

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Seán Kearns
Date of Interview	18 Sept 2009
Location	Interviewee's home near Yonkers, New York
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Daniel Hannon
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1962 Home County: Bronx, New York
Education	Primary: Sacred Heart School/St Philip's Secondary: Cardinal Spellman High School, Bronx
Family	Siblings: 8; 4 th of 9 children Current Family if Different: Six children
Club(s)	Fordham Shamrocks [America]; St Barnabas [America]; Kerry
Occupation	Railroad Conductor
Parents' Occupation	Bus driver [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Republican

Date of Report	30 May 2010
Period Covered	Late 1960s - 2009
Counties/Countries Covered	New York, Americas
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Material Culture, Education, Media, Emigration, Involvement in GAA abroad, GAA Abroad, Identity, Rivalries, Club History, County History, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Retirement, Food and Drink, Socialising
Interview Summary	<p>Daniel Hannon is an Irish-American born in New York in 1962 and brought up in the Bronx. He played Gaelic Football for Fordham Shamrocks, St Barnabas and Kerry in New York. The interview gives an excellent insight into the experience of Irish-Americans in the GAA in New York including his early memories of Gaelic Park and the GAA community in New York, club life and the development of the underage players in New York. It also deals with the ways Irish-Americans stayed in touch with GAA in Ireland, visiting teams and players from Ireland, the standard and style of Gaelic Football in New York, the impact of changes in emigration patterns and the at times difficult relationship between Irish-American players and the New York and Irish GAA leadership. The interview also deals with the development of the Minor Board and underage GAA in New York and the CYC games, all of which the interviewee was heavily involved in, as well as various trips to Ireland with underage New York teams.</p> <p>0:00:18 Describes his first GAA memory as being in Gaelic Park and watching Mick O'Connell being in a place-kicking contest with Roy Gerela of the Pittsburgh Steelers American Football team, who had won the Superbowl that season. The owners of that team were the Rooneys, who were of Irish roots so they let him come in.</p> <p>0:00:45 Describes having the run of Gaelic Park as children, there every Sunday.</p> <p>0:01:20 Describes an earlier memory of Down coming to play in Croke Park and being very big and intimidating in their</p>

	<p>Black jerseys.</p> <p>0:01:40 Talks about the big crowds at Gaelic Park in his childhood and staying the whole day going all over the place and getting up on the roof to retrieve balls for John Shaughnessy.</p> <p>0:02:25 Describes the rickety stands at Gaelic park then and how people coming out from Ireland were always disappointed by how dilapidated the Stadium was.</p> <p>0:02:45 Describes crowds at the stadium and dances in the evening, with the odd fight. Tells story of giant fight his uncle got in there.</p> <p>0:04:20 Describes how the people dressed up to go to the Gaelic Park. People didn't wear team colours much –maybe a badge. Wore church clothes to the stadium.</p> <p>0:05:25 There were plenty of women in attendance – it was a good place to meet a partner or get a job.</p> <p>0:06:00 Describes tribal nature of Gaelic Park.</p> <p>0:06:20 Describes decline in crowds at Gaelic Park from late 1960s onwards after limits put on immigration by Kennedy.</p> <p>0:06:40 Describes tough nature of Gaelic Football and hurling in his youth. Catch and kick style football with the old style football that was like a meteor.</p> <p>0:07:20 Standard was high with good fielding of the ball, not as much soloing.</p> <p>0:08:00 Describes the pitch at Gaelic park as a dustbowl with rocks. Van Cortlandt park was similar. Ball could bounce anywhere which was a problem for the guys out from Ireland.</p> <p>0:09:10 Describes teams coming out from Ireland, like the All-Stars, coming over in the 1970s. You saw players who you'd only heard about on the radio. Although hard for American kids to understand the commentary of Micheal O'Hehir.</p> <p>0:10:30 Talks about listening to games on the radio.</p> <p>0:11:00 Describes seeing All-Ireland final at the cinemas on Fordham Road. It was 8 dollars. A big tribal gathering with</p>
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	<p>people from both sides.</p> <p>0:11:50 Describes his father fundraising for people and getting them into see games for free.</p> <p>0:12:20 Describes limited contact with GAA in Ireland when he was young.</p> <p>0:12:40 Describes learning to play football in Pat Guerin's back-yard on Shakespeare Avenue in the Bronx. With Pat' son, Patrick, who manages up in Rockland now. Pat Guerin took them to Gaelic Park, and once, he took outlines of their feet to get them Blackthorn football boots from Ireland, when they couldn't afford them. That was what it was like then.</p> <p>0:16:00 Talks about how New York GAA got their gear from Ireland. Talks about getting a football somehow from Gaelic Park and playing with it in the neighbourhood</p> <p>0:16:50 Talks about explaining to his American neighbours what they were doing – playing 'Irish' football.</p> <p>0:17:20 Talks about forming of their club Fordham Shamrocks in 1970s, one of the first Irish American teams, and regular training. Talks about how he learned to play and the coaches they had. Working men who gave their time.</p> <p>0:19:20 Talks about underage Gaelic Football in 1970s and the kids from new jersey who didn't have Irish names but were huge. Games could be tough.</p> <p>0:20:00 Talks about rivalries with the other underage teams in New York – the Celtics and Rangers. They played catch and kick style football and were tough and got taught all the little tricks of marking your man.</p> <p>0:21:00 There weren't that many serious injuries. Jammed thumbs were common.</p> <p>0:21:45 Talks about the heaviness of the ball they used, and using a smaller ball for underage.</p> <p>0:22:10 Talks about why there were less injuries. People got rid of the ball quickly. Little solo running because you'd get hammered.</p> <p>0:22:30 Talks about referees allowing tough play to go on. Expected you would get a hard tackle if you tried to run ball</p>
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	<p>into the full back line. A big brute was the normal full back.</p> <p>0:23:00 Talks about difficulties of being a goalkeeper at that time.</p> <p>0:23:20 Talks about the idea of a good foul.</p> <p>0:24:00 Talks about playing in Gaelic Park and how good John Kerry O'Donnell was to minor board in giving them slots on weekends. They played all year nearly and had lots of competitions. Played in a few other locations.</p> <p>0:25:50 The rules of their league was there were no weekenders in the minor board. You had to be registered in school. Mainly Irish Americans as emigration was down in 1970s so few kids from Ireland arriving to live.</p> <p>0:27:00 Talks about other kids from their neighbourhood getting involved in GAA, Italian kids - some of whom went on to play for New York. Some second and third generation Irish kids as well who got interested through school friends.</p> <p>0:28:30 Talks about how playing other sports like lacrosse or basketball actually made kids better at GAA, and playing GAA made them better at other sports.</p> <p>0:29:00 Talks about problem of High School kids getting told by their sports coaches in school to give up GAA so as not to get hurt.</p> <p>0:29:40 Talks about high standard up to under-14 in New York and keeping those kids in the game once they go to High School for various reasons.</p> <p>0:30:30 Talks about how chance of travel to the CYC games or to competition in Ireland encourages players to take part.</p> <p>0:30:50 Talks about playing baseball and American Football as a kid.</p> <p>0:31:20 Talks about Gaelic Football being a staple of his childhood and having his gear always ready.</p> <p>0:32:00 Talks about the picking of the team and hoping you'd get picked because often there were more kids than jerseys.</p> <p>0:32:50 Talks about parents coming to Gaelic Park coming to watch their games. Some of the mothers made their presence</p>
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	<p>felt.</p> <p>0:33:30 Talks about fundraising dances for the club with 500 or 600 people at them in Gaelic park with 50 tables with chance books and a band.</p> <p>0:34:20 The Fordham Shamrocks didn't get any money from outside – the government or GAA – and they did so much for kids.</p> <p>0:35:00 Talks about the organisation of the club and meetings in the back rooms of various bars. Might be thirty people at that meeting and all the offices were contested.</p> <p>0:35:40 The people who ran the club weren't highly-educated by they knew how to run a meeting and make rules for a club.</p> <p>0:36:50 Compares that with the rule bending you see today.</p> <p>0:37:00 Running the club properly was part of their being American and voting and democracy was a part of that. Those men weren't too fond of the English.</p> <p>0:38:20 Talks about link between GAA in New York and Irish politics and republicanism and remembers rows about the subject of raising money for Republican causes. The club voted it down.</p> <p>0:39:20 Talks about Northern Aid being big in New York then but GAA wasn't just about that.</p> <p>0:39:45 Talks about lack of sectarianism and having Cuban and other kids involved.</p> <p>0:40:00 Talks about limited links between church and their GAA club when they were young, although they prayed before games and they still do which causes some looks when they travel.</p> <p>0:41:15 Criticises removing the Christian symbol from the GAA logo.</p> <p>0:41:55 Talks about effect of the decline in Emigration in 1970s. Didn't have any effect of the Minor Board because they got their kids from the Irish Americans but the Senior Board were hit and him and his brother ended up playing for Kerry Seniors because the Senior clubs needed the Irish</p>
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	<p>American players.</p> <p>0:43:00 Talks about how the Senior Clubs kept waiting for the emigration floodgates to open again rather than really engaging with the under-age game and bringing on the Irish American kids.</p> <p>0:43:30 Talks about the standard of a county players coming over from Ireland now. Like professionals. The Irish Americans can't compete with that.</p> <p>0:44:00 Talks about the Irish Americans who play Senior in New York now, like for his club St Barnabas. They don't get the breaks from the referees.</p> <p>0:44:30 Talks about a player getting sent off for shouting at the referee from the sideline.</p> <p>0:45:15 Talks about the draft system for the Senior teams from the Minor League. But Senior teams more interested in the college students coming over from Ireland who take their places.</p> <p>0:46:00 Talks about drawbacks of the Senior teams using these college players out from Ireland and the effects on the minors.</p> <p>0:47:20 The GAA in New York tend to boast about their youth development programme but they actually don't do anything to promote the underage game. Very few of those underage players ever get the chance to play for New York.</p> <p>0:48:50 Talks about playing corner forward in New York and his attitude to winning the ball. The Irish players he played against didn't know what to think. His father used to tell him that they didn't have a chance at beating the Kerry boys so that motivated them to get stuck in.</p> <p>0:50:00 Talks about being unable to mark some of the county players out from Ireland.</p> <p>0:50:30 Talks about playing with Mick Moynihan who owned the Aqueduct bar, who was older because they were struggling to find players. Talks about other Irish Americans who played for Kerry and how willing they were to fight.</p> <p>0:51:55 Talks about playing against Brian Mullins in a quarter</p>
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	<p>final and being a bit star struck. He'd just paid to see him an All-Ireland final on the big screen at Lehman College.</p> <p>0:52:50 The players over from Ireland could do what they wanted because the referees didn't want to send them off. So Mullins hit him so hard in the head he saw stars, but you just couldn't hurt him he was so tough. Also mentions a player named Niblock (probably Mickey Niblock of Derry).</p> <p>0:54:00 Talks about the impact of the bringing of weekenders because the team you beat easily in Spring would bring players out and beat you in August and then players lost their places to the weekenders which was bad for team morale and made players leave.</p> <p>0:54:20 Teams brought out eight or nine county players and only a few Irish Americans could compete, like Pat Carroll. As was one of Terry Connaughton's sons, but the Irish Americans didn't always get a chance.</p> <p>0:55:40 Discusses whether New York could be competitive in Connacht Championship. Possibly at Junior level. The standard in Ireland is so high now.</p> <p>0:56:10 Thinks that New York should be represented by the Irish-American guys because they'd be motivated and would do as well as the current team do.</p> <p>0:57:00 Talks about the surprise Irish teams get when they play the American underage teams, because they take it seriously.</p> <p>0:57:30 Talks about his unique approach to refereeing underage games.</p> <p>0:58:00 Talks about bringing underage teams back to Ireland for trips and the level of work involved in shepherding a group of 17-18 year olds and the pride of representing your club, city and country.</p> <p>0:59:40 Talks about picking players based on their attitude and not just skill and handling players on tour to keep them in line.</p> <p>1:00:00 Talks about taking teams to see historical sites in Ireland including the peace line in Belfast.</p>
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	<p>1:01:30 Talks about taking team to Louth in 2002 to play in International tournament against teams from all over. Hired a bus and took the team to Portrush. The team were surprised by the Union Jacks. Team ended up in a pub called the Londonderry Arms and playing rap music.</p> <p>1:04:30 Team adapted to Ireland fine, they were there to play football and they consider themselves a part of the GAA like the kids in Ireland.</p> <p>1:05:00 Talks about playing Kilcummin in Kerry and the Kerry team being surprised by how good they were. Also played well in Mayo and referee complimented their direct play and kicking the long ball. Also played in Cavan.</p> <p>1:07:00 Talks about how well the team were treated in Ireland, especially in Swinford.</p> <p>1:08:00 His management style depends on the strengths of the players he has and with American kids, contact is what they understand. Try to attack directly.</p> <p>1:09:00 Talks about getting his players to block kicks correctly and to kick frees properly.</p> <p>1:10:00 Stresses importance of close marking of your man as key defensive tactic.</p> <p>1:10:43 Talks about stressing to young players to enjoy their time playing football.</p> <p>1:11:00 Talks about relationship between New York and GAA HQ in Dublin. Thinks Dublin hasn't a clue what's happening in New York. Don't understand what's really happening on ground. New York needs money to develop underage and expand it to other cities.</p> <p>1:12:30 Talks about pointlessness of having a GAA games promotion officer who doesn't come from the community.</p> <p>1:13:30 He's said this to GAA Presidents and senior people but they don't really listen.</p> <p>1:14:00 Talks about whether the GAA will still be around in New York in twenty years. It will still be there but not sure what format?</p> <p>1:14:30 Talks about difficulties with personality clashes within</p>
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	<p>clubs. But GAA does have resources it could use. More sponsorship from big companies with Irish-American leadership. So many influential Irish-Americans out there that could be tapped into with some broader thinking.</p> <p>1:16:50 Instead GAA in New York is dependent on the same group of bar owners and contractors.</p> <p>1:17:40 There is an element of tribalism in New York GAA that stops it expanding.</p> <p>1:17:50 His best GAA memory would be taking his two sons to Ireland to play Gaelic Football, when he was managing. They hadn't started playing until age 14.</p> <p>1:19:00 His worst memory would be getting ready to play a game when you find out there's a guy out from Ireland for the weekend and he's taking your place. It made people like him quit playing.</p> <p>1:19:40 Describes the best game of his life as his games under 14 with the Fordham Shamrocks. Or seeing Tyrone play Kerry in 1986, when Tyrone were winning at half time but Kerry came back.</p> <p>1:20:50 Describes his best team as the Kerry team of the late 1970s with Liston, Spillane, Power, O'Keeffe. Good Shepherd in New York had big tough Irish American teams, although the style the teams he played on it that era played would get them all sent off in the first ten minutes under today's rules.</p> <p>1:21:50 Talks about the CYC (Continental Youth Championships) games and being in Louth in 2004, when international chairman, Gene Duffy, had idea of continental games and although the head of the Minor Board was against it, he thought it was a great idea and got on board.</p> <p>1:22:30 Talks about the tough ten months planning the first games in New York with Eamon Deane and getting pitches and getting more teams into it, ending up with a huge turnout.</p> <p>1:24:20 Talks about how important the CYC games were and trying to do the games in a different way to get people involved, like putting three kids who drove up from Philadelphia, straight into a team.</p> <p>1:25:00 Tells great story about getting goalposts sent over</p>
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	<p>from Ireland in a container for the CYC and there being a delay, but he needed the goalposts immediately, so he used the Irish-American network and the goalposts came on time. That's the kind of thing the GAA should be doing with Irish America to get things done.</p> <p>1:27:40 Talks about playing a commemorative game for his brother who died, reforming Fordham Shamrocks to play St Barnabas and also a game with the Fire Department.</p> <p>1:28:20 Talks about the way GAA in New York do benefits for players who get injured and other people in need. That's always been part of the New York GAA, as has getting work for players.</p> <p>1:29:00 Talks about Mick O'Connell as his GAA hero. Seeing him play at the top of his game was very impressive. Catching uncatchable balls and flowing through the field.</p> <p>1:29:50 Talks about the part of the GAA that makes it proud is that it's the second largest amateur organisation in the world and have that big impressive stadium even though no one is getting paid. There's no fence between players and fans.</p> <p>1:31:15 His main disappointment with the GAA has been the top-down management style, where HQ is out of touch with the roots like them. It's offensive when they don't take the grass roots people seriously, considering the organisation is supported by people like him, spending his own money bringing kids around. They don't listen to these people's ideas.</p> <p>1:33:00 Talks about stress of running a team and CYC and getting suspended from the GAA for blowing off some steam. Talks about all the work of the CYC games at the beginning and putting the bills on his own credit card.</p> <p>1:34:30 Talks about ambition to take a football tournament to Disneyworld and bringing youth teams from all over. Then getting Disney media involved to promote it. Riverdance worked when nobody expected it to.</p> <p>1:35:45 Describes what the GAA means to him: It's part of his life that he's passed on to his kids. Tried to get daughters to play. He'll always watch Gaelic Football even if it comes time to pass on the responsibilities to the next set of people.</p>
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	<p>1:36:30 Talks about trip to Ireland with Fordham Shamrocks in 1977 “It could have been 1577.” A bunch of city kids who’d never seen a cow. They went back in 1979 and tore through parish teams.</p> <p>1:37:10 Talks about being proud of getting kids involved who otherwise wouldn’t have ever played Gaelic Football, and taking them to Ireland and England. It did good for a lot of kids and he still meets them and talks about those trips to Croagh Patrick.</p> <p>1:38:10 Talks about encouraging those kids to do the same thing for the next generation of kids. The GAA should be helping with that, encouraging American teams to come over.</p> <p>1:39:00 Suggests structure for getting New York minor team involved in some club championship back home, but the will to do that kind of thing isn’t there.</p>
<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 type="checkbox"/> Steward <input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person <input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ </p>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Played underage with Fordham Shamrocks, Played Junior and Senior with Kerry in New York Championship 1979, Also played with St Barnabas</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Vice President – St Barnabas Club</p> <p>Representative for Barnabas Minors.</p> <p>Delegate for New York Minor Board to Congress</p> <p>Chair – CYC Games</p>

REFERENCE NO. AM/1/8

Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:34:25
Language	English

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: Seán Kearns

Date: 1st July 2010