

HIA REF:

Witness Name: SR 52

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF SR 52

1. I, SR 52, will say as follows –
2. This statement is provided by me in response to a request from the Inquiry and in response to the various complaints and allegations set out with that request.

Personal Background

3. I was born SR 52 in [REDACTED] was the second youngest of [REDACTED] siblings.
4. After secondary school I went into teacher training in [REDACTED] between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I was sent to Nazareth House, Bishop Street, Derry in [REDACTED] following my teacher training and was responsible for Reception and Primary 1 children. I also did a part-time course for my advanced certificate in nursery education at [REDACTED] I cannot recall the exact dates for that but it was in the early [REDACTED]

Time in Derry Generally

5. I spent two periods in Derry between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (but during this time I spent one year in Belfast on a Teacher Training course. This was a course you could only do after 5 years of teaching. This was around [REDACTED]) and a second period from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I appreciate the second period is not relevant to this inquiry as it is outside the period of their investigations and also because there were no children in Nazareth House during that period.

6. As I have said my first teacher posting was to the primary school in Derry and I was teaching the youngest children there. My normal duties were those of a teacher and I would have spent my days in the classroom. I worked as a teacher with Reception and Primary 1 children from [REDACTED] until [REDACTED] these were 4-5 year old children and we had classes of about 40. At the time the large class sizes meant some schools split the classes into morning and afternoon classes but as we had to manage the schooling and the residential care of the children it was not possible to split them in this way. I left Derry in [REDACTED] until I returned as [REDACTED]
7. In addition to my teaching duties I would also be required to help the sisters in the residential home with the children. That assistance would be of a supervisory nature in the morning helping get the children their breakfast and then out to their various schools. In the evening I would assist with extra-curricular activities and home work. The sister in charge of each group would have been the main sister and she would have co-ordinated things and I would be there to help out. At no time did I work in Fahan Nursery nor did I work in St Joseph's Children's Home, Termonbacca.
8. I would have helped out after school by walking the Termonbacca boys up to the bus stop at Abercorn Road to get the bus back. The buses refused to come closer to the school because of a fear of being hijacked. I recall an incident when I was approached by a man telling me to move the children so that they could get a line of sight to fire on the army. I told them to go away as the children needed to go home and they needed to get the bus. The man left and there was no shooting anywhere near the children.
9. My memory of the children generally is that they came from a number of different backgrounds. Some were orphans, some came from families who could not, for many reasons, cope and provide for them. Some came from the nursery in Fahan, others from the nursery in Bishop Street and others came from their families who for many reasons could not care for them.
10. I do not recall any incidents of a child being abused. I recall [REDACTED] SR 9 who was responsible for discipline in the home and also in the school. She was very strict but was also fair. The usual punishments I recall are of being refused an activity like music or dancing or of pocket money being withheld. I never remember any occasion when a child left [REDACTED] SR 9 office and ever said they had been slapped or beaten. They were upset if they had been punished and some may have felt it was unfair because they did not think they were to blame but none ever said they had been slapped or beaten.

HIA 90

11. I have seen the statement provided by [REDACTED] HIA 90 and there are some simple inaccuracies in this statement. She refers to being sent downstairs from the nursery to the junior dormitory. The dormitory was upstairs from the nursery unit until the 1970s when the unit was converted into smaller family units. I do recall [REDACTED] SND 50 and I

remember [SND 51] [SND 51] attended the Mass for the closing of the house on Bishop Street in a wheelchair.

12. She says that she recalls going to Mass every day. That would not have been normal practice for the children. They would have gone to Mass on a Sunday and on Holy days but not every day. During Lenten season they may have been encouraged to go to Mass but they were not made to go.
13. She says that she had no contact with her sisters until the age of four. My recollection is that her sister [SND 288] worked in the nursery unit and would have seen her on an almost daily basis. I recall [SND 288]s being small in stature but she was in her [redacted] when she was working in the nursery unit.
14. I was not involved in making arrangements for children to be placed with families during any holidays. My recollection is that the children stayed in Nazareth House during the Christmas break and did not go to families. I remember the House at Christmas and the children going to the pantomime. I also recall visits from the Bishop and the children putting on a show for him. They would have performed music and dances they had been learning during the year. This is why I do not think the children went out to families over the Christmas break. I do not know what arrangement she is referring to about going to Mass early with two members of the host family. At that time it would have been usual for a whole family to go to Mass together so if that is not what happened I do not know why. [redacted] I been told I would have reported this to the Superior. I was never aware of any sexual or sexualised behaviour within the home, between peers or outside the home concerning our children. The recent revelations are the first I have seen of this type of behaviour.
15. If any child had returned early from a placement there would have been questions asked about why the child had returned. If they had been unhappy we would have tried to find out why.
16. I do not accept that this girl missed school because she was potty training the younger children. I recall the wife of our maintenance man taking the younger children to her home during the day and she would have done that.
17. I am surprised that [HIA 90] feels the nuns stopped her from doing a Child Care course. Career advice would have been within the remit of the school and not the sisters. I certainly do not recall ever being asked for my view on this course and I had no part in deciding on the future career of [HIA 90]. I do recall that she, among other children, changed schools as a result of the rioting and troubles in the Bogside but not for any other reason. It is possible the change of school was a reason for a change in her career choices but it was not a decision taken for any reason connected to her career as far as I am aware.

18. I am very surprised and upset at the allegation that I hit a child as some sort of punishment for getting hurt. I would have helped a child who was injured and cleaned a cut and put a plaster on a cut if it needed one. I deny categorically that I ever hit or beat a child which caused bruising and that to hide this I stopped the child from swimming. If the children were on a day trip we would not allow them to swim as there were so many of them and the risks to them were too great. Even then I would not be the sister in charge of the children and the decisions about swimming and so on would have been made by the sister in charge and not by me.
19. I do not recall anything like the story about the brick and the first time I saw such a story was in the statement provided by **HIA 169** If **SR 30** was driving the bus this would have been during the year I was in Belfast doing my teacher training course. I do not recall the girls wearing a tartan skirt as part of any school uniform. I recall a tartan skirt or kilt was worn by one of the bands who played Scottish music. I would find it hard to believe anyone would hit a child on the head with a brick and do not see **SR 9** as being the sort of person who would do that.
20. **HIA 90** describes me as a young novice when the unit changed and three groups were formed. I was in fact **years** a sister at that stage but I will accept I may still have looked younger. I do recall the children doing chores around the house. This was partly to help out and partly as a distraction. The chores were normal household chores such as dusting, brushing and polishing. I recall a handheld polisher used with a rug or blanket thing underneath. I do recall seeing the children using the handheld polisher but I have no memory of them using it in the hall. I have no memory of them polishing floors using their feet.
21. I do not recall there being scrubbing brushes in the bathrooms. I clearly recall sponges and nail brushes. I recall that each of the girls were given a packet of sanitary towels each month.
22. I do recall a time when there was a fear of a prowler in the dormitory at night. I recall a nursing sister who worked with the elderly residents, was attacked and an intruder tried to pull her outside. She raised the alarm and nothing serious happened. This person was not me and the sister was not raped. Because of the rumours of an intruder an alarm bell was fitted to the doors leading to the stairways and on one occasion three sisters stayed up and saw a man climbing a drainpipe. The chaplain and an off duty policeman chased and caught this man. The area was a "no go" area at the time and the police did not come out and the man was not arrested.
23. The children were never locked in the units. In fact I would say there were no locks on the unit doors to lock them in. The usual routine was that the children returned home from school, changed out of their uniforms, played outdoors if dry or in the hall if it was wet until the evening meal was served about 5pm.

24. I recall Dr [REDACTED] making regular visits to see the children. I believe he would have come in every Wednesday.
25. I do not recall a large number of social workers. Only a few of the children would have had their own designated social worker as far as I can recall. The social workers would have visited the House to see the children and would have had the opportunity to speak to them privately.
26. I remember HIA 90 coming to visit me after she moved to [REDACTED] to work. She married a man who had also been in the care system and unfortunately this marriage broke down and ended in divorce.
27. When Nazareth House celebrated its centenary I returned with a number of sisters who had been there over the years. A large number of former residents who had kept in touch were invited to join in the celebrations. I recall a very happy and joyous celebration and I do not recall anyone who was distressed or upset. No-one approached me with any concerns and everyone I spoke to were grateful for the home and were sad to see it closing after such a long time in Derry.
28. I was present at a meeting with Cardinal Brady and members of the various congregations. Former residents of the various houses were present and it was a difficult meeting for all concerned. On behalf of the congregation I apologised for any hurt caused to our former charges. This was an apology on behalf of the congregation and was not a personal apology or admission. The sisters have no problem in such an apology as they always wanted the best for the children and tried to provide for them as best they could. If any child felt they were mistreated or feels pain or hurt as a result of their time I happily repeat that apology.

HIA 169

29. HIA 169 alleges that I hit her with my fist and also with a bunch of keys. I have never struck any child with my fist and I did not carry a bunch of keys while I was in Bishop Street. I completely deny this allegation.
30. She also alleges that I struck her with a steel ruler. I do not recall there ever being steel rulers or any other implement that could be mistaken for a steel ruler. The rulers in the school were all wooden. I did not teach HIA 169 nor was she in any family group I was in charge of. I completely deny this allegation.
31. Children who wet the bed like HIA 169 were called by the sisters before they went to bed. They were woken and they went to the toilet to try to stop bed wetting. If beds were wet the sheets were taken by the sister in the laundry and were washed during the day.

32. The self abuse referred to by HIA 169 was completely new to me. I had no idea about this and had never been told or this before. I did not witness anything that might have indicated this was going on. Even now thinking back with greater awareness of issues like self harm I cannot say that there were signs I missed. I do recall an incident of HIA 169 being injured but my memory was that her sister told me she had fallen carrying a crate of milk and cut herself on the broken glass.
33. I am sure she received medical treatment but I could not say anything about a cotton wool dressing as I was not involved in the treatment. I deny being involved in holding her down while such a dressing was removed in the way she describes or at all. I am sure HIA 169 sustained the injuries she has complained of and I have seen the report from the doctor and the pictures. I cannot comment on how these injuries were received other than the recollection of an incident with milk bottles I do not recall any other major incidents with HIA 169. Dr [REDACTED] attended every Wednesday I believe and any child who was ill or needed any care would have been seen by him. I am sure he would have treated HIA 169 for injuries she sustained and if he was concerned I am sure he would have made some note or comment about those injuries. I am also sure the staff at the school would have noted serious injuries and made inquiries about them.

HIA 105

34. HIA 105 describes incidents where the older girls combed her hair with a steel fine comb and that her scalp was bleeding. She says that I supervised this and took no action. I deny this. This sounds like an incident when there was an outbreak of headlice. This did happen and we did not have the treatments available today. The normal course was to wash the hair and then comb out the lice and nits using a fine comb. I recall some of the children may have had sores where they had scratched their heads and this could be a memory HIA 105 has. Many of the children came from deprived backgrounds and were unwashed or had infestations of head or body lice when they were admitted. They would have been washed and the lice combed out to try to prevent the spread. Infestations were unfortunately regular. I deny the allegation made that suggests that there was a bullying type regime which I supervised and allowed to happen. That is simply untrue. Bath nights were usually on Tuesdays and Fridays. The children's hair was washed on Saturday afternoon when I was out collecting in the Waterside. I was not involved in this routine.
35. I also completely deny the allegation of physical abuse and cruelty. I have never witnessed either of the two sisters identified inflict harm on any child. I do not accept that a child was ever made to eat food they had already eaten after they had been sick. The food was the best we could provide and there was no choice available. We had our meal after the children but ate the same meal cooked for them. Our dinner would be plated up and then kept warm while we supervised the children's meal time.

36. I do remember **SND 109** she went on to **[REDACTED]** to do teacher training. I believe she became a music teacher but she did not maintain contact with the sisters so I am recalling what I had heard.

General comments

37. During my time in Derry we saw some of the worst of the troubles. There was daily rioting and shooting. Rioting was almost a pastime for young people in the area and we were anxious to keep our children away from this. I was there for the trouble around internment, Operation Motorman, Bloody Sunday among other things. Bishop Street was very close to the Bogside and the Brandywell areas and many of the children we saw in the school had seen dreadful things. We tried to protect the children in Bishop Street from the worst of these problems as best we could with the resources available to us
38. We were heavily dependant on the collecting sisters and donations from the diocese and Saint Vincent de Paul. Without the charity of the people of Derry, who despite the poor circumstances they found themselves in, always gave generously to the sisters. We simply could not have operated the home without their aid. Even big companies like Desmonds gave us gifts of clothes and pyjamas for the children. This charity allowed us to operate and to do what we did for the children.
39. When I consider all the information available now on learning difficulties, behavioural problems and the effects of family trauma I wish more had been known then. In some ways we were better off as the children were more naïve and childlike than many of our young people today. I do not doubt that some of the children with us had behavioural problems which are more readily noted and treated today. I am sure many were traumatised by the events in the streets around them.
40. The Sisters did all they could with the knowledge and facilities available to them at the time.
41. The Sisters made sure the children had the best clothing they could provide. Every child had full school uniform and non uniform clothes for play. We baked bread in Bishop Street which was swapped for potatoes and fresh food from the farm at Termonbacca. This meant the children could get a decent meal. We had to manage the resources we had as best we could.
42. I am aware that it is suggested we sent the children out badly dressed and they were bullied because of that. I do not accept that. We sent the children out in uniform for school. I would say they may have stood out because they had better uniform than some of those from the local community. If any child was bullied it is not acceptable. That goes for now as much as it did then.

43. I am also aware of allegations that the sisters ate better meals than the children. That would not be my memory. I recall eating the same meal as the children. I recall that often our food would have been kept warm while we supervised the meals eaten by the children. There was definitely not a separate meal prepared for us.
44. I recall that there was always some sort of activity being organised for the children. There were dancing and music classes and the children would often perform on occasions and attend competitions. I have heard it suggested that these dancers or musicians were used like trained monkeys to make the sisters look good. This is a comment I find very hurtful. The best comparison I can make is of proud parents wanting to show off the talent of their children. We were immensely proud of the skills the children had learnt and it was a pleasure to see and hear them perform.
45. Whilst I did not participate in the washing of the children's hair as I was collecting on a Saturday I do recall Jeyes Fluid in the home. I recall a handyman, **SND 311** think he was called, who would have used it for cleaning toilets and drains. You always knew he had been using it because the smell was very distinctive.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

SR 52

Dated 12 November 2013

HIA REF:

Witness Name:

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 – 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF

SR 52

1. I, **SR 52** will say as follows –
2. This is a further statement provided by me to the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, to assist the Inquiry in regards to my recollection of Nazareth House, Derry.
3. I went to Bishop Street on [REDACTED] and left on [REDACTED]. When I arrived in [REDACTED] there were three Sisters in charge of the children – **SR 59** **SR 9** and myself. The first floor was made up of the nursery and a place for the older working girls. The latter were either working outside the home, or in the nursery or with the elderly residents. The dormitories were on the second floor.
4. I neither witnessed nor heard of any sort of abuse by the Sisters. After leaving the home a number of girls stayed in close contact with the nuns. I would describe **SR 9** as ascetic who always put the children first and herself last. She was a tireless worker in the home. **SR 9** would give the children every opportunity and had talent for helping the girls do what they were best at. I never witnessed any corporal punishment occurring in the house as the removal of sweets, TV or pocket money was a very effective punishment.

HIA 169

5. **HIA 169** had three other sisters in Nazareth House. I do recall attending her sister, **SND 272** wedding in Derry. **SND 272** was getting married to [REDACTED] and his family were worried about coming to Northern Ireland at this time. We offered his family to stay with us and they stayed in the spare room before the wedding. **SND 272** and her husband were married in St. Columba's and it was a fantastic day.
6. **SND 179** stayed in contact with me for a few years and sent a Christmas card each year but unfortunately I do not have these cards anymore.
7. Unfortunately I no longer have any personal records such as cards or letters from the girls of Nazareth House. After [REDACTED] years of living in Ireland, I was moved to [REDACTED] in 2003 and I destroyed all my personal records. All my possessions were contained in one large and one small suitcase. I now live in [REDACTED] since 2012 .

Statement of Truth

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

Signed SR 52

Dated 23 March 2014

64

J. M. J. +

SR 147

65

Date of Profession

May 1st 1965

Father's Name

Mother's Name

Where born:—

Date she came to this House

Left for Finchley

Sister's Name

SR 52

Date of Profession

Oct 1st 1963

Father's Name

Mother's Name

Where born:—

Date she came to this House

Left [redacted] for Nazareth Lodge,
Belfast.

VIS.

BY

DATE

17th Apr 1969

40

J. M. J. +

Daughter of

Born

Co. Armagh

Name in Religion

SR 9

Entered

1st Profession 2/2/43

1940-30th April

Came to Derry

Left for Hammersmith 7th October 1976.

Daughter of the late

Born

Co. Cork

Name in Religion

Entered

24th May 1940

Came to Derry

Left for Birkenhead

Daughter of the late

Born

Co. Antrim

Name in Religion

SR 122

Entered

8th Jan 1919

Came to Derry

Left for Swansea

J. M. J. +

53

[REDACTED] dau. late [REDACTED]

Born [REDACTED]

Entered

26th July 1952

Received

Religious name

SR 59

Professed

14th May 1954

Came Derry [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Daughter late [REDACTED]

Born [REDACTED]

Entered

20th 1938

Received as notice

Aug. 15th "

Professed

15th 1939

Religious name

SR 166

Came to Derry [REDACTED]

Left for Hammermith [REDACTED]

PRIVATE

within our group. If a spot was missed she would get down on her knees and start scrubbing. If we did not offer to help she would physically punish us by pulling our hair, kicking us on the body or hitting our heads off the wall. Sister SR 59 would always get a red face with rage. SR 59 was given the nickname [REDACTED] because she always wore boots and would kick us with them.

9. The food was good. However it was often withheld as a punishment. There was recreation. There was a swing outside. If it was raining there was a hall to play in where we had tricycles to ride. You got pocket money. There was a school tuck shop to spend your pocket money. Sometimes we were allowed to watch a film on a Sunday and we were given an apple to eat while watching the film. I was often punished when the films were shown and wasn't allowed to watch. We always had second hand clothes but clothes were provided. We were taken to a nearby dentist. I think we were given immunisations at school. However in other ways we were not well looked after.
10. When we slept in a dormitory we had metal beds with a sheet and a blanket. It was freezing cold. The dormitory was dark and scary. One form of punishment I endured was being made to stand on a dark corridor naked. There were cockroaches on the ground. I recall this happening twice when I was nine and eleven years old. I had a problem with wetting the bed. This problem persisted throughout my time in care. They would get us up in the middle of the night to go to the toilet but I still had a problem. I think it started around the time I was first raped when I was five or seven and I think it persisted as a result of the treatment I received from the nuns. In the morning I was beaten by SR 59 or SR 9 but worse than that they then humiliated the bedwetters by making us put our underwear on our head and stand at the breakfast table so everyone could see.
11. During my time at Nazareth House I suffered physical abuse at the hands of three nuns SR 9 SR 59 and SR 52

PRIVATE

19. I became very overwhelmed by everything that was happening to me. When I was about [REDACTED] years old I cut myself for the first time in an attempt to relieve my emotional pain. At night everyone received milk and buns at 8 o'clock. I brought the milk round to the three different groups. On my way back I threw the empty bottles down the steps to smash them. I then lifted up a piece of smashed glass and I started to repeatedly cut my right leg with it. Blood was pouring out of my leg. It was a release. For a couple of seconds I felt that I could breath. I do not remember how I ended up there but I was taken downstairs to a classroom. [REDACTED] SR 9 wiped the blood and then bandaged my leg with cotton wool and bandages. I did not receive any medical attention and my dressings were not changed for three or four days. When the bandages were removed the cotton wool was embedded in the wounds which were closing over and infected. [REDACTED] SR 59 and [REDACTED] SR 52 held me down while Sister [REDACTED] SR 9 pulled the cotton wool out of the wounds. It was agony. I was screaming with the pain. I was not taken to hospital and I received no medical treatment because the nuns would not have wanted questions to be asked. It took the wounds a long time to heal. I still have scars on my leg today.

20. When I was about [REDACTED] years old I was physically assaulted with a brick by [REDACTED] SR 9. At this time I was attending [REDACTED] SR 30 dropped some of us off in a minibus and then she drove to St Mary's College to drop off another girl and then she dropped the rest of the children off at [REDACTED] on the Waterside [REDACTED] SND 60 and I were playing truant from school and saw British Army soldiers leaving their barracks in a jeep. We picked up vibes from the nuns that they hated the British Army and the police. If British Army soldiers came in through the back gates of Nazareth House the nuns would hit them with brooms. As a result we thought that we should hate the Army too. They also made us distribute election leaflets for the SDLP as Sister [REDACTED] SR 9 was very good friends with John Hume. We were allowed to watch TV and we could hear the nuns talk politics between them. The streets were covered in bricks so I picked one up and I threw it at the Army jeep. Sister [REDACTED] SR 30 was passing by in the minibus with some of the children and the minibus and the jeep nearly collided. I am sure I must have frightene [REDACTED] SR 30 as I nearly caused an accident and there were children in the minibus. She got out

Met with D/C [REDACTED] to discuss an unrelated Matter when he asked me if I remembered an
HIA 169 [REDACTED] last pupil from [REDACTED]. I said that I remembered her very well indeed. He
explained that he had been in contact with her re. her allegations of abuse during her stay in the
Nazareth House in Bishop Street. I said that in the years I had contact with her [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] she was perceived to be "difficult". She did tell me that she was very unhappy in the
Nazareth House, but did not disclose any abuse. I visited the Nazareth House to talk to the nuns
about [REDACTED] and to ascertain the source of her unhappiness. The nun with whom I spoke said she
could not understand how [REDACTED] could be unhappy as she had a "lovely bedroom" which she then
showed me. I asked D/C [REDACTED] to ask [REDACTED] to contact me if she wished.

Mary Mc Cafferty
13 July 2010