GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of	Arlene Crampsie		
Interviewer	Alielle Olalipsie		
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Date of Interview	25 th Feb 2009		
Location	McDevitt Realty Offices, Boston		
Name of	John McDevitt		
Interviewee (Maiden			
name / Nickname)			
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Biographical Summary of Interviewee			
Gender	Male		
Born	Year Born: 1945		
	Home County: Donegal		
Education	Primary: Templedouglas NS, Co. Donegal		
Education	Primary: Templedouglas NS, Co. Donegal		
Family	Siblings: 3 brothers & 1 sister		
	Current Family if Different: Married to Bernadette with one		
	son and one daughter		
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Club(s)	Armagh-Notre Dame [Boston]; Glenswilly [Donegal]; St.		
Occupation	Eunan's [Donegal] Real Estate CEO		
Occupation	וופמו בשמופ טבט		
Parents'	Farmer [Father]; Farmer and Housewife [Mother]		
Occupation			
-			
Religion	Roman Catholic		
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Political Affiliation /	Sinn Féin		
Membership			

Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Pat Kenneally	
Biographical Summary of Interviewee		
Gender	Male	
Born	Year Born: 1941	
	Home County: Waterford	
Education	Primary: Presentation Convent, Co. Waterford	
	Secondary: Lismore CBS, Co. Waterford	
Family	Siblings: 1 sister	
	Current Family if Different: One son and one daughter	
Club(s)	Lismore [Waterford]; Armagh Notre Dame [Boston]	
Occupation	Office Manager, Real Estate CEO	
Parents' Occupation	Farmer [Father]; Housewife [Mother]	
Religion	Roman Catholic	
Political Affiliation / Membership	Sinn Féin	

Name of	Pat Callaghan
Interviewee (Maiden	
name / Nickname)	
	Pingraphical Summary of Interviewee
	Biographical Summary of Interviewee
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1924
	Home County: Donegal
Education	Primary: Creektown NS, Carndonagh, Co. Donegal
Family	Siblings: 2 brothers & 2 sisters
	Current Family if Different: 1 son and 2 daughters
	,
Club(s)	Galway [Boston]; Notre Dame [Boston]
Occupation	Real Estate
Parents'	Farmers
Occupation	
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Fianna Fáil

Name of	Jim Gallagher		
Interviewee (Maiden			
name / Nickname)			
Biographical Summary of Interviewee			
Gender	Male		
Born	Year Born: 1933		
	Home County: Donegal		
Education	Primary: Letterkenny, Co. Donegal; Fisher Junior College,		
	Boston		
Family	Siblings: 2 brothers & 3 sisters		
	Current Family if Different: 3 sons and 1 daughter		
	Current Family if Different. 3 sons and 1 daugnler		
Club(s)	St. Eunan's [Donegal]		
Occupation	Truck Driver for Teamster Union		
Parents'	Lorry and Truck Driver [Father]; Nurse [Mother]		
Occupation	,		
•			
Religion	Roman Catholic		
Political Affiliation /	Fianna Fáil / Sinn Féin		
Membership			

Date of Report	22 nd February 2010			
Period Covered	1930s – 2009			
Counties/Countries Covered	Americas, USA, Donegal, Waterford			
Key Themes Covered	Emigration, GAA Abroad, Involvement in GAA Abroad, Purchase of Grounds, Socialising, Economy, Alcohol, Food and Drink, Earliest Memories, Childhood, Travel, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Officials, Administration, Media, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Rivalries, Irish Language, Culture, Scór, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Impact on Life, Challenges, Violence, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism			
Interview Summary	John McDevitt, Pat Kenneally, Jim Gallagher and Pat Callaghan discuss the role of the GAA in their lives in Donegal and Waterford, before they emigrated to America and the role of the GAA in their lives in Boston since. They discuss the development of the GAA in Boston since 1954, the places matches were played in the past, the role of the GAA in the community, fundraising for clubs and the importance of the GAA in providing work for Irish emigrants. They discuss the development of the grounds at Canton and the importance of having county players over from Ireland to attract people to the games. They discuss the impact of the Irish economy on the GAA in the Unites States and outline their views on the challenges facing the GAA into the future.			
	01:13 Pat K remembers Waterford winning the 1948 All-Ireland and getting a half day off school to shout 'Up Waterford'. Ned Daly from his home town played for Waterford. Around 1946 he also remembers being at a game with his father and remembers seeing John Keane one of the all time great hurling players. One of Pat's teachers was President of the GAA in 1952, Vince O'Donoghue. He never spoke a word of English to them, all he spoke was Irish. He was originally from Galway and played for Waterford in 1948. 02:40 When Jim came out to America in 1954 they were playing Gaelic football and Soccer. He played Gaelic football in Smithfield while he lived with his cousin. He came home from playing one day and his cousin asked him who would			

look after him if he broke a leg. He hadn't thought about that and that finished his football.

03:25 Later he got a job where he had to work on a Sunday too, he did play some soccer which wasn't as violent as the Gaelic.

03:45 He joined the army then and that finished his football.

03:55 Jim played for St. Eunan's in Letterkenny, but felt he was too young to play senior. In the junior team they went to the Ulster Final, but then they put him into the senior team when he was only 17. He was playing against men who knew how to hurt him, so then he went to soccer.

04:38 In the Summer soccer leagues if they won a match they got a £1 each. He played all over Donegal and in Strabane. They were all banned from the GAA.

05:20 Jim recalls playing with Bovril (Charlie) Collins he was a great athlete and boxer. He was banned. When asked why he played soccer he said it was because he got paid. He was married with children.

05:55 Jim didn't really get involved that much after that. He remembers playing with Peadar McGeehan and Joe Carroll on the senior team.

06:30 John used to listen to Gaelic football on the radio. Michael O'Hehir was his idol. The first game he remembers listening to was the All-Ireland football final of 1957 between Cork and Louth. His uncle Mandy used to bring him to games in Letterkenny – St. Eunan's vs Gweedore / Ballybofey. They were great games with big crowds. He played with Termon for awhile.

07:15 In 1970 when he came to America he got involved with Galway Football Club. There were 7 clubs: 2 hurling Fr Toms and the Galway Club and 5 football clubs – Galway, Connemara Gaels, Cork, Kerry and Springfield. He stayed involved with Galway until he got married in 1989.

07:45 In 1989 he joined the board and became treasurer, having won the North American League with Galway in Cleveland. He saw the facilities in Cleveland compared to Boston and he started looking to find their own grounds in Boston. They came up with the grounds in Canton and the Irish Cultural Centre got involved. It was 1999 before they came to an agreement together.

08:35 They played in Dilboy Field, Smithfield, Quincy,

Westwood, St. John's, Cleveland Circle, but they found their own place in Canton then. It was the best move they ever made. John outlines the facilities in Canton. There are 21 clubs and 40 teams in Boston. They also have ladies' football and youth teams coming through.

09:20 With 9-11 the numbers have taken a hit, a lot of people are going home and the economy is bad, they can't get jobs for players, but they are hopeful with the economy in Ireland that the trend will reverse.

10:00 John finished playing in 1984 and became manager of Galway and then became treasurer of the North East Board. He was treasurer for 6 and chairman for 5 and then he became chairman of the North American Board for two years, but he didn't like that job.

10:46 The move to Canton was because they had so many teams and only one field. They'd start at 10.30 on a Sunday morning and play until 8pm when it got dark, but they couldn't accommodate all the clubs they had.

11:15 John believes the GAA never charged enough on the gate. Before the end of John's treasury the city of Summerville was not charging them anything, but they didn't look after the grounds, the GAA had to, John describes this work.

12:05 In 2009 they have been in Canton for ten years out of a 30 year lease and they have the first option on the next 30.

12:25 There were heavy negotiations by the GAA for rights, because they were putting up a substantial amount of money. They came to an agreement with the Irish Cultural Centre. They never did any fundraising, they made their money on the gate.

13:25 They charged \$3 to get into Dilboy, then it went up to \$5 and now it's \$7/8 on a Sunday.

14:00 In Ireland you had training grounds, they're impossible to get in America. Even in Dilboy field they were never sure when they had the ground, sometimes there'd be other functions on e.g. Rugby match, American Football Game, Graduations, Band Competitions.

14:50 All the manager wanted was money – greed.

14:55 John talks about the times that they wouldn't get notice that the grounds were in use or that they would have to leave

early.

15:30 Pat K came to Ireland very young, he became Americanised and went to the army, it was only when he got older that he became involved again.

15:45 Pat K had been a delegate to the Waterford Council at 16. The GAA was always his first love. He didn't have good teams, he won a West Waterford Hurling Medal in 1957 with his junior team, it was the first medal his club had won in many years.

16:45 'I played hurling ... That was all they played around my place, there was no such thing as football, I didn't know what a football was.'

17:00 He ended up as treasurer. He was there for three years.

17:50 Pat K outlines his roles. He started off as Honorary President and is still a trustee on the board.

18:30 It was mostly football when he came to Boston and it took him many years to get to like football. In the past he never knew when a hurling game was on. He got to like football, Mike Hynes took him to matches and he never missed a match for thirty years.

19:25 Jim is an American Football fan now.

19:35 Down came out in 1962 to Boston and they had over 8,000 people in Dilboy field, it was the biggest crowd that was ever at Dilboy field. In the 1980s they had all-star teams in Boston, because the economy wasn't good in Ireland.

20:00 'We had quality games, we had a short pitch – Dilboy field was only a 150 yards long by 60 something wide – we had a very small field, but everybody was on top of it and we had tough battles, because of the small field, hard hitting and tough games, very good games, and even in the 90s we had great teams here, but when 2000 came, the standard's gone away down here, we have the teams, but not the quality players.' They're not happy with Croke Park tightening up on county players going out, because it's stopping the young people seeing the quality players.

20:50 John feels the county in Ireland are against them taking out the players. He says they're not paying the players, they're just giving them travelling expenses. 'The issue of money nowadays has gone by the way side, because clubs don't have it. Our sponsors are hurting big time, that's one of

the problems we have, the bar rooms are hurting, and businesses are hurting, so we're not getting our sponsorship easy.'

21:35 Bar Rooms (pubs) are the biggest sponsorship, but they're struggling with the Irish going home. It's going to turn around this year, because a lot of people want to come over, but they have no jobs for them.

22:00 John is involved with Notre Dame since he got married in 1990. He had a disagreement with Galway over their players going to New York, where they were getting paid to play, even though they were playing in a semi-final. One of the players got hurt before this and another three went – they were offered £450 each. They got hammered in the semi-final, but the club wouldn't take action against the players.

23:30 A lot of the Donegal guys in Galway decided to leave and they joined with others and formed Notre Dame, they won a senior in 1994 and they've been getting close again. There was a Donegal club, formed by Donegal boys that left Galway, but John wouldn't leave at the time, because he was involved with the older guys at Galway.

24:20 There's 20 clubs within a 15 mile radius, they're so close together and there's only about 1,000 people supporting the GAA in Boston and keeping it going.

25:00 The one county that sticks to county allegiance in America is Cork. 90% of Cork players, play for Cork, the rest of the players would go anywhere. A lot depends on the treatment they get when they join and friendships they make.

26:05 'For the young Irish coming to America there's nobody does more for them than the GAA. Because, they give them apartments, they give them jobs, they pick them up at the airport, they take them everywhere, there's no organisation I think in America as good to the young Irish as the GAA is.'

26:25 Pat C says you'd have to be a footballer or hurler for the clubs to do that. John disagrees, because the player brings friends and they have to be helped too.

27:05 Pat K says any benefit that's going on the GAA is always there supporting it. There's no organisation that does as much for the Irish as the GAA and that's across the USA.

27:30 Pat C didn't get involved at first but he got involved as junior manager for Galway and won three championships in a row and an American League. He was involved with the minors for a good while and put a lot of money into them.

There were seven different junior clubs (St. Colmcille's, Woburn, Jamaica Plains, Galway, Charlestown, Kerry, Milltown) and they had a good competition, today they only have one.

28:50 John says they haven't seen the growth of Irish-American kids getting involved. They have one club called the Celtics and the majority are Irish-American born kids. The youth board organises those clubs.

29:35 John's two children have no interest, Pat K's son was involved in St. Colmcille's for a while, Pat C's son also played for awhile. Once they start going to high school and college they're gone. Pat K says it's because it's not an American sport. Soccer is the only sport to become big in high school.

30:35 John talks about his children's love of baseball and lack of interest in Gaelic.

31:20 Pat K talks about Shannon Blues picking up a few Irish-American kids, but John believes they got as many in the 80s. They talked about children they knew who played. In the 80s they had to have three Irish-American born children to play. 99% of them weren't as good as a child in Ireland.

33:00 Jim: Like any sport they need to start off very young, it takes a lot of training and coaching. Coaching is a big problem.

33:45 They only train the kids on a Sunday morning out at the Irish Cultural Centre and on a Tuesday night, and then they only play for a few months a year and then they're gone.

34:10 'In the 80s there was no room for American born players here, there was so many Irish players here, all over the place, in the early 90s as well, you were going for the best player and that was it ... they got older and an awful lot of them went home, there were droves going home for the last six or seven years, but that's stopped now last year and it's stopped this year, we think the trends going to turn if we can get them jobs.'

34:45 John outlines the type of jobs they get Irish people when they come over, particularly if they're not legally there – some painting, landscaping etc.

35:10 Pat K: The older Irish don't get involved or go to the games anymore. John adds that they can watch matches on the TV, they can watch it in the pub or the cultural centre for \$20.

35:40 John: 1973 was the first game John remembered being televised in Boston. Billy Kelly brought it into the music club, Downtown. It might have been Dublin or Cork vs Galway.

36:20 Talks about Dublin coming through in the mid-70s.

36:30 'The atmosphere was great, because the first game there were 1200 people in the music club Downtown for that, we never got crowds like that since.' They got 700 or 800 since though. Pat: There were people from every county. It was All-Ireland day and they all hated Dublin. The atmosphere was good, because everyone was in one place.

37:20 Jim talks about 31 and a half counties supporting Donegal when they beat Dublin to win the All-Ireland.

37:50 John: They just don't have the same number of Irish people in Boston now and a lot of people who went to Dilboy field, don't go out to Canton. You can get a drink out there, but you can't drink. It's twenty two miles out to Canton, which is too far for a lot of people.

38:25 Jim's son goes more often than Jim does, because he lives out near Canton.

38:40 Pat K: People become Americanised, but his family know not to ask him to do something on a Sunday because he goes out to Canton.

39:25 Jim: There were several thousand in Boston alone. John: They reckoned there were 50,000 at one stage. If you're talking second generation, Boston is the most Irish city in the US.

39:45 John believes it's the backbone of the GAA in the US. Pat K: Regardless of what is said they need the county players in the US to keep it growing.

40:30 Jim says that if they see good players out it keeps the interest up.

40:40 John: They're the only county that are deprived of county players, they can go out to other areas but not to them.

41:15 John says they hope that the players will come out and not go home again. That's what happened years ago. The 90 day rule is killing them.

42:15 Pat K: A lot of them have already been given out.

42:35 John says Pat C was a good motivator and treated

them well. Jim says motivation is the most important. You don't know who you're playing in Boston, there could be players there this week that weren't there last week.

43:25 You can bring 18 players out up until July 1st.

44:10 John: The biggest issue is getting work for them. They couldn't beat the set up there, getting picked up from the airport and getting work.

44:35 Pat C thinks that next year there will be crowds coming from Ireland and staying.

45:05 They believe the American economy will pick up in a year, but it will take Ireland a while.

45:20 John discusses the structure of the GAA in America. There's two different county boards, the North American County Board and New York. New York has 'one up on us'. Toronto have their own county board. Competitions are run on a league basis within the division. There were 11 senior teams in Boston.

47:00 American League finals were held in Boston this year, there were teams from Chicago, San Francisco, Philadelphia and Boston. John discusses the various levels of teams – men's, ladies, camogie and youth.

47:55 John talks about the New York County Board. The North American Board was formed in 1959 in Cleveland, but New York had a board long before that, they were never affiliated with Croke Park but they were recognised.

48:30 John and Pat K think there's no bitterness between the boards, they run as separate leagues, they only meet if they play challenge matches.

49:20 John discusses the role of the clergy in Boston. They try to help people who are out of work. Pat K says Fr Dan Finn played football for Cork for many years. There are not that many Irish priests in Boston. Pat C mentions Fr Eunan from Mayo.

50:35 John: Fr Peter Quinn was involved in the board in a big way.

51:30 Pat K says he was charging Fr Eunan into Canton for awhile. They never saw a nun out in Canton.

52:25 John: There's not many Irish born priests around, Fr. John McCarthy, Limerick is the only one at the minute. They discuss other Irish priests who were in the area at one time –

Fr Boyle from Donegal, Fr Peter Dolan, Roscommon, Fr Flood, Tipperary.

53:00 John: There's not many people from other nationalities involved in the GAA in Boston. They only know of one girl who plays with Shamrock's who is a different nationality.

53:42 Pat K: 'The only negativeness comes from the Irish themselves'.

54:00 John: The board doesn't do any fundraising, but they do get sponsorship. Discuss the type of fundraisers ran.

56:10 John: They'd bet on St. Patrick's day club finals and sell tickets for \$100; that with donations from the pubs was their fundraisers. Pat C talks about Kerry club fundraisers.

56:50 John: They're going to be in trouble if people don't come out. Pat K: At the AGM nobody new would take a job, he was the only one who got out and he was sick. The group talk about happenings at the AGM and the danger of the club 'going flat'.

58:00 John: James Brady, an accountant is mentioned as somebody who could have taken the role of treasurer and they discuss why he didn't. His son is assistant treasurer.

58:50 Pat K: They need new people, the officers are forced to stay in roles. John outlines the roles of the officers. 'It's a lot to be away from home.'

59:35 John: They did everything they could for the GAA. Pat K: They don't look at it as sacrifices. The GAA is very important to the community. They fight, but they're always there for one another, if somebody is hurt they run a benefit.

01:00:15 John: A lot of relationships have developed around the GAA at Canton, Dilboy field and the pubs after the matches.

01:00:45 John: 'It's a place for the GAA to go back to, and the pubs provide food for them after the games and then they drink and socialise until whatever time so. The pubs sponsor money to them as well; they give them financing for the year. Each pub has its own club and maybe some pubs would have two or three clubs.'

01:01:15 Discuss modes of travel. John: In Boston the clubs have a spot where they pick up the players and take them to the games. John got a lift to training and games at home. Pat K had to cycle. John did too sometimes. Jim remembers

having 12 kids in one car when they were playing minor. Pat C played soccer. Pat K also went in the back of a lorry. He used to go to Munster championship games with a friend and his son in a car to Thurles and Limerick and the Cork County finals.

01:03:24 Pat K: 'He had a car, he had a Morris Minor, we went to the All-Ireland final of 1957 in the Morris Minor, that was the last time I was in Croke Park. I was supposed to been there this past September, I took the heart attack two days before. I was lucky I would have taken the heart attack at the game I suppose.'

01:03:55 Pat C: They had good soccer teams in Carndonagh and Buncrana. He recalls one series of matches that were drawn twice. At the third match 'Tom Farren, was a big GAA man, he was in the county board in the hurling, and he was standing out in the diamond watching were there any GAA men going down to watch the soccer game. So they all went down, after that game there were no Gaelic football played in Inishowen for 15 years. Urris was the first team to start it up.'

01:04:35 John asks about the Burt hurling team. Pat C talks about Carrowmore hurling team.

01:05:20 Pat K: His team [Lismore] lost three of their best players to soccer. They lost the junior county final of 1957. The GAA pitch, soccer pitch, cricket pitch and tennis court in Lismore were all in the same area.

01:06:15 They discuss the lifting of the ban on foreign games. Discuss rugby.

01:10:05 Irish / American politics doesn't impact on game there. They don't think there is much internal politics.

01:11:00 John: Rivalries have died away in Boston. Galway and Connemara Gaels were bitter rivals, Galway and St Pats were rivals, Galway and the Toms, Cork and Tipperary. John thinks they're hurting with the lack of rivalry. There's too much changing of personnel now. Pat C: In the 1980s Galway had the best players in the county over. They had county men as subs. Players like: DJ Kane, Liam Austen, Micky Linden, James McCartan, Greg Blaney. Every club was stacked.

01:12:50 John tells the story of final that went wrong – Wolfe Tones coming into Boston. They played Brendan's in Chicago. When the game was over, Brendan's objected to Tones playing illegal players. Describes what ensued.

01:15:15 Pat K's favourite GAA memory was umpiring a

match that Christy Ring played full forward in against Tipperary in Thurles. Ring was an oil truck driver who drove around Pat's part of the country. Tells story about Ring always having a hurl in the back of the truck and how he used to play with Johnny Poole, a neighbour.

01:16:50 John tells the story Michael O'Hehir told at a Pat's banquet about a comment he made about English at a Munster hurling final. English always took off his boots and one day O'Hehir without thinking said 'he's bootless, he's sockless, but he's certainly not ball-less.'

01:17:40 John's favourite memory is winning the American League in 1989 with Galway. Jim wasn't involved enough to have a memory. 'We went to the game, played the game, came home and that was it.' Pat C's was winning the American Final in 1983 with the juniors. They beat Michigan Gaels in the final.

01:18:35 John and Pat K haven't had disappointments with the GAA. Pat C's big disappointment was in 1986 against Cork when they drew the first game with the juniors. It was the best team they ever had. John says junior was a higher standard then than senior now.

01:19:10 John also remembers the setting up of Canton. They're all proud of that.

01:20:00 The Irish language and culture plays little role in the GAA in Boston and they aren't aware of Scór competitions being held in clubs.

01:20:15 They discuss what the GAA means to them. Jim: It's a very wealthy organisation in Ireland. He has a friend in Kerry, Teddy O'Sullivan, he was telling Jim the freebies they get every year, a new suit, a place to go with his wife, all-expenses paid. The Letterkenny club complained about not getting enough national support for re-developments. Dr McDaid, as minister for sports, did get money into Letterkenny.

01:21:40 John: St Eunan's and Glenswilly did best out of McDaid's time as minister.

01:22:25 Pat C says the GAA is known as the beggars – they're looking for money every week.

01:22:45 John says the GAA was his whole life except his wife and family. He got so much enjoyment from it.

01:23:20 John talks about the role of the GAA in the

	community in Glenswilly, Co. Donegal providing facilities through voluntary labour and hard word and providing a pastime for the young people. 01:23:45 Pat K: GAA has meant everything to him. He's made great friends. Last fall when he was sick he got so many calls from GAA people wishing him well. It's a great organisation. He never regretted his involvement, but wishes he had gotten involved earlier.	
Involvement in GAA	☐ Supporter ☐ Player ☐ Manager ☐ Coach ☐ Steward	
	☐ Chairperson ☐ Committee Member ☐ Grounds-person	
	☐ Caterer ☐ Jersey Washer ☐ Referee ☐ None	
	□ Other (please specify):	
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	John: Played from 1970 – 1991.	
or time played)	Pat K:	
	N/A	
	Pat C: N/A	
	Jim:	
	N/A	
Record as an	John:	
Administrator (Positions held; how	Has been involved in administration since 1990.	
long for)	North East Boston: Chairman, Treasurer	
	North American Board: Chairman	
	Pat K: North East Board: Treasurer, Trustee, Honorary President	
	Pat C: Club: Person of the Year c. 2002	
	Honorary President of the Boston Board and American Board.	
	Jim: N/A	

Format	✓ Audio □ Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:24:25
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed:	Arlene Crampsie	
Date:	22/02/10	