

HIA REF: 404

Witness Name: HIA 404

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 404

I, HIA 404, will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on the [REDACTED] in Belfast.
2. My mother was called [REDACTED]. She was aggressive and was physically abusive towards me. My mother and her sister [REDACTED] spent some time under the Good Shepherd nuns in Belfast when they were young and my mother was very badly abused herself, both physically and emotionally. I believe her Good Shepherd experience had an effect as to how she treated me as a child. I knew who my father was but I never had any contact with him. My Mother had another relationship when I was 9 years old and I have one half-brother. When I was born I lived with my mother and my aunt [REDACTED], and her husband [REDACTED], at [REDACTED] off the [REDACTED] in Belfast. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had two children of their own.
3. My mother worked at the [REDACTED] Hospital. She worked in silver service catering and worked long hours. When my mother worked my aunt [REDACTED] looked after me. She was very motherly and comforting. The house we lived in was in a bad state and we took sick. Uncle [REDACTED] developed tuberculosis and had a lung removed. There were slugs in the kitchen sink, rats running round and pigeons in the house. Uncle [REDACTED] kept pigeons and sometimes we would

have eaten the pigeons for meat. Times were hard. We had little food, unsliced bread, and maybe soup and potatoes.

4. I was approximately 9 months old when I took sick with the measles and was admitted to Purdysburn Fever Hospital. I was there for about three weeks and got very sick. I developed Diphtheria, Scarlet Fever, Meningitis and the Whooping Cough. I was transferred to the Royal Hospital in Belfast and then moved to Lissue House in Lisburn. I applied for my medical records for further information. My records state I came out of a tuberculosis house and that my mum died. This is incorrect. My aunt [REDACTED] died of tuberculosis after I was admitted to Lissue. Unfortunately there is a gap in my medical records and I cannot confirm the date I moved into Lissue House. I think it was just before Christmas 1951 or 1952. I know I also spent a period time in Crawfordsburn Sanatorium where they treated infants with tuberculosis.

Lissue House (dates unknown)

5. I was very young but I remember incidents where I was physically abused. I cannot confirm if the abuse happened at Lissue House, the Royal Hospital or Crawfordsburn. I do recall the incidents took place beside a door with a painted glass window and the windows were open and it was cold like a dungeon. I remember always feeling cold and afraid in Lissue which makes me think it was Lissue House. I was in a little ward off to the right and I recall a white metal cot with a dark red rubber mattress. The mattress had no bed clothes and I remember being naked and cold.
6. On one occasion I was standing up holding on to the bars of the cot when a nurse came in and beat me. She shook me very hard. She threw me down on the mattress. I was so scared I wet myself. I had no nappy on and remember standing in a pool of urine. I couldn't understand what was happening. I was crying and the same nurse came in, lifted me, shook me and threw me down again. A second nurse came in and put me over her shoulder and soothed me. The nurse that shook me cleaned my mattress and put me down again with a slap. She was short and fat with mousy brown hair and a cross face. I can

remember the second nurse scolded the first nurse and told her she would get into trouble or words to that effect.

7. I also recall an incident with a male nurse in a white shirt. He came in and exposed himself through the cot railings. I know now that he had an erection. I don't believe he had physical contact with me in a sexual way. This is the only incident I can recall of a sexual nature. Other stuff could have taken place but I have no memory of it. I do recall many incidents of getting slapped and hit with a spoon. I remember the nurses feeding me and hitting me on the chin and forehead with a spoon. I know I was very young but these memories have stuck with me.
8. There were food rations in the early 1950s. My mother told me she bought up four eggs every week to Lissue House with my name wrote on the eggs. However I never saw one egg. I don't recall getting fed much. I have not eaten properly my whole life. I never recall being happy in Lissue even when my murn came to visit.

Life after care

9. Once I left Lissue House I came back to live with my mother and Uncle [REDACTED]. My mother stayed at [REDACTED] to look after her sister's children. However it was deemed inappropriate for my mother to remain living with her sister's husband. My mother's aunt, [REDACTED], offered to take my mother and me in and we moved to [REDACTED]. I was reared up there and on that street there were big families with lots of older children. As I was on my own I got bullied and I had to fight to get my way through and I use to run away a lot.
10. I attended the Chest Clinic for several years between 1952 and 1957. They found tissue scars on my lungs and were concerned about tuberculosis. In 1957 my medical records state I was 8 years old and weighed just over three stone. I have had chest problems most of my life.

11. I was educated in the Christian Brothers. I received many terrible beatings in the school. Many incidents took place where the Brothers punched me the head, shoulder and back and occasionally kicked me. I remember one day [REDACTED] brought me up to the front of the class and lifted me by my ears and pinned me against the blackboard.
12. My mother had a relationship with a married man when I was 9 years old. I was very jealous. I felt he took the only person I had from me for that brief period of time. I was only 9 years old but I remember I wanted to kill him. I was very angry when I was young. I remember when I was 8 years old saying to my mother that I wished I was dead and would be better off dead. I think it stems from the hospital and school treatment and from being bullied.
13. In the early 1970s I was interned in prison for several months. Whilst in prison I suffered degrading treatment and went on hunger strike. It was not for political reasons. The living conditions were inhumane and I did not receive adequate medical attention for my chest. After the hunger strike my eating habits deteriorated. I eat food very late at night and in private. I do not eat in restaurants and I do not like anyone seeing me eat. My family have never seen me eat properly. After my time in prison I found it difficult to gain employment. I was self employed for a number of years as a [REDACTED] and I used the proceeds to open a [REDACTED] shop.
14. I married my wife when I was 19 years old. We met when we were 9 years old. She was a protestant and I was a catholic. We moved home several times until the troubles died down. We had four daughters. Despite all the years of psychical abuse I have suffered I am thankful I never hit any of my children. I now have fourteen grandchildren and sixteen great grandchildren. My wife died of lung cancer in 2010 and I now live on my own now. I don't go out much. My happiest years were my married years.
15. I never received counselling until I came to the Inquiry. I did feel low for a couple of years in my forties and started taking depression tablets. I did have a

few suicide attempts in my life. My last attempt was eighteen years ago after the death of my mother-in-law.

16. I came to the Inquiry to get some sort of closure. Throughout my life it has caused me stress. I do not feel my experiences are as bad as others have suffered however I want to expose the treatment that happened to children in these institutions. My own mother suffered serious physical and emotional abuse from the Good Shepherd nuns and never got a chance to tell her story. I only told my mother about my experience in Lissue two years before she died in 2007. It upset her greatly as she believed I received the best treatment in Lissue.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

HIA 404

Dated

20th Feb 2016

The Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children

FALLS ROAD, BELFAST

Dr. Getty, _____ 1st August 1951

194 Crumlin Road.

Ref. No. Frazer 56

Your patient **HIA 404** of _____was admitted on 5-7-51 and discharged on _____
was examined _____

Clinical report and examinations: (Progress Report)

Admitted from Extern because of loss of colour and appetite since measles 1 week previously. There is a contact at home, who, I understand has died since **HIA 404** was admitted to Hospital.

X-ray chest suggested that he had had consolidation and effusion right base though there was no gross basal change now - resolving consolidation right upper lobe. Mantoux positive to 1:1000.

Treated with a course of Distaquaine penicillin for 8 days when the signs in chest cleared, clinically.

X-ray chest on 29th July showed a hilar adenitis with chronic inflammatory changes in right base, not really characteristic of acid fast.

We are sending him to Lisson House today for a few weeks' convalescence.

M. J. L. Frazer
for M. J. L. Frazer, M.R.C.P., F.R.C.S.

Telephone: Belfast 22441

THE ROYAL BELFAST HOSPITAL FOR SICK CHILDREN
180 FALLS ROAD, BELFAST

File No. Frazer 56 (Progress Report)

6th September 1951

Dear Dr. Getty,

re **HIA 404** [REDACTED]

There has been some improvement
note on X-ray. [REDACTED]

He is still at complete rest in
bed and his general condition is
reasonably satisfactory.

Yours sincerely,



for Mr. J. L. Frazer, M.R.C.P., F.R.C.S.

Dr. Getty,
194 Crumlin Road,
BELFAST.

Telephone: Belfast 23441

THE ROYAL BELFAST HOSPITAL FOR SICK CHILDREN
180 FALLS ROAD, BELFAST

File No. Frazer 56 (Progress Report)

8th November 1951

Dr. Getty,
194 Crumlin Road,
BELFAST.

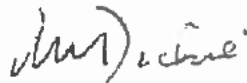
Dear Dr. Getty,

re **HIA 404** [REDACTED]

HIA 404 is not settling as well as we would like. At times his temperature reaches 101 but is usually around 99-100. He has now a large area of consolidation at the left apex and hilar glands still enlarged.

I am afraid he will have to continue at rest for some considerable time yet.

Yours sincerely,



for M. J. L. Frazer, M.R.C.P.

C2.

21.8.52.

Northern Ireland Tuberculosis Authority.

Clinic Address: Central Chest Clinic,

Dunham Street,

BELFAST.

Dear Dr. Getty,

Re HIA 404

Age.....

re
I examined the above-named patient on 10.8.52. and found as follows:—

History and Clinical Examination :

No complaints.

Physical examination of chest: No adventitious sounds heard.

Sputum :

Tuberculin Test :

B.S.R. :

X-Ray :

Lung fields clear.

Diagnosis: Primary tuberculous complex (quiescent).
Re-examination six months.

Treatment Recommended :

Dr. J.H. Getty,
194, Grumlin Road,
BELFAST.

Yours faithfully,

M. Havelle

Chest Physician.