

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Arlene Crampsie
Date of Interview	15 th April 2010
Location	Interviewee's home, near Beragh, Co. Tyrone
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Frank Rodgers
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1940 Home County: Tyrone
Education	Primary: Beragh PS, Co. Tyrone Secondary: Omagh CBS, Co. Tyrone Third Level: St Joseph's Teacher Training College
Family	Siblings: 3 brothers & 3 sisters Current Family if Different: Married to Claire with 3 sons and 2 daughters
Club(s)	Beragh Red Knights
Occupation	Teacher; Part-time Journalist
Parents' Occupation	Farmer [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	None
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

REFERENCE NO. TY/1/16

Date of Report	15 th June 2012
Period Covered	1950s – 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Tyrone
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Officials, Administration, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Education, Religion, Media, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Rivalries, Scór, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Outsider's Perspectives, Violence, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Ban on Security Forces, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy/ Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Frank recalls his youth and his involvement with the Beragh club in Tyrone. The club was rarely successful and was located in a mixed community, so the bond with the GAA in the community was not as intense as it might have been in other places. Games were few and far between, training was not organised and strategy was not considered a worthwhile way of approaching the game. Frank played for his club and for Tyrone but injuries hindered his career. He worked in the administrative side of things and also landed a reporting job with the BBC. He participated at county board level and wrote about the GAA too. Frank also discusses the nature of the GAA in Northern Ireland and offers his opinions on issues affecting the Association today. Although he has been involved in it all his life, Frank is unsentimental when it comes to the GAA. This makes for some interesting observations.</p> <p>00:00 Introduction</p> <p>00:30 Earliest memory is listening to Michael O'Hehir on Radio Éireann and playing juvenile football at 12 or 13.</p> <p>01:20 The father of Croke Park architect Des McMahon organised the games. It was around the year 1952.</p> <p>01:40 They played Ballygawley one time and the play was not very organised.</p> <p>02:05 His father was slightly involved as it wasn't very organised.</p>

	<p>02:30 The Beragh club used to be called Beragh St Mary's and his father used to tell him about when they were called Beragh Red Knights.</p> <p>03:10 Frank became secretary of the club and in 1973 he thought it was the 50th anniversary of the Red Knights club and tried to change the club's name back to Red Knights.</p> <p>03:50 The club colours changed over time.</p> <p>04:15 Brendan Harkin would have referred to it as a symbolic moment for the GAA in Tyrone.</p> <p>04:50 Tournaments were a big thing and the Red Knights became a big attraction.</p> <p>05:40 His uncle was very involved with Beragh.</p> <p>06:55 His mother was from Ballygawley and didn't approve of playing football and told the Brothers in Omagh that he wasn't to play football.</p> <p>07:30 People played football in schoolyards and there was no such thing as a pitch that was used exclusively for football - the farmer might need to use it too.</p> <p>08:25 At the age of 11 Frank went to the Brothers in Omagh and got an introduction to the game there.</p> <p>08:50 The facilities were good in Omagh and they did have a dressing room.</p> <p>09:30 He used to travel in people's cars to games and when underage football became organised buses were sometimes hired.</p> <p>10:22 All the club football was local - Beragh, Carrickmore, Pomeroy, Augnacloy, Ballygawley.</p> <p>10:50 Playing for the Brothers they travelled to Letterkenny and Derry, sometimes on the train to Derry.</p> <p>11:40 His first trip to Croke Park was with his uncle Frank, a Pat McCartan and a cousin of his in 1956. Tyrone were playing Galway and St. Colman's were also in Croke Park that day, playing a team from Ballaghaderreen called St Nathy's.</p> <p>14:00 He didn't go to county matches a lot – sometimes he went to Dungannon but his father didn't have a car so it didn't happen regularly.</p>
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	<p>15:00 His impressions of Croke Park when he first visited.</p> <p>15:55 Beragh bought a piece of ground in 1954 from his uncle and it cost 1500 pounds. Funds had to be raised.</p> <p>17:00 Tournaments and céilís were held.</p> <p>17:35 Today you need a lot more money to run a club.</p> <p>19:25 Frank is not romantic about the past; things were sporadic and there wasn't a lot of community spirit around the Beragh club.</p> <p>20:40 John Donaghy - one of whose sons is the father of Kerry player Kieran Donaghy who came to prominence in 2006 - was from Beragh.</p> <p>21:05 Seán Bennett was club secretary for a while and local teachers were often involved in the club.</p> <p>21:40 In 1956 one of the Tyrone players, Mickey Kerr was on the team and another, Jim McAleer, was a substitute.</p> <p>23:00 Certain family names would be associated with the Beragh club - Owens, Rodgers, McCann.</p> <p>23:45 There wasn't much needed to be done in order to run the club...the teams looked after themselves.</p> <p>24:20 Handball was played and a nearby club, Brackey, played it a lot.</p> <p>21:10 The first year of Scór was 1970 and Frank was secretary of the club.</p> <p>26:10 Paddy O'Neill was county secretary at the time and decided to hold the final at Beragh but it wasn't a roaring success.</p> <p>27:20 In time, Scór became more popular in Tyrone.</p> <p>27:40 There are many in Tyrone who are exclusively 'GAA people', but Beragh is a mixed community, unlike somewhere like Carrickmore.</p> <p>28:50 Frank would have liked to have tried to involve the other side of the community more.</p> <p>29:40 He feels it would be better if the GAA reached out to those who are different.</p> <p>30:10 Recalls the northern reaction to the opening of Croke Park.</p>
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	<p>30:45 There aren't many people from the other side of the divide involved with the Beragh club.</p> <p>31:05 Beragh play the Omagh rugby club annually on St Stephen's Day.</p> <p>32:30 Frank played minor, junior and senior with Tyrone but got a knee injury at 28 and stopped playing.</p> <p>33:20 Until recently clubs did not play a lot of matches.</p> <p>33:50 Tyrone used to be split into east and west but Beragh rarely did well, often losing to clubs like Clonoe and Derrylaughan.</p> <p>35:10 When the east/west division was ended, Tyrone's fortunes improved.</p> <p>35:45 When Frank played there was juvenile (Under-16), minor and senior and not many games were played.</p> <p>36:40 There was the St Enda Cup in west Tyrone and Beragh beat Carrickmore to win it one particular years - Carrickmore's star player Frankie Donnelly was absent that day.</p> <p>38:00 Frank rarely went to a county final if Beragh were not involved. Jimmy Treacy played for Clonoe and they and Derrylaughan contested many finals but few in Beragh were interested.</p> <p>39:05 Frank played for Tyrone at minor level in 1958, beating Antrim in Casement Park.</p> <p>39:45 Recalls losing to Down in an Ulster minor semi-final and toting out in the same dressing room as the Tyrone seniors.</p> <p>40:10 The Down team had Seán O'Neill and won their first minor Ulster title that year.</p> <p>40:30 The seniors - who had players like Paddy Corey and Brian McSorley – were going for a third consecutive Ulster title but lost and were not happy.</p> <p>41:05 Frank was in college in Belfast and played for the Tyrone junior team.</p> <p>42:05 In the early 1960s he got on the Tyrone senior team but did not make a huge effort.</p> <p>42:30 Down were a powerful team at the time and inspired Frank and others.</p>
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	<p>44:40 People expected more from you when you were on the county team but it wasn't a big deal to be on the county team.</p> <p>45:20 The minors did not train a lot and Frank never went to Tyrone senior training as things were not organised.</p> <p>45:05 County secretary Paddy O'Neill had a big hand in running the teams as the idea of a designated 'manager' had not yet taken hold.</p> <p>47:00 Recalls playing for Tyrone alongside Jody O'Neill and switching positions with him.</p> <p>48:20 Recalls playing for Beragh in Omagh at the age of 16 and getting badly injured.</p> <p>49:55 There are club players today who feel they do not get enough attention when they are injured.</p> <p>50:40 Ballygally had a Paddy Joe McClean and they worked hard on tactics and that all filtered down to All-Ireland-winning Tyrone boss Mickey Harte, who was part of the same club and took on board their strategic approach to playing the game.</p> <p>52:25 Frank played with Jim McIver at college and tactics weren't discussed.</p> <p>53:00 The full forward on the Red Knights team once suggested working on tactics.</p> <p>53:25 Frank gave up looking after the senior team in Beragh as he was doing match reporting for the BBC.</p> <p>54:00 Frank had been away from Beragh, living in Castlederg and teaching in Irvinestown, Fermanagh and playing football there.</p> <p>54:50 He went to a convention and had decided that he wanted to be secretary in 1968. He was in the role for 25 years.</p> <p>55:30 His role expanded as time went by and facilities were improved at the club.</p> <p>56:15 There was not as much violence in the games as some would like to claim, but when pitches weren't fenced it was easy for bad things to happen.</p> <p>57:20 He wasn't aware of much GAA politics going on at administrative level.</p> <p>58:10 At the end of his time there, Paddy Joe McClean of the</p>
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	<p>Errigal Ciaran club lived in Beragh and got involved with the club, helping to set up a youth policy. Paddy was quite political and some people did not like this.</p> <p>1:00:55 Paddy got involved at senior level and brought in statistical analysis. Many did not like this and there was a fall-out.</p> <p>1:02:35 Frank was secretary of the committee that looked after the leagues in Tyrone and was part of the PRO committee until 2000 when he quit.</p> <p>1:03:45 He got involved with the county board when he became club secretary.</p> <p>1:04:30 He didn't stay on the county board as he had family commitments.</p> <p>1:05:00 When Tyrone had east and west each side sent a delegate to the Ulster Council. Frank and Mickey Harte's brother Peter were nominated and Peter went along as Frank had little interest.</p> <p>1:06:45 There weren't people within his club involved in paramilitary organisations as the area in which they lived was mixed.</p> <p>1:08:45 One time the goalposts were cut down before a Beragh match. Frank went to see Mick Grimes and he came up with a solution.</p> <p>1:09:50 Frank does not think there was as much harassment as has been claimed during the Troubles.</p> <p>1:11:00 Opening Croke Park was a progressive move.</p> <p>1:11:30 Frank does not see himself as 'a typical GAA person'.</p> <p>1:12:30 Working with the BBC he got to go around the province and mix with people from different sports.</p> <p>1:13:10 His GAA involvement helped him to get work with the BBC and he tells the story of doing a report on a Tyrone/Donegal minor match in Omagh for a screen test.</p> <p>1:15:10 He visited pitches in Kilcar and Killybegs.</p> <p>1:16:10 He tried not to be biased in his reporting if Tyrone were playing.</p> <p>1:16:50 The BBC were slow to cover the GAA in Northern Ireland.</p>
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	<p>1:18:10 Press facilities at GAA grounds were never very good.</p> <p>1:18:50 Frank remembers covering an Ulster final and having to sit in the dugouts.</p> <p>1:19:40 The media has a crucial role nowadays which means that the GAA have to be more open about what they do.</p> <p>1:22:35 The GAA need to look at the number of paid officials that it employs.</p> <p>1:23:15 Frank used to think that professionalism for players was inevitable and he thinks that Donal O'Neill who founded the GAP felt the same. Frank doesn't believe that now.</p> <p>1:24:35 His GAA hero would be Mickey Harte in Tyrone because he is not afraid to speak out.</p> <p>1:25:55 A lot of officials these days don't have any bright ideas.</p> <p>1:26:15 Frank once pushed for the MacRory Cup and Vocational Schools competitions to be able to meet up and not be kept separate but it wasn't passed.</p> <p>1:29:10 Best memories include winning a McNamee award for a club secretary's report and an award for a newspaper column. Managing the Beragh team is another, and Tyrone's All-Ireland wins.</p> <p>1:30:20 Bad memories include losing big championship matches at club level and Tyrone losing to Sligo in 2001.</p> <p>1:31:45 A lot of his family were involved in the GAA, his brother Eamon played football and hurling and his brother Alan was involved in the local club. His brother Paul had no interest, his sister Helen played camogie.</p> <p>1:33:30 When ladies football started Frank did not expect it to take off. A lady that was on a committee with Frank went off and started her own club.</p> <p>1:34:20 Ladies football helped give women equal status within the GAA.</p> <p>1:35:05 Usually change in the GAA comes from the bottom up and not the other way around.</p> <p>1:36:30 The GAA has been a big part of Frank's life but he doesn't look at it with rose-tinted glasses. Compares the GAA in Northern Ireland to the Orange Order.</p>
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	<p>1:38:45 Frank is part of the GAA and the GAA is a part of him, but he does see its limitations.</p> <p>1:39:40 Recalls being at an All Stars event.</p> <p>1:40:20 The GAA can lead to good and it can lead to bad too.</p>
Involvement in GAA	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p>
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	Frank played from the age of 10 / 11 up to 28.
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	<p>Frank was involved in administration from 1968 – 2002.</p> <p>Club: Secretary, 1968 – 1991; Trustee of Club, c. 1995</p> <p>County: County Board Member, 1970 – 2002; Secretary of Tyrone Activities Board (20 years); Tyrone Communications Committee (25 years); Chairman of Tyrone Minor Board</p> <p>Frank has won two McNamee Awards one for his Club Secretary's Report and one for a newspaper column he wrote about the death of Cormac McAnallen.</p>
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:41:22
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: _____ 15/06/12 _____