

Q1: Describe your earliest GAA memory and how you became involved in the GAA?

Where I lived there was a council property at the rear and some great footballers played there when I was a child. Mayo were in All Ireland Finals at both Senior, Junior and Minor and many of the players played in "The Plots" which is the name given to the green field. Famous Mayo players of the time came down there.

From there I played at under age with Claremorris. Then I went to the local Secondary School, St. Colman's College Claremorris. There I experienced the best and most thoughtful coach of my time in Father Jarleth Waldron. We did not win much during my time there but he gave me a great insight into the G.A.A. and many of his coaching methods were used by inter county and club coaches after that. After school I joined the Garda Siochana and played for a Club in Laois, O'Dempsey's. There I won a County Senior Final with the club. It was their first senior win. I had already won a Junior County medal with Claremorris in Mayo. After Laois I came to Castlerea where I won three Senior Club Championships. Whilst in Castlerea I was much involved with O'Rourke Park and the club. I was a member of the County Board and was also on the Connaught Council. Along with playing I coached teams at all grades. I refereed at all grades in the county to and was lucky enough to make the County senior panel for one season. I could write a book on my time with Castlerea.

From there I went to Salthill. Played for one season and retired (then 39). I coached teams to win under age county championships. Became club treasurer and helped to clear what was then an enormous debt of £120,000. I was also involved in many other aspects of the club.

Whilst in Galway I worked with the most diligent committee that I ever worked with. The county development committee raised more than a million pounds for clubs. A committee of five did this with the help of clubs. I refereed many games in Galway at all grades including many county finals and by the way I refereed at inter county level too - Championship and League. I could write much more but it would take a week.

Q2: Did your family have a tradition or history of GAA involvement?

My uncle (mother's brother) was very much involved in Galway. My father had no involvement. My uncle played for Ballycroy (Co. Mayo)

Q3: Did your relatives discuss their GAA experiences with you? What were they?

No.

Q4: Tell me how GAA affected your family life?

life? If I am honest I must say that I feel I gave too much time to the G.A.A. and in one sense I regret this. At the same time I enjoyed it. Two of my sons played for Salthill and one of that two played for Castlereagh. My daughter played for Salthill camogie Club .

Q5: Tell me what it was like to support your club/county when you were young and down through the years (travelling to games, prices of tickets, food, grounds visited, clothes worn, match-day traditions, local celebrations and traditions).

My first experience of travelling away from Claremorris was in a small Ford Car belonging to a neighbour (going to Castlebar) There were sleepers as seats and Mayo were playing Galway in a challenge game. Purcell, Stockwell, and Carney Langan all the greats were playing. I also remember travelling by train to Tuam and getting crushed at the Railway Station.

When we won the Co. Junior Final in Claremorris in 1960 the only celebration I can remember was that we had won in Castlebar and Mickie Noone our Captain sat on the bonnet of a car as we paraded through Claremorris.

Q6: If you had to choose just one game from all you've experienced, which would you choose? Why?

The winning of the Junior Final as it was my first County medal.

My worst experience of a game was in 1964. In 63 O'Dempsey's had won the Laois Final and we were playing Graiguecullen in the county semi final the following year. We were a point down with a minute to go, we got a fifty. I took it and put the ball over the centre of the bar - over the black spot. I was proud of myself. But alas the referee Paddy Peacock said he had not blown the whistle and that I would have to take it again. I did and I put it wide. There was bedlam

Q7: What impact has the GAA had on your life?

Anyone who knows me associates me with the G.A.A. I can speak to people in most counties of the country. I have many contacts that I used and continue to use. I have many stories about contact.

Q8: What place and role does your club have in your community?

Salthill Knocknacarra plays a large role in the Community. There are 38 teams in the club. It caters for all players. It has a large clubhouse and is one of the leading clubs in the country. A few years ago it won the All Ireland Senior Club Football Senior Championship

Q9: What role did the GAA play as part of your school and/or college life?

I played and made many friends. Many of them continue to be friends

Q10: Who do you admire most in the GAA and why?

It is a national body with leaders in every club that lead many organisations in the parish. It caters for all young and not so young people.

Q11: In your experience what have been the biggest changes in the GAA?

Speed of play, Coaching. Administration has improved. Television. I could go on

Q12: Have changes in your community affected your club and how?

Yes. Housing estates - youngsters have grown up and moved away leaving older people in houses. The area covered by the club now is far greater.

Q13: Do you think the role of women in the GAA has changed over the years and how?

Of course it has. They now hold down different positions in many clubs. I see in two counties that the Sec. of the Co. Board is a lady. There is also Ladies Football

Q14: Describe the role of the churches and clergy in your club and how it has changed over the years?

At one time especially up to the seventies the priests played a significant role in the G.A.A. In Mayo for instance the pitches in Castlebar, Claremorris and Charlestown are called after catholic Clergy. They were always involved in clubs at all levels. With the decline in vocations their role has diminished.

Q15: Was there a connection between politics and the GAA for you, if so what?

There was always a connection between politics and the G.A.A. It never had any effect on me.

Q16: What have been the main disappointments you have had with the GAA?

I am delighted to be associated with it. There has been no great disappointment. In many cases those elected to positions were not suitable but they held on to power too long. On the other side there were some magnificent people in the G.A.A. and continue to be there.

Q17: Did the GAA shape your own identity in any way?

That is for others to say

Q18: What role has Irish language and culture had in your club and on your personal involvement with the GAA?

Little in Mayo, Laois and Roscommon. Saw a good deal of it in Galway.

Q19: How important are rivalries within the GAA and what are yours?

Very important. When Mayo and Salthill are playing the opposition I get a little excited

Q20: Comment on the role of volunteers within the GAA?

At my age I continue to be a leading steward at Pearse Stadium in Galway.

Q21: Describe your experience with teams as a player, manager, committee member or supporter.

I have not time to go through the rest of it. I could write a book (if I was able) about the G.A.A. and I

God Bless.

Q22: Describe your experiences, if any, with the GAA outside Ireland.

Q23: Describe how media coverage of GAA in your lifetime has changed.

Q24: What in your opinion are the biggest challenges facing the GAA in the future?

Q25: What does the GAA mean to you?

Q26: Do you have any pictures, documents, video etc. that you could share with us? Please provide a brief description.

Do you know any songs or poems about the GAA in your local area that you can send us or write in here?

Can you think of anyone else in your locality or in your family circle who we should contact for this project? Who are they and why?

Q27: Is there anything else you would like to say about the GAA?

I hereby assign the copyright of the answers 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 questionnaire.

Signed: _____ Sean McManamon _____ Date: __19/3/2009_____

Please Note: If you are aged 18 years or younger this must be signed by your parent / guardian. Failure to do so will mean that we are unable to include your responses in the Archive

REFERENCE NO. (OFFICE USE ONLY): MO/2/11

Data Protection Information

The GAA Oral History Project aims to record the fullest possible picture of what the GAA has meant to the Irish people, in their own words. The project will record face-to-face interviews with thousands of people in Ireland and internationally, including GAA members and supporters, current and former players, managers, officials and administrators; anyone who has ever had any contact or involvement with the GAA. In addition, in order to reach the largest number of people possible, the GAA Oral History Project is also requesting that people fill out one of the questionnaires or send the project a letter or email about the place of the GAA in their life.

At the start of each questionnaire are a number of biographical questions, which we hope will be completed by each respondent. By including this section we aim to build up a profile of the socio-economic, religious and political composition of the people involved in the GAA. As this project aspires to be the largest public history project carried out in the state to date, the material collected will provide possibly the richest source of material to the sociologists of the present and the historians of the future. By including biographical information such as religion, political affiliation, education and occupation this project will allow academics, family or local historians and interested individuals to build up a picture of the composition of the GAA in a locality, a county and in the country. The interviews that are conducted and the questionnaires that are collected will allow current and future family members of participants to hear and see their ancestors, to view their handwriting, to learn about how they lived and the place of the GAA in their lives.

The interviews, questionnaires, letters, documents, recordings and photographs gathered will be preserved as the GAA Oral History Project Archive – a permanent resource on the history of the GAA in particular and Irish society in general. Samples of the collected material will be made available to the public on our website www.gaahistory.com and may be used in: public performances, lectures or talks; publications, including print, audio or video cassettes or CD ROM; public reference purposes in libraries, museums and archives; on radio or television; in educational establishments, including use in a thesis, dissertation or similar research; publication worldwide on the internet.

The entire GAA Oral History Project Collection, i.e. the full length interviews, questionnaires, letters, photographs, documents and recordings, will be made available to the public through the GAA Museum and Archive.

It should be noted that all contact details provided will be kept entirely confidential and will be accessible only by the staff of the GAA Oral History Project Team. Your contact details will only be retained so that we can contact you to clarify factual information, to send out a thank you note for your contribution, or to request clarification on items that you may have donated. Under no circumstances will your details be passed on to a third party, without your prior consent.