

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Regina Fitzpatrick
<b>Date of Interview</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> April 2012
<b>Location</b>	Cusack Park, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Pat Collins
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1942 <b>Home County:</b> Meath
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> Athboy NS, Co. Meath <b>Secondary:</b> Athboy VEC, Co. Meath
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 1 brother <b>Current Family if Different:</b> Wife & 1 son
<b>Club(s)</b>	Athboy Football and Hurling Club [Meath]; St Loman's GAA [Westmeath]; Raharney Hurling Club [Westmeath]
<b>Occupation</b>	Nurse, St Loman's Psychiatric Hospital
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Postman [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	None
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	N/A

**REFERENCE NO. MH/1/19**

<b>Date of Report</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> June 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1940s - 2012
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Westmeath, Meath, Dublin, Mayo, Down, Kerry, Cork, Louth, Laois, Offaly, Australia, Australasia
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Material Culture, Education, Media, Involvement in GAA Abroad, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Alcohol, Violence, Bribery, Politics, Northern Ireland, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Food and Drink, Socialising, Relationships, Economy/Economics
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>Pat discusses his lifelong contribution to the GAA. He explains how he represented his native county of Meath in both football and hurling at minor and senior level before moving to Westmeath to work in St. Loman's Hospital. He outlines his playing career in his adopted county and describes his career refereeing football matches. He also considers the challenges of refereeing All-Ireland finals and International Rules games and discusses coverage of his performances in the media. In addition, Pat recalls his various other roles within the GAA, including managing a patients' team in St. Loman's Hospital, acting as selector for Westmeath in 2004 when Westmeath won the Leinster Final, and his 32-year tenure as county secretary. Finally, he reflects on the changes he has witnessed both in refereeing and within the organisation as a whole.</p> <p>00:33 Describes upbringing in the Hill of Ward, near Athboy, Co. Meath. His father playing hurling for Meath, the first Meath man to play hurling for Leinster. Pat's earliest memories of playing hurling and football on the road, few cars.</p> <p>02:17 Athboy primarily a hurling area. Playing both sports. Strong team in Athboy at underage. Mentions sporting influence of Mr Keenan in school. Winning Under-14 championship in football and hurling in 1956. Also playing pitch and putt. Also tennis and badminton.</p>

	<p>03:54 Discusses prominence of hurling and football in national school. Mentions Tommy Reilly's involvement with team after school. GAA pitch in Athboy, also fair green for informal games. No television. Listening to Micheal O'Hehir on radio, wet battery.</p> <p>05:54 Explains how lack of television resulted in fewer sporting heroes. O'Hehir's descriptive skills. Mentions Peter McDermott. Meath's football strength. Pathé newsreels in cinema occasionally showing clips of All-Ireland finals from 1950s. Start of televising All-Ireland finals in early 1960s. Recalls listening to boxing matches in the 1950s. Mentions Rocky Marciano and Sugar Ray Robinson. Also listening to soccer matches. Mentions Moscow Dynamo and Wolverhamptons. BBC. Watching Wimbledon tennis matches on television in electrical shop in Athboy.</p> <p>09:35 Recalls going to matches as a child. No car. Mentions neighbours the Andrews bringing them to matches. Pub after matches, drinking Club Orange. Drink driving. Attending All-Ireland Senior Hurling Final in 1959, Kilkenny vs. Waterford. Also 1961 All-Ireland Senior Football Final, Down vs. Offaly. Record crowd, Pat in Hill 16. No seats under Cusack Stand.</p> <p>12:20 Comparison of Croke Park then with today. Seeing hurlers, for example Ollie Walsh. Uncomfortable, difficult to see.</p> <p>13:42 Describes gear when he was young. Compares boots with today's. No training gear. Heaviness of wet footballs and sliotars. Travelling to matches in back of open-top lorry. Mentions driver, The Lugs McGovern. Playing matches in Trim. Recounts incident involving basin of urine being thrown at celebrating team in lorry.</p> <p>17:25 Mentions rivals: Bohermeen in football. Mentions referee John Andrews in Trim. Recalls being driven in car to play illegally with Delvin, Westmeath, in minor hurling match. Mentions Willie Weldon. Mentions Paddy Shaughnessy of Delvin who played a camogie match. Also mentions teacher Eugene Doherty, his son Patrick Doherty currently working in Croke Park.</p> <p>23:25 Describes Athboy in the 40s and 50s. Little industry. Paying tab in grocery shops. Pitch and putt club, also badminton, tennis, GAA clubs. Dance hall.</p> <p>25:34 Reflects on the part of Gaelic Games in the vocational school. Mentions teacher Snitchy Ferguson, Dublin footballer. Snitchy's spell in Portlaoise Prison for Republican activities.</p>
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	<p>Snitchy's son, Terry Ferguson, who won an All-Ireland with Meath. Also mentions Christy Ring. Hurling and football teams in vocational school. Recalls playing with Meath Vocational School team in Newry. Also playing for Athboy GAA Club at various grades, underage to senior. Winning intermediate title in 1960. Going to work in St. Loman's Hospital in Mullingar. Recalls doing exam to work there. Mentions Joe Geraghty. Considers the advantages of his GAA talents in getting job. Playing for St. Loman's Mullingar GAA Club from 1961. Hitchhiking to Athboy.</p> <p>31:49 Describes playing minor and senior football and hurling for Meath. Recalls playing football and hurling on same day in Navan. Mentions Enda Colleran. Getting card in post calling him up for county team. Driven to county training.</p> <p>34:38 Discusses living in St. Loman's Hospital. Sharing rooms with Westmeath footballer Mick Carley. Also mentions Dessie Dolan. Carley introducing Pat to Pat's wife. St. Loman's a major employer. Rules about signing in and out at gate lodge, regime less harsh under Dr. O'Brien. Description of changes in St. Loman's and in psychiatric hospitals in general. Interest in football of Meath patients. Patients brought to matches in Cusack Park.</p> <p>39:08 Describes his management of a patients' football team in St. Loman's in the early 1960s. Travelling to play in Cork and Killarney. Playing against St. Finian's, St. Ita's Portrane, St. Brendan's. Training patients during work hours.</p> <p>41:00 Explains how an interest in Gaelic games helped in his work. Refereeing. Bond with Meath patients.</p> <p>42:02 Outlines the development of his playing career. St. Loman's a strong club, Gardaí membership. Arriving in 1960, winning championship in 1961 and 1963. Playing alongside Mick Carley until Carley went to play with The Downs GAA Club. Fewer games compared to today. Playing tournament games. His dislike of training: laps of field. No nutrition advice.</p> <p>45:22 Mentions trainer Ned Reilly, Longford player, Fianna Fáil politician. Also mentions Albert Reynolds. Insignificance of manager then, comparison with cult of the manager today.</p> <p>46:53 Playing hurling and football with Westmeath for couple of years. Hurling with Raharney Hurling Club, Mullingar. Less intense training. No hamstring injuries. Robustness of game.</p> <p>48:53 Reflects on social life surrounding the GAA in those days. Gallaghers' pub in Mullingar, Kellys' in Moate. Team</p>
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	<p>drinking alcohol, Pat drinking orange. Celebrations after winning match: bringing cup around pubs.</p> <p>50:29 Describes tournaments: the Roseland Cup in Moate, tournament in Kilskyre, Meath. Knockout nature of championships. No local leagues.</p> <p>52:11 Discusses how he got involved in refereeing. Around 1968. No knowledge of rules. Mentions refereeing games with St. Finian's and St. Mel's in Longford. Shortage of referees. No referees' seminars or committees then. Progress to refereeing county finals, hurling and football. Recounts story of refereeing a game between Galway and Antrim in Ballycastle in 1973, travelling by bus. Mentions Frank Corr escorting them to Ballycastle, killed shortly after by loyalist paramilitaries.</p> <p>58:22 Reflects on importance and difficulty of refereeing job. Recalls refereeing 1974 All-Ireland Football Semi-final between Galway and Donegal. Mentions Brian McEniff. Describes further refereeing. Recalls being contacted by GAA correspondent for <i>Irish Independent</i> Donal Carroll. Recalls refereeing 1976 All-Ireland Senior Football Final between Dublin and Kerry. Mentions Mikey Sheehy, Paddy Cullen, Tony Hanahoe.</p> <p>01:03:08 Discusses his mental attitude before the 1976 game. Conscious of the significance of the game. Umpires in game working with him in St. Loman's Hospital. Mentions referee Seamus Aldridge. Refereeing 1981 All-Ireland Senior All-Ireland Football Final. Efforts in that year to curb abuses of handpasses. Glory of Dublin/Kerry teams at the time. His obligation to enforce new guidelines. Recalls travelling to Killarney and Castlebar to demonstrate new rules about handpass. Appearing on television, featured in <i>Irish Press</i>. Mentions referee Pat Lane. Also mentions Frank Murphy. Criticism of Pat Collins in <i>Cork Examiner</i>.</p> <p>01:09:31 Reflects on refereeing All-Ireland Senior Football Final in 1984, GAA centenary. Kerry vs. Dublin. Driving to Croke Park with umpires. Breaking his toe that morning. Mentions Dr. Donal Keenan giving him treatment. Also mentions Micheal O'Hehir. Cutting piece out of football boot. His wife attending all his matches. His wife collapsing in Croke Park and hospitalised that day.</p> <p>01:14:50 Discusses his wife listening to spectators' abuse. Start of International Rules in 1984. Australians in Ireland for 3 tests in Cork and Croke Park. Refereeing final test.</p>
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	<p>Mentions sending off The Big Dipper.</p> <p>01:16:25 Recalls travelling to Australia in 1986 for International Rules game. Mentions Ireland manager Kevin Heffernan. Also mentions fellow referee PJ McGrath. Playing in The WACA in Perth. Acrimonious game. Brawls, players sent off. Also playing in Melbourne and Adelaide. Ireland winning the series. Televisions brought into schools in Ireland to watch games. Celebrations at homecoming in Dublin Airport.</p> <p>01:19:20 Describes touring around Australia. Travelling by plane. Lack of enjoyment of games. Briefing Irish players on rules before games. Mentions Australian referee Rowan Sawyers. Mentions athlete Ronnie Delaney. Outlines further refereeing of Gaelic football and International Rules in the 80s. Reflects on serious nature of refereeing important games. Positive response in newspapers to his refereeing 1989 All-Ireland Senior Football Final. Mentions Cork's Dave Barry.</p> <p>01:26:30 Recalls refereeing Dublin vs. Meath in the 1990 Leinster Senior Football Final. Mentions Jimmy Gray. Robust nature of Dublin vs. Meath games. Positive media response to Pat being chosen. Mentions Colm O'Rourke, John O'Leary. Controversy over disputed goal.</p> <p>01:31:31 Describes refereeing 1979 Leinster Football Final between Dublin and Offaly. Change from 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in September to 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday to facilitate the visit of Pope John Paul II. Mentions Jimmy Keaveney hitting Ollie Minnock, Pat sending Keaveney off. Mentions Brian Mullins. Pat's report ruling Keaveney out of the All-Ireland final. Mentions Padraic Moriarty, Liz Howard speaking on Keaveney's behalf. Pat's wife and son Dublin supporters.</p> <p>01:37:39 Recalls violent game in Croke Park between Louth and Laois. Pat suffering from frozen shoulder. Refereeing his last game in 1995 in Ballina, a national league game. Mentions umpire Paddy Hannon.</p> <p>01:40:32 Discusses his role of chairman of National Referees Committee. Mentions Joe McDonagh. Outlines the changes he made: introducing the Athlone Academy. Travelling around country talking to coaches and referees.</p> <p>01:42:19 Considers the progress in refereeing. More preparation now. Process involved now: exams, fitness test. High standard of refereeing currently. High expectations of</p>
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	<p>spectators.</p> <p>01:45:30 Discusses his opposition to video referees in the GAA. Fallibility of referees. Reasons for video referees in rugby. His agreement with using hawk-eye technology to detect points scored. Difficulty of umpires' decisions.</p> <p>01:48:51 Reflects on his good fortune in never being physically threatened or assaulted. Recalls refereeing a sporting game in 1989 in Burren, Co. Down, the club's welcome for him. Camaraderie. Sleet, very cold. Needing help taking off his boots. His response to highly pressured games. Remembers speaking at an event in Galway about the pressures on referees.</p> <p>01:58:22 Describes the loneliness of a referee's position. Discusses travelling with Irish Compromised Rules team to Australia. Expectations of bias towards Irish team. Reflects on partiality of referees. Importance of consistency.</p> <p>02:01:47 Outlines his career in administration in the GAA. Mentions then county secretary Paddy Flanagan retiring in 1969. Also mentions assistant secretary Tony Gilligan. Meeting Tony at the Bridge Bar, agreeing to be assistant secretary. Progress to secretary. No offices, working from home. His wife's contribution to the role. Arranging All-Ireland final tickets. 32 years in the position. Tradition of county secretaries working in St. Loman's. How he managed work and GAA duties. Fames in Mullingar. Mentions Martin Breheny.</p> <p>02:12:24 Outlines the responsibilities of county secretary. Looking after such things as Cusack Park, players' travelling and accommodation, fixtures, meetings, treasurer duties. Recalls lodging money in post office during bank strike, subsequent issues with tax. Mentions Phil Smith of the tax office in Athlone. Describes another incident lodging GAA money in the bank when it was robbed at gunpoint.</p> <p>02:19:37 Ponders the impact of the role on his family life. Callers to house, his wife's skillful dealings with visitors. Mentions Seamus O'Faolain. Renovating Cusack Park. Fundraising efforts: draws, putting levy on clubs. Partial grant aid. Mentions politicians John Bruton, Jim McDaid, Bertie Ahern, Donie Cassidy. Recalls meeting Bertie Ahern. Also mentions Charlie McCreevy promising them money in the budget.</p> <p>02:28:30 Considers his good fortune in meeting Ahern. Mentions meeting Liam Mulvihill and Paddy Duffy in Croke</p>
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	<p>Park.</p> <p>02:31:44 Discusses the changes he's witnessed in the GAA. More full-time administrators and coaches now. Heavier demands put on inter-county players now: lots of training, sacrifices made.</p> <p>02:34:23 Describes his role as selector in 2004 for Westmeath. Mentions Páidí Ó Sé. Mentions liaison officer Michael Duffy organising hotel and travel arrangements. Dietitian Winning Leinster Football Championship in 2004. His concerns for weaker counties. Disadvantage of playing against Dublin, higher population. Difficulty of attracting same sponsorship as bigger counties. Imbalance. Positive and negative impact of Dublin winning the 2011 All-Ireland Senior Football Final. Importance for Westmeath of winning Leinster championship for first time in 2004: boosting morale, motivating children.</p> <p>02:40:03 Discusses the friendships he has made in the GAA, particularly Westmeath GAA. Mentions Séamus Ó Faoláin. Ponders the negative impact of his GAA involvement on his family. Considers how he could have acted differently.</p> <p>02:43:04 Reflects on what the GAA means to him. Irish identity.</p> <p>02:45:44 Describes his loyalty to Westmeath GAA. Recalls returning to Athboy, his disgust at seeing a rugby pitch.</p> <p>02:51:26 Discusses his success in avoiding major controversies as a referee. Difficulty of being criticised. His pride in being the only Westmeath person to referee an All-Ireland final. Pride in his other achievements and contribution to the GAA.</p>
<p><b>Involvement in GAA</b></p>	<p><input 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 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><b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Club: Played hurling and football with Athboy and won several underage titles including both the Meath Hurling and Football championships in 1956. Won 1960 Meath Intermediate Football Championship with Athboy. Moved to Mullingar in late 1960 and started to play with St Loman's. Won 1961 &amp; 1963 Westmeath Senior Football Championship. Played</p>

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	<p>hurling with Raharney throughout the same period.</p> <p>County: Played minor (1960) and senior hurling and football with Meath (1960 &amp; 62). Played senior hurling and football with Westmeath (early – mid 1960s).</p>
<b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)	<p>1970: Assistant Secretary of Westmeath County Board</p> <p>1976 - 2007: Secretary of Westmeath County Board</p> <p>2008 – 2012: Westmeath GAA Development Officer</p> <p>Selector with Westmeath Senior Football team when they won Leinster Championship in 2004.</p> <p>Late 1990s: Chairman of the National Referees Committee (4 years); also held various positions on rules committees at county and national level.</p>
<b>Format</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 02:55:29
<b>Language</b>	English

**To be filled in by Interviewer:**

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Signed: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012