

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Arlene Crampsie
Date of Interview	16 th March 2010
Location	Interviewee's Home, Longford Town, Co. Longford
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Eugene McGee
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1941 Home County: Longford
Education	Primary: Colmcille NS; Edenmore NS Secondary: Moyne Latin School, Co. Longford Third Level: UCD
Family	Siblings: 2 brothers & 4 sisters Current Family if Different: Married to Marian with one son and one daughter
Club(s)	Colmcille GAA
Occupation	Journalist
Parents' Occupation	Teacher [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Neutral
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	School Board of Management at St Christopher's, Longford Town

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Date of Report	12 th June 2012
Period Covered	1940s – 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Longford, Dublin, Cavan, Kildare, Laois, Offaly, Meath, Kerry, Great Britain, England
Key Themes Covered	Earliest Memories, Travel, All-Ireland, Education, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Playing, Commiserations, Celebrations, Administration, Coaching, Training, Managing, Emigration, Role of the Club in the Community, Identity, Socialising, Relationships, Media, Family Involvement, County History, Career, Fundraising, Material Culture, Emigration, Outsiders Perspective, Sponsorship, Grounds, Facilities, Impact on Life, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Fundraising
Interview Summary	<p>Eugene discuss his family’s involvement with the GAA, in particular his brother’s, as well as recalling the state of the GAA where he grew up, Colmcille, Co. Longford. In particular he discusses how he drifted into the administrative side of the GAA while at UCD and the success he had there. Eugene then goes onto talk about his involvement at both a county and local level, recalling managing Offaly and the 1982 All-Ireland Final, managing Cavan as well local clubs in Longford such as Newtowncashel and Colmcille. He also touches on a number of topics such as the importance of the GAA in the community, the importance of the association to emigrants, pressure placed on players and the impact the GAA had on his career as a journalist. He also discusses the problems he thinks the GAA faces in the future, who his GAA heroes are, his highlights and disappointments with the association and what the GAA means to him.</p> <p>0:00 Introduction</p> <p>0:22 Earliest GAA Memory-Travelling to matches with his late brother Father Phil McGee. Gives an example of going to Croke Park. Notes that he would have gone to matches before his contemporaries as his brother had access to a car.</p> <p>01:16 Talks about Colmcille, the area he grew up in in Longford. Notes that it was near Cavan and after talking up football he inherited all the great stories of the county. Notes Cavan took part in around 12-15 All-Ireland’s (won 5) in a period of 20 years.</p> <p>02:03 Notes many of the Cavan players lived in adjoining parishes such as Arvagh. Mentions Seamus Morris, John Joe</p>

	<p>Cassidy. Notes Phil "The Gunner" Brady living in Mullahoran. Recalls them being like heroes and how great it was to meet them.</p> <p>03:09 Recalls most went to St. Mel's College, a famous football college. He did not as his brother was ordained and qualified as a teacher. Eugene talks about Moyne Latin School the school he attended and where his brother taught.</p> <p>04:31 Notes that there was no real football team in Moyne. Notes that they only really played a few challenge matches against St. Mel's and that it was only when Moyne Community School was established that there was success with sports.</p> <p>05:28 Notes his brother tried to get football up and running but he soon died.</p> <p>06:01 Recalls the involvement his brother had in the GAA. Was involved with the Longford Minor GAA Board and later the County Senior Board. He also became the Leinster Centre Council Delegate. Helped revive the Longford county football in the mid-1960s. Mentions county chairman Jimmy Flynn.</p> <p>07:03 His brother struck up a relationship with Mick Higgins. Talks about Higgins. Notes Longford made it to a Leinster Final in 1965 (lost to Dublin) and won the National Football League in 1966 (beat Galway). Went on to beat New York as well.</p> <p>08:04 1966 and 1967 lost the Leinster Final but won in 1968 (beat Laois). Notes it was a difficult final. Had played Dublin, Offaly and Meath in the championship. Longford went onto play Kerry in the All-Ireland Semi-Final and lost. Mentions Jimmy Flynn.</p> <p>09:24 Recalls going to UCD in the 1960s and that he did not make the Colmcille Senior Team. He recalls he drifted into administration while at UCD and became club secretary. He helped coach the senior team.</p> <p>10:22 Notes winning a number of Sigerson Cups over a 7 year period in the 1960s and 1970s. Won 2 All-Ireland Club Championships in UCD and several Dublin Championships. Says UCD was where he became knowledgeable in team management/coaching.</p> <p>11:01 Mentions that team management only came in with O'Dwyer and Heffernan around 1974.</p>
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	<p>11:12 Recalls being involved with Dublin County Finals with UCD and St. Vincent's during the 1970s. Notes Heffernan was involved with Vincents.</p> <p>11:43 Notes that in 1976 he was contacted by Father Seán Heaney who was chairman with the Offaly County Board. Was asked to be the team manager for Offaly.</p> <p>12:15 Talks about how he considered the position.</p> <p>13:46 Notes his first championship was in 1977 and he stayed with Offaly for 8 years. Won the All-Ireland in 1982. Were in 5 Leinster Finals in a row, won 3 of them. Were involved in 3 Under-21 Leinster Finals in a row, won 2.</p> <p>14:20 Discusses how managing was a difficult task as older players had to be phased out. However, won the Leinster Championship in 1980. They had previously lost the Semi-Final against Dublin in 1978. Lost in 1979. Mentions Brian Mullins and Jimmy Keenan.</p> <p>15:05 Talks about winning the Leinster Championship in 1980. Mentions Matt Connor. Played Kerry in the Semi-Final and mentions Matt Connor's match performance that day.</p> <p>16:34 Recalls that Offaly made it to the 1981 All-Ireland Final. Played Kerry again. Mentions Jack O'Shea.</p> <p>17:39 Mentions Matt Connor again. Mentions Liam Curran and Pádraig Dunne.</p> <p>17:55 Notes the 1982 All-Ireland was planned for.</p> <p>18:18 Mentions that high quality matches such as the 1982 All-Ireland could be recorded and that it was an advantage. It is possible to look at match quality. Mentions Paddy Downey said it was the best All-Ireland he had seen in 25 years. The Galway vs Kildare Final in 1998 is, in his opinion, the next comparable match.</p> <p>19:10 Notes the 1982 All-Ireland atmosphere for Kerry. Mentions Séamus Darby.</p> <p>19:44 Says the preparation for the 1982 All-Ireland was 7 years in the making and that it would not be seen in modern times.</p> <p>20:11 Thinks he was the first outside manager to train a team and win the All-Ireland. Mentions John O'Mahony.</p> <p>22:11 Eugene eventually took over the Cavan team. Mentions the Cavan Chairman Phil Brady. Won a McKenna Cup and</p>
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	<p>got to Ulster Semi-Finals each year. Eventually had to leave as he became editor of the Longford Leader Newspaper in 1983.</p> <p>23:09 In his final year of managing Cavan the Under-21 Team made it to the All-Ireland. After that they did not win another match for 7 years. Mentions Martin McHugh.</p> <p>23:32 Mentions he has been involved with several clubs over a number of years. Mentions Newtowncashel, Longford. Asked to train them around 1977 and won the championship that year. Notes further success of the Club in championships.</p> <p>25:00 Talks about becoming involved with the Colmcille GAA Club and how emigration affected the standard of players. Colmcille dropped down to Junior Level.</p> <p>25:45 Trained the senior Colmcille team for a number of years. Got to 2 or 3 Semi-Finals in a row. In recent years won the County Final for the first time.</p> <p>26:24 Says the strongest thing about the GAA is the lure of the home parish, especially in rural areas. Gives a sense of identity. Mentions the 2010 football final, Kilmurray Ibrickane vs. St. Gall's in Croke Park.</p> <p>27:09 Notes how the GAA gives a base which other sports can be lacking in. Can create ties for the Irish living abroad.</p> <p>28:58 Mentions the funding the GAA puts into participating with GAA Clubs abroad such as sending out people to coach and referee. Discusses how it is like a bonding exercise.</p> <p>29:47 Mentions that the GAA provides structure to emigrants and improves the quality of their life. Notes the internet has helped bring people and the GAA together.</p> <p>30:50 Notes how in the boom times, those who emigrated helped set up GAA Clubs in Europe.</p> <p>31:40 Discusses how he became good at coaching teams even though he did not play football. Notes the importance of communication with all types of players.</p> <p>37:19 Mentions the one huge problem for all managers is the pressure put on club players at club and county level due to mass media coverage nowadays. Notes when he was with Offaly there were only around 5-8 national newspaper writers. Mentions Mick Dunne, Paddy Purcell, Paddy Downey, John D. Hickey and the Independent, Peadar O'Brien and Jim</p>
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	<p>O'Sullivan of the Cork Examiner.</p> <p>39:00 Notes that interviews would not have been carried out with players such as Mick O'Connell and Christy Ring.</p> <p>39:40 Discusses family involvement with the GAA. Talks about his father and other brother Pádraig. Notes for example, he won a championship with Colmcille GAA Club and was Secretary of the GAA Club at St. Patricks Training College.</p> <p>40:45 Mentions that growing up there were not many club football matches. There would have been only around 10-12 matches a year which were mainly played during the summer.</p> <p>42:22 Notes he took an interest in the GAA when he was a teenager and that the tradition of the GAA in counties such as Longford was weak.</p> <p>43:11 Mentions the death of Mick Higgins and how there are no icons in football anymore. Eugene mentions that he and his brothers had to generate their own traditions.</p> <p>44:09 Discusses his background with the GAA and playing minor Under-16 football. Mentions younger players getting time off from, for example, cutting the hay, to play a match.</p> <p>45:15 Talks about the quality of the facilities. Notes due to Longford's hilly terrain, flat fields were requisitioned to play matches like in other counties.</p> <p>47:00 Mentions the first time he saw a hurling match was in UCD.</p> <p>48:01 Talks about his local GAA Club getting its own grounds and how his brother (Father Phil McGee) was a catalyst for it. It was bought in commemoration of him and fundraising was carried out throughout the parish. It was completed a month before the 1982 All-Ireland.</p> <p>51:30 Talks about how his brother was not very affected by the clerical ban as he was more on the side of administration.</p> <p>52:27 Mentions Liam Mulvihill starting his career as a County Board Delegate.</p> <p>53:16 Talks about the importance of the GAA to him in UCD. Mentions that GAA Clubs were non-existent in UCD during the early 1960s. They played matches but there was no GAA presence. Rugby was the only sport that mattered at the time and soccer as well as rowing to a lesser extent.</p>
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	<p>54:06 Mentions Dr. Tony O'Neill.</p> <p>54:35 Talks about how he was trying to expand GAA by publicising their efforts and getting it a fair position in the college. Mentions the success and successful players UCD had but notes unlike rugby the GAA rarely had staff members involved. Exceptions included Dr. Stuart who acted as the Treasurer of the UCD GAA Club.</p> <p>55:52 Explains the nature of the UCD GAA Club. There was no residue of graduates after courses to make a committee unlike rugby as most of the players were Dublin based.</p> <p>56:32 Started the All-Ireland 7 a-side competition in the late 1960s/early 1970s. Was unofficial at the time. Included Irish and UK clubs.</p> <p>56:57 Mentions being approached by PJ Carroll Cigarettes to sponsor the competition. Mentions Pat Heneghan. Received £1000 from Carrolls.</p> <p>57:40 Talks about entertainment on Fridays and Saturdays.</p> <p>57:52 Mentions the National League Final and the success that Kilmacud Crokes went on to have.</p> <p>58:30 Mentions the success UCD had with Dublin Championships, All-Ireland Championships and the Sigerson Championship. Helped the GAA spread in UCD during the 1970s.</p> <p>59:01 Mentions he was involved with starting the Higher Education League. Mentions Thomond College in Limerick, Pat Spillane and Brian Mullins.</p> <p>59:40 Notes the establishment of the Freshers Competition. UCD won the first one in 1969.</p> <p>59:50 The Higher Education League began to expand. Mentions he represented the Central Council and Intermediate Competitions began to expand.</p> <p>01:00:12 Notes that in 1969 there was only 1 team at each of the universities. Senior hurling and senior football. Also mentions that the GAA backed up their efforts to expand.</p> <p>01:01:56 Mentions an outbreak of foot and mouth in 1967 threw the Sigerson Cup off until spring 1968. Mentions Tony O'Sullivan and John Kerry O'Donnell. Notes John Kerry O'Donnell organising a charity match in New York in 1968.</p> <p>01:03:20 Talks about the Club Competitions taking the UCD</p>
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	<p>team all over Ireland. Were on television for the 2 All-Ireland Club Finals.</p> <p>01:04:05 Discusses what he brought to the teams by coaching and managing.</p> <p>01:05:36 Mentions 1981 All-Ireland Final, Pádraig Dunne, Jack O'Shea, 1982 All-Ireland and Man of the Match.</p> <p>01:06:48 Discusses what coaching was to him. Mentions the importance of communication again.</p> <p>01:10:21 Talks about the build-up to the 1982 All-Ireland Final in Offaly. Mentions being beaten in 1981 and in the 1982 Semi-Final by Cork. Mentions Jimmy Deenihan of Kerry, Tim Kennelly and Richie Connor.</p> <p>01:12:45 Skated through the Leinster Finals on the lead up to the 1982 All-Ireland. Notes the 3-4 weeks prior to the All-Ireland were dominated by Kerry.</p> <p>01:14:11 Mentions 2 challenge matches were played in secret. Against Down and Roscommon.</p> <p>01:14:50 Notes a week before the match a "fracas" began between the Tralee Urban Council and Killarney Urban Council about who would get the Sam Maguire Cup first. Made it to The Kerryman Newspaper. A record referencing 5 in a row win was released which referenced Matt Connor.</p> <p>01:16:35 Mentions Liam Kennedy at the Sunday Independent tipping Offaly to win.</p> <p>01:18:08 Mentions Kerry had the opportunity to win 5 in a row back in 1932. Talks about glass and t-shirts with 5 on a row on them being sold in 1982.</p> <p>01:19:34 Talks about having a team match the night before the match and giving each player instructions.</p> <p>01:20:15 Mentions Liam Curran and Gerard Power. Recalls talking to Curran before the match and the goal he scored.</p> <p>01:22:18 Notes the turning point of the match was when Mikey Sheehy took a penalty and Michael Furlong saved it. Mentions Eoin Liston and Liam O'Connor</p> <p>01:25:37 Mentions Charlie Nelligan, Seamus Darby and the power of television.</p> <p>01:27:08 Recalls the sportsmanship of the Kerry Team. Mentions Mick O'Dwyer.</p>
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	<p>01:28:29 Talks about the temptation of staying on as a manager after having such success with Offaly. Notes taking over the Longford League in 1983. Mentions Mick O'Dwyer again.</p> <p>01:30:01 Discusses the impact of the GAA on his professional career as a journalist. Notes first major assignment was with The Irish Press. Taught briefly in UCD. Mentions Breandán Mac Lua, Jimmy Smith and the Gaelic Weekly.</p> <p>01:31:25 Notes the establishment of the Irish Post Magazine and travelling around England with Jimmy Smith organising the GAA Clubs. Mentions the Sunday Press and The Irish Post. Mentions Mac Lua again.</p> <p>01:33:24 Eugene notes moving on to freelance work for different magazines and The Longford Leader but once managing Offaly he began writing for The Sunday Tribune. Mentions Eamon Dunphy and David Walsh.</p> <p>01:34:07 Mentions that he could not write whatever he wanted due to being manager of Offaly. Also mentions going back to the Longford Leader as the Managing Editor.</p> <p>01:35:51 Notes many would have accused him of criticising the GAA.</p> <p>01:36:57 Talks about going to the first GAA coaching conference in the 1960s and how people saw coaching.</p> <p>01:38:42 Mentions the GAA Club Development Scheme and a ban on foreign games being removed in 1971.</p> <p>01:40:03 Says the ban removal and opening of Croke Park were extremely important.</p> <p>01:40:50 Mentions there are totally different ways of being committed to the GAA.</p> <p>01:41:27 Talks about how the GAA helped his career. Mentions the Irish Independent.</p> <p>01:42:40 Discusses other roles he had within the GAA such as being on various high power committees. Notes being on the committee which brought in the All-Ireland Qualifiers and being on different committees for coaching.</p> <p>01:43:45 Talks about what he thinks are the biggest challenges the GAA faces in the future. Notes fixtures and players being left idle.</p> <p>01:47:09 Notes county managers have to be prevented from</p>
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	<p>dominating club fixtures and many matches are steamrolled into a short period of time. Players 17-20 are being abused / misused due to fixture making.</p> <p>01:49:13 Mentions report on the burn out situation which was documented by experts such as Pat O'Neill but largely ignored by the GAA.</p> <p>01:50:17 Talks about administrative structure being one of the GAA's big problems.</p> <p>01:51:11 Discusses the impact the media has had on the GAA and how the organisation will be affected by it in the future. Mentions the use of the internet and chatrooms. Mentions GAA players are not commodities like soccer or rugby players and the Cork Rows of recent years show the effect the media can have.</p> <p>01:54:19 Talks about his GAA heroes and what makes a GAA hero. Mentions Mick O'Connell, Seán Purcell, Mick Higgins and Jack O'Shea.</p> <p>01:58:08 Mentions his involvement with Irish International Rules Team. Was involved with the national Irish Team in 1987 in Ireland and 1990 in Australia.</p> <p>01:59:42 Talks about small events which were important to him such as bringing the GAA into UCD, the championship win against Newtowncashel and especially the 1982 All-Ireland Final.</p> <p>02:03:10 Talks about his biggest disappointment being not having been able to contribute to Longford winning something tangible.</p> <p>02:04:21 Discusses what the GAA means to him.</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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input 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 for 7 / 8 years.</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how</p>	<p>Club: Chairman and Secretary of UCD; Manager and Selector UCD; Manager Newtowncashel Gaelic Football Team.</p>

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long for)	County: Manager and Selector Offaly Senior and U-21 team; Dublin U-21 team; Selector Longford Minor Team and Temporary Manager Longford Senior Team; Manager/Selector of Cavan Senior and U-21 team. Provincial: Manager Leinster Inter-Provincial Team National: Executive member of Higher Education Council; Delegate to Central Council from Higher Education Council; Manager Irish International Team, 1987 & 1990
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 02:06:07
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: _____ 12/06/12 _____