

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 235

Witness Name: HIA 235

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 235

I, HIA 235 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] Omagh. I am 74 years old. My mother was unmarried when she was pregnant with me. She lived in a workhouse in Omagh. My cousin [REDACTED] told me my mother wanted to keep me but [REDACTED] father didn't so I was given to a young couple in Omagh to live with. However they moved to England and my mother had no way to look after me so she put me in Termonbacca when I was two and a half years old.

St Joseph's Home, Termonbacca (1st October 1941 – 29th November 1951)

2. I was placed in Termonbacca when I was about two and a half years old on 1st October 1941. I left when I was twelve years old on 29th November 1951. The first recollection I have of the home is me crying all day. I must have been happy with the couple my mother placed me with in Omagh and unhappy about being taken away from them. It was a culture shock.
3. I was beaten every day in Termonbacca nearly always with a bamboo cane or a thick leather strap. You were beaten for anything. I think I wet the bed every night. There was a group of us that did. When I left the home I stopped wetting

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the bed within a matter of weeks. If you wet the bed you had to strip the bed and stand naked in a queue holding your wet sheets waiting for a cold bath. We had to hold our hands out to get beaten with a bamboo cane as punishment. If you didn't hold your hand out you just got hit anywhere on the body. The beating depended on which nun it was. I felt it was hurting some of the nuns both physically and emotionally to beat us so forcefully. I don't recall the names of these nuns. I cannot remember what any particular nun looked like. They all wore black and white and I think I have shut out the memory of their faces.

4. I went to Nazareth House Primary School, Bishop Street and I got the greatest beating of my life there. I was about seven or eight years old and I think Sister **SR 77** was the nun who beat me. She was a well built nun and I was sitting in the classroom at the desk the furthest to the wall. It was the first day back at school after the summer holidays. While we were waiting for class to start, I was doodling and my friend said to me there's a cobweb on the ink well. I cannot remember my friend's name. I told him to blow it and he did and the ink went all over him. I tried to rub it off him using a page from my book but I just spread the ink instead. I started laughing hysterically.
5. **SR 77** came in and asked who did it and my friend pointed at me. Sister **SR 77** beat me with her palm first and then a closed fist. She then dragged me into the corridor and she kept pounding me with her fist over and over. She also beat me with the strap which her rosary beads hung from. I was screaming that I wouldn't do it again. This went on for quite a while; I don't know how long exactly. I think she only stopped because she got tired. I don't even remember the beating ending; I may have passed out. She lost her temper completely. I think it was the worst beating I've ever had. I was bruised for weeks after it. I never told anyone about it. The nuns were solely in charge; there was nobody else to tell.
6. The nuns put older boys in charge of us in Termonbacca when they went away to pray. The older boys were bullies. There would be one older boy in charge of a group of between six and eight younger boys. The older boys were about four years older than us. As a punishment for doing something wrong in the home I

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was made to sit on a bench in the dormitory with my arms folded. There were about six other boys with me. I don't think half an hour passed without someone breaking wind or doing something. When that happened the older boy came round on his hands and knees and sniffed our rear ends to see who had broken wind. Then he would beat the culprit or whoever he could catch.

7. When the nuns came back from praying some of us boys would have a black eye or a split lip but the bully would make up excuses to the nun. He would say we had been cheeky or something to justify his behaviour towards us. The nuns seemed to think we were responsible for our own misfortune. You dared not tell the nun what really happened or you would get another beating.
8. The level of violence in Termonbacca was unacceptable. You got beaten for every little thing. On one occasion I got beaten around the legs just for having a hole in my sock; that was the extent of the violence. Then I was given a bag of socks to darn even after all the older boys went to bed. When I was about eight or nine years old I was in bed one evening. Most boys in the dorm were pretending to be asleep for a quiet life as they were terrified because the nuns sometimes walked up and down between the beds praying. We were put to bed at 7pm as a form of control. This particular night I had to pee and I had a hold of myself. The nun saw this and beat me hard. You would try everything to avoid getting out of bed to go to the toilet in front of the nuns. I had a big stain on the front of my trousers in the church at my Confirmation from where I had wet myself. I would have got beaten for that.
9. The older boys used to pinch the food off our plates at meal times so we had to eat fast. My wife tells me off now for eating too fast. The habit has just stayed with me. The older boys would take things like sausages off your plate but you were safe with a plate of porridge. I was diagnosed with clogged arteries in my thirties and the doctor said it was due to the diet in the home. We had very little fruit and we ate a lot of fried food and bread. We all wore the same clothes in Termonbacca – short trousers. I think we had a uniform for school. The nuns also cut our hair so we all looked the same.

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10. My cousin has told me that my mother used to come and see me in the home every couple of years. She brought me a little prayer book once as a gift and God forgive me but I used it as toilet paper. The toilets in the home were awful. The walls were covered in excrement as high as the boys could reach because a lot of the time there was no toilet paper and the boys would just rub their hands on the wall.
11. We got up about 5.30am/6am in the morning. We had baths on Wednesday and Saturday and they were awful. They were like sheep dips. The nuns had gallon drums of Jeyes Fluid and they would pour it in the water and your privates and eyes would sting and you would be in agony. Boys would scream with the pain. If you were the first boys in the bath there wouldn't be a lot of Jeyes Fluid in it but it got topped up as the baths went on. We all bathed in the same water.
12. There was a lot of praying in the home to the exclusion of all else. There were retreats where we had to stay silent for hours and we had to say the rosary every day. I was an altar boy and I sang in the choir. We went on one day trip to Buncrana each summer. At Christmas we got an apple and an orange and that was the only fruit we ever saw. We never got any toys or cards at Christmas or on our birthdays. The American soldiers used to bring us gifts like footballs and sweets. The nuns used to get their fun by throwing a handful of sweets in the air and we would be killing each other for them.
13. My best friend in the home was [REDACTED] in 1946 he disappeared from the home and I think he was taken to Australia. He was about eight years old. Around the same time a boy from the home died. He slipped on the floor and I think he ruptured something on his inside leg and he never came back. The floor had just been polished and he slipped on the polish. Every Saturday we would have to scrub off the previous week's polish and then polish all the floors again. There would be three of us in a row scrubbing the floor to a chant like 'river back, river back'.

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14. I was very clever at school and I passed the 11 plus. I went onto a Christian Brothers school called Brow of the Hill. I loved school but Brother **SND 208** was very nasty. He was a bully. He used a stick to hit me on the tips of my fingers and my fingers would be in agony for hours afterwards. Brother **SND 209** used to swing boys around by the hair. There were civilian teachers in the school called **██████████** and **██████████**. They were excellent. When I left Termonbacca at twelve years old I was taken out of school and I never attended school again. I went to night school when I was in my fifties.
15. The older boys in Termonbacca would expose themselves to you but I was not subjected to any sexual abuse during my time there. I did not witness any sexual abuse either.
16. When I was twelve years old I was doing my homework and a nun came up to me and said 'you are leaving us tomorrow' and that was it. I can't recall her name. I was taken to live with Mr and Mrs **██████████** and their son. They lived outside Castleblayney in County Monaghan. They had a farm where I worked. I was happy. I ploughed with horses, lifted creamery cans, harrowed and thrashed corn. I worked for free. Some nights with them, I still wet the bed. They put the bed up on two boxes to stop me wetting the bed.
17. One morning in the **██████████** I woke to find their son standing naked in my room with an erection. He was just looking out the window. We didn't share a room so I don't know why he was there. I pretended to be asleep. A short time later I was moved to a family called the **██████████**. **██████████** was twelve or thirteen years old. The **██████████** had a son and daughter in their forties who still lived at home. The son's name was **██████████** and the daughter's name was **██████████**. **██████████** was a drunk. **██████████** had a ferocious temper and he beat me on the head with a hawthorn stick. Other than that incident I was happy with both the **██████████** and the **██████████**. I used to work from early morning until late at night and I loved doing it. I was free. I wasn't getting beaten except for that one occasion. Again, I worked for free with the **██████████**.

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am now retired. I went to live in [REDACTED] County Tyrone to be near my mother who was in an old people's home in Clogher. My mother had worked for [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Omagh and she passed away on 28th August 1989.

22. I made a statement to the police in relation to the abuse I suffered. A policewoman named Stephanie came to see me at home in June 2013.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

HIA 235

Dated

28/10/2013

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HIA 235

was born in Omagh Union on [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] + baptised in St. Mary's, Killiclogher. His mother
being [REDACTED]. She has promised to pay
10/- monthly for his maintenance
Left 29th November 1951

Christian Name	Where Born	Date of Birth	Where Baptised	Parents' Names	Occupation	Recommended by
HIA 235	Enagh Union		St. Mary's, Killybegh Enagh		Servant	"

Recommended by	Received	Died	Left	Observations	No.
"	"	1 st Oct. 1941	29 th November 1951	mother living	402