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Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Aitiúil
Dhún na nGall
Donegal Local Community Development
Committee



Echoes of the Decade – Oral History Strand

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Mary Harte
Date(s) of Interview(s)	25 October 2020
Location	Rosaleen's home, Raphoe, Co. Donegal
Name of Interviewee	Rosaleen Harte
Gender	Female
Year of Birth	1930
Interview Synopsis	<p>Rosaleen Harte is from Raphoe, Co. Donegal and is from a family with a long-held interest in politics. She was married to Paddy Harte who served for 36 years as a Fine Gael TD for Donegal North East and who is also known for his role in remembering Irish soldiers who fought and died in World War I. In this interview, Rosaleen is interviewed by her daughter Mary Harte about her life and the revolutionary period. Themes and topics in this interview include Rosaleen's childhood, her parent's interest in politics, War of Independence and Civil War, the experience of being married to a TD.</p>
Time-Coded Interview Summary	<p>00:00 Introduction to the interview.</p> <p>00:20 Rosaleen was born in Raphoe, Co. Donegal on Irish Street [Mary subsequently clarified that this is Irish Row]. Description of the Raphoe of her childhood. Mentions oil / tilly lamps and candles in people's homes. Describes the school she attended and talks about Children walking to school and poverty. Mentions Master McGlinchy. Children getting slapped with the sally rod.</p> <p>05:55 Mentions Miss Kerrigan who was a teacher there from Co. Roscommon. Talks about scholarships to secondary school. Talks about outside toilets, hardships of walking to school.</p> <p>07:30 Grew up in a small, warm, comfortable house. Describes the house. She had one brother and one sister both of whom were much older than her. Her sister was Bridie. Her mother was from Killygordan. She and her sister used to do embroidery work on linen table clothes and provided them to a shop in Ballybofey. Mentions a christening gown that her mother and aunt had made.</p>

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10:48 Her father drove the parish priest on the pony and trap, Canon Blake – he was then transferred to Dunfanaghy and took her father with him, they bought a motor car that her father used to drive, this was when he was young, before he was married.

11:40 Her parents lived through the War of Independence and the Civil War. Their house was a political house, it was called 'the Dáil'; because people gathered there to have political arguments. Mentions Mick McGeehan from the Glen in Raphoe. Talks about a shooting one night after people had been in their house. Her parents appearing in court in Dublin as witnesses, but they had not seen him with a gun. Parents were put up in Jury's hotel during the trial. Talks about the trial.

15:54 Talks about her first election and her experience of voting. Her family were pro-Treaty.

14:57 Talks about the curfew at night-time during the War of Independence. Talks about her father almost being shot when he was driving the doctor out to a case. A scary time.

15:49 Raphoe a predominantly Protestant town but after that period people settled down to what was to be. People were very poor. Mentions the free beef. Her mother wouldn't take it because it was Davey's beef provided by the de Valera's government.

17:05 Poverty in the town in her childhood. Local people working in Convoy Woollen Mills. They made the material that made the Garda and Army uniforms. Beautiful Donegal tweed material. A rich farming area.

18:40 A lot of people did not go on to secondary school except for those on scholarships. She went to secondary school in Letterkenny. Had to pay for the uniform and books even when you were on a scholarship so some people could not go because they could not afford those things.

19:34 Mary asks Rosaleen about the 1918 Flu epidemic. Mentions Paddy Brolly who was married to her aunt and who was a successful businessman. He got a flu or pneumonia and her mother and her aunt made a 'posals' for his lungs to try and clear it but he died. His wife Cassie left with a house full of children, her brother stayed with her when he returned from World War I. Paddy had an undertaking business and his children were too young to take it over when he died.

21:06 Rosaleen would remembers World War II. Soldiers coming over the border to Lifford, drinking in Harte's Bar and buying meat in the butcher shop to take back to the base. American soldiers also based in Derry. Her husband kept in touch with some after they returned to America. Lifford thrived at that time because of this activity.

22:17 Talks about the railway in Raphoe at the time. The railway was a big loss. Could get tea on the train. Erskine Childers blamed for closing the railways.

23:47 Met her husband, Paddy Harte on the train. He was in St Eunan's with his brother Jim. He wanted to be a butcher and his father wanted him trained properly, so he was sent to Pattersons in Letterkenny. He would get the train to Letterkenny to

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work every morning, Rosaleen was on the same train going to school. A lot of people got the train from Raphoe to Letterkenny to school. Mentions the Royal school.

25:05 Got married when they were 21/22. Lived in Coolatee outside Lifford at first with Paddy's family. Describes the house mentioning a ship's captain that used to own the house.

27:26 Moving to live in Raphoe and open a butcher shop in the Diamond. Mentions Dr Hamilton emigrating to Canada which was how the house came up for sale. Bought the house and then the price of cattle went up which was bad for business.

29:10 They had 9 children, nothing but beds and cots in the house. Had a girl working in the house with her to help, had a big garden which helped too. Describes the house as it was.

30:40 It was a busy house, always people coming and going, always a baby. Rose Lynch worked in the house helping them. Paddy was then elected to Dáil Éireann. His father had stood for the council and didn't get elected. His father died in 1945 so he stood for him to honour his father. He was subsequently convinced to run for the Dáil on Dan McMenemy's retirement. Talks about the work of a politician in those times.

34:10 Talks about PJ Ward who was a TD in the First Dáil. She knew the Ward family for years, once he left politics he never got involved again.

34:54 The experience of being the wife of a politician for 37 years. Meetings in the house, clinics held at the house on Saturdays. The phone never stopped. Mentions Neil Blaney from Fanad. A very Fianna Fáil county in those days, it was difficult to be Fine Gael. Mentions Gerry Cashin remarking on how his father managed to get elected in such a Fianna Fáil county.

36:45 Inishowen had been neglected by Fianna Fáil so Paddy opened branches in every town in Inishowen and around Milford and started to have clinics there.

37:13 The Dáil sat on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday so he was in Dublin a lot. Used to go with Pa O'Donnell who was a TD for the West of the county. The salary was not good at the time. There were no secretaries.

39:22 Rosaleen's thoughts on the comparison between life then and now. People were very poor, very little social welfare. Her mother taking towels and clothes up to traveller family.

40:26 Her thoughts on the pandemic happening now. Not easy for people running a business. She just stays in and 'cocoons' to keep away from it. Misses going to see friends. How she will celebrate her 90th birthday.

42:04 Interview ends.

Language

English

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Restricted Information	None
Field Notes	This interview was conducted by Mary Harte, Rosaleen's daughter in Rosaleen's home in Raphoe. Mary's memory has failed in recent years but the familiar encounter between mother and daughter lead to a beautiful interview.
Audio File Details	
Recording Format: 48kHz 16 bit stereo	
Length of Interview(s): 42:02	
No. of Files: 2	
File Types: 1 uncompressed WAV files and 1 corresponding MP3 copies	
Documentation Completed by Interviewee	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Registration Form✓ Pre-questionnaire Monitoring Form✓ Participation Agreement✓ Post-questionnaire Monitoring Form✓ Recording Agreement✓ Participant Sign-in Sheet✓ Photograph of Interviewee	

To be completed by Interviewer:

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Signed: Mary Harte

Date: 15 December 2020