

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	21 November 2008
Location	Waterford City
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Pat Fanning
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1918 Home County: Waterford
Education	Primary: Mount Sion Primary School, Waterford. Secondary: Christian Brothers, Mount Sion, Waterford
Family	Siblings: Two sisters and one brother Current Family if Different: Three sons and one daughter
Club(s)	Mount Sion GAA Club
Occupation	Social Welfare Officer
Parents' Occupation	Insurance Agent and Housekeeper
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A

Date of Report	28 November 2008
Period Covered	1918-2008
Counties/Countries Covered	Waterford, Kilkenny, Cork, Tipperary
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Officials, Administration, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, 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, Sacrifices, Alcohol, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Ban on Security Forces, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Retirement
Interview Summary	<p>Introduction</p> <p>0:22 Born in 1918 into Waterford city family; family nationalist and steeped in the GAA; always had a hurley; father interest in hurling and all things national.</p> <p>1:16 Earliest memory of matches in the 1920s; description of the 1931 Munster Final in Clonmel; the emergence of Waterford hurling from that date.</p> <p>2:35 Two clubs in Waterford in the early 1930s; Mount Sion (1932) and Erin's Own; they shared a field; changes that have occurred in his lifetime</p> <p>3:00 Played on Mount Sion team that won the first county final in 1935; reached the All-Ireland in 1938; playing a county final in snow in 1939; two teams in county final trained on Walsh Park; Erin's Own on one end of the field, Mount Sion on another; no clubs had a field at that time. Only surviving member of that 1938 team.</p> <p>4:42 Going to Mount Sion CBS; formative years; forming of his nationalist thinking; never had an English newspaper in his house; only Catholic newspaper; thinking very much influenced by the Christian Brothers; contribution of the Christian Brothers to the growth and development of the GAA.</p> <p>6:54 Acquisition and development of fields for the purpose of Gaelic games alone; this was a policy decision –impact of this</p>

	<p>decision to community life in Ireland.</p> <p>8:01 His position on Rule 27; Tom Wolfe letters to newspapers; accusation that was made; 'The GAA made me a better Irishman than I would otherwise have been'; his words mis-construed; influence of the GAA, the Christian Brothers and Ignatius Rice on his life.</p> <p>9:35 Time as secretary of the Mount Sion club (1940-55); winning championships; uniqueness of the GAA; never regarded it as just a sporting organisation; declined a career in politics as he felt it would distract from his commitment to the Mount Sion club.</p> <p>10:57 Never took promotion or movement in his working career so that it would not take away from his commitment to the club. Consumed by the GAA; saw the GAA as an opportunity to serve an ideal.</p> <p>11:50 GAA evolving and developing; GAA as a mass movement of Irish people; Conor Cruise O'Brien's description of the GAA as 'the most durable and influential of the great movements of the nineteenth century' – land league, Catholic Emancipation, Conradh na Gaeilge.</p> <p>13:00 Durability of the GAA; difficult times when association was threatened; political context of the association; the importance of Arch-Bishop Croke's patronage of the association</p> <p>14:15 Charter of the GAA; how Croke spoke about the GAA – Irish-Ireland movement</p> <p>14:45 Life president of the Mount Sion Club; Life president of the Waterford Co. Board; still in touch; not the same involvement amongst those involved now in terms of his concept.</p> <p>15:44 The GAA ideal - a lecture he gave 30 years ago about this ideal; enthused by the interested amongst younger members in that ideal; that young people should consider the GAA as something uplifting; something that would make them better people.</p> <p>17:03 GAA and life in Ireland; the development of Croke Park; financial concerns about the development; GAA in step with Ireland moving into the twenty-first century.</p> <p>18:32 Plans to build an office block for the GAA in his time; plans made for a department of State would occupy it and give them an income; idea did not take off; role of providence</p>
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	<p>in the development of the GAA.</p> <p>19:35 The GAA's place in Irish society; proud tradition of Waterford hurling; great clubs in Waterford; a county that consistently strives. Waterford faithful to the association. Became chairman of Waterford county board in 1955.</p> <p>21:20 Waterford team from 1955-63 one of the greatest teams of all time; determination and will to win.</p> <p>21:55 Rivalry between Waterford and South Kilkenny; became a 'battle of equals' from 1955-63; the Deise county owes a lot to its GAA tradition</p> <p>23:10 Mount Sion one of the greatest teams in the history of the association; Erins Own another great Waterford team.</p> <p>23:36 Career as an inter-county player; trained the 1948 Waterford Minor team that defeated Kilkenny in the All-Ireland; on the panel of the senior team at the same time; never trained with senior team only with minor team; Munster Final of that year, spent first match with minors and was one the panel for the senior later in the day.</p> <p>25:00 All-Ireland semi final ; John Keane – greatest Waterford hurler ever; persuading him to step down from selection committee, costing Pat his place in the 1948 All-Ireland.</p> <p>27:08 Home-coming when the minors won in 1948; his brother, Larry was on that team.</p> <p>27:55 Always considered the Christian Brothers philosophy in his decision making.</p> <p>Pause to fix microphone</p> <p>28:48 How he got involved in administration in the GAA; started in 1940 at a general meeting unexpectedly; also served on the first policy committee with Alf Murry. Running against Alf Murry and Paddy O'Keefe for the presidency.</p> <p>30:05 Paddy O'Keefe as an architect of the modern GAA; Canon Hamilton regarded him as one of the most powerful men in Ireland in church and state; they had been on opposite sides of the Civil War.</p> <p>31:10 Presidency of the GAA (1970) – occupation of Casement Park; negotiations in Westminster; the lifting of 'The Ban'; tension involved despite the democratic process; what the ban meant to those who were in favour of it; attempts made by members to circumvent the decision; how he approached the issue and managed the strong emotion</p>
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	<p>involved on both sides of the debate.</p> <p>36:30 His speech at congress the day the ban was lifted; undertaking that no attempt would be made to re-introduce the ban in anyway; drafting of the charter of the GAA</p> <p>37:25 Press coverage of the congress</p> <p>38:26 Tensions coming up to that congress; pressure from different members; Pat, Alf Murray and Canon Hamilton were advocates of the rule.</p> <p>39:41 How he handled personally advocating the ban and presiding over its abolishment</p> <p>40:41 How effective the ban was in its lifetime; terrible things done in the name of the ban; observed in the breach more than in the observance; lack of the observance in Kilkenny; observed in Waterford and Cork</p> <p>42:00 PSNI hurling team; RUC as an organisation; Good Friday Agreement; GAA in their charter propound the pursuit of a 32 county Ireland; moving with the times; tolerates it.</p> <p>44:22 Impact of the troubles in Northern Ireland on his presidency; anxious to keep away from the official activities of the Provos and their fundraising activities; 'The Great Lift'; many lifting only because they were members of the GAA.</p> <p>45:00 Tommy Melon and Seán Ó Síocháin and Pat; creation of a fund to aid those interned during 'The Great Life'; six chairmen of the six counties handled the fund and distributed it the families of those interned.</p> <p>47:00 Club development scheme; concern about pubs in clubs; consulted with his bishop and the Archbishop of Cashel; movement towards social centres; successful bar in Mount Sion; accepting the inevitability of change</p> <p>49:33 Dependence of the parish on the GAA club; influence of the GAA</p> <p>50:42 Purpose of the Association in its foundation; a lot of people involved in county councils got their beginnings in the GAA</p> <p>50:29 McNamee Report; structure today of the GAA; changes in Croke Park; complex organisation; Paddy O'Keefe, Seán Ó Keefe running the organisation in his youth; amateur status of the GAA; needs professionals employed by the GAA in order to provide support for the volunteer.</p>
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<p>54:12 Pat Cant – accountant with Gouldings in Cork; left a prominent position in Gouldings to work for the GAA; employees in Croke Park are born into GAA families</p> <p>56:00 Advocated in Croke Park recently to recruit from the world of business regardless of background- Pat disagrees; employees should have the ideal.</p> <p>57:00 Wish to serve in the human psyche</p> <p>57:41 Irish language and the GAA ; weakening on that front; Croke Park capable of doing everything in Irish.</p> <p>58:20 The importance of the Oireachtas hurling title; association between the GAA and Conradh ne Gaeilge; very few can speak Irish when interviewed after matches on TG4</p> <p>59:00 Learned his Irish through the GAA; worried about the lack of emphasis on it in the GAA now.</p> <p>1:00:00 The GAA and Irish culture; recognition in its foundation that all aspects of culture be preserved; reduction in amount of Irish spoken at Congress.</p> <p>1:02:13 Importance of knowing when to step to one side; today's people are doing a great job.</p> <p>1:03:05 Demands of the job of president</p> <p>1:04:09 Role of religious in education important to him.</p> <p>1:04:30 Doesn't agree with the president of the GAA being full time.</p> <p>1:05:09 Effects of the GAA on his personal and professional life – a fulfilling life.</p> <p>1:07:05 Proudest moment – the congress that lifted the ban; passed with out decent and winning a club championship with Mount Sion in 1938 at the age of 18 or 19.</p> <p>1:07:47 No regrets – times when things went wrong; GAA continues to strengthen and develop; believes that people continue to be motivated by Cusack and Davin; the tradition of service; the ideal of Ireland; GAA accommodating itself to the needs of its time.</p> <p>1:10:01 Great presidents – Con Murphy and Alf Murray stand out; transformation of the GAA under Alf Murray; visiting Paddy O'Keefe with Alf Murray the day before he died before going to the Whit Sunday Games; Alf Murray's speech on television; first president who was more of a figure of authority</p>

	<p>than of ceremony.</p> <p>1:11:41 Con Murphy – served well; each president served well and made their own mark</p> <p>1:11:51 Against the opening of Croke Park to other sports</p> <p>1:13:33 Mick Loftus protest against the Guinness sponsorship of the All-Ireland championship.</p> <p>1:14:32 Hope for the future of the GAA; hopes it will never lose sight of its origins; more than a sporting organisation; part of the fabric of Irish life.</p> <p>1:15:49 Difference between being a member of the GAA in Northern Ireland and in the South; in the north its recognised that it was national; the football was a means to that; carrying a hurley was a badge of honour; stronger attachment to the language and music.</p> <p>1:18:00 History of the GAA – IRB attempts to take it over.</p> <p>1:18:42 Relationship between clubs in the south to clubs in the North.</p> <p>1:19:34 GAA did as much as they could for clubs in the North.</p> <p>1:20:16 Media reporting of the GAA</p> <p>1:21:24 Until the Irish Press came out in the 1930s; the All-Irelands were barely reported; good impact on the association.</p> <p>1:22:44 What it was like when his term as President of the GAA ended; Donal Keenan from Roscommon took over; remained active; chairman of the policy, communications and development committees and of the symposium in UCC in 1984.</p> <p>1:24:20 Highlight of the centenary year – very proud; wrote Paddy Buggy’s speech for the opening in Clare; sense of achievement; reflection of what Ireland would be like without the GAA</p> <p>1:25:50 Still follows Mount Sion – his funeral arrangements; keeping the Mount Sion flag on the coffin.</p> <p>1:26:46 Sons involvement in the GAA – played for Waterford; his grandson played for Waterford.</p> <p>1:27:15 Disappointment over the All-Ireland that year.</p> <p>1:27:39 Best team in his team – Waterford 1959-63 as good</p>
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	<p>as he's seen; the current Kilkenny team must be close to it; Eddie Kehers team also.</p> <p>1:28:43 Opinion of the controversy in Cork</p> <p>1:29:15 Thoughts on how hurling is played today.</p> <p>1:30:09 How he would be liked to remembered –for his service to the GAA.</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 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): <u>President of the GAA</u></p>
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	Minor County Championship 1934; Senior County Championship 1938, 1939, 1940, 1943, 1948, 1949.
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	Hon. Secretary 1941-1955; Chairman 1955-1970 ad 1978-2008; Chairman of Waterford County Committee 1955-1962, 1969-1970, 1975-1978. Chairman of Munster Council 1962-65; first chairman of GAA Policy Committee 1964-1970, later successively chairman of Development Committee and Communications Committee, 1975-1982.
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 1:30:21
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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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: 2 October 2009