

# Marty O'Keefe

Male

File 1 0:00:00 - 0:07:58

CURRACHS/TURF BOATS -

Marty talks about the rowing currachs. He and his father went in a currach from Querrin to Glin in Limerick. His father was born in Glin and needed to pick up his birth cert to get his pension. They then pulled up at Labasheeda and bought a boat there. They did this over two days. He says his grand aunt, Maura O'Keefe, gave a turf boat to his grandfather and Sally his wife. At that time they would take the turf on big boats to Co. Limerick. The good turf around Querrin and Doonaha was getting cut away and the best turf came then from Tullaheer and Monmore so they brought the boats up to Poulnasheery and loaded them there then. He recalls taking a trip with Johnny Madigan on one of them. He says the turf boats were poor sailing vessels. They took about 50 horse carts of turf. They started to load it in Moyasta and finished in Kilrush. They had to wait for the high tide to get out. The first day they got as far as Red Rock which was near Kildysart. They had to wait another night there. They got to the mouth of the Mag River at Monty's point and had to wait for the tide again. They then had to get into a smaller boat and pull the bigger boat up the Mag River. They unloaded at the Ferry Bridge.

0:07:59 - 0:12:29

FISHING -

Marty says the Shannon was good for salmon fishing but not the best for other fish. He speaks of salmon fishing in Doonbeg. He says there was also lobster, mackerel and Pollock would be fished in Doonbeg with the currach. He says he had the plan to go to America and come back and buy a boat but then he met his wife from Tuam and the idea of the boat went on the back-burner.

0:12:30 - 0:18:34

FAMILY -

Marty is being recorded in Clohanes, Doonbeg. His grandfather was Denis O'Keefe. He describes where his house had been in Querrin. He speaks of Daniel his grandfather's brother and Nance his wife. He says two of his grandfather's siblings went to Galveston in Texas and another went to Liverpool. His grandfather was a (boat) pilot. His father first went to Australia and then America. He got into the building business there until his mother wrote to him and asked him to come home and take over the pilot job in 1910. Marty was born in 1912. His father knew all about fishing. Marty is not sure what happened to the O'Keefe land.

0:18:35 - 0:20:48

FATHERS WORK IN AMERICA -

Marty says his father Jim O'Keefe had a union card under the Painters and Iron Workers of New York. His work was putting up steel beams. He says a sailor is good for that because he has good balance. When he came home his father had left him a Galway Hooker.

0:20:49 - 0:23:44

CUAIRD/DANCING -

Marty says Counihans were the landlords when he was young. The land across from there house was owned by Collins and they let them use it for donkeys/goats. They would go on the night-time on their cuaird. Older fellas would be talking about their turf and their hay and their seaweed and the young people wanted to go dancing. He says there weren't too many musicians around but there was always a lilter. They would go to McInerney's or Frawley's and they would ask Jack Micheál to jig for a set. It was a way of life.

0:23:45 - 0:26:40

## LAND/SOCIALISATION -

Marty says they had about half an acre of ground for potatoes. They would pay for the use of the land by giving a day back of work. If they borrowed a horse and plough from Counihan's they might have to do three day's work to pay him back. Dinny Collins had about 100 acres. He says neighbourhood socialising was terrific. If you went to the quay the younger ones would be playing pitch-n-toss or handball together. He thinks the socialising was better than today. He says the idea of 'keeping up with the Joneses' wasn't there. It was a simple way of life. He says they would be always thinking about when they reached 18 they would go off to England and get rich.

0:26:41 - 0:30:45

## AMERICA -

Marty went to England in 1939. He says in 1941 they were looking for people to join the army but he didn't want to join so he went back to Querrin. He got a letter from his sister Mary in New York. She was married and had a pub in Worcester County and she had a job for him, tending the bar. Marty didn't enjoy it and didn't stay long doing it. He had some experience on carpentry work as he had worked with Gerry McCarthy in Doonbeg. He got in with the carpenters union in America. He moved to Rochester New York. He worked at maintaining steel boilers, shovelling the coal etc and then when oil came in he said it became a nice job and he stayed working in that area for the next 30 years. He worked for the Board of Education and then other jobs in the same line of business as station engineer.

0:30:46 - 0:35:31

## SCHOOL -

Dan Lillis was his teacher in Querrin. He says they had short pants to the knees and he describes the stockings they wore. Marty tells a story about having his

stocking up over his knees and the teacher saying asking if the man in the moon would have his stockings over his knees. The children then called Marty 'Moon Man'. He says Bid Cullinan, (later to be Connell), was a strict teacher. He says the parish priest only had a pony & trap. He says Sunday mass was at 10.30am in Doonaha. Miss Costello, (later Mrs O'Donnell), was the teacher in the big classroom. He recalls having an exam going from one class to another. He says the homework was very important and to be on time.

0:35:32 - 0:39:38

CIVIL WAR -

Marty speaks of the Civil War and giving up the six counties. He says it made enemies between neighbours. He says his brother, Jack, joined the Free State army when he was seventeen and his mother went to Kilkee and objected and they let him off. Then he went to sea as a sailor on a Danish ship going to Caracas, Venezuela. When he came back he was ready for America. He mentions some names of those who were on different sides in the Civil War. He thinks those with land & property would mostly have been on the Free State side. He speaks of the shipbuilding in Belfast. He says his dad was on the Free State side.

0:48:15 - 0:50:23

ROLE OF WOMEN -

He says they were closer at that time than they are today. He gives credit to the generosity of the women. He says women ran the house.

0:50:24 - 0:56:58

DOCTOR/CURES/HOLY WELLS -

Marty says that doctor Hickey in Kilkee was a great man. He remembers him giving a lift and he praying as they were going along - he became Fr Hickey later on. His mother was 48 when she died. It was said that Molly McMahan cured herself from TB with carrageen moss and garlic. St Michael's well was behind

their house. He recalls people coming there and doing the rounds. He mentions St Martin's well.

0:56:59 - 1:05:49

NEIGHBOURS -

He says it was the women that kept up traditions. He thinks the men were too preoccupied with the bog and the hay. He remembers Katie Griffin from the post office. He says one shoemaker was Connell. He speaks of John (Corc) Griffin and the Griffin connection with his grandmother. He says Ned Griffin lived next door to him.

He remembers being sent to Griffin's for tea during WWII rationing. He says you should love your neighbour as yourself.

1:05:50 - 1:07:50

MUSIC -

Marty's mother was a concertina player. She came from Shyan, (Kilmihil). She was O'Brien and her mother was Markham. Mrs Crotty the concertina player from Kilrush was Markham too and they came from the same area, Cooraclare, so he wonders if they were related. He was related to Mikey Markham from Moore St, Kilrush.

1:07:51 - 1:10:10

FERRY ACROSS POULNASHERRY BAY -

He says Martin Conway was the boatman on the ferry across Poulnasherry Bay. It was two miles from there into Kilrush. There was no motor on his boat. The McMahons were just off that road.

1:10:11 - 1:11:59

MUSIC

Marty speaks about his mother and music. He said it was mostly women playing

concertinas and he wanted to play fiddle. He didn't try the concertina until he came back from America.

1:12:00 - 1:16:18

HORSE RACING -

He speaks about flooding and rice grass. He raced on Tom Griffin's pony on the strand. He recalls other places he raced. He asks if he had to do it all over again how would he do it.

FILE 2 0:00:00 - 0:09:07

MARTY'S POEM: 'QUERRIN CO CLARE'/TRADITION -

Marty speaks of all the nice houses that are there now and he says that you'd settle for a just a nice door in his time. His says the houses were mostly thatched. He believes that humility is the bottom line. He says he would just like to be a humble fisherman. He recites a poem he wrote about being a fisherman's son. He wrote it after he came back from America for the first time, after 30 years.

He says there's something about your youth you can't forget. He remembers the first pants he got. He says it would be nice to know if we could exist without computers and listen to the older people instead. He wouldn't know how to make a net if he was trying to learn it from a book. He says nobody worked on a Sunday but they would meet by the quay and chat.