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**Interviewer:** Pauline Connolly  
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**Padraic:** My father, my grandfather started the shop in Milltown. My father took over from him and.....Started the travelling shop in 1955, I think it was, 1955. I was only a young fella that time.....went out 3 days a week, some days 12 / 14 hours. Came home and we had a bit of land at that time too, milk the cows, the usual small farm things. We ran a grocery, drapery. My mother did the drapery end in her day and we had a pub. We were undertakers.....Now, they were four other undertakers in Milltown at the time as well. Then we started the travelling shop. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and I'd a half day Thursday delivering stuff that I couldn't bring, collecting eggs. Some farmers ran their household on the hens. They had their own fodder oats and what not to feed the hens on. I know there were two certain houses that'd have money back (pounds, pence & shilling) after buying the weekly groceries, selling the eggs and that. That used to be some awful trouble too. Somebody would come in, some other travelling shop come in maybe a penny less or more for the eggs – that's trying to please different people and that. Mostly 99.9% of the people that I dealt with were perfect. They would tell you if you were a penny too much the next day or the next week and that. That was how we started off. That went on til I think it was 1980, my father died. Supermarkets had come in, in the meantime then too. They were able to sell cheaper even though we delivered to the house. The people had their own cars and what not and they went off to supermarkets. Naturally, you could buy things cheaper. We were being moved out as they say. My father died in 1980 then and I said that's it...no more travelling shop for me. My mother had moved to Galway at that stage. I got married in the meantime and decided close down the shop altogether and went into the farming so that was the end of the travelling shop.

We sold flour, meal and all that, all types of groceries. We had the bar then as well. Friday now was a great day for the Old Age Pensioners. They'd meet there and they'd be there. I remember one particular man, he had two sticks and he'd be hobbling on the two sticks. There was a programme on: Benjo [Benjy] I think it was, a Friday evening about 8 o'clock and he'd come into the kitchen listening to the radio and he'd have the two sticks doing the steps with the two sticks. I can remember that very well. He'd hit off himself and a neighbour maybe about half 10 or 11 o'clock, a winter's night going home in the ass and cart. The ass'd bring him home. There was one particular incident. On his way home, I won't mention any names now but the ass took a sharp turn anyway and the driver fell out of the cart. He arrived home anyway and of course, there was great commotion. One particular man said well he said 'The plane has arrived but the pilot is missing so we'll have to go looking for him'. That's a true story now. There were great times, great times.

The flour I remember as a young lad I wasn't long driving at the time. Sure I used to love it, go over to the station to collect the flour. There was a railway lorry that used to come from Tuam I think it was or Claremorris. I'm not that sure now. They would deliver some stuff. Paraffin oil would come, the lorry would come. I think they were 10 gallon drums and they'd fill off the lorry and bring in around and fill our tank, whatever type of tank you'd have with the oil.

I'd go over. Well in actual fact before that, before we got the station, the van.....horse and cart. You'd bring over the flour on the horse and cart. We deliver it out as people want it again. The Guinness used to come by rail too but the railway lorry used to deliver the Guinness to us. They were timber kegs that time. They weren't.....there was no such thing as gas. To gas them off, you had to tap them yourself. The Guinness sometimes be flat enough, that was it. Ah it was good ol' times.

My father and I had an Uncle that worked there. In my early days now, ....The travelling shop did most of the business outside....A Ford van. That one was a maroon coloured van and then we got another ford – a blue one and then. All ford vans except the last one I bought was an Austin. It was a bit bigger. It was great to start a cold morning but a damp morning, you'd have a job to start it. Otherwise now, they gave me good service alright.

We carried everything with us. Bread, sugar, butter except milk. There was no such thing as selling milk. Although we did sell milk at home. We always kept a few cows, just local. There were no fridges that time either.

**Pauline:** So, did you prefer going out on the travelling shop?

**Padraic:** Not on a Monday morning (laughs). I'd get the van packed and then ok. I used to love meeting people. I was like the postman – people watching for the travelling shop to come, we'd have some news and they'd have some news. I used to get news 5 miles away that had happened next door maybe a week before that I wouldn't have heard it. I'd hear it 5 miles away.

A Monday, I'd go up Liskeavy and over Belmont, in Gurrane and come back, finish off here where Greenes are now. That was Monday. Tuesday go down Dawros, Russelstown, Cloonagh, Corohan, Tanyard (We always called it Tanyard. We had land down there and we still have land down there. It's in Dunmore parish of course. It's below the bridge in Dalgin. You turn left, you go in there. Some people call it Corohan. There were a few houses there. I always called it Tanyard. It'd bring you out on the Ballindine / Irishtown road again), Dalgin and go over Lower Dalgin into Conagher, a village in there, come out there, go down Stripe, that used to be a late day alright and go down and into Meelick, that was Irishtown parish. I'd go over the border into Meelick and come back up home. A radius of 5 miles I suppose. I remember one night I got a puncture. The spare I had was flat and it was raining and I got a bike off someone. I got a spare wheel off Paddy Varley. It was a car wheel. Here I come limping. But I got home alright.

Do you know what I miss most now was the last round I went out, there were tears in my eyes. I'd say the next time I'd see you now would be at your funeral.....coupla houses I'd always have the cup of tea and the chat. Wintertime now, heavy frost, the first thing I'd do at night time is open the range door and put my two feet in it because they'd be ice from my knees down but otherwise, it was good. That's gone now, 30 years.

Completely changed. Completely changed. You know, their sell by date. If you got a loaf now, there was a date yesterday, people ....one time, they'd be hard as a rock and you know people didn't mind. They were used of that and they didn't mind.

My grandfather worked in Glynn's now, it was McDonnell's. He bought this site off McDonnell just at the back of Glynn's shop and he started to build in it. It seems he had to finish the building to get a pub license within so many months or whatever it was. He did it anyway. When he had it built then, McDonnell, he had shops, he had one in Dunmore, he had one in Castlerea, Roscommon. He was a fairly big merchant. He built.....The Old Road was down by our old house, as we called it down the lane and it came out near Mullarkey's. McDonnell was pretty big in his way. He built part of Glynn's

right up in front of ours and got the road changed out in front of Glynn's and we were cut off. That's why we were in at the back. I understand my grandfather lost a lot of money, went to the High Court and still lost it. That's how we were stuck in at the back.

Going back to the troubles and that. The tans tried to burn our place one time, set it on fire and locked up my grandfather and grandmother, locked them in a shed outside. Somebody released them and they got inside. They had bed linen and mattresses pulled out and they had set them on fire. They quenched it anyway. The house wasn't burnt.

Christmas was a hard time for us. As they say, I'd go out and people be buying the Christmas. They'd have a big list and I'd spend half a night doing up those boxes and put them in and deliver them the next day then and that. People that time, there wasn't a lot of money anywhere but there'll be always somebody either in England or working somewhere and they'd be home for the Christmas and they'd bring home this bit of money. They'd pay off the few bob that they owed the shopkeeper like.

Well, I remember most of them really now, I enjoyed.....There another one now, funny one too. This man, son and the daughter, the father and the mother lived in the one house. He was always on about the price of eggs. We'd always have the battle when I'd go down to him. This day he came up or his daughter came up to draw the pension and she went home anyway and she said when she was emptying her few groceries out, she said 'I brought a surprise now' and the father was looking and what was the surprise? Four herrings and he said and he'd a stick. He hit it, the stick on the table. He said 'There'll be no more luxuries in this house until the price of eggs goes up (laughs). So that will tell you now the way people lived you know, that the herrin was a luxury. There used to be a lady from Tuam, what's this her name was? McNally, I think. They used to come and in front of our place, they'd have two of those fishboxes with herrings. I think it was 6 old pennies each for the herring. I think that was it now. She'd be selling them there on the Friday you know.

I have the old license, the pub license and I think it was 12 and 6 pence. You had to have a licence to sell tobacco and drink. I think it was 12 and 6 pence it was that time. Now, it's a couple of thousand now I think.

**Pauline:** Rationing, did ye deal with rationing?

**Padraic:** Yes, that was tough now too. That was kind of just before my time really. I do remember, I do remember one particular man. I don't think he has any relations around. Mooney Charles we used to call him and he used to come over every day to the shop and he'd be sitting maybe on a bag of onions, he'd be sitting somewhere around there. He used to smoke the pipe. You'd be selling sugar or whatever it was and you'd weigh it on the scale but sometimes, there was 2 pound tobacco. It'd be in a 2 pound, the 2 ounces but they'd be in a little parcel and you'd put that upon the scale to save you looking for weights. There was an odd two pound missing at times. His sister was Ellen Charles. She came over one time. She had three 2 pound packets of tobacco in the bag. The tobacco itself was alright but the [parcel round it] was smoke where ever they were. Characters. They were great aul characters.

There was Murphy's of Ballina. They supplied meal. Different. There was clarendon. It was meal soaked, do you know what it would remind now you of? Like cornflakes, you know. It came out. There was another name for it as well but it came in four stone bags. That was kind of the elite of the feeding stuff at the stage. Pollard now was not. It was kind of just like the beet, the pulp. People wouldn't... It was the leftover of the beet say. Pollard then was the leftover of the flour. Pollard and bran....but of course, they were alright too I suppose. Murphy's of Ballina used to come once every

two weeks. They supplied the shop. There was a crowd from Westport. What were their names? Can't think of that now. Then, there was Odlums flour. That used come to the station. But then later on, in later years then they had their own lorries Odlums and Ranks. They would supply their flour. Funny, some people wouldn't take Rank's flour. They made out wasn't good flour but I found out afterwards that the same mill milled the flour but they were put into different bags. There was another crowd then: Black Swan butter that used come from Cork. I remember my father telling about the tea rationing. About a week or a fortnight before, there was this commercial traveller came. He had, what was it now, he had a dog that won a big race in Dublin and he said, he had a few too many drinks I suppose taken. He took a note of...put down such as one wants so many chests of tea. Twas all chests, twas all loose tea that time. He put my father down for 20 chests of tea, was a lot of tea that time. That was just before the rationing came in and the following week, the rationing came in. The tea was delivered to our place. We hadn't the storage for it. We hadn't it at home but we got storage for it. We were lucky in that sense, that we had plenty of tea for all our customers. It lasted....I remember my father saying that he never charged a penny over the, whatever.... Some people did. He was always proud of that. That he didn't charge anybody anymore, customers. But of course, an outside person come in, looking for tea, well naturally, they'd have to have coupons for it for they wouldn't get it. Whiskey was scarce too I believe. Now, that was before my time.

**Pauline:** In then your shop then, what kind of sweets did ye sell?

**Padraic:** The lollipops. The liquorice, the liquorice pipes and that. Very few be buying bars of chocolate and that. Very few be buying them.....Knick knacks.

The year my father died. I said that's it. Business had gone from small shops then anyway. I could see it dwindling for nearly 10 years before that. The supermarkets started. Of that time, there were cars coming into every village and they'd get to Tuam or Claremorris or whatever. Then, Glynn's opened a supermarket in Milltown too.

My Uncle used to do the coffins that time. Then, I took over from him and well, there was Burkes, Mannions, Glynn's, ourselves and Keane's (The Blue Pig). They used to draw out a coffin too. So well supplied with coffins in the area. You wouldn't to that many you know...when there was so many you know. People had their own. The same with the travelling shop. They dealt with....they kept with the one shop really. They didn't go around. It was the same with the undertaking too. You had your own customers. Over in Belmont now, they all went to Ballindine for the funerals. There was no hearse here. Maybe that's why....parents before them bought the coffin. They went back to there again.

Half ten was the bar. You could open the shop at half 10 for the bar. I don't know was it 11 o'clock at night it closed down. I think it was 11.

Oh ya. Mostly, the bar was in at the back. You had to go in. There might be a snug in the bar. People be kind of away from the women coming in doing their shopping. They wouldn't want to be seen. Ah, there wasn't that much drinking in the day time. A few would come in but more for a friendly talk. People would meet and that.

Farming was my favourite all the time.

After I'd grown up say. I suppose like every young lad, they hadn't any favourites. Do what you were told and that was just it.

Well, we always had a few cows. Milk by hand of course. Then, in the early 70s I think it was, the late 60s, I think, I got into a few suckler cows and I decided, I changed a few cheques for milkmen. Had

started off milking.....That looks better than the suckler cow and I got into the milk then. I remember I was milking 9 cows by hand. There was one tough one. I said after a coupla months, Ah I said we'll have to get something. So I got a milking machine then and then that was up at the house. It wasn't...We hadn't any land. The cow be coming in and out in front of the shop and in front of Mrs Feeny's Post Office....There weren't....Ah Janey. Then, we built here then and moved over here and built a parlour down the back and built all the sheds and all that. That's when I got out of the shop altogether. We sold it. It was a long time on the market but we sold it.

I'm 80 years now. I suppose early 70s I'd say. I have the land now and the sheds all that leased out, nearly 10 years now, I suppose so a man of leisure now. Walk the dog now.....As they say who wouldn't be a dog