

GAA Oral History Project

**Interview Report Form**

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Brendan O'Sullivan
<b>Date of Interview</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2008
<b>Location</b>	Interviewee's home, near Clontarf, Dublin
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Al O'Donoghue
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1933 <b>Home County:</b> Cavan
<b>Education</b>	N/A
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 8
<b>Club(s)</b>	Virginia GAA Club [Cavan]; St Mary's GAA Club Caherciveen [Kerry]; Ballinlough GAA Club [Meath]
<b>Occupation</b>	Teacher
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Pharmacist [Father]
<b>Religion</b>	N/A
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	N/A
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	N/A

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<b>Date of Report</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> July 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1930s – 2008
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Cavan, Kerry, Meath, Dublin, Galway
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Violence, Politics, Professionalism, Economy / Economics
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>Al talks about his involvement in the GAA down through the years. His father's enthusiasm for Gaelic games rubbed off on him and he started to play. Things were basic back then and they didn't have the best of facilities, but things were often rough on the field of play so you needed to be tough in order to survive. Al recalls travelling to support the Cavan team and later travelling to play with various schools and clubs in Meath, Dublin, Galway and Kerry. In Kerry he worked as a teacher, coached youth teams and played with a local club, all the time maintaining his involvement with Cavan GAA. He played with some of the great Kerry players and remembers his time there as if it were yesterday. He later moved back to Cavan and played with the county team. He trained teams at all levels and with varying degrees of success, and also found time to try his hand at refereeing, take up administrative positions and become involved in tutoring coaches. He has experience at all levels of the GAA and his vivid recollections shed light on what it was like to be involved in the Association at a time when things were often much more volatile than they are now.</p> <p>00:00:45 His father was a chemist and his mother's family were in the cattle business.</p> <p>00:01:25 He has eight siblings</p> <p>00:01:40 His father was a GAA fanatic and travelled to games all over the country in his Chevy</p> <p>00:02:15 His father was an officer of the county board for many years and had also played the game</p> <p>00:02:45 His father played with Meath as he was working in</p>

	<p>Kells. He won a Meath championship with Kells and games were sometimes rough</p> <p>00:03:35 It wasn't enough to beat a person with skills; you had to be physical too</p> <p>00:03:45 Al went to watch games from the age of four, often in Virginia and paying six pence to get in</p> <p>00:04:05 Talks about Virginia's team at the time and how the supporters behaved</p> <p>00:04:30 League matches were played home and away</p> <p>00:04:50 As children they had no ball and sometimes used the bladder of a pig or tied socks and paper together and used that instead</p> <p>00:05:20 They were influenced by Michael O' Heiher's commentaries and one day Al was pretending he was a Corkman, [...] whilst playing</p> <p>00:05:45 There was no traffic so they were free to play and were very competitive</p> <p>00:06:10 Al was a shy child and didn't think he had the guts to play football</p> <p>00:06:35 There were no organised games so they organised the town of Virginia into two and played each other</p> <p>00:06:50 One day Al was hit with frozen cow manure but he got his own back</p> <p>00:07:10 Many of the children went on to become good footballers</p> <p>00:07:30 Heroes of Al's included people he saw at Clones at the Ulster final</p> <p>00:07:35 They travelled in the car and Cavan rarely lost between the mid-1930s and 1946; they did lose in 1946 and Al was upset</p> <p>00:08:00 One car would make a number of trips ferrying people up and down to Clones</p> <p>00:08:25 Some people used to cycle - it was 20 miles to Cavan and then you had to go to Clones</p> <p>00:08:35 Antrim beat Cavan in 1946 and they were later beaten by Kerry</p>
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	<p>00:08:55 Al's first All-Ireland final was in 1945 when Cork won. TP O'Reilly shot three wides in five minutes. Johnny Wilson was playing for Cavan</p> <p>00:09:40 Heroes were people his father mentioned, like Patsy Lynch of Bailieborough and Donal Morgan from Cross, Paddy McNamee who was a substitute in 1933.</p> <p>00:10:25 Virginia once had the pick of a huge area but didn't win anything between 1916 and 1958</p> <p>00:10:50 There was nothing to do but play football</p> <p>00:11:10 One time the parish priest bought a football for the locals</p> <p>00:11:35 Fr Michael O'Rourke was the curate and a big GAA man</p> <p>00:11:50 The parish of Virginia had three sections - Maghera and Lurgan as well as Virginia</p> <p>00:12:15 A farmer named Paddy O'Brien volunteered to be a referee and organised games for Virginia against Lurgan</p> <p>00:13:00 When Al played there was no minor team because of emigration</p> <p>00:13:25 Al went to Oldcastle and got rheumatism and ended up at St Pat's Cavan as a border</p> <p>00:14:00 Michael O Heiher lit up their Sundays and they would listen to the radio either at Al's or in town</p> <p>00:14:25 Many cycled the 52 miles to Dublin to watch games</p> <p>00:14:45 Al's brother was working as a barman in Dublin and often cycled home and back for games</p> <p>00:15:10 A man who was dumb in the town cycled all over to see games</p> <p>00:15:45 Al started playing in 1950</p> <p>00:16:05 His father stopped attending games in the 1970s and often watched Al playing</p> <p>00:16:45 Al was an average player and played with a club called Denn</p> <p>00:17:15 After he turned 18 he improved</p> <p>00:17:25 He went to St Patrick's Maynooth and there was a</p>
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	<p>lot of football played there</p> <p>00:18:00 There were people from every county in Ireland there</p> <p>00:18:30 Al played as a forward but early on lost his place and after persevering he won it back</p> <p>00:19:05 They didn't play teams from outside the college</p> <p>00:19:50 Players often ended up in the infirmary as things often got rough</p> <p>00:20:15 First and second years in Maynooth played separately to the older people in Maynooth</p> <p>00:20:40 Al's team won the championship in Maynooth</p> <p>00:21:00 Players at Maynooth included John D Flannery, Christy O'Connor from Galway, Jim Linnane from Kerry, Tom Morley from Mayo, Sean Flynn, Noel O'Reilly, a Costello man,</p> <p>00:22:05 Recalls a time when Cavan were playing in Croke Park and trying to get to listen to the match</p> <p>00:22:35 Johnny Wilson from Cavan got out of Maynooth to play. Some players sneaked out of Maynooth to play</p> <p>00:23:15 There was a theologian called McGuinness from Roscommon; he could be rough on the field of play</p> <p>00:24:10 Jack Mahon - who later won an All-Ireland with Mayo - was there</p> <p>00:23:30 Mahon and Noel O'Reilly would come back to play the Maynooth boys and Al loved this</p> <p>00:25:00 These games were called [...] games - it was a society for people who left Maynooth and were looking for jobs</p> <p>00:25:40 After Maynooth Al went to Galway to do a higher diploma</p> <p>00:26:25 He played Sigerson football in Galway and played against Sean Purcell and Stockwell, and recalls telling a Mayo man named Gilmartin to mark Purcell</p> <p>00:27:15 A man named Higgins coached them and was very good. They trained in Fahey's field on the edge of Galway</p> <p>00:27:40 Al also boxed and fought regularly. He was a determined fighter</p>
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	<p>00:28:25 When he went back to Cavan he had been in the local newspaper for winning a boxing tournament and got great respect</p> <p>00:29:00 Virginia started as a junior team in 1956. They lost to Killenkere in Breffni Park in the final</p> <p>00:29:30 They lost in the first round the following year and in 1958 they decided to be serious and they went on to win it</p> <p>00:29:50 Al moved down to Kerry and had fond memories of holidaying in Ballyunion in Kerry</p> <p>00:30:25 He was delighted to be in Kerry and was teaching in Cahirciveen and coaching football</p> <p>00:31:00 He got on the Mary's team and played against Renard, Valentia, Waterville, Portmagee</p> <p>00:31:35 There was a Dasher Connor with Valentia; they were tough men</p> <p>00:31:55 Al was picked to represent South Kerry and was asked to take a trial with the Kerry junior team, although he was playing for the Cavan junior team at the time and was a substitute on the Cavan senior team</p> <p>00:32:50 He was advised to play badly in his trial for Kerry</p> <p>00:33:50 He spent two years with South Kerry and in the second year they won the county championship</p> <p>00:34:15 He played centre half back for the Marys club</p> <p>00:34:20 Mick O'Connell played for Valentia against Renard and Al started telling the Valentia selectors how to play Mick O'Connell</p> <p>00:35:20 The following Sunday Al was playing in a game against O'Connell and wanted to do a good marking job on him</p> <p>00:36:00 Maurice Fitzgerald's father Ned played for South Kerry, as did Jerome Shea, Mick O'Connell's brother, Sugrue from Portmagee, Dasher Connor, Michael Dwyer, Griffin from Caherciveen, Tadhg Connell, Gerald Sullivan</p> <p>00:37:00 They lost to Kerins O'Rahillys and Al went to an objection hearing in Tralee. He was playing in both counties but nobody realised</p> <p>00:38:00 Al feels they lost to Kerins O Rahillys because of</p>
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	<p>fear brought about by a rumour</p> <p>00:40:20 Al was only the second Cavan man to win a medal in Kerry after Simon Deignan, who was in the army</p> <p>00:40:45 He went back to Oldcastle to work there and got a nice letter from Brother Cotter in Cahirciveen when he left Kerry</p> <p>00:42:20 He played with Virgina, winning a junior championship, two senior championships and two senior leagues between 1958 and 1962, the year he became chairman of the club</p> <p>00:42:45 The previous chairman left because he had received a punch at a meeting</p> <p>00:44:45 You only started preparing for games in Easter but Al trained by himself as well</p> <p>00:45:45 Al went to play in Meath and lost a final to Skryne because of indiscipline</p> <p>00:46:20 Al's father didn't talk to him when he went to Meath</p> <p>00:47:20 In 1955 he was selected to play for Cavan and received a card in the post informing him</p> <p>00:47:50 His first game was in Breffni Park and he kept the jersey</p> <p>00:48:20 His second game was against Mayo in Swinford and he played against Longford in Longford Park</p> <p>00:48:40 They only got to a League final once, against Down, and Al wasn't even on the panel because of selector politics</p> <p>00:50:00 He went to Dublin with High Barney and watched the game from the sideline. He was hurt and was glad to see Cavan beaten that day</p> <p>00:51:10 His daughter has played in Croke Park but he never got to, although he managed a county team to a Vocational Schools' final there in 2000, beating Tyrone and Cork along the way</p> <p>00:51:45 He played Armagh in the Ulster Championship with Cavan and lost, the first time Cavan had lost in the first round in 44 years</p> <p>00:52:00 Gabriel Kelly played for Cavan but rambled too much and Al got in trouble whilst trying to cover for him</p>
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	<p>00:53:05 Colm Smith was full back and was a bit afraid of the Armagh man he was marking</p> <p>00:54:00 In 1961 he switched to Ballinlough in Meath as Oldcastle had no team at the time; he coached them too</p> <p>00:55:00 He met great friends through football</p> <p>00:55:20 He had coached a bit in Cahirciveen with the Under-14s but at the time they just played football in training</p> <p>00:56:40 He went refereeing and was the first chairman of the Cavan Referees' Association</p> <p>00:56:50 He refereed a game between Monaghan and Tyrone but then changed to coaching</p> <p>00:57:10 He had to run and hide during a game in Monaghan</p> <p>00:58:00 Recalls an argument in a game between Cross and Knockbride in Cavan that he was refereeing; Brendan Smith advised him on what to do</p> <p>00:59:05 Tells a story of a serious argument at a game when he was a young child; there was widespread violence</p> <p>00:59:55 Recalls a match in Cootehill and there were several games going on at once. Their chairman Matty McNamee got a call from the Cootehill chairman ahead of the game immediately following the original fall-out with a proposition</p> <p>01:01:50 AI has coached Oldcastle to an intermediate championship in 1987, Ramer to a league semi-final, Moylough to an intermediate championship in 1975</p> <p>01:02:45 He has coached teams in Clontarf in Dublin</p> <p>01:03:00 He is a member of Clontarf club and coaches at St Finian's in Swords. He also coached Garretstown</p> <p>01:03:00 He worked with County Dublin VEC and had an office in Swords</p> <p>01:03:50 Tom Crotty and Bill Cashman from Erin's Isle were in the school and got him involved</p> <p>01:04:20 He was chairman of the Leinster Vocational Schools Board for ten years and trained a team to a Leinster Championship and an All-Ireland with players like Darren McGee, Stephen Shaughnessy, Seamus Breathnach, people from Ballyboden, Fingalians, St Margaret's</p> <p>01:05:20 They beat Tyrone in that All-Ireland final and some</p>
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	<p>luck went their way</p> <p>01:07:50 In 1975 he coached Moylough to a dramatic win over Dunshaughlin by making various tactical changes</p> <p>01:09:10 In Galway he coached Kilannin to their first ever Galway championship in 1967, Kevin Walsh and the Faheys play there</p> <p>01:09:35 Al doesn't like all the appealing of suspensions that happens now</p> <p>01:09:50 He doesn't like the GPA</p> <p>01:10:15 Children are better looked after now, which is good</p> <p>01:11:10 Al reads books on coaching methods in other sports and tries to ask players on what they would like to do</p> <p>01:11:55 Al was sent by Pat Daly at Croke Park to Limerick in 1992/1993 for training on how to coach coaches</p> <p>01:12:30 He gave courses to coaches all over Leinster</p> <p>01:13:00 He did a training course at NUI Galway and set up a course in Maynooth to train coaching tutors - Al is in the master tutors group</p> <p>01:14:00 Everyone ought to try and improve themselves in what they are doing in football</p> <p>01:15:05 The South Kerry players impressed him the most during his career</p> <p>01:15:45 He loved to watch Purcell and Stockwell play</p> <p>01:16:35 He liked to watch Down play, and the great Kerry team featuring Pat Spillane (Kerry captain in 2009 Darran O'Sullivan reminds him of Spillane), Ogie Moran, Jack O'Shea, The Bomber Liston, Mikey Sheehy and John Egan, John O'Keefe, Ger O'Keefe, Páidí Ó Sé</p> <p>01:18:00 He also liked Dublin players like Hanahoe, Anton O'Toole, David Hickey, Alan Larkin, Buckley, Kevin Moran</p> <p>01:18:50 Cavan are no longer very good and this is very disappointing</p> <p>01:19:10 Tyrone have played very well, as have Armagh</p> <p>01:19:40 He admires Kerry's Tommy Walsh who played until 2009</p>
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	<p>01:20:45 The GPA 'would want to be put in their place'</p> <p>01:22:00 AI is very thankful for his GAA experiences and tells a story about ginger biscuits</p> <p>01:22:45 He liked the Cavan team of 1947 and 1948 team and thinks that they should have won again in 1949</p>
<b>Involvement in GAA</b>	<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 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>
<b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)	3 Cavan County Championships; 1 Kerry County Championship
<b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)	Chairman of Vocational Schools GAA for 10 years
<b>Format</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 01:23:43
<b>Language</b>	English

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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:        Brendan O'Sullivan

Date:            10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2008