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HIA REF: 341

Witness Name: HIA 341

## THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 341

I, HIA 341 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] in Lisburn.
2. My mother's name was [REDACTED] and she was twenty years old when I was born. She was a domestic servant. She had me out of wedlock. My father's name does not appear on my birth certificate.

Manor House Home, Lisburn ( May 1941 – November 1950)

3. I was placed in Manor House Home, Lisburn when I was a baby. I can only recall about nine or ten boys in Manor House Home at the time.
4. I recall a lady used to come to visit me in Manor House every Sunday or most Sundays and we would sit on the porch and she would talk to me. When I met my mother in later life she confirmed that she used to visit me.
5. I recall being frequently assaulted in the home in Lisburn. What I found strange was that at times during these assaults the staff would threaten to send me back to my mother. I asked my mother in later life why they would have issued such

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threats but she refused to answer. I never found out what she did, if anything, that resulted in my being placed in care but I always found these comments unsettling.

6. I used to wet the bed in the home daily. The staff would strap me to the bed and sometimes they left me there for days in the wet bed. Even though I would wet the bed again I would just have to stay there and I was left to lie in the wet bed. They would then take me out of my restraints and drop me in a cold bath in order to clean me. They would hold me by the feet, drop me into a tin bath of water and hold me down in the water. I believe another boy in the home, **AU 80** also got this treatment. They would threaten to return me to my mother if I told anyone what they were doing and their comments never made sense to me. Their treatment of me gave me a lifelong fear of water. I have had homes with swimming pools but I would never go swimming or use the pool.
7. I was also punished for wetting the bed by being placed in a room where they kept coal called the dungeon. I am not sure if this happened in the home or in the church but I recall being placed there, sleeping in the dark and then being returned to my bed. I recall a name, it was **MH 2**. He was one of the older boys or he might have been an altar boy at the church. He took me down to the dungeon with some other members of staff. I was often smacked on the ear by other members of staff, not by **MH 2** and I attribute my hearing loss that I now suffer to the treatment I received as a child.
8. I recall a device being put on my penis and on my testicles by staff in the home. They said they were helping me, the idea of doing this was that it would help me to wake up but it gave me electric shocks when they were applying it to my body and I do not know if they were deliberately giving me electric shocks with this device. I do not remember which members of staff did this to me. I remember a similar device being used by the home that I was sent to in Australia.
9. They also used to lay me on a bed on my stomach with my knees up behind me and put things into my rectum or they would place a funnel in my rectum and force liquid through it and into my rectum. They would ask if it hurt and they



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would then say "well it is going to hurt more if you keep wetting the bed". It was yet another punishment for wetting the bed.

10. I remember always being thumped on my head by staff at Manor House. They would use their open hands and hit both my ears at the same time and it was really painful. I recall being punished by the use of a cane and I recall a whip with long strings attached which really hurt on impact. The staff would shout at you when they hit you "Don't cry and don't tell, you cry, you get more".
11. I recall being dressed in girl's clothing by one Minister although I do not recall his name. I felt a silk dress belonging to my wife at one stage and it was made from the same fabric and it brought this memory back to me. The Minister did this quite often to me and made me sit on his knee. There was not skin to skin contact but I could feel that he got an erection and I could feel it through the silk fabric. Again I was brought to see this Minister by [REDACTED]
12. I do not recall what age I was when the sex abuse commenced in residential care in Lisburn but the more painful physical punishments started when I was around seven years old. I also recall my feet became totally misshapen because we never wore shoes.
13. I did not receive a proper education in Northern Ireland. They referred to me as "a retard" because I was small and I would stand up to them and fight back so they kept me under lock and key and called me retarded and I was not kept at school or given a proper education.
14. I remember the issue of migration to Australia being discussed in Manor House. My mother gave consent to my being sent to Australia. They did not ask us if we wanted to go but they told us that we were going. I recall being petrified because I had not been going to school and I distinctly remember asking some of the other children to teach me what they had learned at school because when I arrived in Australia I was going to have to know as much as they did.
15. I left Manor House in November 1950 when I was nine years old. Six other boys from Manor House left with me. Their names were [REDACTED] HIA 346 AU 78

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AU 78 AU 79 AU 80 AU 81 and AU 82 We travelled to Liverpool to board the NV Cheshire to Melbourne. I was given the Number 171 or 771.

16. I do not recall being sent for a medical appointment prior to being sent to Australia. There was a photo taken of all the boys on the ship. Reverend A Boag travelled with us. I think it was his job to travel to various countries with children from orphanages to ensure they arrived safely and he would then return home.
17. I recall sitting on a bunk bed looking out the window but all the portholes had been painted over so that we could not see outside. We were rarely above deck level. I recall only being on deck twice, once when we crossed the equator and the second occasion was because one of the boys died or went overboard. Apart from that we were kept below deck for the entire journey. The journey lasted seven weeks.

**Dhurringile Rural Training Farm, Victoria (15 December 1950 - 1958)**

18. When we arrived in Melbourne on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1950 we were taken on a bus to Dhurringile. Dhurringile was run by the Presbyterian Church of Tatura.
19. I was placed in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade when I arrived in Australia. I had been in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in Northern Ireland but was never sent to school so I was considered "retarded" in Australia also and rarely attended school. I do recall going to school initially on arrival in Australia until I was abused by many of the Ministers in the area. My records from the home note that I left school in 1955 and assisted in the kitchen and garden. They noted I was only up to 4<sup>th</sup> grade standard and "did not have the capabilities to go any further at school". I consider that I was wrongly taken out of school and unfairly denied an education.
20. A civilian member of staff who abused me was referred to as AU 47 His room was covered in lotto tickets. I do not know his real name. He used to sit



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me on his bed and he would make me sit up whilst he got an erection. He would make me engage in mutual masturbation. I looked for him in later life but was never able to find him.

21. One day I arrived at school and the subject for the day was reading. The teacher knew that I could not read and he still asked me to read to the class. I refused as I knew everyone would laugh at me. He put me in the corner at the back of the classroom. When the other children went to lunch he dragged me into a small room, told me to pull my pants down and he said he was going to belt me for giving him cheek. The room had radio equipment in it so I picked up some of the equipment as he belted me with a cane and a strap. He was trying to remove my clothing as he beat me but I managed to retrieve it and run out the door. I had hit him with some of the radio equipment in self defence.
22. I was walking back towards the home and I was still about a mile away when the school bus stopped and the driver apologised and told me he was sorry but he was not allowed to pick me up as I had broken the radio at school. He then drove off. Shortly thereafter a car approached me and I recognised the driver as a member of the clergy or a church officer. I did not know if he was from Murchison or Tatura parish. I knew his face as he attended regular meetings at the orphanage with other church members. He asked me what I was doing on the road and I explained what had happened. He told me to get into his car and he drove up a side road. He asked me to remove my shirt and he said what the teacher had done was terrible. He told me to get out of the car so he could see where I had been belted. He then physically removed the rest of my clothing and sodomised me. He told me to stay there and he would arrange for me to be picked up. He said I was not to tell anyone what had happened. He drove off and I was left there until after dark.
23. When I arrived back at the home I tried to tell someone in authority what had happened but no-one would listen to me and I got another belting for having caused damage in the school earlier that day. I was told to go and have a shower and I was being sent to bed without any tea. I was bleeding from the rectum and I had blood and sperm on my legs.

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24. I was taken from my bed that night by a member of staff and brought to stand outside the office door downstairs. I could hear the voices of three men behind the door. The discussion was clearly about what had happened that day at the school. **AU 45** was the Superintendent at Dhurringile at the time and I could hear his voice. There was one voice I did not recognise and the other voice was the person who had sodomised me earlier that day. The conversation ended by the person who had sexually abused me making the comment that there would be no point in talking to me as I was retarded in every way. **AU 45** was charged in later life with sexual abuse but he died before the matter was properly investigated.
25. A police officer from Tatura came out to me in full uniform following this incident and said "one day you are going to finish up in jail if you keep this up". Even today I look back on this incident and think "keep what up?". After this incident those in authority decided I was uncontrollable and that I should stay in the home and not be sent to school so I never received a proper education in either Northern Ireland or Australia. I am self taught today. I struggle still with writing but I am an above average reader. My command and understanding of the English language is above average. I am extremely articulate. I had to teach myself as I wanted to understand my history and to learn more about myself.
26. One man I recall in particular was called **AU 48** and he attended monthly meetings at Dhurringile. Many of the meetings were attended by ministers or "do gooders" and I was raped on occasion by some of these ministers on the days they attended these meetings. I would be peeling potatoes and they would stand me on a box and fondle me. **AU 48** was one of the men who did this and there were two others but I cannot recall their names. **AU 48** lived in Tatura which is not far from Dhurringile. I did not talk to the other boys about these incidents. I do not know why we did not talk to each other as we might have been able to help each other but you felt alone all the time. There was a culture of secrecy and silence. I actually called at the home of **AU 48** many years later when I was with my wife as I wanted to confront him and a neighbour told me he



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had died only two days before my visit. I said "that's great, another paedophile off the streets".

27. I recall having my tonsils removed when I was at Dhurringile. All seven of the Northern Irish boys who came from Manor House Home had their tonsils removed at the same time. I recall they approached the mouth of each boy with a rag to knock them out and I thought they were trying to kill us. I was the last boy to receive treatment so by the time they got to me I was absolutely petrified and screaming in terror as I was so frightened by this incident.
28. I went out at times to stay with different families but I was not allowed to be placed for adoption. My mother had refused to allow me to be put up for adoption. Various people had attempted to adopt me. I recall staying with a lovely family called [REDACTED] who lived in [REDACTED] in Victoria. The father was a policeman and he told me that they could not adopt me as my mother would not allow it. I kept in touch with them for many years.
29. I never had the opportunity to communicate with anyone independent of the institution. I found it really difficult to adjust to life after care, to be a real person in the outside world was difficult for me. By the time I was in my twenties I was still learning things that I should have known when I was twelve years old and so that was a difficult adjustment for me.

#### Life after care

30. I left Dhurringile when I was seventeen years old. I became a prostitute for two years. That was just the way of life, they treated me that way in care so I had two more years of similar treatment after I left care. I did speak to Ministers about it to try to get someone to understand but they would end up abusing me too and there is nowhere to go after that. I know some of the other boys also got involved in prostitution but we would never speak to each other about it. It was just how you survived.

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31. When I was twenty I met boys my own age hanging out together at a railway bridge in an area known as Ringwood in Australia. They would talk about girls and I just wanted to jump off the bridge.
32. I went from one farm to another trying to find work but at one farm I had sex with both the farmer and his wife and once again I was being used like a common toy. I felt as if I was just leading myself back to where I had come from.
33. I joined the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and a friend of mine who was an engineer sat the exam for me as I knew I would never pass it. I wanted to get into the refrigeration business. After that I worked for a container refrigeration company for fifteen years.
34. I looked for some of the men that had abused me in later life but many of them had died. I just wanted to confront them so that they had to look me in the eye after how they had treated me during my time in care.
35. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] I did a [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] in [REDACTED] with BBC London. I said on this show that I was a child migrant from Northern Ireland and that I had been sent to Australia as part of the big brotherhood movement. Following on from this interview I was contacted by a BBC journalist from London who asked me to do more work with the BBC on this issue and this assisted many former child migrants to find their families.
36. I returned to Northern Ireland for the first time in the late 1980's. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] The BBC contacted me and they had done a lot of research into my background story. They took me back to my old school in Lisburn and I was able to ask the Headmaster at the time if he would let me see the old records from the years that I was supposed to have attended there and I told him that I wanted to read the minutes from the Committee meetings. He gave me access to any records that were of interest to me. There was a record of me having been at the school



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for four years but I can state clearly that I had never attended that school at any stage. I had no recollection whatsoever of ever being there. My research made it clear to me that you could not be deported to Australia if you had not been to school and I had never been to that school at any stage. I had not been in school at the time I was deported and therefore I should never have been sent to Australia.

37. I also noticed in the register that certain boy's names had been changed or certain letters in their names had been changed. It is my view that this was done to further frustrate the process of enabling former child migrants to find their families and relatives.

38. I then sought the help of a genealogist to find my own family. It took him a long time but he eventually traced my mother. Things had been further complicated by the fact that my mother had changed the date of birth and name of my brother on his birth certificate to hide the fact that he was also born out of wedlock. I was on holiday in Germany with my wife when I found out so we travelled to London where my mother was living and we knocked on her door. When I saw her I thought we looked alike. She would not hold me and she would not shake my hand but she did give me her phone number and I called her later that night. My wife and I then flew to Northern Ireland to find out more about my family. I had a long conversation with my mother on the phone again but after that she changed her number and blocked my calls. When this happened I decided to return to London to speak to her but she would not answer the door. I introduced myself to her neighbour as the illegitimate son of [REDACTED] my mother's married name, from Australia and she was shocked. She said the only son she knew [REDACTED] had was [REDACTED] That was how I found out that I had a brother.

39. She told me where [REDACTED] lived and said she could not talk to me any more. [REDACTED] was ten years younger than me. He had not been placed in care. I had a warmer reception from my brother [REDACTED] and his family. He introduced me to his son [REDACTED] who was sixteen at the time and he took his daughter [REDACTED] out of

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school to meet me. She was only fourteen. It was an emotional reunion for everyone. Unknown to me [REDACTED] had tried to correspond with me and he had sent me pictures of his family. He had been told by our mother's sister, Aunt [REDACTED] that I was in the British Army and lived in Germany. He was also told that I did not want any contact with him. He asked why I had never responded and I told him I had never seen any of his letters. He never knew I had been sent to Australia and he was corresponding to the wrong address. We got along well and have maintained good contact for about fifteen years now. We never knew the identity of my father and when I asked [REDACTED] if we were real brothers or half brothers his response was that regardless of the identity of my father we were full blown brothers.

40. I also discovered that I had a sister, [REDACTED] but she died when she was only four months old. My brother made the comment to me that he thought my mother had possibly abused her. My mother had also said to me that she had given me away as I was too small and I was going to die anyway. That made me think back to what the staff in the home said about her, whatever they were telling me about her was not good news.
41. I had a [REDACTED] company in [REDACTED] in Melbourne and I made up a container of products [REDACTED] and sent them to my family in England. My brother showed my mother the gifts I had sent and a video of me on Christmas Day. He asked her to accept me into the family but she just walked out of the house. None of the family ever spoke to her again after that incident and she died a very lonely woman.
42. I visited Northern Ireland and there was some [REDACTED] with my visit. A man who lived close to Manor House presented me with the bell from Manor House as a keepsake. He told me that the home had stopped being an orphanage a long time ago and they knocked it down with bulldozers without even looking inside the building.



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43. I wrote an article in [REDACTED] for the [REDACTED] about one day in my life in care and [REDACTED] and it made a huge change to my life.
44. I did not seek the assistance of the Child Migrants Trust initially as I was not comfortable about telling my story to them at that stage. I always had them in the back of my mind and I recall always reading their material but I did not seek their assistance until the late 1990's. I have found their assistance has been invaluable to me and I wish I had sought their help many years ago.
45. I married and had three children and I now have four grandchildren. I got a copy of my birth certificate from Northern Ireland when I was got married when I was twenty one years old. My grandson is called [REDACTED] and it is lovely to have your own family.
46. Even after sixty years living in this country I am not an Australian. I still travel on a British passport and I consider myself to be Irish. I have made three applications for citizenship but I have never been successful with becoming an Australian citizen. The last government official I spoke to made the comment "let me tell you <sup>HIA 341</sup> [REDACTED] ..... reckon that by 2040 you will all be dead and it won't be a problem any more". In this country I could just disappear as I don't really belong here.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

**HIA 341**Dated 24 / 6 / 14

Irish Church Missions (ICM) welcomes and supports the work of the HIA Inquiry and utterly condemns all and any kind of child abuse. It is also the firm view of ICM that the Manor House Home (MHH), Lisburn, which closed in 1984 endeavoured to nurture and protect the children under its care over the fifty-five years of its existence. It is our contention in relation to the applicants of the Australian module that this was indeed the case.

In regard to the claims of [HIA 341], we find these impossible to reconcile against his previous claim in the documents he submitted to the Inquiry. On page AUS 11049, he is quoted in the newspaper article: “I have no memory of my life before I was 10”, says [HIA 341], 56...’ He left MHH for Australia when he was 9. This is consistent with all the newspaper articles that [HIA 341] has submitted to the HIA Inquiry. In all of them, he makes no mention whatsoever of abuse in the MHH, let alone the kind of abuse he is now submitting to the Inquiry as having experienced.

Furthermore, in the claims he is making about MHH, the only name he mentions in the alleged abuse is of an older boy, who ‘might have been an altar boy at the church’. MHH was a Protestant home attached to a Church of Ireland church, Christ Church, Lisburn, where there were no such things as ‘altar boys.’ Such abuse could not therefore have happened in the MHH. [HIA 341] recent recollections are therefore not accurate.

In regard to [HIA 346], the tenor of the claims are vague with no staff named in the ‘couple of times’, he says he was beaten by staff. Certainly, corporeal punishment was administered in the 1940’s by institutions and MHH was no exception. However, the MHH noted and took seriously any such punishment and indeed investigated any claim of excessive punishment. In the minutes of the MHH committee of 9<sup>th</sup> August 1946, the alleged excessive physical punishment of two boys by the assistant- Matron was immediately investigated by the Committee, who sent for the local doctor to examine the boys. The doctor’s report is quoted dismissing any claims of excessive punishment; the assistant-Matron was brought before the MHH committee and questioned why she administered physical punishment. Because of the Doctor’s report, her description of what had happened was accepted. Furthermore, the committee was reminded of the policy of the ICM on the matter of physical punishment, which was that ‘punishment with a cane was only to be given on the hands and that the open hand may be used on the buttocks.’ All this shows that any report of excessive punishment was taken seriously by the MHH committee and that children then were not permitted to be subjected to the kind of harsh treatment alleged by [HIA 346] and [HIA 341].

Not only that, children were free to question the administration of physical punishment. A minute of the MHH committee meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1947 shows that the Matron, [MH 1], reported that she had to administer punishment to one boy and that some of the boys questioned her on this. They went before the MHH committee where the chairman explained to them that the Matron had their support! The fact that the MHH committee even talked to the boys is indicative that they took the administration of physical punishment seriously and that children certainly could complain to the highest level, contrary to the claims of the applicants.

In regard to the 7 boys from MHH sent on the Presbyterian Church scheme to Australia in 1950, the records of the MHH (pp.11057-11071) clearly show that this was regarded as a great opportunity for them by the MHH and ICM. Indeed, the correspondence surrounding the emigration of [HIA 354] from Tyrone (pp. 11259-11264), indicates that the Ministry of Home Affairs at Stormont also thought that this scheme of the Presbyterian church of Victoria was in the best interests of the children and that the Presbyterian church was regarded as a responsible body.

The material submitted by [HIA 346] clearly shows that the proper procedures concerning the certificates of migration and medical examinations were followed by MHH. Furthermore, MHH minutes (p.11064) show that the MHH committee took the initiative to write to the boys and when one of them, [HIA 341] later wrote looking for information on his parents, the MHH committee enthusiastically endeavoured to help him (p.11065), which is immediately apparent in their warm and sympathetic reply (p.11046).

In summary, the claims of the applicants do not show systemic abuse on the part of the MHH, firstly, because the claims are contradictory to earlier claims made by one applicant, [HIA 341], and secondly, the records of the MHH show that they consistently had the best interests of the children at heart in dealing with matters of discipline and also in the matter of emigration.



20 Donegall Square East,  
BELFAST 1.

1st November, 1963.

HIA 341

Dear HIA 341

Very many thanks indeed for your letter received some days ago. I was delighted to hear from you and very interested in all your activities and work.

I read your letter to my Committee at its last meeting and they were pleased to know that you are progressing so well in your work.

I trust there is much happiness in store for you and [REDACTED] in the future. I hope you will be making Christ the Head of your home and that God will "sow the seed of eternal life in your hearts". Do read the Bible together.

I have endeavoured to contact your mother, but unfortunately I have not made any progress. I have enquired at the address that appeared in our books but she is no longer there and also the residents who have been in that district for a long time have not been able to help me. Regarding your father I am afraid I know absolutely nothing and I am very sorry that I do not seem to be able to trace anything in this connection.

I must apologise for the delay in replying to your letter but this was due to the fact that I wanted to explore every possible avenue of information regarding above. *THIS IS BULL SHIT*

I am glad to hear news of [REDACTED] AU 78 and [REDACTED] AU 81. Things seem to have worked out very well for [REDACTED] AU 78 and I hope he is very happy in his new home. I am sure that by now the Reunion of the Home will be over and I hope you had an enjoyable time.

My Committee join me in sending you our very best wishes and may God's richest blessing rest upon you and may you be guided in all your plans and decisions that lie ahead.

With prayerful good wishes,

Yours very sincerely,

*F. George Thompson*

Secretary.