



UNIVERSITY OF
ST. THOMAS

William J. Flynn
Center for Irish Studies

WILLIAM J. FLYNN BIOGRAPHY



As the namesake of the William J. Flynn Center for Irish Studies at the University of St. Thomas, Bill was a frequent visitor and strong patron of the Center. He opened doors around the world for us in our work to promote peace and reconciliation. He also helped with scholarships and other support for our students. He was a regular guest at our annual Irish Gala and St. Patrick's Day celebrations.

He devoted himself to many humanitarian causes, including the Northern Ireland Peace Process. Bill's inspiration for peace in Northern Ireland originated from his Irish heritage. His father came from Loughinisland, County Down, and his mother came from County Mayo.

Bill became actively involved in the peace process following a visit to Northern Ireland in 1992. After that visit, he organized a peace conference in Derry/Londonderry called "Beyond Hate". His approach to conflict resolution was nonsectarian and nonpartisan.

In 1994, the National Committee on American Foreign Policy held a peace conference in New York, inviting representatives from various political parties in Northern Ireland. From there, the peace process strengthened with Bill's continued interest and input. He promoted peace through diplomatic and political means. The 1990's peace process culminated in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement/Belfast Agreement through the support of United States Senator George Mitchell and President Bill Clinton. Bill Flynn received numerous awards and recognition for his efforts, as outlined below. The 20th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement occurred last April. The peace is holding.

It is through the determination of people like Bill Flynn, who believed in dialogue as a means to conflict resolution, that we are able to take our students to study abroad where they witness the beauty of the island of Ireland and the continuing peace today. Our students return, by their own account, "transformed." We all have been transformed by knowing Bill.

Bill was the former Chairman of Mutual of America and spent most of his business career in insurance. He also was a former chairman of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, which is a nonprofit policy organization dedicated to the resolution of conflicts that threaten US interests.

The University of St. Thomas named the Center in honor of Bill Flynn for his outstanding contributions to the Northern Ireland Peace Process.

Bill attended Cathedral College of the Immaculate Conception, Huntington, NY, and received his M.A. in Economics from Fordham University in New York. He served in the United States Air Force during the Korean conflict.

He was a member of the Racquet and Tennis Club, The University Club, and The Garden City Country Club.

Bill was a former Chairman of the Board of The Life Insurance Council of New York, the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, The Ireland Chamber of Commerce in the United States and St. Vincent's Services and, former President of the Board of the Flax Trust America and the New York Foundling Hospital. He was a former member of The Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation, The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, the U.S. Army War College Board of Visitors, the Ireland America Economic Advisory Board to the Taoiseach, Boston University, The Catholic Health Association of the United States, College Construction Loan Insurance Association, The College of

Insurance, The College of New Rochelle, College Misericordia, Co-operation Ireland, Covenant House, Fordham University, Laboure Junior College, Medical Information Bureau, Mercy Health Foundation and the Advisory Committee to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council.

Bill was also a former member of the Board of the Police Athletic League, Pope John XXIII Center Medical-Moral Research and Education Center, Richmond Hill Savings Bank, The Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Foundation, The Royal Society of Medicine Foundation, Inc., St. Francis Hospital, St. Michael's College, St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical Center of New York, United States Catholic Historical Society, The United Student Aid Funds, United Way International and The Williamsburg Charter Foundation.

He received Honorary Doctorates from St. John's University (1989), The University of Detroit Mercy (1991), The College of Mount Saint Vincent (1995), The College of New Rochelle (1995), College Misericordia (1996), Sacred Heart University (1996), Richard Stockton College of New Jersey (1998), The University of Ulster, Northern Ireland (2012) and St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland (2015).

In 1980, he received Brandeis University's Distinguished Community Service Award, and in 1983 he was the recipient of the Ubi Caritas Deus Ibi Award of Catholic Charities. Bill received the United Way of America's National Professional Leadership Award and The National Conference of Christians and Jews Brotherhood Award in 1984. In 1985, The United Way of Bergen County presented him with its Distinguished Service Award, and in 1986, he received the Brooklyn Bureau of Community Service Man of the Year Award. He received The New York Foundling Hospital's Elizabeth Ann Seton Humanitarian Award in 1988. In the same year, he received The Israel 40th Anniversary Medal from the State of Israel and Catholic Charities Bishop's Humanitarian Award, Diocese of Brooklyn. In 1989, he received the St. Mary's Foundation for Children's Humanitarian Award.

In 1991, Bill received the American Cancer Society's Alfred P. Sloan, Jr. Memorial Award and the Life Services for the Handicapped National Leadership Award. Mr. Flynn received ENCORE Community Service's Heart to Heart Award, and The Favorite Son Award from The Society of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick on Long Island in 1992. In the same year, he received The National Council on the Aging's Distinguished Achievement Award. He was also honored by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and received St. Patrick's College Maynooth's Man of the Year award in 1992. Bill was the recipient of the 1993 Calvary Hospital Medal and The Ellis Island Medal of Honor. In the Fall of 1993, he was awarded The Elizabeth Ann Seton Award of the National Catholic Education Association.

Early in 1994, he was honored by the Life Insurance Council of New York as the most outstanding CEO of the life insurance industry in the past twenty-five years. In March of 1994, Mr. Flynn was selected Irish American of the Year by Irish America Magazine and in May was honored by the American Ireland Fund. Additionally, in 1994, he received The Sister Cecilia Schneider Award from The New York Foundling Hospital and was the inaugural recipient of The Human Rights and Business Award of The International League for Human Rights. He received The Federal Law Enforcement Foundation Community Leadership Award, and in November 1994, Prime Minister of Ireland, Albert Reynolds recognized his contributions to the Northern Ireland Peace Process at a Tribute Dinner in his honor.

Bill received The Cathedral Club of Brooklyn's Man of the Year Award and The Ambassador Award from The Saint Patrick's Day Parade Committee of Holyoke, Massachusetts in 1995. In the fall of 1995, he received The Sisters of Saint Dominic's Veritas Award, The Outstanding Achievement Award from The Ireland United States Council. In March of 1996, he was the Grand Marshal of the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

In the spring of 1997, Bill was the inaugural recipient of The National Committee on American Foreign Policy's Initiative for Peace Award. He received The New York City Chapter of the Association of the United States Army's Distinguished Service Award. In the fall of 1997, he was honored by The Irish American Society of Nassau-Suffolk & Queens, Inc.

In early 1998, Bill received The Club of Champions Gold Medal Award from The Catholic Youth Organization. In October 1998, he was honored by The Ancient Order of Hibernians with The Man of the Year Award.

In November of 1999, he was selected by *Irish America* Magazine as one of The Greatest Irish-Americans of the Century. Bill was among the honorees at the December 1999 Peace Links gala in Washington, DC for his help to broker peace in Ireland. In March 2000, he and Cardinal O'Connor were the first recipients of the St. Patrick's Day Parade Medals. A year later, he was the Grand Marshal of the Rockville Centre St. Patrick's Day Parade.

Early in 2001, Bill received The Outstanding Civilian Service Medal from the Department of the Army for extraordinary service as an expert consultant on the U.S. Army War College Board of Visitors. In May, he received St. Clare's Hospital and Health Center's Helen Hayes Award, which acknowledges professional and personal accomplishments and contributions to the quality of life. Soon after, The United States Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania dedicated the "William J. Flynn Room" as the location for the General Omar N. Bradley Chair of Strategic Leadership. In the fall of 2001, he was honored with the Man of the Year Award by the Physically Challenged Irish and American Youth Team. A year later, he was awarded the Benjamin Rush Award for Humanistic Values in Corporate and Government Life by Dickinson College. In March 2003, Bill was awarded the John F. Kennedy National Achievement Award by the St. Patrick's Committee of Holyoke, Massachusetts. In making the announcement, the President of the St. Patrick's Committee said, "William Flynn, by far, surpasses any criteria that may be set as a measurement for success in a person's professional or personal life. Mr. Flynn has succeeded in business while demonstrating a continued commitment to human rights issues, not just in Ireland, but around the world."

In March 2005, Bill received the Humanitarian All-Star award from the Police Athletic League. In May, the St. Aloysius School of Central Harlem, a transformative model for inner-city education, honored him at its Annual Scholarship Benefit. In September, the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding presented him with a Special Peacemaker in Action Award "for a lifetime devoted to conflict resolution." In October 2007, Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs Dermot Ahern praised Bill's tireless work over the years in fostering peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Minister Ahern presented Bill with a photograph of the Farmleigh handshake, inscribed by the Prime Minister of Ireland Bertie Ahern and Dr. Ian Paisley, for tireless work over the years in fostering peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

In April 2008, Bill was honored by The Brehon Law Society and The Emerald Isle Immigration Center with a Commendation from William C. Thompson, Jr., Comptroller of the City of New York. In May 2009, The Catholic Big Sisters Big Brothers paid tribute to Bill with their Humanitarian Award.

Bill was awarded an honorary CBE (Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) by Her Majesty the Queen in recognition of his exceptional contribution to peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. He received this award at an investiture ceremony, at the British Embassy, in Washington, D.C. in June 2009.

In 2010, Harvest Houses paid tribute to Mr. Flynn with their Pope John XXIII Humanitarian Award. He was inducted into the Irish America Hall of Fame sponsored by Irish America Magazine in February 2011.

Opportunity Ireland honored Bill for his dedication as a renowned Irish American leader and as a tireless defender of peace in February 2012. He was honored by The Society of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, Long Island, NY, with their Favorite Son Award in March 2012.

Bill was with The Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States from 1953 to 1971 where he was Vice President, Group Operations. In 1971, he joined Mutual of America as President. In 1972, he was appointed President and Chief Executive Officer and in February 1982, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer. He served as Chairman of the Board until his retirement in May 2005, when he was named Chairman Emeritus. Bill is survived by his wife Peg and two children (Maureen and William (Bill)). Two other sons, James and Robert, are deceased. They had eleven grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Bill and Peg were married at Annunciation Catholic Church in Houston.