

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 91

Witness Name: HIA 91

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 91

I, HIA 91 will say as follows:-

Personal Details

1. I was born on the [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]. I had 4 siblings: 3 brothers called [REDACTED] HIA 297 and NL 131 and a sister called [REDACTED] [REDACTED] passed away two years ago. I am not sure of the names of my parents. I was told that we were taken away from our parents and put into a Parochial House in 1970. The police were involved in this move but I am not sure of the circumstances. We were given no information at the time, and were moved around like sheep. We were told that our mother was an alcoholic but when we found relatives living in [REDACTED] they told us a different story, so we did not know the truth. NL 131 and [REDACTED] were fostered out and I think that [REDACTED] was sent to live with the [REDACTED] family.
2. I have tried to find out more details of my past, but have struggled to get information because there is no medical file for me before the age of 7 or 8. My brother has heard that a lot of files went missing or were destroyed in Nazareth Lodge which might explain why I cannot trace my younger years.

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Nazareth Lodge, Belfast (28/8/70 – 04/09/72)

3. I was sent from the Parochial House to Nazareth Lodge in 1970. I do not remember my brothers [REDACTED] and HIA 297 being there with me, because I was a young child. I was initially sent to the baby unit, and then on to the Lodge. I only discovered that I had siblings when we were sent to [REDACTED] after Nazareth Lodge. We did not find out about our older brother NL 131 and our sister until much later.
4. I attended the primary school at Nazareth Lodge, but I had just started school when they took me and my brothers out and sent us to live with the [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]. The school had been recently built or refurbished when I was there, and everything in it was brand new. We wore shorts and t-shirts rather than a school uniform.
5. I do not remember much about my time at Nazareth Lodge because I was there when I was very young. I do remember that the bedroom I slept in had wall-to-wall beds, for about 20 or 30 children. The other children who were there at the time were around the same age as me. The children would have been crying and screaming at each other, and I can remember crying in my cot, but no-one came to comfort me. I remember running around the Lodge, but I cannot recall much else about my time there.

Outside Institutions

6. HIA 297 [REDACTED] and I left Nazareth Lodge and were sent to live with the NL 77 / 78 family in [REDACTED] when I was about 5. We were put into a car by a social worker but we did not know where we were being sent to. Going to live in [REDACTED] was like going into Hell or World War Three. We could not understand how the government could give us to another family as we were just kids at the time. Our foster family lived on a farm and my two brothers and I had to share a bedroom. It was alright at the start but it soon changed.

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7. We were regularly beaten by our foster parents. We came home from school and were sent straight out to the fields to tend to the cattle. We were not allowed into the house and had to stay outside in the yard beside the chickens, pigs or cows. It was only at night time that we were allowed into the house to say a rosary and then straight up the stairs.
8. Our foster parents did not feed us, even though they were getting money for us from the government. I can only remember being given crusts of bread, despite the fact that the **NL 77/78** children were eating potatoes and everything else. The **NL 77/78** had 4 other children, but I believe that the eldest girl was fostered. If we said something smart or asked for more food we were beaten, and we had to survive by eating food off the streets. I remember we broke into **██████████** to get a box of crisps because we were so desperate for something to eat. The **NL 77/78** children could beat us as much as they wanted, but we did not dare hit them back. My brothers and I were like castaways and we had to do what we were told at all times.
9. I was beaten so badly on one occasion that I passed out. I had a dry skin condition that made it very painful to be bathed, but I was bathed in a harsh chemical soap that smelt like TCP. **NL 78** battered me black and blue and every time I screamed she scrubbed the soap into my skin despite the blood running down my legs. My brother **HIA 297** was beaten with a Blackthorn stick by **NL 78** and he ended up in hospital as a result.
10. **NL 77** was not as bad to us as **NL 77** was. He did beat us if we did something wrong, for example, if we forgot to bring the kettle in from the yard, but he was not as vicious as his wife. My two brothers would have received beatings as frequently as I did, but the **NL 77/78** children were never beaten. We were like dogs to the **NL 77/78**

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11. We stayed in [REDACTED] for two or three years. Social Services had nothing to do with us and did not come to visit us, nor did the nuns have any contact with us when we left the Lodge. Even if they had come, they would have been told that we were away out in the fields and kept away from us.
12. We attended the local primary school that was close to the [REDACTED] house. The school was lovely but we did not get to learn that much. There was a teacher at the school who was very concerned about us and reported the [REDACTED] to Social Services. We had told the teacher about some of what was happening to us at the [REDACTED] and she also noticed the bruises on our arms and legs. The [REDACTED] had warned us not to tell anyone, but the teachers noticed how my brothers and I were like animals at lunch time because we were starving. A social worker came out to visit us after this but we did not get speaking to him.
13. Our brother [REDACTED] came and took us away from the [REDACTED] but before this we did not know he existed. He took us back to Armagh with him when he saw us sitting in the yard like orphans. I am not sure how [REDACTED] knew where to find us, but I think that he spoke to Social Services.

Dalton Road Family Group Home, Armagh (dates unknown)

14. [REDACTED] took my brothers and I to Dalton Road Family Group Home in Armagh that was run by the [REDACTED] family. This was a mixed home for boys and girls from around 5 or 6 right up to 18. When I was there with my brothers there were around 18 – 20 children living there. The government sent down money for us but we never received any of it. We did however get fed in Dalton Road, and there were lovely women who gave us our meals and looked after us, such as [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and a girl called [REDACTED]. We were regularly beaten in Dalton Road, and after one incident where I was beaten with a bamboo stick by [REDACTED] I put three cats in with the pigeons in the loft as payback.

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15. The [REDACTED] family replaced the NL 79 family after NL 79 savagely kicked and beat [REDACTED] another resident, on [REDACTED] 18th birthday. I have a lot of respect for the [REDACTED] family because they did the best that they could for orphans like us. They did more for us kids than any social worker did. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] talked to us if we had any problems and treated us with respect. We felt that we could not confide in social workers in the same way, because anything that we told them was reported back. I left the [REDACTED] when I was 18. They were a brilliant family and I invited them to my wedding.

Life After Care

16. I have seen boys who have gone through the care system turning to drink and drugs after everything. My brother and I went through Hell, but we never turned to drink or drugs, and I am proud of that. I could have thrown myself into the Troubles, or gotten myself into debt but I didn't. When I was 18 I was a tear-away, but I think I have done well for myself. I was married 13 years ago, but my wife [REDACTED] and I are now separated. I have three daughters; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and a son [REDACTED] I have a good relationship with my children, and I dote on my three grandchildren.

17. My wife knows about what I went through when I was a child, and she encouraged me to come forward. There were nights that I had nightmares and flashbacks to my time in care, and I would often wake up screaming in my sleep. My wife told me to go to my GP but all he did was write me a prescription. I don't like taking tablets so I did not take my medication. I did talk to a group called WADE in Armagh and it was a weight off my mind. They were a brilliant help to me, but WADE has closed down now and there is no one else I can talk to in Armagh.

18. I was questioned by the PSNI about the abuse that was going on in Nazareth Lodge, but I told them to speak to my older brother because I could not tell them much from my time there. I did not hear anything else from the police, and I never made a statement to them.

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19. I want answers from the Government: I want to know why my brothers and I had to go through what we did. We got nothing from the Welfare, and we should not have had to go through any of it. We missed out on a lot from our childhood, such as the opportunity to get a good education. I believe that the Government has failed children who were used and abused within the care system. I also believe that both the State and the Church Institutions owe children like me an apology.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed **HIA 91**

Dated 29-6-14

19/3/68

HIA 297

at request of Nay the Pilam - on getting to old
for the Rang Nay the - Nay house helper -
Neither can take them at present. Both Homes
now endeavouring to take families.
on W.L. for adm. at Easter to Nay Lodge -
mother comm

19/4/68 Rang ... 641356

on 17/4/68 23/4/68. - arranged with D.W.O.
Free ...

transferred by C.O. 23/4/68 (Receipts
(No bed cards & No milk books) Case forms given
These = bed cards to be sold by D.O.)

Confidential

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS ACT (N.I.), 1950.

Report from Voluntary Organisation on Children maintained on behalf of a Welfare Authority.

Name of Child **HIA 91** Date of Birth **[REDACTED]** Religion *Rc*

Name of Voluntary Organisation *Nazareth House, Portadown*

School Attendance

If child is in Employment give the following information:—

Name and address of Employer

Wages

Amount of contribution towards maintenance

Have parents visited the child within the past three months *no.*

General Conduct *normal.*

General Health (Note any illness) *Fairly good - improving*

Does child receive religious instruction *no.*

GENERAL REMARKS

Had operation for [REDACTED] 14th October, 1967.

Date *5-4-68*

Signature—Matron/Officer

SR 29 *Superior*

FOR OFFICIAL USE

No interest shown by mother

NOTES:—

1. This form should be completed in respect of each child maintained on behalf of a Welfare Authority.
2. Completed forms should be returned to the appropriate Welfare Authority at the end of March, June, September and December in each year.
3. Under the Heading of "General Remarks" any items of interest should be noted, e.g. vaccinations, immunisations, periods in hospital, etc.

file

Sough Barracks,

25th August, 1970.

Dear Rev. Mother,

re: Children

Further to my telephone conversation last week with Mother I now wish to confirm that I will transfer and HIA 91 to your home from Nazareth House, , on the morning of 28th August, 1970. Thank you for helping us to keep the four children in this family together.

Yours faithfully,

County Welfare Officer.

Rev. Mother,
Nazareth Lodge,
516 Ravenhill Road,
DUBLIN 18,
RG 6 0RM

MG/EM

HIA 97
HIA 91

b.

b.

b.

14th May, 1971.

Visited these boys at Nazareth Lodge.

It was my first interview with them and was therefore very informal, and in a group. We talked briefly about football, cowboys, and guns. They all related well. HIA 91 being the most reticent. I promised to come and see them again.

I indicated to SR 71 my feeling that HIA 297 and [redacted] might be best fostered together and that I was investigating this possibility. At present the [redacted] were 'considering the matter'.

I said that no definite plans were envisaged for the Hand children.

[redacted]
Assistant Children's Officer.