

## GERRY FAGAN



Known far and wide. Gerry gave a life-time service to the GAA. First as a player, then as an official and latterly as an administrator of exceptional abilities and loyalty. Since its formation over a century ago. The GAA has been served by many powerful and distinguished leaders, all men of the soundest integrity. Gerry Fagan fitted the mould. He became a legend in his own life-time, such was the enormity of his contribution at club, county, provincial and national levels.

Born in Mullagh, County Cavan in 1926, Gerry moved with his family to the North when he was only 4 years old. His father was a foreman on the railways. He was educated in St Peters Primary School. Lurgan and St Colmans College. Newry.

In 1942 as an untrained teacher he taught for a few years in Milltown school in Belfast which was under the patronage of the Christian Brothers. It was at this time he began playing for the O'Connells Club in Antrim along with household names such as Paddy O'Hara, Kevin Armstrong and Sean Gibson.

In 1945 he came back to the Clann Eireann club in Lurgan and captained the Junior Team which won the Championship that year. A year later he commenced his teacher training at St Marys Belfast was soon picked for the Antrim Senior Team. In the 1947 Ulster Final against Cavan he came on as a sub at left corner forward.

Gerry started his teaching career in 1949 at Lislea in South Armagh and when he obtained a post back in Lurgan shortly after this he was back playing for Clann Eireann. He played for the County on a number of different occasions in the late 40's and early 50's. In 1953, he married Kathleen McCorry, the sister of the great Bill McCorry.

After Kathleen had a stroke, Gerry looked after her with all the care and attention in the world. Both were devastated when their son Peadar was shot dead by loyalists during the 1980's. When he not married, Gerry's interest in County Football was terminated and he focused on playing for Clann Eireann. He captained the sides that won the Senior Championship in 1954 and 1963. He also played on numerous Clann Eireann teams that lost the McKillop Cup decider.

During his long career Gerry turned out in many positions for both club and county, even played in goals for Armagh. His heart was always in the game and his inspiring presence invariably was a tremendous boost to his colleagues.

Gerry Fagan was the undisputed guiding figure of Armagh Football and after taking over the post of county Secretary, in 1968 he applied all his knowledge for the betterment of the County.

The GAA, not only in Armagh and Ulster, is indebted to Gerry, a servant loyal and true. He was a remarkable man in so many ways, a reservoir of GAA knowledge, a library of facts and figures. His death left a vacuum that cannot be filled.

Gerry was also a referee and took charge of many big games including Ulster Finals and an All-Ireland Semi Final. A strict disciplinarian, he was never one to stand nonsense. He was fair and honest and everyone found him so in their dealings.

Gerry's achievements on the field would have been enough to secure his place among the Armagh greats, but it was as an administrator of vision, courage and integrity that he became known all over Ireland. He was a firm believer in equal treatment for all members and was no stranger in Croke Park where he was also very popular.

He never missed an opportunity to call on old associates who were ill or had fallen on lean times. He never passed the grave of a former comrade without pausing to offer a prayer. Gerry's friendship was infectious and as each new Championship season dawned, there was nothing he enjoyed more than renewing old friendships. What he achieved, he did so by maintaining, the friendship, confidence and respect of all those he came into contact with. For a man who had given a life-times service to the GAA, his allegiance remained true to the very end. He made it to the County Convention despite rapidly deteriorating health.

During his time as Rúnai Gerry had the satisfaction of seeing Armagh win Ulster titles and reaching All Ireland Finals at various grades.

He left an imprint on the Association in Armagh like no other before or after him. The Gerry Fagan Cup was dedicated to his memory and is now presented to the Armagh Senior Champions. This is a fitting tribute to a wonderful Gael.