

Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse 1922 to 1995

Witness Statement of Clifford Smyth

I, Clifford Smyth, say as follows to the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse 1992 to 1995 (the HIA Inquiry):

1. I was born on the 2nd February, 1944.
2. I have been asked by the HIA Inquiry whether I have any evidence for the propositions in my contributions to Chris Moore's 1996 book "The Kincora Scandal" that William McGrath *was an agent of the State and that Kincora involved an operation run by the intelligence agencies*. My contributions can be found at Exhibit 1 to this statement.
3. I confirm that I did not and do not have any evidence for the propositions. I was writing at a time when there had already been years of speculation about William McGrath and the involvement of intelligence agencies in Kincora. The allegations were met largely by silence from the authorities. That is why I speculated as I did in the book.
4. I spoke to the RUC in May, 1980 and I confirm the content of that statement which can be found at Exhibit 2 to this statement. It is the case that the interactions with McGrath over my sexual problems ^{wife + transvestism} in the mid 1960's, and his supposed "treatment" of them, went as far as him masturbating me, but this did not involve others. I questioned his so-called therapy / treatment and I felt uncomfortable. The whole episode came to an end when McGrath encountered me dressed in women's clothes in my flat in Fitzwilliam St. His reaction surprised me – he simply abruptly left without speaking. Later when I quizzed him about the whole matter he stated that I was 'cured' and these incidents were never referred to again. I did not want to speak of the extent of his behaviour to the RUC because of embarrassment; however I did describe the sessions in which I was passive.
5. I also spoke to officers from Sussex police in 1982, and I confirm the content of that statement which can be found at Exhibit 3 to this statement.
6. I was a rent paying lodger in William McGrath's home, where he lived with his wife and 3 children, from about 1968 until 1973 when I left to get married.
7. I was involved with him in TARA, unionist politics and the Orange Order from about 1965 to 1975. To clarify, I returned to Northern Ireland in 1962 from Scotland and shortly

thereafter joined the Orange Order. I then joined the Ulster Young Unionists and became very active in both. I met McGrath through Orange circles in 1965 and was closely associated with him when he set up TARA in the autumn of 1969. My association with TARA and McGrath continued until about 1975.

8. While 2 individuals spoke to me about McGrath in the 1970's I was not persuaded that he was a homosexual as the claim was inconsistent with what I saw of him and his family. After 1980 I could ~~not~~ begin to understand his compartmentalised life and why he was able to deceive someone like me who thought he knew McGrath reasonably well. I concluded you could not know him at all.

9. I have been asked about a document by the HIA Inquiry which I had never seen before it was shown to me by the Inquiry. I am advised that the document appears at pages KIN30216-30220 of the Inquiry bundle. I wish to state categorically that I have never been blackmailed by McGrath or any other person for that matter.

10. As the HIA Inquiry is aware in 2005 I revealed publicly in the Belfast Telegraph the struggle that I have had with transvestism all through much of my life. The articles can be found behind Exhibit 4 to this statement. That was what McGrath was supposed to be helping with during the "treatment" in the 1960's. I obviously recognise now that his motives were not for my assistance. Allegations about my private life were thrown at me in the 1970's when smearing and attempting to undermine and damage people about such things was common. However, I have addressed the affliction of transvestism through sessions with a number of counsellors and finally through an NHS psychiatrist. I now lead a stable and relatively normal life. I would prefer not to have to discuss the subject in public.

11. I can say that it was not until 1980 that I learned that William McGrath was said to be sexually abusing boys in his care in Kincora. I appreciate that it could be said I should have realised what he was capable of because of my own experiences, but I believe that is a claim based on hindsight which is unfair. The fact is that I did not suspect him during the 1970's, and no claims or rumours of him abusing his position in Kincora ever came to my attention until after 1980.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed: Clifford Smyth

Dated: 5th of July 2016.

block on an Army Intelligence officer from learning more about McGrath and Kincora prevented the information from being passed on to the police . . . and as we now know there was a reason for wishing to keep the lid on Kincora. There has never been an enquiry into the political associations of McGrath, to determine just who in British Intelligence knew what about Tara, McGrath and his nefarious activities. Those who suffered in Kincora for the sake of a security operation deserve to hear the truth. They should not be regarded as expendable in order to protect those in authority who knew what was going on but did nothing. Those charged with protecting the integrity of the state should be accountable for their actions and the government owes it to those abused in Kincora to make them accountable. In reality, there's more chance of my playing for Manchester United before the end of the current season . . .

AFTERWORD

Everyone in Northern Ireland - people of all religions and people of none - has suffered through the twenty-seven years of bloody conflict, whether bereavement, injury, the loss of a job or an insult from strangers in a bar in Spain. All have had their lives curtailed, their horizons dimmed.

For too many the suffering has been so intense that the human heart can hardly cope with it. Against the background of that grief and pain, the grim and mysterious figure of William McGrath is not just an enigma but an irony.

Here was a man who lived in the shadows, who shunned the light of day, who told his closest associates that he preferred to 'remain a backroom boy'. Layers of meaning were concealed by that sly remark. McGrath lived a secret and perverted homosexual life for years but he was also in contact with the impenetrable world of secret intelligence. McGrath was told things; McGrath knew things. It is clear that McGrath knew too much because he knew in advance - if only in outline - that the conflict was coming.

This was long before the debauched days of Kincora. The quest for the truth has centred on what happened and how things happened between the late 1960s, when McGrath set up Tara, and 1980, when the abuse of boys in a hostel in East Belfast was disclosed. The whole truth is still denied us; some of those who might enlighten us remain under protection in the secret places of Whitehall.

In the years from 1969 to 1980 reactionary loyalist paramilitarism and the IRA and other groups in the

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the sixteen years that I have been collecting information on William McGrath and Kincora, many individuals gave of their time to me at great personal cost, as they relived episodes from their lives that they had thought long since buried. It is impossible to mention them all individually, and, indeed, there are many who wish to remain anonymous. Three people deserve particular acknowledgement for their commitment to trying to come to terms with the real William McGrath and for taking great risks to expose not just his wrongdoings but the activities of MI5, the agency that used and manipulated McGrath for so long. Two are former associates of McGrath - Roy Garland and Clifford Smyth. Without their help and their dogged determination to unearth the truth, this book would not have been possible. The third person is Valerie Shaw, a former missionary in Ian Paisley's Free Presbyterian Church, who showed great courage in 1982 when she spoke out in public on the issue. Others, who include former associates of McGrath, former members of Army Intelligence and police officers, went to great lengths to help me in my research but cannot be publicly identified. To them and to all who valued truth over any political cause, I say thank you.

Thanks also to friends Tony Curry, Mike Nesbitt and Róisín Duffy, who read early drafts of the manuscript and provided critical advice.

In a project such as this, the most vital support comes from home. My wife Fiona and daughter Louise had to

tolerate my being a fixture in front of the word processor over the past few months. Without Fiona's unswerving faith in this work, which goes back more than a decade, it might never have been completed. This book is dedicated to her.

*Chris Moore
Belfast, January 1996*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Since 1980 the name Kincora has been associated in the public mind with homosexual abuse of young men in care, but because of the nature of the media coverage of the story and some wild speculation about the events at Kincora there have been many misconceptions. For example, the word 'prostitution' has been used in relation to the abuses at the hostel in East Belfast but it is quite clear from the evidence of former residents that this allegation is without foundation. In statements to the authorities those abused made allegations only against the three members of staff at Kincora who were subsequently convicted in court. Some made allegations against individuals at other state-run institutions which also resulted in convictions. No one alleged that he was taken to other men for sexual activity or that men came to Kincora to engage in sexual congress with the young men in care there.

Another issue concerns Tara, the group William McGrath established. Initially, it was set up as a ginger group, a talking shop, which was intended to form a cohesive unionist response to the rapidly developing political upheaval of the late 1960s and early 1970s. It must be stressed that Tara was never a proscribed organisation. It provided unionists with a melting pot to take a variety of ideas and develop a strategy to deal with what they viewed as a deteriorating political situation.

Later, McGrath was to use Tara as a means of trying to prepare for a 'doomsday' situation, the day Northern Ireland would face the prospect of British withdrawal and

a united Ireland. He used Tara as a pool from which to draw individuals into what he regarded as a paramilitary group, although not paramilitary in the more usual sense of the word - not a group which would conduct a campaign of violence like that of the IRA, UVF or UFF. For instance, although there is some evidence to suggest that a small number of individual members of the group were armed with illegal weapons, Tara itself never engaged in a single 'military operation' during the twenty-five years of conflict in Northern Ireland. McGrath's idea was to prepare a group of men in platoons of twenty, who would not be called upon to fight until 'doomsday' arrived. In the 'doomsday' scenario, law and order would have completely broken down and the Army and RUC would be either disarmed or withdrawn to barracks prior to a total British withdrawal. McGrath's plan was that Tara would step in at this stage and provide leadership for the Protestant people, taking control of the rogue elements of the loyalist paramilitaries and providing support for the legitimate forces of law and order. McGrath was very much against the murderous campaign of tit-for-tat killings conducted by loyalist groups.

Some of the men who attended meetings of Tara were later to become influential figures in unionist circles and it is important to remember that Tara was an entirely legitimate organisation. There is no suggestion that these individuals were at any stage involved in the paramilitary activities described above, nor that they had any knowledge of attempts made by McGrath and by a small number of Tara members to obtain weapons.

Similarly, it must also be stressed that, although

McGrath himself was homosexual, it has never been alleged nor is there any suggestion that any other members of Tara were homosexual.

Again, while there is a suggestion that McGrath may have been working for British intelligence agencies, there is no evidence to suggest that other members of the group were similarly employed or even aware that McGrath may have been an intelligence agent.

Detailed in this book is the extraordinary ability of William McGrath to compartmentalise his life in such a way that even individuals in Tara who were acquainted with one another neither knew nor guessed that McGrath had so many different dimensions to his personality. It was partly the skill with which he managed to do this which enabled him to keep his activities secret for such a long period.

FOREWORD

The Kincora sex scandal is etched on the collective memory of Northern Ireland. All who have heard the sordid story of the systematic molestation of young victims who were under the care and protection of Northern Ireland's Eastern Health and Social Services Board are left with deep feelings of unease. No other scandal in the province's recent past has prompted so much speculation and rumour. Now we can get as close to the truth as is humanly possible.

Journalistic investigations into the Kincora sex scandal have centred on the personality, character and bizarre motivation of one individual, William McGrath. It was the multi-various, corrupt and sinister activities of McGrath which led to a massive cover-up in Whitehall, a cover-up which to this day withstands attempts to penetrate its wall of secrecy.

This book will expose for the first time the fact that even as McGrath was going to trial for sex offences, a whole litany of criminal activities on behalf of Ulster loyalism was also coming to light. Highly placed security officers charged with the investigation of McGrath's secret world already knew that this middle-aged sex offender had run guns into Northern Ireland. Furthermore, the police knew that McGrath had been instrumental in founding an organisation called Tara. There is evidence to suggest that this organisation may have been controlled and manipulated by British Intelligence for its own ends.

This book will argue that in forming Tara, William

McGrath acted on the directions of his intelligence handlers and that he set in motion events which led directly to the emergence of loyalist paramilitarism or counter-terrorism. He was not alone; others served similar ends. The questions that such evidence raises are devastating. Did British intelligence maintain a shadowy but firm control over loyalist paramilitarism from the early 1970s onwards? Were the innocent lives and future prospects of male adolescents sacrificed to the cynical manipulation of one of the most mysterious and intriguing figures to emerge from the tragedy of Northern Ireland?

It is immediately apparent that the story of William McGrath reaches into the very heart of Northern Ireland's troubles. He was able to build on the fears of grassroots loyalists while promoting a heady doctrine of unionism, evangelicalism and Orange fervour. Given the gravity of the charges contained in this book and the new perspective that such revelations bring to our understanding of the crisis in the North, the reader needs to be assured that the scandal about to unfold is based on careful, tenacious and well documented research, research which has taken the author sixteen years to amass, collate and analyse. In the course of that research the author has interviewed one hundred and three people, many at great length and on numerous occasions. The author has been the recipient of numerous documents from both official and unofficial sources, which have also made a vital contribution to our understanding of William McGrath and the seamy world he inhabited. He found it necessary to broaden the enquiries and the scope of the investigation by making visits to the Republic of Ireland, England and

Scotland and communicating with people now living in France and South Africa.

Because of the nature of these enquiries it has not always been appropriate or possible to publish the names of the author's sources. It will be obvious to the reader when a witness has been given a cover name. All who have contributed to this story are to be commended, particularly those who have allowed their names to go forward.

The real story behind the Kincora cover-up took years to emerge. The author was finally able to dismantle part of the wall of silence and open this sordid affair to the gaze of the public.

*Clifford Smyth, loyalist historian,
ex-member Tara and Democratic Unionist Party
Belfast, 1 February 1996*

vanguard of republicanism turned Northern Ireland into a cockpit of terror. Loyalist paramilitarism owed much to the machinations of William McGrath, much more than rank and file loyalists could ever have imagined. Soon after the first terrorist murders of the new-style UVF, Tara acted as a catalyst providing recruits both for it and for the emerging UDA. McGrath was the author of what other writers have called the 'birth certificate' of the UDA.

Apparently, McGrath did not initiate the 'Tara brigade', as he liked to call it. As Billy told me once:

With the benefit of hindsight I believe that Tara was essentially set up, funded and indeed organised by the British security service, MI5. For a start, finance never seemed to be a problem, then there was McGrath's talent for predicting events long before they ever came about and of course what he told us about people of influence and the intelligence community. I believe Tara was effectively the property of MI5, was in fact a safety net - used to control paramilitary elements within the loyalist group in the event of a total breakdown of law and order.

McGrath made it obvious to all those who heard him speak that he was acting on intelligence. There was a higher authority; McGrath was not alone. Figures like John McKeague spring to mind, and there are other documented episodes like the Colin Wallace affair and the case of Brian Nelson to suggest strongly that British Intelligence had penetrated and was manipulating the loyalist paramilitary

underground from the early 1970s onwards. Where was the democratic control over all this unquestionably illegal activity? Why have elected representatives, including MPs from Northern Ireland itself, been so reluctant to become involved in uncovering the truth?

McGrath drew the attention of some of those closest to him to an emerging pattern in the street violence in the early days of the conflict: a pattern that was to have a profound effect on the thinking of the British public. Republican street agitation would subside, only to be replaced by a fierce outburst on the part of loyalists burning buses and stoning the police, for instance on Belfast's Protestant Shankill Road. McGrath argued that this spiral of violence in which terrorist and counter-terrorist alike attacked the security forces while striving to get at each other's throats - the infamous 'tit-for-tat' equation - was no accident.

The psychological impact of these disorders on British public opinion was to have an important political consequence. Seeing the security forces caught, pig-like, in the middle sapped any commitment there might have been to the resolution of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Disenchantment and cynicism about the province's 'tribal conflict' created a climate in which the London establishment could push forward policies, safe in the knowledge that they would never be subjected to critical scrutiny at Westminster. The bipartisan approach which dominated parliamentary debate ensured that evidence of British misgovernment would be covered up. Occurrences like Kinvara existed within what was effectively a quarantine zone. The British parliamentary system normally charged

with protecting the interests of the ordinary voter was put into suspension. Northern Ireland offered a special set of circumstances. New rules applied, and the democratic rights of Northern Ireland Catholics and Protestants alike were ignored by British public opinion. The Kincora affair raises the very real possibility that psychological operations - psych-ops as they are termed by the military - set in train a series of events that alienated public opinion from the bloody situation in Northern Ireland. Once this had happened the establishment could cut whatever deals it thought expedient with political forces in Ireland.

So often throughout years of conflict in Northern Ireland the British government has been represented as a neutral or fair-minded umpire, detached, non-partisan and unselfish in its search for a solution.

Yet, I believe, this book presents sobering evidence that ordinary people in Northern Ireland, Protestant and Catholic alike, were goaded into actions that inflamed the tribal warfare. It is my belief that we have to ask ourselves whether William McGrath was in reality an *agent provocateur*.

Although Northern Ireland is viewed as a sectarian battleground, the extent to which disorder has been initiated by powerful agencies outside the state has often gone unnoticed. This book indicates that the emotions and passions of ordinary working people are open to manipulation.

In the nature of things it cannot be conclusively proven that McGrath was an agent of British Intelligence. However, the events of the past three decades are well documented and, given the incalculable sums of money poured by the

British Exchequer into the crucible of Northern Ireland, the constant appearance of the conflict at the lower end of the opinion polls points up the abandonment of the issue by the British public. In an age of media manipulation and spin doctors, this reaction by public opinion could hardly have been entirely accidental.

It is not, of course, argued that the Kincora sex scandal alone carries responsibility for this. The contention of this book is that in the story of William McGrath we get a glimpse of how Britain's secret state tried to control and direct events in Northern Ireland. I hope that the story which this book develops has uncovered a number of pieces in a large jigsaw. In the interlocking pattern we see a scenario begin to emerge. Many other pieces are resistant to being explored, understood and assembled.

William McGrath remains inscrutable to this day. Despite the statements of many witnesses and the medical evidence, he did not break under police interrogation. After his release from prison he still circulated occasional letters, written in the same evangelical and prophetic style as earlier documents. Nothing had changed. He neither repented nor recanted. He maintained a rigorous silence about his past. An intelligence operative who played a pivotal role in bringing McGrath's dark past into the light of day brought his interview with this author to a close with this enigmatic question: 'Is it possible that in the case of William McGrath we are dealing with a trained mind?'

In this book is presented the fruit of intensive research, I trust in the form of fresh insights that will provoke many questions. Readers will have to decide for themselves, on the basis of the evidence presented, what was the true

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nature of the life and role of William McGrath . . . at least until the next piece of evidence presents himself for public scrutiny.

APPENDIX
TARA PROCLAMATION

On the following pages is the text of the Tara Proclamation which Adrian (Chapter 9) read in the *Belfast News Letter* of 20 June 1974. These pages are reproduced in facsimile from a Tara publication.

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

STATEMENT OF: ANDREW CLIFFORD SMYTH

AGE OF WITNESS (if over 21 enter "over 21") 'OVER 21'

OCCUPATION OF WITNESS: SCHOOLTEACHER

ADDRESS: [REDACTED] BELFAST.

TO BE COMPLETED
WHEN THE
STATEMENT HAS
BEEN WRITTEN

I declare that this statement consisting of 8 pages, each signed by me is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence at a preliminary enquiry or at the trial of any person, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Dated this 5th day of May 19 80 .

(Sgd.) G Caskey, D/C/I.
*SIGNATURE of MEMBER by whom
statement was recorded or received.*

(Sgd.) Clifford Smyth
SIGNATURE of WITNESS

I was first introduced to McGrath through members of the Orange Order who had convened a private meeting in McGrath's house at 15 Wellington Park to discuss political and religious matters. There were about 15 present including one Church of Ireland Clergyman. There were probably half-a-dozen of these meetings, all of which commenced with prayer and Bible study. At that time I was living in a flat in Fitzwilliam Street, and was aged 22. The friendship with McGrath developed and we seemed to have a mutual accord on many political matters. Furthermore, McGrath had been highly spoken of by those who had introduced me to him. It wasn't long before McGrath told me in private conversation that he had an insight into many of the emotional problems which afflict young men. He spoke of how he had counselled those who had problems with masturbation and homosexuality, and claimed to be able to alleviate their distress. These conversations disturbed me because no other christians that I had met had ever conversed with me along these lines, and yet I was anxious about my own youthful emotional hang-ups (which were not homosexual in nature). In this atmosphere I confided my youthful emotional concerns to McGrath who then persuaded me to submit to his form of 'treatment' which involved his stroking and massaging my thighs, and which was supposed to relieve my

SIGNATURE of WITNESS: (Sgd.) Clifford Smyth

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emotional tensions. My role in these incidents, which took place on three or four occasions, was entirely passive. McGrath rationalised these incidents at that time very plausibly and in such a way as to allay my natural misgivings as to their nature, but with hindsight I subsequently wondered if he gained some form of sexual gratification from them. The political situation in NI was beginning to deteriorate and my own circumstances were changing, because I had committed myself to the task of gaining admission to QUB. To complicate matters, the two young men with whom I shared the flat were leaving, one to get married, the other to take up a teaching post in County Tyrone. McGrath, who knew of my personal circumstances, invited me to join the other lodgers in 15 Wellington Park. As I recall the weekly cost was £3.10 shillings. It was the practice of the McGrath's to accommodate lodgers from time to time and indeed during the early period of my stay with them, several people who have become highly successful and prominent in their own professions lodged there. These include W J McClelland, Manager of the Northern Bank Executor and Trustee Company and William Parker, Chief Examiner in the Capital Taxes Office, Law Courts Building, Chichester Street. A number of missionaries home on furlough from the mission fields also stayed with the McGraths, as well as a [REDACTED] KIN 358 who had been associated with Faith House in Finaghy, and a Mrs T Burns, McGrath's widowed sister. All three McGrath children also lived at 15 Wellington Park. McGrath seemed to earn a living through a carpet import business which he ran from the front room of the house. He also had a friendship with another young member of the Orange Order, Roy Garland. McGrath had known Roy Garland for some time before I came on the scene, and there was some kind of business arrangement between them. McGrath now claimed that he was in financial trouble, Wellington Park was sold and we moved to 4 Greenwood Avenue; that was about 1967. I gained entrance to QUB in the Autumn of 1967. The political situation in NI was soon to deteriorate into widespread social disorder. McGrath convened a meeting in 4 Greenwood Avenue, which was attended by about a dozen and there he revealed from sources which he never disclosed to me, that it was the intention of "the enemy" to create the impression that the Stormont

SIGNATURE of STATEMENT MAKER: (Sgd) Clifford Smyth

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Government was a "discredited government, served by a discredited Police Force". McGrath also asserted that it was the intention to provoke some episode which would enable the Eire Army to invade NI and thus 'internationalise' the Ulster problem. By the Autumn of 1969, the first part of this scenario had been confirmed, and a second meeting was called and outline proposals for 'TARA' were given by McGrath; it was obviously his brainchild. "TARA" was to be "an organism" not an organisation, which in the event of an Eire Army take-over would provide "hardcore Protestant resistance (sic)". Initially the "Organism" recruited very successfully only to collapse in late 1971, when the Belfast paramilitary loyalist groups took over many of the membership, leaving McGrath and his closer associates isolated. The circumstances of this collapse are of interest because there was some kind of character assassination campaign mounted at that time. I personally became aware of the fact that I was being accused of being a homosexual. Contemporary with these events, Roy Garland broke off all his associations with McGrath. The fact that the rumour campaign was directed, as far as I could detect, chiefly at myself, caused me considerable distress at first. Then I came to recognise that numbers of public figures of different callings and importance are the subject of all kinds of gossip and innuendo. Because I had been the victim of untrue rumour, I made it my practice never to believe anything about anyone unless I was confronted with the proof. I was the first to learn that there was trouble brewing between Roy Garland and McGrath, because I was called to Roy Garland's house Belmont. Roy Garland had married a girl who was a member of the Young Peoples Fellowship which he had met in 15 Wellington Park. When I arrived at Roy Garland's home he launched into an attack on McGrath, accusing him of being a "homosexual and a communist"; it was also alleged that these homosexual tendencies were known to Norman Porter a leading Evangelical Protestant who had gone out to Australia. This meeting left me shattered and confused, and the way I responded to it was to influence all the events that came after. I went to McGrath and started to relate what had taken place. He was uncharacteristically curt with me and told me that his

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friendship with Roy Garland was none of my business. McGrath emphatically refused to hear anymore about the episode. I was to go on holiday to my parents home in Scotland, and this I did. I was left in the position that I had previously been accused of being a homosexual and that was untrue. The same accusation had now been made against McGrath, and furthermore, he was said to be a communist. I thought of myself as being well read in political matters and could not discern anyway in which McGrath's activities, as I saw them, advanced the cause of communism. Furthermore, the circumstances of the split with Garland, involving as they did some kind of hiatus in their financial matters, reinforced my view that Garland's accusations were the product of bitterness and malice. I returned from Scotland, and the altercation between McGrath and Roy Garland overshadowed life in Greenwood Avenue for months, their business partnership ended, there was a row in their Orange Lodge and it was split, and eventually Greenwood Avenue was sold, and the McGraths and myself moved to 188 Upper Newtownards Road. I had been teaching since September 1971, and was now planning to get married to a student whom I had met at QUB. Consequently I only stayed in 188 Upper Newtownards Road for a short time. While I was there Frank Millar junior, whom I had met originally through the Young Unionists and Orangeism, became a frequent visitor and often stayed in the house; he later married McGrath's only daughter. I was by now paying £5 a week in rent and busy either with DUP activities or house hunting. In April 1973 I married, and left 188 Upper Newtownards Road. In the meantime McGrath had taken up employment in Kincora Boys Home. I was never made aware of how he obtained this position, and I was informed of his post in an off-hand way some time after he had started to work there. The very fact that McGrath had obtained this post seemed to confirm my notion that Roy Garland's accusations were false. Later McGrath was to say that as a result of Roy Garland's activities, his position in Kincora had been investigated and he had been 'cleared'. No reference whatsoever was made to the other officers in the Home. At some stage prior to my break with the Reverend Paisley and the DUP, one of those employed by the Reverend Paisley's organisation informed me that Miss Valerie Shaw had left the Martyrs Memorial

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Church. The reason I was given was that there had been a theological divergence of opinion between her and the Reverend Paisley. I am now told that Miss Shaw had approached the Reverend Martin Smyth and the Reverend Paisley about McGrath's involvements in Kincora. She never did speak to me directly on the subject nor did the Reverend Paisley. I was aware that the Reverend Paisley disapproved of "TARA" but in the absence of any reasons stated by him, I assumed that this was because he did not want members of the DUP to have divided loyalties. He never directly mentioned McGrath. I was also aware of rumours which claimed that the Northern Ireland Office was involved in some scheme to "blacken" the reputations of Unionist leaders, but in the event the story came to nothing. Then in the Autumn of 1976 a document identified as the "Folio Document" from a reference at the top of the first page, was circulated to a small number of people. It was to be many months before I was to obtain a copy of this document for myself. The Reverend Ian Paisley did claim that he had seen this document and he and the Party officers of the DUP must have surmised that I was in some way linked to this document, through having transmitted confidential DUP business to "TARA". I had no direct access to confidential Party matters at that time, but nevertheless a meeting of the Party officers was convened in Reverend Paisley's house. I was summoned, and in a heavily charged atmosphere, the DUP and I parted company. I would emphasise that the disagreement centred solely around the accusation of a breach of confidence. I subsequently challenged McGrath as to whether he had been directly responsible for the "Folio Document"; he laughed, and said "Don't be ridiculous!" As a result of the row with the DUP, the DUP element in "TARA" withdrew. "TARA" had continued to function in a desultory fashion in rural Ulster after the debacle of 1971; now the movement practically ceased to exist. At no time though had I seen any evidence which linked boys in Kincora Home to "TARA", either by attending meetings or in any other way. I personally visited Kincora briefly on about four occasions to see McGrath on political matters. Twice we talked on the doorstep and on the other occasions I was taken to a small ground floor room behind the television room.

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At no time did I meet any of the boys. Somewhere about the time of my break with the DUP a member of the security forces approached me, and in the course of a conversation about other matters, long since forgotten, pointedly advised me as follows, "Don't trust McGrath, he's a homosexual and a liar". Kincora was never mentioned, but because this member of the security forces didn't elaborate upon the story and just left me with the bald statement, it greatly alarmed me. Unlike my attitude to the Garland episode, I was never able to free myself from this statement and I became suspicious of McGrath's own propensities. The fact that the statement came from a completely impartial source with no axe to grind gave it added weight. As a result I kept a certain distance between myself and McGrath from then on. In due course though, just as on previous occasions, I took the opportunity of confronting McGrath with this statement; he seemed shocked and hurt and complained that the subjects of such statements had no right of reply. In the end though, the very fact that McGrath worked in the Kincora Boys Home weakened my suspicions. This episode brought to an end the period of frenetic political activity which had culminated in my leaving the DUP. In the seven years of my married life, my wife and I have been blessed with two children, and coped with the long illnesses and deaths of my wife's grandmother, mother and father; we have also contested four elections. In the very nature of things, having left 188 Upper Newtownards Road in April 1973, I subsequently visited the McGrath household infrequently, never stayed very long, and usually discussed political matters while there. Many of the events of the late 60's and the mid-70's had receded into the background and nothing occurred to indicate that life in 188 Upper Newtownards Road might be lived on any level other than that which appeared on the surface. As far as Kincora was concerned, it was seldom referred to directly in conversation; it seemed, in fact, a world apart. After the publication of the charges against McGrath in the Belfast Telegraph, I went to see one of those who had attended the private meetings of Orangemen at [REDACTED] -

UDR Captain N. I had not spoken to UDR Captain N [REDACTED] since about 1970 when he had broken with McGrath. UDR Captain N [REDACTED] confirmed that McGrath had discussed my emotional

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hang-ups with him. Suspecting this, years previously I had challenged McGrath as to whether he had spoken to ^{UDR Captain N} [REDACTED]; McGrath denied that any such conversation had taken place. Now, some ten years later I knew that McGrath was well capable of lying to me. I shall deal with the points raised in the document known as "The Focalin File" individually -

- 1 "For a number of years William McGrath lived with Clifford Smith" (sic). The obvious inference in the context of the piece is that McGrath and I had a homosexual relationship. This I emphatically deny. As explained earlier in the statement I lodged with the McGrath family for some time.

 - 2 "Intelligence Officer of TARA". The organisation known as "TARA" was the brainchild of McGrath - in fact it would be true to say that he was the sole motivating force. It was a loosely structured body which based its philosophy on a hypothetical series of circumstances which McGrath was certain would ultimately occur. McGrath envisaged a civil war situation, in which, following a collapse by the forces of law and order in Northern Ireland, the Eire Army would cross the border ostensibly to protect the Roman Catholic minority. "TARA's" role was to provide a "last ditch" defence against the Eire Army in that given set of circumstances. Until this did occur "TARA's" function was to be completely passive and merely to maintain a watching brief on the Eire Army, noting any troop build-up and any purchases of sophisticated equipment. "TARA" had no initiation ceremonies, membership cards, oath-takings or the like. Those who were interested were notified of the irregular meetings of the organisation by McGrath.
- I was known as "intelligence officer", presumably because I have access to a wide range of political journals and other publications and am a keen reader. The phrase "intelligence officer" is misleading because it was my function occasionally to give a political assessment of current events.

(Sgd) Clifford Smyth
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3 "About to be appointed legal adviser to the Northern Ireland Police Authority". I have no legal training, and this statement is manifestly untrue.

4 The following paragraph refers to the pamphlet 'Ulster Assailed' which I wrote in the early 70's.

5 "Smith (sic) has been up to his hard neck with Robinson in the child prostitution racket". My only contact with Peter Robinson was in respect of party matters during my membership of the DUP. I have never spoken to him in any other capacity. I am not and never have been involved in any 'Child Prostitution racket' with Peter Robinson or anyone else.

The 'Sunday World' article is so confused that it is extremely difficult to deal with. The descriptions of those alleged to be involved are written in such a way as to make it difficult for me to determine whether any of them are intended to apply to me. I trust that the earlier statement will cover any points that may arise and I will add that I have not, and am not, being blackmailed by anyone.

SIGNATURE OF STATEMENT MAKER: (Sgd.) Clifford Smyth

STATEMENT OF: Andrew Clifford SMYTH.AGE OF WITNESS (if over 21 enter "over 21"): Over 21OCCUPATION OF WITNESS: TeacherADDRESS: [REDACTED] Belfast. Tel. [REDACTED]

I declare that this statement consisting of 7 pages, each signed by me is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence at a preliminary enquiry or at the trial of any person, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Dated this 27th day of May 19 82G.R. Harrison D/Supt.Clifford SmythSIGNATURE OF MEMBER by whom
statement was recorded or received.

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

I refer to a previous statement made on 5th May 1980. I have been asked by Sussex Police officers about how I first came to know William McGRATH. I think I first met him in 1965. I was a student at that time living in a flat in Belfast. I got to know him through my Orange Lodge connections and through Evangelical meetings which McGRATH figured in. It has been said that I lived with McGRATH for eight years, in fact I lodged at his house for that length of time. He lived in the house with his wife and family. At one time a [REDACTED] KIN 358 and a Miss HANCOCK also lodged at McGRATH's house at Wellington Park. To the best of my recollection I knew McGRATH for fourteen years from 1965 to 1979.

I am able to clarify the situation about rumours that I was a transvestite. It is true that I did have a problem at the time I first met McGRATH and I admitted to him that I was a transvestite. This is a problem that I have overcome many years ago and I am naturally anxious that this information should not be publicised. McGRATH counselled me about this problem and massaged my upper legs and thighs as described in my previous statement. I must make it clear that sexual problems were not the overriding considerations associated with my meeting and subsequent friendship with McGRATH, the main common

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS:

Clifford Smyth

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interests were political and Orange Order matters. The Tara side of our acquaintanceship I have detailed in my previous statement.

I never knew Colin WALLACE. I consider that McGRATH and I were good friends. I had no worries about McGRATH being a homosexual. The transvestite business only was a subject for discussion quite early in our association and once it ceased to be mentioned it was as though a shutter had come down and it was never spoken of again, and I had no other indication that McGRATH might have homosexual tendencies for some years, and indeed although it might appear naive I did not consider his 'treatment' (ie. rubbing my thighs) to be a sexual approach at the time.

In the early 1970s there was a rumour campaign against me, to the effect that I was a homosexual but I had come to the conclusion that anyone in Northern Ireland who was involved in politics had to suffer this type of rumour. I know it was described as 'poison gas'.

I was introduced to Roy GARLAND through McGRATH. In 1971 certainly before the financial wrangling between GARLAND and McGRATH became known, I was asked by GARLAND to see him at his house. I remember the incident very well because it had a tremendous impact on me. GARLAND said to me, "You are a transvestite". I had only ever confided to McGRATH that I had had this difficulty and I knew he must have talked to someone about it. GARLAND then began to denigrate McGRATH, saying he was a homosexual and a Communist. There was no mention of McGRATH being employed at Kincora at this time and as far as I am aware he was not employed there at that time. GARLAND never explained how he knew McGRATH was a homosexual and I never asked him how he knew, but he implied that he knew through talking to people in Evangelical circles. McGRATH was living at Greenwood Avenue at this time and was in the kitchen when I returned. I said to him, "Your friendship

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with Roy GARLAND is not as sound as you think it is". He said, "My friendship with Roy GARLAND is none of your business". His tone of voice made it clear that he did not wish to discuss this further and the subject was dropped.

I then went away on a holiday and upon my return McGRATH and GARLAND were at financial loggerheads. I was encouraged by McGRATH to believe that GARLAND's allegations about McGRATH being a homosexual were made up because of the money difficulties between them. I think that even when considering the incident when McGRATH touched my thighs in conjunction with GARLAND's allegations I was still inclined to afford McGRATH the benefit of the doubt. At this time I had obtained a degree from Queen's University, had obtained a teacher's job and was 'going steady' with my girlfriend. McGRATH sold the house in Greenwood Avenue - he told me that was in order to help repay the money he had to pay GARLAND, and moved to a house at 188 Newtownards Road. He got work at Kincora. I know he used to get up early to begin work at Kincora at 7 am. He did not speak of his work at Kincora and certainly never brought any of the boys to his home as far as I am aware.

I left McGRATH's house when I got married in April 1973. I was very involved politically at this time. I fought four elections of one sort or another and was elected to the Northern Ireland Convention. I used to see McGRATH from time to time and obviously met him at Tara meetings.

The next occasion the subject of McGRATH being a homosexual arose was when a member of the security forces, an officer named Brian GEMMELL, told me in confidence "Don't trust McGRATH, he is a homosexual and a liar". He never mentioned McGRATH's place of employment or Kincora. GEMMELL now works for British Rail I believe. I do not know in what capacity. I do not know in which Army Unit he

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served. After hearing of McGRATH's alleged homosexuality from GEMMELL I eventually saw McGRATH and told him what I had been told. He became very emotional, and was nearly in tears. He said that such rumours were terrible, there was no defence to rumours and slander of this kind. He said the story originated from Roy GARLAND and that GARLAND had tried to take the Kincora job away from him. He said the allegations had been investigated by a Police officer from Strandtown Police Station. I cannot be sure but 'a Police Superintendent' may have been how McGRATH worded it. I have never heard of a Policeman called John GRAHAM. McGRATH used to refer to the man in charge of Kincora (MAINS) as The Chief and spoke of him knowing a Policeman in Strandtown via the Masonic Lodge that MAINS belonged to. He never enlarged on this comment or how it affected McGRATH. I cannot explain what it meant and I don't really understand it. He certainly said it.

After the Kincora story came out in the newspapers in January 1980 McGRATH telephoned me and I went to see him. This would be after a funeral I had attended involving a family bereavement. McGRATH spoke about the reports in the Southern Irish newspapers. He was very worked up and emotional, he was in tears, saying it was a Republican political conspiracy to destroy him. He said that he believed other people might be got at, including his son-in-law Frank MILLER. I still did not believe that McGRATH was a homosexual, because his employment at Kincora was employment in a position of trust, and such employment to my mind was evidence that he wasn't a homosexual because the authorities would not employ a man in a position of trust. When McGRATH was arrested and charged I noted from the dates of the offences detailed in the charges that they coincided with the dates that I had heard McGRATH was a homosexual from GEMMELL.

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I saw UDR Captain N at Easter 1980. I asked him if he had been told by McGRATH that I had been a transvestite.. UDR Captain N said, "Yes". I now knew that McGRATH was a liar because he had denied to me that he had ever revealed my confidence to him to anybody. He agreed that he UDR Captain N had spoken about me with Roy GARLAND. I asked why they did not come to see me about it.. He said they had talked about coming to see me but had never got around to it.

I have been asked if I know of any homosexual involvement between anyone from Kincora, either staff or boys, with any Northern Ireland official, Policeman, businessman, lawyer, J.P. or anyone else. I have no information on this whatsoever and apart from the rumours circulating via the newspapers, have never heard any rumours on this subject.

(signed) Clifford Smyth.

Tuesday 14 June 2016

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Dealing with my sexual brokenness

Clifford Smyth, respected Orange historian and family man, tells of the transvestite compulsions which have made his life a struggle.

PUBLISHED

20/07/2005



SHARE

La Dolce Vita, Federico Fellini's film released in 1960 was to play a crucial role in my life. I was sweet sixteen, living with my parents and sister near the Royal Naval Dockyard at Rosyth on the Firth of Forth. I wasn't academically gifted, muddling through at Dunfermline High School. I was ill at ease with team games; some unspoken dread. I did enjoy fishing trips or swimming with other young people on a Sunday afternoon at the shore base, HMS Caledonia.

There was one strange activity which added to my isolation; I loved putting on make-up and wearing girl's clothes. I knew this was weird, but my hobby gave intense pleasure until, that is, La Dolce Vita, reached the silver screen. A film review in the Scottish Sunday Express did the trick, defining my infantile diversion as something dark and unwholesome.

Illustrating the nihilism of Fellini's masterpiece, the critic described a scene of decadent abandon, in which "transvestites" cavorted about in flouncey skirts. I identified with their enthusiasm, only to realize that I too must be a transvestite.

Though the word had registered, its implications eluded me. I did not know how to respond. Anyway I had no need to dress-up, had I? I could take it or leave it. More than that, years before, I had asked Jesus into my heart, I could pray and He would hear my cry.

Examinations soon imposed other priorities. .

Two years later I was re-establishing my roots in Belfast where I would become a trainee quantity surveyor. I conducted a private funeral before bidding farewell to Rosyth. I purged myself of all that girly stuff. My frillies were consigned to a rusty incinerator. Pink knickers, net petticoats and tiered skirts went up in smoke. "That's, that!"

Weeks later, anxious and alone, finding it more difficult to fit in to adult life than I had anticipated, I went in search of a comfort zone in my landlady's attic. Squeezing into one of her daughter's party frocks purloined from a wardrobe, I panicked as the zip jammed.

This powerful resurgence of my freaky behaviour, persuaded me to attempt some research. What I found in the textbooks was deeply unnerving. Was I doomed? I fell on my knees.

Other compulsive excursions would follow; my prayers went unanswered, yet I never lost hope.

Some years passed and help did arrive.

Now active in the Orange Order, I was introduced in the mid-60s to a fervent Protestant. He jolted my puritan reserve when he disclosed that he was an expert on sex. Trusting, I confessed my frailty. He offered pastoral counselling, but beneath the surface lurked monsters.

In despair I had opened my heart to one of the most dangerous and enigmatic figures of the Ulster conflict. In the near future, he would know that the IRA were coming before they came, pen the 'birth certificate of the UDA', successfully run guns, and meet the criteria for an agent provocateur.

In my determination to exorcise my troubles I had only compounded them.

Many years later I sat in the corner of the Session Room of my Presbyterian Church. I was terrified, and felt that at any moment I would wet myself. I knew what was coming.

Only weeks before one of the Orange Order's Committees had held an irregular meeting in my own home. My personal life was under scrutiny. Having some experience of the way things are done in Ulster, I had taken the precaution of asking my own minister to sit in on that meeting.

My life was under the spotlight because I had provided part of the Christmas entertainment at a large unionist party function in Portadown. While my wife Anne sang and played the accordion, I had recited some of the poems of WF Marshall, and then reappeared dressed as the 1930s film star, Carmen Miranda.

This wasn't the first time I had appeared in drag. Dressing-up as Marlene Dietrich, or Dame Edna Everage had been a route mapped out by my marriage guidance counsellor as we had tried to work out a strategy for managing my transvestism.

Marriage counselling had been yet another attempt to find help. And help was needed because the first person in whom I confided my bizarre behaviour, all those years before, was none other than William McGrath, founder of Tara which served as a catalyst to loyalist paramilitarism.

McGrath had been exposed as a notorious sexual predator. I found myself embroiled in the Kincora sex scandal. Interviewed by the RUC, and the Intelligence Services, and warned of the likelihood of my personal life being exposed to public gaze at some

impending inquiry, I had at last taken Anne's advice and sought help.

I was extremely candid with my Orange brethren, but in my heart I knew they were on a witchhunt. By this stage I had learned how to read the signs.

In November 1976 I had been called to a meeting in Ian Paisley's Parsonage where I would be accused of passing on information to Merlyn Rees's office at Stormont and of having compiled a document which made scandalous allegations about leading loyalist politicians. Ian Paisley was irate and the whole atmosphere was deeply hostile. Nothing had prepared me for this. I didn't know what was going on. I was mystified but some of the information that I was aware of, had come from the lips of Ian Paisley's paid employees. I felt there was little alternative but to take whatever was coming to me however unfair the situation might be.

I offered to resign from the DUP only to realise that this had been the undeclared aim of the meeting all along!

My wife Anne was outraged at my decision, prevailing upon me to put up some kind of fight in my own defence. Letters were exchanged with Ian Paisley, but they made no difference, I was out on my ear.

I was determined not to give up my commitment to unionist politics despite having been thrown out of the DUP. A year later I would begin doctoral research into the very party that had exiled me.

Life moved on, and in due course I became chairman of a pressure group which argued that the British Labour party was morally obliged to field candidates for elections in Northern Ireland. When the Campaign for Equal Citizenship as it was called, attempted to stage-manage my removal, I had learned enough to know I could sit the meeting out.

Numbers shrank as the night wore on. The next evening a small delegation arrived at my home and asked for my resignation. I still hadn't a clue as to what I had done to upset them; but accepted the inevitable.

The imminent Session Room inquisition fitted this pattern.

I had pleaded with my minister, but to no avail. He answered that, according to the code of the Presbyterian Church he was entitled to tell the Kirk Session of my sin. I knew I could take to my heels and run - instead I followed him into the crowded meeting

I threw myself on God's mercy as the minister spoke, and suddenly a wonderful peace enveloped me. When the minister had finished his denunciation of my sexual brokenness before all the elders present, I was given the strength to speak.

This is what I said:

"I confess before you all that I am a failed human being. There is not a single man in this room who would volunteer to be in the situation in which I find myself. Others in my circumstances have committed suicide, become alcoholics or suffered marriage

breakdown.

"I have a wonderful wife and I love her very dearly. I have four children whom I love very much. I thank God for all he has done in my life, and I praise his holy name. And now, if you don't mind, I ask permission to leave the room."

I left in tears. I would cry non-stop for three days and nights, much as my wife Anne tried to comfort me.

Anne reacted vehemently, which I found strangely comforting. Anne said she would never darken another church again, while I was more hopeful. Time passed and we found a charismatic fellowship which specialised in taking in waifs and strays.

In due course I became involved in a work of healing in Belfast originally pioneered by the Charismatic Vineyard Ministries in the United States. The Bible-based course reached out to Christians struggling with issues associated with sexual brokenness.

There God met me, and I was delivered from transvestism. My masculine-self had finally been asserted. From now on everything would be plain sailing . . . or so I thought.

For tragedy on a scale I could not have imagined was to shatter my life.

And, as I will explain tomorrow, in my grief and pain, the compulsion to put on make-up and dress in women's clothes would suddenly re-assert itself.

From the web

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Dragged back by grief

The second part of Clifford Smyth's candid, moving account of his life-long struggle with transvestism.

PUBLISHED

21/07/2005



SHARE

My past life laid its hands on me shortly after my mother's unexpected death. My mother had enjoyed rude good health for years but she collapsed one evening and, overnight, succumbed to a massive stroke.

My past life laid its hands on me shortly after my mother's unexpected death. My mother had enjoyed rude good health for years but she collapsed one evening and, overnight, succumbed to a massive stroke.

Transvestism had played no part in my life for over 10 years but, after my mother's death, the compulsion to put on make-up and dress in women's clothes suddenly re-asserted itself. I felt weak and powerless and the need was pressing.

Fear and shock overwhelmed me. For years I had comforted myself in the knowledge that, after so much struggle and pain, the Lord had delivered me. Now my transvestite urgencies had taken on a new life. What was to become of me, I wondered.

Years earlier, my wife Anne had prevailed on me to go to the marriage guidance council, as it then was, about my "problem."

Eighteen months with the marriage guidance counsellor had been an important stage on the road to recovery, though her "solution" took me aback. I ended up touring senior citizens' groups, and appearing in concert parties with a bevy of crazy women - Carmen Miranda, Edna Everage, Marlene Dietrich and Shirley Temple all at my beck and call. My amateur drag act enabled me to exercise a measure of control over my compulsive needs.

This was a high risk strategy that eventually led to my downfall when my minister of religion publicly denounced and humiliated me.

The dust had no sooner settled than I found myself attending a healing ministry for the 'sexually broken' and, during one of their sessions of prayer, confession and healing, I was liberated from the power of transvestism over my life.

I interpreted this remarkable change as God's 'deliverance'. I left my transvestite ways behind and moved on, though the cause or causes of my former affliction remained unknown to me. There had been a hint of an episode of sexual abuse when I had found myself the plaything of much older boys in the 'big school', but that clue hadn't been followed up.

The marriage guidance counsellor, had remained on the friendliest of terms ever after, although we didn't see much of each other. Then our paths crossed for the first time in ages just weeks after my mother's death. As we chatted across shopping trolleys, she asked: "And how are you?"

I didn't hold back, and she got my whole sorry tale of woe.

"That's not to be unexpected, Clifford," she said.

Disaster struck a second time but on a scale unimagined.

Just when I had purged myself of the dressing-up kit and had hoped for calmer waters, we received the dreadful news that my youngest child had been involved in a fearsome car crash while back-packing in Australia. Gripped by incomprehension - a mixture of disbelief at what was happening and denial - I flew out to Melbourne with my eldest son.

Later, I would realise that Almighty God had taken us all the way to Australia, to say goodbye because, three days after we touched down, Martin, who had never regained consciousness, died of his brain injuries.

I was heartbroken and devastated. Weeks passed and, like some untameable torrent, the flow of grief changed course. Once again, the compulsion sprang up, and old, long forgotten patterns of behaviour reasserted themselves.

I was at a loss. Losing Martin was horrendous, but why this?

On our return to Belfast, we had certain procedures to go through, required by the authorities in Victoria. We had to produce psychiatric reports on our family's trauma. This gave me the opportunity to raise my predicament with the psychiatrist preparing my medical report for the accident tribunal. The doctor explained that, from what little he knew of my past, the transvestite reaction would not have been unexpected. Now the psychiatrist was saying the same thing as my former marriage guidance counsellor.

As far as I was concerned though, this unwelcome development was almost entirely

unexpected; I say "almost" because, during the 10 years when I had been 'delivered', there had been the occasional disturbing thought that, when my mother died, I might regress.

Nothing, though, had prepared me for the actual horror of the events that engulfed me. I had no idea how to cope. I prayed and I trusted and I confided in friends. I also went to a self-help group for transvestites, but that was depressing.

I had thrown out much of my wardrobe in an effort to keep a grip on myself, but I knew from all the literature that I had read, that 'purging' was actually part of the pattern of transvestite behaviour, which only reinforced my fears of where all this was heading.

My father had survived my mother's death and, having lost his daughter to breast cancer years before, he comforted me in the death of my Martin.

I got to know my father in a way that I had never known him before. This moment, though, was short-lived. Suddenly, he went into, what would have been called in the past, a decline, and I lost him, too.

Before his death, he had been moved into a nursing home, an event which triggered all kinds of unhelpful memories in my mind about family relationships in the past.

My transvestism frothed up with a revitalised urgency. My wife, Anne, already having to cope with Martin's death, seemed remote; how could I burden her with my frailties? She knew the past had caught up with me, because I needed to be honest with her, but there seemed little point in troubling her with the extent of my difficulties or their frantic intensity. My explorations of my feminine self took place elsewhere.

Anne and I went on holiday to Sardinia, and we enjoyed the break intensely, but Martin's death was never far from my mind, as if he stood on the edge of my conscious thoughts, ready to burst in.

When we returned home, I went rapidly downhill. Suddenly, the deaths of my mother, Martin, and Dad all came together in one big 'thing'. I couldn't even define the 'thing' - blackness of an impenetrable kind, just blackness.

I knew I was unravelling like an old woolly jumper, all loose threads, shapeless, and not much else. I hadn't lost faith in Almighty God. Despite every disaster, I knew the Father's love, but why, why, why? And especially, why was I vexed with the compulsion to be a weirdo?

We went for a long walk along the tow-path between those little villages in the heart of Ulster, Scarva and Pontzpass.

The rain was unceasing but my companion was the ideal Presbyterian minister, non-judgemental, compassionate and wise with another world's wisdom, not like the minister I had encountered many years previously, who hurled me out of his church when he encountered my deviant behaviour; no help there.

My companion on the walk advised me to go for counselling to a personal friend of his, an expert on post-traumatic stress syndrome.

Despite previous encounters with counsellors, of whom some were charlatans, I recognized that I was desperate and that my brother in Christ would steer me in the right direction.

And so it came about that, over a number of months, I journeyed back into the past, through the pain and grief of Martin's loss, encountering two episodes of sexual abuse, one after I left school when I first confessed my transvestite shame to William McGrath, who would later be jailed for predatory sex at Kincora Boys' Home, and the other at the 'big school'.

We went even further back, deep into the past, through the earliest episodes of dressing-up in frocks, to confront a sense of deepest abandonment in early childhood.

Carlos Ruiz Zafon, in his novel *The Shadow of the Wind*, remarks: "One of the pitfalls of childhood is that one doesn't have to understand something to feel it. By the time the mind is able to comprehend what has happened, the wounds of the heart are already too deep."

Bereavement was reinforcing that deep-seated sense of abandonment and, though a grown man, I was reacting in ways that had comforted me as a child, dressing-up. There were many complexities, but there was a narrative that made some kind of sense.

Now I have a much greater understanding of the origins of my pain and my need to cross-dress, and why death reignited that deep sense of loss and abandonment, and the desire to find a place of safety - infantile and narcissistic though it might be.

I have also discovered that, even though you may come to a much more profound understanding of why you behave in irrational ways, that doesn't mean that those patterns of behaviour go away.

"I don't keep an eye on you, you know," Anne confided on one of those days recently when I felt particularly bruised and forlorn, her understated loving remark displayed understanding and comfort.

Faith and hope have equipped me to be a survivor, to remain optimistic and not give way to suicidal thoughts or take to 'drink'; faith and hope are good companions with

which to face the future.

From the web

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Orange TV pundit in drag!

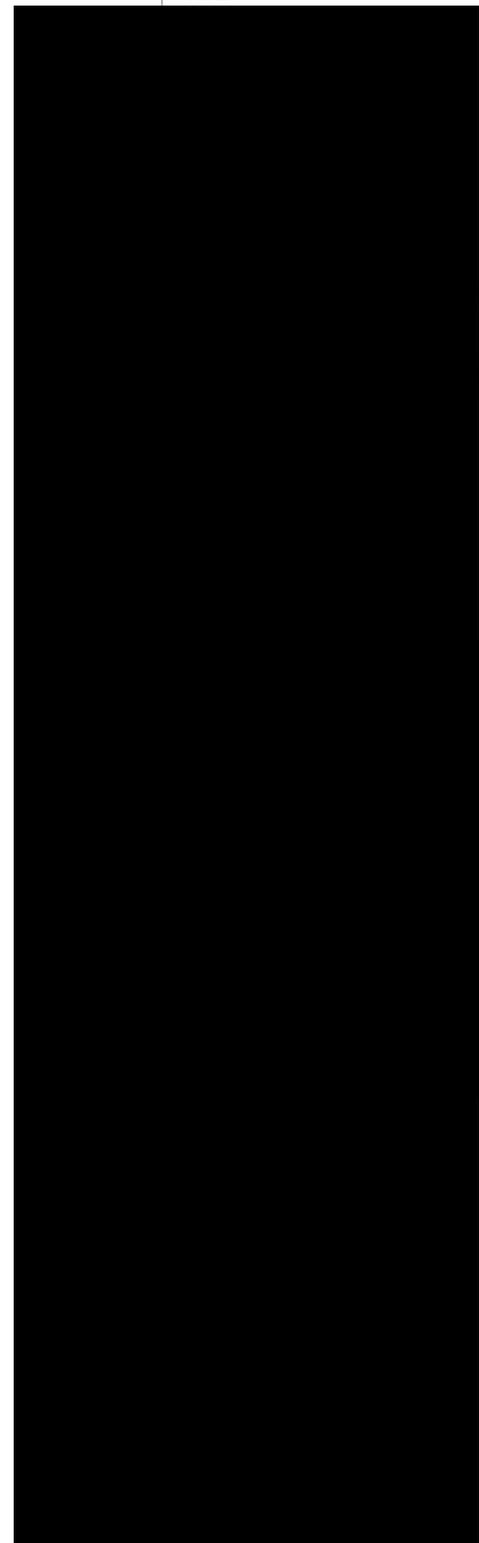
By Stephen Breen

PUBLISHED
24/07/2005

SHARE



THIS is leading Orange historian Dr Clifford Smyth dressed as a woman.



THIS is leading Orange historian Dr Clifford Smyth dressed as a woman.

Last week, the well known unionist commentator wrote frankly and movingly about how he fought his transvestite compulsions.

And today, with his consent, Sunday Life publishes an exclusive picture of Dr Smyth from his days as a drag queen - the first time he has appeared dressed as a woman in a newspaper.

Our photo of Dr Smyth as 'Deirdre Blanchflower' was taken at a charity Christmas function in Belfast, in 1993.

It is a part of the historian's life, which he spoke about for the first time in the Belfast Telegraph last week.

In a candid series of articles for the newspaper, the ex-DUP man told how he had struggled against the urge to dress up in women's clothes, his bid to seek help and his resignation from the Orange Order.

Speaking to Sunday Life last night, Dr Smyth said he had received great support since the publication of his revelations.

"I have been very embarrassed because people keep telling me how brave I was to speak candidly about the transvestite compulsions, which have been a big part of my life.

"My family and friends have been right behind me and I can't thank them enough because we are still coping with the grief of losing my son Martin, in an horrific car crash in Australia," he said.

"Many people who have contacted me believe my honesty can help other men in Northern Ireland, who find themselves in the same position as me.

"I also received a letter from an academic in Manchester who thanked me for confronting the super macho and aggressive subculture in this society. He believed my openness would be shocking to many, but would also encourage people who battle with the issues that I have dealt with to confront them through the grace of God."

But Dr Smyth, who is a key contributor to the BBC's annual Twelfth coverage, also told how he had received one concerned call this week.

He added: "I received a call from a friend this week who is very protective of me.

"Although they appreciated my honesty, they believed my revelations could have been used by enemies against me.

"I don't know if I have enemies but I think he was talking about the IRA, who know all about me because of my views on Orangeism."

The historian went on to say how he was warned by police in 2003 that the Provos had targeted him.

"My wife and I had only just got home from Australia when the police visited me to warn me that my name was on a IRA intelligence gathering list, which they discovered in Belfast," he said.

"The information the Provos had was that I had relatives in the RUC and watched TV

wearing a dress and smoking a pipe.

"I may have wore a dress in my time, but I did not smoke a pipe.

"After a while my family joked about the threat and said that I would be bottom of the IRA's hit-list.

"I took some precautions but what else could I do. I still had my faith."

Dr Smyth also spoke to us about his time in drag, adding: "I did this for charity and there was an amusing side to it. I remember getting stopped at an RUC checkpoint and the young police officer waving me on.

"For all he knew I could have been a terrorist, dressed as a woman!"

"I also remember losing my bag with my clothes in it at a hospital function, and having to sit in a canteen packed with people."

sbreen@belfasttelegraph.co.uk

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