

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Seán Kearns	
Date of Interview	27 th Aug 2009	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photograph of Interviewee
Location	Riverdale Steakhouse, The Bronx, New York	
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Benny Connaughton	
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>		
Gender	Male	
Born	Year Born: 1930 Home County: Roscommon	
Education	Primary: Athleague National School	
Family	Siblings: 4; Oldest of 4 brothers and 1 sister Current Family if Different: 4: 3 sons and one daughter	
Club(s)	Athleague [Roscommon] , Clare hurling [New York], Roscommon football [New York]	
Occupation	Restaurant and Bar owner	
Parents' Occupation	Army captain	
Religion	Roman Catholic	
Political Affiliation / Membership	Fianna Fáil	

REFERENCE NO. RN/1/1

Date of Report	27 th Oct 2009
Period Covered	1930s – 2009
Counties/Countries Covered	Roscommon, New York, USA
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Managing, Coaching, Emigration, Involvement in GAA abroad, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Alcohol
Interview Summary	<p>Benny Connaughton is a well-known figure in the New York GAA world. He was born in 1930 and grew up in Athleague in Roscommon and the interview covers the importance of hurling in his native area in the 1930s and 1940s. He played Minor hurling for Roscommon in 1948 before emigrating to New York in 1949. The interview gives interesting insight into the standard of hurling and football in New York in the late 1940s, 1950s and onward. The social and economic life of the GAA is also a major subject. In the interview he states that the Clare hurling team managed by him in 1968 was the first New York team to specifically recruit players from Ireland, both by encouraging good players to move to New York to play for them and also by flying players over for a short period to play a game for Clare in New York. The interview is also interesting on changing attitudes to hurling tactics and the mental side of hurling preparation.</p> <p>00.20 His earliest memory is of going to see his home club of Athleague in Roscommon play hurling at about four years of age. He remembers that they won. His family were a GAA family.</p> <p>01.10 “Nobody taught us [how to play]. We’d just be out in the field every evening – about forty of us out playing hurling every evening.”</p> <p>01.25 “Athleague is all hurling. You could have a football at the end of the field and nobody would touch it. We have about seven clubs in Roscommon and Athleague would be about the centre of the hurling. We always had a tough time keeping hurling going Roscommon being such a good football county – they really looked down on the hurlers.”</p> <p>02.20 Roscommon football was very successful winning the</p>

minor All-Ireland in 1939, then a Junior All-Ireland, and Senior All-Irelands in 1943 and 1944. Big focus on football in Roscommon...

“...but not in Athleague. It was like a religion in Athleague. You had to play hurling – if you didn’t play hurling there was something wrong with you. It was sort of bred into us, bred into us. We had a couple of idols there and we tried to follow in their footsteps – Jim Moore would be one and Thomas Boyle would be another and Michael Finneran would be another and Gerry O’Malley. These were all fellas who played for Connacht – Roscommon representatives in the Connacht hurling.”

03.30 Minor Hurling in Roscommon faced plenty of challenges:

“We weren’t well organised. We had no trainer and no manager. We would just get together in a field and select the team. I remember playing Galway in Ballinasloe [Connacht Minor final 1948] and we went up and nobody knew where they were playing. The fella who was supposed to be in charge didn’t show up. I know I had two different shoes when I played. Galway beat us by one point.”

04.00 That was the best they did in hurling, nearly beating Galway when Galway had a great team with Joe Salmon.

04.25 They had plenty of hurls because a man called J.P. O’Gara in the village made them full-time but not much other equipment. They had a pitch but no changing facilities. Once they were playing a match against Four Roads and they had a player called Michael Curley home from London to play. He had a lot of money with him but because there was no changing room he had to hide it in a rabbit burrow beside the field and cover it with grass.

05.10 They learned the skills themselves, partly by playing among the Seniors when they were young and copying what they did. They didn’t do much physical training – they mainly worked on farms and when you worked on the farm all day you didn’t need much training.

05.45

“In those days everyone had bicycles. Roscommon town was

five miles away and you'd cycle in and back. There was no such thing as hamstrings in those days and it was because of the bicycle."

06.05 The game of hurling is better today than it was in his youth. It's faster, the skills are better and the players are fitter and have more stamina because of their training.

06.40 He played Minor for Roscommon at home but never thought he'd be a great player because he didn't have the speed. His strength was that he could play in any position from goalkeeper to full-forward. His favourite position was probably Centre Half back, which is where he played for the county. His philosophy on how to play centre back was never take your eye off the ball.

07.30

"It was easy pick for the county in Roscommon because the pool of players – there wasn't that many."

If you had 20 or 30 on the Minor panel you were lucky. They had a couple of workouts before they played Galway in the Connacht final they didn't have any other games. You just went from Roscommon and if you lost that was the end of the Minors for the year apart from at club level, so it was really totally disorganised.

08.30 Galway were the power in Connacht and with a few exceptions Roscommon couldn't compete with them. They had great players. "Joe Salmon was special."

09.30 He left Ireland for New York in 1949, aged 19, "because I like to eat."

"My uncles were here. There were five of us in the family and I was the oldest. My father had passed away – passed away when he was 44 years old, so somebody had to go. I wound up in New York and later on I took my brother Rory over and my brother [former NY GAA President] Terry and my brother Albert."

10.10 "When i took over the Clare hurling team, Galway were very strong at the time and I took three players out from Clare and they were the first three players who were ever brought out to play hurling in New York. They were brought out for a

	<p>week...That would have been in 1968.”</p> <p>11.00 There was no attempt to persuade him to stay at home to play hurling because:</p> <p>“There was no work in the village at all. There was nothing in our village – nothing whatsoever. Actually, the fifteen players who played Galway in the Minor – two years later they were all gone – mostly to England.”</p> <p>11.35 He was in New York only two weeks before he was involved with the GAA there. He ended up linking up with the Clare hurlers – his grandmother was from Clare. He would have joined Galway but they had a lot of players already and three teams. The Clare people were very nice. He was also involved with the Roscommon people but they only had Junior football and no hurling.</p> <p>12.30 Gaelic Park was named Croke Park when he arrived first. Think it changed the name to Gaelic Park in the 1960s. He thinks they were made to change it for some reason.</p> <p>12.50 The GAA was well organised when he came over in 1949 with good presidents etc but they were short of players as there had been little emigration during World War II and after. The first hurling game he played in NY the two corner forwards were over fifty years old. One of them was the famous Rob Doherty who had won an All-Ireland with Clare in 1914.</p> <p>13.30 It was still 15 a side in NY then. They changed it to 13 a side in NY in the 1990s but he thinks it should still be 15.</p> <p>13.55 The pitch at Gaelic Park wasn't great:</p> <p>“The pitch was terrible. The pitch was absolutely terrible. There was no maintenance on the thing – after rain there'd be big holes in the place and stones coming up. Nobody ever took care of it.”</p> <p>14.10 It was hard to hurl on the bad ground but the style was mostly still pulling on the ball rather than in the air.</p> <p>14.30 The standard of hurling in New York was good especially as more and more quality young players arrived in the 1950s.</p>
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14.50 He brought his hurl with him from Roscommon but there was no real problem getting them in New York. People imported them from Ireland regularly and sold them. People did try once to make them in America and went to Canada to get ash but it didn't work out.

15.30 Clare hurlers weren't that strong when he started with them, but:

"We had a meeting when I was appointed manager and they said 'Look, we've got X amount of funds, you put the team together and I did. I went back to Ireland and I recruited five or six players from Clare, and a few from Roscommon, and we started like that."

He asked them were they interested in coming out and they all were. He also brought out players from Newmarket-on-Fergus to play in championship match. Newmarket were going for three in a row when he recruited their players so he was afraid to go near that town afterwards.

16.30 The county teams in NY also competed for the players who were arriving independently. Tipperary usually got the Waterford men, Offaly got the Laois men.

17.10 There was very little work when he arrived in New York. A few years after Paddy Sullivan of Cork was made President of the warehouse union local and got a lot of guys jobs in warehouses.

17.50 There was good social life at Gaelic Park when he arrived – a big party after the games.

"Gaelic Park – when you look at it you might say 'This is where the Gaelic Games were played', which is true. But there's a lot more than that. It's where the people meet on Sundays. They get apartments, contacts for jobs and all that stuff. That's down to the present day. I go down to the park every Sunday and I meet the fellas from Clare and Roscommon and we have a drink and say 'Who's looking for a job or who can't find a job and who's got an apartment, so it's a lot more than just playing."

19.00 In his day a large amount of the Irish coming over got involved in the GAA, nowadays it's not the same. "You would find more people up on the bars on McLean Avenue on a

	<p>Sunday than you would in Gaelic Park.</p> <p>19.20 The hurling in New York when he came over was very tough and physical. The referees were liberal. You pulled on everything that moved. But people were tough and if they went down they got back up. Not that many serious injuries. If you got injured there was a doctor you went to on Monday. He once had a hairline fracture. A doctor was on duty from the 1960s on and there's a nurse as well.</p> <p>20.20 In the 1950s it was bad. If you got hurt there was no money to compensate you for your loss.</p> <p>20.30 He played hurling for Clare in NY for 19 years. They needed players so he had to keep going. When he became manager he stopped and put his energy into getting players from Ireland. In the time he played hurling in NY improved but his team didn't – just got older.</p> <p>21.20 There were eight senior hurling teams and nine junior teams in New York for most of the time he played. In one junior final Clare were able to tog out 30 players.</p> <p>21.50 All the other teams were Clare's big rivals – especially Tipperary.</p> <p>22.00 At that time Tipperary were very good and Galway. Cork had a lot of county men come out to play for them and Waterford got a good team as well. Then Wexford and Westmeath.</p> <p>22.55 Tells story about why NY didn't play in the National League for a while. Cork came out for a hurling game. New York had a great team at the time and were two points down when NY scored a goal. The referee disallowed it and gave Cork a 21 yard free at the other end of the pitch. After the game the referee got beaten up.</p> <p>He was manager of the New York side and had complained to Sean O'Siocháin that the referee couldn't give them fair play because at the dinner for the Cork team on the Friday before the match the Corkmen's Association had presented the Referee with a watch, and he stayed in the Cork team's hotel.</p> <p>Anyway the referee got his jaw broken and when New York went back to Ireland to play the National League game it was</p>
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	<p>cancelled on them and the games were closed off to them for few years.</p> <p>25.15 He attended one game in the Polo Grounds. Games there drew a big crowd of Irish and Irish-Americans.</p> <p>26.00 He wasn't really keen on being involved with the Clare hurlers as manager, but at the convention they nominated him. He said he didn't want any part of it but they insisted – "You're going to lead us to the promised land". So he took it seriously.</p> <p>26.30 He had a specific idea of how he wanted to organise the team. A lot of New York sides brought over county players just to have them, but he went looking for certain positions and only played the guys in the right positions.</p> <p>"If I knew there was a good corner back in Clare, that's who I went after – I didn't go after two, just one...We had say ten good players here and I had to get 6 or 7 more.</p> <p>27.20 He needed a goalkeeper so he got Henry Condon from Moneygall who worked in Shannon Airport and was willing to come out. Then he got Sean Custy who was a great minor full back for Clare. Then Herbie McCabe for centre half back.</p> <p>It was very easy to persuade those guys to come over to New York then:</p> <p>"It was easy, very easy, and they were great fellas. It wasn't like now – because those guys come over here with their hand out. These fellas didn't want nothing – they just wanted to win. We trained, we trained night and day...it's not a problem, not when you have committed players. We used to train on Monday – that was our big day because we would have a bit of a hangover from the Sunday in Gaelic Park, and we'd train for two or three hours down here in Van Cortlandt park, and again on Thursday, and I mean train. And in the summer time when it's 100 degrees, it didn't take a lot of training to get you fit."</p> <p>28.50 The training was a lot of running and then hurling. It took him two years to get Clare to the competitive level he wanted them at.</p> <p>29.00 He kept close to the players, talked to them one-to-one and made sure they wanted to win and make sure there was</p>
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	<p>nothing in the background that was affecting them.</p> <p>29.15 “Y’know they’re all talking about this thing now of no drink, no drink – we always drank after training. We always went in and had a couple of pints, but we never drank say on a Friday or Saturday or anything like that. Because you tell these guys you can’t drink for the next thirty days – that’s all bull –they’re going to drink anyway. So you go out and you say ‘Look fellas, we’re all going to have two drinks and then we’re going to go home.”</p> <p>30.00 Clare’s success made hurling in New York very competitive and Galway really wanted to beat them at their own game. Galway took over twelve players for a final against Clare but they already had a good team so they were just confused on the sideline. Players who had been brought over never even played. They had 3 or four corner backs. Clare still beat them. John Connolly was on that team, one of the best players of all time.</p> <p>31.00 It was hard to develop young players in New York. They did manage to develop some players who came over from Clare without much hurling experience. They did this through the juniors. Paddy O’Neill of Scariff in Co Clare started off not being able to hit the ball and ended up playing for New York.</p> <p>“He just kept at it, but you’ve got to have fellas who just want to win. If you don’t have that, you’re wasting you’re time trying to get them to play. Winning was everything with us. We’d have a meeting – we’d have sixty players at the meeting. No ashtrays – nobody smoked – it was all about being fit – but we always had a few drinks.”</p> <p>32.00 When he was manager of Clare and they won the championship he became the manager of new York and they got to play against the big teams from Ireland – Wexford, Kilkenny, Waterford.</p> <p>32.45 Hurling was at a very high standard in New York in the late 1960s. He thinks the Clare team he managed to the New York championship for the second time would have been as good as the Clare county team back home.</p> <p>33.10 He managed Clare hurlers for 8 years and won three</p>
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	<p>senior championships and three junior championships.</p> <p>33.30 As manager of the New York team it was easy enough to pick the side. They had a selection committee and Mick Morrissey, twice an All-Ireland winner with Wexford, was on it. New York in their heyday could have taken anybody at home on. The 1958 team, with Normal Allen of Dublin on it. He was a great player. Everybody on the 1958 team had been involved in an All-Ireland at some level – they were a tremendous team. They’d be very close to having been good enough to win an All-Ireland back home.</p> <p>35.00 Despite this, the New York teams were viewed as nothing by the teams as home – a no-name team. Having said that the teams from Ireland took the games seriously when they came out.</p> <p>36.00 As manager of New York, the players he noted most included Eddie Keher of Kilkenny. But they had stars to match the Irish stars. When his team played Wexford in 1968 they only lost by a point and their best player, John Maher, was knocked out.</p> <p>37.00 It was wonderful to be able to travel back to Ireland with teams as part of the GAA, especially because</p> <p>“Money was scarce. The Irish didn’t have the good jobs like they have today. Today they think nothing of going home.”</p> <p>37.30 John Kerry O’Donnell had complete control at Gaelic Park in the early days, although he was more interested in the football than the hurling. He could be a difficult man to deal with.</p> <p>“It was either his way or no way. But he did a lot of good things, but he didn’t take care of the playing pitch. And he had the bar business then, when you couldn’t even get a drink in there. We used to get eight or nine thousand people when Clare played Galway or somebody.”</p> <p>38.30 The arrangements at Gaelic Park were different back then. The pitch was smaller and there was a stand behind the goals.</p> <p>39.00 There were great men involved in the running of the GAA clubs in NY, men who arrived before his time. They were very, very dedicated “and you’d have to have that as a</p>
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	<p>foundation to go on.”</p> <p>39.40 There wasn't much internal politics in the club, barring annual elections, but there was a lot of politics between the club and the New York board. O'Donnell controlled everything. He ruled the roost.</p> <p>40.30 It was very difficult to keep in touch with how Roscommon were doing back home when he came over first.</p> <p>“It was very difficult because we had no telephones. I'd write to my mother and ask 'How did Athleague play?' You might get a letter back two weeks later. Then in the sixties you could make a telephone call. You went to the post office and it was \$18 for three minutes. But in my home in Roscommon there weren't phones, there were maybe three phones in the whole village.”</p> <p>41.00 There weren't any papers from Roscommon then either. At one stage a travel agents, O'Briens, paid for the radio signal for the All-Irelands and you might have two hundred people listening to it.</p> <p>42.00 Not being able to see the games back home was hard.</p> <p>“I missed it terribly. You'd be asking everybody 'Did you hear who won at home?' The All-Irelands you'd know, or the big games – you'd know that alright, but club games no. But then again, I used to go back every year – it was a promise I made to my mother, and I went back every year.”</p> <p>42.50 He's going to the All-Ireland hurling final next week, that's his 26th in row. He missed a few before that, but he's probably been to 40 All-Ireland hurling finals.</p> <p>43.10 “If you a had a thousand tickets, ten thousand ticket, you could get rid of them here [in New York].”</p> <p>The All-Ireland tickets for hurling get distributed by the Chairman between the hurling community. “You get guys showing up now looking for tickets that didn't support the game for 30 years, so they have to use good judgement.”</p> <p>44.30 The best time for New York GAA in terms of good players coming over in large numbers from Ireland to live was the 1950s, but the Irish lost their quota and the numbers have</p>
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	<p>never been as good since.</p> <p>45.40 New York hurling needs to have new players coming from Ireland all the time. That situation is very serious in New York now. Most of the current players are just Irish fellas over for the summer. Brendan Maher from the Tipperary hurling club told Benny that they only have three resident hurlers on the team now.</p> <p>46.20 They're trying to develop Irish-American talent, but that works better in football than hurling. It'll never happen.</p> <p>46.35 He doesn't think bringing players over for the weekend did any damage. In his time you could bring over as many weekenders as you could afford, now it's two.</p> <p>47.00 When he was manager of Clare, they did take over three players for the weekend for each final, but it was expensive. He would try and follow who was playing well back in Clare and then recruit them for a weekend. Any player he brought over was good – they all played for Munster. He used some players regularly – Jimmy Cullinane ('The Pudding') was a tremendous player, and Paddy McNamara. Paddy Cronin.</p> <p>"All I had to do was make a phone call and they'd be here, because they lived in Newmarket-on-Fergus area which is by Shannon. But you have to pick a player for the position. You can't just ring up and say 'Send me a player' and then you find out he's a goalkeeper and we've three goalkeepers already".</p> <p>48.40 Hurling is a game of positions and you can't have a corner back playing centre half forward.</p> <p>"I've never seen it work. A back man is a back man – a forward is a forward. Once in a while you can take a fella and put him full forward, but that the only position you can work with."</p> <p>49.10 The best players he saw in New York were Terry Leahy of Kilkenny, Norman Allen of Dublin, Mick Morrissey of Wexford, Paddy Bermingham from Offaly, Paddy Dowling from Cork, Sean Custy, Paddy Kirby, Jim Kearney, of Clare. Tipperary had Sean O'Meara, Johnny Murphy, Donal O'Brien, Joe Carey was a great player.</p>
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	<p>50.00 Norman Allen was particularly great and Terry Leahy. He scored the winning point for Kilkenny in an All-Ireland final with a sideline cut. Phil Grimes, Ambrose Galvin and Jimmy Mahoney of Waterford were also good.</p> <p>51.00 He never got interested in any of the American sports. Once they took Christy Ring to the Polo Grounds to see how he would fare against a proper baseball pitcher, but he didn't even see the ball.</p> <p>51.30 Some Irish guys were good kickers for American football. Tom Furlong [brother of Martin Furlong] was drafted by the NY Giants for kicking.</p> <p>51.50 Galway had great players – John Connolly, Paddy Egan, Padraig Fahy, Kenny Croke. They could have played with anybody and Paddy Egan and John Connolly were All-Stars.</p> <p>52.10 Those were great times with players like that coming to New York, but now nobody comes. They can't get green cards and can only stay 90 days.</p> <p>52.40 The other problem for the New York GAA is that it is doing a good job of developing young Irish Americans into footballers but when they reach 20 they are also really good at baseball or American football so they go and do that because it has advantages.</p> <p>53.00 He never played any other sports in his youth.</p> <p>“Are you kidding? If you went to a rugby dance where I come from in Athleague, you wouldn't be on the team for the rest of the year. If you just went to a rugby dance or soccer dance, you wouldn't. It would be the worst thing that could happen...I think it was bad. I don't think there should be any difference.”</p> <p>53.40 He thought opening up Croke Park to soccer and rugby was a good idea. It's a good business decision. The GAA needs money, so what's wrong with opening it up and making money.</p> <p>54.00 But he doesn't think the GAA will lose its amateur status. There's nothing wrong with it the way it is, but the players should get some money, and a good way to get that is to open Croke park up.</p>
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54.53 “There’s something I’d like to add now. I go to the All-Ireland every year and I get the chills when the teams come out on the field, in the hurling especially. You see the finest athletes in the world out there. But then the Artane Boys Band, who I love, they start marching behind them, and nobody’s in step, and I think it’s terrible – I turn away. How long would it take for somebody to teach them to all keep in step?”

55.20 Players today do have a different attitude to in his time – they’re all Prima Donnas now.

55.50 He thinks management today has moved on though and is better. Although he doesn’t like the earpieces and the manager having someone up in the stands telling him things once the game starts.

56.30 The way football is played has changed a lot. It’s more like basketball now. He preferred the old style, Kerry and Roscommon football – the high catch and kick. Hand passing now is overdone.

57.00 Hurling tactic haven’t changed as much because it harder to short pass in hurling.

“Y’know, let’s face it – the game is all about your heart. If your heart is in it, y’know. I see fellas up there, they can hit balls up in the air and upside down, but then they go out on the field and they can’t hit nothing. You have to have it, like the Clare team that I managed, they had it. You could be twice as good as them but you’re not going to beat them. Y’know what i mean , you’ll never beat them.”

58.00 You can develop that heart in the players. He would meet with them in small groups for a few drinks and tell them that they had to win and motivate them by saying their opposition thought they were afraid of them or their parents would be proud of them etc.

58.50 New York hurling has been nearly destroyed by the lack of emigration.

“We haven’t had any hurlers coming out here to stay in seven or eight years and the fellas that are there are getting old. They get married and have kids and there are no replacements. We need a flow of players all the time. If it

	<p>wasn't for the students..."</p> <p>59.30 But bringing out the students for the summer is very expensive. For example, he's involved with the Roscommon football team who are in the final stages of the intermediate championship. The five students they brought over for the summer are already gone home to school, and will have to be brought back over for the semi-final because their 90 day visa was up.</p> <p>01.00.00 They fundraise by having a Roscommon banquet every year with 500 people and a diary where people can advertise their business – 200 pages at \$100 a page. The banquet maybe makes \$24,000 clear, but that wouldn't be enough to keep the club going for a year. So we had a race night last week and got \$10,000 out of that, but what with sending these students back and forth, at the end of the year we'll have nothing.</p> <p>01.01.00 It's tough to keep the finances going because you're going back to the same people time after time. Roscommon also raise money for other things. They recently ran a a benefit for a local girl who needed an operation on her spine in Philadelphia.</p> <p>"We do a lot of other things, not just football. If somebody is sick, we take care of them."</p> <p>01.02.00 The GAA in New York is still a good networking place. In Roscommon club, they have two members who are in construction and they had 25 students working for those men this summer, who got \$100 a day clear money.</p> <p>01.02.45 But there is a problem in getting insurance for these guys when they're over. They had an incident where a player llost all his teeth and the club just had to pay for them to be fixed - \$3,400.</p> <p>01.03.00 There was never any clash between his involvement with Clare hurling and his involvement with his native Roscommon. There was a good relationship between the two and Clare fellas played football for Roscommon.</p> <p>01.04.00 His son played minor for new York and played against Armagh in Croke Park. There is a good degree of second generation involvement. The Rangers club have 102</p>
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	<p>players in their youth development programme. “They’re terrific and so dedicated – they’re the ones who are going to keep the football end of it going.”</p> <p>01.04.40 At the moment New York aren’t good enough to be competitive with the Irish counties in the Connacht championship. Whether that changes depends on the young players coming up in New York. “New York footballers can’t beat nobody right now.”</p> <p>01.05.30 The one memory he would choose from his GAA experience would be Clare winning the NY hurling championship after a 50 year gap, when he was manager.</p> <p>01.05.50 Drink wasn’t a huge part of the GAA in NY in his day. People would have a few drinks when they met on Sundays but generally they didn’t have the money.</p> <p>01.06.20 His worst memory would be when he managed the New York team against Cork and the game was taken away from them by the referee. They had trained so hard and too have it taken from them by a bad decision was unbelievable.</p> <p>01.07.00 The game that sticks in his head is when he captained the Roscommon minor team against Galway in Ballinasloe in 1958. Galway only beat them by a point.</p> <p>01.07.20 The best game he ever saw was a game in New York between Tipperary and Galway.</p> <p>01.07.40 He thinks that the present Kilkenny team are the greatest team he’s seen in his lifetime, because it’s so competitive on to get on the team. It’s a religion to them and they have a great manager in Cody.</p> <p>01.08.30 John Fenton of Cork was one of the best players he ever saw. He really took the game by the back of the neck. He was unbelievable.</p> <p>01.08.50 The GAA makes him proud because:</p> <p>“I think they’re a great bunch of fellas, great Irishmen. In this country here there’s so many different things that you can go to – basketball, baseball, football – whatever you want, but they stayed with the GAA, they never strayed away from the GAA. And we have fellas down here working in Gaelic Park, who put in hours of work, like Johnny Phelan, Seamus</p>
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	<p>Dooley, Donie Sullivan, John Cox, and a lot of other players I can't think, and they're down there 3 or 4 nights a week and Sundays."</p> <p>01.10.00 He gave a lot of hours to the GAA and it meant he neglected his bar business in a couple of years. But he never regretted it.</p> <p>01.10.50 One of his main disappointments with the GAA was in New York when the NY President had a fight with Kerry O'Donnell and took the games out of Gaelic Park and up to Rockland, which is 20 miles away and a lot of the old-timers didn't have cars and couldn't go to the games. The row was over stupidity and you couldn't talk to the President at that time. And the GAA lost a lot of people over it – there might be a hundred people at a game up there.</p> <p>01.12.00 The pitch at Gaelic Park is great now, but the bar is much the same as it was when he arrived 60 years ago. But the guys in charge now aim to make it a state of the art centre like they have in Chicago and Boston. It will bring the people back and they can have social events at the park again, like weddings.</p> <p>01.12.40 What does the GAA mean to you?</p> <p>"Everything. It means everything. If the GAA wasn't here I wouldn't be in this country. I'd be back in Athleague cutting turf.</p> <p>01.13.00 he put in a lot of work but he enjoyed it all.</p> <p>"Because I was dealing with a great fellas, and I still put in a bit of work with Roscommon and we have a great bunch of fellas. Very dedicated.... I didn't regret nothing."</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input 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 type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p>

REFERENCE NO. RN/1/1

Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	Captained Athleague to Roscommon Minor hurling championship in 1948. Played Minor Hurling for Roscommon 1948. Played hurling with Clare in New York for 19 years.
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	Managed Clare to win their first New York hurling championship in fifty years. He was also a delegate to the New York board.
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:13:20
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: Seán Kearns

Date: 28 Oct 2009