

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Regina Fitzpatrick
<b>Date of Interview</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2010
<b>Location</b>	Seamus's home, near Killinick, Co. Wexford
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Seamus Howlin
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1949 <b>Home County:</b> Wexford
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> Piercetown NS, Co. Wexford <b>Secondary:</b> CBS Wexford
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 1 sister <b>Current Family if Different:</b> Wife & 3 sons
<b>Club(s)</b>	St Martin's GAA [Wexford]
<b>Occupation</b>	Accountant / Farmer
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Gardener [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	Fianna Fáil
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	N/A

REFERENCE NO. WX/1/27

<b>Date of Report</b>	27 <sup>th</sup> June 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1942 – 2010
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Wexford, Cork, Kerry, Kilkenny, Meath, Great Britain, Europe, Belgium, Australasia, Australia, New Zealand, Americas, North America, Canada, China
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Education, Religion, Media, Involvement in the GAA abroad, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Rivalries, Culture, All-Ireland, Club History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Politics, Opening of Croke Park, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Socialising, Relationships, Economy/ Economics
<b>Interview Summary</b>	In this interview Seamus talks about his early days playing for Saint Martin's against his mother's team Saint Fintan's. He then discusses the formation of Saint Martin's club taking over from the games being played beforehand in Murrintown. and the prominence of the club in the area. He goes on to talk about those who influenced him and then discusses how the club surveyed the local community and took on their requirements for tennis and bowls. He goes on to talk about his playing career from schooldays through the Rackard Cup games and playing with George O'Connor. He speaks of his heroes and what these players gave back to the team and clubs. He goes on to talk about being involved in the administrative side of the club and about getting a bank loan for the developments and his time on the county board. He talks of the professional manner of the GAA as an amateur organisation and the structures and strengths of the GAA along with the importance of training for those involved. He talks of setting up the supporters club. He next covers the lead up to 1996 and Wexford winning the All-Ireland and of the celebrations that followed. He goes on to discuss what it means to be a good chairman. He talks of the close relationship with the Department of Foreign Affairs. He talks of the role played by the GAA abroad. He then speaks of his time in Central Council. He talks about the development and opening up of Croke Park. He talks about how the GAA has impacted on his identity and his family life. He speaks about the GAA staying close to the grass roots of the organisation and the challenges facing the GAA and of his hope to one

	<p>day be the President of the GAA. He tells what the GAA means to him and what makes him both happy and cross within the organisation. Finally, he discusses his involvement in Rounders and speaks of the dedication of those involved.</p> <p>00:31 Speaks of being born and raised in Piercestown. Mentions his parents involvement in the GAA being members of Saint Fintan's Club rivals of his own club Saint Martin's. His mother went as far as shouting for Saint Fintan's when Seamus was playing against them for Saint Martin's.</p> <p>01:50 Tells a story of not being given his dinner because of the game he played against Saint Fintan's such was his mother's interest in the hurling.</p> <p>02:58 Talks of the Murrintown playing in 1884 with Saint Martin's being formed in 1932. Mentions Boggins playing for Sarsfield.</p> <p>04:10 Speaks about the area covered by Saint Martin's with about 1500 homes covered in Murrintown and Piercestown. Mentions the Quigleys, John and Martin who were involved in the club both hurling and camogie.</p> <p>05:51 Talks of the prominence of the club when he was growing up, with people becoming involved in the administrative side when only in their early twenties. Mentions Frank Colley and Kevin Power.</p> <p>06:46 Speaks of the men involved before him who influenced him over the years including Jim Power and Jim Mahoney.</p> <p>07:29 Talks of Jim Power and his views on development and community involvement.</p> <p>08:18 Speaks of surveying the community to see what they wanted and of including not only hurling and football but tennis and bowling. Mentions putting in a lift for older people.</p> <p>09:15 Tells of never being refused when selling tickets as the club is seen as the centre of the parish.</p> <p>09:28 Speaks of his playing career starting in school with a teacher from Murrintown, Derek Burton coming to Piercestown to encourage the young players.</p> <p>10:42 Tells of starting in the Rackard league and going on from that and playing senior level from 1977. Mentions playing with George O'Connor in 1977.</p> <p>11:54 Talks of his GAA heroes growing up including the 1968 team, Tony Moran, the Quigleys, Willie Murphy, Vincent</p>
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	<p>Staples and Sheamus Shanks</p> <p>13:00 Speaks about what it means to have that level of success in the team. Mentions the players who gave back to the team.</p> <p>14:18 Talks of how he got involved in the administrative side of the club at an early age. Mentions, Jim Mahony, Jim Power, Jim McBride.</p> <p>15:14 Tells of his vision of the club then and now of improving the club facilities.</p> <p>16:38 Recalls the time taken up when playing and being involved in administration. Mentions looking for a bank loan and meeting the bank manager and how he saw something in them that was worth investing in.</p> <p>19:15 Talks of his father passing away six weeks ago and the way in which the GAA responded to that with only a few counties not represented at the funeral. Mentions Mícheál Ó Muircheartaigh, Marty Morrissey and Paul Byrnes.</p> <p>20:19 Tells how the GAA are at their best when people are in trouble.</p> <p>21:03 Talks of what motivated him to get involved in the administrative side of the club. Mentions Joe O'Shaughnessy.</p> <p>22:32 Speaks of getting involved at county level in the 1990's. Mentions having a full time Secretary, Michael Kinsella.</p> <p>23:20 Speaks of the challenges of playing both football and hurling to a high level.</p> <p>23:57 Talks of his impression of the organizational structure of the GAA. Mentions the cross-section of people involved all with equally valid opinions.</p> <p>25:38 Speaks of the difficulty of being an amateur organisation depending on volunteers that must present itself in a professional way.</p> <p>28:05 Talks of the different structures in place now as opposed to when he started. Mentions the importance of training and assistance for all involved. Also mentions the importance of treasurers having financial backgrounds or being given the necessary training.</p> <p>31:52 Speaks of the strength in the GAA being in the clubs and the importance of recognising this and nurturing it into the future. Mentions that no matter what position you hold you will</p>
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	<p>always be a club man.</p> <p>33:39 Talks of being in Parnell Park for a presentation for Celebrity Bainisteoir between Castleisland, Kerry and Ballymun Kickhams, Dublin</p> <p>34:14 Speaks of becoming chairman of Wexford County board and working with Joe O'Shaughnessy and Paddy Wickham. Mentions having to bring people around as chairman.</p> <p>36:21 Recalls the big issues when he became chairman including the vision to win the senior hurling All-Ireland final. Mentions starting the supporters club under Matt Brown and John Doyle.</p> <p>37:37 Talks of the lead up to winning in 1996. Mentions the games over the previous years against Cork and Kilkenny. Also mentions taking the team on holiday after narrowly losing a final which helped focus the team on winning.</p> <p>39:59 Speaks of losing to Meath in Belfield under Liam Griffin in 1995. Then moves on to 1996.</p> <p>40:53 Talks of the 1996 Leinster final meaning as much to him as the All-Ireland final. Recalls the All-Ireland final and running onto the pitch after the match. Mentions George O'Connor and DJ Carey. Also mentions the celebrations in the open topped bus from Gorey heading to the quayside in Wexford with 30,000 people waiting.</p> <p>43:14 Speaks of having no food on the bus and finally sitting down to an evening meal at 2:30am in Liam Griffins hotel.</p> <p>44:02 Speaks of going off on the holiday to California for three weeks having collected IR£240,000 for the holiday fund and giving the remainder to a coaching fund for young players.</p> <p>45:02 Talks of the impact of that win on Wexford hurling being great for a few years but wishing it had lasted longer. Mentions 1997 Leinster final and winning in 2003.</p> <p>46:15 Speaks of memorable decisions of the county board and mentions when the referees went on strike when new rules were coming in at national level.</p> <p>48:20 Tells of the difficulty of making unpopular decisions and the impact personally on the officials. Mentions the importance of the rule book and upholding it without fear or favour.</p>
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	<p>50:40 Talks of the importance of listening for a chairman. Mentions being only as good as the people around you and choosing carefully people who are willing to challenge you. Also mentions being willing and able to deal with any problems that arise within games and competitions.</p> <p>54:41 Speaks of his involvement in Leinster Council over the years. Huge province with twelve counties which equal in numbers the other three provinces in the Republic.</p> <p>56:20 Talks of the strategic plan for the Leinster Council in terms of the growth in urban areas.</p> <p>57:50 Speaks of his different roles within the Leinster Council including representing the Leinster Council on the GAC under Frank Murphy of Cork. Mentions being PRO for a number of years and being Vice Chairman and Chairman. Also mentions Martin Sherrie and Michael Delaney.</p> <p>59:58 Talks of the building of the Leinster Council offices.</p> <p>01:00:40 Speaks of having a great relationship with the schools. Mentions good finance committee under Martin Quigley and infrastructure under PJ Murphy.</p> <p>01:01:22 Tells of the enjoyment of getting things done and looking back at them. Mentions enjoying meeting people and making friends and the love and pride people have for their clubs and the games.</p> <p>01:03:36 Speaks of accepting decisions that went against them as being part of life and not being disappointed by the outcome but being willing to try again.</p> <p>01:05:06 Tells of being involved in the overseas committee. Mentions Tommy Walsh and his work with the Gilford four and Birmingham six.</p> <p>01:05:53 Talks of being inspired by Tommy Walsh and talks of Joe McDonagh. Mentions Gene Duffy holding the position before him. Tells of being in Maastricht for the European finals with Michael Delaney.</p> <p>01:07:40 Speaks of sending referees to Europe and Mick Moran of Interpol helping with training of referees in Europe. Mentions the banquet after the final and meeting one young man who was defending Slobodan Milošević in the courts.</p> <p>01:09:04 Speaks about the Asian games in Shanghai with Mícheál Ó Muircheartaigh, whose son Pdraig was over there. Mentions the banquet with 750 people in attendance.</p>
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	<p>Also mentions Joe McDonagh going to Hong Kong this year and the clubs that are all over the world.</p> <p>01:11:13 Talks of his own son going to Toronto and being well looked after by the GAA people out there. Mentions there being 450 clubs abroad, Australia, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, America.</p> <p>01:12:27 Tells of the development around the world including San Francisco. Mentions the link with the Department of Foreign Affairs and thanks Brian Cowen for all his assistance.</p> <p>01:13:28 Speaks of the importance of the GAA overseas when people might be feeling alone and missing home. Mentions helping those who go abroad to find a place to stay and a job.</p> <p>01:16:00 Talks of the quality of young people going abroad and how they are leader of industry and present a positive image of Ireland. Again thanks the Department of Foreign Affairs.</p> <p>01:16:48 Speaks of the relationship with the Department of Foreign Affairs as they were trying to do the same thing abroad. Mentions Ray Bassett and how they worked together.</p> <p>01:19:10 Speaks of setting up coaching and games development in the UK.</p> <p>01:19:52 Tells of a sports graduate going to Asia and helping them with regard to coaching.</p> <p>01:20:17 Speaks of how the GAA and the Department of Foreign Affairs got together over a pint and bite to eat to discuss their plans.</p> <p>01:21:33 Tells how the Department of Foreign Affairs realised that the GAA was not simply about the games but had a wider role to play.</p> <p>01:23:10 Tells of the development officers in the United States funded jointly between the GAA and the Department of Foreign Affairs.</p> <p>01:23:50 Talks of the role played by the GAA abroad in the past and how this is the case today. Mentions the unsung heroes who got Gaelic games off the ground abroad in the past without the support of the GAA and how this is being built on now.</p> <p>01:26:20 Talks of the level of support given to the GAA abroad and how it is not recognised by those at home, who</p>
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	<p>are busy with their own teams, clubs and counties. Mentions Nickey Brennan and his support over the years.</p> <p>01:28:15 Talks of the GAA abroad forming a sense of Irishness for those abroad. Mentions too that hopefully those who have had to go away will come home again.</p> <p>01:29:58 Speaks about the role of the GAA in the current economic climate. Mentions not letting anyone go from their positions due to economics. Also mentions encouraging those who have lost their jobs, and who might not be involved in the GAA, to get involved.</p> <p>01:32:03 Talks about the development plans in clubs and how this might help the economy to grow.</p> <p>01:33:28 Speaks about the Portlaoise development and how this has effected them.</p> <p>01:34:33 Talks of his work on the Youth Committee under Joe McDonagh.</p> <p>01:35:15 Speaks of his first glimpse into the workings of Central Council and other GAA committees.</p> <p>01:37:15 Tells of the key moments in the GAA including the development of Croke Park in the 1990's. Mentions his pride at the British Ambassador's visit and how the GAA conducted itself.</p> <p>01:39:33 Talks of the opening up of Croke Park and the discussions involved. Mentions being a Republican himself but that time moves on and yet everyone's view had to be respected.</p> <p>01:41:57 Speaks of the impact that opening up Croke Park has had not just on Ireland but on all the countries that have been able to play there. Mentions being given a few free pints by some French fans over for a match.</p> <p>01:43:45 Talks of the GAA as a nationalist movement and how this has developed.</p> <p>01:45:13 Speaks of what the GAA means in terms of his own identity.</p> <p>01:46:22 Talks of the impact of his involvement in the GAA on his family life. Mentions the support of his wife and family.</p> <p>01:47:34 Speaks of his family taking an interest in the GAA, with one son teaching hurling in school and his other son in</p>
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	<p>Toronto playing.</p> <p>01:48:53 Tells of bringing experiences from the GAA into his personal life. Mentions having to give presentations in work and learning to do this from an early age in the GAA.</p> <p>01:50:44 Talks of the leaders in the GAA that he has admired the most, including Liam Mulvey and many of the Presidents over the years each bringing their own skills to the Association. Also mentions Joe McDonagh, Nickey Brennan and Jim Power.</p> <p>01:53:21 Talks about the mistakes of the Catholic Church, the bad time Fianna Fail are going through and the GAA and how they are staying close to the grass roots. Discusses the future of the GAA and the strategic plan, closing the gaps between all the administrative levels.</p> <p>01:57:51 Talks of the lessons he learned including the benefits of playing games with our children.</p> <p>01:58:36 Speaks of the biggest challenges facing the GAA, organisation and the balance of population across the provinces.</p> <p>01:59:42 Speaks of his aspirations to being President of the GAA and how he would love the position.</p> <p>02:00:37 Talks of what the GAA means to him, including loving it enough to argue with the President about certain matters.</p> <p>02:01:15 Speaks of what makes him happy about the GAA including what they do for getting children involved. Talks about what makes him cross about the GAA being when people go on strike.</p> <p>02:02:39 Talks about his involvement in Rounders and the people involved. Mentions players being in the minority but supporting them as much as they can.</p>
<p><b>Involvement in GAA</b></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter   <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player   <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager   <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach   <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson   <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member   <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caterer   <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer   <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referee   <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p>

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<b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)	Played for 30 years at all levels for St Martin's; also played hurling and football for Wexford.
<b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)	St Martin's GAA: Held all positions in the club with the exception of treasurer  Wexford GAA: Sponsorship chairman; vice-chairperson and chairman  Leinster: Member of the council from 1989-current; chairman (3 years); vice-chairman and PRO (6 years).  National: Member of Croke Park Management Committee; Chairman of Overseas Committee; Members of youth committees; fixtures committees; referees committees.
<b>Format</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 02:03:59
<b>Language</b>	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:            Regina Fitzpatrick

Date:              27<sup>th</sup> June 2012