

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Seán Kearns
Date of Interview	14 Sept 2009
Location	Interviewee's Office at Seton Hall University, New Jersey, USA
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Larry McCarthy
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1954 Home County: Cork
Education	Primary: St Catherine's NS, Bishopstown, Cork City Secondary: Colaiste Iognaid Ris, Cork City Third Level: Thomond College (UL), New York University, Ohio State University
Family	Siblings: Oldest, six sisters and two brothers Current Family if Different: Married with two children
Club(s)	Bishopstown in Cork, Thomond College, Sligo in New York
Occupation	University Professor in Management (specialising in Sports Marketing)
Parents' Occupation	Bank Manager
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	None

REFERENCE NO. CK-1-8

Date of Report	29 May 2010
Period Covered	1960s-2009
Counties/Countries Covered	Cork, Limerick, Dublin, New York
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Coaching, Administration, Education, Media, Emigration, Involvement in GAA abroad; GAA Abroad, All-Ireland, Career, Challenges, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism
Interview Summary	<p>Larry McCarthy is the current chairman of the New York GAA Board. He was born in Cork in 1954 to a family very involved in the GAA and the interview covers early trips on the train to Croke Park and the Cork Athletic Grounds. The interview discusses his involvement with other sports as a child and his heavier involvement with Gaelic Football once he went to Thomond College to train as a physical education teacher. The interview covers his experiences as secretary of the college GAA club, their involvement in inter-college activity and entry into the Limerick County Championship and eventual winning of the All-Ireland Club Championship in 1977/78. The interview also deals with the social side of college GAA and the style and tactics of Gaelic Football at that time. From college, he moved to Dublin to teach in Malahide and the interview discusses schools GAA and GAA in Dublin in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He began travelling to New York for the summer in the early 1980s before moving there and the interview gives a good insight in the GAA in New York in the 1980s – the dilapidation and crowds of Gaelic Park, the high standard and toughness of the football, the networking and social life and the provision of jobs for players. The interview also deals with the Sligo club in new York which the interviewee was involved in. The interview deals with the system of bringing players over from Ireland and how it has changed from the weekender system of old and the addresses the areas payment and finding of jobs for players. It also covers the way in which the methods of emigrants keeping in touch with the GAA back home has changed since the early 1980s. The relationship between New York and the rest of the North American GAA, and with Ireland is discussed, as are the challenges facing the GAA in the 21st century – the ground, emigration, developing underage players, the decline of hurling. The general areas of discipline and the importance of amateur status versus the</p>

REFERENCE NO. CK-1-8

	<p>demands being placed on players by the modern game are also discussed.</p> <p>0:00:15 Describes earliest GAA memory as being told by his mother that he had to stay at home to watch 1963 Hurling All-Ireland final instead of going to a soccer match and later being taken to see Kerry in All-Ireland final on train with father.</p> <p>0:00:50 Played for Bishopstown even though he didn't live there but then GAA disappeared off radar for a while.</p> <p>0:01:00 Didn't play GAA until secondary school. Played much more soccer as a kid. Would have been more a soccer kid than a GAA kid well into secondary school. Always went to see Cork Hibernians and Cork Celtic in soccer more.</p> <p>0:02:20 Describes playing soccer in street not GAA and after school, even though the Christian Brothers objected to them playing the foreign game.</p> <p>0:03:00 Describes selling GAA programmes for the Christian Brothers at the Cork Athletic grounds and banter with the crowd.</p> <p>0:03:45 Describes the old Athletic Grounds in Cork in the late 1960s. Run down but had tradition. Hurling was so big in Cork City then with the big teams.</p> <p>0:04:30 Describes seeing Christy Ring winning his last County Final in 1965 and talks about the Cork team of that era.</p> <p>0:05:20 Describes family involvement in GAA, Mother was Chair of Munster camogie, but other sports were still allowed.</p> <p>0:05:50 Talks about father's background in Kerry GAA and. A Kerry player called Tom Moriarty had stayed with their family while recuperating from a broken leg he got in a game.</p> <p>going on train to Kerry match with father</p> <p>0:06:40 Describes routine of journey for going to see Kerry play in Croke Park on train. The journey, the pubs, the cards etc.</p> <p>0:08:30 Describes Croke Park in the late 1960s. Describes going on his own to a game aged 13.</p> <p>0:09:30 talks about GAA heroes of his youth – Mick O'Connell</p>
--	--

REFERENCE NO. CK-1-8

	<p>Christy Ring, the Cork 1966 team. Mick Burke and Billy Morgan.</p> <p>0:11:00 Talks about Mick O'Connell standing out.</p> <p>0:11:50 Talks about how there are always connections in the GAA.</p> <p>0:12:00 Talks about becoming involved with Bishopstown Club aged 15, when they moved there because new house was beside their field. Lost connection with the club a bit when went off to college.</p> <p>0:13:20 Talks about becoming heavily involved with the GAA club when he went to college in Thomond College, Limerick. Took over as secretary and it became a big part of his college life, although he still played soccer.</p> <p>0:14:50 Talks about all the responsibilities of running that club and what he learned from it. They had a great team – the first wave of free education benefited sport in Universities then. Talks about good teams in lots of Universities in 1970s</p> <p>0:16:10 Talks about the players they had in their college team then – Pat Spillane, Brian Mullins, Ogie Moran, Hugo Clerkin,</p> <p>0:16:45 Matches in the college were social events as well as sporting events. You went to the match and got hosted to a meal, in to a bar, bus back with a stop on the way.</p> <p>0:17:45 Talks about high level of competition in colleges then and impact of colleges on All-Ireland Club Championship in 1970s after UCD won.</p> <p>0:18:10 Talks about Thomond College getting into various competition and trying to get into Sigerson Cup but being turned down.</p> <p>0:19:00 Describes Sigerson Cup as a finishing school for inter-county players.</p> <p>0:19:30 Describes Thomond's entry into the Limerick County Championship in 1975 and reluctance of County board to have them. Describes meetings about getting the college in and later objections because he hadn't registered their players properly, which got them kicked out of the championship. He still has team mates from that year introduce him as the man who stopped them getting an All-Ireland Club Championship medal.</p> <p>0:23:00 Talks about registering every male in the college the</p>
--	--

REFERENCE NO. CK-1-8

	<p>next year to be on the safe side.</p> <p>0:23:40 Talks about playing for Thomond College in 1977 the year they won the All-Ireland club, but only in the Limerick County Championship. Lads who were away for the Summer came back and a lot of the players were dropped for the County final.</p> <p>0:24:10 Talks about toughness of Limerick club football then and attitude to the college team. Pat Spillane was captain and they decided to really go for it.</p> <p>0:26:00 Talks about fact that they were actually graduated by the time the 1997 championship finished in 1978. They drove down from their teaching jobs in Dublin to train.</p> <p>0:27:00 Talks about development of GAA in colleges and Universities in Ireland, and how important it was to his development that students ran the club as an amateur concern. Compares to professionalism of college sports in USA.</p> <p>0:29:20 Talks about how college team was selected in Thomond College when he was there. A staff member, Dave Weldrick, trained them and selected them with advice from Captain and himself. They had big captains as well</p> <p>0:30:40 Talks about the style and tactics of football they used because they had an advanced coach in Weldrick – kick-out strategies etc.</p> <p>0:32:00 The modern game is faster and the hits are harder because the guys are bigger. Game then was more individual, less teamwork and support play.</p> <p>0:33:00 Training was physical training but everything done with the ball. They were fit anyway because they were training to be PE teachers.</p> <p>0:33:45 Talks about getting a loan of Garryowen grounds to train in 1978. They had floodlights.</p> <p>0:34:30 Talks about hiring a car to drive down from Dublin and bringing a crowd of other fellows with him.</p> <p>0:35:10 Talks about funding for the team – college paid for travel and kit. They organised disco to raise money once or twice a year. Talks about having to provide food to get a license and Pat Spillane handing out biscuits to comply.</p> <p>0:37:40 Talks about combining studies with the GAA in college. Not a problem really and the college expected PE</p>
--	---

REFERENCE NO. CK-1-8

	<p>students to take part in sports.</p> <p>0:38:00 Talks about argument with a lecturer over students taking parts in sports.</p> <p>0:39:00 Talks about living in Dublin after college and playing football for Raheny and setting up hurling and football in his school, Malahide Community School, which was important in the growth of St Sylvester's GAA Club and worked on the Dublin Colleges' Committee.</p> <p>0:40:10 Talks about growth of GAA in his school in late 1970s and early 1980s and finally getting to an U-16 C Final in Croke Park.</p> <p>"Better than winning Sam Maguire"</p> <p>0:41:40 Talks about developing GAA in Malahide school which didn't have a GAA ethos.</p> <p>0:42:40 Talks about his role in boy scouts in Ireland.</p> <p>0:43:00 Talks about why GAA was strong in certain schools and why a lot of older people, who only went to national school, didn't get GAA in school. He talks about not getting on his secondary school team.</p> <p>0:44:50 Talks about making sure his students in Malahide were offered a wide variety of sports.</p> <p>0:45:30 Talks about the influence of the success of the Dublin Football team.</p> <p>0:46:20 Talks about first coming to New York in 1980 for the summer. Ended up playing football for Sligo and coming out the next few summers before deciding to do a masters degree in physical education in NYU.</p> <p>0:47:20 Describes calling the head of the Sligo club in New York, Jimmy Nicholson, who was involved with the Carpenters Union and asking him if he could get him a job if he came over and he did.</p> <p>0:47:40 Talks about being an apprentice carpenter by day despite having no skills.</p> <p>0:48:24 Talks about how he ended up playing for Sligo in the first place having not come over to play football. He met someone on the plane and an hour after he landed at JFK he was watching a football match in Gaelic Park. Went training with the Sligo Junior that week and he's been with Sligo more</p>
--	---

REFERENCE NO. CK-1-8

	<p>or less ever since.</p> <p>0:49:00 Talks about how disappointing Gaelic Park was as a venue when he arrived – very run down. Stands falling down, dusty pitch. Was like that for a long time.</p> <p>0:50:00 Talks about the stands as they were in Gaelic Park then – boxes from the old Polo Grounds. Tommy Smyth did the commentary from those boxes. The ground got worse when the GAA left Gaelic Park for a few years in the 1990s.</p> <p>0:51:45 Describes crowds at Gaelic Park and days in 1989 when Cork played New York in the national League and there was an All Star game, and a visit by Australian rules side on way to Ireland in 1988. He trained that New York team and they won because they had a great team because of emigration.</p> <p>0:53:00 He took a career break from teaching to get his masters but emigration brought a lot of good players from Ireland – Fran Ryder, Billy Morgan etc. Very high standard of new York football.</p> <p>0:53:40 Talks about how tough New York football was in 1980s and still in 2009. Pitch conditions made it hard to play.</p> <p>0:54:35 Talks about the bringing over of weekenders in the 1980s. Sligo tended to bring people from Sligo – Barnes Murphy was one.</p> <p>0:55:00 Talks about money spent on bringing players over. Clubs raised money through donations.</p> <p>0:55:40 Talks about how the different clubs in new York controlled jobs in different areas. Leitrim was bar work, Longford was doormen. Sligo was carpenters up in White Plains. You contributed money from that job to the club.</p> <p>0:57:00 Talks about effect of heat in Summer on GAA in New York.</p> <p>0:58:00 Talks about training with Sligo in Westchester Community College where they had a connection. Trained twice a week</p> <p>0:59:00 Talks about social side of GAA in New York at that time. No dancing and dining in Gaelic Park – that was gone. There were still dinner dances for the clubs. Sunday at Gaelic Park was still a big evening.</p> <p>1:00:40 Talks about keeping in touch with GAA back home through in 1980s through local papers, which arrived in Bronx</p>
--	---

REFERENCE NO. CK-1-8

	<p>on Monday nights and that was a big social event at the bars. They also got tapes of games from home shown in Norbert Hennessy's bar.</p> <p>1:02:00 Talks about showing of All Ireland finals shown in Lehman College auditorium. Also listened to All-Ireland on Fordham radio. Didn't feel too bad to be away from home though.</p> <p>1:04:20 Talks about travelling to Ohio to further education and then down to the state of Georgia, where he taught in a University. That was totally isolated from GAA and he relied on Liam Ferry from Galway, who had the Irish Emigrant newsletter on an early email system. Got it on Sunday night and he describes going to the computer labs in Ohio to get the email to find out the results. Sent in a couple of dollars to get a present for Ferry at Christmas.</p> <p>1:06:50 Still went back to New York and Gaelic Park when living in Georgia.</p> <p>1:07:00 Describes coming to teach in Seton Hall in New Jersey in 1999 and getting involved with Sligo again and then elected secretary to New York Board and later President.</p> <p>1:07:30 Talks about changes in New York GAA between 1980s and 2000 and teams starting to fail and be worried about numbers.</p> <p>1:08:20 Talks about changes to Gaelic Park once Manhattan College got involved with it.</p> <p>1:08:40 Talks about effect of Celtic Tiger and lack of emigration on New York GAA and problem with tightening of immigration laws for undocumented.</p> <p>1:09:30 Talks about challenges in bringing Irish-American kids through from Minor game to adult participation in a culture where you are not the dominant sport. Difference in amateur nature of games and involvement in Ireland and USA. Lack of club structure for games. People drop out after school.</p> <p>1:12:30 Talks about son's involvement with St Raymond's GAA in New York.</p> <p>1:13:00 Talks about challenge of keeping Sligo going in New York without a local base of players and dependence of drafting players from junior teams and bringing students over for the summer from Ireland. Other New York teams like Cork and Tyrone do have a strong base of New York-based</p>
--	--

	<p>players.</p> <p>1:14:00 Talks about the old weekender system of bringing players from Ireland for single football matches. It cost clubs a fortune and alienated local players who got dropped for the weekenders. On the other hand inter-county stars would boost the gate. His philosophy is that New York GAA is here for the New York players not just to get a crowd.</p> <p>1:15:50 Problem with New York being a recreational league for young students out for the summer.</p> <p>1:16:30 Hurling in New York will continue to struggle because it's very hard to get Irish American kids to develop as hurlers.</p> <p>1:17:20 Talks about relationship between North American Board and New York Board. Historically has been bad but better at moment. John Kerry O'Donnell was an influence in that separation and in New York's separation from the GAA back home.</p> <p>1:19:20 Talks about players moving between the North American board and New York being an issue. CYC games show better relationship developing.</p> <p>1:20:00 Talks about New York's affiliation with Central Council and benefits of that.</p> <p>1:20:30 Discusses whether New York can be competitive in the Connacht championship. Need emigration to change. In their 1989 days they would have been.</p> <p>1:21:10 Talks about the balance between being part of the club and part of the Board and duties of delegates to the Board.</p> <p>1:22:00 Talks about divisions within the hurling clubs in new York and how that affects hurling as a whole.</p> <p>1:23:20 Talks about why he ended up Chairman of the New York GAA – feeling that things could be done better and with less aggravation and treating each other with more respect. And do things more efficiently for the clubs.</p> <p>1:25:00 Talks about initiatives brought in to GAA in New York like the Discipline for Dollars programme, which rewards the club that gets the least yellow and red cards, and bringing elderly people in the community to the New York County Final as part of the GAA social initiative.</p> <p>1:26:00 Talks about Gaelic Park being the home for the New York GAA for the foreseeable future and the complexity of the</p>
--	--

REFERENCE NO. CK-1-8

	<p>ownership and leasing of the ground from the Metropolitan Transit Authority.</p> <p>1:27:20 Talks about the GAA facility up in the northern suburbs of Rockland and ambition to have another facility east of the city.</p> <p>1:28:00 Talks about the idea of GAA in New York needing to be amateur, but that GAA in Ireland could be a successful professional sport technically.</p> <p>1:29:25 Talks about uniqueness of GAA being amateur run and compares to sports in America.</p> <p>1:30:00 Talks about how much time he gives over to the GAA. Eight or ten emails this morning already.</p> <p>1:31:10 Describes his Sunday, dedicated to GAA, and other times spent on GAA business during the week and time spent going over to Ireland.</p> <p>1:32:30 Talks about payment of players, the experience of New York historically in the area and the idea of players coming over and being set up with jobs.</p> <p>1:33:30 Argues against the idea of players being paid full-time in the future from a business point of view, possibly could work on some kind of part-time basis, but he wouldn't like to see it.</p> <p>1:34:20 Talks about how rugby in Ireland has been affected by professionalism</p> <p>1:34:40 Talks about the ethos of amateurism and why it's important to the GAA. Professionalism would lead to a disconnect between the players and ordinary GAA people.</p> <p>1:35:25 It may be inevitable that there is professionalism though, because managers keep upping demands on the players and that can't go on indefinitely. The players are already expected to train to professional standards.</p> <p>1:36:30 Describes his favourite GAA memory as taking part with the Thomond College team that won the All-Ireland Club final in 1977/1978.</p> <p>1:37:05 Describes worst GAA memory as losing a match with Thomond College in Portarlington. They had put in huge work and shouldn't have lost.</p> <p>1:38:00 Describes best game he ever saw as possibly the U-</p>
--	--

REFERENCE NO. CK-1-8

	<p>16C finals that Malahide won in Croke Park.</p> <p>1:38:40 Talks about Kerry four-in-a-row team as the greatest team he's seen</p> <p>1:39:30 Talks about having GAA heroes when he was a child, like Mick O'Connell and Christy Ring, and then two friends from his college days who he looked up to were Pat Spillane and Brian Mullins.</p> <p>1:40:00 Talks about what makes him proud in the GAA is all the things it does to support people, and you see that more in New York, because emigrants are more dependent on that kind of support. Suggests that this is something common to lots of emigrant groups.</p> <p>1:41:00 Talks about disappointments with GAA. Nothing collectively that stands out. Some bad decisions on discipline, when they don't follow through and the culture of trying to get people off disciplinary decisions. People should take responsibility when they break the rules – but possibly that's an Irish trait.</p> <p>1:43:00 Talks again about his win with the U-16 Malahide team.</p> <p>1:43:50 Talks about his faded memories of the 1966 All-Ireland Hurling Final.</p> <p>1:44:25 Talks about what the GAA means to him. At some level it's simply what he does for recreation because he enjoys it. His wife probably thinks it's his vocation but he thinks the GAA is not the 'be all and end all' of his life. He could live without being Chairman of the Board, but he finds it hard to picture a life not being interested and checking the internet and reading the papers to see what was going on with the GAA.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input 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 type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Won All-Ireland Club football medal with Thomond College 1978.</p>

REFERENCE NO. CK-1-8

Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	Secretary of Thomond College Football Club Chairman, New York GAA Board
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 1:40:50
Language	English

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: Seán Kearns

Date: 1 July 2010