

# Tom Brennan

Male

0:00:00 – 0:04:00

CHILDHOOD – Tom talked about his early childhood, his birth in a nursing home in Limerick, his move from Cratloe when he was 5 years old to Sixmilebridge and his mother been paralysed by the shock of seeing the Black and Tans shining a light into his Aunt's house. He talked about his mother using a chair to get a around and that he put a bathroom into the house.

0:04:00 – 0:07:00

CUMANN NA MBAN – Tom asked me to read an article written about his mother, I did so out loud. She was described as one of the most daring members of Cummann na mBan. Tom said his house was never locked and the key was always in the door and people let themselves in.

0:07:00 – 0:09:00

HOME HOUSE – Tom talked about his county council house and the house containing three bedrooms, a big kitchen and a garden for growing vegetables. When they moved in they had kerosene lamps and you put a lady's hair pin in to prevent it from bursting.

0:09:00 – 0:10:26

EMIGRATION AND LIFE IN ENGLAND – Tom spoke about his time in England. He moved when he was 16. He came back after a year. He talked about working during World War 2 and having to carry a gas mask with him. He returned to England again a year later and got a job with Backcock and Willcocks and worked there for 11 years and he now gets a small pension from England.

0:10:26 – 0:20:10

EMIGRATION AND LIFE IN AMERICA – Tom said he could not get a job in

America because you had to pay into the workers union. He worked with Allied Radio for 22 years. He moved to America because his mother had 4 sisters in Chicago and one of his Aunt's sponsored his fair. Tom talked about the Visa process and the live wake when someone was leaving Ireland. 75 people saw him off when he was leaving for America. Two of his Aunties in Chicago never returned to Ireland. Tom spoke about his mother coming to Chicago to meet her four sisters. Tom immigrated for America on a Saturday night about 11pm/12am with TWA. The plane stopped in Newfoundland and then New York. From New York he got a flight to Detroit, Michigan and then to Midway Airport in Chicago. Tom spoke about bringing over his chest x-ray for officials to examine. Tom travelled with 3pounds of bacon to give to his Aunties. Tom said they fumigated the plane at that time for disease.

0:20:10 – 0:22:33

CHICAGO – Tom met his four Aunties at Chicago Airport. Tom talked about his welcome to Chicago and the welcome party. He stayed with his Aunt until he got a job as a bar tender and he talked about the slight depression at that time.

0:22:33 – 0:26:21

LEAVING SIXMILEBRIDGE – Tom said he left Sixmilebridge because he thought he would make more money in England and he said he did. When he came to America he found it hard and it took him 6 months to settle down. Tom thought America was one of the finest countries when he settled in. He said he also liked England and English people. He spoke about his job in England and that he got on well there. He talked about Casey's pub in Sixmilebridge and said he always went back there when he was home and people would call him 'the Yank'.

0:26:21 – 0:28:45

CONTACT WITH HOME – Tom said he brought bacon to America because his Aunty had requested it. Tom said he had to bring his Irish money to a bank in Shannon Airport and change it into dollars but they stamped the amount of money he had on the back of his passport.

0:28:45 - 0:29:51

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE - Tom talked about his cousins, the real rebels, Austin, Patrick and Michael Brennan and Tom's father was involved too. Tom said that is why they raided the house beside his Aunts looking for his dad. Tom lived in Austin's house for 6 or 8 months, helping. Tom talked about Michael and the Black and Tans looking for him and that there was £10,000 on his head. Tom described the time when the Black and Tans raided his Aunt's house looking for the three boys. There was ammunition in the box she was sitting on. Tom said the English opened up some of their jails and sent the prisoners over to Ireland. Tom talked about people hearing the dogs barking at night and saying, 'the boys are out tonight'. Tom said people would get out of bed and feed them and let them stay all night. Tom described a story of Austin hiding from the Black and Tans and taking off his hat and doubling back on himself. Austin got refuge in a woman's house but he didn't trust her and asked her to stay in the house after he left. Tom said Austin was afraid the woman would call the Black and Tans to the house. Tom said his mother would have to take dispatches in her hair and cycle some back ways, two or three times a week. There was an ambush outside Sixmilebridge and they waited for two days. The Black and Tans came and the Irish shot 7 of them and one of got away. Tom said the Black and Tans were meant to be happy to leave Clare because there was a forest there. The Black and Tans were before Tom's time but he said they wore tan leggings, breeches and boots. Tom said he saw a Black and Tan in England in an inn having a drink and he was talking to him. Tom thought this man was a Black and Tan.

0:42:42 - 0:45:57

THE IRISH IN CHICAGO - Tom said the Irish were very helpful and would try and do everything for you in America. Tom said when he came to Chicago he tried to get into the union but you had to buy your way in and it would cost \$4000 between three or four people and he couldn't afford it at the time. Tom said it was underhanded but the Irish would always try to help. Tom talked about his brother getting a pension from Ireland, \$600 a month. Tom retired at 62 years and now

gets his social security and English pension.

0:45:57 – 0:56:00

BEING IRISH – Tom stayed with his Aunt for about 6 months when he arrived who was a police matron and a nurse. Tom talked about moving in with a woman who had advertised accommodation for Irish people and he moved in. There were other Irish people who lived there. He said the woman would make breakfast and sandwiches for them. Tom said he felt at home in Chicago and he found the same in England. Tom said if you proved yourself in England you would do well. Tom talked about having loads of Irish music and said he loves it. Tom has not become an American citizen and still has his Irish passport.

Pause

A neighbour of Tom's called in so I stopped the tape recording.

0:00:00 – 0:09:30

IRISH COMMUNITY IN CHICAGO – Tom said the Irish community helped him over in Chicago and people were very helpful. Tom said he missed people when he left. He said the hundred people he went to school with, two of them are alive now. Tom described his brother who lives in Chicago and that he reads the Irish newspapers and keeps Tom informed of all the people dead and alive in Ireland. Tom said he would of done well in Ireland if he stayed. Tom said he has stayed in touch with Ireland and has visited 42 times. Tom spoke about returning to Ireland for funerals and buying his mother and brother caskets. Tom also discussed his own funeral arrangements.