

GAA Oral History Project
Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Arlene Crampsie
Date of Interview	11 th March 2010
Location	The Yacht Bar, Lanesborough, Co. Longford
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Albert Fallon
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1947 Home County: Longford (although originally from Westmeath)
Education	Primary: Rochefortbridge PS, Co. Westmeath Secondary: Gormanstown College, Co. Meath Third Level: UCD
Family	Siblings: 3 brothers & 3 sisters Current Family if Different: Married to Phil with 3 sons and 1 daughter (died 1979)
Club(s)	Ballymahon [Longford]; St Mary's Rochefortbridge [Westmeath]; UCD [Dublin]; Donegal [New York]
Occupation	Secondary School Teacher
Parents' Occupation	Farmers
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Community Games; Fundraising for Church; National School Board of Management

REFERENCE NO. LD/1/6

Date of Report	28 th May 2012
Period Covered	1963 – 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Longford, Westmeath, Dublin
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Education, Religion, Involvement in GAA abroad, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Irish Language, Culture, Scór, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Alcohol, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Opening of Croke Park, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Albert reflects on many years spent working within the Association. He recalls growing up in Westmeath and playing football and hurling for his local club Rochfortbridge, before playing with UCD whilst at university and later settling in Longford where he worked as a teacher and got involved with the Ballymahon club. There he trained some sides and gradually became more and more involved on the administrative side - chairing committees and county boards and eventually becoming involved with the Leinster Council and having a run at the Presidency. Albert has been involved in numerous Croke Park committees and has worked with key GAA figures and on landmark projects over the years. His period of involvement covers the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the redevelopment of Croke Park, the playing of rugby and soccer at Croke Park and the rise of the GPA. He gives his opinions on these issues and on other matters of relevance to the Association, such as the use of Irish, the role occupied by Scór and changes in the role of women over the years. He has mixed with the great and the good of the GAA both on and off the field, but he still places huge emphasis on clubs and local communities, which he believes are the cornerstone of a successful Association.</p> <p>00:20 Earliest memory is getting a present of football gear as a 12-year-old in Rochfortbridge, Westmeath.</p> <p>00:45 His local club St Mary's reached the final that year and lost to Athlone; they togged out in a pub in Mullingar and had to borrow jerseys from Laois.</p>

	<p>01:20 He went to school in Gormanstown County Meath where he encountered Fr Louis Brennan, Fr Fiachra Kelly and Joe Lennon of Down.</p> <p>01:45 They lost a Leinster junior final in Croke Park in 1963, and in 1966 they beat Belcamp College in the Leinster semi-final and lost to Finian's in a replay - a game in which Albert marked Nicholas Clavin who went on to win All-Ireland medals with Offaly.</p> <p>02:15 Clann Bréanainn was an underage section of their club in Rochfortbridge formed by national teachers in the catchment areas - Rochfortbridge, Gainstown, Tyrrellspass and Dalystown, and Albert played with them and won a minor medals and Under-21 hurling titles.</p> <p>03:10 In his Leaving Cert year they lost a Leinster final, and a county final to Kinnegad.</p> <p>03:25 He won a senior hurling medal with St Brigid's.</p> <p>03:35 Recalls his first convention in Westmeath in 1971 and treasurer of the Westmeath Board Matt Slevin fielding a question about why a charge had been attributed in the books to jersey washing when it was understood to have been done for free.</p> <p>04:20 In 1972 he began teaching in Ballymahon, Longford and joined the club there.</p> <p>04:35 He played at UCD, winning a freshers competition and playing with Offaly's Kevin Kilmurry and against Martin McAleese who was with Queens.</p> <p>04:55 Playing Sigerson he marked Moss Keane, who would later represent Ireland in rugby.</p> <p>05:05 Recalls a year at UCD when Benny Corcoran was due to be suspended for a final due to an objection, but they were thrown out of the competition completely.</p> <p>05:50 He got involved with schools football in Longford, playing challenge matches before being accepted into the Longford vocational schools system.</p> <p>06:20 Eventually they competed at Leinster level, won Longford championships and competed in six 'Senior A' semi-</p>
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	<p>finals in-a-row.</p> <p>06:45 In 1977 he was training a side that beat Rathcline.</p> <p>07:00 In the same year he became youth officer with the Longford County Board for a year.</p> <p>07:10 In 1983 he became minor chairman for a year.</p> <p>07:25 In 1986 he was asked to stand for the senior chair and was elected. He stayed in that position for four years.</p> <p>08:20 His friend Tommy O'Brien suggested he run for the vice chair in Leinster and he was elected in 1991.</p> <p>08:35 Recalls a Billy Lawless from Wicklow who was secretary of the county board and remarked on Albert's youth.</p> <p>09:00 He was vice chairman for three years and was chairman of the council in 1993, 1994 and 1995.</p> <p>09:10 The first new stand was opened at Croke Park for the Leinster final in 1995.</p> <p>09:35 He has served as chairman of many committees in Croke Park and contested the presidency twice.</p> <p>10:05 He was elected a trustee in Killarney in 2006.</p> <p>11:00 In 1991 Jimmy Gray was chairman of the Leinster Council and asked him to chair a post-primary schools' committee.</p> <p>11:35 He is a chairman of an All-Ireland schools' committee.</p> <p>12:00 In 1959 he and his friends collected the balls while the seniors were playing.</p> <p>12:30 The locals played football between themselves a lot.</p> <p>12:55 Rochfortbridge were successful at the time, reaching many finals.</p> <p>13:20 They commentated on their own games after listening to Micheál Ó Hehir.</p> <p>13:40 He was the youngest of seven children - the eldest played for Westmeath and Albert went to games with him.</p>
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	<p>13:50 Sometimes Albert would be sent to ask his father if they could go somewhere to play a game and even though his father would say 'no', Albert would tell his siblings that the answer was a 'yes'.</p> <p>14:15 His father was from Roscommon and attended games a lot - a local engineer would take them to games.</p> <p>14:30 Recalls waiting for four hours while the adults were in the pub in Kilbeggan.</p> <p>15:00 When he was at school there was a strong Gaelic ethos and Fr Fiachra was a great trainer.</p> <p>15:15 Joe Lennon, the Down player, would come back and tell them stories of a Railway Cup final against Munster and figures like Bernie O'Connor of Kerry and Paddy Doherty of Down.</p> <p>15:55 He used to keep a GAA scrapbook from newspaper clips.</p> <p>16:15 Recalls Galway being in a three-in-a-row final in 1964 to 1966 and counting the cars driving home from the All-Ireland.</p> <p>16:50 When he was young the club played a huge role as there was little else going on in the community.</p> <p>17:10 In Ballymahon the club supported a lot of things that went on in the community.</p> <p>17:55 He enjoyed coaching the children in Ballymahon and it helped him maintain discipline in the classroom.</p> <p>19:00 The GAA does a lot for local communities.</p> <p>19:35 There is a drinking culture problem amongst the youth.</p> <p>19:55 Teachers play a huge role within the GAA</p> <p>20:25 Some people have become selfish with their time</p> <p>21:00 Recalls being in Rathcline, Longford with an Under-14 team to play St Mel's College and losing by a point. Albert was upset and a first year student, Raymond Kenny told him that it was only a game. The following year he was angry</p>
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	<p>again and he remembered the boy's words.</p> <p>22:00 Recalls winning the Under-14 Féile with Ballymahon and arguing with a Longford Slashers man and apologising afterwards.</p> <p>22:35 It's important to remember that it's only a game.</p> <p>22:55 He trained a Ballymahon minor team and the seniors won the championship in 2002 and lost narrowly to Clonguish in 2009.</p> <p>23:30 Recalls Leo Kenny, a bank manager in Drumshanbo in Leitrim, who was vice chairman of the Connacht Council but dropped dead near the end of Joe McDonagh's presidency. He was a great friend to Albert and wrote the history of Ballymahon GAA, 'Boots and Togs'.</p> <p>24:40 In 1947 Ballymahon lost a replay of a county final against Mullinalaghta - the score was 0-0.</p> <p>25:00 Recalls Paddy Kenny, who was a non-playing captain in 1969 and drove the players everywhere. He was living in Carlow in 2010.</p> <p>26:00 Recalls Phil Ronayne, chairman in 1968-1969 and in 1984. Mentions Mel Duncan, John O'Shea, Sean Ryan, Frank McGann.</p> <p>26:40 Albert felt he wasn't being challenged in Ballymahon.</p> <p>26:55 Recalls being tour manager of the Irish team that went to Australia in 1999. Colm O'Rourke was manager with John O'Keefe. Johnny Tobin and Peter Canavan were also there and Mickey Moran was trainer and they all got on very well.</p> <p>27:50 Albert was appointed tour manager by President Joe McDonagh and had to make sure buses were organised and everyone was on time for flights.</p> <p>28:10 Recalls the trouble they had getting players out of bed for a flight after winning the first Test.</p> <p>29:25 Recall Ciaran Mullooly contacting him ahead of a game between the RUC and the Gardaí. He did an interview and went to New York to represent Jack Boothman at a dinner and the interview came up in conversation and Albert was told that someone who was in jail would not like the interview.</p>
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	<p>30:25 He and his wife lost a baby in 1979 but he has a strong family.</p> <p>31:00 His eldest son Ross played underage and won a minor medal.</p> <p>31:40 His other son Cathal was a great prospect but had appendix problems which set him back.</p> <p>32:05 Diarmuid the youngest plays a bit with Ballymahon.</p> <p>32:55 Gormanstown had 500 boys and boarders too, with pupils from Donegal and Mayo. They had great sports facilities and Albert got involved in athletics.</p> <p>33:45 Albert was advised to opt for athletics over GAA but his made him more determined and he made the senior team in the end.</p> <p>35:00 He doesn't think the pupils that played Gaelic were treated better.</p> <p>35:50 It was great to have Joe Lennon, Down legend, at the school.</p> <p>36:00 He loved Micheál Ó Hehir, and Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh too.</p> <p>37:15 He knew Liam Mulvihill and that was great when he went to work in Croke Park.</p> <p>37:35 Liam Mulvihill spanned nine presidencies. Mentions Paddy MacFlynn.</p> <p>38:00 Peter Quinn, Sean McCabe, Joe McDonagh, Sean Kelly, Jack Boothman were all great figures.</p> <p>38:50 Liam Mulvihill was chairman in Longford for years and people there have great affection for him.</p> <p>39:30 Recalls a Leinster v Ulster game in Casement Park in 1995 and previously a car had blown up outside the stadium where Derry and Donegal had been playing. Albert stayed in Dundalk the night before and they had to go into Casement Park under armed escort.</p> <p>40:15 People in Northern Ireland had to endure a lot and the</p>
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	<p>Association is stronger there as a result.</p> <p>40:45 Recalls Gene Larkin of Crossmaglen who struggled a lot.</p> <p>41:10 Albert has a brother-in-law in Bellaghy in Derry and he understands that it is a different type of organisation there.</p> <p>42:00 Liam Mulvihill worked through all these problems and kept a lid on things.</p> <p>42:10 Recalls Aidan McAnespie who was killed.</p> <p>42:20 Recalls being stopped whilst travelling from Bundoran to Croke Park and the soldiers were only in their late teens.</p> <p>42:55 Scór was never very important to Albert; he saw it as 'an endurance test'.</p> <p>43:30 He does believe that it plays an important role in clubs and allowed women to come to the fore.</p> <p>43:55 Women should have been more involved in administration over the years.</p> <p>44:15 Ballymahon has had bad experiences with Scór due to adjudicating decisions.</p> <p>44:40 Scór could be modified to make it a more enjoyable experience.</p> <p>45:15 He can't understand why the state of the Irish language is so poor.</p> <p>45:55 Recalls being invited to a club in 1993 because of a row over money. There was a meeting and a vote had to be taken. They had to convert a list written in bad Irish and it led to problems in identifying members, so they had to sign the 300 members in all over again and he left the meeting at 2:30 am.</p> <p>47:45 The language should be encouraged and not forced.</p> <p>48:10 Hearings are often knocked out on a technicality - often relating to the use of Irish - and this can be frustrating for people.</p> <p>49:10 Recalls a man whose Irish was not strong. He sent out</p>
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	<p>Christmas wishes in Irish and then a priest rang him and spoke Irish to him but the man could not speak Irish.</p> <p>50:30 Technology breakthroughs in communication have helped a lot - especially with text messages. Child protection issues are affecting this though because of the issue of contacting children directly.</p> <p>52:10 He served as every officer in the minor club and every officer in the senior club in Ballymahon. He has been youth officer, chairman and treasurer of the senior board. He has been minor board chairman, chairman of the provincial council, chairman of all the major committees in Croke Park.</p> <p>52:30 He enjoyed being chairman of the provincial council the most - you are not as constrained by rules and regulations.</p> <p>53:15 People afford the office a great deal of respect and he got to come into contact with many clubs - he was often amazed by the projects they were working on.</p> <p>53:45 Religion, education and the GAA have done a lot for the country.</p> <p>54:40 If he was invited somewhere he always went.</p> <p>54:50 Recalls a time in 1993/1994 and he was not liked in Laois because they were often 'in the chamber' after games. But they invited him to present Leinster Under-21 medals and he went along.</p> <p>55:40 He went along to open a new facility in Rochfortbridge and was very proud to do so.</p> <p>56:30 He was on central council during the development of Croke Park and was on the Management Committee in 1993, 1994, 1995 with Peter Quinn and Jack Boothman. Liam Mulvihill did an awful lot of work and was not rewarded enough at the time.</p> <p>57:20 He was involved in a lot of initiatives which required employing people full-time and he saw the growth in venues around the country.</p> <p>57:45 Recalls a small club in Dublin looking for a loan of £100,000 and after a year they came back again as what they built wasn't big enough.</p>
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	<p>58:30 Everything in the Association is about meeting people.</p> <p>59:00 Developing Croke Park and seeing all the concerts was great. Stadium Director Peter McKenna pulled off a huge job when he managed to facilitate U2 concerts and relay the Croke Park pitch in 2009.</p> <p>01:00:05 He loved being involved when rugby came to Croke Park and recalls the special atmosphere when the English rugby team played at Croke Park. He was proud of how much the Association had grown and welcomed the debate that the GAA could have around the issue.</p> <p>01:02:10 Two trustees are elected by Congress every three years and it is a big endorsement. Joe Boyle from Antrim was elected with Albert. The President consulted them on important issues and they were also on the finance committee.</p> <p>01:03:35 Peter Quinn's strategic report was delivered in that time and it was great to be a trustee at the time.</p> <p>01:04:30 Some relationships within the GAA could be stronger. There is not enough communication between clubs and county boards, who can sometimes ride roughshod over clubs.</p> <p>01:05:10 The relationship between provincial councils and officers can be good.</p> <p>01:05:30 Some people feel that the full-time people in Croke Park make too many decisions, and marrying the voluntary people and the full-time people is a problem.</p> <p>01:06:20 it's difficult to get young people involved in administration.</p> <p>01:07:15 Most of the people on the post-primary committee are retired teachers, so there is an imbalance there.</p> <p>01:07:55 The GPA came about as a result of inaction in Albert's view. Some counties treated players well and others didn't but Albert is happy that things are going in the right direction and players are being properly treated.</p> <p>01:09:45 He has great regard for Dessie Farrell and Donal Óg Cusack of the GPA.</p>
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	<p>01:10:05 He is opposed to pay-for-play as it is unsustainable and would work against weaker counties as their record on the field isn't as good as that of the big counties.</p> <p>01:11:10 It would also create further divisions between those in full-time positions and volunteers.</p> <p>01:11:30 The players are treated well and huge amounts of money are already being spent on inter-county squads.</p> <p>01:11:45 Seán Óg de Paor wrote an article which envisaged full-time professionals but it is difficult to make this a reality.</p> <p>01:12:10 Referees and administrators are just as important to the GAA as the players are - it's a complete package.</p> <p>01:13:15 Women's role within the GAA has changed for the better - they are more decisive and can offer a lot to clubs.</p> <p>01:13:45 Ladies football takes away from women's involvement with the men's side of the GAA a little.</p> <p>01:14:10 Praises women's football for its skill levels and general attitude.</p> <p>01:14:40 The GAA in schools is vital; it has to be strong in secondary level schools because then the players go back to their clubs as better players.</p> <p>01:15:50 The secondary school in Ballymahon covers pupils from five clubs so it is important that the clubs support the schools in term.</p> <p>01:16:25 The GAA should be a subject on the Leaving Certificate course - Colm O'Rourke has suggested this in the past.</p> <p>01:17:10 Playing GAA gives students a good balance.</p> <p>01:17:40 Hero would be Mick O'Dwyer of Kerry. He is 'a lovely rogue' who has great desire.</p> <p>01:18:25 Seán Boylan did great work with Meath. He engages with people.</p> <p>01:19:05 Colm O'Rourke of Meath is a good friend. Peter Canavan of Tyrone was a top player, as was Jack O'Shea of Kerry.</p>
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	<p>01:19:20 Mentions Sean Purcell, Jack Mahon, Gerry O'Malley, Mick Carley of Westmeath (who once played for Rochfortbridge).</p> <p>01:20:00 Mentions Paddy Doherty, Tony McTigue, Seamus Flynn</p> <p>01:20:40 He was chairman of the Leinster Council in 1995 when Westmeath won the Leinster and All-Ireland minor titles and he presented them with the minor cup.</p> <p>01:21:10 Ronnie Delaney was once his athletics coach and he often met him and John Treacy at Croke Park.</p> <p>01:21:45 Recalls being in UCD and a sevens competition and having some banter with Mick O'Dwyer over the jerseys and togs.</p> <p>01:22:25 A good President is someone who has a clear vision for the Association and the ability to lead people, and to listen to others.</p> <p>01:23:10 Best memory is meeting people at club functions and seeing what clubs and communities can achieve.</p> <p>01:24:55 Disappointments include not becoming President but the biggest would be that he wasn't around when Longford won the Leinster title and the National League. Football is very big in Longford and people take great pride in their achievements when they experience success.</p> <p>01:26:45 People put in a lot of work for the Association and Albert always does his best. Some people refer to him as 'God' but he doesn't like this; he is working for the future of Ballymahon.</p> <p>01:27:40 Longford is proud of its referees - John Bannon, Derek Fahey, Fergal Kelly.</p> <p>01:28:00 The GAA has given Albert endless hours of enjoyment. He had to sacrifice a lot of his family life but he had a lot of support.</p> <p>01:29:00 The GAA started taking partners into account more over the years and this has been a good thing.</p> <p>01:30:10 Recalls a sing-song when Seamus Flynn was</p>
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	stepping down from the Leinster Council.
Involvement in GAA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	Played from he was 12 up to 35. In hurling he won Westmeath Minor, U-21 and Senior hurling medals.
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	Albert has been involved in administration since 1976. Club – Minor: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, PRO. Club – Senior: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, PRO. County: Minor Board Chairman; Youth Officer, 1977; Chairman, 1986 – 1990; Treasurer, 2006 – 2007. First Chairman of Comhairle Iar-Bhunscoil na Laighean, 1991. Leinster: Chairman of Leinster Council, 1993 – 1995; National: Chairman of Coaching and Games Development; Policy and Planning; Fixtures Advisory Body; National Trustee, 2007 – 2009. Secretary and Chairman of Longford Schools Body; Chairman of National Post-Primary Schools Committee
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:31:17
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: _____Arlene Crampsie_____

Date: _____28/05/12_____