

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Arlene Crampsie
Date of Interview	18 th Feb 2011
Location	Interviewee's home, near Castleisland, Co. Kerry
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Phil Brennan
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1926 Home County: Donegal
Education	Primary: Clonmany NS, Co. Donegal Secondary: St. Columb's College, Derry
Family	Siblings: 1 brother & 5 sisters Current Family if Different: Married to Mary (RIP)
Club(s)	Urris [Donegal]; St. Mary's GAC, Ahoghill [Antrim]; Donegal [New York]; Castleisland Desmond's [Kerry]
Occupation	Business Manager, Union Secretary and Treasurer New York
Parents' Occupation	Small Grocery Shop and Small Farmers
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Sinn Féin
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Northern Aid New York; Donegal Association; St. Patrick's Fathers New York

REFERENCE NO. DL/1/24

Date of Report	6 th August 2012
Period Covered	1940s – 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Americas, USA, Donegal, Antrim, Great Britain, England, Kerry, Cork
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Emigration, Involvement in GAA Abroad, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Outsider's Perspectives, Alcohol, Violence, Politics, Northern Ireland, Relationship with the Association, Retirement, Food and Drink, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy/ Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Phil talks about a life spent in many different locations, moving from his native Donegal to Antrim to London and then New York before finally settling in Kerry. He describes his experiences with the GAA while on that journey, and how it was incredibly popular amongst those who had emigrated to London and New York. As a union delegate in New York Phil soon became involved with the Donegal GAA club. He describes the GAA set-up there and how it differed from that in Ireland, shedding light on how valued players' services were secured by teams, the political currents running through New York GAA and his own topsy-turvy relationship with the New York Board. Phil never set out to become heavily involved with GAA matters, but his life's story illustrates the extent to which the Association is an integral part of the Irish emigrant experience.</p> <p>00:00 Introduction</p> <p>00:35 Earliest GAA memory. Soccer prominent in Clonmany, Urris was the only GAA team in the area. Influence of the Army in the area. Playing football in Ahoghill, Co. Antrim in the 1940s. Involvement in athletics. Eddie Doohan involved in rugby.</p> <p>02:55 GAA involvement in New York and politics. Jackie Salmon in charge of Connemara Gaels. Helping him out in New York. Having a conversation with Jackie in a bar. What was said.</p> <p>04:55 Left Urris, Donegal when he was young. Move to</p>

	<p>London, not getting involved in the GAA. How he got involved in Ahoghill GAA. What he enjoyed about it.</p> <p>06:45 Working with farmers in the early 1940s and B Specials men with guns stopping him as he cycled home from work. What it was like working for Protestant farmers. Work he did at the farms.</p> <p>10:20 Training in the meadow in the evenings. Farmer crying the day he left the farm. Relationship he had with the man.</p> <p>11:45 Standard of football in Antrim at the time. Kevin Armstrong a good player.</p> <p>12:15 Playing 7-a-side football in the summer.</p> <p>14:50 Working on tunnels in London. Games held at Wembley. People coming from all over England and beyond to watch games. Arriving in Hammersmith when he moved to England. Where he kept his money, getting settled in.</p> <p>17:25 Moving to the United States in 1957. Arriving in Hoboken, New Jersey. Becoming a union general secretary and what that involved. Getting incoming migrants work.</p> <p>21:00 How the union system worked in the United States. Trade agreements. Health plans and pensions.</p> <p>23:45 Cavan man looking for work from him. Reaction when he was told there was no work available.</p> <p>25:20 Cavan man, Irwin, running against him for election. Many of the union members 'illegal aliens'. Irwin man speaking up at a meeting. Response he got.</p> <p>27:40 What happened when the Irwin man ran against him for delegate.</p> <p>28:20 Going to GAA games at Gaelic Park, New York. What that was like. Annual Fordham Feis. Championship final played at the same time. Big crowds. Admission price. People securing work through meeting at Gaelic Park.</p> <p>32:35 Involvement with the GAA. Joe McCabe from Laois asking him to be a guest of honour at a reception. John 'Kerry' O'Donnell also involved. Tommy Hennessy and Jack McCarthy union men. Importance of union men doing favours for the GAA.</p> <p>34:35 What the Donegal club entailed. Phil O'Donnell of Kilcar giving him advice on what Donegal meant to people.</p>
--	--

	<p>36:30 Dinner dance they had and number of people there. Frank Byrne from Kilcar playing until he was 50. Kind of man he was. Paddy Ward from Glenfinn, Naois and Danny Campbell and Eddie Doohan also playing.</p> <p>38:45 Team training at Van Cortlandt Park, a City park. Playing a game in Gaelic Park and things going wrong. What he said to Donal Gallagher.</p> <p>41:25 Donegal people referred to as 'The Untouchables'.</p> <p>41:45 Being president of the Donegal Association in the 1980s. Leading the county people up Fifth Avenue at the St Patrick's Day Parade. Anthony and Connie Molloy talented footballers from Glengesh. 'Big Frank' playing in goals.</p> <p>43:15 Club moving up the divisions from the 1970s on. Kerry dominant in the 1960s. Cork, Galway, Mayo all strong teams. Some of them weakening over the years. Cavan and Tyrone difficult to beat. Reason the Donegal team improved. Students arriving over the summer from UCD. Former Cork star Niall Cahalane playing for them. Former Kerry stars Pat Spillane, Mickey 'Ned' O'Sullivan and Jack O'Shea also playing. Johnny Byrnes a connection to the Kerry players. Donal Gallagher, an importer of goods, also had contacts. Dave McCarthy their link to Cork players.</p> <p>48:25 How people arriving in the country decided what teams to play for. McShea and McEniff men playing for Kerry against Donegal in a game. Criticism they got as a result.</p> <p>50:35 Asking O'Donnell if they could hold benefit dances at Gaelic Park.</p> <p>51:30 Money attracting players to certain teams. Fees some of the players commanded. Martin Carney a talented player.</p> <p>53:05 Getting jobs for people from different counties. Nicholson a union delegate from Sligo living in White Plains who also helped people out, along with Joe McCabe. Tommy Hennessy a delegate who helped a lot of people from Kerry. Not many other delegates involved in the GAA.</p> <p>55:20 Relationship with New York Board. Mike Cassidy a Cavan man who dealt with them. Calling them the 'kangaroo court' and reason for that.</p> <p>57:00 Willie Joe Cunningham a Donegal man who was always dressed up. 'No-show job' he was rumoured to have.</p> <p>58:30 Sligo were their biggest rivals. Settled nature of Sligo</p>
--	---

	<p>team.</p> <p>59:30 When 'summer players' first started to arrive. Tyrone and Monaghan paying players. Alan Clancy a Monaghan man who had successful businesses. Assistance he provided.</p> <p>01:00:35 How they kept the club going. Raising funds. Where club meetings were held. Danny Doohan involved in meetings held at the Rye River Inn. Rory Gilfeather a businessman who often helped them out. Meeting in a dressing-room after a game and asking those present for money. Beer in the dressing room.</p> <p>01:06:15 Alcohol and the GAA in New York.</p> <p>01:07:10 Gaelic Park supposed to be owned by John Kerry O'Donnell family. Dispute over ownership and move to Rockland County.</p> <p>01:08:40 Prejudice against the GAA in New York.</p> <p>01:09:40 John Kerry O'Donnell wanting him to run for GAA President in New York. Jackie Salmon telling him he would never get elected. How the vote went. His car stolen the same night.</p> <p>01:13:00 New York Governor an Irish-American named Carey. Seeking use of land in the Bronx for GAA pitches. Others not in favour of the idea.</p> <p>01:14:50 Being involved with Northern Aid organisation.</p> <p>01:16:35 Changes in GAA in New York over the years. Increased competitiveness. Different counties experiencing success.</p> <p>01:17:10 Retiring from his GAA duties. Reason for that. Burden of responsibility. Economic downturns. Stricter immigration regulations.</p> <p>01:20:00 Returning to Ireland regularly. Moving back for good.</p> <p>01:21:10 Local club (Castleisland) in Kerry asking him to get involved.</p> <p>01:22:20 Team from New York touring around Ireland, playing in Cork, Donegal, Mayo. Meeting Tom Ross at the Strand Hotel in Ballyliffin. Tom's singing abilities.</p> <p>01:23:50 Songs associated with the Donegal club. Song written by a lady from Castlehaven, Co. Cork.</p>
--	--

REFERENCE NO. DL/1/24

	<p>01:24:25 Best memory is watching Donegal in the 1992 All-Ireland final. Dublin's Charlie Redmond missing a penalty. Martin McHugh playing well for Donegal.</p> <p>01:26:40 Attending his first All-Ireland final in 1961. Down playing Offaly. Ball landing near where he was positioned. Biggest crowd ever at the game. Paddy Doherty and the McCartans playing well. Getting a Down hat in 1961.</p> <p>01:29:50 Former Cork footballer Larry Tompkins a player he admired. Former Kerry footballer Mick O'Connell another talented player. Tompkins telling him about abuse he received.</p> <p>01:30:05 Disappointments.</p> <p>01:30:15 What his GAA involvement has meant to him. Seamus Darby scoring a goal to deny Kerry the five-in-a-row in 1982. Listening to the game on the radio in New York with his wife Mary.</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 checked="" 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>Played for 3/4 years with Ahoghill.</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Was involved with the Donegal Club New York from 1968 / 1969.</p> <p>He was President of Donegal Club, 1970 – 1975.</p>
<p>Format</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual</p>
<p>Duration</p>	<p>Length of Interview: 01:32:40</p>
<p>Language</p>	<p>English</p>

REFERENCE NO. DL/1/24

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: _____Arlene Crampsie_____

Date: _____06/08/12_____