Martin Lafferty

Male

File 1 0:00:01 – 0:05:23
EARLY LIFE & FARMING –

Martin begins the interview by stating that he was a home birth and he was delivered by Dr Barry of Ennistymon. He had and still has two sisters; Maura Harold of Liscannor and Betty Keane in Ennis. His father was born in Kilmoon and was one of eleven children most of whom immigrated to America. One uncle became a Garda in Kanturk, Cork. His father's passage had been paid to go to America also but he stayed at home on the promise of taking over the land. The farm consisted of 26 acres of mountain and 6 acres of 'the butt' which was fairly good land. However his uncle the Garda got some of the land while his father had the rest and also had a little shop in Kilmoon. Martin states that as a business man his father wasn't the best as he didn't collect the money due on bills for the flour and meal etc. Nevertheless he had built a house in the town where he opened a butcher's stall which was operated by Martin's uncle Joe Howard from Ballycannoe. His father was enterprising though and made a living rearing sows and bonabhs/bonhams) and selling turf. Martin himself remembers cutting turf and taking horse-loads of it with his father to Ballyvaughan and calves and bonabh's to Gort. Jimmy O Brien his neighbour had a covered-in trap and on the way to Gort early one morning with bonabhs they lost one on the road in Kilnaboy near Tony Killeen's house. Martin remembers cycling to Miltown to a cattle fair where they bought 6 year and half old bullocks and he walked them home to Lisdoonvarna without a break (about 20 miles). Sometimes though they had stops at certain houses on the road, e.g. Tom Keeffe's near 'The Major's Woods'. He remembers bringing cattle in the West Clare railway to Lahinch and leaving them at Lafferty's of Moymore until the next day. Martin describes the farming as 'marginalised' but he always loved animals and between himself and his father

they bought 'fragmented' acres to assist their livelihoods.

0:05:24 – 0:09:18
SCHOOL DAYS IN LISDOONVARNA –

Martin attended the old primary 3 teacher school in the town. The teachers were Mrs. & Mrs Jack Sheedy & Mr. Paddy Lynch. Turf was burned in the fires and each family was asked to supply a creel. The teacher would try to embarrass children of those who hadn't brought the turf by asking 'was it stones they burnt at home instead of turf?' They were good times but tough enough. The Lafferty's received many parcels from the aunts in America or from two spinster aunts who brought parcels with them when they came on holidays. One particular army jacket was modified by the dressmaker/seamstress Mrs. O Connor who lived near the school. The Inspector called to the school one day and asked 'the lad with the army jacket' the answer to a particular question. Mr. Lynch was his teacher in the senior classes. Martin's method of arriving at the correct answer was not credited as the master's son Pádraig had the correct answer and the correct method!, with the master's quip that 'Pádraig could do it 'Cape Dutch'. He finished his time in primary school with Mr. Greene of Ballycotton who replaced Mr. Lynch.

0:09:19 – 0:19:24
SECONDARY SCHOOL –

Martin's father was very interested in education. Very few people went to secondary school at the time. Both Lafferty girls were sent to boarding school in Kinvara. Maura became a primary teacher and Betty became a nurse. He himself went the CBS in Ennistymon which cost only Â£6-10- 0 a year. All the subjects were taught through Irish there which Martin feels was a drawback when he was teaching himself in later years. A group of students from Lisdoonvarna and Carnane cycle to Ennistymon to school: Martin, Jacksie Marrinan, Michael Guthrie, RIP, O Leary boys and a Frawley boy. In winter sometimes they got the bus. Brendan Lowe was in his class; his father was a vocational teacher in

Miltown. His mother was Finn from Kilmoon and he came to Lisdoonvarna on his holidays where Martin and he often smoked clay pipes filled with turf hiding at the cliff behind the house. Study was interrupted by rural students who had to work when they got home from school. Cutting and turning the turf in summer had to done in the 'Parish Council Bog' called Moroney's in Aughiska. This initiative was pioneered by a Fr. Walsh as part of emergency powers during the War. He remembers the Christian Brothers who were holidaying in Lisdoonvarna, lying in the heather sunning themselves in the 'Seanagort' and 'Cnoc a' Mhadra' as the meitheals in the bog did their work. The Lafferty's also had turf in Kilmoon but Kilmoon was subject to fog which made the work more difficult. The family sold turf to the mines in Doolin. Maly Callanan of the Bellview Hotel took lorry loads of turf to Limerick but the wet weather meant that the turf was not dry. During the frost of winter it was hoped that it wouldn't thaw before it reached its destination!1950 was a particularly wet year when the family cut timber or 'faggot' in Caherbullog. Martin spent 6 years in Ennistymon his favourite subjects being Irish and English. Botany, Drawing, Geography Woodwork where he didn't understand anything about the ['BunchlÃ³' (plan) agus BonnchlÃ³' (groundplan)]. They also studied a little Science. His memory of an explanation in Irish of what 'Life' was he quotes:
Beatha: Rud diamhar doimhin do-thuigthe is ea an bheatha. Theip ar na feallsÃºnaigh a mhiniÃº céard is beatha ann ach in ainneoin sin is féidir idirdhealÃº a dhéanamh idir damhna beo is damhna neamh-beo. [liberal translation] Life is a mysteriously deep incomprehensible concept. The philosophers failed to explain what 'life' is but in spite of that a distinction can be drawn between animate and inanimate matter.

0:19:25 – 0:33:18
THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION, UCG & THE IRISH LANGUAGE –

Martin next attended UCG where he took lodgings with an uncle living in the city. He studied Arts and Commerce. Professor Liam Ã“ Buachalla taught Economics

through Irish and translated a book on the subject. One of the professor's statements he remembers was: Is ceist Ã atá go spéisiÃºil ach damanta casta. [translation] That's an interesting question but damnably complicated. Martin spent 3 years in the college and graduated in 1957 with a B.Com.in Irish. His ambition was to teach in a Technical School, this involved interviews and other Irish qualifications. RuairÃ and Seán O Brádaigh were on one of the courses with him but politics were never discussed. His first job was in Gort for 3 weeks. Again he was sent to the Gaeltacht to improve his Irish. He spent 2 years in Carraroe and travelled in and out of Galway with a colleague. He still didn't have a car as his monthly wage was Â£32-2-4. He received his 'Teastas Gaeilge' after a couple of efforts as the de Valera influence wanted the language revived. Martin was anxious to get back closer to home. However he got his next job in Limerick city in the Technical Institute, in 45 Upper O Connell Avenue. There he took an interest in shorthand and typing and qualified with a teacher's cert having attended a course in Grafton St. Dublin. Eventually he got back teaching in the Technical school in Ennistymon in 1961 and subsequently he got involved in politics.

0:33:19 – 0:51:10
POLITICS: V.E.C. AND CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL –

Martin describes how the political system worked in Clare County Council in the 1960's. The C.E.O. ruled the roost and the ordinary members had very little influence. He and Christy Curtin of Miltown (also a teacher in Ennistymon) were interested and duly got elected to the V.E.C. of the council as they were deemed eligible in 1974 as Local Government Employees. The Ennis Vocational School was extended then which was opened by Dick Burke, T.D. Minister for Education. The initial council meetings he remembers were hotly debated over issues to do with how Vocational Education was funded and administered. Martin was to the forefront in these debates. The Clare Champion carried banner headlines and details of the stormy debates. Martin squeezed in getting a H.Dip.(1968/69)

before getting elected to the Council. Again he returned to college in 1980/81/82 and received his LL.B. which he felt he needed to understand the legal language often put before the members of the council. In the end Martin came to the conclusion that 'Politics is all about perception' and describes how certain politicians through media etc. get coverage and the perception is there that they are the ones that deliver. Martin also gives a detailed account of how quietly he got things changed within the council and the work he did for his constituents in north Clare. He gives high praise to Hugh McKiernan, engineer of the council, who proved a great friend to north Clare. He drew up a map of the area and devised a scheme for the proper water and sewerage facilities of the Burren.

File 2. 0:00:01 – 0:12:40
POLITICS –

Martin continues with the efforts of Mr. McKiernan and himself to get proper water and sewerage for Lisdoonvarna which was partly financed by Europe (approx.Â£15million) Unfortunately the Doolin scheme didn't take off. The pier in Doolin was previously financed in 1983 by a former Government under Minister for the Environment Liam Kavanagh (Â£250,000). Mr. Haughey and his type of politics didn't appeal to Martin and he joined the Labour Party. Afterwards he became an Independent Councillor but helped the present Michael McNamara in his canvas to become the Labour T.D. for Clare. Dick Spring wanted him to stand for Labour which he turned down but he proposed Dr. Bhamjee instead.

0:12:41 – 0:20:16
FAMILY LIFE IN LISDOONVARNA –

Martin returns the interview to family life by telling how he met his wife Helena in Sonny Mullin's Kincora Hotel Ballroom in Lisdoonvarna. Helena and her family from Loughrea often came on holiday to Lisdoonvarna staying in Sheedy's Hotel (Spa View) Eventually they married in 1965; Helene was a primary teacher and got a position in Saint Brigid's Well N.S, Liscannor. He talks about Helene's

brothers and sisters and their interests and positions in life. He talks about political tours abroad and family trips to visit members of the family. But all in all Martin was a 'home bird'. Not ever an avid reader Martin admits to reading mostly 'compulsory material' for study.

0:20:17 – 0:23:44
SERVING MASS IN LISDOONVARNA & RELIGION –

Martin served Mass in Lisdoonvarna for many years with Kevin Lynch and Joe Mooney. He believes in the main tenets of his faith but not in the Institutional Church as he believes the church is too interested in wealth and power. Spirituality is far more important in his opinion and working with the land and animals keeps one close to nature and all it encompasses. Conservatism has stifled the church he believes, social democracy is more in tune with what we should be aiming towards.

0:23:45 – 0:35:40
PISEROGS –

On New Year's Night, Paddy O Loughlen called to their house at 12 o'clock the belief being that a man should be first to enter the house to welcome in the New Year. A crowd of men would also come up the town beating tins to welcome in the New Year. Martin wasn't sure why he was called that name but his grandfather Michael Lafferty was not pleased when he wasn't called Michael. His mother on occasion made butter. Geese were always killed, plucked and singed before they were cooked. It was in later years that the turkeys were introduced. The tradition has reverted to the goose again in recent times.

0:38:04 – 0:42:44
WORKING ON THE FARM –

Everyone had a horse if not two for bringing home the turf, cutting hay and other farm work. His father bought them young and trained them. He doesn't remember

a great black horse his father had but a story was told of how the horse pulled a full load up the 'The Bealach Doimhin' near New Quay. It was also claimed that he could pull a ton load up the Corkscrew Hill. The last grey horse they had his father bought as a year and a half at the November fair in Ennistymon from Paddy Vaughan of Kilfenora. They cut hay with a Pierce mowing machine which was difficult to pull. He remembers John Sheedy, Frank's father repairing a broken part at the hotel. Eventhough the hotel was full John Sheedy took the time to help a neighbour. Tom O Neill was Lafferty's blacksmith who had his forge close by the Spectacle Bridge. In Doolin Fitzgerald's had a forge and the Malones in Caherkinalla and Patsy McInerney's in Ballycannoe. The first tractor in Lisdoonvarna was owned by Jimmy O Brien the former County Councillor and Martin remembers the lorry delivering it at the entrance to O Brien's house.

0:42:45 – 0:56:20
MARTIN'S CHILDREN & PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE LISDOONVARNA –

Martin and Helene had five children, four girls and one boy who unfortunately died at 4Â½ months of a 'cot death'. Martin looks back and believes that a happy home life allowed him being contented with his lot. He believes that the way we treat our fellow man is our real religion. Being a good neighbour is also one of his important values along with humanity. Nature and compassion are part and parcel of what makes Martin what he is. He put these attributes in practise in his public and private life. Martin finishes the interview by referring to how Lisdoonvarna has changed over the years and the difficulties experienced by the business people from lack of a proper water supply. Another problem in the town in the early years was 'class distinction' which was clearly propagated by the hoteliers in the type of clientele they allowed into their businesses. Martin feels that the Wild Atlantic Way tourist promotion has affected Lisdoonvarna to some extent. The cliffs of Moher and Doolin though have benefitted which is good for the area.