



516 Ravenhill Road,  
Belfast, BT6 0BW

Tel: 028 9069 0600

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For the attention of,

**HIA 146**




Date, 19 December 2012

Dear **HIA 146**

I received your request asking for a copy of your record's that the Sisters of Nazareth hold on you when you where a resident in St Joseph's Home Termonbacca. Many thanks for sending me a copy of you photographic identification which confirms your identity.

The following information was taken from St Joseph's Termonbacca records and can be broken down as follows.

Taken from St Joseph's Termonbacca database. Date of Birth, 

Date of Admission, 21/03/1956.

Date of Discharge, 05/07/1965

Age of Discharge, 14

HIA 146

Taken by mother who has a home in [REDACTED] Derry.

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1972; HIA 146 got married

(No date given) HIA 146 has two children and seems very happy he called in here last year.

Taken from the Sacramental Register for St Joseph's Home, Termonbacca

1<sup>st</sup> Confession; 4<sup>th</sup> June 1958

1<sup>st</sup> Holy Communion, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1958

Confirmation, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1960

Church, St Eugene's, Derry

Admission Slips; Reg no's 500-720

Information recorded is as follows;

Reg no. 671

Father's Name, [REDACTED]

Mother's maiden name, [REDACTED]

Occupation of parent, [REDACTED]

Present Address; [REDACTED]

Reason for admission to home; Father drinking and mother in hospital

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HIA REF: 146

Witness Name **HIA 146**

## THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF **HIA 146****HIA 146** will say as follows:-Personal Details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] in Ballykelly. I remember a three bedroom house and there was a river in front of us and there were woods all around. I remember walks in the woods with my father and my mother.
2. I remember some traumatic incident happened around the house at the time my brother **HIA 151** was born in 1952. I don't remember much about that but I seem to remember an incident with paper and an open fire and **HIA 151** received a severe facial burn. I remember I was helping my mother in the kitchen. That is the last thing I remember about Ballykelly and the next thing I recall was a black car and a long journey to a massive building and being taken by nuns up flights of stairs. I know now I was being taken to the nursery at Termonbacca. I don't remember my father or mother being ill. They told me this was where I was going to stay for a while. I was brought in to a room full of beds and cots. I was shown the hanger where my clothes would go and as I couldn't read or write then you were given a symbol and my symbol was an aeroplane. I think that is ironic looking back because my father was in the air force so it would be easy to remember. I remember certain smells but I don't remember much more about that time.

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St Joseph's Children's Home, Termonbacca (21/03/1956 – 05/07/1965)

3. I was four and a half years old when I was placed in care in Termonbacca on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 1956.
4. I was physically and mentally abused there but never sexually abused. I did not witness any sexual abuse of others taking place in the home. I felt constant fear of the older boys in the home so I kept my head down and kept a low profile and tried to avoid situations where I would be vulnerable because I was always terrified. I experienced beatings and saw others being beaten in the home. You often got a beating for no good reason. We were just children and the only way they taught you a lesson was to give you a good hiding. The senior boys beat you as well as some of the nuns. I can only recall **SND 222** now as an older boy who terrified and abused me and Sister **SR 1** as the nun who beat me, although not frequently. Sister **SR 2** was a young nun in the home at the time but she was alright. I can no longer remember the names of the other nuns or older boys. When the nuns were not around the older boys would abuse their privileges.
5. I don't remember my brother **SND 235** being there. I knew my younger brother **HIA 151** was in the home but I didn't know I had a sister. I found out when I was eleven that my sister **SND 95** was in care at Nazareth House, Bishop Street from when she was only a young baby. I don't remember much more about being in the nursery part of the home. I remember having a birthday party just once when I was a child. I don't know what age they moved you over from the nursery part to the junior part, it could have been seven or eight but that was a completely different story. You were in a dormitory but I don't know how many other people were in the room. I remember older boys being in charge when the nuns were not around.
6. Our routine was to get up in the morning and get breakfast in the refectory and that was when the beatings started. You got beaten if you did something wrong or not quite right or if you were not on time. You had to learn to make



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your bed and you would be beaten if it was not made properly and all the clothes would be pulled off and you had to make it properly. I don't know what age you were moved to the senior part but I remember I went over to the senior part before my brother **HIA 151**. My younger brother **SND 235** was still in the nursery at this time. When I was in the senior dormitory I never met my younger brothers until I was more or less leaving the home. I didn't even know that **SND 235** was in the nursery. **HIA 151** was maybe a year and a half younger than me and we were separated and you weren't allowed to go down to the nursery as it was all locked off from everybody else so you couldn't get access to that area. I never asked about my brothers as you were not encouraged to meet up with your siblings. I do not know why the nuns discouraged this interaction between siblings but it meant that I did not get to know my brothers and sister properly until years after we had left care.

7. I went to primary school at Nazareth House in Bishop Street. I think from seven you go to another school called Bridge Street Primary School. I remember you had to walk to school from Termonbacca along the Lonemore Road. It was horrible because you often got laughed at probably because we were walking in single file and we were all dressed the same and everyone knew we were from Termonbacca so we were "home boys". That name was shouted at us constantly all the way up to Bridge Street School. It is no longer there but that was a school of hard knocks because you had people from the Creggan, the Bogside and us, the homeboys. The homeboys stood out because we were being picked on probably due to the way we were dressed. There were raggedy boys from the Creggan and Bogside and there was some fighting and tussling in the school play area. I got to know some of these boys and I started to let them know that it was not my fault that I was in the home. Some of them understood but a lot of them had a misconception that you must have done something wrong to be in a home. Their parents had told them if they were not good they would end up in a home so even at that young age I was trying to tell them that I didn't do anything wrong and did not know why I was in a home.

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8. One of the teacher **SND 236** kept everyone in line because he always had a cane on his desk. If you got a question wrong he would say you were not listening and you would get hit but he was the same with everyone. You got so used to being hit that it stopped having any effect. I recall one teacher, [REDACTED], who had children of her own at Bridge Street school. I also remember [REDACTED] who was very old with long hair and she used to get the boys to brush it. I used to enjoy doing that because she was a lovely person, she treated all the boys like her own children which was pretty rare. I ended up in a class with [REDACTED] and although she was very strict she was fair. You had to learn the catechism in preparation for your First Communion. Every now and again you were tested on the catechism and if you got it wrong [REDACTED] would give you six of the best with a ruler or it was two rulers taped together most of the time and if you didn't take it in the hands you would have got it in the legs which wasn't good when you were wearing short trousers.
9. I was about thirteen or fourteen when I moved to the senior dormitory. Once you moved into the senior dormitory it was older boys that sort of took over. There was one boy called **SND 222** who was a thug and brutal to everyone, he is now deceased. He just loved hurting people, mostly for no reason. He would hit you with the nearest thing. We were playing a game once with a tennis racket and you had to run and chase the ball but when he hit the ball it went into another field. When I came back and said I couldn't find the ball he gave me a whack right across the head and injured my head. I still have a scar on my head from this incident. He made me go back down the field with the blood pouring out of me to look for the ball and when I returned without it again he pushed me into a barb wire fence taking the skin off my arm and I still have a scar due to this incident. I was not taken to hospital and did not receive any medical treatment for this injury. There was no such thing as being sent for stitches **SR 1** knew I had been injured and that the wound had become infected and she treated it with iodine and a poultice.



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10. I remember one time we were playing cowboys and Indians and some of these older boys would be Indians. One of them made a spherical object and chased us with it and a nail from this object went into the back of my leg leaving a scar that looks like a bullet hole. It went through my wellington boot and in to my leg and they just pulled it out and again I was not sent to hospital. **SR 1** again treated me with iodine for this injury. I never saw a doctor throughout my time in the home except maybe for a cursory examination probably required by the government at the time.
11. I never saw a welfare officer during my time in care. No-one from the outside world came round to ask you how you were and you were always told to shut your mouth when visitors came to the home. Occasionally you would get visitors coming in from St Vincent de Paul to say hello to the children or to bring sweets but on occasions such as the **SR 1** or one of the other nuns would warn us to keep our mouths shut.
12. Bedtime was a difficult time as you were often beaten to sleep by the older boys then they would come round and beat you to see if you were sleeping. You would pull the covers over you so they wouldn't know if you were sleeping or not and if they hit you, you had to pretend that you were asleep and you didn't feel it. The older boys did this. I would estimate there would have been about sixty people in the senior dormitory. You had someone wandering around with a stick to put you to sleep. There was a nun's cell in the dormitory and she could have opened the curtains at any time to see what was going on. She was right next door and she could hear all this going on but the nuns never intervened. If there was anything happening during the night they just ignored it and let the older boys take over.
13. Mornings were interesting because there were boys called "pee the beds". These boys were probably like myself and felt terrified. I never wet the bed, I was too terrified of the consequences. These boys would be singled out in the morning and at times they were put outside and made to dry out the sheets. They had to walk through everybody which must have been embarrassing.

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14. I recall the nuns putting Jeyes fluid in the bath on bath days and we were lined up then scrubbed with deck scrubbers and we were always told by Sister

**SR 1**

that we were dirty sinners.

15. I tried not to make friends in the home because if you made friends you made enemies so I kept myself to myself. I started to get involved in the choir and then I was told I had to be an altar boy. It meant being away from the rest of the group and I felt safer being away from them because I wasn't going to get beaten for some stupid reason. I felt sort of privileged to be out of the way and it was another way to keep your head down. I was left alone because apart from being an altar boy I had a sort of place of trust where the nuns would send me to do messages like taking envelopes to various places like the bank or to the stores. It was probably paying off bills. You got small privileges like a nicer breakfast than the rest of the boys, you might get a bit of fruit or whatever the priest was having. The priests were well fed.

16. I was constantly hungry. You didn't have a choice in relation to food, whatever was on the menu you had to eat and if you didn't like it you starved. Sometimes when you were serving mass for the priests and the nuns you were up at 4.30am. There were two priests who weren't all that nice to me. One was called **SND 32** I don't know if he is still alive. The other was called **SND 223** who was vicious to say the least and physically abusive. If I didn't respond properly in Latin or forgot to ring the bell Father **SND 223** would hit me across the face. He hit me once for not giving enough wine in the chalice. I put too much water in the next time so I got slapped again. I had to carry a heavy bible and brass stand and I dropped it once so I got punched by **SND 223** in my side on that occasion. I still felt as if being an altar boy was an escape for me.

17. Everybody took their turns at different chores in the laundry, others worked on the farm and when it came to harvest time we were all sent up to the fields to pick potatoes and stack corn. I remember picking potatoes for another farmer

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and I don't think we ever got paid for our hard work. We were just hired out to this farmer.

18. I think my mother turned up once to take us out for the day and then she took us down to Nazareth House and that was the first time I knew I had a sister. I think my father was there as well. I only remember seeing him once when we were at Nazareth House on that visit to my sister. I did not see him again until after I was married. I did not see my mother for maybe another couple of years. I couldn't ask anyone about her whereabouts as they wouldn't tell me anything anyway.

19. I remember at one stage there was a lot of talk going on about whether or not anybody wanted to go to Australia. They said it was on the other side of the world and it was sunny and beautiful. That sounds interesting when you are a child. A couple of boys signed up to go away, I cannot recall their names but I am pretty sure at that time some of them boys just disappeared. They could have gone to other places or they could have been moved on or adopted, I don't know. They would have been older boys, maybe fifteen or sixteen. I was about ten at that stage. Those residents with parents seemed to be excluded from the discussions regarding Australia and they appeared to be targeting the orphans in the home.

20. I heard that **SND 223** and **SND 32** worked in the college. They used to come up to Termonbacca to say mass. The 11+ exam was coming up at school and if you passed it you could go to college. I deliberately failed my 11+ as I didn't want to go to college if they were there after the way they had treated me. Also I had heard that much about the St Peter's Christian Brothers School, about the beatings that went on there as well and I thought I don't want to leave one place to go to another place and get the same poor treatment. In the end I went to St Joseph's Secondary School which was a brilliant school. I thought it was the best years of my life.



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21. I started St Joseph's in 1960 when the school first opened. It was a new secondary school and an alternative to the college but children were receiving the same kind of education. I was happy in that school. The Headmaster, Mr **SND 180** was fine. The Vice Principal **SND 73** would slap you for almost any reason. One of his biggest hates was coming into school late. They were strict at Termonbacca about doing things on time. They saw beating you as another way of instilling discipline in you. I thought that if I went to a new school I would be alright but I received beatings there as well. I got to school three minutes late once when there was very heavy snowfall and I still got six of the best for being late. It did not help me in later life as I am still never on time and deliberately so as I hate being told to be anywhere at a certain time.

22. At school you would get beaten up by the boys from the Creggan if you walked through their area. You got beaten up by the bullies at school but every class had a bully and that was normal. I did not stand up to the bullies at first as I was used to being hit but when I did stand up for myself eventually the bullying ended. I left school at fifteen.

23. Just before I left the home I had made friends with one boy **SND 157**. He had come from a very deprived part of **[REDACTED]** and he had a heavy **[REDACTED]** accent which made him an immediate target for the bullies. He was the only friend I made before I left.

24. At that time my mother had returned to live with my aunt in the Creggan. I think she had stayed away in Belfast for years. Once a month or so they would take us to my aunt's house for tea and a chat. I used to go round at lunchtime from the school to my aunt's house which was only 500 yards away. I used to see my cousins and it was the first sense of family that I had because they were all fussing over me telling me I looked like so and so and that was a nice feeling. My mother was living there as she didn't have a house of her own. This was in the early 1960's.



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Life after care

25. I think my father was a Sergeant in the RAF and an alcoholic and he had gone to England and my mother struggled to get somewhere to live as she was a single mother. Then we heard that my mother had finally found somewhere to live. I think she was helped by some of the local councillors. I recall Brendan Duddy as one of the people who helped to sort her out with accommodation. She got a three bedroom flat in the Creggan. Then we heard that we were getting out of Termonbacca. I left Termonbacca on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 1965 when I was fourteen.

26. My friend **SND 157** also got out of the home around this time and I used to visit him in the Bogside. The housing conditions he was living in were absolutely atrocious. I remember an outside toilet, a cold tap outside, one room and one ring to cook on. People in this part of the Bogside lived in damp conditions and I don't know how they survived. I thought I was lucky, I felt privileged. My brothers and sisters felt like total strangers to me and my mother was a hard taskmaster. She would have hit you with a brush without hesitation but that is probably the way she was brought up. My mother was never affectionate. I never heard her once say "I love you" or praise you for anything. My grandfather ended up living with us. He used to tell me some fantastic stories and that was the only sense of family I really had. I was close to my cousins, the ones that I called over to see from school and I am still close to them today. They are like my family. My cousin **[REDACTED]** was like my sister because I didn't see my sister all the time she was growing up. When she finally did come out of the home we never got close. She ran away when she was sixteen to Belfast and I never saw her for years. I went up to see her once in Belfast years later but we were never close. She is now deceased. My brother **HIA 151** tried about twenty years ago to get us all together but certain family members did not want to meet up or face any of the painful memories or whatever traumatic things they had in their heads. He also tried to get a group of ex residents together but a lot of ex home boys do not want to be involved or have died through alcohol abuse or suicide.

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27. When we moved back in with my mother there was no welfare support and no-one in social services that you could go to. A lot of the boys were just dumped out of Termonbacca at a young age with no-one to go to and at eighteen you were out on your own. We had no job skills and no social skills. I didn't know how to talk to girls.

28. I tried to better myself. I knew I had only been average at school and my maths was poor so I went to a technical college and did technical drawing which I enjoyed. I was determined not to get stuck in a factory job. I wanted to be a joiner so I got on a government training scheme and it was great. I worked my way up. I learned a lot of other skills like people skills and I learned how to be more confident talking to people. I worked as a joiner until retirement.

29. I have only very basic information from my time in care as I could gather very little paperwork about my past. I went back to Termonbacca to request my paperwork from the nuns but they said they did not keep records there and only gave me very basic information in a very crude form giving only admission and departure dates. There is one comment noted on my papers and when I read it I thought perhaps they were trying to justify themselves. In my view it does not tell the whole story. They have noted a comment at the end that I came back to see them. I remember going back to see a Sister **SR 2** because I think she called to my house once when I had just got married. At that time the nuns used to do collections around doors and visit people in the community. I just happened to recognise **SR 2**. She was okay to me actually and I heard she was going to Africa so I did call down and see her.

30. When I came out of Termonbacca I kept in contact with my cousins and tried to find my wider family and I met other cousins. I still kept in contact with my friend from **[REDACTED]**

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31. I got married and had three children. I got on fine with my daughters but my son had ADHD so it was difficult dealing with the relevant authorities to ensure he got the proper education. My marriage became strained after about seven or eight years but I was determined to make the marriage work and not walk away like my father had done years ago. I stayed with my wife for twenty five years and I raised my children until my last child turned eighteen and then my wife and I separated. I tried to keep in contact with the children but she turned them against me. I went to Gweedore in County Donegal for a year. I see my children now and again and they are friendly enough now that they realise and accept the situation between myself and my wife.

Statement of Truth

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

Sig

**HIA 146**

Dated

30-10-2013