



The passing of Moira Kennedy– O'Malley

Moira Kennedy O'Malley, a lifelong fundraiser for Irish cultural and charitable causes and the first executive director of the Ireland Funds, died on Christmas Day in her home in Stonington, Connecticut, US. A charming, intelligent, vivacious and stylish woman, she and her husband, Cormac O'Malley moved in Irish and Irish American circles in the United States, Ireland and on his postings to Mexico City, Brussels and London.

A meeting with businessman, Tony O'Reilly at a dinner in Ashford Castle in 1975 led to a discussion on how Irish Americans could fund worthy Irish causes rather than support the IRA which in turn led to the formation of the Ireland Funds. As its first executive director, Moira organised fundraising events in New York, Chicago, Boston and San Francisco. The Glenree Centre for Reconciliation, St Michael's House, the Central Remedial Clinic and the National Association for the Deaf were among the charities first supported by the Ireland Funds.

Moira was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, the second of four children to John Kennedy and Helen (Driscoll) Kennedy, both of whom were the children of Irish immigrants to the United States.

Following her schooling in Worcester, she studied at the Dominican-run Albertus Magnus College in New Haven. As a graduate, she initially worked in Columbia University, New York handling international applications but on the appointment of the new college president, Andrew Cordier (former secretary general of the United Nations), she was tasked with administrative duties to establish a democratically elected university senate – one of the first in an American university. She later became assistant director of development at Columbia Law School.

She met Columbia law student, Cormac O'Malley when he “crashed” her St Patrick's Day party at Columbia in 1970. The couple got engaged in July 1971 and when Cormac discovered that Moira was planning to go to Ireland in September, he proposed they get married before then and go together. She skilfully organised their wedding within eight weeks and so they spent their honeymoon in Ireland, coming again every summer both to Dublin and to the O'Malley's family home in Burrishoole Lodge, Newport, Co Mayo for the following six years.

Returning to the United States after their first trip to Ireland, Cormac and Moira became actively involved in the American Committee for Ulster Justice, a business organization of prominent Irish Americans which campaigned to make the Irish Troubles an American foreign policy issue.

While living in New York in the early 1970s, the couple helped organise the annual Irish American Cultural Institute's Irish Fortnight in March. Moira also worked with her husband's Irish American Bicentennial Corporation which celebrated the Irish cultural aspects of the American Bicentennial in 1976.



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Their daughter, Bergin was born in 1977 and shortly afterwards, Cormac and Moira moved to Mexico City where Cormac was assigned by his New York law firm. Their son Conor was born in New York on their return to the United States in 1979. When Cormac was appointed legal counsel for Europe, Middle East and Africa for the pharmaceutical company, Bristol Myers in 1981, the family moved to Brussels. In 1986, his appointment as International Legal Counsel for the Healthcare division of Bristol Myers saw the family moved to live in Richmond, just outside London.

While Moira couldn't work in these countries due to visa restrictions, she embraced motherhood and home-making with a passion. She also volunteered for fundraising activities in their children's schools and was a quick-witted and sociable hostess to international gatherings which often included Irish ambassadors, prominent business and political figures. Her talent at piano playing and singing Irish songs was a special treat for guests.

Moira was also a lover of poetry and opera and a great supporter of the Irish American Cultural Institute. In her latter years, she became a board member of the Irish Georgian Society in the United States and hosted lavish fundraising dinners in New York.

She also joined the Abbey Theatre Foundation in the United States for a time and frequented Irish cultural events in New York.

Always interested in politics and political dynasties, Moira was part of the New York City Committee to elect Senator Ted Kennedy as president in 1980. Twenty years later, she worked in Connecticut for Senator Bill Bradley's presidential aspirations in 2000.

Although a committed Democrat, she always insisted on voting for the best candidate based on character and policy rather than party politics. Her political acumen was later rewarded when in 2001 she was elected a Burgess of Stonington – the Borough in Connecticut in which they settled.

In his eulogy at her funeral service in Stonington, American author, Matthew Thomas said nothing could beat her laughter, the way she could stand on ceremony yet be a woman of the people. "No one I know mixes patrician grace and street smart in the way you do . . . or knows that among the rules of decorum, the most important is to know when to break them," he said.

Moira Kennedy O'Malley is survived by her husband, Cormac O'Malley, their daughter, Bergin, their son Conor, her brothers Brendan, Sean and Brian Kennedy and her grandsons, Emmet and Elliott Boyle.





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The O'Malley Clan Association aims to reach out to O'Malleys from all around the world and foster links between the O'Malleys around the globe and the clan at home here in Ireland.

The Clan Association formed in 1953 has been connecting O'Malleys around the world in The US and Canada, Britain, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, South America, and anywhere else you can think of for over 60 years now.

We hope with our new website, and newsletter, that We can go from strength to strength in our aim to connect all the O'Malleys around the world.

The O'Malley Clan DNA Project on Family Tree DNA

The most common queries we get at The O'Malley Clan Association are queries in relation to helping to trace peoples ancestors in Ireland. As we all know, written records can only take us so far, (if you're lucky you'll get back to the early 1800's or late 1700's).

Many of the Irish Census Records and other historic documents were destroyed during the early part of the 20th century and as a result it can be very hard to trace ancestors back beyond the 19th century. Church records are a help, but can be patchy at times.

One way of narrowing down the search is through DNA testing. The O'Malley Clan Association is involved in a project with Family Tree DNA to test as many O'Malleys as possible to try and expand our knowledge of our roots as much as we possibly can.

There's a specific page for the project on the Family Tree DNA website:

<https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/omalley/about>

Check it out, there's lots of info there, and administrators also for any questions.

