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HIA REF: 282

Witness Name: **HIA 282**

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF **HIA 282**I, **HIA 282** will say as follows:-Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] and lived with my parents and brothers and sisters in the [REDACTED] of Belfast. There were [REDACTED] children in the family and I am the [REDACTED]. I have [REDACTED] sisters and [REDACTED] brothers. I attended [REDACTED] and then moved to [REDACTED] Secondary School. My father was a [REDACTED] and he travelled all over the country and my mum looked after us at home.

St Patrick's Training School [REDACTED]

2. I got into trouble when I was about [REDACTED] and I broke into a sweet shop near where I lived in [REDACTED]. I was arrested and I had to attend the Juvenile Court in Belfast. The Court ordered that I be sent to St Patrick's for [REDACTED] and at that time the Christian Brothers ran the Training School. I left the Court and was taken straight to the Training School in a minibus.
3. The first night that I was there I thought that the Brothers seemed okay because one of them got me something to eat because I had missed dinner time by the time I arrived. However after a few days I started to get smacked

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on the back of the head or kicks on the backside when the Brothers were walking past me. These were for no reason whatsoever. The Brothers simply hit you and walked on without saying a word. This happened to me and to other boys frequently. I literally became afraid of them and was terrified of one in particular as he was a [REDACTED]. As far as I remember he was the [REDACTED] of the Brothers at the time I was at St Patrick's. The Brothers carried leather straps and I would have got a thump with the leather strap basically for nothing. The Brothers were really vicious. I cannot remember any of their names as it was so long ago.

4. There was one Christian Brother who looked after a class in the school and he was okay compared to the others. I never remember him having a strap or hitting anyone. Once I was fighting with another boy and he broke the fight up. He told both of us off but he never raised a finger against us. He was the exception to the rule. He appeared to be an old man and I recall that he walked very slowly and never got angry. He was kind to me and the other boys. Education in St Pat's was poor because I learned absolutely nothing whilst I was there. You would have spent the normal school day in the classroom and there were around twenty boys in the class. We did not change classrooms as you would in secondary school but stayed in the same room all day like in primary school. I liked the Brother who taught me although I cannot actually remember his name. I felt that going into his class was a way of getting away from the rest of the Christian Brothers because when you were in the class they never came in.
5. There was a set routine in St Patrick's and it was extremely regimented. One of the Brothers put the lights on in the dormitory and hit the bed frames with his strap. This was usually around half past seven or eight o'clock. I had to wash, dress, make the bed and fold up my pyjamas before going for breakfast. I then went to school and after school I could play in the yard, go to the games room, play handball or go to my dormitory. I do not remember if I had to do any homework. Tea was at the same time every day and all the boys went to the canteen and ate our meal. It always seemed really rushed then there was free time until around eight o'clock. All the boys had to be in their dormitory by then

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and had to be in bed by nine o'clock which was when the lights were turned out.

6. Christian Brothers would come round to turn the lights out but you could hear the Christian Brothers walking up the corridor. Once we knew a Brother was coming you could have heard a pin drop in that dormitory and before he turned to go into that dormitory everybody was in bed and ninety per cent of the boys were lying on their side with their eyes closed pretending to be asleep, that's how terrified they were of the Brothers. We would have been sitting on somebody's bed talking away and we were like rockets getting into the bed. If you were not in bed he would have used the strap to slap your leg.
7. At the weekends, there was always cleaning to be done and there was always a trip to Broadway Cinema. Any boy who wanted to go was allowed to go and all the boys walked down to the cinema in a group. There was a Brother who was at the head of the group and another couple at the rear. There were always a number of Brothers who went in case anyone tried to abscond. I do not remember anyone trying to run off whilst I was at St Patrick's. I used to look forward to the trip because it was the only time I was allowed outside of the school site.
8. I remember that the food was a bit scant to and there were no extras. To my recollection you could not go up and ask for more. The place was clean and the bedclothes were changed. I believe my mum would have taken my dirty washing home, washed it and brought it back up again on her next visit. I think there were visits twice a week but I am not a hundred per cent certain. There was always a visit on Sundays and I believe that the second visit was on Wednesdays. To be honest my mum would have been up every day if she could have been. She always brought me sandwiches, biscuits and sweets so that I never went hungry. My dad travelled all over the country and he would have rang my mum up when she had to come up to visit me. I do not remember any Social Workers coming to see me but things were different back then and the Christian Brothers answered to no one as far as I was concerned.

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9. A week or so before I got out, it was a Saturday afternoon, we had sausage rolls and beans for tea. I took my sausage roll and I went outside and sat on the main steps leading up into the reception hall. The crumbs from the sausage rolls were dropping all over the place and the particular Christian Brother who terrified me was walking past. He started to go on about the crumbs falling and then he began to hit me on the head with the leather strap. I must have received ten or fifteen thumps with the strap on my head and back and it was really vicious. He would have hit me the same way as you would hit a man if you were fighting with him. I ran away up the steps to get away from him. There were no witnesses and the Brother never spoke to me about what he had done.
10. I was released around a week later and there were marks all over my back caused by his strap and there were a couple of lumps on my head where he had hit me. One evening I was getting a wash and I had my shirt off. My dad walked in and I remember him telling me to behave myself when I went out because I was only out of the home. He then saw the marks on my back and I told him what had happened to me. He contacted his friend [REDACTED] and both of them went up to St Patrick's to find out what had happened. I cannot remember the name of the Brother he was speaking to and he told me that the Brother threatened to call the police and that a half dozen Christian Brothers came out to confront my dad and his friend.
11. There wasn't any sexual abuse at St Patrick's as far as I was aware. My complaint was just about the viciousness of them and the assaults I sustained. I probably would have got smacked on the back of the head up to six times a day and that wasn't unusual for other kids who were in there as well.
12. The abuse never stopped and I really pitied anyone who had a longer sentence to serve there. I know a cousin of mine, [REDACTED] was there for two years and he came out a completely different person altogether. He was a happy go lucky kid when he went in but when he came out he was

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withdrawn and would hardly have spoken and kept himself to himself. He hardly ever came out of his own house.

Life after Care

13. I was released from St Patrick's after [REDACTED] was served and I never returned. I went back to school and I left there to join the [REDACTED] I was [REDACTED] when I joined the [REDACTED] and it was fantastic. I have been all over seeing the world and getting well paid. When I first started I would have been getting the same wages in the [REDACTED] then as a tradesman would have been getting here and I was only [REDACTED]. The work was hard but I enjoyed it. I did it for a number of years but then I met a girl here in Belfast and I got married and we had children. I have [REDACTED] children and I am close to them even though my daughter is now based in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and my eldest son is considering emigrating to [REDACTED] as his wife is [REDACTED].
14. I detest the Christian Brothers now and I do not have much confidence in the Catholic Church because of the allegations and because of the cover up that went on. I do not go to chapel now because of these sex scandals but I do say my prayers. Sometimes I am ashamed of being a Catholic because it is only the tip of the iceberg. I remember a specific incident when I was around seventeen and was in the [REDACTED] I saw two monks in the street and I had to quickly move to avoid them as I was so afraid of the clergy and the memories came flooding back.
15. I believe that there should be compensation for those people who suffered abuse and most importantly there should be a full apology from the Christian Brothers and the Catholic Church in Ireland. I was abused by members of the Church and the fault totally lies at their door. I was not abused by any member of the State and do not believe that the State owe me an apology. I do not consider that a memorial would be appropriate.
16. I am [REDACTED] years old and when I look back over my life I remember all the dangerous places I travelled to with the [REDACTED] but I state with all

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sincerity that [REDACTED] I spent in St Patrick's Training School was the most terrifying [REDACTED] of my life.

Statement of Truth

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

Signe **HIA 282** [REDACTED]

Dated 7/2/15

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HIA REFERENCE – BR 94

HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE INQUIRY 1922 – 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF [REDACTED] BR 94 – BR 94

I, [REDACTED] BR 94, will say as follows:-

1. I was born on [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] and I am now [REDACTED] years old. I joined the De La Salle Order on [REDACTED]. In August 1961 [REDACTED] I was sent by my Provincial to St. Patrick's Training School in Belfast and I took up my position there as a member of staff on [REDACTED]. I continued to work at St Patrick's for approximately [REDACTED] years, until [REDACTED]. Since my retirement I have continued to live in a De La Salle owned house in Belfast.
2. I did not teach in the school. My role was that of [REDACTED] which could be described as a [REDACTED]. I looked after and supervised the boys when they were not at school. This was from when they first got up in the morning until they went to bed at night. I had no responsibility for the boys after bedtime as the school employed night supervisors. The only exception would be if I was called in to deal with an emergency at night time, such as if a boy had to be taken to hospital. I worked in the junior section of the school supervising younger boys up to the age of fifteen until around [REDACTED] when I then went on to [REDACTED] the senior school.
3. Discipline at the school was maintained with a system of rewards and privileges. There was a marks system and at the end of the week depending on what marks they got, the boys would be told what pocket money they were to receive. Use of the swimming pool and various other activities were also used as part of the reward system. For more serious misbehaviour corporal punishment was administered, particularly in the earlier years when it was permitted. A strap was used for this purpose and it entailed usually two or three slaps on the open hand. I did not hit the boys anywhere else. If it was more serious the boy would be referred to the Principal of the school, the manager, to decide what punishment they should get.

4. [REDACTED]



COMPLAINT 2 – [REDACTED] – HIA REFERENCE 282

8. HIA282 [REDACTED] made a statement to the Inquiry on 17 February 2015. I do not believe he has made a statement of complaint to the police. I do not recall this person and I note he has stated he was resident in St. Patrick's Training School for a [REDACTED] period in [REDACTED]. He was unable to name me but identifies me as [REDACTED]. I am assuming this is a reference to myself since [REDACTED] at St. Patrick's at that particular time although I know of one other Brother – BR103 [REDACTED] – who, while not as [REDACTED] as me, was certainly [REDACTED]. While I accept a leather strap was used by the Brothers, including myself, it was used sparingly as far as I was concerned and I deny using the leather strap "basically for nothing". HIA 282 has also referred to one particular incident when he was struck repeatedly on his head and back with a leather strap because of crumbs which had fallen from some food he was eating. While he does not identify the Brother who allegedly beat him, he states it was "the particular Christian Brother who terrified me" and I believe he could therefore be referring to me. I deny this happened. I also have no recollection of the confrontation which he states happened after this when his father and a friend went up to St. Patrick's to complain about the beating. If this had occurred then I believe I would have heard about it. The impression that I or the other Brothers were violent in this sporadic unreasonable fashion, is totally at odds with my perception of life in the school at that time.
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