

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Seán Kearns
Date of Interview	2/9/2009
Location	Riverdale Steak House, Bronx, New York
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Brendan Hynes
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1934 Home County: Galway
Education	N/A
Family	N/A
Club(s)	Padraig Pearses, Gurteen, Galway
Occupation	Bus Driver, Bar Business, Local Politician
Parents' Occupation	Farmer – His father was one of the founders of the Club mentioned above.
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	None in Ireland; In US, Republican, formerly Democrat

REFERENCE NO. GY/1/4

Date of Report	18 May 2010
Period Covered	Late 1930s - 2009
Counties/Countries Covered	Galway, New York
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Coaching, Administration, Fundraising, Emigration, Involvement in GAA abroad, Role of the Club in the Community, GAA Abroad, Career, Relationship with the Association
Interview Summary	<p>Brendan Hynes is a Galway man who emigrated to New York in 1956 aged 20. His interview describes his earliest memories of hurling in Gurteen in Galway in the 1940s and 1950s, including comment on the lack of facilities and grounds and poor promotion of the game among young people. The interview also touches on transport, women in the GAA at that time, politics and geography of Galway GAA and trips to Croke Park, as well as the great Galway players of that era. In America, Brendan was a key member of the Galway hurling team as a player and administrator, and the interview covers the high standard of hurling in New York in 1950s and 1960s, his time in the US army, Galway's success in the New York Championship including a three in a row 1964-66. The interview also deals with the social and networking side of the GAA in New York, John Kerry O'Donnell, the cardinal Cushing Games, Gaelic Park and New York's failure to develop their own ground, and New York's tense relationship with the GAA at home. The interview also deals with injuries and training in his time, and changing styles of hurling play in various positions he played in, and the negative impact of rule changes. The interview also deals with the challenge of developing the youth game in new York, the effects of bringing players from Ireland for the weekend on New York, and the decline of hurling in the city. The interview also mentions a large number of prominent hurlers who the interviewee knew or played with.</p> <p>0:00:30 Describes earliest GAA memory as going to hurling games of local club – Gurteen Ballymacward – now called Padraig Pearses. Mainly a hurling club then.</p> <p>0:01:35 Describes success of club, which he still follows from New York, in recent years and new facilities they have.</p> <p>0:01:45 Describes lack of facilities in his youth, playing in</p>

	<p>farmer's field. Didn't have own field or dressing rooms. Contrasts lack of structure for youths in his day with current emphasis.</p> <p>0:02.45 Describes role of his father in founding and playing for first team formed in 1911 in Gurteen-Ballymacward club, later renamed Padraig Pearses.</p> <p>0:03.20 Describes family involvement in GAA of father and brothers and GAA a big part of family and parish life.</p> <p>0:03.50 States that it was mainly men involved in GAA at that time. No Camogie until much later.</p> <p>0:04.20 Describes lack of underage teams when he was young in early 1950s and lack of promotion of games among young and in schools. People didn't have time or money and emigration an issue.</p> <p>0:05.20 Describes learning to play by watching older players and getting involved with group of interested boys in Minor Championship.</p> <p>0:06.00 Describes political elements to selection, he went for minor trials with Galway minors with three from club, but they felt you only made the team if you knew someone. One of his friends broke a hurl at the trial and the County Secretary, Jack Whelan wouldn't give him a replacement, even though he had a bag of hurls.</p> <p>0:07.00 You had to have your own equipment. Nothing provided. Parents encouragement kept it going.</p> <p>0:07:40 Local carpenter made their hurleys. His brothers went out for the carpenter looking for good ash trees to make hurls.</p> <p>0:08:20 Describes lack of help from organisation at that time and reliance on a few old interested people. Contrasts with interest now and success of club in getting players on minor and senior Galway teams.</p> <p>0:09:00 No fundraising or money in his day. Since then they've raised money to build facilities.</p> <p>0:10:10 There was a collection at the gate on Sunday for the senior team only. There was no help from County Board in promoting games at that time.</p> <p>0:10:30 Cappataggle GAA Club were their big rivals. One east Galway final was abandoned due to fighting. The referee was from Loughrea and the joke was that he got his bike and</p>
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	<p>was in Loughrea before the fight was over.</p> <p>0:11:40 Describes team getting to that game in a lorry. The rivalry with that team was there a long time and maybe not all over hurling.</p> <p>0:12:20 Describes following Galway and going to Croke Park on train with brother. For home games they would cycle or all go in the lorry.</p> <p>0:13:20 A lot of people would go on the train to Croke Park if Galway were in the semi-final. His brother was not a player but a big fan and took him.</p> <p>0:14:00 Describes thrill of going to Croke Park but infrequent due to cost and Galway not playing there often. Wasn't too expensive. His brother also took the neighbour's kid and gave him half a crown.</p> <p>0:16:00 Describes his favourite player when young as Fr Paddy Gantley. Joe Sammon came along a little later. Earliest memories were of Inky Flaherty and Josie Gallagher of the late 1940s. Terry Leahy from Kilkenny and Christy Ring were ones from outside Galway, but not as interested in non-Galway hurlers.</p> <p>0:17:00 They were very much more hurling than gaelic football supporters, although there was one Galway footballer, Tom „Pook“ Dillon, from a neighbouring parish who they followed and Jack Mahon.</p> <p>0:18:00 Describes how different parts of Galway at that time were either hurling or gaelic football with different boards and so on. They were on the dividing line.</p> <p>0:19:20 Describes coming to America aged 20 in 1956, sponsored by an Aunt already in America. Came by boat in October.</p> <p>0:20:45 Describes how he became involved with the Galway club in New York right away on arrival, although played no games because so late in year.</p> <p>0:21:00 Describes being drafted into US Army in May 1957 having only played a couple of games in April. Five or six Irish guys with him for basic training in Fort Bening, Georgia.</p> <p>0:21:45 Describes club arranging him to fly home from Army basic training to play a game in New York and bewilderment of his army superiors about his being flown to New York to play in a game they'd never heard of. Pat Madden the GAA</p>
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	<p>secretary for Galway and New York wrote the letter to get him out for the weekend.</p> <p>0:23:40 Describes long journey from Georgia to New York to play game against Cork, playing full back and losing.</p> <p>0:24:20 Describes being stationed with army in New Jersey and able to travel on weekends for games, before being shipped to Germany for 2 years in November 1957. He was in Germany at the same time as Joe Carey and so they missed out on being subs on the famous 1958 New York hurling team.</p> <p>0:25:30 The Army tried to get him to play soccer. A few of them volunteered to get out of duty. They had two weeks of it. Enjoyed it. They had a good duty in the army, quite a lot of Irish in it then.</p> <p>0:27:00 Describes rebuilding of Galway hurling team in New York from 1959 and getting more players from 1959 to 1963.</p> <p>0:27:30 Describes high standard of hurling in New York in late 1950s with lots of county players emigrating from Ireland because of economy there. Describes Cork team of 1962 with 8 or 9 county players.</p> <p>0:28:00 Standard very high in 1960s with lots of counties competitive and stable teams from year to year. Galway had 18 or so of same players as a core each year. The guys who worked night trained in the daytime, the guys who worked days trained in the evening.</p> <p>0:28:30 Describes change in rules in hurling in New York down to 13 a side and negative aspect of this.</p> <p>0:29:00 Describes field as not good then but there were good hard games. Field was dusty, especially around the goals.</p> <p>0:29:50 Thinks yellow card has taken away from the game. Stops good players from playing as aggressively as they should be able.</p> <p>0:30:40 Describes refereeing games while still a player. He didn't think they were too rough when they played.</p> <p>0:31:40 Talks about how there were fewer injuries in his day, especially hamstrings, not like today's players.</p> <p>0:32:00 A lot counties had strong hurling teams then, especially Munster. Mainly players from the actual counties back home. Most players were permanent emigrants from Ireland. Galway only had one not like this, and his father from</p>
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	<p>Galway. It was easy to come over then, but much harder now.</p> <p>0:34:00 Describes Gaelic Park as a great meeting place and to get jobs. The older guys helped out with good connections and full house even at club meetings and support at games.</p> <p>0:35:00 Describes Sunday afternoons in Gaelic Park in 1950s and 1960s. Lots of girls. Close to 10,000 attendance and describes stands as they were then. Seats purchased from old Giants Stadium. Maybe 20,000 in the park to see Down when they came over in 1961.</p> <p>0:36:20 He missed games in Polo Grounds because he was away with the army.</p> <p>0:36:40 Suggests that most (90%) of Irish emigrants in the 1960s and into the 1970s were involved in GAA, either as players or supporter4s in the Park at some point.</p> <p>0:37:00 The County associations were also big then. They had their field days in Gaelic Park.</p> <p>0:37:45 In the 1970s, the Irish Americans really got involved as well. Do great work with the Minor Board. Keeping that going.</p> <p>0:38:00 Describes success of Galway hurlers who won three successive championships in 1964-66. Contacted players from Galway who were interested in coming to New York and got them sponsored to come over. Mike Sweeney who played for Galway came in 1961 and then suggested players to contact. Describes being back in Athenry and contacting three or four players playing for County on and off to see if they would emigrate. Des Coen, John Maher came to new York. Built team from there and Paddy Egan came back, another County Player. The Donoghue brothers. Had same team for several years.</p> <p>0:40:00 Describes influence of having Pioneers on that team. Trained hard together. Lost to Clare when going for four in row and then took a trip together home to Galway: invited to play Galway County team for opening of Kinvara Field.</p> <p>0:41:00 Fr O'Dea, who ran Galway hurling at home "with an iron fist", thought it was a joke to have the New York Galway team play the real Galway team, and didn't want it to happen as he thought Galway New York weren't up to scratch, but the New York team beat them 5-10 to 12 points. They had players on their team that Fr O'Dea had dropped from Galway or never given a chance.</p>
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	<p>0:42:00 He was surprised at how able they were to play Galway, Galway complained they were too tough. The New York team played a lot of first-time ground hurling. There was a big tussle in midfield between their Johnny Burke of Turloughmore and Galway's John Connolly of Castlegar. Turloughmore and Castlegar were big rivals anyway. Burke pulled on everything that moved first time, which the Galway people didn't like.</p> <p>0:43:10 Describes training of Galway team in New York. Two or three times a week. Van Cordlandt Park and a ark at 207th street. Running and practice six on six with ball.</p> <p>0:44:20 You got used to heat. Played in 100 degree heat sometimes. The team was fit.</p> <p>0:45:16 A team needs pride to get three in a row. Not just talent. They almost won four in a rowe but a key player got injured playing at home on a visit. The Clare team brought over two players from Ireland to beat them – one was actually from Galway.</p> <p>0:47:10 Describes playing full back in hurling for Galway in New York. Played full back unless they brought the Stanley brothers down from Boston. Then later he played as full forward or corner forward. Describes one game where he marked Joe Carey of Tipperary. Donal O'Brien was in goal for Tipperary that day. He had won an All-Ireland with Tipp in 1961.</p> <p>0:50:10 Describes use of low ball in to forwards as common in his day. Now everyone wants the ball into their hand. Inside forwards stayed in nearer goals then, now they come out. Joe Canning is a good full forward, they should leave him stay in there.</p> <p>0:51:10 Job of corner forward was to keep ball in, pass it back to the half forward if necessary. Now they catch the ball too much. Joe Sammon was the best striker of an overhead ball. You don't see that anymore. Players don't strike the ball on the ground as much as they should either.</p> <p>0:52:50 Kilkenny now are the best team to have a free man to take a pass and get an easy score.</p> <p>0:54:00 Describes involvement with Galway hurling club on administration side. Dinner dances and fundraising. Role of delegate for ten or twelve years. Meetings every Thursday. Enjoyed that aspect of it.</p> <p>0:55:30 Players were involved in running club, and the old-</p>
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	<p>timers were involved. Made sacrifices but worth it. Played final game in a Junior Final in 1974 or 1975, with Noel Skehan in goals for them, who they brought out from Ireland.</p> <p>0:56:50 Describes role of Delegate to New York Board in 1960s and 1970s. John Kerry O'Donnell the dominant figure no matter who was Chairman. He was tough but also very helpful. Good for promoting games like with the Cardinal Cushing games bringing out Christy Ring and Des Foley. He would bring out a players from Ireland to play Galway when they were New York champions. Galway were able to compete with those class players – like Austin Flynn of Waterford.</p> <p>0:58:40 Christy Ring came out in 1966 and took a 21 yard free. His wrists were incredible. The guys lining the goals for Galway say they never saw the ball before it hit the net. He pretended to be arguing with his marker than bent down and hit it suddenly when they weren't prepared. Probably 12,000 in the Gaelic Park that day.</p> <p>1:00:00 John O'Donnell held back the GAA in New York as far as getting their own stadium was concerned. When they had money back in the 1960s they should have got their own stadium, like they have in Chicago, but people didn't want to rock the boat with O'Donnell.</p> <p>1:00:40 Or GAA should have taken over Gaelic Park. There was a lot of politics and the boards were all afraid of O'Donnell.</p> <p>1:01:00 Describes other failed attempts by New York to get a stadium.</p> <p>1:02:00 Describes work of Terry Greenan on Minor Board and setting up a facility up at Rockland, getting a grant from the GAA in Ireland to develop the pitch there and keep kids involved.</p> <p>1:03:00 Describes difficulty in keeping kids involved due to competition from many other American sports. You can get other non-Irish kids involved though. It takes a lot of effort.</p> <p>1:04:30 Mentions Denis Twomey as someone who worked hard at keeping kids' teams going in new York.</p> <p>1:05:00 Describes difficulty of getting hurling going with youth in America. They don't have the time to devote to it, and they might be able to get a scholarship to college for another sport.</p> <p>1:06:00 Describes going home to Ireland in recent years to</p>
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	<p>watch grandkids go home to play in Ireland for New York. Girls and Boys. Train from March till July.</p> <p>1:07:30 Describes fundraising to raise money to promote the youth's games and other features of youth development in Rockland where he lives now, about 50 miles north of New York city.</p> <p>1:09:00 Describes the genesis of bringing players over for weekend to play games and negative effect on development of game in New York. Good prospects from America quit because they were dropped to make room for these visitors.</p> <p>1:10:00 Describes Tipperary bringing over Joe Canning in a big move in recent years but then he went home to play in the U-21 game at home and they lost.</p> <p>1:11:10 If immigration changed, the GAA in New York could get built up again. Without that hurling will have it tough to survive, but football will be ok</p> <p>1:11:30 Players who come out for the weekend have no loyalty to their own county, play for whoever is offering the best deal.</p> <p>1:12:00 describes how games in New York GAA at times were won by whoever could afford to bring over the best players. Describes financial pressures causing some clubs to fold.</p> <p>1:12:30 Managers in the GAA in Ireland seems to get more professional all the time. Mentions GPA and players only having a few years in the limelight. GAA should help them with jobs anyway.</p> <p>1:13:00 Gives credit to the Irish Americans in New York who are keeping the thing going – huge effort in time and organising and fundraising.</p> <p>1:14:40 Describes disappointment in dropping off of hurling in New York compared to what we used to have. Football will stay strong because of younger generation being encouraged and growth of ladies football.</p> <p>1:15:00 Doesn't think new York will be competitive within the inter-county championships in hurling like they used to. Football maybe, but not in the next few years.</p> <p>1:16:00 Describes favourite GAA memory as the mid-1960s Galway hurling team in New York. Competitive games and a great group who still keep in contact.</p>
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	<p>1:17:00 Describes worst moment in a game was playing full back marking Liam Dowling of Cork, over for the weekend, in early 1960s. They let in five goals in first half.</p> <p>1:18:20 Describes best game as playing Cork and Clare in the 1964 and 1965 finals. His worst game was possibly when he was a selector for New York when Benny Connaughton was manager, They played Cork in great game but someone hit Tim Foley, the referee. Still not sure who did it. That finished the international games and their game the following Sunday in Croke Park was cancelled and New York thrown out of the competition.</p> <p>1:20:45 Describes greatest team in his life time as the three in a row Galway Gaelic Footballer of mid-1960s. Kilkenny now would be the best hurling team – they play nice hurling, team work and they can mix it.</p> <p>1:21:50 Describes Joe Sammon as his GAA hero – a great sportsman. And Mattie MacDonagh in Gaelic Football. John Connolly and Joe Cooney were good role models. Paddy Egan was also good. Paddy Dowling of Cork – had great positional sense. And Tony Keady. Now everybody just catches ball, not enough ground hurling.</p> <p>1:24:20 Describes the thing about the GAA that makes him proud as thre things it does for youth and thye fact that its amateur even though hurling is the best game in the world.</p> <p>1:24:40 Tells story of new American visitor to Croke Park for hurling game – Couldn't understand why only some wore helmets and why nobody was killed. He couldn't get over Croke Park and the crowd all in together and no fights or tension.</p> <p>1:26:00 Describes disappointments as being around rule changes that slow down game and stop it being physical but not dangerous. Too much hand passing in Gaelic Football.</p> <p>1:26:40 Describes feeling ok about opening Croke Park to other sports as long as it makes money for GAA. He would not discriminate against other sports.</p> <p>1:27:20 Describes what the GAA means to him as:</p> <p>“I think it means everything to the immigrants in New York. If we didn't have the GAA in New York, I don't think we would have met for jobs for people, met all these friends that we have. Oh, I think it meant everything. Gaelic Park, even though it's not what it used to be, meant everything at that time. It was the place to meet. I think if we didn't have it, if the</p>
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	immigrant didn't have it, we'd be lost."
Involvement in GAA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person <input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	Won NY Hurling Championship with Galway 1964, 65, 66
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	Galway Delegate to NY Board.
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 1:28:20
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: Seán Kearns

Date: 1 July 2010