

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	9 th June 2012
Location	Michael and Tom's home, near Killucan, Co. Westmeath.
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Michael Geraghty (also present Michael's brother Tom)
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1927 Home County: Westmeath
Education	Primary: Coralstown NS, Co. Westmeath
Family	Siblings: 1 brother & 1 sister
Club(s)	Riverstown GAA [Westmeath]; Coralstown GAA [Westmeath]; Coralstown-Kinnegad GAA [Westmeath]
Occupation	Farmer
Parents' Occupation	Farmers
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Pioneers Total Abstinence Association; Legion of Mary

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Date of Report	25 th June 2012
Period Covered	1893 - 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Westmeath
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Officials, Administration, Fundraising, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Media, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Rivalries, Irish Language, Culture, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish, History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Alcohol, Politics, The Troubles, Socialising, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Michael talks about his memories of the GAA since he was born in the 1920s. A local historian, he shares stories that he came across about people involved in the GAA in its formative stages, and the games played by people before the GAA was founded. He describes how different 'branches' were set up around Westmeath, which later became clubs. Michael's family were involved with the GAA and he himself played with Coralstown. He grew up in a farming area of the county and the GAA played an important role in the community. Michael played at school and with Coralstown, and when he was older he became involved in administration. When he was growing up clubs came and went, facilities were non-existent, people had to work very hard in order to make a basic living, and the community was close-knit. In 2010, as Michael sees it, circumstances have changed beyond all recognition.</p> <p>00:15 Born in 1927.</p> <p>00:20 Mentions a Thomas O'Neill Russell who wrote a book called Dick Massey in 1860 about football, hurling and stone throwing contests and often travelled to the United States. Gaelic League founded in 1893 and O'Neill arrived for that. Fluent Irish speaker. Michael wrote about him for a GAA book.</p> <p>02:15 Las Vegas couple visiting Michael and knowing Thomas Moore songs. Lutheran minister visiting Michael and explaining how people knew the melodies. John McCormack recording melodies.</p> <p>04:50 Seamus Shanahan an inspector of national schools</p>

	<p>who was tasked with introducing the Irish language into schools.</p> <p>07:45 Michael reads about the life of O'Neill Russell.</p> <p>09:30 Stone throwing contests and how they worked. Michael's granduncle winning contests.</p> <p>Tom enters the room</p> <p>10:45 Tom born in 1926. His father was from Kinnegad, his mother from Killucan. Farming in the family.</p> <p>12:45 Getting a book about Dr Douglas Hyde and O'Neill Russell's name cropping up.</p> <p>13:35 Older people speaking Irish when Michael was young.</p> <p>14:45 Michael writing about Riverstown. Bernard Carroll was son of James Carroll and was vice president of the GAA in Westmeath. The facts were printed incorrectly in the book and Michael was not happy.</p> <p>16:20 First known GAA branch in Killucan in 1885. More followed in Raharney Rovers, Thomastown Rangers, Kinnegad, Derrymore, St Patrick's. No organised games at county level until 1900. Michael reads about how the teams operated at the time.</p> <p>21:30 First game he went to in 1933 in Riverstown. Eoin Dalton marking out the field for games. Eoin and his way with words.</p> <p>23:40 People from all over the world calling to see Michael.</p> <p>25:25 Riverstown when Michael was growing up. Working on the farm and the bog. Harvesting sugar beet. Working with horses. Men coming and taking away the railway sleepers and selling what they took for scrap.</p> <p>28:15 His uncle's involvement with Kinnegad GAA and the county board. His uncle attending finals in Dublin and staying with John Clarke. How county teams were organised then. Best Westmeath players working in Dublin. Idea of following one's county not prominent at the time. The Kennedys of Wexford being good players, and a Stanley man from Kildare. Attendances in the early 1900s. Mick Dunne playing for Kildare and later with Riverstown.</p>
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	<p>32:05 Michael playing for Coralstown in 1949. Low cost of starting a club at the time.</p> <p>37:00 Club joining up with Kinnegad. Michael playing in goals.</p> <p>39:20 Getting involved in administration.</p> <p>40:15 Main rivals when he was playing - Derrymore, Riverstown, The Downs, Belfield, Grattan, Gibbstown, Dalystown.</p> <p>41:35 Training when he was playing. Peter Waters captaining Kildare and training teams. Eamon Boland from Roscommon coming to the club.</p> <p>42:45 Getting the train to Dublin for his first game at Croke Park when he was in his late teens. Cycling to games locally. Toggling out at the side of the pitch. Peter Keegan arriving with football boots and everyone looking at them.</p> <p>44:45 Fundraising. Dances and the music played there.</p> <p>46:10 Taking part in plays in school in Coralstown. Prominence of football at the school. Inter-school competitions against Kinnegad, Rochfortbridge, Killucan and Milltownpass. Mouth organs as prizes. Travelling in horses and traps. Camogie in the area.</p> <p>49:20 Other pastimes. Dances and plays. Ties loosening in the community.</p> <p>50:30 County board meetings. Getting a lift in and a bus home. Events at the meetings. Motions for meetings to be conducted through Irish. Fleadhs taking place and Michael's opinion of them.</p> <p>52:55 Importance of winning in the GAA. Political dimension to the GAA. Stories of the Troubles in the 1920s.</p> <p>54:15 Illegal players. Confusion over twins playing illegally. Fr Murphy telling a man the true story about the twins years later.</p> <p>56:25 Paddy McCain, Joe Geraghty, Paddy Flanagan, Charlie Fay and Eamon Moynihan at meetings when Michael used to go.</p>
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	<p>57:05 Length of his involvement with Coralstown. Interest in céilí dances.</p> <p>58:30 Riverstown's successes before disbanding.</p> <p>58:55 Changes he has seen in the GAA over the years. Clubs becoming stable and acquiring grounds and facilities. Playing in farmers' fields when he was young. Changes in facilities available to GAA players.</p> <p>01:00:10 Listening to Micheál Ó Heiher on the radio and what that was like. Listening to his first broadcast from Mullingar, a game between Galway and Monaghan in 1936.</p> <p>01:01:20 Reading about the GAA in the newspapers.</p> <p>01:02:00 Decline in involvement of farming people in GAA.</p> <p>01:02:45 Importance of Irish aspect of GAA. Bowling on the roads. Church of Ireland objections to games being played on a Sunday.</p> <p>01:04:15 Involvement of priests. A priest playing in Croke Park and a bishop in attendance.</p> <p>See attached for further memories of Michael's GAA experiences.</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 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 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): _____</p>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Played for 17 years between school and Coralstown GAA</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Secretary of Coralstown GAA for 15 years.</p>

REFERENCE NO. WH/1/2

Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:05:33
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 25th June 2012