

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Arlene Crampsie
Date of Interview	27 th Feb 2009
Location	St. Patrick's Clubhouse, Fairfield, Connecticut
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Niall O'Neill Kieran McAlinden Patrick 'Musha' Maher Gerry Rooney Jimmy Fahey Paddy Coyle
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: Niall – 1975; Kieran – 1965; Musha – 1962; Gerry – 1934; Jimmy – 1940; Paddy – 1961 Home County: Niall – Carlow; Kieran – Armagh; Musha – Tipperary; Gerry – Monaghan; Jimmy – Tipperary; Paddy – Tyrone
Education	N/A
Family	N/A
Club	St. Patrick's Connecticut
Occupation	N/A
Parents' Occupation	
Religion	N/A
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A

Date of Report	15 th Oct 2009
Period Covered	1950s – 2009
Counties/Countries Covered	Americas, USA, Tyrone, Tipperary, Carlow, Armagh, Monaghan, Dublin, Great Britain, England
Key Themes Covered	GAA Abroad, Involvement in GAA Abroad, Emigration, Challenges, Media, Volunteers, Career, Officials, Administration, Travel, Supporting, Club History, Identity, Playing, Managing, Grounds, Facilities, Childhood, Education, Opening of Croke Park, Role of the Club in the Community, Role of Women, Role of Clergy, Outsiders' Perspectives, Relationship with the Association, Politics, Culture, Earliest Memories
Interview Summary	<p>St Patrick's Club, Fairfield was founded in 2003 by Paddy Coyle, Jude Fitzgerald, Patrick Maher, Tommy Moran and Joey Moran. Present for this interview were a number of people heavily involved in the club. Paddy Coyle from Tyrone, Patrick Musha Maher and Jimmy Fahey from Tipperary, Gerry Rooney from Monaghan, Kieran McAlinden from Armagh and Noel O'Neill from Carlow. The group range in age, but all are dedicated to the development and administration of the club. The interview covers the challenges faced by clubs in America in trying to develop club facilities, increase numbers, and promote the games. The group feel that the thing most keeping them back is the lack of television coverage of Gaelic games. Matches are blocked on the internet and people have to pay large sums of money to gain entry into bars televising the match. The costs associated with playing the games in America, in terms of shipping equipment from Ireland and also insurance costs are big issues. The group discuss their introductions to Gaelic games in America, trips that they took, their views on professionalism and its part in the GAA in America and New York in particular, the underage scene in America, the challenges of keeping children involved as they grow up, the importance of Gaelic Park, the changing role of the media, the role of women and the sense of neglect and isolation they feel from the GAA in Ireland.</p> <p>00:00 Introductions – The club is called St Patrick's Connecticut</p> <p>01:40 Paddy: It was founded in 2003. Founding members: Paddy Coyle; Jude Fitzgerald, Clonmel; Patrick Maher, Thurles; Tommy Moran, Achill, Mayo; and his brother Joey</p>

	<p>Moran.</p> <p>02:20 It was really the dream of Paddy's, he approached Musha and brought everyone on board. Musha knew the connections in New York.</p> <p>03:00 Paddy: 'GAA was very important to me growing up in Pomeroy, always looked forward til a Sunday, keep your mind off the troubles, you went to mass and then it was all GAA ... I've got five boys and I wanted to see them all play the game. I was taking my kid down to New York to play and I said after the first year why not do it up here.'</p> <p>03:25 There are a lot of Irish families and Irish-American families in the area that they could approach to get their kids to play.</p> <p>03:45 'We started in the Fall of 03 right after Tyrone won the All-Ireland, we played our first game down in New York in Rockland and played about three / four games that year.'</p> <p>03:55 'We played our first game in Oct up here ... with Under 12 only, the next year we entered three teams, Under 10, Under 12, Under 14 and we went on to win the Under 10 and Under 12 B championship in that year.'</p> <p>04:10 Discuss the clubs successes and the relationship with New Haven.</p> <p>04:45 An adult team has started off 'a lot of Irish-Americans have started playing for the adult team.'</p> <p>05:10 Paddy: The underage programme started with Tommy Moran. They've played Hartford, Philadelphia and New Haven.</p> <p>05:55 Musha: They follow the standard rules from home. They have to go under the minor board and the New York GAA Rules. Getting insurance signed-off for the kids is a big issue. Their president is chairman, not like the figurehead President at home.</p> <p>06:35 They're trying to keep it alive, the kids love it. Describe trying to get the kids involved.</p> <p>08:00 'If anyone asks me how to describe it, like parents would ask me, well I never seen a game of gaelic football well I say its kind of a cross between basketball and soccer.' Discuss the merits of basketball players to GAA.</p> <p>09:00 Lack of exposure to the sport on TV. Mention ESPN</p>
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	<p>and Setanta.</p> <p>09:50 Talk about refereeing at underage.</p> <p>10:00 When they go home to the Féile's they do very well and represent themselves very well, when they are coached properly. They've had a couple of Under 14 All-Stars.</p> <p>10:25 Discuss different nationalities involved in the club. Mention African-Americans, Italians, Jewish.</p> <p>10:40 Talk about emigration laws and the role of Irish-Americans.</p> <p>11:15 Niall just moved up two years ago from Queens and describes the differences he's noticed.</p> <p>11:55 Musha: This club is big because it's Gaelic Irish-American and everyone has some link, it's about heritage, but people need to see Gaelic Football on TV, a lot of people thinks it's Australian football when they describe it for them.</p> <p>12:45 Niall: 'It's terrible to say that unless you can afford \$80 a month to go with a Setanta package, you can't actually view Gaelic Football in this country.'</p> <p>12:55 Paddy: 6,000 members in club, but 80% don't know what a gaelic football looks like 'that's because they can't watch it on TV and it's not in the schools.' 'Ireland is gaelic ... you can't watch it in any other country.' Anything else you can watch.</p> <p>13:55 Niall: St Patrick's GFC is a separate identity to the Gaelic-American club. Gaelic-American club has about 6,000 members, the Football club has between 50 – 80.</p> <p>14:55 Paddy and Niall: We get the field separately and 'we get permits from the town of Fairfield to play our home games up here ... they give us financial support every year, they give us a place to hold meetings ... most of us are members anyway.'</p> <p>15:35 Discuss fundraising.</p> <p>17:05 'The minor board controls everything when it comes to the youth out here, so whatever Croke Park gives them, they spread it out and it's very hard to get money off them.'</p> <p>17:30 Niall: 'To promote Gaelic Games ... the number one goal of the club is to bring gaelic football to kids, and show them what it is and keep it going, that when we're all dead</p>
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	<p>and gone they'll still be playing Gaelic Football in America.'</p> <p>17:55 Gerry: 'When I emigrated here half of Ireland was out here, Springfield had a team, Bridgeport had a team, Hartford had a team, Boston and New York, you had to be good to get your place in New York.'</p> <p>18:15 Gerry played with Bridgeport and then got his place with Monaghan in New York. Describes returning home with the Monaghan club in 1962.</p> <p>18:45 There was plenty of Irish in the area, you could go to the pitch and kick ball in the evenings. They all got together with dances. When Musha came out he met a lot of older guys at dinner dances. Gaelic Park needs to be kept up – but, there's probably only four hurling teams left in New York.</p> <p>19:35 Discuss the issues with developing hurling in the club and mention the cost of a Setanta package. Having to wait for Tuesday night replays. The cost of going to a pub to see the live games.</p> <p>22:45 Jimmy: 'They should help the people out here the clubs, people like us, we have such a love for the football and hurling, but we're not getting any help, everything is coming out of our pockets.'</p> <p>23:10 Going to Lehmann College to watch matches. Even internet access is problematic.</p> <p>24:15 Musha: They need a development officer to say these clubs need help. Mentions the 125th Anniversary night between Dublin and Tyrone in Croke Park. Compares the crowd to crowds at the Superbowl.</p> <p>25:20 Musha & Jimmy: Schools: GAA will never interfere with American Football or Baseball – they're America's national game. Niall: It'd be like trying to introduce American football or baseball in a school in Mayo or Offaly.</p> <p>25:50 Paddy: 'If you could approach Catholic schools in this country and find an Irish–American priest in some of these Catholic schools, that knows a bit about the games, I think you'd have a good chance of getting it into the schools, but as for public schools out here there's not a chance. They're too busy and they don't have the funds.'</p> <p>26:20 Musha: 'Insurance is a big thing in this country.'</p> <p>26:35 Gerry: You could hear the hop of the ball in the evening it would bring you back. Met a couple of guys in Seaport park</p>
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	<p>and they started playing, Bridgeport and New Haven had a team at that time.</p> <p>27:10 Jimmy: 'All my life I was playing hurling.' When I came out all my uncles played with Limerick out here. 'He's coming out and he used to hurl, ok if he comes out and plays with Limerick, we'll pay his fare.' Wanted to play for his own county so moved to Tipperary after three years – 'then Tipperary had to pay Limerick the fare that they paid Limerick to bring me out here.' Played with Connecticut State and won four New York Junior Hurling Championships in a row.</p> <p>28:20 Paddy: 'It's easy to adapt to the social life in America if you're around a football team, it's just home away from home and it makes it a lot easier.' There's a good social scene around the football here.</p> <p>28:50 Niall: When I seen the camaraderie between the senior guys playing up here and the fun they were having. In Queen's he wasn't involved.</p> <p>29:50 Kieran: 'If you were home sick or something it was a good way to go and mingle again, you'd see your old friends ... then I got involved with the boys.'</p> <p>30:10 Musha: 'I was in London then for a couple of years and got flown out here just like Jim to play, 23 years later I never went back.' Won an All-Ireland B with London, 1980. Came over to America to play for Waterford, played with Tipperary, Galway, Limerick and then Stanford. Great admiration for the older guys, who kept it alive.</p> <p>31:25 'To hurl in Gaelic Park or play Gaelic Football, you have to know what you were doing, it's so narrow.'</p> <p>31:45 Jimmy 'Whoever you played with, if you were anyway decent at all to play hurling or football they'd go out of their way to get you a job, that was very important then.'</p> <p>32:00 A lot of history in this country from New York, Connecticut, Boston, Chicago. Féile / CYC is when you see how powerful it is.</p> <p>32:35 Discuss the need for the children to have their own field.</p> <p>33:10 People in the Bronx could go to Van Courtland Park – a public park, and you wouldn't get a parking spot anywhere nearby.</p> <p>33:30 They discuss the need for permits to play and the</p>
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	<p>difficulties in not being able to pick a set night a week for practice. Mentions Thominson High School and the Fairfield Parks and Recreations Department.</p> <p>35:15 Identity – you’d have to be at club on a Saturday night, there’s bragging rights. ‘It’s such good fun here.’</p> <p>36:15 A lot of people from Leitrim in New Haven, a lot from Tipperary, Cork, Galway, Kerry and very few from the North, only two from Carlow.</p> <p>37:00 Gerry and Jimmy describes the importance of Gaelic Park and travelling to it. Mention the social side of Sundays in Gaelic Park and Robert Kennedy.</p> <p>38:50 Little prejudice – it was all Irish born people or Irish American.</p> <p>39:05 ‘I was lucky enough to get on the New York team to go to Australia, New Zealand, we played a hurling match in Fiji Islands and the people there they were amazed ... I never found any prejudice with the games.’</p> <p>39:45 Niall: ‘In America you’re very well received.’</p> <p>40:10 Jimmy: 1973 they went to Fiji – ‘the pick of the New York senior hurling team and anybody who wanted to go ... we had Mick O’Connell, Niall Sheehy, Christy Ring and Ollie Walsh with us on the trip, and you get to know these people and oh my god it’s like meeting somebody really, really, truly famous ... we went to San Francisco, Tahiti, Fiji Island, New Zealand, Australia, Hong Kong and back to Los Angeles.’</p> <p>41:15 ‘Most of us were single at the time too which made it even better.’</p> <p>41:35 Paddy describes the role of the GAA in the pub scene in America.</p> <p>42:35 They discuss the differences in the GAA in Ireland and America. Paddy talks about the difficulties in getting numbers while Kieran discusses the issues with insurance.</p> <p>44:50 Musha notes that they get less support than the New York City clubs and describes initial reactions to Gaelic football from members of the community.</p> <p>45:48 Discuss the role of the minor board and underage football in the club.</p> <p>47:35 Paddy: Tomorrow they’re going to the Cardinal Sheehan centre in Bridgeport, trying something different.</p>
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	<p>They're playing Lacrosse there from 10 – 12 and they're going to have their kids stay over and we're going in from twelve to two and putting on a bit of an exhibition with our new kids and past players and try and tap into that.</p> <p>48:20 They discuss the drop off in participation between Under 14 and 16 and the impact of students going to college. The lack of scholarships for Gaelic games.</p> <p>50:25 Paddy describes the way underage competitions are structured.</p> <p>51:30 Two girls from St. Pat's went on U-14 All-Star tour with New York.</p> <p>51:50 Have to have mothers on the side-lines because nobody can go near the girls. Of the 20 new players 6/7 are girls.</p> <p>52:15 Musha gives his opinions on the role of women in the club.</p> <p>53:20 Games in New York are all scheduled for a Sunday morning for the U-16 and U-18, whereas the U-14 are Saturday afternoons.</p> <p>54:10 Discuss their opinions on pay for play in the GAA in America in particular.</p> <p>57:25 Musha discusses players being dropped in favour of Irish players that have been brought over and the impact that has on team morale. Niall recounts a story with a carpenter.</p> <p>01:02:50 Jimmy: 'The people in the GAA in Ireland don't realise the struggle that's involved to keep our national games going ... the people out here, it's like traditional music, they have more of a love than the Irish people themselves ... the people that's running, controlling, trying to keep the thing alive, they should be supported.'</p> <p>01:03:40 Mickey Harte – World Cup in Gaelic Football – are the GAA prepared to send people out and around the world to develop it in schools.</p> <p>01:04:10 Musha: 'We're too far away, the people in Ireland don't understand how hard it is to even get sponsors for jerseys, everything we buy it's not a couple of hundred dollars, it's a couple of thousand dollars, because we have to ship it in, they stop it in customs ... they hold up our stuff. When we had the CYC they held up our container of goals, footballs, jerseys, and they knew what was in it, but they</p>
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	<p>didn't care, it was down in New Jersey, we had to go down the night before and call top people in customs to release our container.'</p> <p>01:05:00 Niall: The cost out here is a lot more. \$30 to buy trainer gaelic footballs, cost €12 in Ireland and to get them shipped was £108Stg.</p> <p>01:06:10 Paddy: 'We can handle the cost of that, we have it in the club, it's just getting the kids to play, the exposure is terrible in America.'</p> <p>01:06:35 'It has to be on a National network in America ... everything else can be overcome.'</p> <p>01:07:45 'Pat Spillane said get rid of New York, get rid of this, that doesn't help ... that effects our kids more so than the grown ups.'</p> <p>01:08:25 For years we've been buying the games from Croke Park.</p> <p>01:09:04 Musha: Honour to be an Irishman and be able to play this sport. Best memories playing Under 21 with Tipperary and winning the All-Ireland B with London.</p> <p>01:09:43 Paddy: Worst Tyrone losing to Kerry in 1986, best Tyrone winning their first All-Ireland, still doesn't agree with the opening of Croke Park.</p> <p>01:10:40 Jimmy: 'The trip I got from hurling in 1973, I will always remember that' and playing with Connecticut when we won four in a row. Agrees that Croke Park should be kept free of foreign sports. Biggest disappointment was Tipperary last year.</p> <p>01:11:40 Gerry: Monaghan losing to Kerry in the last minute and the increased cost of games. In 1951 I was at Croke Park and it only cost 3s6d now its €70.</p> <p>01:12:10 Kieran describes travelling by train to watch Armagh playing. Mentions Portadown and getting stoned on way home.</p> <p>01:12:40 Rule changes that speed the games up are for the better.</p> <p>01:12:50 Niall: 'Where do you want me to start with the disappointments.' 'Croke Park was only for big teams ... you always had to pick another team, when I was growing up that you'd want to win the All-Ireland, whether it be Kerry or Dublin or whoever, it was never even in the thing that Carlow was</p>
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	<p>ever going to get it.'</p> <p>01:13:35 Agrees with Paddy that Croke Park should be Croke Park. If you keep giving a little bit of heritage away you'll having nothing.</p>
Involvement in GAA	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input 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)	N/A
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	N/A
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:14:33
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: _____ Arlene Crampsie _____

Date: _____ 15/10/09 _____