

Biography of Anthony M. Kennedy

Before He Became a U.S. Supreme Court Justice

Biography of any person can show what made him or her make certain decisions in life. As for work of the courtrooms, a combination of decisions made by different judges can influence the entire social situation of people on local, state, or federal level. In this respect, the life of Anthony M. Kennedy should be discussed with regard to general information and some facts that could have been influential in his further decisions as a U.S. Supreme Court Justice. For example, some preferences and decisions have had an impact of perception of his decisions in the Supreme Court; he was later called the “swing shift justice” as stated by Toobin (2005). On the one hand, everything that happens in person’s childhood, adolescence and early career influences all further decisions. On the other hand, in case of the Supreme Court justice, everything should be left aside in order to be objective while making a decision on the issues.

As it was presented in fgj, Anthony M. Kennedy was “Born July 23, 1936 in Sacramento, California. Married Mary Davis, June 29, 1963; Children: Justin Anthony, Gregory Davis, and Kristin Marie” (n.p.). As stated in..., Anthony McLeod Kennedy was born in Sacramento, California in the family of people being closely related to the political and legislative system of the United States, though on the local and state levels. The family had no relation to the political family of the Kennedy. His father, Anthony J. Kennedy, served as an attorney, but he was rather influential in the entire state of California with regard to legislature and related issues. His mother, and Gladys Kennedy (née McLeod), took active part in local civic activities. This connection to the civil activities was also absorbed by Anthony M. Kennedy; in other

words, the early inspiration by legislature and civic activities stems from his parents' professions and involvements.

Education and social background are integral parts of a person's further development. This means that all decisions made by a person in later life can be the result of certain education, moral and ethical values and norms taught in childhood and adolescence. Education of Justice Kennedy was the following: "Stanford University, 1954-57; London School of Economics, 1957-58; Stanford University, B.A., 1958; Harvard Law School, LL.B., 1961" (Legal Information Institute: US Supreme Court 2009). It shows that he was a student of rather reputable schools with undeniable reputation, which enabled him to be a great candidate for law firms and hope for prominent career in legislature following his father's footsteps. At the same time, the selection of schools demonstrates the influence of parents and their authority and successful career on Kennedy and his decisions to enroll in those specific schools. For instance, his mother's alma mater was Stanford University, which later became the choice of Kennedy himself immediately after graduation from the high school.

Since his father was influential lobbyist in California legislative issues, Kennedy met many contemporary prominent politicians. At the same time, he could see his father's influence and the power of persuasion while lobbying interests of diverse parties and organizations. Later on, Kennedy became a page in the California State Senate in his young adulthood (Tomlins 2005). The records about his law practice after graduation and obtaining a diploma show the following: "Admitted to California bar, 1962; U. S. Tax Court bar, 1971; Associate, Thelen, Marrin, John & Bridges, San Francisco, 1961-63; sole practitioner, Sacramento, 1963-67; partner, Evans, Jackson & Kennedy, Sacramento, 1967-75" (Legal

Information Institute: US Supreme Court 2009). In other words, he started with the simplest and less prestigious positions, but has obtained the job in the U.S. Supreme Court with Reagan's appointment.

Though Kennedy met Reagan before his appointment, as they worked together on the tax proposal draft, the appointment served as the beginning for their relations as the President and the Justice. At the same time, Kennedy had some capabilities in teaching, as he was a "Professor of constitutional law, McGeorge School of Law, University of the Pacific, 1965-1988" (Legal Information Institute: US Supreme Court 2009). The fact that he wanted to share his knowledge can serve as a sign of his overall appreciation of his parents' efforts in his education and further career choice. On the other hand, the teaching process could be seen as an opportunity to obtain a good job in McGeorge School of Law in University of the Pacific as an extra to his basic career. Nevertheless, he obtained many different positions during his career, including California Army National Guard in 1961.

In fact, all the positions that Anthony M. Kennedy has had during his life before the appointment by the President Ronald Reagan, can be treated as experiences that might have influence over Kennedy's decisions in court. Nevertheless, some critics perceive his work in the Supreme Court as a natural result that should have happened in its time due to the experience and the level of expertise of Kennedy. According to Melone (1990-91), "Kennedy's behavior during his first two terms on the Court cannot be described as disoriented, uncertain or vacillating – characteristics of the 'freshman effect.' In fact, reports indicate he settled nicely into his new job within a short period" (6). In other words, he was not uncertain even though he was often called the "swing voter."

Kennedy is known for being rather conservative in most of his decisions in the Supreme Court, which may be the result of his background, education, social position, and many other issues. At the same time, even his father's career, which includes many different jobs, including lobbyist and attorney, and his mother's civic activities. Schmidt (2004) claimed that "In the case of free speech decisions in particular, we find that Kennedy epitomizes an alternative form of the "swing voter," veering off from his more natural bloc in that important subset of cases" (209). In other words, the individual rights of the American citizens were not perceived by Kennedy in the same way as all other cases, which means that his conservative views were not applied to the cases of individual rights.

To conclude, Anthony M. Kennedy is a well-educated person that had many different job experiences throughout his career. At the same time, his devotion to the legislature started very early due to the professional activities of his parents and their success in those fields. On the one hand, he is conservative due to the knowledge of laws and many experiences he had to see the applications of laws in practice and the way they serve people's purposes and the purpose of justice. On the other hand, lack of conservatism in the cases related to individual rights of citizens, including gay marriages, shows that Kennedy distinguishes between the rights and interests of society as a group of people and an individual person as a member of society.

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