

## **Commentary about Bill Kelly - by Ray Flynn**

Most of you probably knew Bill Kelly longer than I did, so there is not a lot I could tell you about him that you don't already know. An acknowledgement, you probably never heard before from a speaker at a memorial tribute. Usually, comments would likely begin with the speaker saying, "We go back a long time." But I'll spare you of that. But let me also tell you, that there are probably very few people here who have known about me longer than Bill Kelly. And it has absolutely nothing to do with politics or business. Let me explain. When I first met Bill, it was at a charity benefit we both attended for poor kids, something we did regularly. But the first time we talked, he told me how as a young boy growing up, he was a big Providence College basketball fan. He knew all the players names like Lenny Wilkins, John Egan, Jimmy Walker, John Thompson, Ray Flynn and so many other basketball legends, as they would later be called.

Our games were all broadcast live on both WPRO TV and radio and covered extensively by all of Rhode Island newspapers. The state media coverage and interest was both compelling and entertaining. One high school teacher in Bill's hometown in Rhode Island was interviewed by the press as saying, "Friar basketball, that's all the students want to talk about." But our coaches and priests at the college made sure that the players projected the best and most positive image possible to our large New England audience, many of whom were young basketball fans. Happily, we never let them down, on or off the court. Bill could tell you about the great P.C. National Championship teams as well as anyone.

When I was first invited on his radio program, our conversation quickly led to stories about growing up, family, faith and experiences. Exactly how Bishop Arthur Kennedy explained it in his beautiful homily about Bill at his funeral Mass at St. Clare's Church in Braintree. As the Bishop said, "Every Saturday morning he loved to listen to Bill Kelly on his radio show. Saturday was my one day off and I really loved to listen to Bill and Ambassador Flynn tell so many great stories they had growing up and the many interesting and fascinating people they knew." From Pope's, President's and Prime Minister's, along with a couple of Saints. I heard this same comment from many people I met in the shopping market or in Church throughout the year.

I once worked on National Catholic Family Radio and did political commentary for Cablevision out of New York City, so I learned the the value of "being credible" in presenting a message, whether it was religious, political or even in a commercial. For Bill Kelly, this came natural. It was fun to work with him and I know it made a difference in people's lives. I don't know much about running a business, but I do know you must have credibility and the respect of the customer and audience. Bill Kelly certainly had that.

God bless him and his wonderful wife Kelly, daughter Mary Madeline and son William. We will all miss him.

Ray Flynn is the former U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican and Mayor of Boston.