

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

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| Name of Interviewer | Regina Fitzpatrick |
| Date of Interview | 10 th June 2010 |
| Location | Paddy's home, near Mullingar, Co. Westmeath |
| Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname) | Paddy Flanagan |
| <u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u> | |
| Gender | Male |
| Born | Year Born: 1930 Home County: Westmeath |
| Education | Primary: Curraghmore NS, Co. Westmeath Secondary: St Mary's CBS, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath |
| Family | Siblings: 2 sisters & 2 step brothers Current Family if Different: Wife (Judy); 1 son & 1 daughter |
| Club(s) | Mullingar Shamrocks GAA [Westmeath]; The Downes GAA [Westmeath]; St Loman's GAA [Westmeath] |
| Occupation | Psychiatric Nurse, St Loman's Hospital |
| Parents' Occupation | Psychiatric Nurses |
| Religion | Roman Catholic |
| Political Affiliation / Membership | N/A |
| Other Club/Society Membership(s) | N/A |

REFERENCE NO. WH/1/6

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| Date of Report | 21 st June 2012 |
| Period Covered | 1916 - 2010 |
| Counties/Countries Covered | Westmeath |
| Key Themes Covered | Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Coaching, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, Involvement in GAA abroad, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Rivalries, Irish Language, Culture, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Politics, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Retirement, Food and Drink, Socialising, Relationships, Economy / Economics |
| Interview Summary | <p>Paddy talks about his wide-ranging GAA career which spanned many years. Originally from Turin in Westmeath, he learned the basics of Gaelic football from Brother Hogan - a brother of Michael Hogan who was killed on Bloody Sunday. He later played with Mullingar Shamrocks and The Downes, and in later years was selected to play for the Westmeath minor team, and then the seniors. He also secured a job at St Loman's Hospital and played football with them. Paddy was also heavily involved in administration - he was assistant secretary of the Westmeath County Board for a number of years before taking over the position of secretary. He was also PRO and in time was appointed a Westmeath delegate to the Leinster Council, and played a big part in organising their centenary celebrations. He took to the job of PRO with gusto, setting about making radical changes to the production and quality of match programmes - an initiative that was incredibly successful and was soon imitated by other provinces. He wrote a weekly GAA column for a local newspaper and was acutely aware of the benefits of maintaining a close relationship with the media. During all this time he witnessed tremendous advances in technology and communications, made lifelong friends, suffered personal disappointments and observed major improvements in the manner in which all aspects of Gaelic games are approached. A proud GAA man, Paddy has made a long-lasting contribution to the Association.</p> <p>00:15 Born in 1930 in Turin, Westmeath.</p> |

REFERENCE NO. WH/1/6

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| | <p>01:00 Gaelic games in the area.</p> <p>01:25 Family's GAA involvement. Father from Meath.</p> <p>01:55 Playing with a rag ball at school.</p> <p>02:10 Going to St Mary's College and playing organised football under Brother Hogan - a brother of Michael Hogan who was shot in Croke Park on Bloody Sunday. Brother Hogan's enthusiasm for Gaelic games.</p> <p>02:55 Winning a medal with St Mary's in 1947.</p> <p>03:20 Being asked to play minor football with Mullingar Shamrocks. Playing with Westmeath minors as well.</p> <p>04:05 Playing junior football with The Downes.</p> <p>04:15 Getting a job at St Loman's Hospital in 1948 and playing football with them.</p> <p>04:40 Going to watch games at Cusack Park when he was young.</p> <p>05:30 Role of GAA at St Mary's. Scarcity of footballs at the time.</p> <p>05:55 Breaking a window at school with a football.</p> <p>06:20 Lay teachers not involved in football - only Christian Brothers.</p> <p>07:00 Training they did. Brother Hogan's techniques.</p> <p>07:55 Playing against other schools. Playing a final in Naas.</p> <p>08:45 Playing for the Mullingar minor team.</p> <p>09:10 Travelling to games by car, by foot or on a bicycle. Hiring a hackney.</p> <p>10:10 Playing for the Westmeath minors. Losing frequently.</p> <p>10:35 Playing Dublin in Croke Park and his parents giving him money as he set off. Eating after the game.</p> <p>11:40 Trials for the county team.</p> |
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REFERENCE NO. WH/1/6

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| | <p>12:00 How he felt about playing in Croke Park.</p> <p>12:30 Playing in years after World War II and what that was like. Lack of public transport.</p> <p>13:05 People cycling to Croke Park.</p> <p>13:25 Hiring a lorry to go to Croke Park for a game.</p> <p>14:15 Paddy Fagan having a lorry and driving to a Munster hurling final. Being stopped by a Garda in Templemore. Paddy going to court as a result.</p> <p>14:55 Setting out early for Croke Park and returning late.</p> <p>15:30 First visit to Croke Park.</p> <p>15:50 Going to Croke Park in 1963. Brian Glynn on the team and being in awe of the stadium.</p> <p>16:25 Position he played. Physical element of games.</p> <p>17:00 Awareness of his talent for football.</p> <p>17:20 Playing with a tennis ball.</p> <p>17:25 No television or radio.</p> <p>17:40 Going to St Finian's College to listen to games on the radio. Micheál Ó Heiher broadcasting.</p> <p>18:30 Listening to the 1947 All-Ireland final in the Polo Grounds in New York.</p> <p>19:20 Friendship with Micheál Ó Heiher.</p> <p>19:50 Delivering programmes to Croke Park ahead of Leinster championship games and calling to Micheál Ó Heiher at his home in Griffith Avenue.</p> <p>20:35 Micheál Ó Heiher's first broadcast in Mullingar in 1936. Returning 50 years later to mark the occasion.</p> <p>21:45 Colinstown opening a new pitch in 1949 and Westmeath seniors due to play Offaly. Being selected for the Westmeath team and the first edition of the Sunday Press coming out that day. Laois and Paddy Rustico playing in an</p> |
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REFERENCE NO. WH/1/6

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| | <p>All-Ireland final the same day.</p> <p>22:50 Being informed that he had been selected by secretary Paddy McCabe.</p> <p>23:25 Inter-county team training. Training under Paul Russell of Kerry.</p> <p>24:10 Fr Jim Duignan of Cavan, a brother of Simon Duignan, training them. Fr Jim not allowed to play with Cavan in the final at the Polo Grounds.</p> <p>25:10 Fr Tulley - who went on to train an All-Ireland winning Meath team - training them.</p> <p>25:40 Training they did.</p> <p>26:05 Awareness of diet.</p> <p>26:35 How they were treated as inter-county players.</p> <p>26:55 Starting playing for St Mary's and having no football gear. How he solved the problem.</p> <p>28:05 How his GAA involvement affected his personal life.</p> <p>29:05 What his family thought of his involvement.</p> <p>29:20 Attitude to injuries.</p> <p>29:35 Playing Meath in Croke Park in 1955 and his mother attending.</p> <p>30:20 Pre-match ritual and superstitions.</p> <p>31:05 His work at St Loman's as a psychiatric nurse. Role of football there.</p> <p>33:00 Leaving school in 1948 and scarcity of jobs at the time. Parents both psychiatric nurses.</p> <p>34:00 Gender break down of staff at the hospital.</p> <p>34:35 History of St Loman's football team. Founded in 1916.</p> <p>35:15 Inter-county footballers on their team. Brendan O'Shea from Kerry on the team.</p> |
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REFERENCE NO. WH/1/6

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| | <p>35:45 GAA involvement an advantage when applying for the job and reasons for that.</p> <p>36:40 How the St Loman's club was run. Fundraising.</p> <p>37:15 Using a YMCA hall in the Downes for dancing. Dinny Hughes - a member of staff - and his band playing.</p> <p>37:40 Ned Reilly from Mullineachta going to the bank to borrow money for a dance.</p> <p>39:10 Rivals were Mullingar, Rosemount and Rochfortbridge.</p> <p>39:35 Height requirements to get into St Loman's.</p> <p>40:10 Facilities they had.</p> <p>40:30 Going to the pub after a game.</p> <p>41:15 Toggling out in pubs due to lack of dressing-rooms in Cusack Park.</p> <p>42:05 Other sports in the area.</p> <p>42:30 Board of management in charge of pitch at St Loman's and soccer club applying for use of the pitch. GAA players taking action.</p> <p>43:50 Ban on foreign sports and dances. Johnny Lyng getting suspended. Vigilantes.</p> <p>44:55 Getting involved in administration through St Loman's. Appointed secretary in 1949 amid fears of a coup.</p> <p>46:15 Elected assistant secretary of the Westmeath County Board in 1954. Paddy McCabe was secretary. Taking over from him in 1959 and staying there until 1969.</p> <p>46:45 Enthusiasm when he first came into the role.</p> <p>47:05 Putting a stand in Cusack Park.</p> <p>47:15 Having an annual Siamsa Mór and what featured at that.</p> <p>48:25 Teams and officials going for lunch after a county final. Paddy Fagan involved with the Lake County Hotel.</p> |
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REFERENCE NO. WH/1/6

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| | <p>49:25 Paddy Fagan refusing a soccer team who wanted to eat at the hotel but offering football teams a reduced rate. Entertainment at the hotel during the meal.</p> <p>50:15 Tradition of the meal dying out and reason for that.</p> <p>50:40 Stepping down from his position when he had ran out of ideas.</p> <p>51:00 Importance of Irish culture at the time.</p> <p>51:20 Peter McKenna objecting to a tune played by a band because it wasn't traditional enough in his eyes.</p> <p>51:55 Use of the Irish language.</p> <p>52:20 Learning a lot while he was assistant secretary.</p> <p>53:10 Playing football while he was secretary of the county board. Being busy with secretarial duties the morning of a game. Tommy Riordan of Leitrim in a similar position.</p> <p>54:55 Importance of volunteers in the GAA.</p> <p>56:20 Opinion of politics in the GAA.</p> <p>57:00 1967 junior football final between Tubberclair and Ballynacargy in Cusack Park. Controversial refereeing decision by Paddy Cooney and Tubberclair players' reaction. Resolution.</p> <p>59:00 County board meetings and where they were held. Debates on referees.</p> <p>01:00:30 Going to the bar after meetings and 'the real meeting' taking place.</p> <p>01:01:20 Arguments at county board meetings. Entertainment value.</p> <p>01:02:00 Team due to play Ballynacargy wanting to change a fixture date and chairman passing judgement. Ballynacargy bluffing.</p> <p>01:03:30 Becoming PRO and what that involved.</p> <p>01:05:05 Postal strike in advance of an important Westmeath game. Driving to Dublin to deliver information to newspapers.</p> |
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REFERENCE NO. WH/1/6

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| | <p>01:05:55 Being PRO from 1970-2000. Technological changes he witnessed in that period. Communication tools they used.</p> <p>01:08:40 Coverage of the GAA in the local and national newspapers.</p> <p>01:09:01 Seán Óg Ó Ceallacháin and others writing columns in newspapers.</p> <p>01:09:55 Need for clubs to supply newspapers with material.</p> <p>01:10:25 Contact with RTÉ.</p> <p>01:10:50 Sending out the team sheet to media people.</p> <p>01:11:20 Enjoying reading articles by Mick Dunne. Not liking his work as a commentator.</p> <p>01:12:20 Difficulty with computers.</p> <p>01:13:00 Interest in hoarding articles, photographs and information.</p> <p>01:14:00 Working with Keiran O'Neill, secretary of the Leinster Council, to get rid of 'bogus programmes' from Croke Park.</p> <p>01:15:30 Starting to produce programmes in 1975. What featured in the programmes. Getting others to help - Tom Ryan from Kilkenny, John Clarke from Tullamore.</p> <p>01:17:45 Reason for getting involved in programme production.</p> <p>01:18:30 Other provinces following suit. Ideas pooled at central level.</p> <p>01:19:00 Spending time on the programmes at the Westmeath Examiner. Printing machines.</p> <p>01:20:00 Sending photographs to Dublin to be prepared for printing.</p> <p>01:21:20 Dublin and Meath's four-game saga in 1991 and being busy producing programmes.</p> <p>01:22:05 Driving to Croke Park with boxes of programmes.</p> |
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REFERENCE NO. WH/1/6

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| | <p>01:22:30 Cost of programmes.</p> <p>01:22:45 Advertising and guidelines about that. Leinster Council secretary Mick Delaney looking after advertising.</p> <p>01:23:55 How he found the time to fulfil his GAA commitments.</p> <p>01:24:30 Getting onto the Leinster Council as a Westmeath delegate in 1964.</p> <p>01:25:00 Getting treasurer role in 1992 after Hugh Byrne retired. Albert Fallon persuading him to do it.</p> <p>01:26:00 Being chair for the Communications Committee.</p> <p>01:26:15 Leinster Council centenary in 2000 and working on that. Convention held at Croke Park. Banquet at the Bridge House in Tullamore.</p> <p>01:26:55 Commissioning a special flag for the occasion. Westmeath refusing to fly it at games. Reason for that. Resigning as a result. Disappointment he felt.</p> <p>01:29:25 IT coming in. Getting counties to take more care in relation to programmes and facilities for the press ahead of games.</p> <p>01:30:40 Need to have people with a flair for communications. Vocational aspect of the job.</p> <p>01:31:20 Having seminars on dealing with the press, especially in times of controversy. Gavin Duffy of RTÉ chairing a seminar.</p> <p>01:32:30 Impact of technology on communications within the GAA.</p> <p>01:33:05 Growing sense of respect for people coming to see the games.</p> <p>01:33:35 One good idea leading to another.</p> <p>01:34:20 Building a press box in Cusack Park.</p> <p>01:35:10 Some people objecting to treating the press well.</p> |
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REFERENCE NO. WH/1/6

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| | <p>01:36:00 PROs from different counties in Leinster meeting and exchanging ideas.</p> <p>01:37:15 Impact of television coverage of Gaelic games. Adverse effect on the Railway Cup.</p> <p>01:38:40 Improvement in type of people appointed as PRO.</p> <p>01:40:15 Committees he was on and how people were selected. Mick Dunne talking to them.</p> <p>01:41:15 Seminar in Booterstown in Dublin. Mick Dunne involved.</p> <p>01:42:30 Doing a weekly column for the local paper under a pen name.</p> <p>01:45:25 Ringing a man about a mistake in a piece he wrote on the Delaney Cup because a relation of the Delaneys, Mick Burke, had died.</p> <p>01:47:00 Enjoying writing.</p> <p>01:48:00 Winning awards.</p> <p>01:48:50 Technological advancements making programme production easier.</p> <p>01:49:30 Position he enjoyed the most and why. Having sympathy for the underdog at hearings.</p> <p>01:51:10 Abolishing the Ban in Belfast. Pat Fanning President at the time. Laois man objecting.</p> <p>01:52:15 Opening up of Croke Park and how he felt about it.</p> <p>01:55:15 Time commitment of his GAA involvement.</p> <p>01:55:45 Satisfaction he took from his involvement.</p> <p>01:56:10 His family's GAA involvement.</p> <p>01:57:05 Going to meetings when his children were growing up.</p> <p>01:58:20 Importance of the GAA to parish life.</p> <p>02:00:55 GAA and his sense of identity.</p> |
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| | <p>02:02:40 The future of the GAA.</p> <p>02:04:10 Admiration for Pat Fanning, Alf Murray and other GAA leaders.</p> <p>02:06:40 Player-power. Cork hurlers going on strike.</p> <p>02:08:30 Being at a function and RTÉ's Colm Murray there. Special Olympic athletes there. Contrasting the enthusiasm of the athletes to the Cork hurlers who were on strike at the time.</p> <p>02:10:00 Being chosen for the Westmeath Team of the Century. President McCague visiting for a function.</p> <p>02:11:10 Proudest GAA achievement - winning his first senior championship medal with St Loman's in 1961.</p> <p>02:11:35 Playing in Croke Park in 1955 haven beaten Wicklow.</p> <p>02:13:15 Hopes for the future of the GAA.</p> <p>02:14:10 Importance of passing on the GAA tradition.</p> <p>02:15:05 Lack of interest in occupying high office and reasons for that.</p> <p>02:16:25 Going to London for the Westmeath Association's annual dinner. Playing with Round Towers club illegally.</p> <p>02:17:05 Playing for Westmeath in Gaelic Park in New York against Clare in 1970 after some persuasion. Meeting Pat Bradley on the pitch - a Westmeath man playing for Clare. John Kerry O'Donnell running Gaelic Park at the time. Whisky at half-time.</p> <p>02:19:45 Playing for a club in Nottingham. Flying home for a game against Kinnegad.</p> <p>02:21:35 Importance of GAA clubs abroad. Clubs assisting new arrivals overseas.</p> <p>02:24:00 Patsy Caffrey asking him about setting up a Westmeath Association in London.</p> <p>02:24:55 Giving them a Westmeath banner for the St Patrick's</p> |
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REFERENCE NO. WH/1/6

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| | <p>Day parade in London.</p> <p>02:26:35 People being paid to play in the United States.</p> <p>02:27:10 Trying to keep people motivated in Westmeath.</p> |
| Involvement in GAA | <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p> |
| Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played) | <p>Played at club level age 17 – 40 yrs. Played football and hurling for Westmeath, 1947 – 60. Member of the Westmeath team of the century; Won 2 Westmeath Senior Football Championships with St Lomans.</p> |
| Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for) | <p>St Lomans GAA: Committee member for many years, holding positions such as secretary (5 years); currently President of the club.</p> <p>Westmeath GAA: Secretary of County Board, 1957 – 69; PRO 1972 – 2000.</p> <p>Leinster GAA: Member of Leinster Council and of various committees associated with that including finance, management etc. Chairman of Communications Committee; Treasurer of Leinster Council.</p> |
| Format | <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual</p> |
| Duration | <p>Length of Interview: 02:28:17</p> |
| Language | <p>English</p> |

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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: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 21st June 2012