

GAA Oral History Project

**Interview Report Form**

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Arlene Crampsie
<b>Date of Interview</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2009
<b>Location</b>	Interviewee's home, the Bronx, New York
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Nollaig Cleary
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Female
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1969 <b>Home County:</b> Fermanagh
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> St Mary's Primary School, Killesher, Co. Fermanagh <b>Secondary:</b> Mount Lourdes Convent Grammar School, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh <b>Third Level:</b> UCD
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 3 brothers & 3 sisters
<b>Club(s)</b>	Fermanagh Ladies [New York]; Kinawley Brian Borus Killesher St Marys [Fermanagh]
<b>Occupation</b>	Physiotherapist
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Farmer [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	Democrat / Nationalist

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<b>Date of Report</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> June 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1940s – 2009
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Americas, USA, Fermanagh
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Education, Media, Emigration, Involvement in GAA abroad, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Rivalries, Irish Language, Culture, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Alcohol, Politics, Northern Ireland, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Food and Drink, Socialising, Relationships, Economy / Economics
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>Nollaig talks about growing up in a GAA family in Fermanagh. In 1993 she emigrated to the United States and before long she was involved in the GAA scene in New York. Her skills as a physiotherapist were a great help and she also got involved in reviving the Fermanagh club in New York. They had a men's and a ladies team and a lot of fundraising had to be done to keep the club functioning. The GAA in New York lost numbers if economic conditions in Ireland were good and this was a struggle for the Fermanagh club. Nollaig was heavily involved on the administrative side and played a huge role in encouraging underage girls to play ladies football. She gives a lot of her time to the GAA but she has made a lot of friends through the Association and feels that it has a huge role to play in bringing people together.</p> <p>00:20 Originally from Killesher Fermanagh and her local club is Kinawley Brian Borus Killesher St Mary's.</p> <p>00:35 Earliest GAA memories include playing football with her three older brothers. Her brothers liked to pretend to be people like Peter McGinnity, Joe Kiernan or Colm McAlarney and Nollaig played in goals. She was four years old.</p> <p>01:05 Her father played football and her brothers played with the local club and with the school. Her mother's family were also GAA people.</p> <p>01:30 Her father played in the later 1940s / early 1950s when Fermanagh football was very strong.</p>

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	<p>01:40 They played on bad pitches in her father's day and it caused people health problems later in life - some needed hip replacements.</p> <p>02:10 She went to the United States in 1993, having graduated from college. She applied for a visa to emigrate and got one.</p> <p>02:35 She got involved with the GAA in the U.S. in late 1994 and in 1995 she was involved in setting up a Fermanagh club in New York.</p> <p>02:55 There had been a Fermanagh club in New York in the 1940s but it died away.</p> <p>03:05 The championship in Fermanagh is played for the New York Gold Cup, which was presented by the Fermanagh Men's Association in 1948. In 1998 they rededicated the cup and introduced a new cup that was then played for in the Fermanagh championship back in Ireland.</p> <p>03:25 They started the club in New York in 1995 and won a junior championship in 1996.</p> <p>03:35 The men's team folded in 2008 but in 2009 the ladies team - which started in 2000 - was still playing.</p> <p>03:45 The GAA in the U.S. is a great social outlet and is a great way for keeping in touch with people or getting work.</p> <p>04:25 Her work as a physiotherapist got her involved with the GAA - one of the teams asked her along to Gaelic Park in New York.</p> <p>04:55 She had pride in where she was from and that encouraged people to set up the Fermanagh club, but when people started to return home to Ireland the club suffered - in 2009 they had 10 or 11 members whereas before they had as many as 40 members.</p> <p>05:35 When setting up the club they needed to get the players and the necessary funds together. John Joe McGovern of Cavan was the club president. He died in 2002 and that was the beginning of the end for the club because he used to do a lot of work. He had a taxi company.</p> <p>06:20 It is expensive to run a club in the U.S. due to medical bills and importing playing equipment. It can cost double the</p>
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	<p>amount that it would to run a club in Ireland.</p> <p>06:40 Nollaig was club secretary; she did a lot of communication work and was involved in the day-to-day running of the club.</p> <p>07:00 When the club started they had a dinner dance and Peter Quinn came as the guest of honour. 450 people attended.</p> <p>07:15 They also ran 'booze cruises' but that was a little dangerous so they stopped doing them.</p> <p>07:30 They have done mock weddings where they invited people from two neighbouring counties.</p> <p>07:45 They have also done quizzes, blind dates, raffles and nights at the races.</p> <p>08:05 A lot of Nollaig's spare time was spent doing club-related things and she has made some great friends through the GAA.</p> <p>09:00 There is more of a mix of nationalities with the ladies football than with the men's - 50 per cent of the ladies footballers at the Fermanagh club are Americans.</p> <p>09:15 A lot of women from Northern Ireland play ladies football.</p> <p>09:30 Not as many male Americans play GAA at senior level.</p> <p>10:20 There are a lot of Irish-American women playing but also Italians, Greeks, Hispanics.</p> <p>10:30 In 2003 Nollaig was elected chairperson of the ladies county board.</p> <p>10:45 In 2004 they hosted the TG4 All Stars and at their peak had nine clubs. In 2009 they had five clubs.</p> <p>11:15 In 2003 they started 'Gaelic for girls' which was about getting underage players involved and in 2009 they had two underage clubs - one in the city and one in Rockland County, with another being set up in 2009.</p> <p>11:40 The official ladies football organisation was started in 1992. Terry Connaughton of The Steakhouse was the first</p>
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	<p>president.</p> <p>11:55 Cavan ladies have won 13 championships. Na Fianna have won one and Mayo three, but Cavan are the only club that were there in 1992 and still in existence in 2009.</p> <p>12:30 As chairperson she oversees the running of the league schedule, organises social functions and works on getting student interns over from Ireland. She also sits on various committee between the men's GAA and the ladies GAA.</p> <p>13:10 There is great co-operation between the men and women.</p> <p>13:50 They are affiliated with Cumann Peil Gael na mBan in Ireland, but the youth board, the minor board and the ladies board in New York all work together.</p> <p>14:35 They keep their finances separate.</p> <p>14:55 There can be conflicts over scheduling of games but since Gaelic Park was redeveloped and floodlights put in there is more time for games.</p> <p>16:00 The GAA has helped a lot in terms of scheduling, insurance and funding if necessary.</p> <p>16:15 'Gaelic for girls' started in 2003 with 30 girls between the ages of eight and 12. The girls were given coaching sessions so that they could learn the skills.</p> <p>16:40 In 2008 they decided to start a club in the area because there was not enough games for the girls to play.</p> <p>17:00 The Continental Youth Championships are held in a different city every year. In 2009 they were held in San Francisco but due to a poor economic climate many players were unable to make the journey.</p> <p>17:30 In 2008 the Fermanagh club won all the silverware at the championships in Philadelphia.</p> <p>17:45 Their youth coaches are established players from within the ladies teams.</p> <p>17:55 They have a Féile Peil na nÓg team and made it to the Division 4 final two years in-a-row but lost both times, although on one occasion it was to Nollaig's home club of</p>
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	<p>Kinawley.</p> <p>18:20 In 2009 they had an Under-16 development squad and in 2008 they went to the Waterford Institute of Technology to do intensive training and play games. They also hosted a blitz where teams from Ireland went over.</p> <p>18:50 They are hoping to start a north east league in the U.S. with Boston and Philadelphia.</p> <p>19:20 There is some rivalry between the New York and North American boards but the Continental championships helped to bring them together.</p> <p>19:40 They work closely with Philadelphia as it is only 100 miles away. Boston is 200 miles away which makes challenge matches more difficult.</p> <p>20:10 In North America they have to play according to the men's rules of the game and the interpretation of those rules is different which can cause problems.</p> <p>20:35 They are working on correcting this because the safety of the underage girls is important and ladies rules would suit them better because there's no contact under those rules.</p> <p>21:55 Some of the girls from the mixed Fairfield team were also on the Féile team in 2008. They would like to see a girls-only Fairfield team but there are not enough numbers.</p> <p>22:30 Girls and boys can play together up to 12 years of age.</p> <p>22:45 Many clubs rely on girls to make up a team. One of them is called Rangers and in 2009 they had four or five girls on their Under-14 team.</p> <p>23:30 Their championship consists of five teams and they all play each other twice, with the top four teams reaching the semi-finals. They also have a knockout cup. The bottom three teams in the championship play each other in a junior competition for a cup.</p> <p>24:05 They play from May to August and have a combination of all the provinces but in 2009 it was Ulster against the rest.</p> <p>24:30 They have three players who can come over from Ireland to play in the summer. Usually they are students who are spending the summer in the U.S.</p>
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25:05 They have had some players from the Cork All-Ireland winning team like Nollaig Cleary, Deirdre O'Reilly and Sinéad O'Reilly come over and play.

25:35 In 2009 Nollaig was expecting an influx of players because the U.S. Government introduced a one-year working visa.

26:10 The lack of players, clubs and games at underage level is tough and at senior level you find yourself playing the same teams over and over again.

27:00 Most of the youth players keep playing into senior. The biggest drop-off happens when the girls are aged between 14 and 16. Some have to travel far to go to college.

28:15 In 2009 they hired a games development officer to target colleges in New York like Iona, Manhattan College and a college in New Rochelle.

28:45 They get five or six players a year from Manhattan College.

29:25 Nollaig is the only person from Fermanagh involved with the ladies club.

30:15 Kinawley had only just started their ladies football club when Nollaig emigrated.

30:35 It is too hard to get camogie going in New York.

31:40 The health system in the U.S. is not player-friendly and a lot of the players have no medical insurance, so Nollaig's skills in physiotherapy are often needed. She has two other physios working with her.

32:40 Every time there is a game in Gaelic Park somebody with medical skills has to be present.

33:15 She has very little spare time due to GAA commitments and is on call 24/7.

34:35 The facilities are not great in New York as they only have Gaelic Park and Paddy's Field in Woodlawn, where minor games are played. Rockland were upgrading their pitch in 2009 and outside of that the players have to rely on city parks.

	<p>35:25 They get some use of Paddy's Field for their underage teams and they trained the Féile teams at Gaelic Parks.</p> <p>35:40 When they have to train in the city parks there are concerns over the safety of the girls.</p> <p>36:00 Irish culture plays a big role in the GAA in the U.S. but the Irish language does not.</p> <p>36:20 Recalls sending a letter to schools which featured one line of Irish and then being called up by people who received the letter objecting to that.</p> <p>37:15 Irish dancing is popular and a lot of the colleges have Irish groups.</p> <p>38:00 Nollaig feels that players should be reimbursed on expenses but paying the players is a bad idea.</p> <p>38:55 Volunteers are an integral part of the GAA.</p> <p>38:55 GAA facilities have improved dramatically over the years and Croke Park seems to have a lot more money while counties are more hungry than ever to succeed.</p> <p>41:00 Difference in supporters' expectations of the Fermanagh team when Nollaig was growing up and in 2009.</p> <p>41:35 Changes in how the GAA markets itself and spends its money.</p> <p>42:20 Issues between ladies football and the GAA at both club and national level that Nollaig would like to see addressed.</p> <p>43:50 Effect of increased media coverage and technological advancements on Nollaig's GAA experience in the U.S.</p> <p>46:20 Her admiration for Peter McGinnity, Barry Owens and Marty McGrath and for members of the 2009 Fermanagh squad. Admiration for Peter Quinn and Sean Kelly's administrative abilities.</p> <p>47:40 Recalls a Cork-Kilkenny hurling game being her first at the redeveloped Croke Park.</p> <p>48:05 Talks about hosting the Underdogs in 2007.</p>
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	<p>48:20 Recalls going to Croke Park to watch Fermanagh play Mayo in an All-Ireland semi-final. Enjoying the day out.</p> <p>49:10 Being disappointed with Fermanagh's campaign in the 2008 senior football championship.</p> <p>49:50 Shortage of female referees for ladies football in the United States.</p> <p>50:35 Significant role played by the GAA in Nollaig's life. Friends she has made through the GAA.</p>
<p><b>Involvement in GAA</b></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input 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 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><b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Played Ladies Football at home for 5 years and in New York for 3. She won a junior championship in 2007.</p>
<p><b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Fermanagh Club Secretary, 1995 – 2007</p> <p>Ladies: Fermanagh Club Chairperson, 2002 - ; Ladies GAA Chairperson, 2003 - .</p>
<p><b>Format</b></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual</p>
<p><b>Duration</b></p>	<p>Length of Interview: 00:52:20</p>
<p><b>Language</b></p>	<p>English</p>

**To be filled in by Interviewer:**

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Signed:     \_\_\_Arlene Crampsie\_\_\_\_\_

Date:       \_\_\_12/06/12\_\_\_\_\_