

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	N/A
Date of Interview	14 th April 2011
Location	N/A
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	John McGeary ('Big John')
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: c. 1935 Home County: Armagh
Education	N/A
Family	Siblings: 4 boys, 3 girls Current Family if Different: Married with 3 girls, 3 boys
Club(s)	Collegeland O'Rahillys GAA [Armagh]
Occupation	N/A
Parents' Occupation	Cattle dealer and farmer [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
Religion	N/A
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

Date of Report	16 July 2012
Period Covered	1940s - 2002
Counties/Countries Covered	Armagh, Tyrone
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Material Culture, Religion, Role of Clergy, Role of the Club in the Community, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Big John McGeary, a founder member of Collegeland O’Rahillys, opens this interview by discussing his family background and early GAA experiences. For instance, he was brought by his father to attend the 1945 All-Ireland final between Cork and Cavan. This was the year that Collegeland Harps, the club of which his father was Treasurer, folded. He tells of how a new club, Collegeland O’Rahilly’s was founded in 1949 and charts some of the major developments in the club’s early history. Most notably, he captained the Junior championship winning team of 1956. Another highlight was the wining of the 1961 senior championship. He talks about the lack of underage football in the club when he was growing up and how the club would amalgamate for this purpose at a later stage. Landmarks occasions in the club and county’s history are recalled, including participation in Tournaments, the opening of the new club rooms in 2000 and Armagh’s All-Ireland success of 2002. Alongside Gaelic football, McGeary evinces a great passion for athletics and talks about the starting up of Armagh Athletic Club. He reflects on the catchment area of the club and the successes they have enjoyed.</p> <p>Sports featured include Gaelic football and athletics.</p> <p>00:00:10 Explains why he was known as ‘Big John’ – there were five John McGeary’s in the same district. Says that in his own family there were four boys and three girls.</p> <p>00:00:28 Provides information on his own family: his wife (Mary McBride), who he married in 1961, was from Newtownhamilton Road. Refers also to his parents and their occupations.</p> <p>00:00:40 Becoming involved in the GAA: Recalls being 7 and his father being Treasurer of Collegeland Harps who played in green and white. Recalls him with his ‘small book’.</p>

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	<p>00:01:00 Reference to club folding in 1945.</p> <p>00:01:14 Recalls his taking himself, his brother Patsy and two cousins called John McGeary to the 1945 All-Ireland final to see Cork play Cavan. Mentions his sadness of Tom Reilly being taken off Cavan team at half-time due to injury. Refers also to Jack Lynch playing with Cork and not knowing how well known he'd become.</p> <p>00:01:40 Remarks that Cavan were 'great favourites' – 'it was like the young people nowadays with Manchester United'.</p> <p>00:01:46 Refers to 1948 and Cavan defeating Mayo on 'a very wet day'.</p> <p>00:01:55 Says that in 1950 Armagh won their first Ulster senior final beating Cavan in Clones.</p> <p>00:02:00 States that in 1949 a new club – Collegeland O'Rahilly's – started. Led by Fr. McKnight as chairman. Remarks that he was 14 years old at the time and the decision of club to wear blue jerseys – 'probably of Cavan'.</p> <p>00:02:20 Mentions captaining club to first Junior Championship in Maghery in 1956, defeating Patrick Sarsfields, Derrytrasna. Remarks that Sean Quinn didn't play that day and speculates it was because he was in the army and 'not allowed out'.</p> <p>00:02:40 Mentions that brother Leo was captain of the minor team that same year, when winning the minor final.</p> <p>00:02:50 Refers to four boys at the time: Leo (18), Tommy (19), John (20) and Patsy (21).</p> <p>00:03:00 Refers to absence of underage at the time and that he didn't play football until he was 16. Says, however, that he ran 'a lot of cross country' with Armagh A.C. for three or four years.</p> <p>00:03:14 Comments on attending a minor trial for Armagh in 1953 and being picked for minor team. Says they won the Ulster final the same day the senior's won their Ulster final.</p> <p>00:03:35 Mentions that Collegeland was a 'very small community' and had to amalgamate with St. John's, Clonmore to form underage teams.</p> <p>00:03:50 Refers to opening new club rooms in 2000. Recalls Cardinal Brady officiating and the ball being dropped from an aircraft in blue in white to start the game.</p>
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	<p>00:04:13 Discusses travelling in a bus to travel to games and the cost to players and supporters. Mentions that they togged out on the bus and that quality of grounds was 'very poor, maybe the side of the hill or a bog.' Remarks that playing in the Athletic Grounds was like Croke Park: 'it was such a big event'.</p> <p>00:04:55 Comments on starting an Athletic club under NACA rules, covering Blackwatertown, Grange, Moy – says that Plunkett Donaghy ran for them when he was 16. Talks about travelling 'fare and wide' with youngsters, including to Cork and Kerry. Competed in cross country and track and field.</p> <p>00:05:30 Selects as his biggest disappointment in the GAA the year that Armagh were beaten by Down in an Ulster final when they were All-Ireland champions. Believes that had Armagh won they may have gone on to win an All-Ireland that same year.</p> <p>00:05:55 Remarks that the club team won its first senior county final that same year. And won the minor final, amalgamated with St. Jarlath's, Blackwatertown.</p> <p>00:06:05 Says that he had three brothers play with him that day and four cousins. Comments that most people thought they were all brothers.</p> <p>00:06:15 Other brothers involved included the McCormack's, the McHughs, the Donnelly's.</p> <p>00:06:20 Recalling the presentation in Maghery after the 1961 senior final. Says that Fr. McKnight was the 'man of the moment' and mentions James McCartan took the Sam Maguire cup to sit beside the cup now known as the Gerry Fagan final. Describes it as a 'joyous moment'.</p> <p>00:07:00 Other memorable occasions: talk about the Athletic club belonging to many of the surrounding districts and the success they enjoyed in All-Ireland championships in cross country and track and field, in schools. Remarks that some competed and won in Belgium. Remarks also on their participation in the Community games in Mosney. Mentions Plunkett Donaghy running the 1500 metres as an Under 16.</p> <p>00:07:50 Mentions this as a 'tremendous time' and remarks on retaining many photographs and certificates documenting these athletic achievements.</p> <p>00:08:10 Talks about Armagh winning the 2002 All-Ireland title and flags flying until 'Joe Kernan had to tell people to take</p>
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	<p>them down’.</p> <p>00:08:34 Reflects on rivalries and the disappointments of losing games. Mentions also the Tournaments they were invited to attend: Glencull, Omagh, Monaghan Harps. Describes it as an ‘honour’ to go and play in these tournaments as a small club.</p> <p>00:09:11 Refers to rivalry with The Moy and others.</p>
Involvement in GAA	<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 type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input 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>
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	<p>Player with Armagh Minor team in 1953, winners of Ulster championship</p> <p>Captain of Collegeland O’Rahillys, 1956 Junior Champions</p>
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	N/A
Format	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Audio <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual</p>
Duration	Length of Interview: 00:09:32
Language	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: _____

Date: 14th April 2011