

## GAA Oral History Project

## Interview Report Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Seán Kearns	
<b>Date of Interview</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2009	
<b>Location</b>	Gaelic Park, Bronx, New York	
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Joan Henchy (Née Kiely)	
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>		
<b>Gender</b>	Female	
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1966 <b>Home County:</b> Kerry	
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> Tarbert NS <b>Secondary:</b> Tarbert Comprehensive	
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> Oldest of four <b>Current Family if Different:</b> Married with 2 daughters.	
<b>Club(s)</b>	Tarbert GAA [Kerry], Kerry New York [America]	
<b>Occupation</b>	Recreational Therapist	
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Fianna Fáil politician [Father]; Housewife [Mother]	
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic	
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	Fianna Fáil, Democratic Party in America	

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<b>Date of Report</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> May 2010
<b>Period Covered</b>	1968 - 2009
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Kerry, New York, Americas
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, Involvement in GAA abroad, Role of Clergy, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>Joan Henchy was born in New York in 1966 but her family returned to Kerry when she was still a child and she grew up in Tarbert, Kerry. Her father was the Fianna Fáil politician Dan Kiely. The interview covers the area of Gaelic football in North Kerry in the 1970s and 1980s – the role of her local club, Tarbert, the facilities and politics, and the restrictions on girls’ involvement in the GAA at that time. The Kerry County side of that era is also discussed. The interviewee moved back to New York in 1985 and the interview covers her thoughts on the GAA in New York at that time, including the importance of Gaelic Park as a social and networking centre. The interviewee’s involvement with the Kerry club in New York is covered and her role as registrar of the New York Board, as well as the challenges of keeping a club going in New York, the bringing over of players from Ireland, fundraising, and the problems of emigration and the undocumented Irish. The difficulty with finding training facilities and the weather are also discussed, and the challenges of developing Irish American talent. The interview also covers the changing ways in which the Irish community have kept in touch with the GAA at home down the years and her trips home for All-Ireland weekends. The improved relationship between the GAA in new York and Ireland is also discussed as is amateur status and Rule 42. Ladies football in New York, politics and the New York GAA, and refereeing are also touched on.</p> <p>0:00:20 Her earliest GAA memory is of being lost in Gaelic</p>

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	<p>Park, New York, at about the age of two. She was born in New York, but the family returned to Kerry where she grew up. She returned to New York for six months in 1985, but ended up staying.</p> <p>0:00:55 Talks more about her earliest memory of being lost in the crowd as a child at Gaelic Park. She also remembered John Kerry O'Donnell, how tall he was. He was a legend.</p> <p>0:02:30 Talks about father's involvement in GAA in New York with the Kerry Junior in early 1960s. Organised Kerry Juniors in early 1960s. There was a split in Kerry GAA in New York at that time.</p> <p>0:03:40 Describes her father's training of Kerry minors back in Kerry, before he became involved in politics. Had many of the Kerry four-in-a-row team on that team. He played himself so football was a big part of family life.</p> <p>0:04:00 Talks about not being allowed to play football as a girl in case you got hurt, but then setting up Tarbert ladies. Played a bit in school. Wasn't let go to All-Irelands because she was a girl. Watched on TV.</p> <p>0:05:00 Talks about kicking a ball around at home but girls not being encouraged as players in that era. Had to keep it secret that she's joined a team and her mother covered for her.</p> <p>0:06:00 Talks about her interest in the game in Kerry at all levels and difference in standard between Ireland and New York.</p> <p>0:07:05 Describes lack of role models for women in GAA when she was growing up in Kerry and only a few women involved when she arrived in New York. Women tend to think differently about issues and bring some honesty.</p> <p>0:08:10 Talks more about girls not being allowed to go to the big games when she was younger. You could walk to the local matches but people thought you had an ulterior motive.</p> <p>0:08:50 Talks about hurling in North Kerry, but camogie wasn't available to them in Tarbert. Talks about changes for girls today.</p> <p>0:09:40 Talks about training with the boys football team with</p>
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	<p>her secondary school, Tarbert Comprehensive, but rarely getting a game.</p> <p>0:10:20 No ladies football in New York when she arrived, only camogie, which she didn't know how to play. She played a bit of soccer.</p> <p>0:11:10 Describes the Tarbert club as a big part of community life.</p> <p>0:12:00 Talks about links between clergy and local club. Fr Bric was a big GAA man and player and he was the priest before her time.</p> <p>0:13:00 Talks about relationship between party politics and club life and Kiely family links in the club.</p> <p>0:14:00 Talks about rivalry in North Kerry Football:</p> <p>“North Kerry football is North Kerry football: everybody is your enemy.”</p> <p>Talks about high standard and toughness of club football in Kerry and compares it to New York football.</p> <p>0:14:50 Describes centrality of Gaelic football to life in Kerry and why the Kerry footballers develop such skills. Schedule is 11 months of year. New York only has five months of suitable weather and no real facilities. Finding places to train is a challenge.</p> <p>0:16:40 Explains differences in style between Kerry footballers and New York and explains why this develops.</p> <p>0:17:12 Talks about New York's reliance on bringing players over from Ireland and challenges for the development of the underage game in new York. Scholarships available in other competing sports. Argues that GAA should be providing scholarships to develop game in New York.</p> <p>0:20:00 Talks about the Kerry county team when she was growing up in the 1970s and 1980s. Talks about John Egan was as her big hero.</p> <p>0:21:00 Talks about watching the Kerry games on TV with her mother, and later taking her mother to a game in Thurles.</p> <p>0:22:00 Talks about father listening to radio at game to drown</p>
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	<p>out her mother.</p> <p>0:22:40 Talks about going home from New York regularly now to go to Kerry games with her father:</p> <p>“I plan my summer holidays around Kerry football.”</p> <p>Home for</p> <p>0:23:20 Describes going to Munster finals and the routine for going to the All-Ireland final and all the friends you meet. She flies in on Friday. Kilmacud sevens on Saturday. Parish bar in temple bar on Saturday. Various stops on Sunday on way to Croke park.</p> <p>0:24:30 Talks about the numbers going home from new York to the All-Ireland each year and all the officers of the New York board going home. New York board are well received at home.</p> <p>0:26:20 Describes good relationship between GAA in Ireland and New York now – Sean Kelly and Nicky Brennan – and development of the CYC games. And participation of New York kids in Feile back in Ireland</p> <p>0:27:20 Talks about work of recent NY Presidents in developing good relationship with Ireland.</p> <p>0:28:00 Describes getting involved with GAA in New York when she came back in 1985. Was mainly a supporter in early days. Gaelic Park was a key place to come and make connections and get jobs. Big crowds in the 1980s.</p> <p>0:29:00 Talks about poor state of pitch in Gaelic Park in 1980s and poor seating. It was still the place to be.</p> <p>0:30:00 Describes high standard of GAA in New York in 1980s due to high levels of emigration. Being part of a club was the door to getting on. Hurling was good then but most teams have failed now due to numbers.</p> <p>0:31:00 Talks about trying to keep hurling going in New York.</p> <p>0:32:00 Talks about being reluctant to get involved with Kerry GAA when she was trying to get out from under the shadows of being her father’s daughter. Came in to the Kerry set-up in 1999.</p>
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	<p>0:33:20 Talks about struggle to keep club going and get good, passionate people involved. Not that many people keep the club going behind the scenes.</p> <p>0:34:40 Talks about balance of sacrifices and benefits of being involved in GAA club. Taking criticism for the club and pressure to develop and do better.</p> <p>0:36:20 GAA is still a big deal in New York and a door for players to get jobs and get on.</p> <p>0:37:00 Talks about the illegal immigration issue and how it's affecting the GAA in New York. Has changed in recent years and makes life so tough for the undocumented. GAA has to lead the campaign for those people, because GAA needs those people.</p> <p>0:39:00 Describes challenges of running a club – they do a big single fundraising drive through a raffle and a souvenir journal. Dinner dance doesn't bring in much and they have a good sponsor.</p> <p>0:40:00 Talks about identifying and recruiting players to bring over from Ireland to play for the summer, and getting them work and somewhere to live. Kerry have two teams so have 12 lads over for summer, which is a big bit of organisation.</p> <p>0:41:30 Kerry don't pay the players they bring out. They have to work to pay their way. You need to have the players over from Ireland to stay competitive. Even all the Junior teams in New York bring players over.</p> <p>0:42:30 Talks about the New York board's decision to stop the sanctioning of weekend players – helps develop the native players and there were big costs in the weekender system.</p> <p>0:44:00 Talks about when weekenders did come and teams making decisions about bringing people out and leaving regular players on the bench.</p> <p>0:44:50 The New York hurlers still need the weekenders but fewer big names and more club players from Ireland.</p> <p>0:45:30 Talks about the fact that there aren't big names out from Ireland and the affect on the crowds at Gaelic Park.</p>
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	<p>0:46:10 Describes difficulties around finding places to train in New York and getting permits from the city to train on Randall's Island. Train two nights training a week and much the same type of stuff teams do at home. Have to pace yourself in the heat.</p> <p>0:48:00 Talks about social life of GAA in New York – no big change since 1980s.</p> <p>0:48:50 Talks about politics and disputes idea that New York GAA is very linked to Republicanism. Talks about debate around Rule 42 debate in New York. She was one of five in favour of opening up Croke Park in the debate but most of the delegates in New York against. Describes reasons for being in favour.</p> <p>0:51:00 Talks about amateurism and why she hopes it will remain in place. Parish rule is important as well.</p> <p>0:52:10 Talks about way in which emigrants stay in touch has changed. She used to ring home in the 1980s and get them to put the phone to the radio, which cost a fortune. You could see certain matches on television then. Also relied on getting the <i>Kerryman</i> from home.</p> <p>0:53:40 Setanta made the world smaller, and the internet has made it even smaller still. She listens to radio Kerry all day on the internet on weekends.</p> <p>0:54:40 Talks about her daughters' involvement in the GAA , but they were girls on the boys team and so didn't get the games and that frustrated them. Difficulty of girls playing on boys' teams.</p> <p>0:56:50 Describes growth of Ladies Football in new York and Gaelic for Girls programme pioneered by Nollaig Cleary.</p> <p>0:58:00 Talks about role of woman in administration of GAA and why there aren't more women involved. Still some resistance to change in GAA and what women bring to GAA.</p> <p>0:59:20 Talks about challenges to getting elected to the role of Registrar of the New York board and importance of applying rules to the clubs.</p> <p>1:00:30 Talks about the at times fraught relationship between the Board and the clubs. Talks about balancing being a Kerry</p>
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	<p>representative and being a board member.</p> <p>1:02:20 Describes her father as the biggest influence on her in the GAA even though he discouraged her from playing, but now they have a standing date for the All-Ireland weekend.</p> <p>1:03:00 Describes standing with her father in a hotel on All-Ireland weekend amidst a lot of Kerry greats, and the connections between Kerry in New York and Kerry back home.</p> <p>1:05:00 Describes her five-year term as Registrar and the highs and lows of it.</p> <p>1:06:00 Describes her favourite GAA memory as Kerry winning the Junior final in 2007 in New York. Her husband was manager.</p> <p>1:07:10 Describes worst GAA memory as losing friends who died.</p> <p>1:08:00 Describes Kerry Tyrone 2008 Football final as possibly best game she ever saw despite the result.</p> <p>1:08:20 Describes her best team as Kerry and talks about the difficulty of comparing teams from different generations in terms of fitness versus determination and skill. She prefers the old style of football.</p> <p>1:09:50 Describes GAA hero (after her dad) as John Egan of Kerry. Also like Sean Kelly, the recent President.</p> <p>1:10:45 Describes what makes her proud in the GAA as the honesty and keeping it going to provide outlets for the kids.</p> <p>1:11:20 Talks about GAA disappointments. No major ones but criticises the constant rule changing. Talks about refereeing and need for more consistency with refereeing.</p> <p>1:13:30 Talks about what the GAA means to her. She kind of got dragged in to it. As an emigrant keeping the game alive and keeping in touch with home. The GAA in New York provides outlets for the young people over here and without it they could go astray. The GAA is a family.</p>
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<b>Involvement in GAA</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward  <input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person  <input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): Kerry Delegate to New York Board
<b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)	N/A
<b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)	Kerry Delegate to New York Board; Registrar of New York GAA Board
<b>Format</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 1:14:24
<b>Language</b>	English

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**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:       Seán Kearns

Date:           1 July 2010

