

## GAA Oral History Project

## Interview Report Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Miriam Dalton
<b>Date of Interview</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2010
<b>Location</b>	Interviewee's home, near Slieve Bloom Mountains
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Frank Keenan
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1950s <b>Home County:</b> Laois
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> Killinure National School, Co. Laois. <b>Secondary:</b> The Vocational School, Portlaoise, Co. Laois.
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 2 brothers; 1 sister <b>Current Family if Different:</b> Married with 4 sons and 3 daughters
<b>Club(s)</b>	Camross GAA Club [Laois]
<b>Occupation</b>	Farmer and taxi driver
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	N/A
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	N/A
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	N/A

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<b>Date of Report</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2010
<b>Period Covered</b>	1963 – 2010
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Laois
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Relationship with the Association, Travel, Supporting, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Emigration, GAA Abroad
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>Frank Keenan is a true sports fanatic and winner of many awards and attributes. His heritage and present day life is steeped in GAA. Frank speaks of the GAA in all aspects and how it has influenced and shaped his life.</p> <p>00:00.00 Introduction</p> <p>00:00.30 Frank recalls his first game of hurling. He played his first game with the Pike of Rushall in 1963 as there was no juvenile team in Camross. They got to a juvenile final and lost to Mountmellick.</p> <p>00:001.00 The following year in the 1964, a juvenile team was established in Camross by Sam Pratt, Paddy Bergin and Mick Jack Dowling. They got to the Sean Nós Final and beat Borris in Ossory in a replay.</p> <p>00:01.30 Frank can always remember the then General Director of the GAA Sean Ó Siocháin coming to Camross hall to present them with their medals. This was Frank's first recollection of hurling with Camross "from then it took off up to under twenty one, minor and senior".</p> <p>00:01.50 Frank went to secondary school in the vocational school in Portlaoise, where the hurling was looked after by Bill Phelan.</p> <p>00:02.20 Frank's Uncle Tim and his Father played an influential role in his life, his Uncle Tim amalgamated the two teams in the Parish Camross and Killinure. Frank played soccer and Football and tried rugby but it was his Father who encouraged him to stay with hurling.</p> <p>00:02.45 Frank informs us that his greatest influence on his GAA life was his national school teacher Jim Grinsell, who was a "great character".</p> <p>00:03.05 Jim Grinsell used to bring them to juvenile matches</p>

in his car even though they would wreck his car, and Frank recalls there being a shop in Roundwood (a townland in the Parish) and Jim Grinsell gave them money to get taytos sweets and minerals after the matches. He was a great motivator. There was also a priest in Camross at the time Fr. Lar Dunphy originally from Cullohill who looked after the juveniles he was also a great ambassador.

00:03.30 Frank remembers going to matches on the bar of his Fathers bike, they went to matches in Mountrath and Portlaoise. He remembers going to Croke Park when buses were organised by Camross juveniles or else get the train from Portlaoise or Ballybrophy.

00:04.10 Frank mother is still alive she is 91 years of age, his brother PJ who doesn't hurl lives at home with his mother, his sister Sheila is married to Paddy Dowling who hurled for Camross, but Frank and his older brother Tim were heavily involved, they played for Camross for years.

00:04.30 Tim was nicknamed "the hurler", because he was as "strong with one hand as he was with two". He was feared in different counties as he was a hardy lad around the square. And Frank says you would have to ask Damien Martin, a former Offaly senior to tell you a few stories about Tim.

00:05.00 Frank tells us of his present family involvement with the GAA, he has four sons and three daughters, all of whom play camogie or hurling with Camross. Frank has trained the Camross teams several occasions. He is on the committee and he worked as assistant secretary with Pat Delaney in the past.

00:05.30 Frank tells us about his managerial past: He trained Camross in the late eighties, Frank started to train Castletown in 1991, when they were only a junior C team, but while Frank was with them they went on to win the junior A and B, and Intermediate titles in '92, '93, as his own sons were beginning to make their mark with Camross. He then went on to train Carlow county team where they won a Keogh Cup medal. He then went back to Laois to train the under twenty one team and Slieve Bloom where they reached two finals he then went on to train Trumera whom were having trouble in the intermediate grade. Frank won an intermediate medal with them.

00:06.45 Frank claims you have to have a different perspective when you are training a team than when you are playing, you have to treat players equally.

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	<p>00:07.00 When Frank was over any team he was a players player and got them anything they wanted, physio, gear, hurls etc.</p> <p>00:07.30 Frank had his sons on the team and treated all the team equal.</p> <p>00:08.00 Frank describes the tournaments of the old days as the best thing to happen Camross, he says you could of hurled a hard match at two o clock on a Sunday and then went on to hurl another hard match that evening in places such as Galmoy, Abbeyleix, Durrow, Rathdowney or Castlecomer. And you'd be back training Tuesday and play another tournament match Thursday or Friday. Frank outlines how this is different to present day hurlers who won't hurl certain days and want breaks etc.</p> <p>00:08.30 Frank doesn't agree with county teams holding the panel back from hurling league matches with their clubs, whatever about the first 15, the more matches for players the better.</p> <p>00:09.00 Frank says the tournaments were a great advantage as you got to play against teams from stronger counties such as Castlecomer , Johnstown, Freshford , Lisdowney to name but a few.</p> <p>00:09.40 Frank recalls going to a match in Mountrath in 1967 with his Father on the Bicycle and being told he was on the Camross Senior panel, he went in and got a pair a boots of Ger Cuddy and togs off Jimmy Lyons.</p> <p>00:10.00 The following year Frank was just gone seventeen and he was on the Camross Team, Frank continued hurling senior for Camross till about 1986.</p> <p>00:10.30 Frank was a captain before for Camross in 1981, they were playing Portlaoise in the County final in Rathdowney, Frank was hurling on a great hurler that day the young and upcoming John Taylor. They lost the final, Frank remembers Camross playing many of their older players and felt they would have won the Final.</p> <p>00:10.50 Frank was captain of the 1964 juvenile team, he went straight to Senior and played junior hurling in latter years, he won a final against neighbouring Castletown with his eldest son Barry on the team with him.</p> <p>00:11.30 Frank recalls it as a very proud occasion getting the cup with his son with him in O'Moore Park, he says it reminds him off the good times he had and he wishes others had just</p>
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	<p>a good a time.</p> <p>00:12.10 Frank's proudest moment was in '76. They won the Laois County final and went on to beat James Stephan's off Kilkenny in the Leinster final in Carlow. Frank recalls the Ireland Semi Final in Thurles where they played Moyle Rovers of Cork. They lost the match, Frank scored a goal but it was deemed a square ball by the referee who was in the middle of the field. Later the papers showed he was not in the square and Frank feels this would have turned the match around.</p> <p>00:13.00 Frank trained the Camross Senior team in 1996, who won the 1996 Leinster Final and lost to Atherny in the All Ireland semi-final.</p> <p>00:13.30 Frank started playing with the county seniors in 1969 after playing Juvenile with the county, Frank was captain of the Senior team in 1979 when they won the All-Ireland B, Frank won two All-Ireland B's with the county (1977 and 1979) and he also won a Walsh Cup medal.</p> <p>00:14.00 Frank played for Leinster in 1979, after winning the Laois Hurling award winner in 1978 and 1979, he won a Railway cup medal with Leinster in 1979. He was on the 1980 Leinster panel. Frank describes it as an enjoyable period playing for Leinster.</p> <p>00:14.50 Frank claims he was always proud as a parent or trainer.</p> <p>00:15.30 Frank was always proud as a parent, his sons Barry, Damien and Fran all played for the County and were terrific for the club and the girls all played Camogie for Camross and Laois. He was always proud and always encouraged them. Then the younger lad came along after a few years, Zane. He is well known in Laois.</p> <p>00:16.00 Zane is a terrific chap with abundance of skill, last year he had a horrific break, his leg was broken in two places, but he has recovered and is back in training with the County team.</p> <p>00:17.00 Frank was always against the playing of foreign games in Croke Park, as he was never fond of it. However in latter years Frank feels it was a great rule as it generated a lot of money for the GAA.</p> <p>00:18.15 Majority of friends Frank has made are through the GAA, whatever happened on the field stayed on the field. The best friends are made through the GAA. And now when Frank</p>
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	<p>plays golf he meets his great friends such as Mick Roche , Brian Whelahan etc. GAA brings back great memories.</p> <p>00:19.15 Since Frank started playing GAA, Football has speeded up greatly, but Frank feels it has got to be too much of a hand passing game. Frank feels it is a great idea giving a player a free or a spot kick for doing a great catch.</p> <p>00:19.55 Frank Also feels if you were allowed pick up the ball in Football it might speed the game up.</p> <p>00:20.10 Frank says it was great in the old days beginning able to tackle the Goalie, back then the thing was to get the goalie.</p> <p>00:20.30 The guarded goalie was a great idea, as many goalies were badly injured when the square and rules were not in existence. Ollie Walsh, John Carroll and Damien Martin were all badly injured from being goalies. Frank also feels the catch and hand pass has quickened up the game of hurling.</p> <p>00:21.00 Franks only complaint is in hurling when a good player does a great thing like a good catch or good hand pass, they get broken fingers and wrists from late belts from lazy players. And the referees do not penalise for it.</p> <p>00:21.40 Frank cannot say much about women playing GAA, he describes it as being great. He points to the high standard of camogie and its players in Laois. He also points out the high standard of camogie in Cork, Kilkenny, Wexford and Galway. Ladies today have excellent skill.</p> <p>00:22.00 Frank recalls the Downey sisters of Kilkenny, the Sinnotts in Wexford and Tracy Millea as great players. Frank claims there were just as skilful players in Laois only they were playing in the junior division and were not recognised.</p> <p>00:22.40 Frank recalls the difference in camogie from 13 a side to 15 a side, and he feels it has made a great difference.</p> <p>00:23.00 Frank has been going to camogie matches since the eighties and tries to go to as many as he can.</p> <p>00:23.30 Frank does not have the same interest in Ladies Football as he does with camogie. Some of his neighbours play Ladies Football for Shanahoe and he goes to some of their matches.</p> <p>00:23.45 Frank could not imagine his life without GAA, it has played an influential role in his life. He often says if you didn't play hurling what would you be at, he describes the</p>
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	<p>camaraderie and craic after matches as being great.</p> <p>00:24.00 When Frank was young there was not much else to do except hurling, as there were no cars etc. On Sundays Frank remembers going to Mass, coming back to hurl in the park , getting the dinner going to a match and hurling in the park</p> <p>00:24.40 When Frank was young, Franks county player heroes were Eddie Keher and DJ Carey, but his favourite was Mick Roche.</p> <p>00:25.00 Frank also speaks of great hurlers in Laois such as the Mahons of Rathdowney, Moores of Ballacolla , Fennells of Clonad, John Taylor, Pat Critchley, and his own Camross club hurlers such as John Carroll, Ollie Cuddy, Martin Cuddy etc.</p> <p>00:25.45 Frank speaks of Laois Hurlers establishing clubs in America and England, and how they used to go play these teams abroad in 7 a-side-tournaments.</p> <p>00:26.30: Due to the presence of the timber industry, Bord Na Mona and the building trade there was not much emigration affecting the teams of the old days, however these industries have decreased immensely. Camross like other clubs are feeling the pinch and some of Franks sons have emigrated.</p> <p>00:27.30 Frank recalls after matches there was a good social outlet afterwards. The tournaments were great for this as matches were on a Sunday, but the driving aspect came in and cut a lot of that out.</p> <p>00:28.20 The social end of it is different now, they just meet up off a Saturday night and do their own thing.</p> <p>00:28.30 Frank feels the social end of it is not as strong as it used to be, presently young people go their own way. Back in the old days the team meet up for few drinks together and went home. The sense of unity and community was stronger in the old days.</p>
<p><b>Involvement in GAA</b></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</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson   <input type="checkbox"/> Committee Member   <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caterer   <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer   <input type="checkbox"/> Referee   <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p>

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<b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)	14 Senior county final medals; Laois Player of year (77 and 79), Walsh cup medal; Leinster Express Sports Star Award; 1 Railway cup medal; he was selected on Laois Millennium Team
<b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)	N/A
<b>Format</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 00:29:00
<b>Language</b>	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:        Miriam Dalton

Date:            17<sup>th</sup> Jan 2010