Francis Madigan

Male

File 1 0:00:47 – 0:02:17
HOME –

Francis tells us the story his mother told him about when she went into labour with him, she was milking a cow and she felt her labour pains coming on she still had three or four other cows to milk so she said to herself I'll get these cows milked before anything else, so she finished milking the cows and she went inside and called for the mid wife, the midwife who was called Mrs Brosnan came over and Francis was born within the hour. Francis says it was a very tough time in rural Ireland at one level they had no facilities. No one now days would ever be able to experience the big change that has happened over the years or the lifestyle we went through. When Francis was young they had no electricity no toilets no radio of any kind so any form of entertainment was created locally by the story tellers and people visiting the house or the odd musician. His mother was a very good fiddle player and she entertained them occasionally with a few tunes on the fiddle.

0:02:20 – 0:06:23
SCHOOL –

When it came to school time then Francis remembers things from the age of four and a half to five years old, he remembers walking two and a half miles to school every day. There was eight people in the family so there was always three four or five of them walking the road at a time and then once they went along the road they would meet children from other families then once they got to school there could be fifteen or sixteen of them together. Francis went to school in Drumdigus school in Kilmurry Mc Mahon. One of the things they loved was getting a lift from the people going to the creamery we were always looking forward to meeting the

right person who'd let us sit up on the cart in amongst the milk churns. Some people would pass you by and not invite you and they use to had those people other would stop and give you a lift us as far as school that was one of the things they looked forward to in those days it was one of the great pleasures. Then in the evening time they would just walk home because there was no hope of them getting a lift at that time and again Francis said they would walk home in a big group and as they get closer to home the group would disburse, they were at the end of the line the last house on the journey home from school so they would do the last half mile on their own. Francis said school was good, it was a four teacher school he went to boys and girls were separated, so you had two teachers in the girl school and two teachers in the boy's school. Francis can remember at that time the lad Fitz who was the principal teacher who used to call the role and he would always put the numbers present on a little attendance board and put it on the wall. The number was forty-two boys in the primary school at that time. They were thought by a teacher name Mrs McAuliffe in infant's 1st and 2nd class and then Mr Fitz took over for the higher classes. The amazing thing Francis can remember vividly Mrs McAuliffe use to teach singing, Mr Fitz didn't have any singing so she use to go up to the senior class to do a singing lesson and lad Fitz use to come down to us and what he'd do with them is tell a 'scéal as Gaeilge' and it was about a young fella walking down the road with his donkey and he had a stick in his hand and he was beating the donkey, he met the parish priest coming along in the opposite direction who also had a stick a walking stick and when the priest came up to the boy he said, â€œna bÃ ag bulagh na asal mar sinâ€ and the boy answered â€œis liomsa and t'asal agus is feidir liom mo ramhadh rÃºd a dhéanamh leisâ€, and the priest said, â€œceart go leorâ€ then took his walking stick and gave him a few clips of the stick and the boy said â€œstád, stád na bÃ ag bulagh mé mar sin agus dreagear an sagaÃr is liomsa an bata agus is feidir liom mo rabhadh rÃºd a dhéanamh leisâ€. Francis said the amazing thing he can remember the story as it was and that was somewhere between infants and 2nd class and the language â€œis feidir liom mo rabhadh rud a dheanamh leisâ€, â€œna bÃ ag bulaghâ€. Francis said he finished primary school in 1956. Mr Fitz

retired that year or the next year, and then he went to secondary school in Kilrush which was 7 and a half or 8 miles away. Francis cycled morning and evening to school, there was a man that use to deliver newspapers to the shops and because they passed the two shops down by the creamery he'd leave the newspapers and they would deliver them. Francis said it was very handy because in the morning he'd get a lift with the lad in his lorry he would throw the bike in the back of the lorry and fly down the backroads to Kilrush hoping off the road.

0:06:26 – 0:10:32
LIFE AT HOME –

Francis said life outside school was great there was always lots of young lads of similar age like the McMahons and Keoghs and so on, at the weekends we'd meet in a local field usually a field called O'Connell's it was just down the road from them a bit and they would have a ball of some kind and they'd spend their time kicking around the ball, they were very inventive Francis described that they use to make slings and catapults and all that they would have great fun slinging stones to see who could get it the furthest. Francis said they worked very hard though each person in the house would have their own jobs to do like getting water from the well, bringing in the turf, counting cattle and going back to make sure they're all there. They worked from a very young age. Francis can vividly remember bringing in the water in from the well, they'd have to go allot because there was eight of them in the family and you'd only bring one bucket at a time. Between washing cooking and drinking a bucket wouldn't last very long so you would have to do several trips to the well. At a reasonably young age they were able to milk cows, Francis knew how to milk a cow by hand by the time he came in to 4th class in primary school. Francis's parents had about twelve cows which was kind of the average in those days. There was one cow designated to the house for milking and the cow was called the house cow, they mainly used this cow as the main milking cow. Francis said you'd always help the neighbours, not every house had kids then. You'd get a few pennies for helping the neighbours and that

would be a source of income.

0:10:36 – 0:11:50
MASS –

Francis said the only bit of drama they would have had back then was going to mass. Going to mass was a ritual it was a huge aspect of their lives. They all became mass servers at a young age and you got to dress up. It was an amazing thing Francis said, it was the only bit of drama that they experienced of everyday life and it wasn't uncommon for kids to be playing the mass. Someone would be the priest your brother would be mass server and you'd be replaying the mass at home.

0:11:55 – 0:15:56
FOOD –

Francis said his memory of food would be his mother's cooking, he said there was nobody who could cook like her the flavour in the meals was fantastic. That would remain with Francis to the present day, even when they had become sophisticated and got the electric ovens you could still cook and get the flavours in food that nobody else has been able to do for him, Francis said. Francis said food was very simple, the staple diet was bacon and cabbage and the bacon was home cured which they got from killing their own pig. They would have had their own spuds milk butter and bread which they would have made themselves so the food was okay. Francis said one of the things they had a lot of was rabbit his dad went out shooting them, Rabbit back then was a very tasty dish. They would have been delighted seen him go off in the evening and coming back with about three or four rabbits they'd skin them and clean them and they'd have them roasted within a day or two and that was the only chain we had from our daily diet of bacon and cabbage, Some days they'd have chicken and of course it was home produced. At Christmas time they'd have their own flock of geese so they'd have several geese over the Christmas period.

0:16:00 – 0:19:46
POCKET MONEY –

Francis said back then pocket money was non-existent so you'd have very few treats. The only bit of money you would get is if you work up in the farms and they'd give you a few pennies. They looked forward to June because a man called Andy Mac and he'd bring ice-cream. There would be a line half a mile long of a Sunday and they only loved to get a bit of ice-cream. Other than that they wouldn't have had a lot of opportunities to spend or earn a lot of money. Francis said when his neighbours wife was awful sick and he milked the cows for him, he had six cows and Francis said he milked all six threw one summer and with the money he got from milking the cows he bought his first bike which he used when he went to secondary school in Kilrush.

0:19:52 – 0:21:00
FAMILY-

Francis said he was the 6th youngest, there were eight all together in the family four boys and four girls. Their house was relevantly small but it was amazing how quickly things began to happen because when they were very young the two eldest were practically gone. Kathleen was the second eldest and when she was 15 she went off to Kilkee and started working in the post office at the telephone exchange. Then the eldest sister May took off to Dublin at around the same time as Kathleen so quickly enough the older members of the family were moved out and left a bit of extra space for the rest of them.

0:22:39 – 0:25:07
CHRISTIAN BROTHERS –

Francis said the postulators from the Christian Brothers came around asking people to join up, back in those times u were very limited so going to Dublin or seeing the world was highly exciting. A lot of them went off and it was things like

that which drew them other than their religion. It offered you opportunities that you otherwise wouldn't have had. Francis said he left home when he was 14 he went off to boarding school and that was a big change in every aspect. They only came home once a year and that was summer. Francis said it was up in Bray side of Dublin there was a beautiful setting looking out on the sugar loafs, there was loads of games and it was very exciting.

0:25:15 – 0:32:07
BOARDING SCHOOL –

Francis said boarding school was a very common experience at that time. Francis went to the Brothers. It was no different from any other boarding school, you had the usual study and classes you had a game of football every day and maybe in the evening times you would have a game of handball or table tennis it was great for people who loved sports. Francis said the one thing in the brothers that was different was to do manual labour as well, he could remember spending days piking hay because he was strong and good at it. They were delighted getting called down to the farm and spending the day their instead of going to class. Your day was very organised and timetabled. You'd go to bed very early at night and be up early in the morning for mass.

0:33:53 – 0:40:03
ENTERTAINMENT –

Some of the things they missed was when we were younger the great entertainment was people calling to the house and their stories and talking about different things that happened and talking about people who went to America â€œscéalta de gach saghasâ€ Francis said. It was a lovely feature of life. He can remember his cousin the Cotters coming over telling the stories, they had a fantastic gift of storytelling. Francis said John Cotter was an amazing man he was full of all kinds of stories there was a character around at the time his name was Tom Kearney. He use to go around killing pigs for people. Francis said some of

the stories John Cotter would have about him would have them in stiches, he'd even throw in a couple of ghost stories. Francis said one of the experiences they had when they were younger was total darkness, Francis said when he was young they could get sent up to the cow house at night there could be a cow ready to calf so you would be sent up to check that everything was okay. You'd have an old flash lamp but because it was after the second world war things were scarce so the battery in the lamp was virtually dead in it, so the only bit of light you would have was when you got up to the cow. Francis mentioned that when walking up to the cow threw the haggard it would be in complete darkness so you'd never know what could happen the dog could jump off the hay and frighten the life out of you. There was a character living beside us Francis said Murty Fitz his name was and he use to have very good ghost stories about going home at night into his own house, he lived alone and seeing people in the house before he got there. Murty use to say he was never afraid but after conclusion they all realized that it was the moon shining into the house making shadows. Francis said he remembers delivering milk over the road every night there was a neighbour of his Tommy Loge, They had no land so they use to give milk for the house Francis said he'd hop on the bike in the darkness and cycle away down. He use to tell him stories when he'd go down about coming home from school and they had a spinning top and they were using it one day and the spinning top had come spiralling off and went in through a man called Haugh's front door and knocked a basin off a chair. Francis said he always believed the story and always tried to get the spinning top to come flying off but it never worked for him. Francis went on to say that the family in the Bachelors house up the road they always went on the cuaird to the house. There used to be always a group of people like Murty Fitz and daddy, they'd all sit around the fire and drink a cup of tea and when daddy came back at ten o clock he'd have all the news on the parish. They use to be always dying to hear the latest episode of whatever was going on at the time. Entertainment was very simple yet very humane.

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BLACKSMITH/CREAMERY –

Francis went on to talk about a Pj Gordon and how they use to go to his forge and go in watching him making shoes, anvil, fire and the bellow. There would always be a number of people around there getting a horse shad and there'd be one or two people just there to talk to other people. Every evening you'd have a gathering there. There's no blacksmith in the west of Clare there certainly isn't a forger Francis said. Back then you'd visit all your neighbours' houses or there would always be an exchange of something small like for instance when we'd kill the pig it was always a tradition that you'd give a little pork steak to your neighbours. You'd always know your neighbours really well there was never a question on who they were or what your name was. At mass you'd always have groups of people outside talking for hours and all the kids in the same age groups would all be playing together. There was a great sense of community. You had the creamery then which was another great assembly because you would have all the farmers down there every morning and there'd be a que half a mile long outside the creamery waiting to get milk. They would all go in one by one and Chapman would be in there talking about all the events of the previous week so people would have had great opportunities to meet and chat Francis said. Now a lot of that is gone like the creamery's, the fair and mass. On a Sunday for mass everyone would be dressed up and no one would be in a rush to leave they would all stay chatting.