

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 142

Witness Name: HIA 142

**THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 142**

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I, **HIA 142** will say as follows:-

**Personal details**

1. I was born on [REDACTED] Despite the records which exist in relation to my time in care I believe I was taken into care when I was about approximately ten months of age, and I believe I left care when I was five or six. Records show I was younger than this. There were nine in my family and my siblings are [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. The eldest in our family, [REDACTED] is now deceased. I am the youngest. My aunt adopted me eventually but I believe I was with my mother in the first ten months of my life. I was handed over to social services because my father was an alcoholic, and he eventually died of alcohol poisoning.

**Nazareth Lodge (2<sup>nd</sup> March 1962 – 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1964)**

2. Records state that I was taken into Nazareth Lodge in 1962 when I was almost two years old. I am only able to recall things from when I was around three years of age.
3. I have a scar on my nose given to me by a plain clothed woman who worked in Nazareth Lodge. I am not able to remember her name. In the home I had a chore to do each day and mine was to look after a [REDACTED] baby. The room we

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slept in was divided by shutters, with the older ones like me sleeping in beds and the younger babies in cots on the other side. When the baby cried at night I would go to him. One night he was crying and because I recognised his voice I went in to see him. When I got back to my bed I got whacked in the face and I just bled all night. It was definitely a woman because I can remember the sound of her voice shouting and the sound of her unzipping the boot that she hit me with. I didn't see her face but I did see her silhouette. I got hit the next morning as well for bleeding all night and soiling myself. We were usually hit with keys around the head and this would happen most days.

4. I also remember the trouble I had with the food in Nazareth Lodge and even now I have trouble eating because of it. We had porridge every morning. They force fed me and they actually held me in a clamped position to keep me still and to make me swallow. I was made to eat cabbage and fish, and to this day I still don't like fish. I remember it sticking in my throat. We were constantly hungry and I remember I used to ask my sister to bring me in some fruit.
5. Bath nights were the worst and happened once a week. The nuns would pull my penis and tell me that it was dirty. They used carbolic soap on me and I remember being in one of the steel baths and getting whacked on the head with a scrubbing brush. The water was always scalding hot. They scrubbed me until my skin was raw. That was the worst about the Catholic Church and it's need for such 'cleanliness'. There used to be a priest there on bath nights and he always smelled of smoke. He never came near me but he was always there in the background.
6. I don't know the order of the nuns but I remember their light blue clothing swishing past. I always tended to keep me head down out of fear. One of the nuns wore brown sandals and I knew when I saw her feet coming that she would hit me. I must have been used to it for me to cry to get back to it when I finally went to my aunt's house to live. I had become institutionalised.

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7. During the day I used to get tied by old cloth and held against the old iron radiators when they were on. I remember my skin was burnt on many occasions but I never got any treatment for it. That was my punishment for having done something wrong such as soiling the bed or making too much noise. Sometimes I had clothes on and sometimes not. The sound of the swishing of the nun's robes and the jangling of keys will always stay in my mind. I was so afraid of those sounds. I remember the baby I looked after was treated badly too, even worse than me and I think it was because he was [REDACTED]. I could hear him crying all the time and I can remember seeing him being whacked across the back of the head with a lump of wood and the blood being splattered on his head. I don't remember ever having to change his nappy but I just had to look after him. I think he was very afraid too because he used to cling to me.
8. If you wet the beds in the home you were dragged out of bed and smacked. They took your pyjamas but they never bothered to even turn the mattress. We all had chores to do. The boys had to scrub the floors together but this wasn't very often. We had to go to mass and confession everyday and we would just make things up to confess, just to get out quickly.
9. When someone like my sister and brother visited from outside we all met up in the big hall with the dark polished floor. They would bring me a present like a car or lorry to play with. I never knew where the cars went after that. My sister came in to wish me happy birthday but I never remember anyone else saying it or having a special dinner. I don't ever remember having a Christmas in the home. A welfare officer took me out in her Mini Wolseley car but I don't remember where she took me. My sister and her boyfriend also took me out and I can remember getting my photo taken with them.
10. I remember one day when I was out in the rhubarb patch, I took a bit of rhubarb and started eating it. I had just realised this was the rhubarb put in rhubarb crumble. It was horrible. There was an old nun dressed in black

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there and she beat me with the stalk of it because we weren't allowed near it. My blood was splattered on the statute that was near to where we were standing.

### Life After Care

11. I was officially adopted by my great aunt. I was the only member of my family to be adopted because the rest went to England with my mother. My mother came to Nazareth Lodge and took my four sisters but left me behind. I don't know who my mother could do that. I tried to ask her about that later but she wouldn't talk to me about it. Life with my aunt [REDACTED] was not very good. That was another round of beatings and sometimes she took the poker to me. I remember getting hit and shouting [REDACTED] which was what I called her. Her husband was called [REDACTED] and he didn't see the half of what she did to me. She must have been getting money from the welfare for me but she never seemed to have any money.
12. The welfare used to visit and once they sent us on holiday to Weston-Super-Mare. They sent me with two other boys who were under the care of the welfare. They were protestant boys but we soon became friends. I was about 11 years old then. My aunt was very quick at hitting me with the poker so when my sister was diagnosed with cancer in her kidney I went to England to visit her and I decided to stay there with my mum and her boyfriend. They resented me from day one because I had all the mannerisms of my father. They used to say to me 'Get up you Fenian Bastard' and they both would have beaten me. I was called names on my way to school in England.
13. I did have my own relationship but this broke down because I betrayed her trust. I have two children, one to my ex- wife, and another to another woman. My daughter is 29 now and doesn't speak to me. My son is 16 ½ and I have little contact with him.
14. I tried to commit suicide once in my life but I made a bad attempt at it. I had been drinking heavily and I started taking a lot of my medication. I looked up

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and saw a photo of my son [REDACTED] and I just decided to phone for an ambulance. I knew that it would just make him suffer, the same way I have suffered without my father.

15. I have not come to the Inquiry to gain anything but I do not want it to happen again to other children. The priests were all like saints and there should have been some way of stopping it. I think there should be new laws made so that priests should be allowed to marry.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

**HIA 142**

Dated

18/7/14

I hereby Certify that I have Received my charge

HIA142

from under the <sup>U</sup> care of the Sisters of Nazareth, Nazareth  
Houses, Ballynaseigh; in a Perfect State of Health and  
Cleanliness.

Signed, .....

W. F. Tomson (Belfast Welfare  
Officer

Witness

23. 12. '64