Maureen McDonagh 2

Female

0:00:00 – 0:00:50
CHILDHOOD –

Spoke about childhood – Born outside of Kilfenora and the eldest of five. I had two brothers and two sisters. There was 14 years between my youngest sister and myself and because I was away she thought I was her aunt.

0:00:51 – 0:06:01
SCHOOL –

She went to St Mary's Convent of Mercy which is now the Templegate Hotel. The Boarding School was called St Xavier's and there was also an Industrial School on the grounds of the convent. She stayed there until she did her Leaving Certificate and there was no free year. Before that she did her inter cert in 2nd year and then repeated third year. You did your matriculation which could also be bought from your Leaving Certificate. There were no points, there were percentages. She did Irish and English and subjects through Irish were history, geography, Latin, French, domestic science and botany. She played camogie and also played tennis. She went regularly to Spanish Point to compete with another team in camogie and that was a big day out. The coach would turn around onto the Miltown Malbay road and she would get the smell of rotting seaweed which she loved. In school she sat next to Etta Griffin from Kildysart and she became a nun – Sister Baptist. A while ago she was at the blessed well and there was a big breeze and there at her feet was Etta's mortuary card. Etta was extremely clever and excellent at maths. Maureen describes a typical school day. – She got up very early in the morning. The uniform which was a navy gymslip and navy tie. She served at mass. There were a lot of nuns in both the primary school and secondary school. A lot of the girls she went to school with entered the convent.

School started in September and in November they were allowed a parcel from home and then they went home for Christmas with their tests and report.

0:06:02 – 0:06:20
SUMMER HOLIDAYS –

I loved the summer to go out into the beautiful country air and the lovely grass and the lettuces from the kitchen garden, I loved everything about summer. It was like new life.

0:06:21 – 0:08:29
PARENTS –

My parents were farmers. My mother married very early in life and she was from Waterford and went to school in Waterford to the Ursuline Convent. My mother and her family were evicted from their property in Ennis and there was a lot of land agitation and then they arrived in Kilnaboy. My mother and her nine sisters and one brother. My mother would talk of the day her brother died in Ennis of what I cannot tell you. Diseases in those days were mysterious; you never spoke about tuberculosis or whatever. The day my brother died we had to come from Ennis and there would be people on the sides of the road working shoveling this and that and my mother could not get over that people would be working the day her brother died. I thought that was very sad. My father died when he was 53 of a coronary and he also had very bad arthritis in his 40s. My mother was 71 when she died. My great aunt on my mother's side was 100 and my great aunt on my father's side was 101. My great aunt on my mother's side was forever going on about her ailments she had an ache or pain everyday, she even spoke of having arthritis in her gums. How she came to live to that age. She was very funny and she liked a little drop before she would go to sleep and would say it was an order from the doctor to have a stimulant. She read an awful lot – maybe three books together but never confused them, her mind was very clear.

0:08:30 – 0:13:22
WORKING AND LIVING ON THE FARM –

I loved working on the farm with my brothers, and my sisters had nothing to do with the farm and would be going off up the road on their new bicycles. I was the eldest so we would be out on the meadows doing hay, and my mother would be with me as my father was very disabled, and there would be neighbours and various other people and then I would be at home getting the dinner ready for the men in the evening and there were no cookers or electricity. I would go down the hills and bought the cows up to the stores and milk them and then feed the calves. The cows were much easier to manage in those days than today because today they are more afraid because they get nothing but injections. Some of the names of the cows would have been Daisy or Davern. She was bought from the Princes Davern people of Carron Kilcorney, the place where the horse's hooves are on the rocks. We had a girl from Glenina who helped us at home called Deliah. In fact I only read a few days ago that de Valera was to have said that the best spoken Irish speakers come from Glenina. The last native Irish speaker died in 1974 and his name was Tomas Byrnes and he lived in Glenina. We use to go up with Deliah, pony and trap with lights to Glenina to visit her family and her poor father, when he would see us coming used to hide in a bedroom or outside as he was ashamed that he did not speak English as he only spoke Irish. There was a lovely little beach in Glenina and we used to get crabs claws and on the way home we would stop of at Gregans castle and go to this big orchard and buy apples. So we would arrive back home with crabs claws and apples and you thought you would never see a poor day again. I used to love going off visiting people. My mother would go and see these people that were very old and they would say that so and so called and they used to be mortified that they did not have anything in but they 'slapped up a bit of a slammer onto the griddle' which was like a pancake mix but made from flour, eggs and cream. Then there were times when it was announced that the nuns were coming to visit and there would be awful confusion and there would be the stations. I remember there was this boy who used to sit by the fire

while his poor mother would be getting the room ready for the stations. He could not understand why she would put everything in one room to keep the other room clear and there would be candles and then people would come in and the parish priest would have two boiled eggs and tea and everyone else would sit around and have cakes and raspberry cordial which was also served at a wake.

0:13:23 – 0:17:09
WAKES –

Everybody would come in as the person would be waked at home. There would be a table inside the door with candles and holy water and a saucer of snuff. So you took your pinch of snuff and went in and said prayers and then shook the holy water onto the corpse. You turned around then and sympathized with the family and all the close relatives. You then went into the parlor and would have food and drink. The family would stay up all night and then of course in this area there was the wailing. The last person to do the wailing was Micho Russell's sister Maura. I heard it on television. It was this awful wailing and it went on in every house. What used to amaze me was that a man could get up after smoking his pipe by the fire and do his piece and then come back and carry on smoking his pipe by the fire. The reasoning behind it was that it was very good for you to let out all these feelings. And even today if you're in any kind of trouble it's good to go to the top of a hill and scream your head off. The wailers/keeners off the Isles of Scotland were paid. They are not paid here. I remember the first time I heard the wailing I went to a wake with my father in law and he told me there would be a lovely choir and when I heard it, it was dreadful, a mournful dirge. I don't hear of anyone doing it anymore. I think you would be arrested. There is a pisrogue that a pregnant woman must never go to a wake or funeral. There was another pisrogue which was dreadful. If a lady was traveling on a cycle and she was wearing a petticoat and a hare crossed her, she would have to get off the cycle and tear some of her underwear or else she would risk the baby being born with a hair lip. There was a story relating to the sea around Inchiquin lake where a mermaid

came out of the sea and developed into a person and got married and then went back into the lake after many years.

0:17.10 – 0:21:01
WEDDINGS –

Well in those days it was matchmaking. The men again took charge. I remember listening to the radio once about a man from Moher describing matchmaking and I thought I would go through the radio and choke him. He had been in America for some years and he came back and got married. He said that in the spring of the year the man of the house would go into the town looking for a woman that could help out for the spring and every other spring after that if she lived long enough. He then may know of someone who had daughters that would be eligible. So the men would go to wherever they went to and they would agree on this date that the father of the bride to be would what they call â€œwalk the landâ€ to see if it was good fertile land or boggy which was part of his worth. Then if they did not have enough cattle they would borrow cattle from the neighbour which would be put into their field so they looked very prosperous that day. Then the marriage was arranged and all the preparations then went on. A month before the girl got married they would have what they call the â€œpicking of the ganderâ€ which was again a gathering of people of neighbours, friends and relations and a big feast of geese, turkeys and hams and everybody had a great night. After that the girl got married and went to her husband's home and she could not go home for one month. Then after one month they had what they called the 'hauling home', she was hauled home for another celebration. There were lots of straw boys in their fabulous outfits and great dancing and music. If musicians did not turn up they would have puss music with people with their caps over their faces so they could not be seen and we would dance to puss music. That would go on for the night. Then the bride would settle down to lots of hard work.

0:21:02 – 0:22.30
BIRTH OF A BABY AND BAPTISM –

The baby would be born at home with the help of what they call handywomen. If you knew of someone working in a hospital you could have the baby in hospital and the father would wait outside, there is no way he would be in the labor ward. Before the woman would go home she was churched at her local church. The new mother would wear a black mantilla and she would kneel outside the altar, and the priest came along and would say prayers. I found out later that it was a cleansing; you were to be cleansed from what I cannot tell you. At the time I thought it was a blessing but no it was a cleansing, you were considered unclean after having the baby.

0:22::31 – 0:28:10
GOING HOME FOR HOLIDAYS –

I then would go home for the holidays and look after my sisters and my mother might be gone away and I remember my father sitting in his armchair and I would be cooking and we would have Mrs Beeton's cookery book. My brothers would laugh at my. I would make coffee custard which was custard with coffee granules in it. We had also what was called the bog garden where anything I made such as scones or whatever and if it was a failure my brother would take the food and put over the wall in the bog garden. The staple meal at the time was bacon and cabbage and yellow bacon, where they would kill the pig and put it in a barrel and then hang it up to dry on rafters and the flesh of the bacon would dry and would be hard salt bacon. The bacon would be then cut down and steeped in cold water the night before. I loved yellow bacon with cabbage from the garden, potatoes and parsley sauce. Now if I presented that to any of my grandchildren today they certainly would not eat it.

0:30:39 – 0:33:10
PARENTS' HOUSE –

There were steps up the back of the house and there was a little avenue up to the front door. There was a hall and then to the left there was what was called the

parlour and then to the right was a big kitchen and off that the back kitchen. Next to the kitchen was a dining-room and then bedrooms at every side. I remember when my brothers and sisters were born except for my brother that was next to me and I remember the maternity nurse would come on her bike and she would stay for hours virtually doing everything. Nurse O'Donoghue, God be with her. The mother would be in bed much longer than they do now. They were treated very well after birth. Now new mothers seem to get up the following day and go off about your business. I can remember going into a room with a prayer book – a litany picking out new names for my baby brothers and sisters. I had names like Anastacia, crazy kind of names. My brothers and sisters were called Mathilda Gertrude which I did not design and Ethna Melissant after an aunt in Australia and Myles Anthony and John Joseph.

0:33:11 – 0:37:48
BECOMING A NURSE –

After secondary school I went for various interviews to become a nurse and I did my training which was tough in Barrington's Hospital in Limerick about 60 years ago. We had tough times but we had great times, and I have to say the same when I was in Ennistymon in the hospital. We had great fun and the patients were always very nice, but then there would not be as many old patients as there are now. The elderly patients would have been in St Joseph's Hospital which was known as the County Home and I remember visiting the county home and a poor old man he would reel off the names of all his brothers and sisters of which he had a big family. Once you entered St Joseph's Hospital you would have to wear a grey flannel suit. I remember a big long wooden table and the patients sitting around the table. Of course it was very basic then and it was very sad. I can remember the fever hospital being there before and people would have scarlet fever and polio and that's where St Josephs is now and today it is a beautiful hospital. In those days I suppose they did not have the money. In relation to my training it consisted of class and lectures and on the ward training and we had a

sister tutor and a male tutor. We were on children's wards and men's wards and theatre and I used to spend a lot of time in the outpatients and Limerick had a lot of Seamen coming in from the boats and a lot of accidents in the middle of the night. A lot of the doctors that were mentioned in the book â€œAngela's Ashesâ€ I remembered them and I remember awful poverty in Limerick. I remember going into a house and the mother was every sickly and the grandmother and the children were in a corner of the room and there were papers on the beds. All that is depicted in â€œAngela's Ashesâ€ but people in those days helped each other out an awful lot. There were great neighbours and there was a lot of laughter then which I don't tend to see anymore.

0:37:49 – 0:39:21
RATIONING –

We had a rationing book and we had sugar, tea, not sure about butter as we made butter in the churns at home and there were clothes. There were a lot of shoemakers around Ennistymon that made boots. There were forges and bakers. We had coupons for the groceries and clothes. The more children you had the more groceries you would have. The flour was brown and my mother would make cakes and the flour would have to be sieved through a nylon stocking and you would be left with the white flour. We were never hungry even though we lived during the war.

0:39:22 – 0:41:19
WWII –

I remember exactly where I was when the War broke out in September 1939. I was in Ennis at the convent and I was out with cousins in Ennis.

0:41:20 – 0:45.41
TYPICAL DAY AS A QUALIFIED NURSE –

You got up in the morning at the crack of dawn and you would go around making

beds and then there was a trolley with different medications and then patients would have a nap. There would then be soup or egg flips at around 11 which was made of boiling milk with an egg poured into the milk. I think it is called egg nog now. I remember all the lovely ladies in Ennistymon in the laundry room and there was no washing machine. If they liked you they would give you lots of linen and if they did not like you, you could be waiting and waiting for ages. They had so much work to do squeezing the water out of the laundry with mangles and then hanging the laundry up to dry. You know I remember when the flour was finished at home we would have to steep the flour bags in cold water, and get all the flour stuck inside out, and spread it on the grass, and then wash the bag and bleach the bag. Four flour bags would make a sheet and two flour bags would make a bolster case which I don't tend to see anymore and you could make flour bag shirts. Now you would knit socks and the socks would be dyed from the moss that grows on the rocks around Clehane and the coast of Kerry. The wool would be put into a big pot and the moss would be added to dye the socks a lovely green mossy colour. People used to dye clothes then a lot. You might have a fawny grey coloured coat and you could pop your coat into a pot with some dye, and it could come out a lovely purple colour. I spent Four years in Limerick including my training and then I went to Ennistymon hospital where I worked and lived.

0:45:42 – 0:48:16
GETTING MARRIED –

I moved to Liscannor in 1954 and soon after Dora came along and then Susannah and I did not go back to work. You never went back to work after getting married. I remember once we had a sister tutor and she was married and you thought it was the strangest thing

0:48:17 – 0:51:54
TALKS OF TIMES BEFORE GETTING MARRIED/GOING TO DANCES –

We used to go to the Town Hall in Ennistymon and a hall in Lisdoonvarna or a hall

at the back of the Aberdeen Arms. I notice nowadays younger people don't go to Lisdoonvarna that much. You would head off to Lisdoonvarna on your bike with your half a crown and the dance would start around 9ish and Mickey Hogan's band or Madigan's band would play. Then Mike Delahunty would start to come to Ennis and I remember the night Paddy Con's opened in Ennis which is a furniture shop now I think. It was out on Station Road. Victor Sylvester played there and Bud Clancy. There would also be dancing at the crossroads in Kilnaboy every Sunday. All the older girls would be allowed to go but we were not as I was 15 at that time. All the girls in my area would go off to the dancing at the crossroads but they would be home to milk the cows.

0:51:55 – 0:53:50
VISITORS TO THE HOUSE –

There would be singing and dancing sets and a lot of the people taught themselves how to play music. The time of the house dances there would have been a scarce of milk so milk and a cake would have been bought. Moher was a great place for house dances. The girls in the kitchen of the hospital would go to Dellamore's in Ennistymon around Christmas time for the dances. One morning when one of the girls was woken up she said no way could she get up, that there were fiddles and flutes going in and out of her two ears and that she would never go again, but of course they were off again the following night.

0:53:51 – 0:57:39
GETTING ELECTRICITY IN THE HOUSE –

Yes Jimmy Williams he was considered the best and we had lots of lamps and Jimmy connected them. In the winter time come evening time you would have to be cleaning the lamps to get ready for the night and people did a lot of sewing in that poor light. My mother was wonderful at embroidery and she would embroider the flour bags and make tablecloths. In the summertime then everything would be outside airing such as sheets and quilts and mattresses and

elderly people would put their habits out for airing. The habit would be worn when they died. People were not laid out in outfits then; they were laid out in a brown habit. If you were a child of Mary and then the Franciscans which was the third order of St Francis had something different – they had something on their heads. The blue for the child of Mary was nice.

0:59:50 – 01:01:24
EMIGRATION –

There was such a lot of emigration mainly going to England and to America if you were claimed out there by a relative who would look after you. The guys going to England would have gone to Dublin to go to England and they would have to go through customs. A lot of them did very well over in England and a lot of them did not. A lot of them went to England to work in construction. I remember a guy going to England who was a farmer was on the boat going to England and he was the only one who had a coat.

01:01:25 – 01:02:38
ST BRIGID'S WELL –

I visited St Brigid's Well before I moved to Liscannor and St Joseph's Well. People with eye problems went to St Joseph's Well a lot. I remember going with my cousin and my aunt and my mother when he was 9 and was wearing glasses and we took off in the pony and trap and off to St Josephs Well and he was literally dipped into the well and I would wonder what all the fuss was about and why I was not dipped into the well. I was only thinking about the blessed tree in Rathkeale the other day and just outside Corofin there is a blessed tree with a little altar and things hanging from the tree. People would leave offerings there but I don't know what saint but it's a blessed tree and it is still there.

01:02:40 – 01:05:42
CURES –

On the eve of St Blaise you would hang a black stocking out and he would come along and bless your black stocking and you would take it back in the morning. If you had a cold you would shake salt onto it and put it in the oven and then wrap it round your neck and that was a cure for a sore throat. Then there was castor oil and things for rubbing and lots of herbs. Yarrow was one of the herbs. It had a stem with a white thing on the top and you would boil it and then drink the water which was a cure for arthritis. There was an herb that they would rub onto a cut. There were cures for everything. My aunt Alice has a book with all these cures. There were cures for animals before vets. They would sprinkle turpentine on a sack and wrap it round a sick calf for the heat and poteen was the order of the day for lambs to bring them back from the dead. It would heat them up but then they would get cold again later on in the night. A vet once asked me how I helped a calf and I told him by wrapping the calf in a fur coat that came from America. They need tender loving care. Talk to them and feed them and this and that. I was talking to a vet once and he learnt in veterinary college that an animal knows when you give up on it. If you give up on an animal it gives up on itself.

01:05:43 – 01:07:42
PISREOGS AND CURES –

Leaving eggs in a garden and a garden would not prove fruitful. People would leave eggs in different places to bring you bad luck. If you were going to a fair and met a red haired woman you would turn back. It would bring you bad luck; you would get a bad price on your stock. The Curtis' had cures for horses to stop them bleeding, they were like horse whisperers. People in Liscannor would give boiled stout as a cure for bleeding animals. For ringworm they would mix up blue stone and linseed oil into a paste. They would put that on ringworm. Those are the only ones I really remember.

01:07:43 – 01:21:34
MAIN STREET LISCANNOR –

It has changed quite a bit, lets start at the harbour. The hospital was down by the harbour and there was no light. There were families in all the houses around there and a lot would have been related. Some of them like Mrs Punch would have been married to sailors or seamen that came into Liscannor. Then there was Paddy Blake, as droll as could be. I remember the Griffins and Lambys as it is now. On the other side was the O'Donnell's. Johnny Leahy had groceries and flour and meal. Then there was Blake's – Paddy and Mrs Blake and they had a flour and meal store. Mrs Blake was extremely nice and Paddy was droll and very funny. He would have no time for the Americans as they would be looking at Antiques but would give him no business and Paddy Blake used to say to Jim â€œmake sure of one thing that you keep enough for yourself and your Mrsâ€. Where the old hotel is now Peter Loughlin lived with his son Morgan and his three Daughters, Jean and Moira and I cannot think of the third one. They lived there for years and then the hotel was built in the 1970s. The Blakes, the Leahys, then Lambeys and opposite Lambeys the two O'Donnells who were his relatives, they were his first cousins and then Blakes who had a flour and meal store and I think the Blakes had land. Around from them was where Donal is now Patsy Considine and his wife from Carron who was a very nice lady. As you came around from there was the O'Donnells but before that a Scotsman who sold to Maggie O'Donnell and in turn her brother Paddy inherited the house and he was there with his wife Bridget and then they sold it to John Vaughan who was Bridget's nephew. The next house owned by Lambeys the Dowries lived there for a while and Lambeys brother John came back from the States and renovated it and stayed there for some time and then returned to the States. I remember his coming from the States with his wife and daughter. The next house was McHugh's and then Mrs Lysaghts and her sons Michael Lysaght. For a time then the Sextons that were teachers in Ballycotton. Two sisters Nora and one of them taught in Ballycotton and they lived there for years and after that it was derelict for sometime. Egans and then Tommy O'Brien which was a pub and I think some groceries as well. Then Kitty the Post Office. Before Kitty was the Gardners and Tom Gardner was a teacher and then they moved to Ennis – one of the Gardners married John Murphy from Ennis and they

both died in Cahercalla within a short time of each other a few years ago. Then you would come to Lyons, Mrs Lyons and her husband and a large family and then a Dispensary – Dr O'Dea once a week. Then there was an old house O'Loughlins and then George Scales built a house when he came home from England and he had a butchers stall. On the other side of the street was Considine's farm-open fields. The national school was where the community centre is now. First youth club in Liscannor was in that school. Certain classes downstairs and certain classes upstairs. Then the lower Quay-Mrs Punch and Mrs McCormack and the Murrays. McCormacks, Murrays and the McMahons were related and then Logans, I remember John Logan was a postman. A lot of these families went to England. There were families that would come up here in the winter time for bits of timber for firewood. Eoghan Arackle, he was a big strong man and Eoghan Donoghue. The nicest place to swim in Liscannor is up by the castle and Billy's hole there were flags around it like a swimming pool. And the sun seemed to shine all the time or we imagined it.

01:21:35 – 01:25:10
RECESSION IN 1930S –

There was a recession in 1930 but I also read recently about a recession in the 1960s and I cannot remember that recession. There was talk of the economic war and the very bad prices. So in the 1930s you made your own butter and you had a garden so there was very little shopping. There was a tradition in relation to making butter if you had a visitor you would tell them to â€œput the big of your head in the churnâ€ I am not sure if a man had a lit pipe he would have to quench it or if he had a pipe he would have to light it. Then there would be the killing of pigs which you would hear awful screeching and then filling of puddings and make sausages. Then you would go round to the houses dividing the food up and then the next time the next house would make the food up and we were never hungry. In the garden when we were growing up we would grow potatoes and the vegetables would be carrots, parsnip, turnip and lettuces and parsley and apples.

Our silage pit was at the other side of the wall of an orchard and all these trees were killed and we found out it was from the seepage from the silage that killed the trees.

01:25:11 – 01:25:57
FASHION –

We would paint a seam up the back of our legs. We would love to see the girls coming back from the UK with their great style and to look at their lovely clothes and artificial flowers.

01:25:58 – 01:28:29
REEK SUNDAY –

I climbed Croagh Patrick in a pencil slim skirt as women in those days did not wear pants or trousers or tracksuits. We went up during the night and you would look down from the top and on the last quarter you would see perpendicular rocks and you would wonder how you would get down again. We thought it was a great adventure. We went to Lough Derg and you would have to be fasting and you would board an open boat that would carry about 200 people and you would go out onto the Island and we had bunk beds. We would have Lough Derg soup which was hot water with a pinch of salt. You would remove your shoes if you wanted to and walk around the Island all night and I remember the ground was wet and damp and misty and then at various stages you came into the church to say your prayers and we were left hungry. We would then do the same the following day and then left again hungry and I remember we stayed in a hotel in Sligo and would be woken up at midnight to have something to eat. We would then come back in a motor boat which I was terrified in.

01:28:30 – 01:31:30
RELIGIOUS PROCESSIONS IN THE VILLAGE –

The Eucharistic Procession would be held on Corpus Christi and you went as far

as the grotto. Paddy O'Connor was the person that instigated the grotto and that was another big day of celebration and people would be carrying banners and all the houses were decorated with flowers and there would be an altar outside every house and then you would come back to the church and say your prayers. Then the priest decided there would not be a procession anymore in Liscannor because of the traffic but there is a procession still in Lahinch. The procession was great and used to be the Sunday after the first Communion.
Then there were the May Eve processions where you would have bottles of water and some people would pour on your crops some would pour with good intentions and some not so good. Lough Fergus we used to go to on May Eve with bottles of water and of course they do have bottles of holy water on Easter Sunday in Liscannor today and the Easter water is blessed and people sprinkle it on all the crops. We used to do a lot of trekking around the roads calling in for drinks of water with our bicycles and we had a pump. JJ Considine discovered spring water and we would go up with our bottles. My mother would never have envisaged in a million years that today we would be paying for water.

0.067303240740741
LIVING IN THE GROUNDS OF BIRCHFIELD –

When I first came here there was a dairy and you would milk the cows by hand and the calves would be fed by bucket. Milk would be put into big tubs and the cream would come to the top and be scraped by a skimmer and you would make the butter from that. When I was at school I used to go to my friends house and her grandmother would skim the cream and put it on bread and put sugar on top and give it to us and we used to eat it at lunchtime everyday. The land over by Kilnaboy and Inchiquin is magnificent. When I was younger I would go on my bike and stay there for hours just looking at the beauty. There used to be great dances over on Inchiquin mountain, they would have a Scrap dance where you would have a dance with the leftovers from previous dances so there was no wastage. On a last note you should get up in the morning and look in the mirror and say I

am great but take a minute and ponder and remember your last hour when the world and its vanities are vanishing before you.