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HIA REF: 283

Witness Name [REDACTED] HIA 283

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT [REDACTED] HIA 283

[REDACTED] HIA 283, will say as follows:-

Personal Details

1. I was born [REDACTED] near [REDACTED] in County Fermanagh. I think the townland was called [REDACTED]. My mother was called [REDACTED], formerly [REDACTED]. My father's name was [REDACTED]. I never met my mother.
2. I recall a woman nursing me. She had one arm and when I checked with my sister in later years I realised this was my Aunt [REDACTED]. According to my birth certificate she was present at my birth and she was called [REDACTED]. I do not know if [REDACTED] was her married or maiden name. She is now deceased.
3. I had a brother [REDACTED] who was three years older than me and a sister [REDACTED] who was one year older than me. They were both placed in care in Northern Ireland. I had two younger brothers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who were not placed in care. I also have three half brothers called [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They were my older half brothers from my mother's first family.

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St Joseph's Children's Home, Termonbacca (15 August 1942 – 28 August 1947)

4. I was placed in St Joseph's Home, Termonbacca when I was almost five years old. I have no idea why I was placed in care. I left this home when I was almost ten.
5. [REDACTED] was also placed in Termonbacca. I had very little to do with him as we were separated most of the time and I only ran into him occasionally. It was strange how they separated us. He used to tell me things that he thought were happening in the home but I did not realise what was happening and now I have more or less forgotten all the stories he used to tell me. He died some years back now in or around 1993/1994 when he was sixty years old.
6. I remember a few things about my time in Termonbacca. I remember being beaten on the legs by a nun named [REDACTED] SR 82 [REDACTED] with a belt that had three strands of leather and four or five knots along its length. I thought that was a bit cruel. She is the only nun that I remember.
7. I also recall my best friend in the home at the time was a boy called [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. We used to play together a lot. One day we were playing "chasies" in the hall in the home as boys do and I jumped over a desk and landed on my feet but he chased me, jumped over a desk and fell and broke his leg. He was taken away immediately after this incident. I asked after him and the nuns said he would not be coming back and I never saw him again. I still do not know what ever happened to him.
8. I had another accident at the home when I tripped and hurt my knee on the corner of an old milk crate coming home from school. I was probably skidding along the snow at the time and I took a large chunk out of my knee and had to miss a couple of weeks from school. The nuns fixed it up for me but I did not go to hospital for treatment following this incident. I had a scar there for years but it has almost gone now.

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9. I remember how the nuns used to bathe us and we had to wear these slips at the time. Before they put you in the bath you had this slip around you, they would then bathe you and dry you off but it was natural for them to do that and I never thought anything of it.
10. The Christian Brothers came to the orphanage to select children to go to Australia when I was about nine years old and they asked me if I wanted to go. I recall asking where it was as I had never heard of it before. The Brother replied "Never mind where it is, do you want to go?" I said "No, I don't want to go to somewhere I don't know". I left it at that but a couple of days later they returned and told me that I had no choice and that I had to go as my brother was going and they did not like to split up brothers. I cannot recall the identity of the Brother who said this to me. I had no choice in the matter and the next thing I recall is that a few days later we were packing and getting ready to go.
11. My father turned up at the orphanage the day before I left for Australia. I had never met him before. He said he was my father so I took him at his word. I spent my last day in Ireland with him. He bought me sweets and ice cream and I recall he told me not to worry about going to Australia as he would be moving there himself and he would pick me up and look after me but of course that never happened.
12. I never had another visitor throughout my time in care in Derry.
13. My sister [REDACTED] was in another orphanage close to me. I think she was in Nazareth House, Bishop Street. I recall walking to school and going through the back door of the school and sitting next to my sister in the classroom. I returned to England in 2000 and met her. She told me that most of my relations are no longer in Ireland and have since passed away. She also told me that she was supposed to be selected to go to Australia also but there was a mix up with her name as they had her surname noted in the records as [REDACTED]. They said to her, "only [REDACTED] is entitled to go to Australia and you're [REDACTED] so you don't go."

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14. I do not remember if I ever received a medical examination prior to departure.

Sailing – (29 August 1947 – 22 September 1947)

15. I recall getting on a ship. I don't know if we caught the ship in Belfast or Larne but I know we went to a port in England and caught a train from there. I remember going through London for some reason as I recall seeing a red double decker bus. I do not recall if we got off at any point between London and Southampton.

16. We got on the SS Asturias ship at Southampton. I had no idea where I was going or what was going to happen next. I do not recall if any adult came with us or supervised us. There might have been a Brother but I don't know. I am not sure because we were just a bunch of kids and being that young we probably did not take much notice of them. I recall the crew of the ship taking care of us.

17. All the boys were on the same deck and it was fairly low down the ship. I shared a cabin with my brother. I remember seeing milk and sugar on board. The food on board the ship wasn't too bad. I don't remember thinking it was slop or anything like that and it was much better than the food in the orphanage. I recall in the orphanage in Derry when you didn't like a certain food they would serve it up to you more often and force you to eat it.

St Joseph's Orphanage - Clontarf Boys' Town – (1947 - 1953)

18. We disembarked at Fremantle and were driven by bus to Clontarf. It is no longer an orphanage and is now an aboriginal school. As soon as we arrived at Clontarf they took us to a picture theatre and it was the first time I had ever seen a movie in my life. It was Laurel and Hardy in Bullfighter.

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19. We were then allocated one of the orphan boys who were already at Clontarf to look after us. Most of them were Australian and there was one allocated to each boy that had just arrived. I cannot recall the name of the boy that was allocated to me. I remember the first thing we were told to do was to take a shower and I had never seen a shower before as we only ever had baths in Derry. We were given a towel and the boy told me to get in the shower and get soaped down. He said "take your towel off stupid" and I refused as that was the way we were brought up in Ireland but he stripped it off me and I was just bawling my eyes out. He did not understand why I was crying. After a while I got used to it as everyone else was doing it.

20. The next day a bus arrived at Clontarf and if your name was called out you were told to get on the bus. My brother [REDACTED] was called and got on the bus. I got on with him like a little brother would do even though my name had not been called out. A Brother noticed there was one too many boys on the bus and I was told to get off. They had to drag me off the bus and I was bawling my eyes out as I did not want to be separated from my brother.

21. My brother was moved to a farm school at Tardun which was 600 miles away and I never saw him for six years after that. When he left Tardun he visited me and told me not to worry as he would look after me when I got out of care but when the time came he was too busy getting on with his own life to hang around with me. It is strange that we were told that we both had to go to Australia as they did not like to separate brothers and then as soon as we arrived there we were separated for the entire time we were in care. This had a lifelong impact on our relationship. Even though I got to know him when I left the home, I treated him like a friend rather than a brother and we were never really that close because of the separation we experienced in our childhood.

22. I was a slow learner and they had no facilities to accommodate my learning needs at that time. I was just neglected or thrown at the back of the class and forgotten about.

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23. I was not subjected to sexual abuse at Clontarf but I suffered a lot of physical abuse from the Brothers. I recall one occasion when [REDACTED] BR 6 asked me a question and then awaiting my response said "I haven't got all day" and banged my head against a brick wall and left my head bleeding. That was a frequent form of punishment. He did exactly the same thing to a friend of mine [REDACTED] HIA 332. He was referred to by the boys as [REDACTED]. The Brothers did all sorts of things to you like that and treated you like a dog sometimes. The Brothers would always hit you on the side of your head. All those Brothers involved would be dead and gone now. I referred specifically to [REDACTED] BAU 6 in my report to the Australian Commission.

24. We received treatment from the nuns as they had a small infirmary at the home. There were about four nuns there and they would look after bruises and scratches and fix you up on site. There is no record of me ever having an operation of any kind or any hospital treatment whilst in care.

25. We were supposed to be under the care of the Australian Child Welfare Department upon arrival here. They were located in Perth and they were supposed to check if we were well treated and also check on our progress but I never saw them. They may have spoken to the Brothers but they never spoke to me. They should not have been going to them anyway as they could always have given a false impression but they never spoke to us directly or asked us how things were going. The only time I met with the Child Welfare Department was when I was leaving the home in 1953 and they arranged a job for me as an apprentice carpenter. I was sixteen years old then.

26. I got a carpentry job with [REDACTED] and the Child Welfare Department provided me with clothing for work. I earned £3.10 per week but my board and lodgings cost £5.00 per week. It was my landlady who took me to the Child Welfare Department to ask them how they expected me to pay my rent and only then I learned that they were supposed to pay my board until I was able to earn full pay. My landlady, [REDACTED] also helped me when I grew out of my working clothes by going back to the Child Welfare Department and again I only then discovered that I was entitled to new clothes. They did not give this

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information freely to the boys when they left the home. You always had to go to them, they never came to you.

Life after care

27. Eventually carpenters had to decide if they wanted to be building carpenters, cabinet makers or wood machinists and I chose the latter. I then had to do national service and enjoyed the experience so I joined the Army when I was eighteen years old. I had not experienced the same camaraderie since leaving the boys in the home. I worked in the Eastern states and in Malaya initially. I was promoted after seven years as a Private to a Staff Sergeant. I enjoyed the job and I liked the company. I eventually served twenty years in the Army.

28. I married when I was thirty five and I had one son who is now forty one years old and lives in New Zealand. I have one grandchild. My marriage broke down as I had no idea how to behave around women and I did not know enough about women given my background in care.

29. I drank socially when I was in the Army in order to fit in with the other soldiers but I never had a problem with alcohol and I drink very little now. I have diabetes so I try to be careful with my alcohol consumption.

30. I used to visit my older brother [REDACTED] when I got leave from the Army and I spent Christmas with him over the years. Every time I came home he had found another relation. He told me he had traced a younger brother [REDACTED] and the following year he had located another brother [REDACTED] who was a soldier with the [REDACTED] based at [REDACTED]. They were coming out to Australia at one stage to exercise with the Australian forces so I met [REDACTED] in Sydney. I went out to Williamstown and although I had never met him I picked him out immediately when I saw him coming down the gangway. I wanted to take him on a night out in King's Cross as it was the liveliest area in Sydney at the time but he did not turn up at the arranged time. I went looking

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for him and he said he did not come as he had no money. I gave him money and took him out but he would not buy anyone a drink and he was argumentative and contrary; a bit of a mongrel really. I got fed up and went home and my friends made sure he got home safely.

31. When I arrived in Australia I did not have a birth certificate and I did not even know my own date of birth. I recall a Christian Brother at Clontarf asking me how old I was and I was not able to tell him. He said "you've got to have a birthday" so he looked me up and down and said "you look about ten, yeah"? He knew my name was [REDACTED] so he said my date of birth would be [REDACTED] as that was the feast day of [REDACTED]. In later years when I eventually located my birth certificate I discovered that my correct date of birth was [REDACTED] so his guess was quite accurate. Also, on my birth certificate it states my mother was [REDACTED], formerly [REDACTED]. She must have been married before otherwise it would have noted [REDACTED] as her maiden name so she must have been married to someone called [REDACTED]. In later years my older brother told me that I had three half brothers called [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They were older than me and [REDACTED] died before I ever got a chance to meet him but I attended his funeral. [REDACTED] died before I got a chance to meet him. I met [REDACTED] but he has since passed away. My full brother [REDACTED] is also deceased. He passed away when he was only forty years old. I never met him either so that has always left me feeling a bit mixed up.

32. I asked my sister in later years if there were any photos of my mother but nobody has any and no-one seems to want to discuss her. Family members seem to clam up when her name is mentioned. My Aunt [REDACTED] had photographs but she is now deceased and no-one knows what happened to the photographs or to her belongings. I can only assume it was all burned. Unfortunately my sister [REDACTED] has also passed away. I had contacted her in recent times to find out how she was feeling as I heard she had been in hospital. I received a Christmas card last Christmas from a niece in England and she referred to [REDACTED] death. That was when I first realised she had passed away. She was the last immediate family member I had in England.

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33. I received \$28,000 compensation under the Australian Child Migrant Redress Scheme.

Statement of Truth

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

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Signed _____

Dated _____

21/10/2013