

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	18 th April 2011
Location	Miriam's home, near Tullamore, Co. Offaly
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Miriam O'Callaghan
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Female
Born	Year Born: 1955 Home County: Offaly
Education	Primary: St Philomena's, Tullamore, Co. Co. Offaly. Secondary: Scoil Íosagáin, Dublin; Newbridge Secondary School, Kildare; Sacred Heart Secondary School, Tullamore, Co. Offaly. Third Level: UCG; NUI Maynooth; NCI.
Family	Siblings: 1 brothers & 2 sisters Current Family if Different: Husband (Liam) & 2 daughters
Club(s)	Tullamore Camogie Club; Tullamore GAA Club [Offaly]
Occupation	Health Services Executive employee
Parents' Occupation	Fruit & Vegetable wholesalers
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Fianna Fáil
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Offaly Sports Partnership; National Sports Campus Development Authority; Board of Management Sacred Heart Secondary School; Anam Beo Arts Group; Tullamore Urban Council; Member of County Council for many years.

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Date of Report	18 th July 2012
Period Covered	1884 – 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Offaly, Westmeath, Laois, Dublin
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Material Culture, Education, Media, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Identity, Culture, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Outsider’s Perspectives, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Relationship with the Association, Retirement, Food and Drink, Socialising, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Miriam talks about her involvement in the GAA over the years. She discusses her family’s interest in the games and how her mother’s family was involved in the foundation of the Association in the 1884. She describes first introduction to camogie and getting involved with the club. Miriam describes how Tullamore was the only camogie club in Offaly during the early 1970s and that they played in Laois before a camogie county board was set up in Offaly in 1979. She talks about the challenges the camogie has faced over the years such as the media and low attendances. She talks about the growth of camogie in Offaly in the early 1980s and her involvement in it. Miriam discusses her administration career from county level to becoming president of the camogie association, Cumann Camógaíochta. She talks about the challenges she faced during her term and the highlights of her presidency. Towards the end of the interview, Miriam highlights the important role that camogie has played in her life and what the game means to her.</p> <p>00:20 Miriam talks about her early life and her family.</p> <p>01:13 Discusses her family’s involvement in the GAA. Father played for Westmeath and Offaly. Mother’s family, White’s of Clara, involved in the foundation of the GAA.</p> <p>01:59 Talks about her mother’s family’s interest in the GAA. Discusses starting camogie after finishing school. Mentions Mary Hanley née O’Brien and her involvement in setting up a club for ladies in Tullamore.</p> <p>3:17 Discusses her mother’s family’s involvement in the GAA.</p>

	<p>Links to Fianna Fáil. Father was secretary of Tullamore. No ladies football or camogie in Tullamore growing up.</p> <p>05:03 Talks about her interest in the GAA. Notes how she never seen camogie being played before starting to play. Football the main sport in Tullamore.</p> <p>06:50 Recalls her first introductions to camogie. Most of the women involved were from outside Tullamore. Locals reaction to the formation.</p> <p>08:13 Describes the beginnings of the club. Only club for camogie in Offaly when the formed. Affiliated into the Laois championship, winning it in 1974 and 75. Playing a team from Meath in O'Connor Park in the Leinster championship, making their own skirts. The role of Mary Hanley</p> <p>10:30 Talks about training with the club and travelling to matches. Mention Marian Clavan, the Angela and Jacqueline Cooney, Finnerty.</p> <p>11:50 Holding dances in Killeigh to raise funds for the club. First chairperson was Ray Allen.</p> <p>12:20 Discusses the formation of the camogie county board in 1979, establishment of Birr and Kilcormick clubs. First secretary was Carthagen Minnock. Mentions Sister Vigilius, Mary Breen, Mary O'Callaghan, Bernadette Loughnan, Anne O'Brien née Rigny, Camilus King.</p> <p>14:45 Talks about the players' involvement in administration. Changes over time. The view for the need for ladies to be involved in sport. Outsiders' perceptions of hurling and camogie.</p> <p>18:35 Discusses early issues with the club and people's perception of the club. Links to politics. Work as a youth delegate with the county board. Being the first woman to speak at a GAA congress. Mentions Mick Spain from Drumcullen, John Dowling.</p> <p>22:01 Describes the lack of support and attendances for ladies' matches in the 1970s. Recent increases and All-Ireland club finals being held in Croke Park.</p> <p>23:43 Talks about the positions she played in for the club. Difficulties in getting pitches because of the differences with hurling and football pitches. The change from 12 to 15-a-side.</p> <p>26:21 Discusses the main teams in the Laois championship. Notes Ballyfin, Camross and Slievebloom as the strongest</p>
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	<p>teams. Some opposition about being from Offaly. Relationship between Laois and Offaly. Holding a Féile between the counties.</p> <p>28:00 Describes the development of the ladies county board in Offaly. The work of the camogie Leinster Council and a Mrs Timmons.</p> <p>29:43 Discusses the role of the schools in leading to the formation of ladies clubs. Teams playing in the Cumann na mBunscoil and the Féile nan Gael. Mentions schools in Banagher ,Clara, Tullamore. Primary schools' role.</p> <p>31:56 Talks about the key figures in schools. Mentions Mary O'Callaghan, Brother Dennessy, Brother Vincent, Sister Vigilius, Honour Kinsella, Joe Tully, Brother Charles, Carthagena Kelly née Minnock, Michelle and Edel Corcoran, Colette Kelly.</p> <p>33:28 Notes how most ladies' clubs formed in hurling areas. Clubs like Drumcullen, Banagher, Lusmagh, Shinrone, Coolderry, Ballyskenagh, Kinnitty. The emergence of Ferbane in the 1980s. Clubs in Edenderry, St Conan's in Ballyconnell.</p> <p>34:43 Describes how hurling wasn't strong in Tullamore. Boys the same age playing with the camogie team.</p> <p>35:21 Talks about Tullamore winning the senior camogie championship in 2007. Hurlers won the following year.</p> <p>36:00 Discusses the influence of Offaly's county success in the 1980s in hurling on the sport in the county. Mentions Kevin Martin.</p> <p>36:55 Talks about her administrative career in the GAA. How she got involved. Missing playing. Becoming chairperson. Gives her opinion on the term lengths of chairpersons. Work they've done recently. Participation levels. Mentions Angela Downey.</p> <p>42:52 Discusses the problems with recruiting administrators for the club. Mentions Molly Guinan, Mary Murray. Programmes introduced like 'Mum and Me' to help women get involved.</p> <p>45:40 Describes the club as an escape from daily life for many women. Other associations like the ICA and Macra na Feirma.</p> <p>46:57 Discusses the role of the media in camogie. The Harriers club including camogie in its sports awards. Mentions</p>
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	<p>Eddie Rogers.</p> <p>49:20 Talks about the relationship between her working career and her camogie career. Importance of networking. Being an administrator with the Health Service Executive.</p> <p>51:05 Discussing becoming involved with the camogie Leinster Council. Refereeing matches first and going to meetings. Elected vice chairperson of camogie Leinster Council and delegate to Central Council.</p> <p>53:35 Recalls her first impressions of camogie outside of Offaly at a provincial level. Recalls an issue with uniforms and links to the past. Importance of rules at provincial level compared to their way of doing things.</p> <p>56:29 Describes what camogie Leinster Council meetings were like. Mentions a Mrs O'Duffy, Sean O'Duffy's wife, and her work. Strength of Dublin and Kildare. Mention PJ Fullam, Peter Houy.</p> <p>59:39 Talks about attending Central Council meetings first in the early 1990s. Held in Croke Park, three presidents during her time, Belle O'Loughlin from Tyrone, Mary O'Callaghan from Cork and Brídín Ó Maolagáin from Dublin. Also mentions Sheila McNulty from Down.</p> <p>01:03:29 Recalls the big issues when she first got involved at Central Council level. Change from 12 to 15-a-side, PR issues, changes in competitions, increases in participation, involvement of third level education.</p> <p>01:04:58 Discusses the debate surrounding the change from 12 to 15-a-side. The GAA holding a seminar for women's participation in the Association. Mentions Joe McDonagh.</p> <p>01:06:40 Talks about the relationship between the women's games and the GAA. Role of the Irish Sports Council. Desire to keep separate from the GAA Central Council.</p> <p>01:09:29 Describes how some people were to adapt to having women involved in the GAA. The role of the Camogie Committee in the GAA.</p> <p>01:11:20 Discusses the relationship between the men and the women and club level in the GAA. Role of the social centre in Tullamore.</p> <p>01:13:37 Talks about being secretary to the first development programme for camogie in 1999. Issues surrounding sponsorship. Mentions Mary Moran, Sean McCabe, Eithne</p>
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	<p>Fitzgerald, Teresa O'Callaghan. Receiving media coverage.</p> <p>01:19:03 Discusses the long term impact of the development programme.</p> <p>01:20:30 Talks about becoming president of the camogie association, Cumann Camógaíochta, in 2003. The development and growth of the association during her time as president. The work involved. Mentions Liz Howard.</p> <p>01:26:12 Recalls being elected president and the association during the centenary year in 2004. Mentions Molly Guinan, Helen McEnaney,</p> <p>01:29:25 Talks about the function held to commemorate the centenary year. Mentions Sean Kelly, Joe McDonagh.</p> <p>01:32:50 Describes the work done by the camogie development team. Mentions Mary O'Conner Cooney, Jenny Duffy, Caroline Murray, Eve Talbot.</p> <p>01:34:18 Discusses being part of the association and how it has changed she was first involved in the 1970s. Changes in dealing with children. Going to Northern Ireland during the Troubles. Going to the Pan Celtic festival.</p> <p>01:37:09 Talks about her involvement in Féile na Gael and the role of the Community Games in Tullamore.</p> <p>01:40:25 Describes the impact of Ladies' football on camogie in Tullamore and the relationship between the two codes. Dual players in the club.</p> <p>01:42:16 Talks about her refereeing career. Refereeing in All-Ireland camogie finals. Function held after. Having a function in the Red Cow Hotel after Offaly's appearance in the All-Ireland in 2001.</p> <p>01:46:00 Describes her approach to refereeing. Recalls a league final in Tullamore and her father's reaction to her refereeing. Players and spectators misunderstanding the rules. Problems with people on the sideline.</p> <p>01:50:18 Discusses camogie matches being televised.</p> <p>01:51:00 Talks about her playing career.</p> <p>01:53:23 Talks about her favourite players. Mentions Michaela Morkan, Clare Grogan, Úna O'Dwyer, Anna Geary, Vincent Harrington, Angela and Jacqueline Downey.</p> <p>01:56:50 Discusses Tullamore's senior championship win in</p>
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	<p>2007 and their Féile win.</p> <p>01:57:55 Talks about holding a banquet in 2004. Holding a camogie All-Stars event.</p> <p>02:00:10 Discusses changes in perceptions of women playing sport following the centenary committee. Mentions Teresa O'Callaghan and the 'Chicks with Sticks' campaign.</p> <p>02:02:54 Talks about the friendships she has developed through being involved in camogie.</p> <p>02:04:10 Describes the sense of pride in Tullamore over having players on the under-16 Offaly team that won the All-Ireland camogie 'B' championship.</p> <p>02:06:10 Recalls being proud after seeing girls walking to primary school carrying hurls. Work done by teachers. Mentions Fionnuala Corrigan.</p> <p>02:07:46 Notes her optimism for the future for camogie in Offaly. Highlights the need for Offaly to remain at senior level.</p> <p>02:10:58 Talks about her daughters', Aine and Orla, involvement in camogie.</p> <p>02:12:12 Describes the important role of camogie in her life.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p>✓ Supporter ✓ Player ✓ Manager ✓ Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p>✓ Chairperson ✓ Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer ✓ Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): President of Cumann Camógaíochta na nGael (2003 – 2006)</p>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Played Camogie with Tullamore (1973-2007); Won Offaly Senior and junior Championships; won Laois County Championships.</p> <p>Member of Offaly Senior Camogie team and won Leinster League medals (1973-79).</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Tullamore: Chairperson, PRO, Treasurer</p> <p>Offaly Camogie: First Chairman of Offaly Camogie County Board, 1979 for many years; PRO; Development Officer; Vice-Chairperson; Leinster Council delegate.</p> <p>Leinster Council: Vice-Chairperson; Leinster delegate to Ard-Comhairle; Leinster Development Plan Committee</p>

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	National: Chaired Referee's committee; Secretary of 1 st Development plan; President of Cumann Camógaíochta na nGael (2003 – 2006); Member of Central Council; Member of Management Committee; GAA Overseas Committee (2003-2006); Member of National Féile Committee (1988-89; 2008-2009)
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 02:13:52
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: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 18th July 2012