



125

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6 December 2012-12-06

12/12/12

HIA 125
[Redacted]

Dear **HIA 125**

I received your letter requesting your information from the time you were placed in St Joseph's Home , Termonbacca. Thank you for a copy of your photographic identification as this confirms your identity to us. I note on your letter you stated your date of birth was [Redacted] but I realise that this was a slight error.

I have looked through the St Joseph's Termonbacca records and have found the following information on you

Name: **HIA 125**

Born: [Redacted]

DOB: [Redacted]

Baptised in: St Macarleus (there is something after this but it is very hard to make out)

Parents: [Redacted]

Occupation: Domestic Servant

Recommended By: NSPCC [Redacted]

Admission: 6 July 1959

Left: 17 October 1972

Observations: Mother Living

Christian Name	Where Born	Date of Birth	Where Baptised	Parents' Names	Occupation	Recommended by
HIA 125	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	St. Macarius [REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Domestic Servant	U. S. P. Co. Co. [REDACTED]

Occupation	Recommended by	Received	Died	Left	Observations	No.
[REDACTED]	U. S. P. Co. Co. [REDACTED]	6th July 1959		17 th Oct. 1972.	Walter living	734

19 JUL 2013

HIA REF: 125

Witness Name:

HIA 125

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 125

HIA 125 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I think my mother's house burned down and my mother and I moved to my Aunt's house. The house was overcrowded and the NSPCC came and took me into care. My sister [SND 174] was born when I was about two and a half years old. I was admitted to Termonbacca on 6th July 1959 when I was [REDACTED] years old. I left on 17th October 1972 when I was [REDACTED] years old.

St Joseph's Home, Termonbacca

2. I was placed in the nursery section in Termonbacca when I was [REDACTED] years old. [SR 3] was in charge of the nursery and she was nice enough. There were a couple of women who were civilian staff and they cleaned and helped out in the nursery. I think one of the workers was called [SND 26] There were rows of cots and there was a picture of a big pink elephant on the wall. Outside there was a yard with a concrete wall around it. We were put out to the yard to toddle about.
3. I think I was about six years old when I moved from the nursery to the part with older boys. I don't recall having any visits from my mother or other family members when I was in the home.

4. Termonbacca wasn't a very nice place. It was a big long building with iron frame windows and brass handles. There was a big long corridor and off it was a playroom. That is where we stayed all day. In the room there was a big oil painting up on the wall of a bearded man offering grapes. There were no toys in the room. We made our own fun or sat in the corner. I was nicknamed [REDACTED] by the other boys because of the way I walked.
5. The main building had two dormitories and two nuns in charge – SR 1 (known also as SR 1 and SR 2 SR 2) was quite small and had black bushy eyebrows and wore glasses. One dorm had younger boys and the other had older boys. The young ones were put to bed about 7pm. SR 2 hit us one at a time with a stick which was like a sally rod. She was hitting everyone and one day visitors from St Vincent de Paul arrived unannounced. SR 2 had white elastic garters on her arms which she used when cleaning and she hid the stick up her sleeve with the garter. She shook hands with the visitors and I remember the woman asking why all the children were crying. She said 'oh they're frightened, they're frightened'. When the visitors left she brought out the stick again.
6. This type of beating by SR 2 didn't happen all the time but I remember this particular incident because of the stick going up the elastic garter. SR 2 is still alive and lives in Belfast. I used to think that the nuns were monsters underneath their robes. Their robes disguised who they really were.
7. The nuns had a number system and I was known as [REDACTED]. The nuns called you by your number rather than your name. However the number system didn't last because we all knew each other's names and used them rather than the numbers. The nuns still persevered with this and used numbers. For example they said [REDACTED] get in here get in for a bath' or [REDACTED] polish your shoes'.
8. The nuns had prayer times throughout the day when a bell was rung. They went off for an hour or two and we were left unsupervised. We were left to wander

around on our own. There was no adult supervision for long periods of time. I remember being put outside to play in winter and the nuns locked the door and went off to pray. We were extremely cold sitting waiting on them to come back and open the door. We wore short trousers and a jumper. We were put outside most days and at weekends.

9. The nuns left the older boys in charge when they were praying. I think they were between thirteen and fifteen years old. Two of the older boys were called **HIA 67** **HIA 67** and **HIA 151**. I remember being put into a big room which had a TV. I remember watching Roy Rodgers.

10. I remember we had to learn to tie our laces. They put me in the shoe room and told a bigger boy to teach me how to do it. I do not remember the boys' name. **SR 1** came in and slapped me because I didn't do it correctly. Then she left me for another hour. **SR 1** usually gave a couple of slaps depending on her mood. She slapped us on the legs because they were bare.

11. For breakfast we got lumpy porridge and milk. Sometimes we got a boiled egg and some bread and tea. Dinner was usually stew. I was hungry all the time. On our birthday we were allowed to go down to the kitchen and get a plate with bacon, sausage and egg along with a fairy cake. You had to bring it back to the dining room and all the other boys would look enviously at the food. The nuns ate separately in their own dining room and after breakfast we ran to the servery to see if there were any leftover bits of toast on the plates. I fainted a couple of times in Mass because I was so hungry. Other boys did faint because of malnutrition. We were weak with hunger. We got a cup of gruel last thing at night. We used to get it sent to us in a big green army flask. We were starving and the place was freezing and all we got was this lumpy gruel. It was disgusting but we did look forward to it because we were so hungry and it was warm.

12. There were two nuns that supervised bath time usually, **SR 1** and **SR 2** **SR 2**. We all had to stand in a line naked and face the wall in the bathroom. Then you were called to get in the bath. The bath was filled with scalding hot

water and Jeyes Fluid. There was a boy called **SND 3** and he wouldn't get in the bath. He didn't want to be stung by the Jeyes Fluid. **SR 1** **SR 1** lifted a broom and broke the broom over his bare back. **SND 3** was an older boy and I think he ended up in **SND 3** Hospital. He may still be there. The boy at the end of line was bathed in the same water that was used for all thirty boys. We were washed with wooden scrubbing brushes and a green bar of Fairy soap which was normally used for cleaning floors. The nuns dried us off if you were small. The baths were very sore on my skin especially with the Jeyes Fluid. The Jeyes Fluid stung my body, especially my eyes. I think we got bathed once a fortnight. It was a cruel and horrendous experience.

13. I think we shared toothbrushes and we were given green powder instead of toothpaste. However no one ever showed us how to wash our teeth properly and they rotted. When we attended the dentist in Great James Street he pulled the teeth out and gave no other treatment.
14. When I was about nine years old as a punishment I had to jump over wooden gym benches and run around in a circle in the playroom. I cannot remember what I was being punished for. There were several boys doing the same thing. A nun was supervising but I cannot remember her name. We were starved so after a while I was so exhausted I fell and I broke my arm. I was taken to Altnagelvin hospital by the nun who was supervising. I have my records which show my appointments were during 1966. I was kept inside and I got fed better because I was going to see a doctor. I got extra food however it stopped when I was no longer attending the doctor. I did attend the doctor whilst in Termonbacca on occasions and I have certificates showing the dates. The doctor was Doctor Joseph Devlin in Great James Street Surgery.
15. At Christmas there was a big tree in the home and someone from St Vincent de Paul dressed as Santa came on Christmas day and we received presents. Sometimes it was second hand toys that someone donated. I remember getting a merry-go-round. A week or so after Christmas all the toys disappeared.

16. When I was about ten or eleven one of the bigger boys, **SND 221** told me to go through an outside window and get into a store room beside the church. The room was full of toys. I started handing out toys to **SND 221**. All of a sudden there were thirty or forty boys around wanting toys. The nuns got me and **SND 221** and **SND 221** and **SR 1** gave us a severe beating with a stick across our legs. While she was beating me she was saying that I was stealing. I said the toys were for us and asked why they didn't give them to us. She stopped beating me and sent me to bed. What I said must have struck a chord with her. We didn't see the toys again. **SND 221** is deceased.
17. If you were sick you had to go back to bed in the dormitory. There was no sick room. At the end of the dormitory there was a nun's cell which had a little square window. The dorm was long with beds along the sides. I think there were at least forty beds.
18. When I was about nine years old I was sick and I was in bed in the dormitory. An older boy came up to my bed. He was after something and I didn't like the way he approached me. I think he was coming to sexually abuse me. There was something creepy about him. I told him to leave me alone and I think he may have put his hand on my private area and I jumped out of bed and went over the window and put my hand on the brass handle and said to him 'I am getting out this window'. He knew he would be in trouble if I did so he said 'come in, I won't touch you, I won't touch you'. I told him to get out and he left. I can't remember his name. I think it may have been **SND 27**. He had curly black hair and glasses.
19. The nuns changed groups now and again. One time when I was about ten years old **SR 2** became in charge of my group for a short time. She made us stand in a line and take our underpants off. She walked along the line looking at the underpants to see if the older boys had masturbated. I assumed she was looking for stains. I saw a boy down the line get a slap as she shouted 'you dirty brute'. She did this a couple of times.

20. When we were put out to play I got myself a stick and a rock and I would dig a tunnel, maybe four or five feet to pretend to escape. I could have climbed over the fence if I wanted to escape but I knew if I got out the police would bring me back and **SR 1** threatened that the nuns would get us put into Muckamore Abbey. I saw other boys being brought back to the home by the police. I didn't know what Muckamore Abbey was so I asked one of the older boys and he told me 'you don't want to be going there as there are padded cells and you'll go mad, you'll never get out, you'll be locked up'.
21. No one from welfare came to visit me in the home. I suspect now that welfare officers did come to the home and had tea and cream buns with the nuns but they didn't speak to any children. There were regular visits from priests who tested us on the catechism. Barbers who were members of the St Vincent de Paul came and cut our hair. St Vincent de Paul representatives visited the home every weekend and told the children stories.
22. I was fostered by a woman called **SR 1**. My foster family took me out at weekends and during the holidays from when I was about eleven years old. I am still in contact with her.
23. We got a bus to Nazareth House Primary School in Bishop Street. I remember the bus conductor was good fun and he used to sing songs to us. The school was run by nuns and you got hit all the time. They were very strong on discipline. If you did something wrong you got hit. At school there was a **SR 15** **SR 15** and she was fond of hitting children with a cane. This was not the same **SR 1** who worked in Termonbacca. **SR 15** in school hit us a lot especially if she got frustrated. **SR 9** was in charge of the school and she hit me regularly with a cane which she carried around. There was a nice female civilian teacher. She took an interest in us and showed us how to cook turnips. I can't remember her name but she was a very nice woman. There was also a music teacher called **SR 1** who was nice to us.
24. When I left Nazareth House Primary School I attended **SR 1** Boys' Secondary School at eleven years old. If you were late a teacher called Mr

██████████ who had two big black eyebrows made you put your hand out and you got hit with a strap he kept in his back pocket. If you pulled your hand away you got hit again. We were getting hit in the home and at school. I was in the lowest class in ██████████ I don't remember anybody from Termonbacca getting that well educated. When I left the home at fifteen I could write my name but I couldn't write a letter. Our education was terrible. They kept telling us boys from the home that we were stupid. I think we were treated differently and they didn't bother with us as much as the children from families.

25. The building where the dormitories were was very old and became uninhabitable so we moved into a nissan hut while a new building was erected. I was about twelve years old at the time. ██████████ **SR 5** ██████████ was in charge of the nissan hut I was in. Another thirty boys were moved into a chicken shed which was converted into accommodation and ██████████ **SR 2** ██████████ was in charge of them. I was in the hut until I left Termonbacca at fifteen. The new building opened about six months after I left the home.
26. Termonbacca had its own farm and the nuns sent us out to gather potatoes and work on the farm. I had to look after the cattle on the farm when they were out grazing every day rather than do homework. I was about thirteen or fourteen at the time. There were paid employees who also worked on the farm. They were ex residents and were called ██████████ **SND 1** ██████████ who was the farm manager, **HIA 144** ██████████ and ██████████ **SND 16** ██████████ who is deceased.
27. We all had chores to do in the home as well as the farm. I had to polish shoes and wash dishes. We all had to make our beds, which were bunk beds in the nissan huts. The hut was overrun with rats and you could hear the rats eating the wood every night. A boy called ██████████ **SND 148** ██████████ had the bunk below me. The caretaker was called ██████████ **SND 15** ██████████ and he put tin plates over the rat holes. There were also broken windows which were covered with books. ██████████ **SND 15** ██████████ as passed away. He worked for the nuns for about fifty years. He is buried in a pauper's grave in the City cemetery.

28. When we came in from school about thirty of us would sit and watch Playtime and Roy Rodgers on TV. I remember one time I was sitting watching TV and **SR 5** punched me with her fist on my lower neck and said 'were you bathed?'. She was a big stocky woman. **SR 5** passed away in 1986 in Birmingham. I attended her funeral along with **HIA 98** ^{HIA 136} **HIA 136** and **SND 2**.
29. When I was fourteen or fifteen **SR 5** have two other boys and me a bath every day usually around 7pm. At fourteen you would maybe get an erection and it got to the point where we were all standing naked, fully aroused before we went in to the bath. Then she would wash our private parts with a cloth and soap. The two other boys are called **SND 65** who is a priest in the missions and **SND 94** who does landscape gardening for the nuns. I am not sure why she picked the three of us but it might have been because we were quite good looking and **SND 94** and **SND 65** were well developed for their age.
30. We were never told about sex. When I was about thirteen or fourteen we were brought into a room with a blackboard and a person drew a picture of fallopian tubes and that was our sex education. I don't know who this person was but it wasn't a nun. The only females I encountered were when I was fostered with **SR 2**. She had a couple of daughters who were younger than me.
31. When I was about fourteen or fifteen I walked past **SR 2** on a path outside the nissan hut with my hands in my pockets because it was cold. She slapped me across the face and said 'get your hands out of your pocket you dirty brute'.
32. One day when we were in bed in the nissan hut the Mother General of Sisters of Nazareth arrived on a surprise visit. She assisted **SR 5** getting everyone out of bed. I was on the top bunk. She shook me and I saw this strange face. I thought I was dreaming so I closed my eyes again and the Mother General threw me out of the bed and I banged my head on a locker on the way down. I got a bruise on my forehead and I did not receive any medical

treatment. The nuns could be bad tempered and when they lost their temper they exploded. You didn't know what mood they would be in so to avoid them I used to climb trees all over the grounds. I even made huts up trees by taking some materials from the builders who were building the new home.

33. I left the Termonbacca on 17th October 1972 when I was fifteen. The nuns gave me a small suitcase and in the suitcase was a pack of playing cards, holy gifts, a pair of work boots and a girls brown uniform coat. [REDACTED] SR 5 and another nun [REDACTED] SND 1 took me to a mill outside [REDACTED] to work. It was owned by an elderly brother and sister called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] am pretty sure the nuns sold me for money. I am sure they received a donation. My work was to carry heavy bags of corn on my back from the mill and to hand milk cows. I was paid three punts a week and I had to work seven days a week. I slept in the attic room which was above the general store. There was a bed with one blanket and no sheets. I was locked in this part of the house at night.

34. I was there for six months. I telephoned Termonbacca and I spoke to [REDACTED] SR 7 and I told her the [REDACTED] were not treating me well. She said that I had now left their care and I was on my own. She hung up the phone. There was no aftercare. [REDACTED] came to see me and she got me a job as a night porter in [REDACTED] in the [REDACTED] I was paid seven pounds a week. I was there for a year. I joined the [REDACTED] when I was seventeen. I was in it for two and a half years. Afterwards I came back to Derry and lived in a squat. I shoplifted to survive.

Life after care

35. One day in Nazareth House Primary School I was getting on a swing when a girl came up to me and said that another girl was also called [REDACTED] and that she must be my sister. I didn't know I had a sister. The nuns never told me. It was years later that my uncle confirmed I had a sister and that she was placed in

Nazareth House. I found my sister ^{SND 174} when I was around twenty. We are still in contact. She lives near [REDACTED]

36. About ten years ago my wife received a phone call. An old frail female voice asked if she could speak to ^{HIA 125} when I said 'hello' the line went silent and she put the phone down. I think it was my mother trying to phone me and couldn't speak. I have had no further contact from my mother and I am not sure if she is still alive.

37. I have been married to my wife for [REDACTED] years. We have [REDACTED] daughters and [REDACTED] son. We now have three grandchildren.

38. The experiences I had in Termonbacca affected the rest of my life. Apart from the affection from [REDACTED] never received any love as a child so I found it difficult to show affection at times to my own family. I have a close enough relationship with my son. My two daughters aren't speaking to me. I worked in the council for [REDACTED] and I was [REDACTED] I tried to commit suicide in [REDACTED] by cutting my wrists. My two daughters haven't spoken to me since this incident as [REDACTED] I attempted suicide once before this.

39. I was told that the nuns in Termonbacca ordered two of the residents to burn a metal bin full of personal letters from families to children. I cannot remember who told me this. This happened years ago when I was still in the home. One of the boys was called ^{SND 122} He was a resident and a friend of mine in the home. He is now a caretaker in Nazareth House Nursing Home. ^{SND 15} ^{SND 15} he caretaker stopped him and ^{SND 15} picked out some papers and that is how we found out. ^{SND 15} kept some letters and gave them to the boys they belonged to. I didn't get any documents. I think about 90% of the papers were destroyed.

40. A former resident called ^{DL 48} gave an interview to the journalist Eamon McCann about the abuse he suffered in Termonbacca. Eamon would

17/10/72

Another Raymond. Saw returned to school

Form No. W.1

COUNTY WELFARE OFFICE.

HIA 22

HIA 22

HIA 125

together with

HIA 22

links part.

With Monica Gallagher

The Compliments of

The Children's Officer

Children's Officer
MISS MONICA GILLESPIE

Telephone
OMAGH 2881

12/12/12

Medical Certificate

This is to certify that in my opinion

of Seamus Howe

born to date 18 Aug 1969

was suffering from

body in a fit state of health and nutrition.

and are unable to attend work school

being treated for ingested worms & chills.

signed J. P. Curran

date 18 AUG 1969



I hereby certify that I have received ~~my~~

HIA 125

from under the care of the Sisters of Nazareth,
St. Joseph's Home, Derry, in a perfect state of
health and cleanliness.

Signed.....

Witness.....

Date..... 17th Oct. 1972.