied this highest office in the land. It was in fact the culmination of the great immigrant wave of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century which had so fundamentally – and much for the better in my judgment – restructured our nation.

[00:39:22]

There was a linkage as well in these generations in the presence at the inaugural of an old Catholic Bible with a gold cross in the center. I discovered that this Bible had accompanied the Fitzgeralds in its very journeys, from the narrow streets of the North End, to Concord when they moved out there, to Dorchester. Then with the death of John Fitzgerald, it had gone to the attic of his son, Thomas Fitzgerald. And evidently, right before the inauguration, the Kennedy family were looking at pictures of Eisenhower's inauguration and they noticed a Bible, and they decided "we need a family Bible." So they sent the Secret Service to find this Bible in the attic.

[00:39:55]

And in this same Bible that he used at the inauguration is recorded all the names of the first generation of Fitzgeralds back in the 1850s and '60s – the 13 brothers and sisters of Fitzgerald. Then his children, his six children. Then the nine children of Joe and Rose. Now, so many of these children had died before they even had a chance to live; others had lived to see their

dreams corroded. And yet there they were. They would all share in a moment of glory as that old Bible was placed on the podium and played such a central role in the inauguration of the first Catholic President in the country.

[00:40:30]

But then, as we all know, it lasted only 1000 days. And within five years, Jack's brother, Bobby, would also be dead. And still, Rose could say that she was certain that if her children came back and were to know that they were going to have these shortened lives, they would still choose to be the same people because their lives had been so intense, so full and so vital. And that understanding or that feeling gives her a serenity that I can only marvel at.

[00:40:55]

I can only say for me as a biographer that somehow living with this family's story for the past ten years has heightened within me an awareness of the vulnerability of life that I might not otherwise have had. The book starts in an age and a place in 1863 where life is extremely fragile for everyone. In the slums of Boston, three out of ten infants died before the age of one. Parents were expected to bury at least one child, if not more.

[00:41:21]

Now, the story should have been one of upward progress, such that as the Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys grew in wealth and power, as medical technology advanced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the later generations of Kennedys should have been able to expect that the proper order of things would be preserved, that the parents would die before their children. And yet, as we all know, the Kennedy story tells such a different tale. Of the nine children in that third generation, all of them given the best schools, the best opportunities and the best healthcare, four would die prematurely, beginning with Joe, Jr., at 29; with Kathleen at 28 in a plane crash; and of course with Jack and Bobby at 46 and 43 by assassins' bullets.

[00:41:58]

I think the understanding of that story revealed to me a deeper appreciation of the arbitrariness of things that I might otherwise have had. It made me appreciate even more the specialness of my



own children's young lives. My two sons were born during the course of this book; they are now aged ten and nine, their whole lives having been encompassed by this book, which is really why it took so long. At night, when I would tuck them into bed, I think I could savor even more the warmth of these moments, sobered as I've been by the recognition that however perfect life may seem for me and for them right now— and they are such wonderful kids. And I remember the other night when one of my kids turned to me right before he went to sleep and he said, "I love my life." And yet, this story has to tell one that life will inevitably have in store, even for him, its share of heartaches and disappointments.

[00:42:44]

But I realized as I was putting them to bed that no one could still take away the deep, deep pleasure of what we had right then as they were feeling that sense of their love of life, no matter what happened in the future. And I think for that understanding, as well as for the deepening knowledge that writing history and biography is what I want to do for the rest of my life, I will always be grateful to these two extraordinary families, the Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys.

Thank you very much. [applause]

Thank you. I would be more than glad to take questions on anything – Johnson, Kennedy. The Red Sox I would have said, except that I'm so depressed. [laughter] Yes?

**AUDIENCE QUESTION:** I have a question, so little attention being paid to Jackie Kennedy previous to the inauguration. I was wondering why. And I'm also curious about her.

[00:44:03]

**DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN:** Sure, I think I can answer that question. One of the most difficult things about the book was where to end it, because it was getting so long, and I knew that it was going to be hard enough for people to carry it. And I love to read books at night in bed, and I knew if they couldn't hold it as they went to sleep at night, they'd really get upset, because I knew how I felt. [laughter]

So there is no question that after 1950 when John Kennedy makes the decision to really go into politics on his own that then it shifts gears a little bit and becomes more a way of trying to understand him and the heritage that made him and to get to the inauguration. Because I wanted to end at the inauguration, rather than trying to offer new insight into the characters at that time, who had been much more written about previous to this book than the earlier ones were. So I feel that, too; it was just really a question that space had run out.

[00:44:48]

I can give you one story though about Mrs. Kennedy that really certainly touched me this summer. We did have the occasion to go to Caroline's wedding in Hyannisport. And I understood there as I saw her two children, Caroline and John, the extraordinary mother that she has been. And I will always respect her for that.

[00:45:06]

What happened was that at the bridal dinner the night before the dinner, John Kennedy, Jr., gave a toast. And he's an extraordinary kid. Both those kids have a poise and a sense of distance that is different; they are set apart from all the other cousins. And I think she's the one that did that. He stood up and he talked about the fact that he was so worried about meeting Ed's, Caroline's husband-to-be, because he'd been so close to Caroline all his life. And if he didn't like Ed, what was it going to be like?

[00:45:38]

But he said the first time Ed came for dinner, he was so cute, he said he remembered looking— he dropped his napkin and he looked under the table and she was holding hands with him. And he thought, "Oh, my God, this is really serious. I've got to make a good impression." [laughter] And he said he was so pleased that, as the years when by, he and Ed had become so close that Ed had actually asked him to be his best man at the wedding. And so he said, "For all these years, it's just been the three of us – Mommy, Caroline and I. And now there's a fourth."

[00:46:02]

And I'll tell you, when I heard him say that and saw the emotion in his voice and in his whole manner toward Caroline, after this I said to Mrs. Kennedy, I said, "You've got to be incredibly proud about the bond you've created between those two children of yours." And she looked at me and she just straight out said, "Do you know that being a mother is the most important thing I've ever done in my life. Thank you very much."

[00:46:22]

I'll tell you, that part of her, whatever else one thinks about the photographers, the clothes, the wealth, the money, I will always respect her for that. And I think she's been an extraordinary mother.

Anything else? Sure, right here.

**AUDIENCE QUESTION:** I had that same question about Senator Kennedy, Ted Kennedy. I was hungry in the book to know about him, and I felt the saddest of the children somehow as I read the book that he kind of was an also-ran in that family of so many achieving kids. And now, of course, we have such respect, from me anyway, and from much of the state. But there was a lot about the kids, other of the children that I didn't get, but particularly about him.

[00:47:07]

**DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN:** I had to make a decision. In fact, on that score, there was another reason for that decision. I did concentrate in the third generation on what I called the Golden Trio – as you know, Jack, Joe, Jr., and Kathleen, and to some extent Rosemary. And part of it was space, but part of it was also that over these last years, through my husband, we have gotten to know Senator Kennedy in a social way. I've gotten to know Jackie, I've gotten to know Eunice and Pat and some of the other people. And as an historian, the hardest thing to sort out was how am I going to keep my objectivity and knowing these people at the same time?

[00:47:43]

So it was almost a conscious decision that, except for Rose, who is still alive, and who I really interviewed as an historian not as a friend, I was going to write only about the people who were

dead and whom I really hadn't known so that I could keep an objectivity stronger than I could otherwise. If I started writing at length about Teddy or Eunice, I was afraid I would mix in what I knew as a social friend of theirs versus what I had learned as an historian.

So I, too, there were times when I wished I could have taken it further. But in that case, I was afraid that the whole objectivity that I needed to bring to the rest of the book would be hurt if I kept sliding over that line.

[00:48:19]

But your observation is such an interesting one because I do think that it's an extraordinary feat that Teddy was available to develop his own sense of confidence because he did lead a different life from the rest of those kids. Mostly because he was so much younger, by the time he came back from England when his father's ambassadorship had been so disastrous, there was a cloud on the family that hadn't been there before because his father's career had reached its limit then. And there was always a sadness, I think, as a result, in Joe Kennedy because he knew he had somehow blown it at some level.

And at that time, they gave up the home in Bronxville. There was only Palm Beach and Hyannisport. Teddy was sent off to boarding school at age eight. And there wasn't that same sense of the family moving with the father upward the way the other kids had. And at the same time, he was such a young boy; he was only 12 when Joe, Jr., died, he was only 16 when Kathleen died. So his childhood was already clouded by the tragedies of the family. Whereas, the older kids had only the upward movement and their tragedies came much later when they were already formed. So for him to have remained confident at some levels and cheerful at other levels was an even greater feat than it was for these older kids in a lot of ways, I think.

Yes, over here?

**AUDIENCE QUESTION:** A question about personal experience. You mentioned something about learning. You wrote the LBJ book. Is there something that you've learned now – of course,

you had a very strong bond with LBJ – that you would have changed in your book, your perspectives about Lyndon Baines Johnson?

[00:49:49]

**DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN:** That's a really good question. It's interesting, we were just down in Washington these last couple days. There's this great society that's been created called the Judson Welliver Society. Judson Welliver was President Harding's first speechwriter and probably the first known presidential speechwriter. So William Safire set up an organization of all speechwriters to honor this man, Judson Welliver. Since Harding never said very much, we presume that the speechwriter was one of the greatest of all times. [laughter]

[00:50:14]

Anyway, it was really incredible because all the people were there – we've now met twice – from all of Reagan's speechwriters back through Clark Clifford with Truman. And the interesting things is that as this group – from Truman, to Eisenhower, to Nixon, to Reagan's people sit together – Lyndon Johnson is still the most interesting person that all these insiders wanted to talk about. And I guess the one thing that I've learned continually as time went on about Lyndon Johnson is to feel even sadder that his presidency was destroyed by the war in Vietnam. Because I really do think he was a man who cared immensely about civil rights, about poverty, about becoming an even greater domestic president than Franklin Roosevelt was.

[00:50:55]

And as all these people sat around and kept telling stories, it was always coming back to Lyndon Johnson stories. Not Eisenhower stories, not Roosevelt stories, not— it was so incredibly interesting to see this happen. He was such a large figure, such a great storyteller. And if only the American public could have known that vitality. He so hid it in that ridiculous stance he put on when he spoke on television with his glasses and his podium and his hair slicked back. He was always so afraid he was going to swear or say something terrible, which is what he did in his ordinary life, that he kept himself straitjacketed in front of the—but as a result, we never knew him as a person.

[00:51:30]

So I guess if I were writing the book now, I would just want to make sure that I was able to see him at the last part of his life. I would just want to make sure that I had fully been able to portray him in the glory part of his life so that that largeness of the figure really stood out. But I think historians are going to do that with him. I do think he'll emerge back as time goes by. I hope so, for his sake.

Yes?

**AUDIENCE QUESTION:** My question had to do with mainly, you touched on objectivity and conflict of interest. Now, as it turns out, [off mic] Rose Kennedy was very forthright about the situation between Joe Kennedy and Gloria Swanson. But suppose you had come across, in doing the research, something that might have been very painful to her or to other members of the family? Would there have been a conflict of interest between you as a friend and you as an historian? And how would you have resolved that?

[00:52:25]

**DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN:** It's a very question. And I did have to do that at times because there were things in the papers that I knew if I were one of them writing it, I just wouldn't have used it. I would have pretended it didn't exist. For example, there was a letter that Joe, Jr., wrote when he went to Germany in 1934 back to his father and he talked about how wonderful it was to see the pageantry and the life and the vitality under Hitler, and it was too bad that Hitler had to be doing what he was doing to the Jews, but maybe they had to do something to get that sense of pride back. It was a very sad letter for me to read as a human being, much less as an historian.

[00:53:02]

And obviously, if I were a member of the family, you would make sure to destroy that letter. But as an historian, it seemed to me it was an important understanding, not simply of young Joe, Jr. – he was only 18 years old and a lot of people misunderstood what was going on – but the fact that his father never wrote him back and tried to correct. It was a very deeply prejudiced letter in a lot

of ways – was something that I had to understand because Joe's ambassadorship had a lot of rumors about it of anti-Semitism, and I had to deal with that whole question.

[00:53:30]

So that what I had to do when I'd come upon things like that, I was afraid if I started making decisions that said, No, I'm not going to use this because the family will be upset, eventually you decide it once, you decide it twice, you decide it 20 times, and the whole integrity of your book would be lost. So I had to take the chance that– I had to use an historian's standard when I found these things – is this important? There'd be some things you'd find that might be damaging, but they don't do anything at all to tell the larger story. And even if you didn't know the family, that's the stupid kind of stuff to use. As an historian, it seems to me, you should use things that reveal character or history or texture or something. And that's the standard I try to use.

[00:54:09]

But it still wasn't easy. And there were times when I wished I were writing about George Washington, to tell you the truth. [laughter] And when I think about what to do next, that's the thing. You get caught between the great pleasures that come from being able to interview live people and bring that to bear on your research, and then, on the other hand, you're just walking into land mines when you write about families about whom there's such emotions. And your book can't fully be taken on its own terms.

[00:54:30]

I've been extremely fortunate. I've been really lucky that the reviews have almost universally seen it as a work of history. But beforehand, I was so worried that people's feelings about the Kennedys would intrude into the reviews, and if they liked them or didn't like them, they'd look at the book that way. And that's when I started dreaming about doing George Washington.

[laughter]

Any other questions? Yes?

**AUDIENCE QUESTION:** [off mic] I know it was mentioned that you're doing a lot of lecturing and touring around the United States and the world. What do you see as your next book? Do you have some ideas?

[00:55:09]

**DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN:** The only thing I'd know if I could is I'd like it to be a woman. Even though Rose Kennedy is a major figure in this book— I mean, Lyndon Johnson was so dominant in the other book, and he was so much of a man, obviously, and these characters were predominantly male, that I'd love to try and find, just as a woman, I'd like to try and understand a woman who's— but I haven't come up with it yet. And I also know I want it to have a big mix of history in it because, as I said, I really love— not a lot of people probably are as crazy to love sitting in old libraries going through documents, but when you love it, it's like an obsession. My family thought I was crazy half the time when I'd come back and say, "Look what happened in 1922!" But knowing that you love that. I know it'll be set back so I can do documents from the past.

[00:55:50]

But I think it's just going to take a little while for the emotion of letting go of this one to go away before I can really concentrate. And I've tried; I've come up with ideas and then the next morning they don't seem as good as they did the day before. So nothing really has happened yet.

Yes, there was a question right—

**AUDIENCE QUESTION:** [off mic] Regarding Rosemary Kennedy, did you have a chance to meet with her and talk about some of the episodes in her life?

[00:56:19]

**DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN:** You mean on the retarded daughter Rosemary? No, I did not. She has been almost, most of the time, at a convent in Wisconsin, St. Coletta's in Jefferson, Wisconsin. And as far as I understand it, she can barely talk now and hasn't been able to since.



She can make herself understood, I think, by the members of the family, but, no, I've never even seen her.

Any other questions? Yes?

**AUDIENCE QUESTION:** [off mic]—if you had to meet Ted Sorensen. I didn't see his name.

[00:56:53]

**DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN:** No. In fact, I sat next to him at dinner the other night and we were talking about that. He's, of course, one of the speechwriters that was at this Judson Welliver Society. Again, it comes back to the same question that the first person asked. Once I reached that period from 1950, I almost was going to end the book there because I really found my emotional sense that the book was over once John Kennedy became a politician in his own right, in my judgment. But in order to carry the larger theme out, of the inauguration ending the family's immigrant struggle, I had to get to the inauguration.

[00:57:28]

But if I had started doing original interviewing and research on that last ten years, it couldn't have been in one volume. So as I say, instead I deliberately say when I get to 1950 that the last ten years are going to be told from a different kind of narrative point of view. They're more an attempt to use everything that's gone before to understand John Kennedy. And that meant that there's not new incidents or new materials; it's more an analysis in the last couple chapters of the book.

[00:57:54]

There are times when I wish I'd even ended it back in 1950 and then just skipped to the inauguration because I, too, feel that sense of its not being as full as it could. But I think for people who don't know as much as most of you know, they wanted some sense of the events that got from '50 to '60, or they would have felt a sense of incompleteness. But he's an intelligent man and I'm sure he would have known a lot to share.

**AUDIENCE QUESTION:** [off mic] What does the future hold for the fourth generation of Kennedys?

**DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN:** Well, there's certainly a lot of them out there. [laughter] It's interesting. There's no question that two things have gone through the generations with this family, from all three of mine and into the fourth. One is the sense that public life is a value that is put at the apex of the values. In a lot of other families it might be medicine or it might be something else, but this family seems to think that that value has a higher value than anything else. And for those kids who are temperamentally suited for politics, I think there's a great likelihood they're going to enter into it. I'm concerned only for those kids who aren't temperamentally suited, that they might feel that this is the only important thing to do and they're going to get into it and not be happy in it. Because politics is only for a certain kind of character, in my judgment.

[00:59:12]

But nevertheless, given that there's so many of them out there, and this value has gone through to the fourth generation, I have a feeling that the *Boston Globe* was right in a cartoon that it had after Joe was elected. It had a cartoon projecting 2000 in the House of Representatives in which the Speaker was getting all mixed up as he got to the Ks – "Mr. Kennedy, Ms Kennedy, Mr. Kennedy." [laughter]

[00:59:33]

I would predict that there'll be five or six of them that will enter public life in the next decade, and that at least half of them will probably make it. The combination of their having the background, their having the money to be able to run, not having to do other things to be able to do that, and having the capacity. And then the second thing that goes through this family structure which gives them an enormous advantage and I think is part of the magic of why we keep coming back to the Kennedy story, is that even now the bonds of that family still stay strong. When one of them runs, they have a circle of the other kids around.

When Joe was running in the 8<sup>th</sup> District, his sister Kerry did his field organizing and his brother Michael did his fundraising, and his brother Chris as doing the organizing in Belmont. It wasn't just that these people came on election night, as the family always does, to look like there's a family there, but they were really part of that campaign from the first and earliest day. Kathleen, I gather, in Maryland had a similar grouping of other sisters and brothers who were helping her out.

[01:00:29]

And so long as the American public sees that connection of these kids to one another and the families bondedness, I think in an age of such scattered family lives that so many of us lead with mobility and kids going from one coast to another and not seeing grandparents, divorces, there is that sense that something holds this family together, even though they, too, have been wracked by some of the modern values; there's no question about that.

And I suppose it's that combination of the view that this family is so close to itself and so close to each other, and yet puts themselves out for public values and for public office, and at the same time has that whole history of tragedies behind it, that combination just gives us a fascination that I think is going to be hard for a long time to end.

[01:01:14]

One last thing is, I remember in 1948, Lord Beaverbrook wrote a letter to Joe Kennedy – now, by this time Jack was in the Congress, but nothing else had really happened – in which he predicted them that the Kennedy family would one day rival the Adams family. I think that it's very likely, given this continuing bondedness of the kids, given that they've come through a lot of their tough times, from it can seem, and matured away from the difficulties they had with the drugs and the deaths of their parents that we are going to see this family around for a long time to come. And I think they deserve our respect, our caring.

[01:01:48]

The most touching moment for me, I think, at end of the *New York Times* review of my book, Christopher Lehmann-Haupt said something that put it so well. He said, "After you read this

whole story, in the end, while we envy them, while we respect them, while we admire them, we probably all feel a great sense of relief that we have not been gifted with their radiant gifts and their need to continually reach out and touch the sun." And I think that's the way I feel as well.

Thank you very much. [applause]

[Concludes with an brief announcement explaining the logistics for a post-forum reception.]

**END OF RECORDING**