

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	1 st April 2010
Location	FÁS Offices, Sligo
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Henry Cox
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1952 Home County: Roscommon
Education	Primary: Ballymurray NS, Co. Roscommon Secondary: CBS Roscommon Third Level: UIG
Family	Siblings: 3 brothers & 3 sisters Current Family if Different: 2 sons & 3 daughters
Club(s)	St Dominic's GAA [Roscommon]; Coolera-Strandhill GAA [Sligo]; Calry St Joseph's [Sligo]; Craobh Rua Hurling Club [Sligo]
Occupation	Senior Development Officer, FÁS
Parents' Occupation	General Secretary of a Union [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	County Sligo Golf Club

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Date of Report	18 th June 2012
Period Covered	1950s - 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Sligo, Roscommon, Dublin
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Administration, Fundraising, Material Culture, Education, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Outsiders' Perspectives, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Professionalism, Retirement, Economy/Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Henry discusses his involvement in the GAA in his native Roscommon and in Sligo where he now lives. He reflects on his career as an inter-county hurler and his success in All-Ireland finals at minor and junior level. He also describes his move to Sligo and his role in starting underage hurling in Calry-St. Joseph's GAA Club, Sligo. Henry discusses the challenges of his various administration roles at club and county level, and he reflects on the inferior status of hurling in Sligo. In addition, he considers the issue of professionalism in the GAA. Finally, he recalls his proudest moments representing Roscommon in Croke Park.</p> <p>00:33 Henry discusses the history of Gaelic Games in Ballymurray, Roscommon. Success of parish in football county championships. Hurling starting when he was growing up in the 1950s. Currently both senior hurling and senior football in the parish.</p> <p>00:54 His father's involvement in the GAA: county secretary in Roscommon for a decade. Also his siblings' involvement. Recalls banter in family over matches.</p> <p>01:56 Describes playing hurling and football from Under-12 level up to his 50s. First choice goalkeeper in Sligo. Inter-county hurling. Playing at club level, national school, and CBS Roscommon.</p> <p>02:46 Mentions Brother Kilkenny in Roscommon CBS who was involved in hurling. Also mentions Gerry Dillon, Jimmy Murray, and Pat Rogers in Knockcroghery.</p> <p>03:25 Discusses his preference for football growing up. Hurling new to the area. Local parents anxious about hurling</p>

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	<p>injuries. No helmets. Ponders how hurling started.</p> <p>05:00 Describes travelling by car to matches. Cars packed.</p> <p>05:42 Mentions his sporting heroes: Gerry O'Malley, Dermot Earley, Jimmy Murray, Phelim Murray, Johnny Briens. All from parish, played for Roscommon. Knew Jimmy Murray personally.</p> <p>06:51 Explanation of the change in club name from St. Patrick's to St. Dominic's GAA Club. Amalgamation of two parts of parish: Rahara and Knockcroghery. Named for Bishop Dominic Conway.</p> <p>07:34 Recounts playing early matches: taking frees at Under-14 level, skills training. Attending hurling coaching course in Gormanstown in 1969.</p> <p>09:40 Discussion of loyalty to club before county. His greater skill at hurling. Start of hurling in the club. Jimmy Murray playing hurling.</p> <p>11:16 Describes being sent to play for county from club. Playing in Croke Park in 1966 for Under-16 Roscommon team. Name mentioned on RTÉ radio. Card arriving in the post inviting him to play for county. His pride.</p> <p>12:59 Mentions his hurling mentors: Johnny Haughey, Tommy Healy, Jerry Rogers.</p> <p>13:32 Recalls training for county in Athleague. Challenge matches with Galway clubs.</p> <p>14:01 Discusses hurling rivals at club level when he was growing up: Castlerea, Roscommon Gaels, Athleague, Four Roads, Creggs. Mostly South Roscommon involved in hurling.</p> <p>15:15 Galway the main competition in challenge matches.</p> <p>15:52 Reflects on his county playing career from Under-16 level. Highlight: scoring the winning point in Parnell Park in 1969 All-Ireland Minor Hurling Final. Staying in Spa Hotel before match. Atmosphere before the match. Superstition about taking off a cross and chain from his neck. His strategy for dealing with nerves.</p> <p>19:03 Discusses different styles of different mentors. Passion for representing parish or county.</p> <p>20:16 Describes working in CIE in Dublin, coming home at weekends to play in Roscommon. Informal training with</p>
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	<p>Roscommon men in the Phoenix Park. Playing soccer for CIE. Tail-end of foreign games ban. His father's stories about playing under fake names to avoid ban. Explanation of different sports played in different seasons. No tension between Gaelic Games and other sports.</p> <p>24:34 Discusses fitness in sport. Fit from farmwork. No injuries until his 50s, playing after knee and hip operations. Breaking finger in match, continuing to play.</p> <p>26:07 Describes lack of nutritional awareness. Going to dances the night before matches. Less alcohol in the dancehall culture than disco culture. His disinterest in alcohol.</p> <p>27:07 Discusses his satisfaction in being acknowledged as a county hurler. Sense of achievement.</p> <p>27:50 Reflects on the challenge of travelling between Roscommon, Sligo, and Dublin for GAA, work, and family commitments. Transferring to Sligo in 1989. Playing inter-county every year for 32 years. His wife's understanding.</p> <p>30:37 Reflects on the impact sport had on his career. Balance between work and GAA.</p> <p>31:16 Describes factors involved in his transfer to Sligo: family size increasing, club in Sligo inviting him to play. Playing senior football in Coolera-Strandhill GAA Club and hurling for Roscommon. Joining Calry-St Joseph's GAA Club at the invitation of John Flynn.</p> <p>33:44 Starting an underage hurling team in Craobh Rua GAA Club. Success of team: winning Féile, Connaught Championship in junior hurling, Rackard League medal. Challenge of training and playing.</p> <p>34:11 Explains how he advertised in local papers and church bulletin for underage hurling teams. Huge turnout. Compares protective gear children wear now with that of his time. Attitudes of players toward minor injuries.</p> <p>36:54 Discusses the expense of hurls. Fundraising to buy equipment. Mentions fellow trainer Joe Keane from Galway. Decline of underage teams recently due to lack of trainers, Considers the difficulty of finding hurling trainers.</p> <p>40:16 Discusses lack of parental involvement in coaching. Mentions Marcy Coyne's involvement in fundraising and administration.</p> <p>41:27 Reflects on the social benefits for children of being</p>
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	<p>involved in sport, particularly for only children.</p> <p>42:52 Challenge of keeping children involved in team because of range of sports available. Difficulty of getting commitment from children. Losing teenagers to soccer and social distractions: lack of matches for that age group in Sligo.</p> <p>44:38 Discusses Calry-St. Joseph's significant representation on the Sligo hurling team. Winning All-Ireland. His encouragement of hurlers to play for the county. Benefits of playing under different managers.</p> <p>45:59: Discusses strength of hurling team. Coaching course in Cork, emphasis on skills. Important thing to keeping players motivated.</p> <p>47:13 No camogie in club. Girls play on boys' hurling teams until Under-14 level. His daughters playing hurling. State of camogie in Sligo.</p> <p>48:08 Reflects on the challenges of his administrative role on the county board. His frustration at being on the sideline. Also chairman of local hurling club: fundraising challenges. Lack of appreciation for administration jobs.</p> <p>51:39 Ponders the negative changes in dynamic between players and administration. Sacrifices players make, including his son's. Should be entitled to a say in management and training decisions.</p> <p>52:53 Reflects on the challenge of being involved in a weaker hurling county. The dominance of soccer and football in Sligo. Lack of appreciation for hurling despite Sligo's victory in the 2008 All-Ireland Senior Hurling Championship: The Nicky Rackard Cup. Mentions Henry Shefflin. Henry's frustration at disinterest.</p> <p>54:57 Considers the reasons for his involvement in hurling. Hurling's inferior position in the county. Club's participation in the Kilmacud Croke Sevens, reaching the All-Ireland final. More camaraderie among hurlers than in football. Mentions Mick Shelley, whose brother Paul Shelley played for Tipperary. Mick Shelley's highlight: winning a county hurling medal for Sligo.</p> <p>57:25 His pessimism for the future of hurling in Sligo. Insufficient promotion of hurling at administration level. Johnny Mullins coaching in schools. Negative attitude. Lack of appreciation for Keith Raymond's skill for Calry-St. Joseph's. The effort and promotion hurling requires. His views</p>
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	<p>on how the GAA could improve weaker counties.</p> <p>59:58 His concerns for the sport nationally. Lack of strong teams currently. Bickering among Galway players. Kilkenny's reign. Their club's win in the Nicky Rackard Cup inspiring other clubs. The skill involved in hurling. The need for more effort at underage level and with weaker counties. More funding required. Explanation of how the back door system affects weaker counties in football.</p> <p>01:03:30 Describes the key changes he's seen in games. Better standards, more protective gear, more money spent on county teams, better grounds and facilities. In Henry's time, toggging out under bush or in car. Swapping jerseys now after games.</p> <p>01:05:07 Discusses playing into his 50s. Lists different positions he played in with club and county. Ending up in goal. Missing playing after retirement.</p> <p>01:07:22 Names his proudest moments, including scoring winning point in All-Ireland Junior Hurling Final, watching some of his club's players win the Nicky Rackard Cup. Mentions Brian Cody presenting medals for Nicky Rackard cup.</p> <p>01:08:49 Discusses his children's love of GAA. Playing football, soccer, hurling. Daughters playing and going to matches. Bringing them to All-Ireland finals. Watching rugby and soccer as family too.</p> <p>01:10:06 Best team he's watched: Kilkenny. Likes style of Cork hurling: Jimmy Barry Murphy an idol. Best stylists: DJ Carey, Henry Shefflin, and Tommy Walsh.</p> <p>01:11:32 Most memorable moment: Winning All-Ireland Hurling Final at minor level. More important than winning junior All-Ireland. Being asked for autograph in Croke Park.</p> <p>01:13:00 Reflects on the impact of the GAA in his life. Treated with respect when he worked in Dublin because of his hurling prowess. Considers his motivation for his involvement in training and administration.</p> <p>01:15:06 Discusses the decline of volunteerism nowadays. Problems at weaker county level because of lack of experienced trainers. No financial motivation to volunteer. More paid coaches in future.</p> <p>01:16:29 Considers whether drugs are a feature of the sport. Recalls taking a pill in CBS Roscommon before a match. The</p>
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	negative implications of the win-at-all-costs attitude prevalent even at underage level: drugs, cutting corners, burnout. Too much pressure on children. His grandson playing.
Involvement in GAA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	Played hurling with St Dominic's Knockcrockery. Played on Roscommon Minor Hurling team and won All-Ireland in 1969; played on Roscommon Junior Hurling team and won All-Ireland in 1972. Won National League Division 2 playing with Roscommon. Won League Division 4 hurling in Sligo in 1989.
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	Current Chairman of Calry-St Joseph's GAA; Chairman of Sligo Hurling Board (6 months)
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:21:26
Language	English

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To be filled in by Interviewer:

I hereby assign the copyright of the content of the above to the GAA Oral History Project on the understanding that the content will not be used in a derogatory manner. I understand that I am giving the GAA Oral History Project the right to use and make available to the public the content of this interview.

Signed: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 18th June 2012