



Name: Mr. Frank Kearney
From: Turloughmore, Lackagh.
Interviewers: Brona Gallagher
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Brona **How long did Ciaran Barrett stay in your house?**
Frank For twenty-one years. Twenty-one years, one month, one week and one day - from the day he came to the day he died. His mother came from Ballymurphy. She was Murphy. The house is uninhabited now, to the best of my knowledge. It was last lived in by a first cousin of his, who was Naughton, who was married to a Michael Collins. She got the place from two uncles that lived there. During his youth, he spent quite a lot of time living in Ballymurphy. Prior to coming to us, he spent a short time with the other relations, who were Morans from Lackaghbeg. They have all since passed away. He qualified in U.C.G., as I think, a secondary teacher. He had a B.A. degree.

Brona **Was he nearly in the priesthood?**
Frank I'm not terribly sure, but from what I can gather, but I've never been able to substantiate this, it was never discussed, but there are a lot of reports that he was aiming for the priesthood. He was deeply religious. Very deeply.

Brona **Fantastically so?**
Frank I suppose in present day terms, you could say so, but for his age group you wouldn't say fantastically so. But certainly, religion was something very important for him. He taught for a while in a national school outside Tullamore, but to the best of my knowledge, that's all the teaching he did. I don't think he worked apart from that until after the death of his mother. His father was Stephen Barrett (Stiofan O'Baraid), who was the first treasurer of the Gaelic League and was involved in its formation with Eoghan McNeill and Douglas Hyde and whoever else. He originally lived in Blessington Street and later himself and his sister bought a house between them in Whitehall road, just opposite the Kimmage Manor. After his death, his sister donated a number of his father's papers to U.C.G. After his mother died, which would have been in the late 40's or early 50's, he went working with the Irish Folklore Commission as a collector of folklore in the west, but mainly in Co. Galway. In his early days, he had only a bicycle and the early means of collecting would all have been done by hand and the first type of tape recorder that he ever used was one called an Epiphone and when recording you could see the lines going on the record as it was recording. The mouth piece was also the eardrum - where it went in, it came out! It was an extremely heavy machine. In his early years they had a bag for it and it was something that was transported manually and certainly it was extremely difficult. He collected a huge amount of material

from Mike Silke in Carnmore and his brother Patch. He also collected stuff from Montiagh. There would be a lot of stuff from Sean Reilly – Sean Glenane in Waterdale. He was known as Sean Reilly for what reason, I don't know though, his name was Sean Glenane. He collected stuff from the people of Montiagh and also from those people who moved to Kildare after they'd moved. Dan Hession, here in Loughgeorge, may have given some material. After the Epiphone, the tape recorder came. It was a portable tape recorder that he used, which wasn't a cassette tape, it was one of those big reels, that he used for collecting. He subsequently used a bigger one for the copying afterwards. He is buried in the new cemetery in Claregalway. It was his own wish that he'd be buried there.

Brona **You say he didn't work much until his mother died – would she have supported him up to this?**

Frank I would imagine so, yes.

Brona **Where was his father originally from?**

Frank Roscommon – I think it was around French Park. He was also a great collector of items for the National museum. He was a very good friend of Tony Lucas, who was the director of the museum.

Brona **What sort of person was he?**

Frank They used to say about him that when he lived in Ballymurphy, he'd have his egg in the morning, but he'd never wash a plate. From our point of view, he certainly integrated as a member of the family. He was staying with us in digs, so he didn't have to wash up. He came for a month's lodgings at first, but they turned out to be twenty-one years. He was extremely helpful to us as a person. He had a company car – an old Anglia – there were three gears and a reverse, and the indicator was on top of the hooter on the steering wheel that you pressed right or left, and it was a little arrow on the side of the car that went out – there were no indicators in those days. As kids, we were brought to various places that we'd never have been brought to otherwise. He brought us to Dublin in the mid 50's – something which was unusual for local children at the time. We were brought to Kylemore Abbey and Ashford Castle.

Brona **Did he visit these places out of interest or as part of his work?**

Frank Out of interest. It became a family day for everybody. We were the only kids in our school who'd have been to Shannon Airport in those days. When my father died, he very much became a father to my sister, who was only two years of age, and a very good friend to my mother. He'd help out with the hay – a nice clean job and occasionally he would take a walk around the fields. He was a very quiet person and had absolutely no time for foul language. He was strange in the kind of way that there were some people that he never spoke to – it wasn't all his doing, but in situations where he got hassled, he wiped his

mind of it - he didn't want to know about it. There were two sisters and two brothers in his family, none of them ever got married. He died in Merlin Park hospital. He was extremely restless on the day and said he wanted to go home and when we said where is home, he said to Lackagh - he was very clear on where home was.

Brona **What did he die of?**

Frank Malignant tumour in the brain.

Brona **Was he sick?**

Frank For about six months, he had been failing and his mind had very much wandered, and he became weak. It came to a stage where he wasn't able to drive. He had semi-retired on the February prior to his death. He went to hospital on a Thursday and died on a Tuesday, 16. If we had known that he'd have gone that fast, we'd have brought him home because it wouldn't have been his wish to die in hospital.

Brona **He wasn't in great pain?**

Frank No, he wasn't, until maybe the last day or two, when he'd have been uncomfortable.

Brona **Did he like children?**

Frank Yes, he was extremely fond of the youth. I was involved with Macra na Feirme a couple of years before he died, and he had tremendous time for all the young lads. From the point of view of giving youth their say, he was ahead of his time. It was the type of approach that he always advocated. When he died, he left us the car and he left all of his money to charity, which became a major problem because the house in Dublin was in tenants in common and he left his money to two charities and one of them wanted to release their claim on the house and the other didn't and they had to take it to the high Courts to sort it out and it went on for years and most of the money he left, which didn't amount to much, was swallowed up in that. He used to smoke - he was basically a chain smoker - until about the early 60's, but he never inhaled. When he gave them up, he gave them up for good. He never drank - he was a pioneer all his life.

Brona **Did he transcribe all the material in your house?**

Frank Yes.

Brona **Did he have a study of his own?**

Frank He was given, as it was called in those days, the parlour. It wasn't used for anything else. In those days, the parlour was only a vacant room, that was held for guests and that he had for himself.

Brona

Did he work hard?

Frank

He used to put in colossal hours. He wasn't an early riser - he wouldn't get up on most days until 9.30 or 10 o'clock, unless he was going somewhere or doing something. An awful lot of his work was at night and he could be out until 11pm, visiting people and then he'd transcribe it the following day.

Brona

What did he do with the stuff then?

Frank

He sent it back to the Folklore commission - everything was logged and sent back accordingly.

