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HIA REF: 83

Witness Name: HIA 83

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 83

I, HIA 83 will say as follows:-

Personal Details

1. I was born on [REDACTED]. I was adopted as an infant. My two brothers were the biological children of the family. My sisters and I were adopted. My brother [REDACTED] was the oldest. I was the second oldest. My adopted parents divorced when I was ten. My adoptive father got custody of my two brothers, my two sisters and myself. My sister was just born at that stage. My mother disappeared.
2. I found out I was adopted when I was eight years old.
3. My younger brother [REDACTED] was stealing around the house and stealing money from my father and I was getting continuously blamed wrongly for things going missing. I got terrible beatings from my father.
4. I had to deal with problems such as bed wetting. My father put me in baths of cold water for wetting the bed and I felt humiliated.
5. My brother and I would at times play truant from school and get into trouble with the police in [REDACTED]. Some of the other boys would be off school with us

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and were collecting money and pretending it was for charity. The police and the authorities found out what was going on. They contacted my adoptive father and he said he did not want me around. He said if my brother was involved he would wreck every bone in my body, so I ended up taking the blame. I had no support from the social services whatsoever, all I remember is being physically abused at home and social services never did anything.

Rathgael Training School, Bangor (23/10/1976 to 10/12/1976)

6. When I was [REDACTED] I appeared before [REDACTED] juvenile court due to my truancy from school. I was placed in Rathgael under a place of safety order for one to three years. It was only at this point that I came to the attention of social services. I was told on the Friday that I would have to go to Rathgael Training School in Bangor. The police had arranged to pick me up on the Saturday morning. A male police officer and a plain clothed female officer picked me up in the car from my father's house and drove me to Rathgael. I remember arriving at reception and I was frightened.
7. I was told to have a shower and a member of staff, **RG 31** came in when I was in the shower and he started touching me on my private parts with his hands. He remained dressed as he was doing this but I was naked in the shower and I was frightened and scared.
8. Bed time was usually 9.00pm but a few weeks after my arrival I was sent to bed early at 6.30pm as a punishment for smoking. I was left in the dormitory with the door locked. **RG 31** came up and I was sitting on the edge of the bed and he started touching and rubbing me again and I felt ashamed but there was nothing I could do. He was masturbating himself whilst touching me and I felt dirty.
9. He was there every time I went to have a shower. He had keys and he had access to everywhere. I did not witness **RG 31** abuse any of the other

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boys in this way. I never reported **RG 31** as I did not feel I had anyone to report it to or that anyone would listen to me.

10. At night time you were locked in a dormitory upstairs and you were not allowed to go downstairs. You went to school on site. You were not allowed to smoke on the junior side but during a break one morning on the junior side one of the seniors gave me a cigarette. I was sitting on the toilet during break smoking and a member of staff, called **RG 74** came in and smelt the smoke. He said you've been smoking and hit me with a bat, like a baseball bat. I felt like hitting him, like lashing out. **RG 74** hit me three or four times on my backside with a bat. I never received any treatment or care following this incident.

11. **RG 74** and **RG 31** were about forty when I was thirteen. I believe they are now deceased.

12. I saw boys abscond but I was scared to run away. I once saw two or three boys get punished for throwing a fire extinguisher through a window and running away one evening. When they were caught by police and brought back they were made to wear corduroy shorts and baseball boots with no laces. This was a typical punishment as was being made to do extra cleaning duties or being sent to bed early. I wanted to run away but seeing what happened to them frightened me.

13. I was friendly with one boy at Rathgael, **RG 75** who went to the same school as me in **██████████**. He lives in **██████████** and looks after **██████████**. I have not been in contact with him since leaving Rathgael.

14. The food at Rathgael was horrible and watery and you had to drink from a plastic cup and eat off plastic plates.

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Bawnmore (Coulter's Hill) Children's Home (10/12/1976 to 15/06/1977)

15. I was returned to [REDACTED] Juvenile Court and was moved to Bawnmore Children's Home, Belfast. It was a Protestant boy's home on the edge of a Catholic estate. There were about twenty boys in the home. There was a bit more freedom there. I had to start a new secondary school, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] so I was given a new uniform.

16. There was a family of brothers resident in the home named [REDACTED]. There were five brothers [REDACTED] BM 6 [REDACTED] BM 7 [REDACTED] BM 8 [REDACTED] BM 9 and [REDACTED] BM 10. I was bullied quite a lot by [REDACTED] BM 10 and a couple of his brothers. I was scared to tell staff because nothing would be done. I had no one to turn to on the staff and the bullying continued so I started running away and skipping school. I ran away on numerous occasions but I was always caught by the police and taken back. I got to [REDACTED] one day but was seen walking down the road by one of the social workers, [REDACTED] BM 11. As he pulled up in his car I ran off into someone's back garden but he caught me and I was taken back to Bawnmore.

17. Bawnmore was closed down in 1976. They got another house called Coulter's Hill, 60 Green Road, Ballyclare. All the staff from Bawnmore moved to the new premises. [REDACTED] BM 12 was in charge of the new home. I do not know if he is still alive.

18. I then had to start a new secondary school, [REDACTED], and the bullying in the home by the [REDACTED] Brothers continued. They would try to get money and cigarettes off you and they would beat you up. [REDACTED] BM 10 and [REDACTED] BM 7 were both older than me. I was fed up with the treatment I was receiving so I reported it to a housemaster, [REDACTED] BM 13. I told [REDACTED] BM 13 I was getting sick of the bullying and I felt I had to tell someone but he did nothing.

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Rathgael Training School (15/06/1977 to 11/09/1978)

19. I ran away once too often and was taken back to court and re-admitted to Rathgael. I was placed in the Reception Unit. I was really frightened as [REDACTED] RG 31 and RG 74 were still there. I remember a RG 47 and RG 50 both housemasters, but it was RG 31 and RG 74 that caused me concern. RG 31 kept touching me and he was masturbating whilst doing this as he had done before. This happened about two or three times a fortnight until I was moved to House 8. In House 8 you were allowed around the grounds during the day so I had a bit more freedom. I was not locked up in the same way i was in the Reception Unit.

20. I never received any visits from a social worker throughout my time in either home.

21. My adoptive mother had returned at this stage and I was getting weekend leave to go and stay with her in [REDACTED] I would be collected on a Sunday evening at York Road railway station in a minibus and driven back to Rathgael.

22. I was released on licence in September 1978 when I was sixteen years old. I went to live with my adoptive mother in a flat in [REDACTED]

Life after care

23. I got on with her and got a part time job working in a home bakery [REDACTED] I worked with a guy whose uncle owned the shop and he started bullying me so I only stayed in the job for two weeks and then I signed on for unemployment benefit again. I then got another job with [REDACTED] as a driver's mate, delivering bread to the shops around [REDACTED]

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24. I never told my adopted mother about the abuse or the stuff that was happening. I was confused. I started getting annoyed so I started having a sociable drink.
25. I traced my natural mother when I was eighteen and I found out that she had been in [REDACTED] hospital in Antrim. She had schizophrenia. I went to visit her one day and ended up living with her and her [REDACTED] sister for a week. After a week she told me she didn't want to know me. I felt rejected and that's when I took my first overdose of tablets. I was admitted to Belfast City Hospital for about 2-3 weeks. I saw a psychiatrist there but I cannot recall their name. I never told them about the abuse I had suffered in care but I did tell them about being physically abused by my father. I wanted to end it all and over the years I used drink as a crutch to block out memories from the past but I was never able to forget what has happened.
26. By drinking I got more depressed and shortly after taking the overdose I started cutting myself. I was self harming because I could not deal with the memories of what had happened. I was taken to [REDACTED] psychiatric hospital in Antrim and was also brought to Belfast City Hospital. The psychiatrist admitted me to [REDACTED] hospital in Antrim to detox. I was treated for depression. I have had numerous admissions to psychiatric hospitals in Northern Ireland and England over the years. I am taking anti-depressants now. I take one every night and they help me sleep.
27. I left Northern Ireland when I was nineteen or twenty. I went to Manchester and tried to join the army, Royal Corps of Transport, to learn how to drive. I was in a training camp for three days. On the first night I was there I got drunk, wet the bed and was sick all over myself. That stopped me from getting in and I felt degraded. I then hitched a lift to Blackpool with another guy and we got a job on the pleasure beach for the summer season. We operated one of the amusement rides, collected money and gave out change. I liked that job and enjoyed meeting people. After the summer season I was back on the dole again.

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28. I have lived in London now for more than sixteen years. Every time I think about my past I want to harm myself.
29. Once I was moved to Rathgael I never saw my brothers or sisters again. I think my older brother is now married and my adopted sister joined the police. My sisters are married but I never see any of my brothers or sisters.
30. My adoptive father came once to see me at Rathgael with his girlfriend at the time. I did not want to see him. I went to his house [REDACTED] one night as I had been drinking and I wanted to beat him up. My mother and her friend tried to stop me. My mother hit me a slap across the face and I don't remember much after that. The next day I received a call from a voice that sounded like my sister's husband and he warned me to stay out of [REDACTED] if I knew what was good for me. I have no contact with any family, not even my adopted mother, and it upsets me.
31. I wrote to my adoptive mother about a year ago but the letter was sent back. She knew I was trying to get in touch with her through the Salvation Army in [REDACTED] but I don't think she wants any contact.
32. I was drinking heavily and got in to trouble with the police on occasion for being drunk and disorderly. I was off drink for nearly a year and four months, then I relapsed in June or July 2011. I felt pressure as I was being moved out of a hostel where I had settled and I did not feel ready to move to a flat. That is when I tried to contact her. I have been sober since 25/11/2012 with only one brief relapse in April 2013 and I am currently living in a hostel in London. There are a lot of drink and drugs in the hostel but I have my own room and I come and go as I please. I go out of the hostel through the day. On a Thursday I do computers at the [REDACTED] trying to learn to email and do different things with the computer and then I do some writing and I'm there from maybe about ten o'clock in the morning until half four in the afternoon. On a Wednesday afternoon I do a bit of gardening for community gardening in [REDACTED] in London. I keep myself busy and I go to AA meetings.

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33. I see a counsellor every Friday morning. A couple of times after my counselling I have felt like having a drink, so I phone my AA sponsor. I go to a club called [REDACTED] on a Friday evening. It's a club where you can socialise where people aren't drinking and are in active recovery. You can play pool or have a meal. There's a guy called [REDACTED] who is a trained counsellor and he runs a group where you can talk.

34. I have always been single. I had a couple of girlfriends when I was at school but they two timed me. I still like girls but I am happy the way I am at the moment.

35. I have lived on the street many times because of drinking and have been living in and out of hostels.

36. Several years ago I was in [REDACTED] General Hospital years ago. I was given eighty Heminevrin tablets when I was discharged. They are highly addictive and if you drink on top of them you have blackouts. I drank that day and met someone I knew who offered to put me up in a squat that night. However, he beat me up and took my money off me. The Garda arrested me for being drunk and disorderly and breaching the peace. I was taken to Parnell Street police station, court the next day and the judge remanded me for a week in Mountjoy prison. I had no real chance to explain what happened. That is the only time I was ever in jail.

37. I see a representative called [REDACTED] from [REDACTED], which is an organisation that works mainly with the Irish Community in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] goes on appointments with me to the doctor and the hospital.

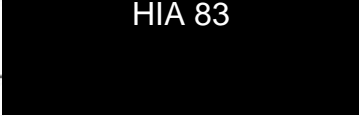
38. I gave a statement to [REDACTED] of PSNI, Garnerville during March 2013 after I had my interview with the HIA Acknowledgment Forum.

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39. I just want people to answer for what they have done and I want justice to be done.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed  HIA 83

Dated 18/05/15