
THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 416

I, HIA 416, will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on the [REDACTED]
2. I have [REDACTED] brothers and [REDACTED] sisters. My earliest memory as a child is of the army tanks and soldiers being all around the road where I lived in [REDACTED]. I used to talk to the soldiers and they would show me their guns. One morning I awoke to rifle being thrust into my face, the British Army were looking for my father. My father was living in [REDACTED] at this time. I can recall my mother crying.
3. My mother raised all [REDACTED] of us. Me and my [REDACTED] brothers in the one bed. [REDACTED] of my brothers shared the bottom bunk bed and the other [REDACTED] shared the top bunk. I used to get into a lot of mischief. I was involved in a few burglaries. I was convicted of an offence and I received a sentence of one to three years in Millisle borstal. My brother accompanied me to court and after I was sentenced I was brought straight to Millisle Borstal.

Millisle Borstal (January 1979 to 07.01.1980)

4. In 1979, I was put into Millisle borstal. I was brought into the canteen which was full at the time when I arrived. I was told that I had five minutes to eat. I had not eaten all day as I was in the Court house and an Officer asked if anyone wanted more bread. I put my hand up and he told me to get the fuck out of there. He then took me into the corridor and battered me. I was then brought to a cell. That night was the worst night of my life as I did not know what was going to happen to me the next day.
5. The next morning I was given black boots, a black Jacket made of cloth and trousers. I had my hair shaved. An officer told me that I didn't have a mother or a father and that the officers in charge were my parents now. He then said that I was only a number. My number was ■■■ and he told me that they had me for three years. He then slapped me. I had just turned sixteen years of age.
6. I had to do six weeks in the first wing that I was placed in. It was called the assessment wing. I had to learn how to make a bed pack which consisted of a blanket then a sheet. It was the way that the Army had to make beds. The staff would come in and measure the beds to make sure they were made right. Your comb and toothbrush had to be a certain distance away from each other, the right side up and facing each other.
7. The staff would come in and inspect our rooms. We had to shine our boots so that we could see our faces in them. If they checked your cell and found any dust on their finger tips they would wreck the whole bed and you would have to tidy it all. I cleaned my cell and the Officers would still find dust. I think that they must have had this on their hands already out of badness. I would then have to clean the whole cell again. I was initially put into the assessment wing. There were individual cells in the assessment wing. After one to two weeks passed I was put into a double cell. In the room there was a chair and a bible. We were not allowed to sit on the chair.

8. I was then moved on to another wing after the reception wing and a man called **ML 8** was in charge of this wing. On one occasion we were getting washed and I was asked if I shaved. I said that I did not need to shave as I did not have any hair to shave. **ML 8** then smacked my face and said that I was to do what I was told. I had never shaved in my life before and I wasn't sure what I was doing. We were made to stand to attention and if we did not do this, we would be slapped. We were made to train like we were in the army and the same Officers used the same tactics as the army.
9. The inspections of the cells continued each morning. The Governor would inspect our cells on a Saturday morning and your cell had to be twice as clean. During the day we would be taken to the gym to exercise and sometimes we would be put into the boxing ring for a minute and we were supervised by a member of staff. I think that he was called **ML 12**. We each had a PE uniform to wear.
10. We were made to scrub and polish the floors each morning. We used a big wooden box with bricks inside it and a blanket underneath it as a buffer for the floors. The buffer was very heavy and I now have tennis elbow in both arms as a result of this manual labour. We were made to buffer the floors as a form of punishment.
11. Each day we had to sit at the table and chair in our cells as we were not allowed to sit or lie on the bed until bed time. We were locked up all day during the summer. We did not have the opportunity to exercise or associate with other inmates. When it came to the winter, we were taken outside and made to exercise in the rain.
12. The only reading material we were given was a bible which was in our room. Each evening we were locked in our cells from 8.00 PM. I did not ask to get out of my cell to use the toilet after lock up for fear of being punished by a member of staff. We used to use the newspaper in our room as a toilet and then throw the parcel out the window of our cell. I remember one morning I

was looking out the window and the grounds man who was walking around told me that I needn't point at him. The next thing I knew, **ML 8** came into my cell and started to slap me for putting what he called a 'mystery parcel' through the window.

13. I had three or four visits during the year that I was in Millisle. My eldest brother, [REDACTED] and my sister [REDACTED] came to visit me. My brother never really showed his emotions. My sister told me that she saw my brother cry for the first time the day they came to visit me and he told her that he would never return to visit me again. My sister continued to come to see me. When some [REDACTED] boys were admitted my sister was able to get a lift to Millisle with their families. Visiting took place on a Saturday and we would all be gathered in the Common room. If you had a visitor your name was called. My mother visited me the Christmas before I was released.

14. When I was moved to the open Borstal, there were two separate wings. There was a green wing for country people and a blue one for Belfast people. The Officers made a distinction between the country boys and the Belfast boys. There was a workshop for joinery and metal work. I chose to do metal work. We were allowed to wear jeans in the open borstal.

15. I was in the canteen one day and word was going around that there were new jackets and jeans in the laundry. At dinner time, I went down to try to get a jacket for myself. There was a boy who worked in the laundry and he was standing at the door. I entered the laundry and I heard him shout 'Punchy he is stealing jackets, get him, get him'. Punchy Skillen was the main guy in the laundry and he had a bad reputation. He made us call him boss. He would always punch you when you walked past him. Punchy then came in and closed the door and told me that I was going to get my star burst. Two boys held me over the press. Punchy then took my trousers down and shoved the shaft of a brush up my backside. After this I never went back near the laundry. I have never spoken to anyone about incident.

16. I remember on another occasion Punchy brought us to mass. When we were leaving two boys went missing. Punchy then went into a rage.
17. When I injured my back, I informed the staff of this but they did not believe me. They thought that I was trying to avoid activities. The staff phoned home and asked my mother if I ever had back problems in the past and she confirmed that I did not have any back issue prior to this. My mother attempted to get my own doctor to attend the Millisle but he was not permitted entry. I was then taken to hospital and my back was x-rayed, I was told there was nothing wrong with it. When I was made to stand to attention I could hardly put my foot on the floor due to the pain that I was in. I was then punched for not standing to attention and I had to scrub the stairs as punishment. We were made to parade in two lines, I also found this very difficult because of the pain in my foot.
18. I was eventually put into the hospital room. I was given tablets; I think that they were pain killers. I was left in this room on my own for three days with no way of contacting anyone. My dinner was taken off me. My leg was so bad but I had to pretend that it was better so that I could leave this room. I now know that I had sciatica.
19. When we were all gathered in the workshop on one occasion I was threatened by another boy. He told me that someone from East Belfast was going to get me because I apparently said something about them. I had not said anything. This sort of intimidating behaviour was common. When everyone went into the workshop we had to remove our boots. I would sneak back into my room and take my boots off. I knew that I was going to get a beating in the changing room before the workshop.
20. I was eventually put into a dormitory with a few other fellows. They were always bullying and hurting each other. During the night, I remember hearing would hear the squealing and crying. I stayed awake as they were taller than me and I had to stay alert in case they started to hold me down and beat me.

I can remember that one of these boys was called **ML 9**. He always wanted to fight. There was a prison officer called **MZ 1** who punched and slapped me. He was a very big man and I knew not to report anything to him as if I did, I would end up having to serve the full three years of a sentence. I think that **ML 9** was in cohorts with **MZ 1** and they both wanted me to lose my special privileges. It was brutal.

21. I had to continue to make my bed each morning. I was in the canteen one morning when an Officer came in and told me that I had not made my bed. He told me that I would be put on report. The next morning the same thing happened. I would walk into my room and it was always the same two boys, **ML 13** and **ML 9**, standing there. They wanted to kill me and they would batter me and beat me up. They were both bullies. I knew that whoever was doing this to me was trying to get to me. I lay in bed at night crying. I then started to make sure that I was the last person to leave the dormitory so that my bed wouldn't be destroyed. Even then it was still wrecked. I felt as though I couldn't confide in anyone. **ML 9** slept in the room facing me and at night time he would look over and tell me that he would beat me. There was nothing I could do. I just lay there waiting on it happening.

22. I was watching television in the common room and it came on the news that soldiers were blown up. **ML 10** from [REDACTED] let out a roar and a prison officers' came into the room and started to shout at us and he called us fenian bastards. The abuse was worse after this incident because we were from [REDACTED]. I received word that I was going to be beaten up in the changing rooms. The man that ran the Work shop used to let me stay there to avoid this. He let me sit on a bench as he knew that my back was bad because I couldn't stand during lessons. He was a lovely man. I tried to keep to myself and hide. All I wanted to do was to go home and see my family.

23. Everyone wanted to receive special privileges as once you received these, you only had twelve weeks until you were allowed to go home. I can recall

when I received my special privileges; a screw was trying to break me so that I would lose them. I eventually left Millisle in 1980. I did not receive any preparation for leaving the borstal. The morning I was due to leave, I was told to polish the floors as I was not out yet. I can remember that my dad came and collected me and this showed me that he cared about me.

Life After Care

1. Everything had changed when I was released. My family had changed and the troubles were going on. I was brought to see my father in [REDACTED] when I got out of the borstal and he then returned home to live with us. When I got out of the borstal, I had so much anger inside me. I had become moulded into a hardened character. I started to get into trouble. I was put into prison after this. Being in prison did not mean anything to me. I was not afraid of being inside. All of this changed when my daughter was born. I never got into any trouble again.
2. My wife died [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]. She was the only one that I confided in. She was the only person who knew about the incident that occurred in the laundry room. I cannot tell my son about this incident. I have had trauma counselling, however, this did not help me as I was unable to talk. I have issues with my anger. I have a very short fuse. I have three children, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I never worked and this was embarrassing for my children. Children look up to their fathers. I feel as though I left school and went straight into the Borstal.
3. I find it difficult to mix with other people. I never realised the extent to which being in Millisle Borstal shaped me as an adult. I have been lying awake at night thinking about the past. I now realise that I have always found it difficult to chastise my children due to the experience that I had when I was in the Borstal. My mother, father and wife are all deceased. I feel like I have to reinvent myself. I did not get a good start in life and my experience as a young boy in Millisle was a brutal one.

PRIVATE

Statement of Truth

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

Signed **HIA416**

Dated 19.12.2015

HIA REF:
NAME: MZ1
DATE: 8th January 2016

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

Witness Statement of MZ1 in reply to HIA416

Millisle Borstal (January 1979 to 07.01.1980)

- 4-7 Although there are no specific allegations made against me in these paragraphs I wish to confirm that I worked in an open borstal where there were no cells. HIA416 refers to incidents that took place in the closed borstal where I did not work and I therefore could not have been involved in the incidents that allegedly occurred.
20. I deny the allegation made against me. I worked in the control room and not in the dormitories where this was alleged to have taken place and I did not take part in any acts alleged.

Conclusion

I was a prison officer for [redacted] years and not a single allegation was made against me. I was brought up as a devout Christian and I can honestly say that I never treated the prisoners with contempt nor did I abuse them in any way.

Signed MZ1
MZ1

Date: 8th January 2016