

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 397

Witness Name: HIA 397

## THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

## WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 397

I, HIA 397 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born HIA 397 on the [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] Belfast.
  
2. I believe I was put into care in October or November 1968. I have three older brother's [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I believe that we were all born to the same mother and father but because we were born out of wedlock we were all taken from her by the Catholic Church. I believe [REDACTED] [REDACTED] my mother was put into a laundry.
  
3. My mother turned into a recluse but I believe she had further encounters with the man I believe is the father to all of us. However I am not in a position to prove or disprove it.
  
4. I was adopted by a family from County [REDACTED] in 1979 or 1980. I now call [REDACTED] my parents and we lived in [REDACTED]

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Nazareth Lodge 01/05/1973-16/03/1978

6. According to records I was moved up to Nazareth Lodge when I was about four or five years of age. I was under the care of **NL 5** she was like a mother figure to me and we still have regular contact today. **NL 5** was strict when she had to be. I don't recall a nun dealing with our group but I do remember **SR 46** was in charge of me at a later stage.
  
7. The other care staff and in particular **NL 19** were not as nice. She wore shoes with cork on the heels and her hair in a . Every time I see somebody wearing either item I think of her. She would pull the children up from whatever they were doing in a rough and abrupt manner. I recall as a child I liked doing handstands and had my hands on the wall and my feet in the air. She came over and stuck her stiletto heel into my hand. I remember crying but I never got any treatment for it.
  
8. In the mornings she lined all the children up and looked at our nails. If our nails were not right she would slap us as hard as she could. I was so afraid of her.
  
9. I remember wetting the bed one time and being petrified of her. I rolled

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round the bed in the hope to get it dry so that she would not notice. She was so nasty. **NL19** beat us regularly and I remember her hitting me on at least one or two occasions.

10. In the summer we would go to Ballyhornan for holidays. I remember **NL 19** dressing us in warm coats on a summer's day and making us walk from Ballyhornan to Ardglass. I am unsure of how far it was but she made us walk and we were dressed totally inappropriately.

11. When **NL 19** had an audience and if she was going away somewhere she would have said to us give us some sugar, it meant she wanted us to give her a kiss. I really hated her and somebody told me not that long ago that she had passed away. She instilled a fear in me that was just unhealthy.

12. All the children slept in big dormitories. We went to bed early at night even in the summer between six and six thirty. We would be woken to go to the toilet later in the night but I never knew at what stage because I could not tell the time. **NL 19** would grab us roughly by the hair and stand over us as we went to the toilet but **NL 5** would have woken us more gently. I remember **NL 19** being particularly nasty to myself and another child but for no apparent reason.

13. Bath time took place in the kitchen in the sink. You were shoved into the sink summer or winter and there would be people walking past as it was daylight. We all lined up boys and girls together and I remember somebody complaining about the water being too hot in the sink. That girl was dragged by the hair and thrown across the floor she slipped because her wee knees were wet. I remember thinking that was horrendous. It should never have happened; we should have been safe there.

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14. I remember somebody pouring me cornflakes and trying to say that's enough, she drew back her hand as hard as she could and busted me on the back of my head. She then said I'll tell you when you have enough you cheeky bastard. I was only a child aged about seven or eight and it hurt I can remember that very well.
  
15. We attended St Michaels School on the Ravenhill Road it was pretty barbaric. One memory I hold is the teacher asking the class what the capital of England was, he pointed at me and said sure he doesn't know he's from up there, how would he know, he's up there you know and I remember the class looking up at me laughing. The teachers have had a negative impact on me and they made us feel like second class citizens.
  
16. It would be wrong to say that all the nuns were bad because that is not the truth but some were worse than others. There was one in particular Sister **SR 31** who wore a big bulky ring and she had an affliction of walking past a group and scraping her ring into the back of our heads. She always did it quite subtly but there was no reason for it.
  
17. On one occasion I was scratching my head and **SR 30** told me it was bad manners. I spoke to another staff member I think to ask her if it was bad manners and she busted me with her hand right across the side of my face she busted me so hard she burst my lip.
  
18. Father Brendan Smyth attended Nazareth Lodge sometimes. I do remember him interfering with me he would sit on the bed and play with my genitalia. I remember him doing the same to the guy in the bed next to me and the guy was shaking his head from side to side, he was terrified and I can still see it.

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19. I remember as a child walking up to the chapel in Nazareth Lodge, I don't know why I was there or why I was on my own but I remember hearing voices in the chapel. It was dark and along the corridor the chapel was on the left hand side. I remember looking in and Smyth was there with a young [REDACTED] guy, the young guy was crying I could see the tears tripping down his face. I looked at him and I remember thinking to myself I know why you are crying because he was alone with Smyth. I didn't do anything I just walked on and to this day it is one of the foremost memories of my mind.

20. Time in the home was always governed by routine you had a set breakfast, set tea, school time and everything else in between. The staff were often the victims of attacks by the children and I remember **NL 5** being assaulted and thumped on the back of the head.

21. **NL 5** wasn't cruel unlike some of the other staff she as strict. When I reflect on my treatment in the home it wasn't as bad as some of the stories I have heard.

22. **NL 5** asked me one day would I like to be adopted. I did not know the meaning of the word but I skipped about outside with [REDACTED] saying I'm going to be adopted. We weren't allowed on the grass at the home in case we got cold and if we did venture onto it we had to explain ourselves to **NL 5**

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Life after Care

24. At eighteen I decided I was going to find out who I was. I had been told when I entered my teenage years that I had brothers. When I left secondary school I was given my birth certificate. It gave my mother's details and had a very traumatic effect on me at that time. My interpretation was that I felt ashamed at being her son and that she was a woman that had no morals.

25. At eighteen I went to see my mother who according to the birth certificate lived at an address in [REDACTED]. I sat outside the house and then went up to rap the door it was opened after a significant time. I said to her you're my mother or I'm your son, it was something along those lines. She said that she wasn't and went to close the door but I had my foot jammed in it. I then said to her who I was and when I was born her head just dropped. I told her that I wanted to see her and she lambasted me for coming into [REDACTED] because I was a stranger. I told her that I wanted to find out about myself and my brothers but she said that I didn't have any brothers. After an initially difficult start she and I got into a good relationship.

26. I had assistance from the Catholic Adoption Welfare Society and [REDACTED] a social worker for Family Adoption Welfare. They helped me build a relationship with my mother, I maybe saw her twelve times over the years and I noticed an improvement in her. I then established contact with my brother [REDACTED] his adoptive mother had brought him to live in the South coast of England. The [REDACTED] were more difficult and when they found out they were adopted it had a very traumatic effect on them. However, the four of us are still in contact today.

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27. My brothers and I were due to meet my mother years later but she reneged. I didn't speak to her for several years and then she became ill. I went to visit her in hospital and did so until she died. I helped arrange her funeral and still look after her grave.

28. I met the man I believe is my natural father but he denied being so and said that it could be his brother. The only way we would find out is if my three brothers and I took DNA tests as this man is now dead but I am afraid to do this in case everything my mum told me is a lie.

29. In 1995 the police called at my parent's home. I had just got married and was returning from my honeymoon. My father told them that I would have nothing to say [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] I did contact them and told them that stuff did happen when I was in Nazareth Lodge but that I didn't want to talk about it.

30. I have always buried the things that happened to me away and now that they have opened it's like a Pandora's Box. I have had some counselling sessions and the thoughts that I had locked away of the bad things that happened me in there are now coming to the fore again.

31. In terms of my own life I am very keen for my own children to have a set routine and that stems from my time in care. I don't understand their constant want for materialistic things.

32. The abuse I suffered has slowly manifested itself in an area where I've had this inability to swallow food there's a constant anxiety. I didn't choose to let it affect me and I chose to forget about it and walk the path I'm on. I didn't do great at secondary school but something in me

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triggered when I left and I went to Technical College and got O'Levels.

33. I started a career in [REDACTED] in 1988 and finished in 1991/92. I have two degrees and have never been out of work. I am now in a more specialised job as an [REDACTED] was previously working in a very stressful job in which I dealt with clients who had been abused. I had difficulties fulfilling this role and my contract was terminated by the company, I believe the impact of my childhood has had detrimental consequences in respect of my ability to perform certain aspects of the job. The trauma of my past is having an impact on my life now more than it ever did before.

34. I am married and have [REDACTED] children.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated \_\_\_\_\_  
HIA 397  
[REDACTED]  
✓ 26/7/2014



RESTRICTED (when complete)

Statement of Witness

Statement of: [Redacted]

Age of Witness: [Redacted] (if over 18 insert 'over 18')

I declare that this statement consisting of one page/s, each signed by me is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence at a preliminary enquiry or at the trial of any person, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Signature of Witness: [Redacted] Date: 27/4/10
Service/Staff # if police/staff

Signature witnessed by: (Appropriate Adult)

Signature of Member: Fiona Mills PW1416 Date: 27/4/10
by whom statement was recorded or received Service/Staff # if police/staff

When I was [Redacted] on the [Redacted], I went into the care of St Joseph's Baby Home, care of the Sisters of Nazareth, Ravenhill Road, Belfast. I have no real memories of the baby home, and stayed there until I was about 4 or 5 years, when I went to Nazareth Lodge. The children in the Lodge were older. I was put in the care of two lay staff, [Redacted] NL 5 and [Redacted] NL 19. [Redacted] NL 5 did not abuse me but I encountered physical abuse from I was 6 years old. There were so many incidents I cannot remember them all but I would have been assaulted on a daily basis by lay staff and the Nuns. I remember wetting the bed a few times and being physically trailed out of bed by the hair and made to strip the bed. This was by [Redacted] NL 19. On and off the physical abuse would happen without warning and in most cases, for no reason. There was seven of us in that group. When I was about seven years old I went up to the Sacred Heart group. This group was larger, about 20-30 children and was run by a nun called [Redacted] SR 223 This nun I can only describe as militant and from a Satanical group. The sisters generally gratuitously physically, verbally and mentally abusive to us. [Redacted] SR 223 was the worst. On many occasions she would trail me by the hair the full length of the 35 ft corridor. At other times she would repeatedly kick, punch and slap me, sometimes if she thought I had said something wrong, but more often for no reason at all. She would also denigrate me saying

Certified a true copy of an original signed document

Table with 2 columns and 2 rows for witness and adult signatures.

- 5 With regard to paragraph 9, it is clear a number of allegations have been made regarding bed wetting in Nazareth. Sisters of Nazareth are remorseful that they did not assist HIA 397 in a satisfactory manner and the staff did not deal with the children in a capable manner. At no time do we agree any child should have felt fear as a result of their bed wetting. As the Sisters cared for a number of children from a number of various backgrounds, it may have been difficult for them to consider the individual needs of each child. The reason behind a child's bedwetting was clearly not dealt with appropriately and methods used to prevent bedwetting were not well known at this time. Medical advice was later sought by the Congregation to help the children and the Congregation do accept that their methods were not acceptable.
- 6 With regard to paragraph 16, our Sisters did not wear rings until the 2000 General Chapter and then it was stipulated that 'Sisters may wear a simple silver Congregational ring'.
- 7 With regard to paragraphs 18 & 19, HIA 397 has discussed sexual abuse by Fr Brendan Smyth. No staff would have been allowed in the children's dormitories except the staff members. The sex abuse of children that were in our care has only come to light in recent years. The Sisters are horrified, shocked and devastated that this abuse took place and offer a sincere and profound apology to any child that suffered this horrendous act.
8. The Sisters that HIA 397 refers to are now deceased and therefore cannot speak for themselves. The Congregation therefore offers HIA 397 an unreserved and most sincere apology for any treatment he received by any Sister which fell below the acceptable standard.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed  Sr Brenda McBall

Dated 28 November 2014

Name **SR 30**  
Date: 26<sup>th</sup> January 2015

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

Witness Statement of **SR 30**

I, **SR 30** will say as follows: -

1. I went to Nazareth Lodge on [REDACTED] and left for Nazareth House on [REDACTED]
2. In respect of the witness statement provided by **HIA 397** formerly [REDACTED] at no time did I have any responsibility for nor physical contact with this person.
3. With reference to paragraph 17 this did not happen.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed **SR 30**

Dated 26 January 2015