

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	21 st Feb 2011
Location	John's home, near Bray, Co. Wicklow
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	John Henderson (also present John's wife Carmel)
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1957 Home County: Kilkenny
Education	Primary: Johnstown NS, Co. Kilkenny Secondary: Johnstown VEC; Kilkenny VEC, Co. Kilkenny Third Level: Carlow RTC; Waterford RTC
Family	Siblings: 3 brothers & 1 sister Current Family if Different: Wife (Carmel) & 3 sons
Club(s)	Fenians GAA [Kilkenny]; Bray Emmets [Wicklow]
Occupation	Financial Consultant
Parents' Occupation	Farmers
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Fianna Fáil
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Wicklow Lawn Tennis Club

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Date of Report	22 August 2012
Period Covered	1957 - 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Wicklow, Kilkenny
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Media, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Retirement, Food and Drink, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy/ Economics
Interview Summary	<p>John talks at length about his ongoing love affair with the GAA. A native of Kilkenny he grew up in a household with strong hurling traditions and played for the Johnstown club. His talent on the field did not go unnoticed, and he came through a gruelling selection process to land a place on the Kilkenny minor, and later Under-21 hurling teams. Inevitably he made the step up to senior level, following in the footsteps of his brothers and playing alongside future Kilkenny manager Brian Cody, whom he respected greatly. John was involved on All-Ireland final days and he vividly recalls what that experience is like from a player's perspective. John spent much of his playing career commuting from his base in Wicklow. He later became involved with the Bray Emmets club and trained the Wicklow hurling team. It was a far cry from Kilkenny standards yet still taught him a lot. He was also involved with the Cuala hurling team in Dublin and retains a passion for all things GAA that will undoubtedly see him involved with the Association for many more years to come.</p> <p>00:15 Born in 1957. Originally from Johnstown, Kilkenny. What that area was like growing up. Living on a farm. Playing hurling.</p> <p>01:10 Family's GAA involvement. Mick Henderson a relative of his father who played for Kilkenny. Mother's father playing in a Laois county final in Jones' Road, Dublin in 1901/1902. Brother, Pat, playing for Kilkenny. Johnstown not a traditional hurling area. Pat attending Thurles CBS. Pat playing against Tipperary player Babs Keating in a 1961 All-Ireland minor final.</p>

	<p>02:50 Kilkenny in the 1963 All-Ireland final. Going to a neighbour's house to watch the game. Getting a television in 1964 as Pat was playing in the All-Ireland final.</p> <p>03:35 Johnstown's success at senior level from the late 1960s. Brother, Ger, playing. Ger playing on vocational school team in Croke Park at 15. His picture featuring in Irish Press newspaper.</p> <p>05:00 Playing hurling at school during lunchtime. Playing on the school league team.</p> <p>05:35 Playing in Galmoy and former Kilkenny player Johnny O'Rourke tipping him to make the Kilkenny team. Enjoying playing for the school team and later the county minor team. Losing a final to Cork in 1974. Playing again in 1975.</p> <p>07:10 Mr Murray a teacher who took charge of the Under-14 team. Mr Connolly involved in Johnstown National school. Billy Burke team mentor in vocational school. Calf dealer Sonny Fitz driving them to games.</p> <p>09:25 Structured nature of modern game. Less coaching back then.</p> <p>09:55 Playing hurling in a concrete yard at home as a child. Using a stable window as a target. Playing with his brother Ger. How that benefited them both. Playing games with friends in the evenings.</p> <p>12:30 Senior team training in a field near the Dublin road. Going along as a teenager hoping to get drafted into training.</p> <p>13:25 Father died when he was 11 so his brother Pat a strong presence in his life. Eddie Kerr, Ollie Walsh, Pat Delaney, Tony Doran, Mick Roche, Ted Carroll players he admired.</p> <p>14:50 First All-Ireland final he attended was in 1972. His brother Ger playing with future Kilkenny boss Brian Cody in the minor game. Going to a league final between Kilkenny and Tipperary with his father. Bad-tempered game. Stopping in a pub in Newbridge, Kildare for food. Dan Hughes accompanying them.</p> <p>16:45 Playing on the school Under-14 team. Number of games they played. How they fared. Tournament in Urlingford. Prizes on offer. National school games held in summer. Meeting people from other areas through inter-schools games and county minor team. Dick O'Hara a player he looked up to as a teenager. Difficulty in getting onto the Kilkenny minor team. Being selected to go for trials. Joe Ryan</p>
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	<p>a friend of his who played for Lisdowney and made the minor team at the age of 16. What the trials were like. Eventual minor team being united as a unit. Dermot Healy in charge of the minors in 1974. 'The Bun' Mealy a selector. Training held at Nowlan Park. What that was like. Getting meals at Langton's after training. Taking the train to Dublin with the senior team in 1975.</p> <p>25:05 Brothers winning minor, Under-21 and senior All-Ireland titles between them in one year.</p> <p>26:45 Training he did with Kilkenny. John Joe Quinn from Freshford a hackney man who drove them around. John Joe offering them cigarettes.</p> <p>30:20 Playing inter-county football for Kilkenny before he played club football. Barney Delaney asking him to play in a game against Meath Under-21s. Being asked to play for the senior footballers against Kildare, who had Tommy Carew on their team. Winning a football All-Ireland with Carlow Regional College.</p> <p>32:35 Playing for Kilkenny vocational schools team in 1972.</p> <p>33:50 Socialising with teammates. Moving to Bray in 1978 and how that impacted on his social life. Going on All Star trips to the United States.</p> <p>35:25 Time he spent commuting from 1978 to 1991 in order to play games in Kilkenny. Different vehicles he drove.</p> <p>37:50 First job in Kilkenny Design. Later moving to New Ireland Insurance. GAA connections proving useful. Little time to train with the club.</p> <p>40:40 Johnstown winning titles in the 1970s. Watching on as a teenager. Joy that it brought the parish. Beating St Rynaghs in a Leinster final. Reaching Croke Park in 1975 and arriving too early. Playing against St Finbarr's of Cork featuring Jimmy Barry Murphy. Beating Inistioge in 1977 and marking Eddie Kerr. Tommy Waters also playing. JJ Delaney a modern-day Johnstown player.</p> <p>44:45 Minor success in 1975. Celebrations. County secretary Paddy Grace on the train home with them. Showband man Brendan Bowyer on the train. Celebrations continuing in Kilkenny. Getting onto a Smithwicks lorry.</p> <p>47:35 Celebrations as a senior player. Collective sense of relief.</p>
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	<p>49:25 Playing for Kilkenny Under-21s in 1977. Playing against Bennettsbridge in a club tournament. Selector Fran Larkin watching. Beating Cork - who had Dermot Curtin and Tom Cashman - to the All-Ireland.</p> <p>50:50 Many retirements from senior Kilkenny team in 1978. Barney Delaney telling him he had been called up to the senior panel. Fr Tommy Maher coaching the team. How they got along. Feeling like he belonged. Brother, Ger, captain in 1978 All-Ireland final.</p> <p>54:15 Pat Henderson and Eddie Kerr managers in 1979. Paddy Pender, Dick O'Hara, Joe Hennessy young players on panel. Mick Brennan, Matt Ruth, Ger Fennelly, Frank Cummins some of the older players. Playing Dublin in Athy, Wexford in a Leinster final and Galway to win an All-Ireland. Memories of his first final at 21 years of age. George Delaney the gate man at Croke Park. Seeing the Connollys arriving. Irish soccer player Paddy Mulligan part of Galway entourage. Galway managed by Babs Keating. Pre-match superstitions. Memories of the dressing-room. Running out onto the pitch and how that felt. Awareness of the crowd. Difference between player and spectator experience. Marking PJ Molloy. Bet a Johnstown man had put on with Larry Nolan on how he would fare in the game. Ger playing at centre-back and suffering from the flu. How they played together.</p> <p>01:04:45 Getting a 'reality check' from Johnny Flaherty of Offaly the following year. Repercussions. How that felt and what it taught him.</p> <p>01:06:00 Getting called back into the panel in 1982. Nerves. League success in 1982. Marking Johnny Flaherty again in Leinster. Winning back-to-back All-Irelands. Noel Skehan in goal and what he was like. Brian Cody the full-back. Dick O'Hara and what he was like. His own role on the team. Nicky Brennan, Frank Cummins, Billy Fitzpatrick, Ger Fennelly, Liam Fennelly, Joe Fennelly and Joe Hennessy also playing. Friendship with Liam Fennelly. Christy Heffernan and what he was like. Reunions in later years. Going abroad together and benefits of that.</p> <p>01:11:15 Losing 1984 Leinster final. Why he didn't play. Tony Doran's goal for Wexford. Barren years for Kilkenny. Thinking his time was up. Tide turning in 1986 with a league title win. Plying in a different position. 1987 All-Ireland final against Galway and what that was like. 1990 league title win and trip to the United States. What that was like. Rooming with Lester Ryan. Playing against New York. Eamon Morrissey playing</p>
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	<p>well.</p> <p>01:15:10 Last campaign was in 1991. Reason he decided to call it a day. Ollie Walsh the new manager. Son, Mickey Walsh, the goalkeeper. Standing up to Ollie on Mickey's behalf. Playing against Tipperary in an All-Ireland final. Resolving to savour it. Memories of the day. Going to Malahide that night and how that went.</p> <p>01:19:30 Going into management in Wicklow. Starting a family. Maintaining involvement in coaching. Involvement with Bray Emmets club.</p> <p>01:20:55 Changes he witnessed over the course of his playing career. Coaching methods evolving. Brother, Pat, becoming manager in 1982 and being hard on him. Absorbing methods of different management teams. Fractious relationship with Dermot Healy and reason for that. Brother, Ger, and Joe Hennessy leaving under that regime. Digging his heels in. Ollie Walsh coming in as manager and what he was like.</p> <p>01:24:00 Mick O'Flynn coming in as physical trainer in 1991. New methods coming to the fore.</p> <p>01:25:30 Different players bringing different things to the team. Respect coming with age. Eamon Morrissey and Bill Hennessy respecting the people who were there ahead of them. Being a leader on and off the field.</p> <p>01:27:20 Playing with future Kilkenny manager Brian Cody and what that was like. Cody's attributes. Cody full-forward on the Kilkenny team of 1978. Getting booed by sections of the support and later dropped from the team. Cody being galvanised by certain experiences. Identifying with Cody's principles. Playing Wexford in a Leinster final and hitting Cody by mistake. Cody thinking it had been John Quigley and reacting accordingly.</p> <p>01:31:40 Move to Wicklow in 1978 and what that was like. Different hurling culture. Managing Wicklow. His expectations of the players too high. Involvement with Bray Emmets. His sons playing Gaelic games but unlikely to be part of a great team in the same way as if they had grown up in Kilkenny. Hurling 'contracting' in counties like Wicklow. Need for that to change.</p> <p>01:36:00 Arbitrariness of county border lines and negative impact that can have.</p> <p>01:38:50 Playing with Bray for one year at junior level. What</p>
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	<p>that was like. Playing senior for Glenealy. Winning a championship. Insisting on playing in the forward line. Managing the Wicklow hurling team over two different periods. Bemoaning lack of commitment.</p> <p>01:42:10 Heavily involved with Bray Emmets during a time of change within the club. Working on hurling structures within the club. Enjoying some success. Club redevelopment. Dispute with county board over land. Taking on a lot of responsibility.</p> <p>01:45:55 Why he got involved in administration. Need to possess different attributes. Learning that slowly.</p> <p>01:47:55 Managing Cuala club in Dublin and how that came about. How he found that experience.</p> <p>01:49:30 Why he thinks it is a bad idea to manage one's own club team.</p> <p>01:50:15 Son a dual player for Wicklow. How his preparation is different to how it was for players in the past.</p> <p>01:52:10 Parallels between sport and life.</p> <p>01:53:40 His wife, Carmel, speaks about what it was like for her watching him play. Carmel a basketball player.</p> <p>01:56:15 What the GAA has meant to him.</p> <p>01:58:10 Proudest moment.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</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 checked="" 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>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Fenians: Played from childhood up to Minor, U21, Senior. Won Kilkenny Senior Hurling Championship (1975, 77) and Leinster Senior Hurling Championship (1975)</p> <p>Kilkenny VEC: Won Kilkenny VEC Football competition (1972); Won VEC All-Ireland Colleges Hurling competition (1991)</p> <p>Kilkenny: Minor Hurling All-Ireland Championship (1975); U21 Hurling All-Ireland Championship ; Senior Hurling Leinster Championship (1978, 79, 82, 87); Senior Hurling National League (1982, 83, 86, 90); Senior Hurling All-Ireland (1982,</p>

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	83); Member of Kilkenny Football team Wicklow: played hurling with Glenealy and Bray Emmets. Won Wicklow B Hurling Championship (1994) with Bray Emmets.
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	Managed Wicklow Minor Hurling Team (1980s); senior teams (1984, 85, 91)
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:58:24
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 22nd August 2012