

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	29 th April 2011
Location	Interviewee's home, near Loughrea, Co. Galway
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Fergus Benson
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1932 Home County: Galway
Education	Primary: Loughrea NS Secondary: De La Salle, Loughrea
Family	Siblings: 1 brother & 3 sisters Current Family if Different: 3 sons & 1 daughter
Club(s)	Loughrea Hurling Club
Occupation	Pharmaceutical Industry
Parents' Occupation	Shopkeepers
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	None
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	St Vincent de Paul Society; Handball Club; Squash Club; Racquetball Club

REFERENCE NO. Y/1/21

Date of Report	24 th May 2012
Period Covered	1930s - 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Galway, Tipperary, Kilkenny, Cork, Dublin
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Material Culture, Religion, Role of Clergy, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Sacrifices, Alcohol, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Retirement, Food and Drink, Socialising, Relationships, Economy/ Economics
Interview Summary	<p>00:28 Fergus recalls his earliest memories of Gaelic games in Loughrea. Born in 1932, no competitions for underage hurlers. Playing minor hurling. No money for hurls or sliotars. Few competitions during war years, shortage of food. Poverty.</p> <p>02:12 His parents from football counties, no interest in hurling. His older brother's interest in hurling. Progress from colleges hurling to minor team to county minor team. Explains how county minor team picked from trials. No training. Galway's sense of inferiority. Playing for club and county.</p> <p>04:29 No training for junior and intermediate county level, some for senior. Collected by taxi, brought to Clarenbridge. Senior training in 1956, disorganised. Only 3 subs then. Several army personnel on team, they led the training. White bread and ham after training session, washing in river. No tactics. Different style of hurling, more ground-hurling. Better quality pitches, balls, boots, training now. Better treatment of players in terms of fitness and diet.</p> <p>07:08 Describes his gear: hurley, boots, stockings, shin guards. No kitbag, towel, headgear or second jersey. Buying his own hurley from Larkins.</p> <p>08:09 Reflects on lack of hype about being selected for Galway then. No expectations for Galway team. Playing in many positions. Lacked speed. Playing in goal against Tipperary in 1950 All-Ireland Minor semi-final, also in goal in 1958 All-Ireland Senior Hurling Final. His favourite position: corner back. Learned to hurl from both sides with his brother.</p> <p>11:05 Mentions his hurling heroes: Johnny Molloy, Seanie Duggan, Jim Brophy, Fahy. Also the 1947 Connaught team that won the Railway Cup. Too young to attend the 1941 county championship, no women and children spectators, only men travelling on bicycles. Galway winning national</p>

	<p>league in 1951. No encouragement.</p> <p>13:20 Recalls playing county minor hurling in 1950, and junior, intermediate, senior that decade.</p> <p>14:12 Mentions strong hurling teams nearby: Castlegar, Liam Mellows, Loughrea, Gort, Eyrecourt, Mullagh, Fohenagh, the army team.</p> <p>15:04 Discusses the individuals involved in organising Galway hurling: Jackie Whelan, Fr. Walsh, Fr. Gantley, Matt Hackett, Bernard Greaney. Issue of favouritism among selectors.</p> <p>16:02 Reflects on successes and failures of Loughrea Hurling Club. Wins in 1941, 1950. Successes at minor level.</p> <p>17:05 Describes informal training on Sunday mornings with other players. Same pitch today as in his time.</p> <p>17:54 Prominence of hurling in Loughrea town, more popular than football. No money or facilities then.</p> <p>18:39 Discusses his administration roles in the club: secretary for a time in the 1950s. Running a céilí to fundraise for clubs, against rules to hold dances. Club supplied hurling balls, left at Robinsons on the hill, closest house to pitch. Shoemaker re-stitching ripped balls. Meetings in Temperance Hall. Recalls running a dance in Craughwell, small profit.</p> <p>22:02 Comparison with GAA today. Sponsorship deals, more gear for players, meals supplied, psychologists and physical training, dietary advice.</p> <p>23:17 Recalls memorable games: playing minor and senior in same day in Killimor. Mentions Inky Flaherty, Josie Gallagher, Sean Duggan, Jimmy Duggan. Amount of pioneers in the GAA in the past. More drinking nowadays. More fitness in the past.</p> <p>26:02 Describes the absence of nerves before a match. Recalls eating bacon and cabbage before match while his teammate was sick with nerves. Getting the train to a match, no food. Also going to the 1958 All-Ireland final, going to mass, having cup of tea and biscuit before match. Eating dinner with his sister before match.</p> <p>28:22 Recalls playing in the 1958 All-Ireland Senior Hurling Final. Playing Tipperary. Galway losing to Limerick earlier in the minor final. Mentions Tipperary's Jimmy and John Doyle, Jimmy Finn, the Kenny's, Tony Wall. Playing in goal in second</p>
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	<p>half. Disappointment when they lost. Strength of Munster and Leinster in hurling.</p> <p>31:24 Describes attending match between Galway and Kilkenny in 1975, seeing strong new players for Galway. Joy when Galway won first All-Ireland Senior Hurling Final in 1980. People running onto pitch, shaking hands, celebrations. Mentions Fr. Iggy Clarke on team.</p> <p>33:28 Considers the appeal in hurling. Importance of learning to play young. Speed of game. Camaraderie in the sport. More enjoyment watching hurling than soccer. Satisfaction of watching juveniles hurl.</p> <p>35:28 Discusses his children's involvement in sport: hurling, football, rugby, cycling, squash, raquetball. His grandchildren hurling and playing hockey.</p> <p>36:58 Ponders what involvement in the GAA has meant to him. Making friends, enjoyment of going to matches. Mentions Fr. Nicholas Murray, Fr. Aidan Murray.</p> <p>38:17 Explains why he didn't miss hurling when he retired. Involved in training teams, refereeing. Taking up squash, badminton, raquetball, and horse-riding in later years.</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 type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input 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>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Played minor, junior intermediate and senior hurling with Loughrea from 1950-1980. Also played Senior Hurling for Galway.</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Loughrea GAA: Committee member 1950s – 2011; Secretary in the 1950s. Current vice-president.</p>

REFERENCE NO. GY/1/21

Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 0:39:41
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 24th May 2012