

HIA REF: 426

Witness Name HIA 426

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 426

HIA 426, will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED]. I was named HIA 426 at birth but changed my name by deed poll in 1983. I have three brothers and a sister. My father left us when I was very young. I was the youngest in the family.
2. As a child I suffered from chronic bronchial asthma and I was in and out of hospital quite often. I recall being in one of the hospitals in Belfast, either Belfast City Hospital or the Royal Victoria Hospital, for a period of time as a child and a male nurse looked after me during that time. I recall he used to say things to me which I found slightly strange. I came from an Italian family so my skin is swarthy and I recall comments being made by this male nurse to the other female nurses saying that I had lovely brown legs and olive skin and that type of thing. I remember wondering to myself why the other nurses did not find the comments of this male nurse strange. These are some of my earliest memories.

Lissie House, Lisburn (Admissions from 1968 - 1971)

3. I was then transferred to Lissie House which was a convalescent home for children. I do not know whether it was a coincidence or orchestrated but this

same male nurse turned up at Lissue House. Looking back I think he may well have singled me out but I cannot be sure whether or not that is the case.

4. He often took me through an inner courtyard area where there was a raised garden and through a door into a corridor inside the hospital. It was an area of the hospital which did not appear to be used often. He would pin me against the wall in this corridor, not aggressively but tenderly and then he would come up very close against me and he would keep talking and talking but at the same time would be putting his hands down my trousers and masturbating me. I think I was about ten at the time. I remember trying to hide on occasions, sometimes in the bushes or in a cupboard, but he would always find me. I knew at the time it was wrong but you did not want to tell anyone because you did not want to get anyone into trouble and you were also afraid that no-one would believe you and you would get into trouble.
5. The abuse was not a daily occurrence but it was certainly regular. He was called **LS 9**. I no longer recall his first name. I think he was a full time nurse. I have no idea what age he would be now but when I was ten I thought he was about thirty years old but that is just guesswork and I could be mistaken. He had dark hair at the time. I also recall he had something wrong with his eye, it was not exactly a squint but there was something not quite right about one eye.
6. I cannot recall exactly the length of my first stay at Lissue House but it was certainly a whole summer. As far as I can recall I returned the next year and this male nurse started interfering with me again.
7. I only saw **LS 9** once after I left care. He was in the centre of town but he did not see me and I did not speak to him.
8. The daily regime at Lissue House was fairly normal. I was never subjected to any physical abuse.
9. I recall one boy there at the time **LS 10**, who had been slightly brain damaged and he just sat there all day and rocked back and forward. I also

recall a couple of older boys there who were bullies. I can no longer recall their names. Sometimes they would bully another boy and I would get the blame because the boy they bullied would be too afraid to tell on them and I would get the blame instead.

10. I remember getting French toast for breakfast sometimes and I had no complaints about the food at Lissue House.

11. I do not recall receiving any education during the periods of time I stayed at Lissue House.

12. My father left the family when I was very young but my mother came and visited on occasion. I never told her or anyone else what was happening to me.

13. I was never taken out of Lissue House on day trips or excursions. I don't ever remember being taken out for any reason.

14. I was ten or eleven when I left Lissue House. I returned to school but my education had been very disrupted due to my hospital stays and I was still quite sick so I got out of the habit and my education suffered a lot during those early school years. I was not unintelligent and I recall going to the library in Royal Avenue where I liked to read film and history books. I did not do well in exams at school and I left school when I was fifteen and went to work in the family catering business.

Life after care

15. I took singing lessons as I was very interested in music, especially classical music. I studied at the [REDACTED] in Manchester for five years and then I studied at the [REDACTED] in London.

16. I would say that my experiences in care definitely did affect me in later life. In my teenage years and my twenties I was not sure if the abuse affected my

sexual orientation but it certainly affected my ability to be intimate with a partner. I felt I could never be intimate with a woman. I also struggled to be intimate with men so I had anonymous sexual encounters in the early years of my sexual development. I spent years in the 1980's worrying about the Aids/HIV scare due to these earlier encounters and this lasted for quite a long time.

17. I have a partner now. I met him in college and we have been together for over twenty years. He has also suffered by being in a relationship with me. He went through a lot at the beginning but he stuck with me through the bad times and he has been a life saver.

18. I now work [REDACTED] as a performer you have to be confident and self assured. I had a good career but I found it hard to network. I did not play up to either conductors or directors and I found it hard to sell myself as other performers do as I often felt insecure.

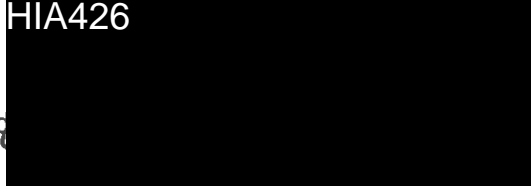
19. During the late 1980's I suffered greatly with my nerves and panic attacks so I took a lot of tranquilizers. I remember thinking there was no point in learning a piece of music if I would not survive long enough to perform it. I had a very pessimistic almost fatalistic point of view. I would then panic having to learn this music or a score for the following week when I should have been studying it six months in advance. I lacked self confidence.

20. I was told my asthma would have gone by my mid teens but I still suffer from it today. I had a great singing teacher who taught me good breath control so it does not affect my performance now.

21. I have told certain members of my family and my partner about my time in care but I never reported the abuse I suffered at Lissue House to any member of the medical profession or to the police at any stage.

Statement of Truth

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

HIA426


Signed

Dated 13-2-2014