

a v.i.p. and me

(very interesting person)

By KATHLEEN A. HICKS

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DOUG KENNEDY

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made available by the Diefenbaker Government to provide vocational and commercial training on a substantial scale. Education was oriented toward academic subjects rather than toward commercial and vocational skills. That was one of the most meaningful things that occurred; some called it the Robarts scheme, he was Premier and advocated it. When they announced that program, we were the first School Board to accept grants. Mr. Archie Turner told me on one occasion that this practically eliminated the word drop-out from our vocabulary.

ME: Then followed a stint as Commissioner of The Township of Toronto Hydro (1963-67). Was it during this period that you realized you were destined for a political career?

MR. KENNEDY: I didn't know I was destined for a political career. In fact, I would have thought the opposite; I had no great aspirations to be in politics. Maybe I was deluding myself, because I was always interested in politics at all levels of government. However, there was redistribution and Peel was divided into two ridings and Peel South came into being. I was on the Hydro Commission at the time, and after giving it much thought I decided to resign my position with the Federal Government, which as I have indicated was an excellent job with security, and I enjoyed it. It wasn't an easy decision to make.

ME: When you were first elected to the Ontario Legislature in 1967, were you pleased about the decision you had made about your future?

MR. KENNEDY: Yes, I was. Sometimes I think it might have been made sooner. Perhaps destiny dictates these things. But I believe this background of working with people has been helpful in preparing me for the work I am doing now as a member.

ME: Then in 1970, Premier Robarts assigned you to the Conservative Party position of Deputy Whip under M.P.P. Alex Carruthers. How challenging was this endeavor?

MR. KENNEDY: It was a reasonably challenging position. It is a responsible job; I had to insure that our members were available, and present for votes. It could be most embarrassing if you felt that you were in a position to have a party vote and then found to your dismay there weren't enough members. And I can assure you for the first few times while the clerk of the House was counting noses, I was

doing likewise, and a little ahead of him, hoping we would come out ahead of the game. The Chief Whip, the other Deputy and myself worked as a team; we had committees to insure that there was voting strength there, quorums, and that the schedules were being met — this type of thing. I found it interesting and not too worrisome.

ME: This February, you were appointed to be Government Caucus representative to the Ontario Cabinet by Premier Davis. What is the extra responsibility put on you by this new position?

MR. KENNEDY: I attend cabinet meetings now, and I have, you might say, one foot in each camp. The private members of the caucus and the cabinet meet separately, of course. The cabinet meetings are held on Wednesdays, and, as the Premier so aptly expressed it, I bring "the expressions and views of caucus" to cabinet.

ME: Why do they call you the Party Whip?

MR. KENNEDY: It doesn't mean that I am in charge of all the parties down there. It is partisan or party politics, and I am the whip of the Progressive Conservative Party. The other parties have whips as well. You work with them in arranging speaking rosters. Certain things insofar as House procedures go are my responsibility. Other House activities fall to the House Leader, who directs the order of business in conjunction with myself; we work as a team on this.

ME: Which do you feel is your biggest obligation, to your constituents or to the House?

MR. KENNEDY: That's a difficult question; I don't think there's any black and white answer to that. You've got to weigh the issues very carefully. Sometimes I receive questionnaires from students or university staff people. Invariably this question is on it, "If the big crunch came who are you going to support?" Well, I certainly would be very very conscious of the wishes of the people in the constituency — they do the voting. But I weigh carefully all the factors. It is not a time for snap decisions which could be harmful not only to myself but to the people.

ME: What part does a Provincial Parliament member's wife and children play in his political life? (Wife, Kay; children, Sue, John, Pat and Janet)

MR. KENNEDY: Oh, they are very important. I think more

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Paul Breen

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Member of Provincial Parliament — South Peel Chief Government Whip — Conservative Party.

ME: You went to Ontario Agricultural College back in 1935 with the intention of becoming an agricultural engineer. What changed your plans and path in life?

MR. KENNEDY: My plans weren't really changed. I had a deep interest in agriculture and I still think it is one of the most exciting fields of endeavour a person can enter. There's a stimulation in it. Just imagine, one little grain of wheat produces as many as 100 seeds. An exciting career — I have no regrets. Following my graduation, I went into the Army, as so many of my classmates did. After the war, the Veterans' Land Act came into being, which was the successor to the Soldiers' Settlement of the First World War. I worked with V.L.A. for some 12 years, buying land, appraisals, settling veterans and their families, purchasing equipment and establishing them in a direction of success. This was right in my line of experience and study. Then I had a two year stint with the public works department, purchasing land for post offices, Mounted Police barracks at this kind of thing. Then I went to the Farm Credit Corporation, which was the successor to the Canadian Farm Loan Board. It came into being about 1960; it was one of the Diefenbaker achievements. This again involved settling of farmers, appraising, giving loans to farmers on a civilian basis as well as ex-military individuals.

ME: Between 1955 and '63, you were a trustee of the South Peel School Board. What stands out most in your mind about this position, and how beneficial was it?

MR. KENNEDY: Well, I found it a most fascinating activity. There were very responsible decisions to make. People don't realize that you have the responsibility of about one-quarter of the population. I enjoyed very much working with other trustees, Home and School Associations and the variety of activities that were involved. What stands out in my mind were a couple of tough decisions we had to make. One was the discontinuing of the Junior High School program; the second was the relocation of the Port Credit Secondary School. Those were two major issues, and I think in both cases the right decision was made. Another important step taken during this time was when capital was

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so today; in the past when communications weren't what they are now, the wife could be somewhat in the background. The member would be traveling by horse and buggy and later by Model T Ford, so she wouldn't go with him. Nor was the telephone the instrument of importance, and sometimes frustration; but now, of course, she's your right hand really. Your family can be such a help to you — I have to pay tribute to my wife, for her assistance. And the children as they are growing up are important to you. When business keeps you away for long periods of time, it's difficult for children. It is very important that there should, if possible, be a father and mother in the home. This is one of the problems and I have a special sympathy for Federal and Provincial members who have to maintain two homes. There is a sacrifice made and people don't give it much thought. Fortunately, I didn't have this problem because I am close to Queen's Park and my children were pretty much grown up when I decided to enter partisan politics.

ME: Your uncle, Col. Thomas L. Kennedy, was known as Mr. Ontario. He was an M.P.P. for thirty years. Do you feel you would like to remain in politics that long?

MR. KENNEDY: If I did, it would mean I would live to be a pretty ripe old age, because he started at quite an early time in his life, and I was somewhat older when I got involved. I don't know how long I will go on; I live from year to year or election to election, and what the long range will bring, I have no idea.

ME: One of Tom Kennedy's sayings was, "Be honest with people. No is the best word you can use if you have a reason for it." Do you have a similar thought you adhere to as a politician?

MR. KENNEDY: No, but I feel service to others regardless of politics, brings great satisfaction. Sometimes this can be frustrating, because your efforts are not always successful, but at least you have tried.

ME: You are from a sixth generation Dixie family. Can you fill me in on the historical arrival of the Kennedys to this area?

MR. KENNEDY: Regrettably, I don't have a great deal of detail. I do remember my uncle discussing this with me and talking about the hardships of the early settlers — the travelling by wagon, back-breaking toil on the farms, high infant mortality rate, short-life expectancy. The first Kennedys came from Ireland around the 1830s. My mother's people came from England a couple of generations later. Her father was a doctor and he practised in Toronto and Norwich. My mother was raised in Norwich. My grandfather Kennedy used to have the local store on the corner where the Kentucky Fried Chicken is now at Tomken Road and Dundas. He built a big house up on the hill, demolished a few years ago. They moved up there the night my father was born. In those days there was a toll gate at the corner of Dundas and Dixie Road. If you went with horse and wagon to the market, you had to stop there and pay a toll. That was before my time but I do recall them paving the Dundas Highway, and that was one of my uncle's projects when he was on the Good Roads Commission.

ME: Col. Kennedy's orchard used to be where Constitution Blvd., is now, and Jack, your father, had his farm on Tomken Road. Having once lived on a farm, which is a free, close to nature existence, what impression did it leave with you?

MR. KENNEDY: It left a tremendous sense of being close to nature. Watching things grow; I never cease to wonder. For instance, the marvelous capacity of grass to regenerate itself. You see grass burned to a crisp, give it moisture and it becomes green again; the power of regeneration is something that has impressed itself upon me. And the love of animals. We had horses and I was so small I used to have to climb up on the side of the stall to put the harness on. There was a strap called the belly band, and it hung down at the side and to tighten it you had to reach through behind the horse's front legs to buckle it. Well, I was so small, I would walk right under the horse to get the strap, bring it under and then cinch it up. It is pleasant to keep such memories in the back of your mind for your own meanderings into the past. We all do that!

ME: Being a member of the Royal Canadian Legion (Col. Thos. Kennedy Branch), the Empire Club (Royal York), the Ontario Institute of Agrologists and the Appraisal Institute of Canada, what do you gain from these organizations?

MR. KENNEDY: The fellowship, as well as exchanging of thoughts; and I feel it broadens one's outlook. You can't, in this business, nor should you in any other occupation, get so introverted that you get turned off from broader interests and activities. Life can be more interesting and enjoyable and you can learn much by listening; and if well informed you can speak with more conviction — knowledge is power.

ME: Being such a prominent figure in the community, what do you most enjoy about your position in politics, and what in your life in general?

MR. KENNEDY: What I enjoy, is being able to assist people of all ages — helping to resolve their problems. I do get satisfaction from doing that. Often it takes time and persistence. I enjoy life, sports, community activities, my family. I like young people, watching them grow and develop, following their achievements. Much of my work involves young families. Stability in family life helps toward stability in our country. That sounds a little trite, but that's what it is all about really. I have to zero in on the value of family life.

ME: Is there anything you yet wish to accomplish?

MR. KENNEDY: As a matter of fact, I dwell on that. The thing that I am interested in of course is the future of the whole country. I've traveled Canada quite a bit, and top priority, without a doubt, is to maintain Confederation. The foundation surely has been shaken in the past five years.

Despite our problems, we have one of the greatest countries in the world. We have so much to be thankful for. Things now seem to be improving. Fortunately there has been renewed interest in Federal-Provincial relations, and these communications should lead to better understanding. We have, and need, a strong Ontario — an important factor in this — and it is my desire to do what I can to maintain that strength.