

# Senan Fitzmartin

Male

File 1 0:00:00 – 0:06:03

EARLY LIFE –

Senan speaks about his early life, his parents, chores, and people coming on cuaird (social visiting). He speaks about the conversations that people had when on cuaird.

Senan speaks about Steven Dillon killing the pig. Bill Roche, Thomas McGrath and Mick Doyle would come with knives in brown paper bags and decide which knife was going to use to kill the pig. He describes the process of killing the pig.

File 2 0:00:00 – 0:02:57

WORK AND ENTERTAINMENT IN DOONBEG –

Michael Francis Killeen also killed the pig in Doonbeg. Senan speaks about the thrashing. Willie Keane and Anthony Talty, Flan McGrath and Tommy Killeen and Senan would try to catch the rats coming out of the stacks with their dogs. He states they had great entertainment from events like the thrashing and killing the pig etc.

0:02:58 – 0:06:03

HOUSE AND HOME –

Senan describes his own home. When he was a child, there was no electricity or running water. He describes the inside of the house, the paraffin lamp, doing homework by candlelight, going to the well for water (Hurley's pump). He describes his mother making griddle bread, cooking a goose with potato stuffing. He states that the head of the goose was also cooked and the Fitzmartin boys would argue as to who was going to get the brains of the goose. Senan's mother

was Margaret Sullivan from Clahanes. Her father was Pat Sullivan. He describes her as "œa tiny little woman, strong as an ox". Senan describes the role of the woman and gives examples of the work that his mother did at home. He states that the only entertainment his parents would have was a house dance but this was seldom.

0:10:48 - 0:16:57

ALTAR BOY -

Senan speaks about his time as an altar boy. He would start at 7.00am and finish at 12.00pm. He names out the priests he remembers. He speaks about a Fr. McNamara from East Clare. He speaks generally about the influence of the priest in Doonbeg and in rural Ireland in general. He speaks about a Fr. Hogan who hated dancing in the hall. Senan and Fr. Hogan once had an argument when Senan suggested making money for the church from dances in the hall.

0:16:58 - 0:21:50

JAMES FITZMARTIN (FATHER) -

Senan speaks about his father James Fitzmartin, who was from Cree East. He came back from America in 1915 to join the IRA. He had been friendly with Mike McTigue (World Champion Boxer 1923). James Fitzmartin's father (Pat Fitzmartin) died when James was very young. He fell off a horse in Cahermurphy and died. A white calf ran in front of them and frightened the horse.

Johnny, Mick, Honor and Bidd were the siblings of James Fitzmartin.

He states that his mother was better to tell the stories than her father. His uncles went to Cleveland, Ohio and didn't hear from them for nearly twenty years.

0:21:51 - 0:25:24

EMIGRATION -

Senan recalls what his mother told her about emigration and how people were sent off. He speaks about a party thrown for Joe Sullivan (his uncle). He was accompanied to Cragganknock where he got the train. It took Joe eight to twelve weeks to get to America. Joe later wrote that 'to return to Ireland again would be one heck of a chore Margaret to every come back with everything we went through going'.

Senan recalls hearing about a poem that Joe wrote home. They knew at home when they got this letter that they would never see Joe again.

0:25:25 - 0:29:27

GHOST STORIES -

Susan McInerney used to tell ghost stories in the village. The McInerney's used to live where Tubridy's pub is now. He recalls going to Susan McInerneys to get milk. He describes how frightened he would be going home with the milk.

He recalls his mother telling the story about Lendrum (Captain Lendrum killed in late 1920 by the local IRA). Her mother remembered seeing the light rising every night at the Caherfeenick gates and going across the land. Also, a very wild cow came in with the tide and disappeared.

0:29:28 - 0:34:02

CAPTAIN LENDRUM AND IRA ACTIVITY -

Senan speaks about how her mother spoke about Captain Lendrum. She stated that there was a tremendous silence. She also stated that a lot of people in Clahanes that were not as much into the IRA as in Cree or Doonbeg. He states that her mother's brothers went to America to get away from it. He states that there may have been people in the Cloher, who may have been involved like the Stacks. He states that the IRA had dugouts in the Sand Dunes. They would pull furze bushes over the holes and the Black and Tans could not find them. His father would never tell him if he shot anyone. He states that Bill Haugh was an

influential figure. He names Seán Liddy and Mick Doyle who were also senior figures.

0:34:03 – 0:41:10

PARENTS –

Senan speaks about the influence his parents had on his life.

0:52:18 – 0:57:28

COMMUNION AND CONFIRMATION –

Senan recalls his communion and states that because they were across the road from the church, there would be a big crowd in after communion.

He recalls Bishop Fogarty coming around. He says he was like the Pope coming around. He states that a lot of poor people from areas like Shragh, Monmore and Clahanes would always have the nice clothes for the confirmation. He states that Dan Twomey helped a lot of people dress for those occasions. Senan describes the atmosphere when Bishop Fogarty arrived on the altar.

0:57:29 – 1:05:49

NERVOUS BUT FULL OF DEVILMENT'

Senan describes fighting under the bridge on the way home from school with Flan Birmingham.

Senan speaks about pastimes including hide and seek and hunting rabbits.

He recalls going up to Studdert's quarry (across from Doonbeg football field). He recalls Johnny Igoe opening boxes of bees at Studderts and running faster than Ronnie Delaney.

He speaks about catching Hares. Tom Clune was the chief man to organise this. They used to catch hares with nets and then take them to Donmore where the

coursing would take place. Senan recalls taking his father's hound poaching. When his father brought the hound to the races in Limerick he was so used to watching for the hare, he waited until the hare came around and caught it instead of racing. His father would race the hounds in Kilmihil. The dogs were treated very well with sheep's head or milk.

1:05:50 - 1:07:37

ONLY RADIO IN THE VILLAGE -

Enrights (creamery manager) had the only radio in the village (across from Comerfords pub today). They listened to the matches and the news.

0:01:02 - 0:04:58

PARENTS CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOLING -

Both Senan's parents went to Cree school. A man called Kelly taught his father. He states that even though his parents didn't receive any formal education past national school, they were very smart, knowledgeable people.

0:04:58 - 0:06:15

ROLE OF WOMEN

Senan states that his mother was the backbone when it came to the family finances.

0:06:16 - 0:10:19

THE TINKERS -

Senan speaks about how his mother would give a lot of help to the Tinkers (Travellers). One day a Tinker woman came and saw Senan's brother Joseph in his cot. The Tinker woman told Senan's mother that the child would not live long. He died a month later. On other occasions, they would arrive with a dead baby in a cloth and look for help to bury it.

He explains where the Tinkers would camp. He recalls a big fight between the Tinkers in Doonbeg one night. The Clydes and Dohertys were involved.

He speaks about Tommy Tubridy's mother breaking a glass and threatening Tinkers for not paying. He states that the women in the pubs were in charge.

0:10:20 - 0:14:53

FINISHING SCHOOL -

Senan speaks about life after finishing school at the age of 14. He recalls going to fairs in Kilmihil and Doonbeg from Cree.

He also recalls running telegrams for the post office in Doonbeg. He would get 1 & 6 for each telegram. He saved up £6.00 and bought a black Dexter calf from Michael Neylon turned it out on the land in April. In November he sold it to Kevin Ryan the Butcher for £12. He speaks about buying cattle in Loop Head and walking them to Cree.

0:14:54 - 0:27:58

LEAVING FOR ENGLAND -

Speaks about his decision to go to England at the age of sixteen. He recalls his parent's opposition to his leaving and his decision to leave on October 8th, which was the fair of Doonbeg. Speaks about his journey to England, the loneliness of the people leaving and the difficulty of the journey.

Speaks about his first job cleaning brick for a construction site. He then worked as a labourer for Lange construction. Speaks about the dance halls in London and names all the places he visited. Speaks about going to Mass on Sunday in a Burton suit with all the other Irish immigrants.

Senan speaks about coming back to Kilkee to take over his brother's Hackney business for a year. He then returned to England. He worked for both Wimpey and McAlpine.

Senan states that all the Irish people in London went to Mass on Sunday morning, even the men who would have been out drinking on Saturday night.

0:27:59 – 0:54:07

#### LEAVING TO AMERICA

Speaks about Nora Talty claiming him out to America. He had wanted to go to Australia but the papers didn't arrive. Senan flew out on March 16, 1958 and had \$27 when he arrived in New York. Speaks about his early days in New York and his desire to be successful. He recalls getting a telegram six weeks after arriving in New York informing him that his father had died. He did not go to a dance or to the cinema for a year after his father died.

Speaks about working as a labourer for different firms around New York, his work as a labourer and the way he learnt his trade. Speaks about his early challenges with becoming a superintendent. Speaks about becoming a Project Manager and then Vice President.

Senan speaks about the opportunity to go to Dallas to open a new office. Speaks about going to Texas in 1976.

0:54:08 – 0:58:29

#### DOONBEG

Speaks about the importance of Doonbeg to him in his life. Also speaks about the importance of telling the truth. Recalls collecting Sleabhacán in Doonbeg. Also recalls his mother cooking a salmon.

File 4 0:00:00 – 0:03:47

#### MISCELLANEOUS

James Fitzmartin and Mike McTigue. Speaks about his father's friendship with Mike McTigue. Speaks about the experience of the Irish in America.

Senan recalls a cure that his uncle Mick Fitzmartin had for a horse with a sore eye.