

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	11 th June 2010
Location	Geraldine's home, near Kinnegad, Co. Westmeath
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Geraldine Giles
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Female
Born	Year Born: 1967 Home County: Westmeath
Education	Primary: Killucan NS, Co. Westmeath Secondary: Sisters of Mercy, Rochfortbridge Third Level: Institute of Tax
Family	Siblings: 1 sister & 2 brothers Current Family if Different:
Club(s)	Coralstown-Kinnegad GAA/LGF [Westmeath]
Occupation	Tax Consultant
Parents' Occupation	Housewife [Mother]; Garage Operator [Father]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

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Date of Report	25 th June 2012
Period Covered	1950s - 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Westmeath
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Media, Involvement in GAA abroad, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Politics, Relationship with the Association, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Geraldine talks about her involvement in the development of ladies football over the years. A native of Westmeath, she grew up in Killucan before eventually moving to Kinnegad. She had a keen interest in all sports as a child, and in 1984 her friend helped to set up a ladies football club in the local area. Geraldine played regularly for the team and went on to play at county level for Westmeath, going around the country to play games against the top sides. She also became involved in administration - sitting on committees and becoming a delegate to the county board, the Leinster Council and Central Council. Eventually she was elected President of the Ladies Football Association and she immediately set about improving the game nationwide, working with others to secure funding and make their vision for the game a reality through the implementation of a strategic plan. She recalls her many experiences during that period - the election process, handling thorny issues that arose, developing a relationship with the GAA and its presidents, visiting clubs around the country, engaging with the media and working with people who move in political circles. Geraldine has great enthusiasm for what she does. She has presided over many positive changes in ladies football, approaching every task with a strong work ethic, an open mind and a sense of humour.</p> <p>00:15 Born in 1967 in Killucan and moved to Kinnegad in 1982.</p> <p>00:45 Her experience of growing up in Killucan. Community spirit. Family connections between people. Role of GAA.</p> <p>02:05 Her father originally from Kinnegad so her brothers</p>

<p>played for them. Football/hurling divide in Killucan. Prominence of football in Kinnegad. Making friends. Travelling to games in a car.</p> <p>03:30 Going to a game with her mother and uncle. Hitching a trailer on a car to transport people to the game.</p> <p>04:20 Father's GAA involvement. Community Games. Old photographs and stories of her father. Mother washing jerseys in a plastic bath. Mother's interest in GAA. Parents attending Kinnegad and Westmeath games.</p> <p>07:40 Going to Croke Park as a child. Uncle visiting from Tyrrellspass to watch All-Ireland final on television.</p> <p>08:35 Westmeath v Louth Leinster senior football game in June 2010 clashing with Cemetery Day and a ladies football match.</p> <p>09:25 Her brother Kevin going to school in Kinnegad. Her brother Joe's enthusiasm for football. Playing casually when she was young. Going to boarding school. Playing hockey and basketball. Geography teacher setting up a soccer league for day pupils. Geraldine objecting and leaving study to play soccer when Sr Magdalene was not looking. Tearing her skirt returning through a window.</p> <p>13:00 Ladies club set up in Kinnegad in 1984.</p> <p>13:15 Mother's attempts to get her involved in camogie when she was younger. Her abilities with a sliotar and hurley. Mother playing camogie for Riverstown, which was between Killucan and Coralstown. Camogie structures when her mother was playing and what it meant to her mother. Social aspect of GAA. People telling stories at O'Connor Park. Playing a minor league match in Milltownpass on the eve of her Leaving Certificate and her mother giving her advice. Being driven to training and games by her mother.</p> <p>16:40 Her father's local garage on the border of Meath and Westmeath as a meeting place for people who liked to talk GAA. People passing the garage on their way to Croke Park and stopping off again on their way home that evening to watch The Sunday Game.</p> <p>18:35 Team established by the time she was 15. Her friend Máiréad Cleary (Greene) setting up a team in 1984 and a neighbour, Frank Mulligan, helping out. Ladies not being</p>
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	<p>allowed to play on the main pitch. Training in Coralstown National School. Breaking windows accidentally. Moving to Frank Kiernan's field to train. Securing the main pitch in Kinnegad for home games. Reasons the club started so late. Evidence of ladies football being played before the club was started. Ladies football being played in Clare.</p> <p>22:30 Meeting in Hayes hotel in Thurles in 1972 to organise ladies football. Four counties playing an All-Ireland series. First All-Ireland in Croke Park in 1986. Rules modified over the years.</p> <p>23:35 Other clubs they played from 1984. Men's county board secretary Paddy Collins' involvement. Other clubs included Streamstown, Rochfortbridge, Tyrrellspass, Athlone and Moate. Coaching in primary schools.</p> <p>25:00 Development of club from 1984. Players involved in all aspects of running the club initially. Representing the club at county board level. Representing the county at Leinster Council and Central Council level. Fostering a relationship with the local GAA club. Speaking their minds. Reaching county finals and getting the support of the community.</p> <p>27:25 GAA selling their pitch in 2001 and buying new land. Joining forces with the GAA club at that time and establishing underage structures.</p> <p>28:25 Playing. Getting involved at county level. Catch-and-kick football. Playing from 1984 to 1994 and continuing in an administrative capacity. Playing as a corner back.</p> <p>30:45 Experience of playing for the county. Playing successful teams like Kerry, who had talented players like Eileen Lawlor. Playing Kerry in the League on the Austin Stacks pitch and a player getting injured in the warm-up. Playing them again in a play-off in Tyrrellspass.</p> <p>33:00 Cyclical nature of ladies football in terms of what county is dominant. Limited ladies football structures in Westmeath in the 1980s.</p> <p>34:05 Training with the county team. Going to the All-Ireland in 1987 and Ken Dolan managing them. Nature of training and their fitness levels at the time. Changes in training methods over the years. Number of trainers and selectors they had in comparison with 2010 structures. Problems in getting ladies to referee. People's involvement ending when</p>
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	<p>their playing careers are over.</p> <p>39:00 Women on county board committees in Westmeath and the benefits of that.</p> <p>40:45 Her career in administration. Being a delegate from the club to the county board, and a delegate to Leinster Council and Central Council. Going to the Éire Óg club in Carlow for Leinster Council meetings. Fighting an appeal at meetings and going to Ollie Kennedy's in Portarlington afterwards. Being secretary and then chairperson in the county. Being elected President of the Association and being national and Leinster PRO. Time commitment involved. Operating in an era when there were no mobile phones or modern communications technology. Building up contact networks.</p> <p>46:55 The growth of ladies football over the years and Geraldine's involvement in that. Ireland as a country undergoing changes at the same time.</p> <p>48:00 Becoming President of the Association. Her approach to meetings.</p> <p>49:15 Leinster final between Cooley Kickhams and Ballyboden St Enda's of Dublin in Dunsany, Meath in 2001. Geraldine involved on an administrative level. Quality of the pitch and facilities. Problems with the referee. Leinster Council delegates getting involved. Going to a hotel in Dunshaughlin for a meal after the game. Problems continuing and the issue going to a Central Council meeting in the Creggan Court in Athlone. Geraldine clashing with provincial presidents.</p> <p>53:30 Geraldine using her accounting and taxation skills in a GAA capacity. Tyrone secretary informing her that they were nominating her for President. Being asked to step aside by a previous President. Election being held in Killeshin Hotel in Portlaoise. Giving her speech before the election. Being up against Liam Forde from Galway and winning. Her acceptance speech. Dislike of canvassing.</p> <p>59:00 Approach to presidency. Resources and staff she had to work with. Being in the basement of Croke Park. Helen O'Rourke's work with the Sports Council and the vision they all had. Meeting John Treacy of the Sports Council and working on a strategic plan. Establishing contact with the Taoiseach's office. Contacts in different counties. Establishing a code of ethics. Anti-doping policies.</p>
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	<p>01:03:15 Persuading people to help her as she sought to implement strategic plans. Securing grants and adding more staff. Working on urbanisation projects. Difficulties they encountered with delegates.</p> <p>01:05:40 Relationship with the GAA. Getting facilities. Television coverage on TG4. Sitting on different committees - Féile Committee, Overseas Committee. Funding at overseas level. Expansion in Europe.</p> <p>01:09:00 Possibility of full integration between ladies football and the GAA. Obstacles to merger.</p> <p>01:10:15 Relationship between ladies football and camogie. Rivalry and reasons for that. Meeting with Derry Camogie Board and working together. Dual players. Relationship with the Camogie Association nationally. Ladies football and camogie moving offices to Westwood House.</p> <p>01:14:10 Her ambitions for her presidency. Travelling to clubs around the country and her experience of that.</p> <p>01:16:45 Difficult aspects of the job. Sponsorship deal with O'Neill's for All-Ireland semi-finals and finals. Clash over this arrangement when Mayo, who had a sponsorship with Azzurri and CBE, were in the 2003 All-Ireland final. Emergency Central Council meeting afterwards and imposing a significant fine. Fall-out from that. Meeting someone in Belfast who could act as a facilitator with Mayo. Calling someone from Mayo whilst at Dublin airport en route to New York. Meeting the Mayo people with a facilitator. Bringing in other facilitators, including Connacht secretary John Prenty. Negotiating a deal. Geraldine's reflections on the incident.</p> <p>01:24:30 Being invited to events and places all over the country and meeting many people.</p> <p>01:26:20 Being the third ever female president of the Ladies Association. Elected a month before former GAA President Seán Kelly was in the Burlington Hotel. Being introduced to former GAA President Jack Boothman there. Meeting Jack Boothman at the opening of a pitch in Saville County Down.</p> <p>01:29:45 Importance of volunteers.</p> <p>01:30:25 Presidents of the GAA and their enthusiasm for ladies football. Working with Joe McDonagh. Seán</p>
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	<p>McCague's approach. His home place of Scotstown in Monaghan having a strong ladies club. Her impressions of Seán Kelly as President and his respect for her role. Former President Nicky Brennan's approach to dealing with people.</p> <p>01:35:50 Working with a male-dominated association like the GAA. Change in the relationship as ladies football expanded. Role of Liam Mulvihill and Paraic Duffy. Prospects for a female GAA President.</p> <p>01:39:45 Benefits to GAA of opening its doors to more people, like ladies football and the Special Olympics. Volunteer issues for GAA during Celtic Tiger era.</p> <p>01:41:40 Relationship with TG4 and its development over time. Benefits of the relationship. Working with Paul Ó Gallachóir and Ronan Ó Crisnithe. Impact of TG4 alliance on young girls getting involved in ladies football.</p> <p>01:45:35 Coverage outside of TG4. Local media coverage. Work done by PROs to generate publicity. Contrast between coverage given to GAA games and what ladies football gets. 1987 Westmeath-Kerry All-Ireland final and the ladies appearing on the Late Late Show with Gay Byrne. Westmeath captain was Joe Glennon from Rochfortbridge. Her sisters played too.</p> <p>01:49:20 Westmeath ladies on facebook. Working on an online lotto. Approaching Áine Carroll about the possibility of a facebook page. Work involved in running ladies football affairs in the county.</p> <p>01:52:40 Developing her leadership skills over the years. Former Waterford and Ballycarbery coach Michael Ryan making an observation on her qualities. Refining her approach.</p> <p>01:54:30 Positions held in 2010. Working on ladies football in Kilkenny. Tutoring for the Ladies Association on courses. Non-involvement with her club and reasons for that.</p> <p>01:56:45 Hopes for future of ladies football.</p> <p>01:57:50 Contribution of ladies football to profile of ladies sports in Ireland.</p> <p>01:58:45 How her involvement in ladies football has benefited her personally.</p>
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	<p>01:59:55 Sacrifices she has made along the way. Enjoying her GAA duties and professional duties in her day job.</p> <p>02:03:00 Her ties to Westmeath and how she feels about that connection.</p> <p>02:04:20 State of Westmeath ladies football in 2010. Progress of underage teams.</p> <p>02:05:10 Relationship between success in men's clubs in a county and success in ladies clubs.</p> <p>02:06:05 Being a relatively young President of the Ladies Association. Peter Rice telling her he was the youngest.</p> <p>02:06:55 What her involvement has meant to her and the legacy she would like to leave behind.</p> <p>02:08:00 Highlights and memories from over the years. Meeting people she would have never expected to.</p>
<p>Involvement in Ladies Gaelic Football</p>	<p>✓ Supporter ✓ Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager ✓ Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p>✓ Chairperson ✓ Committee Member ✓ Grounds-person</p> <p>✓ Caterer ✓ Jersey Washer ✓ Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p>✓ Other (please specify): President of Ladies Gaelic Football Association</p>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Played for 10 years with Coralstown-Kinnegad LGF; won Westmeath Ladies Football Senior Championship in 1990; played for Westmeath Senior Ladies Gaelic Football team for 5 years; won Senior B All-Ireland in 1995.</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Coralstown-Kinnegad: Set up ladies football club in Coralstown-Kinnegad in 1984 and served as club chairperson.</p> <p>Westmeath: Member of Ladies Gaelic Football County Board for many years holding positions such as PRO (1 year); Secretary; Chairperson (1996-2001, 2009-current).</p> <p>Leinster: PRO; Development officer</p> <p>National: PRO of Central Council; Ladies Gaelic Football Representative on National Féile Committee; Member of Central Council for many years; President of the Ladies Gaelic Football Association for 2 terms (2003-2009)</p>

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Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 02:10:09
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: 25th June 2012