

Dear Editor/Producer:

Daniel J. Boyne's new book, **KELLY: A Father, a Son, an American Quest**, chronicles the life of John Brendan Kelly, an extraordinary Irish-American who rose to great heights in the world of sports, politics and business during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in a time and place where the odds were stacked against him.

Born in Philadelphia at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "Jack" Kelly was one of nine children raised by John and Mary Kelly, Irish immigrants who had left Ireland after the devastating potato famine. Along with most of his siblings Jack began working at an English run carpet mill in East Falls, Pennsylvania, when he was only eight years old. Although his formal education ended with elementary school, he dreamt of being a hero some day, and his first opportunity was provided through rowing.

During his heyday in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he amassed a total of 125 victories, including three Olympic gold medals. There was only one important race that he did not win. A few days before he was to leave for the 1920 Henley Royal Regatta in England, he was informed by telegram that he would not be allowed to compete, for the British did not consider him a true amateur. Kelly would never forget the moment of his rejection. A month later, when he won the single sculls at the 1920 Olympics, he sent his sweaty green rowing cap to King George V of England—with a single brick wrapped inside with the notes "Compliments from a bricklayer."

Back in Philadelphia, Kelly parlayed his athletic success into political and financial worlds of power. His bricklaying business became the largest on the East Coast, and his athletic good looks and drive vaulted him into to the public eye. Among his many friends was Frank Delano Roosevelt, who Kelly met after he became the first Democratic Party chairman in the city and successfully broke the Republican strong hold there. Just before WWII, Kelly also helped F.D.R. develop the first national physical fitness program.

Kelly's biggest success, however, may have been his children: Peggy, Lizanne, Jack Jr., and Grace. Like the Kennedy clan in Boston, the Philadelphia Kellys were a strikingly handsome and talented brood. Most people know of Grace Kelly's rise to fame, but an equally captivating Kelly drama unfolded between Jack and his only son, known as "Kell." Although Jack Kelly Sr. had once become the greatest American oarsman of all time, he had left an unfulfilled mission and it fell directly into his son's lap. After all the years, he still wanted to win the Henley Royal Regatta and have the name "John B. Kelly" inscribed on the winner's plate.

In 1947, in front of a crowd of over 40,000 spectators, Jack Kelly, Jr., worked his way through the heats and into the final race of the Diamond Sculls at Henley. His father sat in the stands, along with his wife and three beautiful daughters. Wearing a replica of the green cap his father wore in the 1920 Olympics, Kell rowed down the mile-and-a-half course, thinking of his father all the way, and won the race by several lengths, vindicating the injustice done twenty-seven years earlier.