

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	23 rd July 2013
Location	Silver Springs Hotel, Cork City
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Christy Cooney
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1953 Home County: Cork
Education	Primary: Youghal National School, Co. Cork. Secondary: Youghal CBS, Co. Cork. Third Level: University of Sheffield, UK
Family	Siblings: 4 brothers & 1 sister Current Family if Different: His wife Anne, son Patrick and daughter Edel
Club(s)	Youghal GAA [Cork]
Occupation	Retired Assistant Director General FÁS
Parents' Occupation	Textiles Production Manager [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Fianna Fáil
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Youghal Golf Club

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Date of Report	16 th August 2013
Period Covered	1920s - 2013
Counties/Countries Covered	Cork, Limerick, Dublin, Waterford, Kerry, Tipperary, Clare, Kilkenny, Tyrone, Sligo, Mayo
Key Themes Covered	Facilities, Playing, Administration, Celebrations, Religion, Role of Clergy, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Identity, Culture, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Politics, Opening of Croke Park, Politics, Professionalism, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Rivalry
Interview Summary	<p>Christy talks about the GAA tradition in his family in particular the place of the GAA in his father's life. He recalls growing up in Youghal and the place of the GAA in community life, commenting on the contribution of local administrators, schools and clergy. The games are discussed at length along with players he has admired throughout the years. He outlines the development of both his playing and administrative careers in the GAA which ranged from club to national level. He reflects on the various offices he has held within the GAA and the challenges and successes of each of those roles. He discusses administrators and players he admires, landmark moments in his presidency including the funeral of Ronan Kerr, the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Croke Park and the GAA 125 commemorations. Throughout the interview he reflects on the place of the GAA in Irish society both historically and in the present day.</p> <p>00:00:00 Introduction</p> <p>00:00:22 Growing up in Youghal. Description of family and their interest in the games. Father's involvement in GAA as a player for Castlemartyr and as an administrator. GAA tradition in both his father and mother's families. Father made hurleys for them.</p> <p>00:01:50 Place of the GAA in the household. Meetings held in their home. Growing up with discussion and debate on the GAA and on politics in the home. His father as a nationalist and a supporter of de Valera.</p> <p>00:3:55 GAA's place in the community in Youghal when he was growing up. Soccer and rugby also in the community but not as strong as the GAA. Strength of GAA in schools. Going to matches with family and friends.</p>

	<p>00:04:45 Being exposed to what the GAA stood for when he was a child. Mentions that his father was delegate to Congress when 'the ban' was lifted in 1971. How he felt about the lifting of the ban and the debate around it at the time. Mentions Pat Fanning and his relationship with him. Untimely death of his father.</p> <p>00:06:17 Mother's role in the home and view on the GAA activity in the household.</p> <p>00:07:13 Weekend life and the GAA. Travelling to matches around east Cork and also following Cork. Getting an insight into the GAA and meeting people like Christy Ring.</p> <p>00:08:28 Earliest memories of seeing Cork play in 1966 and 1967. Mentions Fr Seánie Barry of Bride Rovers playing in 1966. Local players from Youghal that were starting to come through at the time such as Paddy Hegarty, Willie Walsh, Seánie Barry and Noel Gallagher. His father as a selector for the Cork U21 Hurling team at the time. Connection between club scene and inter-county scene. Priority of hurling over football in Youghal club. Renewal of inter-county scene hurling in Cork with victory in 1966 after barren years of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Strong senior hurling team in Youghal at the time.</p> <p>00:10:51 Cork's victory over Kilkenny in the 1966 All-Ireland Hurling Final. Mentions Gerald McCarthy</p> <p>00:11:36 GAA heroes growing up – mentions Noel Gallagher, Charlie and Gerald McCarthy, Jimmy Barry Murphy, Denis Coughlan, Ray Cummins. Members of the team from the Cork three in a row, 1975, 1976, 1977. Importance of 1966 victory for Cork hurling. The importance of 1970 for Cork football. Mentions Jimmy Barry Murphy's famous goal that year in Croke Park.</p> <p>00:14:01 Place of hurling in Youghal National School. Christian Brothers run school. Talks about Johnny Coyne. Lack of underage structures. Mentions Brother Coughlan, Brother Dunphy, Joe Coyne, Mick Coleman, Kevin Foley all involved in underage set up. Also mentions the role of Fr Anthony Cronin, Curate of Youghal.</p> <p>00:15:58 No schools competitions in secondary school but played hurling with the club at U16 and minor level. Winning East Cork competitions. Rivalry with Carrigtwohill and Sarsfields. Strong era for Youghal club. Being beaten in a Cork senior hurling final by Glen Rovers. Good administrative</p>
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	<p>structures in the club at the time.</p> <p>00:17:13 History of Youghal GAA club. Strong GAA tradition in the parish. Copper Alley field, once a cricket grounds. British Army base in the town and the importance of the port in the town's history.</p> <p>00:18:03 1970s and 80s high employment levels in Youghal because of textile industry. Mentions Youghal Carpets, Seafield Fabrics; Blackwater Cottons. Thriving town compared to now. Collapse of textile industry. Tourism in the town at that time, trains coming from Cork full of people to enjoy the beach.</p> <p>00:19:47 Secondary schools also going well at the time contribution of religious orders. Camogie in Youghal. Mentions Kelly Riordan. Fr. Cronin's contribution to developing camogie. Strength of ladies football now and historically of handball.</p> <p>00:21:22 Outline of his playing career. Being involved as a selector for Cork winning U21 Hurling All-Ireland team, selector for Cork intermediate teams; currently managing Youghal senior hurling team. All of his brothers also playing hurling</p> <p>00:24:32 Training when he was playing. Mentions Murphy's Row where they played. Few other distractions when he was growing up. Mentions Red Barn dancehall.</p> <p>00:26:06 Going to work at Seafield Gentex after finishing school. Being secretary of juvenile club aged 16 and chairperson of the adult club at 25. Also holding the roles of secretary and treasurer – deep involvement in GAA at the time. Expectation to take on roles in the GAA after the death of his father to carry on family tradition leading to a heavy involvement at a very young age. Death of his father. Con Murphy giving graveside oration at funeral. Getting married later that year in Rome. Buying a house in Youghal and living there.</p> <p>00:33:00 Taking over as chairperson of Youghal GAA in 1977, the December after his father died. Strength of the club at the time. New grounds opened by Erskine Childers. Running a festival of dances in a marquee on the pitch to raise funds. How he felt about taking on the role and lessons he learned in the role. Mentions John Parker, Ned O'Connell, Assumpta Parker</p> <p>00:36:43 Starting to work for ANCO in Cork. Starting to</p>
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	<p>broaden his GAA administrative reach to county level. Attending his first congress in Castlebar in 1978 as a Cork delegate. First impressions of congress. Mentions Frank Murphy, Denis Conroy, Donal O'Sullivan, Paddy O'Driscoll from Shanagarry, Derry Gowan, Seán Crowley from Bandon. Social aspect of Congress.</p> <p>00:40:23 Going to his first county board meeting and seeing Con Murphy in action. Mentions Jim Flynn, father of Joan Flynn former president of the Camogie Association. Mentions Jack Barrett. County Board rooms in Cook Street at the time. Mentions characters involved at the time including Tommy Sullivan, Mick McCarthy, Ned Connor from Blackrock, Jimmy Grady from Finbarrs. Description of meetings, changes in working structures over the years. Reputation of Cork administration within the GAA nationally. Quality and popularity of Cork county hurling finals thirty years ago – a good era to be involved in Cork GAA.</p> <p>00:46:41 Being put in his place at his first county board meeting. Description of Con Murphy and his contribution to the GAA.</p> <p>00:48:08 Ambitions as a young man in terms of GAA administration. Going to college to gain qualifications in education and training for managing ANCO Training Centre in Cork. Became manager at the training centre, chairperson of Cork county board and appointed to board of the Independent Radio and Television Commission all around the same time. Daily routine at the time. Approach to meetings.</p> <p>00:51:02 Function of the Independent Radio and Television Commission. Mentions Century Radio and the development of community radio. Mentions Michael O'Keefe (CEO), Gerry Danagher, Kieran Mulvey, Niall Stokes of Hotpress (chairman), Joe Walsh (then Minister for Agriculture) and Albert Reynolds. Fianna Fáil tradition in family.</p> <p>00:53:32 Expanding nature of his job at ANCO. Developing new training courses in gas and oil. Challenges and opportunities of his job at the time.</p> <p>00:54:20 Busy time, young family. Family life at the time. Talks about his wife Anne who worked for Allied Irish Bank. His family going to matches with him</p> <p>00:55:47 Vice-Chairman as his first role at county level for Cork GAA. Approach to meetings. Working with Frank Murphy. Importance of efficiency and a professional approach</p>
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	<p>to GAA administration</p> <p>00:58:23 Replacing Tony O'Mahony as chairperson of Cork county board in early 1990s. Mentions Donie Coleman, Brian Barrett of Nemo Rangers. Big issues when he became chairman. Mentions controversy around senior football team and Billy Morgan. Working relationship with Billy Morgan. Jimmy Barry Murphy coming in as coach of the Cork Minor hurling team and then manager of the Cork senior hurling team. Mentions Tom Cashman and Tony O'Sullivan as selectors – the 'dream team'. Putting in the groundwork for the Cork teams of that decade. Mentions Jimmy Barry Murphy, Ray Cummins, Teddy McCarthy and Denis Coughlan as remarkable players. Esteem in which Jimmy Barry Murphy is held in Cork.</p> <p>1:03:46 Working with Frank Murphy. Purchase of Páirc Uí Rinn. Purchase of North Monastery playing fields. End of Billy Morgan era and appointment of Larry Thompkins as manager of Cork senior football team. Mentions Tomás Mulcahy. Replaced as chairperson by Brian Barrett.</p> <p>1:05:25 Demands of the geography, size and dual codes in Cork on the role of county chairman. Impact on family life and working life. Unity of Cork county board at the time.</p> <p>1:07:30 Mentions Siamsa Cois Laoi and the world championship boxing match between Chris Eubank and Steve Collins in Croke Park. Seeing them fight in Millstreet. Memories of Michael Jackson and U2 concerts in Croke Park. Bruce Springsteen concert in Páirc Uí Chaoimh. Economic impact of concerts and major fixture on Cork. Role of Frank Murphy and Oliver Barry in pioneering these events. Clearing the debt in Páirc Uí Chaoimh. Mentions John Denver and The Wolfetones playing in Páirc Uí Chaoimh.</p> <p>1:10:33 Vision of Frank Murphy, Oliver Barry and Con Murphy in fundraising and purchasing land. Mentions Nemo Rangers, St Vincent's and assisting the purchase of grounds of other city clubs. Comments on the facilities in clubs around the country and the GAA's response to the expansion of cities.</p> <p>1:13:03 Talks about the impact of Paddy Buggy's plan for every club to own its own grounds by 1984. Risk taking and financial management within the GAA. Voluntary commitment to the Association. Essence of the Association, GAA as a business and administrative model. Success of GAA in engaging young people in the GAA tradition.</p> <p>1:16:40 Cultural identity and the GAA. Travelling to GAA</p>
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	<p>clubs internationally. Talks about emigration of Irish people around the world – sense of identity of this group of people around the GAA as a national movement. Story about going to the Asian Games in Hong Kong. The GAA as a movement. Power of the GAA in Ireland. The power of the position of president of the GAA in Ireland.</p> <p>1:21:17 Reflects on <i>The GAA, A People's History</i> and <i>The GAA County by County</i> the GAA's 125 commemorative publications and the GAA Oral History Project initiated under Nickey Brennan and carried on under his own presidency.</p> <p>1:23:03 Story about visiting Pat Fanning. Mentions discussing the opening of Croke Park with him. Delivering his graveside oration. Story about seeing Pat speak at a presentation of medal years earlier. Mentions Mount Sion and the GAA in Waterford.</p> <p>1:27:42 Becoming vice-chairman of Munster Council. Being promoted to regional manager with FÁS, moving to Limerick. Succeeding Seán Kelly as chairman of Munster Council. Celebrating the 100 year history of the Munster Council. Mentions Jim Cronin. Living in Annacotty.</p> <p>1:30:46 Role of chairman of Munster Council. Mentions Donie Nealon who was secretary at the time. Purchase of Munster Council offices. Being on the Management Committee in Croke Park, Seán McCague president of the GAA at the time, Liam Mulvihill general secretary at the time.</p> <p>1:33:05 Big issues for Management Committee at the time – opening of Croke Park. His opposition to the opening of Croke Park. Talks about rugby and soccer.</p> <p>1:35:55 Impact of this opposition on contesting the presidency. Working relationship with Nickey Brennan. Aftermath of being defeated in the presidential election.</p> <p>1:39:51 Becoming chairperson of the Coaching and Games Development Committee. Expansion of summer camps, advancing coaching certification system with Pat Daly. Views on coaching and participation. Introduction of Go Games. Developing the festival of sports in the US. Appointment of full time coaches in Britain and expansion of that system in Dublin</p> <p>1:42:35 Description of role of Management Committee and comparison with Coaching and Games Development Committee. Role of sub-committees.</p> <p>1:45:20 His career outside of the GAA at this time. Being</p>
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	<p>asked to sit on the Broadcasting Complaints Commission by Síle de Valera. Becoming Assistant Director General of FÁS with responsibility for community employment. Moving back to Youghal. Starting to work in HR industrial relations for FÁS, becoming head of strategy in FÁS. FÁS controversy with Public Accounts Committee.</p> <p>1:50:20 Transferable skills between his GAA administrative career and his working career at FÁS. Becoming a public person with the presidency. Support of his wife Anne during his presidency of the GAA.</p> <p>1:55:42 GAA strikes in Cork in the 2000s. Offering to mediate in the negotiations. Foundation of the GPA. Mentions Frank Murphy, Gerald McCarthy, Teddy Holland. Legacy of strikes. Meeting the players as Úachtaráin Tofa with Páraic Duffy. Mentions contribution of Kieran Mulvey. Mentions Denis Walsh, Denis Coughlan, John Fenton and Jimmy Barry Murphy.</p> <p>2:04:50 Decision to run for the presidency the second time. Canvassing for support. Winning the election at congress in Sligo. Homecoming to club. Returning to work. Preparing to come in as president. Working with Páraic Duffy. Appointing committees. Emphasis on strategic approach of organisation. Delivery of strategic plan. Stadium management side of the job.</p> <p>2:09:33 Negotiations with the GPA. Mentions working with Dónal Óg Cusack, Dessie Farrell, Páraic Duffy, Fergal McGill and Liam Keane. Contribution of Turlough O'Donnell as facilitator in those discussions. The Glendalough Agreement. Mentions earlier efforts by Seán McCague, Jarlath Burns, Nickey Brennan, Seán Kelly to address player welfare. Final outcome of negotiations. Agreement as a milestone in the history of the GAA.</p> <p>2:16:40 Approach to the presidency, ambitions for his term of office. First speech as president at Congress in Cork.</p> <p>2:18:18 Significance of 125 commemorations. Mentions Lá na gClub; documenting of history of Association. Listening evenings with GAA clubs around the country. Travelling around the country to events and visiting clubs and schools. Representing the GAA.</p> <p>2:23:13 Daily routine as president. Travelling around the country; chairing the board of Páirc an Chrócaigh Teoranta; meeting government ministers; going to state functions; working with sponsors; launching GAA events. Evolution of</p>
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	<p>role of presidency. Travelling to Canada, the Asian Games, North America, Australia. Mentions Jim Stynes funeral.</p> <p>2:27:12 Funeral of Ronan Kerr. Mentions Aogán Farrell, President of the Ulster Council. Meeting Taoiseach Enda Kenny, Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness, Mayor of Belfast and Peter Robinson in Tyrone on the morning of the funeral.</p> <p>2:30:02 Meeting the Sports Council in the North. Meeting with Martin McGuinness and Peter Robinson in Stormont after that. Role of GAA in peace process.</p> <p>2:31:33 Visit of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip to Croke Park. Relationship with Mary and Martin McAleese. Mentions Martin McAleese's role in the GAA Social Initiative. Planning for the visit. Working with Ulster GAA, Áras an Úachtaráin and Management Committee. Mentions Aogán Farrell, Danny Murphy and Páraic Duffy. Preparing his speech for the visit. Addressing Bloody Sunday. Description of the day of the visit. Reviewing the day with Peter McKenna. Going to the state dinner that night in Dublin Castle. Response to the visit. Mentions receiving a post card from Brendan Grace. Negative reactions to the visit. His own reflections on the visit and on the contribution Mary and Martin McAleese made generally during Mary's presidency.</p> <p>2:44:43 Implementing plans to prevent pitch invasions at Croke Park.</p> <p>2:47:40 Life after being president of the GAA. Reflections on the presidency and the people with whom he worked. Returning to family, community and club.</p> <p>2:49:50 Relationship between the GAA, the Camogie Association and the Ladies Gaelic Football Association – initiating one club focus.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p>✓ Supporter ✓ Player ✓ Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p>✓ Chairperson ✓ Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p>✓ Other (please specify): Úachtaráin CLG 2009-2012</p>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Played hurling and football until he was 37 and 38. Mainly played hurling. Won a minor and U21 Cork County Hurling Championship.</p>
<p>Record as an</p>	<p>Secretary of the Youghal Juvenile Club at 16 years of age;</p>

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Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	Represented Youghal at both East Cork and County Level and held every position within the Youghal Club down through the years; Chairman of the Youghal GAA Club for 2 terms; Vice-Chairman of Cork County Board (1991); Chairman of Cork County Board (1995-1998); Munster Vice-Chairman (1998) Munster Chairperson (2001-2004); Member of Management Committee (2001-2004); Chair of National Coaching and Games Development Committee (2006-2009); Member of Strategic Review Committee (2000-2002); Contested the Presidency in 2005; President of GAA (2009-2012).
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 2:50:33
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 16th August 2013