

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	28 th May 2013
Location	Croke Park Stadium, Dublin
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Mary O'Connor
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Female
Born	Year Born: 1977 Home County: Cork
Education	Primary: St Fergal's National School, Killeagh, Co. Cork. Secondary: St Mary's High School, Midleton, Co. Cork. Third Level: Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa, Cork
Family	Siblings: 2 sisters and 6 brothers
Club(s)	Killeagh Camogie Club [Cork]; Inch Rovers Ladies Gaelic Football Club [Cork]; Donoughmore Ladies Gaelic Football Club [Cork]; Granagh-Ballingarry Camogie Club [Limerick]
Occupation	Acting Ard-Stiúrthóir Cumann Camógaíochta na nGael
Parents' Occupation	Farmers
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

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Date of Report	10 th July 2013
Period Covered	1960s - 2013
Counties/Countries Covered	Cork, Limerick, Dublin, Wexford, Tipperary, Galway, Kilkenny
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Role of women, Volunteers, Identity, Rivalries, All -Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Retirement, Socialising, Relationships
Interview Summary	<p>Mary talks about her upbringing and family life in Killeagh County Cork. She recalls the place of sport in her childhood and the tradition of Gaelic games in Killeagh Parish. She discusses teachers, mentors, players and administrators that have influenced her along the way. Her deep commitment to training and playing is outlined along with her success at all levels in camogie and ladies football. The parallel development of her professional career with in the Camogie Association is also reflected upon along with her belief in the games and the association.</p> <p>00:00:00 Introduction</p> <p>00:00:17 Growing up in Killeagh in the 1980s. Place of Gaelic games in the community. Mentions ICA, Muintir na Tíre, community council, parish council, Pioneers Total Abstinence Association. Mentions 'May Sunday' festival. Description of Glenbower Wood.</p> <p>00:02:02 Mainly farming community. Geographic location of Killeagh and closest towns, industry. Mentions Carrigtwohill and Midletown.</p> <p>00:02:57 Father from Drinagh, West Cork. Emigrated to England for ten years. Mother from Kilbritten also in West Cork. Married and bought a farm in Killeagh. Parents involvement in community.</p> <p>00:04:20 Description of her family and family life, growing up on the farm and helping out on the farm. Moving cattle, cutting silage, pick potatoes, moving bales and building a load of bales, going to the creamery, milking the cows. Playing sports around the farm. Mentions hurling, football, cycling, Stephen Roche, The Saw Doctors.</p>

	<p>00:09:01 Mother playing camogie in her youth. Mention of camogie uniforms in her time, injuries, mother's promotion of Gaelic games in the family. Family involvement in the games.</p> <p>00:10:43 Hurling as the pre-dominant sport in Killeagh. Football also played. Mention of Junior championship in East Cork. Progress of club throughout the years.</p> <p>00:11:30 Attending St Fergal's National School in Killeagh. Influence of Maurice O'Mahony and John Fitzgerald on sport in the school. Population growth in area. Description of school life. Mentions Mrs Byrne and Mrs McCarthy. Being collected from school by her father in the tractor. Mentions the McGuckins family who were their neighbours.</p> <p>00:13:55 Sporting life in school – mostly catered for boys. Her own interest in sport at that stage. Talks about sports days, athletics and the influence of Fr. Liam Kellegher in the development of athletics when he came to the parish as a curate. Her competitive streak as a child, wanting to play as much and as well as the boys. Attitude towards sports for girls.</p> <p>00:16:39 Killeagh camogie club – competitive structures for girls. Description and importance of parish leagues and of the parish league finals. Starting to play underage hurling with boys. Developing her skills here and playing at home with her brothers. Winning an U12 county final. Defeating Midletown, Youghal, Newtownshandrum and Cobh and also mentions the 'country county' and Joe Deane, Ben and Jerry O'Connor. Being aware of being a girl playing with the boys. The impact of playing with boys on her playing development.</p> <p>00:22:20 Sporting heroes as a child – local women on Cork camogie team but had an interest in all sports. Wanting to be Billy Coleman, Stephen Roche, Packie Bonar, Ger Conygnham, Brian Whelan, John Troy, Katie Taylor. Lack of sporting icons in the media when she was growing up. In her teenage years looking up to Sonia O'Sullivan.</p> <p>00:23:42 Going to see Cork play with Tommy Seward. Mentions Croke Park, Páirc Uí Chaoimh and Semple Stadium, Thurles. Talks about her friendship with Tommy and his hard work with the club. Tells story about Joe Deane and 'Dano' going to a match in Croke Park. Talks about Tommy coaching hurlers and mending hurls.</p> <p>00:26:45 Killeagh camogie club. Talks about the camogie pitch and facilities on Sheila and John Spillane's farm near Burgess. Talks about influence of Sheila Spillane. 1983</p>
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	<p>Killeagh winning the Camogie All-Ireland. Mary's sister also playing camogie there. Crowding people into a car to get a lift into the village from the camogie pitch.</p> <p>00:29:00 Talks about the camogie traditions in Killeagh and mentions Marion Sweeney, Evanne Leahy, Betty Joyce and Pat Maloney. Talks about going to féiles. Story about Sheila Spillane's greyhounds.</p> <p>00:30:25 The enjoyment of playing camogie in Burgess. Girls coming from other nearby villages to play with Killeagh. Mentions Inch, Park and Kyle. Popularity of camogie in Killeagh and opportunities for girls to play there. Talks about girls now going to places like Midleton and Youghal to play basketball and soccer.</p> <p>00:32:48 Attending St Mary's High School in Midleton. Adapting to secondary school. Sport in the school. Tradition of camogie in the school. Mentions Ann Leahy who was in charge of camogie in the school and Geraldine Kerby who took over from her. Also mentions Fiona O'Driscoll who was a past pupil of the school.</p> <p>00:35:05 Camogie as a means to settle into school life and make friends. Training at lunch time and after school in the pitches of the Christian Brothers and of the Community school. Basketball, volleyball and football in the school also mentioned.</p> <p>00:37:43 Other strong camogie schools mentioned include: St Mary's, Charleville; St Pat's, Cork City; St Mary's, Bandon and Coachford. Strength of Charleville particularly.</p> <p>00:38:50 Story about celebrating achievements in school. Community spirit at school, mentions Sr Nuala who was the principal at the time and who set the tone of the school. Ethos of school.</p> <p>00:40:55 Being closely identified with sport in the second half of her school years. Also interested in Manchester United. Playing matches against the teachers on Friday afternoons.</p> <p>00:42:20 Developing confidence and getting to know herself through camogie.</p> <p>43:26 Starting to play ladies football. Structures for ladies football at the time. Winning U16 and U18 county finals. Adult ladies Gaelic team disbanding in Killeagh. Transferring to Donoughmore ladies Gaelic football to stay playing. Playing on the Cork junior ladies Gaelic football team. Mentions Nora Kellegher. Won ten senior ladies Gaelic football county titles</p>
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	<p>in a row with them. Returned to Inch when the club re-formed there.</p> <p>45:20 Starting of ladies Gaelic football in Inch. Mentions Micheál Slattery and Hughie O'Neill. Playing underage football with boys. The decision to transfer to Donoughmore and to transfer back to Inch.</p> <p>47:25 Description of Donoughmore LFG when she joined. Mentions Juliet Murphy, Nora Kellegher, Mossy Bart. Mentions Ballymacarbery. Winning club All-Ireland.</p> <p>49:07 Camogie going through a bad cycle in Killeagh. Transfer of players to Fr O'Neill's. Mary becoming a GAA Development Officer for Limerick Institute of Technology. Transferring to Granagh Ballingarry in Limerick to play camogie for four years. Winning Limerick county championship with them and two club all-Ireland. Transferring back to Killeagh. Success of Killeagh when she returned, building the club back up. Health of club now. Importance of Sheila Spillane and of the history and tradition of the club.</p> <p>55:10 Getting started at inter-county level. Playing U16 and U18 for Cork in camogie and ladies football. On Cork junior ladies football team. Mentions Joe McGrath. Won Junior ladies football All-Ireland (1995). Joining Cork camogie senior panel (1996). What it felt like to play for her county. Playing against Wexford, Tipperary, Galway and Kilkenny, mentions Sinéad Millea. Winning two Munster camogie championships back to back. Mentions trainer, Tom Knox and his training approach. Winning camogie All-Ireland in 1997 and 1998. Mentions 12 aside game. Defeat in 1998 All-Ireland semi-final.</p> <p>1:02:07 Transition from 12 aside to 15 aside game. Mentions Tipperary as leaders in this. Impact of the transition.</p> <p>1:04:14 Starting on the senior panel so young. Developing self-confidence and belief. Mentions Linda Mellerick and Sandy Fitzgibbon, Denise Cronin, Kathleen Considine. Training in the Mardyke, her own preparation for training and for matches. Keeping a diary of her progress and skills.</p> <p>1:08:27 Landmark moments. Playing in the Gael Linn Cup. 1996 All-Ireland camogie final. Determination of her generation of Cork players.</p> <p>1:10:44 Comparison of the recognition of the men's sports got in comparison with the ladies' sports.</p> <p>1:12:39 Level of organisation of the inter-county teams and</p>
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	<p>ladies county boards at the time. Finding venues for training; facilities; equipment etc.</p> <p>1:14:32 Number of dual players at inter-county level. Mentions Fiona O'Driscoll. Commitment, sacrifices and privilege of being a dual player. Mentions Rita Buckley and Breege Corkery. Challenges of burnout issue.</p> <p>1:20:00 Training schedule and routine. Travelling to training and matches. Fitness level.</p> <p>1:22:20 Style and approach to playing. Preparation for games – mental and physical preparation.</p> <p>1:27:15 Sports psychology in camogie and ladies football. Importance of managers. Mentions Eamonn Ryan. How she was motivated and encouraged by herself and others.</p> <p>1:32:04 Winning her first All-Ireland senior camogie medal in 1997. Mentions Mags Finn. What it meant to the parish, her friends and family.</p> <p>1:34:05 Match day – walking out on to Croke Park, marching behind the band; playing in Croke Park.</p> <p>1:36:07 Outline of victories and successes as an inter-county player focussing on camogie. Mentions Fiona O'Driscoll and how she transformed training. Emergence of Wexford camogie team. Mentions Denise Cronin. Mentions Tipperary, Galway and Tyrone. Reflects on her own performance.</p> <p>1:42:00 Decision to retire from inter-county level camogie. Life after retirement. Chairperson of Killeagh camogie club. Work for camogie association. Reflection on her career.</p> <p>1:46:05 Outline of her ladies football inter-county career. Mentions Eamon Ryan and his contribution to ladies football in Cork. Also mentions Juliet Murphy, Valerie Mulcahy, Angela Walsh, Brid Stack, Rena Buckley and Breege Corkery. Talk about club rivalry and overcoming that at inter-county level – spirit of that team. Knee injury and missing out on 2007 All-Ireland. Captaining Cork to win All-Ireland in 2008. Retirement from ladies football inter-county career.</p> <p>1:54:40 Talks about her professional career and getting involved in games administration. Mentions doing certificate in leisure and recreation management in Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa. Becoming a GAA Development Officer at Limerick Institute of Technology. Development of sports ethos there. Challenges and successes of LIT while she was there. Description of role. Returning to Cork to work for the East</p>
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	<p>Cork GAA Board in schools as a coach. Becoming Munster South Leinster Camogie Development Officer. Becoming National Director of camogie development and description of that role. Becoming acting Ard-Stiúrthóir as the Camogie Association. Attraction and description of that role. Talks about clubs overseas. Importance of administration.</p> <p>2:00:45 Her experience of the role of acting Ard-Stiúrthóir, challenges and satisfactions of the job.</p> <p>2:02:04 Ambitions for the role and various aspects of the job - mentions national development plan; operational plan for Irish Sports Council; supporting committees; fixtures; publicity; referees; sponsorship; day to day queries from counties; underage development; official guide.</p> <p>2:04:01 Relationship with the GAA – the ‘GAA family’. Mentions support of Páraic Duffy and how camogie and GAA work together at a local level. Talks about Cúl Camps and camogie representatives on GAA committees. Hopes for further co-operation in the future. Success of double headers with men’s games and what it does for the profile of camogie.</p> <p>2:06:48 Increase in women’s participation in sport and increase in the opportunities for women to participate in sport. Gives the example of Kerry camogie.</p> <p>2:08:28 Ambitions for camogie in next five years. Mentions match attendance, double headers, further merging with GAA, more recognition from the media, more girls playing camogie, more sustainable structures, more inter-county teams competing at senior level, increase in standards of play, improvement in player welfare. Talks about Go Games.</p> <p>2:11:42 How camogie and ladies football have evolved in her experience of the games until now. Mentions improvements in coaching, refereeing standards, skills, increase of women’s involvement in GAA administration and in the respect they are given; improvements in cooperation with GAA, in administration, in participation, in facilities. Mentions facilities in Killeagh.</p> <p>2:14:42 Being Chairperson of Killeagh camogie club – challenges and successes.</p> <p>2:15:35 Reflections on her involvement in Gaelic Games over the years.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p>✓ Supporter ✓ Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager ✓ Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward</p>

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	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): Ard Stiúrthóir Camogie Association.
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	<p>Played camogie and ladies football from childhood up to present. Played underage at all levels with Cork. 7 All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championships (1997,1998, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2009); 2 All-Ireland Camogie Club Championships (one with Killeagh and one with Granagh-Ballingarry); 3 All-Stars; camogie player of the year 2006; 5 All-Ireland Senior Ladies Football championships (2004-2009); 1 All-Ireland Intermediate Ladies Football championships; 1 All-Ireland Junior Ladies Football championship; All-Star; All-Ireland Intermediate ladies football championship with Inch; 2 senior club ladies football All-Irelands with Donoghmore.</p>
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	<p>GAA Development Officer at Limerick Institute of Technology; Coach with East Cork GAA Board; Munster and South Leinster Camogie Development Officer; National Director of camogie development; Acting Ard-Stiúrthóir as the Camogie Association. Chairperson of Killeagh GAA Club.</p>
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	<p>Length of Interview: 2:17:49</p>
Language	<p>English</p>

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 10th July 2013