

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 374

Witness Name: HIA 374

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 374

I, HIA 374, will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] and lived with my parents and two younger brothers in [REDACTED] County Down. I had a very normal childhood and came from a solid family background. I was well reared and none of my family got into trouble with the police.
2. When I was fourteen years old my parents were having some marital problems. I was sent to Lisnevin for approximately six weeks assessment although I am not exactly sure why this happened. I had been there for a few days and I was in the shower room having a shower. A male member of staff walked into the shower and he placed his hand on my private parts. He told me "no masturbating" and then he took his hand away. His hand was only there for a few seconds while he spoke. I cannot remember his name or his description except that he had black hair. I was taken aback because nothing like that had ever happened to me before. That was the only incident which took place during that assessment and I returned home once the assessment was completed.
3. My home life was fine after I returned from Lisnevin until [REDACTED] was injured in a no warning car bomb attack on the [REDACTED] Belfast. He was a hard working man and came from a good family. None of the family was ever in

PRIVATE

trouble and they were always in employment. [REDACTED] was working in Belfast at the time of the explosion [REDACTED]. I saw the aftermath and I started to get into trouble soon afterwards.

4. One summer's evening in 1976 I was involved in a fight in [REDACTED]. I think I was around sixteen years of age and I fought with another man over a girl. I was charged with assault and I went to Court. I thought I would only receive a modest punishment because I was working as an apprentice bricklayer and was attending college in [REDACTED] preparing to take my City and Guilds examinations. I was playing football and sports and I had my whole life in front of me. Initially I was sent to St Patrick's Training School in Belfast for assessment prior to being sentenced by the Court. I believe the assessment was to last six weeks.

St Patrick's Training School Belfast

5. I had been in St Pat's for approximately a week when **BR 89** asked me to come to an office. He was a skinny man with a pointy face and sandy hair with some grey. When I was younger I looked very feminine. I did not need to shave and I had long black hair. Some people did mistake me for a girl which was very embarrassing. **BR 89** was being extremely nice to me and was rubbing my hair and my face. He kept telling me that I had no need to worry about anything whilst I was in St Patrick's and that he would look after me. He took my hand and placed it on his crotch. I noticed that he had an erection and he forced me to masturbate him over his clothing. I was totally shocked because I had never experienced anything like that before.
6. This was the only abuse which I suffered during my assessment in St Patrick's. I also did not witness anybody else getting abused whilst I was there. There were no witnesses and I did not feel that I could tell anybody. Once the assessment was completed I returned to my college in [REDACTED] and was continuing with my apprenticeship. I then went to Court for the sentencing in the assault case and I was sentenced to Borstal for a period of two years and three months. I was stunned because I thought I would get a lesser sentence because of the time I

PRIVATE

had spent in St Patrick's and because I was attending college. I believe now that I received a custodial sentence because the person I fought with was an off duty soldier. I do not believe two ordinary people fighting in the street would have been treated in the same manner.

7. I was taken from court and transported to Crumlin Road Gaol in Belfast. I was placed in a cell with a man who was serving a sentence of fourteen years for explosives offences. I remained in Crumlin Road for two or three days before being taken to the H Blocks at the Maze Prison. This was a complete and total shock to my system. I had been given a Borstal sentence and was being taken to a maximum security prison housing paramilitaries.

Maze Prison

8. When I arrived at the Maze, I was taken to the H Block. I was asked my name by a Prison Officer called **MZ 1**. He was around six feet tall, well built, short sandy and grey hair and in his late thirties or early forties. He was a Class Officer in charge of the wing. I told him my name and he immediately hit me and I fell over. He grabbed me on the back of the neck and lifted me up and shouted into my face "you call me 'sir'". I was petrified. I was subjected to a torrent of constant abuse of sectarian, sexual and physical nature during the entire time I was in H Block.
9. I recall going to a visit to see my mother and I had a black eye. This was caused by one of the Prison Officers who punched me for no reason at all. I remember it well because I did not receive many visits as my parents lived in [REDACTED] and it was not easy to get to the Maze. I was threatened that if I breathed a word about happened on the wing that the visit would be stopped immediately and I would never receive another visit. I also remember a time when the Visiting Board was due to arrive to inspect the wing. It was supposed to be an unannounced visit but the prison authorities knew all about it. I was threatened along with the other boys to make sure that we had no complaints otherwise we would be kept in Borstal for a longer period. I was living under abject fear and

PRIVATE

terror of the Prison Officers. [REDACTED] never visited me because he resided in [REDACTED] since the bomb blast and my mother would not allow my brothers to visit. I was glad about that because I did not want them to see me in that place. It was no place for children.

10. I remember returning from a visit and [REDACTED] MZ 1 bent me over and stuck his fingers up my backside. He was laughing and asking what I was hiding. He was not worried at all and did this in the presence of other Prison Officers. He was trying to humiliate me by treating me this way. The other Prison Officers just stood around laughing and did not even attempt to intervene. I was a child and was being treated like a convicted paramilitary.
11. I felt sick continually, began to wet my bed and I lived in a state of total fear. I was physically assaulted and mentally worn down by the behaviour of staff. I believe this was a deliberate campaign of humiliation. Staff often messed up my cell, made me tidy it up then immediately mess it up again. I was forced to stand still like a statue and if I moved I was beaten. [REDACTED] MZ 1 came into the cell on one occasion and took his penis out. I was sitting in a chair and he rubbed his penis over my face. I always remember another officer coming in and encouraging [REDACTED] MZ 1 to abuse me. I cannot remember his name. I remember another officer who was called [REDACTED] MZ 2 doing the same thing. He was a vicious man and was small with a hook nose. The staff in the other wings knew what was going on but they did nothing to prevent it. The prisoners in the other wings could not see what was going on because wood was put up in the Juvenile wing to block any line of vision.
12. I was forced to drill march until I was sick and I had to scrub floors on my hands and knees. I saw [REDACTED] MZ 1 force people to beg for food as if they were vultures. I saw him rub his penis over the faces of other people. Other Prison Officers were always present but they stood back and did not stop him. I was living in total absolute fear every day. I truly believe that they thought I was going to become a terrorist because of what happened to my father and treated me even more harshly.

PRIVATE

13. I was there for approximately four or five months and I class it as months of torture. I was not sentenced by the Court to torture but that was what took place. I was brought up in a good household where my parents taught me right from wrong. I did not deserve to be treated in that way particularly when I was still a child. I should not have been in a maximum security prison. It was wrong to put a child into that environment.
14. I was then moved to Magilligan Prison and it was a relief to be there compared to the Maze. I can only speak for myself but I never saw a Prison Officer there touch anyone. There was no physical abuse, no sectarian abuse and no sexual abuse. The prison officer in control of the wing I was on was called [REDACTED] and he was a proper gentleman. He sat down and talked to me as if I was a normal person. The other Prison Officers were good people as well. I was there for around five months and was then moved to Millisle Borstal.

Millisle Borstal

15. I was sent to Millisle and for the majority of my time there it was fine. I had been an apprentice bricklayer before I was sentenced and there was a bricklaying shop at the Borstal. I spent my time laying bricks and I did not have to do anything if I did not want to. I only had a problem with one member of staff while I was there. I cannot remember his name but his nickname was "Punchy". He was a small man, stout and with big lips. I will always remember his face. He worked in the laundry and once a week I had to bring my laundry down to be washed. He used to put his arms round me and try to kiss me. I could feel his erection against my body and he bent me over the washing machines and simulated sex with me. This was not a joke to him and he meant everything that he was doing.
16. On one occasion I plucked up the courage to tell a senior member of staff what was taking place. This man was sharp dressed, very presentable looking and had black hair and a black moustache. He simply dismissed what I told him and nothing was done. The other boys in the laundry knew what was going on but

PRIVATE

nothing was ever said. I never went into a Police Station and made a statement because I thought that the police would not be interested in the matter and did not believe that the RUC as it was then would investigate so I told no one.

Life after Care

17. When I was released I could not cope and I moved to Dublin. I had no place to stay and had to squat in an abandoned house. I had never taken an illegal drug in my life until I got to Dublin and I began to take heroin and became addicted to the drug. I was involved in petty crime to feed my addiction and was sent to Mountjoy Prison on a number of occasions. I also moved to London and lived in squats and my life was a complete mess. I just ran away from my problems and used alcohol and drugs to mask reality. I have attended rehab for my alcohol and drugs addictions. I am [REDACTED] and I blame what happened to me on the abuse I suffered in the youth justice system.
18. I can talk about the abuse today but in the past I was full of anger. I turned the anger in on myself and out on to other people and just made my own life a misery. I could not report the abuse to the police previously but I did speak to police about the abuse in around 2012. I spoke to officers from Antrim Road and Newtownards PSNI stations but I am not aware of the outcome of my report.
19. I live in a flat by myself and I have trouble with relationships. I found it very difficult if someone told me what to do and that is not the way to try to build a relationship. I tried to work on a fishing boat but I found it really difficult. I have always had trouble holding down a job because I could not cope with anyone in authority telling me what to do.
20. I was married but it only lasted six months. I have a step daughter who lives in Dublin and we visit each other. We are very close to each other, even more than my family. I have serious problems trusting people and I did not really trust my mum. I could not accept her moving on with her life after [REDACTED] was injured. I trust my brother [REDACTED] to a certain extent and consider him to be my closest blood relative. My mother died a few years ago and I never told her what had

PRIVATE

happened to me. I believe I was sort of shielding her from it. My father died three years ago [REDACTED]

21. I believe that the State owe an apology for the lack of inspection or supervision of me once I was sentenced. I was sent there and tortured and forgotten about. I believe that the judicial authorities also must bear some responsibility because they sent me to a maximum security paramilitary prison rather than somewhere more appropriate. I also believe the Church should apologise unreservedly for the cover up and for the abuse I and others suffered at the hands of those who were supposed to be caring for us. I also feel compensation should be made available to assist the victims and their families move on from the suffering. I had no life because of what happened to me.

22. I do not want retribution on the people who abused me nor do I want them to be prosecuted. They are old men now and I do not see how it would benefit anyone for that to happen. I do want them to be held to account however for the abuse and torture they perpetrated. I do not want to see a memorial because from my perspective it would only dredge things up every time I would see it.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

HIA 374

Dated

19. 3. 2015