

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

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| Name of Interviewer | Arlene Crampsie |
| Date of Interview | 11 th March 2010 |
| Location | Interviewee's home, near Ballinalee, Co. Longford |
| Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname) | Jimmy Fox |
| <u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u> | |
| Gender | Male |
| Born | Year Born: 1940 Home County: Longford |
| Education | Primary: Scoil Samhain, Ballinalee |
| Family | Siblings: None Current Family if Different: Married to Anna-May with 6 sons and 1 daughter |
| Club(s) | Sean Connolly's Ballinalee |
| Occupation | Forestry Division and Longford County Council |
| Parents' Occupation | Labourer, Farmer [Father]; Housewife [Mother] |
| Religion | Roman Catholic |
| Political Affiliation / Membership | N/A |
| Other Club/Society Membership(s) | Senior Citizen's Club; Hillside Active Retirement Association |

REFERENCE NO. LD/1/2

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| Date of Report | 24 th May 2012 |
| Period Covered | 1917 – 2010 |
| Counties/Countries Covered | Longford |
| Key Themes Covered | Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Rivalries, Irish Language, Scór, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Alcohol, Violence, Politics, Relationship with the Association, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy / Economics |
| Interview Summary | <p>Jimmy talks about his experiences with the GAA in Longford. His club was Sean Connollys and he played in goals for them in the 1950s. After that he got involved in administration, starting out as a minor selector and occupying a number of roles before becoming Chairman of the Longford County Board and later being involved in the Leinster Council. In all he spent 34 years in the Association. Outside of these roles he also hosted a radio programme on Shannonside Radio, adjudicated at Scór events and refereed at all levels of the game. He worked with men like Páraic Duffy and Liam Mulvihill, who would go on to become prominent figures in Croke Park. Jimmy reflects on these years and tells stories of heated exchanges at meetings, political manoeuvrings, things going wrong at matches, and playing pranks on his friends. Jimmy has seven children and his involvement with the GAA meant that he had to sacrifice a lot of his family life, but he loved every minute of it and is grateful for having met so many characters and good people as he went about his duties.</p> <p>00:20 Earliest memory is the local club in the late 1960s and being involved with the Longford Minor Board in the early 1970s.</p> <p>00:40 He had been a minor selector, and in 1973/1974 he became vice-chairman of the minor board and was then made chairman around 1976.</p> <p>01:00 Liam Mulvihill was county chairman and brought him in as a youth officer.</p> |

REFERENCE NO. LD/1/2

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| | <p>01:40 In 1978 he ran for county secretary and did that for four years with little or no technology at his disposal.</p> <p>03:15 He became vice-chairman of Longford County Board but found it hard to make chairman but eventually got it for four years.</p> <p>04:25 He was then a delegate to the Leinster Council and when he finished that he had been involved for 34 years and was made President of the county board, an honorary position.</p> <p>05:10 He met characters like Paddy Doris, a minor secretary who worked as a porter in the county hospital, and there they did out fixtures together during the night.</p> <p>06:30 Tells a story about Paddy refereeing a match and his mobile phone going off in his pocket.</p> <p>07:20 Tommy Nevin joined them adjudicating at Scór in Roscommon, Leitrim and Westmeath.</p> <p>07:45 Recalls a night in Castletown-Geoghegan with Seamus Whelan, former chairman of Westmeath County Board. Jimmy had adjudicators cancel, but there were concerns over judging the Set Dancing – the winner was decided by lacing on the shoes.</p> <p>09:50 They had tea in Mrs Whelan's after Scór that night.</p> <p>10:25 Former GAA President Joe McDonagh told the story about Jimmy Fox and Tommy Nevin adjudicating that night.</p> <p>11:00 Tommy Moran has stories about Scór in Ballinamore and Carrick-on-Shannon.</p> <p>11:20 Scór was fun and not really professional; it is different today.</p> <p>11:40 Tommy O'Brien of the Longford Leader was another character and he was very knowledgeable.</p> <p>13:05 Tells a story about a player, Terry, being reported by the referee for kicking and Jimmy was there when his case was being heard.</p> <p>14:35 Mentions Croke Park GAA assessor Tony Jordan who</p> |
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REFERENCE NO. LD/1/2

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| | <p>tells the story of Jimmy listening to Terry's appeal.</p> <p>15:20 Mentions Jimmy Reilly of the Ballymore club who helped him with canvassing.</p> <p>15:55 Albert Fallon was running that year too against Jimmy Fox and he knocked at Jimmy Reilly's door.</p> <p>16:50 Rogie Martin and Terry McGovern were referees and Jimmy feels that they did a good job.</p> <p>17:30 Tom McLoughlin from Edgeworthstown was treasurer for years, John Greene was county treasurer and county secretary.</p> <p>17:45 John is involved in the Leinster Council.</p> <p>17:55 While on the Leinster Council Jimmy served on the National GAC with Páraic Duffy, a very serious man. Jimmy liked a bit of banter and Paraic got used to this in time.</p> <p>19:25 Liam Mulvihill was also a serious man.</p> <p>19:40 Jimmy recalls a night in the Longford Arms with Tommy O'Brien and the committee members trying to work out fixtures.</p> <p>20:35 On the executive everybody was smoking. They had a room in the Longford Arms.</p> <p>21:55 Jimmy has seven kids and they were all involved with the GAA and Jimmy was often absent at meetings.</p> <p>23:15 People were calling to the house all the time.</p> <p>23:50 Recalls being in hospital in 1992 and Longford playing Wicklow in Pearse Park and listening on the radio and Seamus Dukes was commentating with Ciaran Mullooly and Jimmy's son Kieran got injured.</p> <p>25:20 His son and Matt Duggan were brought in to the hospital in Mullingar that evening.</p> <p>26:55 Nobody involved in the GAA should ever get too stressed.</p> <p>27:05 Everything is gone too official now - there are too many committees and the enjoyment has gone out of it.</p> |
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| | <p>28:15 Praises a law that came in - 'the two thirds majority - that made it easier for clubs to have their say.</p> <p>29:20 He is still on good terms with everybody he encountered in meetings over the years.</p> <p>30:35 He has met hundreds of great people around the country, including Therese and Joan Cooney in Croke Park with whom he had good banter.</p> <p>31:30 Tommy Moran and Jimmy Mahon in Leitrim were great fun; he used to do a programme with Tommy on Shannonside radio.</p> <p>32:25 They would never put down a club on the radio; they always praised.</p> <p>33:10 Tommy would always send him a Christmas card and write funny things on it.</p> <p>33:25 Tommy was a teacher and when he retired he told a joke about Jimmy on the radio.</p> <p>34:15 The All Stars were a great night out; recalls going on year and staying in the Burlington.</p> <p>35:10 Recalls a year when he was stepping down as chairman. John Fay, Albert Fallon and John Greene were going but not Jimmy. The others tried to get him a ticket through Bank of Ireland.</p> <p>38:55 He was never a great footballer but played with Ballinalee, Clonbroney as a child.</p> <p>39:25 His first game was in the early 1950s and his uncle brought him on his bicycle to the field to play.</p> <p>40:00 Games were played in Dick Foster's field outside the village at the time and there was no underage football - just schoolboys and minor.</p> <p>40:50 He played in goals with Sean Connollys in the late 1950s until he went to England in the early 1950s.</p> <p>41:10 Recalls doing a trial game for the county in Pearse Park; Jimmy Flynn was county chairman at the time and complimented him but Sonny Callaghan got the goalkeeping</p> |
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| | <p>position in the end.</p> <p>42:00 Recalls a junior game in Pearse Park against a back line of Paddy Ealey, Sean McEvoy and Peetie McNamara and being involved in a collision which led to violence.</p> <p>43:40 He didn't win many medals but did win a losers' competition.</p> <p>43:55 The late Fr Phil McGee, a central council delegate in Longford would do the presentations.</p> <p>44:15 Recalls playing illegally with the Ardagh club in the Ballynacarrigy Tournament.</p> <p>45:30 He didn't get involved in the GAA in England but went to New Elton to watch games.</p> <p>46:15 His club at home was once called Camden Rovers and won a county championship in 1917; they are a senior club now.</p> <p>47:00 They got the 'Sean Connolly' name in the 1920s; Sean Connolly was killed in battle in Mohill in Leitrim and had been captain of the club.</p> <p>48:20 The first pitch they had was in Whitehill on the edge of the parish; they got it from a Ms Welsh who owned an estate.</p> <p>49:20 In 1997/1998 they got a new ground which was more central; he scoped it out with Joe McGrane the club chairman and they bought it there was a problem with the Daltons, who owned adjoining land.</p> <p>51:20 It is named Maguire Park after Jim Maguire who was chairman of the local club and vice chairman at county level.</p> <p>52:10 They have a pitch & putt club at the back of the pitch.</p> <p>53:00 The club has lost players to emigration.</p> <p>53:20 Lord Mayor of Balinalee was one of the first fundraisers they did.</p> <p>54:00 Galway were in an All-Ireland hurling final so they sold raffle tickets win All-Ireland tickets all over Galway.</p> <p>54:10 They run a lotto and do a Rose of Balinalee competition</p> |
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| | <p>- males dressed as females.</p> <p>56:30 They have spent up to half a million euro but they have very good facilities and do not have debts.</p> <p>58:00 The Church of Ireland people in the parish have always played - Tommy Foster was one.</p> <p>58:50 Tommy's father gave them the field and they paid him money when they could even though he never asked for any.</p> <p>59:20 John Gillard was another Church of Ireland player and both religious communities support each other.</p> <p>01:00:10 Priests have been chairpersons of the club but not in recent years.</p> <p>01:00:25 Fr Brian Brennan is there now and was a footballer himself; he is from Granard.</p> <p>01:00:40 Before that Fr Peter Beglin was a patron of the club.</p> <p>01:01:00 The last chairman that was a priest was Fr Francie Doyle, who also trained underage teams and crammed them into his car to go to training.</p> <p>01:01:55 Jimmy used to cram players into his car and recalls going to Edgeworthstown and meeting Jackie Devine who was shocked at how many were in the car - 17 in total.</p> <p>01:02:40 Fr Doyle was a great man for debate at meetings and Jimmy recalls arguing against him one time and learning a lesson.</p> <p>01:04:00 All his sons played with the club and Jimmy got involved with the schoolboys because of that and that led him to getting involved in other administrative positions.</p> <p>01:04:50 He was treasurer of the club with James Maguire for years.</p> <p>01:05:10 After meetings they played cards.</p> <p>01:06:00 Nowadays it's more complicated as administration has changed and technology is prominent.</p> <p>01:07:00 Before if you used English in documents you were in trouble.</p> |
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REFERENCE NO. LD/1/2

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| | <p>01:07:30 He was a selector as a minor and a delegate to the minor board and that led to being nominated for other positions.</p> <p>01:08:15 Recalls his first night as minor chairman in Temperance Hall in 1974/1975 and feeling overwhelmed.</p> <p>01:09:10 When he was county secretary it worked out well and he had to visit every club in the county.</p> <p>01:09:50 He got great enjoyment out of travelling around the county.</p> <p>01:10:20 He made many friends.</p> <p>01:11:10 He was friendly with Connaught Council people, especially Johnny Prenty.</p> <p>01:11:50 County chairmen he served under included Liam Mulvihill, Niall McCormack, Albert Fallon, TJ Ward, Martin Skelly, Pat Cahill.</p> <p>01:12:30 1966 and 1968 are the only good memories Longford have of their senior footballers.</p> <p>01:12:50 Recalls Longford visiting Elton to play London. Sean Donnolly was there, as was Sean Murray.</p> <p>01:13:20 Jackie Devine and John Heneghan played for St Mary's in London and would fly home for Longford matches.</p> <p>01:13:45 A son of Jimmy's is married to a daughter of Sean Connolly's.</p> <p>01:14:10 In 1966 the celebrations were like when Jack Charlton's Irish soccer team returned from the World Cup in 1990.</p> <p>01:14:50 They lasted a fortnight but two weeks after that they had to play Louth in the Leinster Championship in Navan. Louth won.</p> <p>01:15:30 The year they beat Laois in the Leinster Championship was great too; they lost the All-Ireland semi-final to Kerry.</p> <p>01:15:40 Recalls the semi-final.</p> |
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REFERENCE NO. LD/1/2

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| | <p>01:16:00 Recalls Terry McGovern holding Cyril Dunne of Galway in a National League Final.</p> <p>01:17:00 Tommy O'Brien was the other delegate to the Leinster Council.</p> <p>01:17:35 There was a way to run for a position; you had to understand the politics.</p> <p>01:18:30 Jimmy was elected on the first count and Tommy was fourth; once Tommy was elected he was shocked.</p> <p>01:20:10 They always attended funerals of GAA people and recalls a removal in Ballinamore in Leitrim where they played a prank on Tommy.</p> <p>01:21:40 Recalls meetings in Newbridge finishing very late.</p> <p>01:22:00 Sean Logue was the other delegate and often carried a torch because they used to get lost coming home from meetings.</p> <p>01:23:00 Recalls a night they encountered a squad car.</p> <p>01:23:35 Michael Delaney was secretary of the Leinster Council; Hannah, Patricia and Julie were in the office.</p> <p>01:24:35 Recalls a night when they were fixing the Championship dates and Seamus Flynn was a delegate with Jimmy; Dublin were to play Longford.</p> <p>01:27:00 When Jimmy was in hospital in 1992 the Leinster Council were very good to him financially.</p> <p>01:28:10 He used to do referee assessing and monitoring at games.</p> <p>01:29:00 He refereed a county final in Longford in 1975, Longford Slashers and Mostrim were playing.</p> <p>01:29:40 One year he refereed 38 minor matches; the furthest you had to go was 20 miles.</p> <p>01:30:20 He refereed at all levels for years and the most he got was ten shillings.</p> <p>01:31:20 Teams did not put too much pressure on him over</p> |
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| | <p>decisions.</p> <p>01:31:50 Recalls local derbys with Ballymore and St Columba's, Mullinalaghta.</p> <p>01:32:05 One time county secretary Sean Dunne rang him to referee at the last minute to referee in Mullinalaghta and there were 2,000 people at the game.</p> <p>01:33:00 They were tough, hard games and the crowd were roaring the players on.</p> <p>01:34:20 The rules are more strict now during a game.</p> <p>01:34:50 Killoe used to be their big rivals, now it's Colmcille - and the rivalry is between the spectators because of players transferring.</p> <p>01:35:15 Jimmy was chairman when the players transferred and there is some lingering bitterness with the older supporters over it.</p> <p>01:36:45 Recalls a game with Killoe in the 1960s on a bumpy field and 64 pounds collected at the gate. It was six pence to get in.</p> <p>01:37:50 There is not much hurling in the county. Clonguish, Mostrim, Slashers and Ballymahon used to play a bit and bring in players from neighbouring parishes.</p> <p>01:38:20 The county team is in Division 4 and is made up of people from a small pool of clubs.</p> <p>01:38:40 Schools do indoor hurling.</p> <p>01:39:20 Scór na nÓg is strong but Scór sinsear not so much.</p> <p>01:39:40 Máiréad Ní Farrell is the Irish Officer, she is a teacher in Granard Convent.</p> <p>01:40:35 Hero would be Liam Mulvihill, who started at the bottom and rose up.</p> <p>01:42:35 John Greene is like a brother to Jimmy; Tommy McLoughlin the former treasurer is also great, as is former vice-chairman of the county board Michael Farrell - they all go to games together.</p> |
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REFERENCE NO. LD/1/2

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| | <p>01:44:10 Best memory is 1966, coming home from England and Longford winning the National League, and winning Leinster in 1968.</p> <p>01:45:25 Another memory is when the local club won the Intermediate Championship and being county chairman at the time and presenting them with the cup and medals.</p> <p>01:45:45 His wife has been very patient through the years.</p> <p>01:46:30 Recalls two occasions when his children were born and going straight to a game after dropping mother and baby home.</p> <p>01:47:55 You devote your life to the GAA, that is the sacrifice. There was a lot of writing to be done in the old days before modern technology and you were absent from the family home most of the time.</p> <p>01:49:25 He worked with the forestry division and that took up the rest of his time.</p> <p>01:50:25 Biggest disappointment is that the club has not won a senior championship. In 1992 they came close but lost to Mostrim.</p> <p>01:51:45 The GAA has meant everything to him and he has met great people through his involvement.</p> <p>01:52:45 Recalls being in the Galway Bay Hotel and bumping into Paddy Muldoon from Mayo who he knows from the GAA.</p> |
| <p>Involvement in GAA</p> | <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input 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): _Selector; Scór Adjudicator_____</p> |
| <p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p> | <p>Played for club in 1950s – didn't win any titles.</p> |
| <p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p> | <p>Involved in club administration; went as delegate to County Minor Board in early 70s and became Vice-Chairman and Chairman (1976); became County Youth Officer, County Secretary; County Chairman; President of County Board; Delegate to Leinster Council; Delegate to Central Council;</p> |

REFERENCE NO. LD/1/2

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| | Member of the Games Administration Committee. |
| Format | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual |
| Duration | Length of Interview: 01:54:41 |
| 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: Arlene Crampsie

Date: 24th May 2012