

# BRO. THADDEUS, HARDY BROTHERS, JFK AND ME

*Seamus Hanney*

WELL, THERE was a lot going on for an 11 year old in 1963. I stood beside Bro. Thaddeus as he locked the door of the old national school for the last time. I didn't think then whether Bro. Thaddeus was feeling any sadness about leaving the old school behind. For me, the excitement of moving to a brand new school only a short distance up Summerhill overrode everything. Bro. Thaddeus instructed me to go out to Eamonn Gavin in St Patrick's Park and ask him to turn off the water. He was very careful giving instructions. If any of us boys was out sick from school, you were asked to go to his house and speak with his mother. Three things to say to her: would it be possible for John to come to school today, if so he can sit beside the fire all day during classes and he won't be given any homework this evening. Now, repeat back what you are going to say. Before you left on your journey Bro. Thaddeus might have a quiet word with you, explaining why this procedure was in place "It's important we keep the numbers up in the school and have a good attendance rate". So, with the old school locked for good, I headed out to Eamonn. The summer holidays were on their way and there was more excitement with the visit of President Kennedy to Ireland. I would listen to the radio commentary of his visit. Photographs of him showed a smiling face, with a great colour, but we were told he was really Irish, and what made him an even greater man was his Catholic religion. When I gave Eamonn the message from Bro. Thaddeus

I headed for the Library. Down Bridge Street, up the steps and in to the quietness of what seemed a large room and over to the children's section. This time I selected a Hardy Boys Mystery *While the Clock Ticked*. Later, I sat at the kitchen table, waiting to see how the boys would get out of this particular dilemma. In their endeavours to crack another vicious crime, they were captured and tied up in an old house. A bomb, placed in a grandfather clock beside them, was due to go off any-time soon.

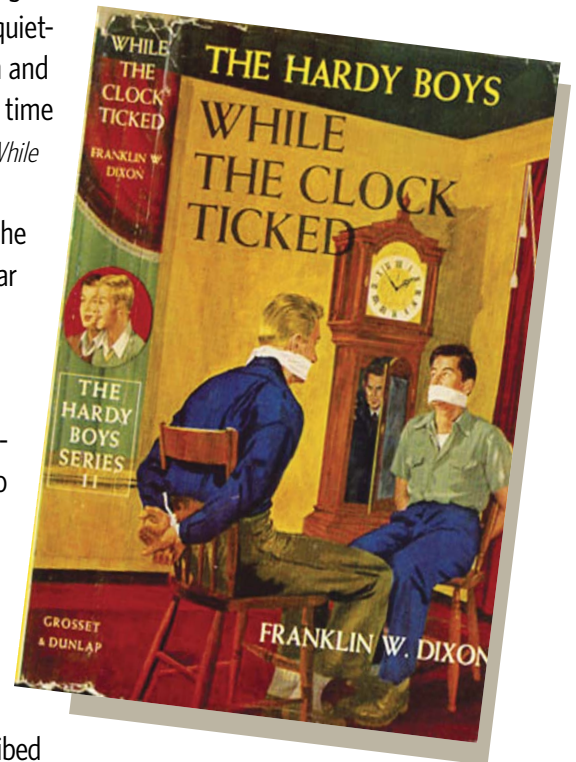
In the background I could hear the live coverage of the Presidential visit. The motor cavalcade made its way down O'Connell Street, Dublin and the commentator described every movement of President Kennedy. He was looking to his left and waving to the cheering crowds, he looked to his right and waved and smiled. He looked up at buildings, where people were cheering and waving flags from balconies.

There was mounting tension with the Hardy Brothers. I turned the pages, as

■ **Greetings at Áras an Uachtaráin**



■ Bro. Thaddeus



the bomb ticked closer towards their extinction. There was no way out for them, as far as I was concerned. In the meantime President Kennedy waved to the throngs of well wishers along the route to Áras an Uachtaráin.

I should never have doubted the Hardy Brothers. Of course they extricated themselves from certain death, with only seconds remaining before the bomb went off. *Meanwhile, the commentator described the scene as President Kennedy entered Áras an Uachtaráin accompanied by President de Valera, with photographers taking pictures from every possible angle, for the newspapers the next day.*