

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	21 st April 2011
Location	Rory's home, near Feenagh, Co. Limerick
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Rory Kiely
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1934 Home County: Limerick
Education	Primary: Feenagh NS, Co. Limerick Secondary: CBS Charleville, Co. Cork
Family	Siblings: 1 sister Current Family if Different: 2 sons & 2 daughters
Club(s)	Feenagh-Kilmeady GAA [Limerick]
Occupation	REtired Farmer; Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann
Parents' Occupation	Farmers
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Fianna Fáil Senator 1977-2007
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Macra na Feirme; Irish Farmers Association; ICMSA; Munster Agricultural Society

REFERENCE NO. LK/1/6

Date of Report	15 th June 2012
Period Covered	1934 – 2009
Counties/Countries Covered	Limerick, Cork
Key Themes Covered	<p>Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Officials, Administration, Fundraising, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Rivalries, Irish Language, Culture, Scór, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish, History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Politics, The Troubles, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Ban on Security Forces, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Socialising, Relationships, Economy / Economics</p>
Interview Summary	<p>Rory recalls his youth in rural Limerick, where he played hurling with his friends and at school. He went to secondary school in Charleville and also played hurling there, before returning home to work on the farm. He and his friends decided to set up a local club and Rory was very much involved, getting his first taste of administrative work along the way. The club soon joined up with another local club and that offered Rory a valuable lesson in diplomacy. He thrived in the administrative arena and rose through the ranks of the GAA, going from club level all the way up to Central Council and eventually being made a trustee of the GAA. He also found time to serve in the Seanad, where he acted as Cathaoirleach. Rory gives his opinions on issues such as the lifting of the Ban, the opening of Croke Park and the increasing number of disputes at inter-county level - something he is all too aware of due to the 2009/2010 fall-out in Limerick over the manager of the senior hurling team. He is a traditionalist at heart but also a firm democrat who is willing to move with the times, his chief concern being the preservation of a successful Association where people work together in harmony for the sake of the greater good.</p> <p>00:15 Born in 1934 in Feenagh, Limerick.</p> <p>00:45 He is from a farming background.</p> <p>01:00 Earliest memory is going to hurling games in a horse and trap to watch Feenagh, who were successful at the time.</p> <p>01:35 His uncle played some GAA, as did his father. But they</p>

REFERENCE NO. LK/1/6

	<p>were busy at home.</p> <p>02:15 It was a hurling area and a strong GAA area as there was little else in the way of entertainment.</p> <p>03:05 The dances were held in farmers' kitchens at the time, sometimes to raise money.</p> <p>03:50 They often went to Kilmallock - 14 miles away - or Ballingarry on the horse and trap to watch games. The alternative method of transport was they bicycle.</p> <p>04:20 He used to play hurling with friends from school and they made their own goalposts.</p> <p>05:00 Their parents bought the hurleys for them in shops.</p> <p>05:30 He went to Feenagh national school and they would play at lunch. The teachers would referee. There was no coaching until he went to the Christian Brothers school in Charleville.</p> <p>06:30 In Charleville they had a good Harty Cup team but Rory was too young to play. They went to go by bus to Buttevant or Mallow to watch the team play.</p> <p>07:15 Limerick CBS often won the Harty Cup, doing the four-in-a-row in the 1960s. St Coleman's of Fermoy were very good, as were St Flannan's of Ennis and Farranferris in Cork. Limerick's Ardscoil Rís won it in 2010.</p> <p>08:05 Hurling was very big in Christian Brothers' schools - they promoted it well.</p> <p>08:35 He stayed with an aunt in Newtownshandrum whilst at school and played with their Under-14 team.</p> <p>09:25 When he came back from school there was no team in Feenagh and many locals were playing with the neighbouring team, Dromcollogher - who won the championship in 1949.</p> <p>09:50 Rory and some others decided to affiliate a minor team and they did that in 1952.</p> <p>09:55 Kilmeedy had no team either at the time and they affiliated a junior team.</p> <p>10:15 In 1954 the two teams joined up. The team was called St Ita's after the patron saint of both areas, but they quickly decided to call it Feenagh-Kilmeedy in 1955.</p> <p>11:10 There was rivalry between both ends of the parish and</p>
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	<p>that caused the name change.</p> <p>11:55 At the beginning there was tension between the two sides but it eased off over time.</p> <p>12:45 In their first year together they won the west championship and that bonded them.</p> <p>13:30 Their colours were blue and white and they still are.</p> <p>14:05 The GAA had a big presence in the community. There was no Muintir na Tíre in the area, but Macra na Feirme had branches in Feenagh and Kilmeady. There was also a tennis club.</p> <p>15:10 There were no soccer clubs but eventually they came in.</p> <p>15:30 They have their own playing field and a camogie club.</p> <p>16:00 In the beginning there were no women involved but that changed. In 2010 they had a lady secretary of Bord na nÓg, Breda O'Connor.</p> <p>16:55 Women are very much involved at underage level.</p> <p>17:40 In the 1930s there was a great Limerick team that featured the Mackeys, Jackie Power, the Cloughessys, Dr Jimmy Carthy. That helped develop the interest in hurling.</p> <p>18:35 Kevin Long was a good player for Feenagh.</p> <p>18:50 Tom Galvin played with Newtownshandrum. He captained a Cork divisional team, Avondhu, to a county senior championship in 1953 and then went to Limerick and captained Western Gaels to a senior championship in 1961.</p> <p>19:55 It was always an honour to have a club player represent the county.</p> <p>20:55 Rory was delighted to play for his club and then Western Gaels in 1961 and 1962.</p> <p>22:55 Wristwork and speed was important. Everyone had to watch their man closely; today it's looser.</p> <p>24:15 He doesn't like the short puck-out. There is a lot of hand-passing now.</p> <p>25:45 Limerick were in a barren period in the early 1950s. He went to a game in Cork and saw Limerick beat Waterford. They then played Clare in the Munster final and won the final for the first time since 1940. It encouraged the people that</p>
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	<p>hurling was on the way up.</p> <p>26:55 They had a car when they went to the inter-county games.</p> <p>27:20 He remembers when they had no electricity and they only had oil lamps and candles. Electricity came in the early 1950s.</p> <p>29:20 He was 17 when he became secretary of his local club. He organised meetings and they needed to find ways to raise money. Players and games had to be organised too.</p> <p>30:45 He was registrar of the West Limerick board, vice chairman of the county board and then chairman of the county board. He was a delegate to the Munster Council and then Limerick's representative at Central Council. He was made a trustee of the GAA in 2003. He was chairman of the west Limerick Board for three years in the 1980s and occupied different positions in his own club.</p> <p>32:50 He was ambitious when he was involved in administration.</p> <p>34:00 Being chairman of the Limerick Board in 1973 was a highlight as they won a senior hurling All-Ireland that year.</p> <p>35:20 Being chairman was not as demanding then as it is now. There were less games and competitions, and not much emphasis on coaching.</p> <p>37:30 He was secretary of the Fianna Fáil cumann at a young age. He ran for the Dáil in 1969 and the Senate in 1977.</p> <p>39:10 Limerick had a successful team in 1971, winning the League, beating Cork in the Munster semi-final and then losing to Tipperary in the final in Killarney, winning the Oireachtas Cup. The following year they lost to Clare in Ennis and lost. It was a major disappointment.</p> <p>40:40 Being chairman was the most challenging position he held. You have to try and influence decisions and look after players - though he is against player power.</p> <p>42:20 He would like it if players understood that county committees make decisions under the rules and that not every decision is going to go for them.</p> <p>43:30 He was against the opening of Croke Park but accepted what was a democratic decision.</p> <p>44:00 He felt that by opening Croke Park the GAA was</p>
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	<p>helping its competitors.</p> <p>44:00 He worried that the opening of grounds to other sports will spread and that club grounds will eventually be opened up.</p> <p>47:55 He worries that the GAA is becoming too liberal for its own good and that counties are getting weaker when they should not be.</p> <p>48:55 He sees the GAA as a national organisation. He was born shortly after Ireland became independent and was once tempted to join the IRA. That was how people felt then.</p> <p>51:40 He remembers when the Ban was lifted. Pat Fanning was GAA President at the time and was against the change, but conducted himself with dignity at Congress in Belfast.</p> <p>53:10 The atmosphere at Congress was that it was a done thing that had to be accepted.</p> <p>53:40 Rory doesn't think that the removal of the Ban damaged the GAA.</p> <p>54:30 When people broke the Ban at club level they often turned a blind eye to it.</p> <p>55:40 The GAA is successful in promoting Irish culture through Scór. Rory was chairman of the first county Scór and they have a great tradition of promoting it in his parish.</p> <p>56:45 People are not so enthusiastic about using the Irish language within the GAA now as they were in the past.</p> <p>58:45 Recalls a Scór winner singing the national anthem at Congress.</p> <p>01:00:10 Even though he was in politics he could never allow himself to abandon the GAA. He often milked cows in the morning and then went to the Senate.</p> <p>01:00:55 He was cathaoirleach of the Seanad from 2002-2007. It was important for him to be fair and to be firm. Listening was also a good skill.</p> <p>01:02:15 He admired Con Murphy a lot as a GAA leader. Joe McDonagh too, and Pat Fanning. Liam Mulvihill did a lot of good work.</p> <p>01:03:20 He is hopeful for the future of the GAA in Limerick, though there are less young people now and clubs have to join up or games are played with less players on each team.</p>
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REFERENCE NO. LK/1/6

	<p>01:04:25 They have a 'Go Games' system now where every young player gets a chance to play in games.</p> <p>01:05:00 He doesn't go to rugby but he would watch it on television. GAA is his priority.</p> <p>01:06:40 The Limerick hurling dispute of 2009/2010 is not helpful. It leaves scars.</p> <p>01:07:15 Recalls players in 1973 being disappointed about a decision but it was ironed out.</p> <p>01:07:35 He would like to see Croke Park devise a mechanism for resolving disputes.</p> <p>01:08:00 Recalls the unfolding of the 2009/2010 dispute.</p> <p>01:11:00 Disputes are more common since the GPA came in. He didn't like the fact that they organised their own version of the All Stars and got their own sponsors.</p> <p>01:12:35 He doesn't like the fact that the GPA have joined forces with Croke Park, but he hopes that it leads to more harmony.</p> <p>01:13:50 As Limerick delegate to Central Council he is part of a supreme authority. There are a lot of members and decide on things like what matches should be played at Croke Park.</p> <p>01:15:35 He is conscious of his obligations to his county and to the GAA.</p> <p>01:17:10 Some people associate themselves with the GAA for political gain and some have said that of Rory.</p> <p>01:17:40 The GAA has been his life. He has made great friendships.</p> <p>01:18:30 The GAA helps our national identity. Other countries are proud of their national identity and we should be too.</p> <p>01:19:10 The GAA helps people who have to emigrate.</p> <p>01:19:40 Joe McNamara once appointed him to an overseas unit.</p>
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REFERENCE NO. LK/1/6

<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p><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</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Played U14 hurling with Newtownshandrum; played minor hurling with Feenagh; played junior and senior hurling with Feenagh-Kilmeady and Western Gaels (a divisional team). Won 3 West Limerick Hurling Championships with Feenagh-Kilmeady in 1955, 60, 62 (captained the team in 1962); won 3 Limerick Senior Hurling Championships, 1 with Feenagh-Kilmeady in 1963 and 2 with Western Gaels.</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Secretary of Feenagh-Kilmeady in 1955; Secretary of Feenagh in 1952; Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Treasurer of Feenagh-Kilmeady at various stages.</p> <p>Registrar of the West Limerick GAA Board 1956-1959/60; Chairman of the West Limerick GAA Board (3 years).</p> <p>Vice-Chairman of Limerick County Board, 1966-69; Chairman of Limerick County Board, 1969-81.</p> <p>Member of the Munster Council, 1982-2010</p> <p>Central Council delegate for Limerick 2010 - ; Trustee of the GAA.</p>
<p>Format</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual</p>
<p>Duration</p>	<p>Length of Interview: 01:21:56</p>
<p>Language</p>	<p>English</p>

REFERENCE NO. LK/1/6

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 15th June 2012