

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 87

Witness Name: HIA 87

## THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

## WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 87

I, HIA 87 will say as follows:

Personal Details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] My mother [REDACTED] worked in [REDACTED] Hospital for a while, and then a restaurant in [REDACTED] I do not know who my father was. My older brother [REDACTED] was placed in care at the same time as me when we were young children so that my mother could get back on her feet. I believe that my mother could not take my brother and I back to my granny because it would have been a taboo at that time.
2. I have managed to find out some details of my family, including the fact that my mum went to [REDACTED] where she died about 4 or 5 years ago. She left Northern Ireland around 1945. My mother had 6 more children in [REDACTED] but two of them have since passed away. My half-siblings have been in touch with me because my mother died without a will and her estate has not yet been settled. I have also learned that my mother was put into Nazareth Lodge with her two sisters and her brother when they were children.
3. I was admitted to Nazareth Lodge when I was one year old. When I was two years old I was taken out of Nazareth Lodge by Mr and [REDACTED] who fostered me. I went to school in [REDACTED] when I was 5. The school was a 3 mile walk away from where we lived. After a few years I moved to a

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Catholic school at [REDACTED] which was closer to our house. This school had a soup kitchen and we were given soup for our school dinners. When I was 8 I went to a non-denominational school in [REDACTED]

4. Times were hard for the [REDACTED] but they did their best for me. I remember that there was not a lot of food at [REDACTED]. In the summer I ran around without any shoes, but I got to know the farmers and I helped out around the farms, carrying out jobs such as lifting corn or potatoes and milking the cows. In the autumn I collected blackberries that we sold, allowing for clothes and different things to be bought. I was happy with my life when I was living with [REDACTED] and I thought of her as my mother.
5. My brother [REDACTED] was fostered out in [REDACTED] with the [REDACTED] family. Mr [REDACTED] was in the [REDACTED] and I believe that he fostered [REDACTED] because he received extra money from the Welfare for looking after him. My mother never signed the paperwork for my brother's adoption, but I was told that someone from the Catholic organisation signed it, allowing for the adoption to go ahead. The Catholic Care Society has provided me with information on my brother [REDACTED] who passed away 10 years ago.

**Nazareth Lodge, Belfast (1946 - 1952)**

6. I lived with [REDACTED] until I was 8. One day I was told that I was moving, but I later found out that Nazareth Lodge wanted me back because the Welfare State was coming in, and the Lodge could make money if I was returned. I believe that the County Down Welfare Committee had started to pay for children in care. One night I was staying overnight at [REDACTED] mother's house, and a policeman, the Parish Priest and two social workers came and took me back to Nazareth Lodge. They told me that they were taking me away from [REDACTED] because she had not been looking after me properly, and that I had been neglected. Living with [REDACTED] was a way of life for me, and I did not know any better. [REDACTED] worked away from home for periods of time, and [REDACTED] had 4 other children to look after. I was removed from

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██████████ about 6 weeks before Christmas. I believe that Nazareth Lodge did not want me until I was able to work and pay for my own keep.

7. When I first arrived at Nazareth Lodge I was taken up the stairs and put into a bath. I was given a cup of tea and a slice of bread and was put to bed. The next day I was issued with a one-piece boiler suit, a pair of plimsolls and underwear. I learned to just accept what I was given. We knew when we were going out of the home because we were given short trousers, shoes, socks and a shirt. We were all dressed the same, and we could be easily identified as home boys.
8. I was not allowed to go with the other children to the Circus that Christmas in case I ran away. My freedom was curtailed in the Lodge, and even when I was permitted to play there was always someone with me. I cried a lot initially, but eventually the crying stopped because I realised that I was here to stay. I soon learned that I had to knuckle down and get on with it like the rest of the boys. There were around 100 boys in the home. I got to know who I could trust, and which boys told tales. I had two particular friends: ██████████ ██████████ and **HIA 33** ██████████. We had to be quiet all the time, and we were not allowed to run in the corridors, or whistle or shout. If we disobeyed these rules we were punished.
9. We were woken every morning at 6 am, and had to attend Mass at 7 am before we got our breakfast. Breakfast was usually porridge and a slice of toast, and supper was usually at 6 pm and consisted of bread and lard with a cocoa drink. Lessons in school took place from 9 am until 3 pm. During the week we had school dinners. After school we had various chores to do around the home, like washing the floors, polishing the corridors and cleaning the refectory. As we got older the work increased, and we had to wash, scrub and polish the floors. We were given an old rag and blanket and had to polish and shine the floors on our hands and knees. The corridors were around 100 yards long, from one end of the building to the other, and we worked on them in pairs.

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10. We usually had our baths on a Saturday evening at around 5 or 6 pm. There were 3 baths for the whole Lodge, and we were made to line up in two lines waiting for our turn. If you were lucky you were one of the first in the bath when the water was clean. We were stripped off and put into the bath in pairs, and were given an old sheet to dry ourselves with. If you were one of the last boys to get your bath, you were left with dirty water and a wet sheet to dry with. We had no privacy at bath times, as we were always being watched by the nuns. We did not have our own toothbrush, but had to share with each other. Modesty went out the window.
11. When the benefactors came to visit the Lodge we had to put all of the best stuff out. We were given a polish and Jeyes Fluid mixture to polish the floors with. The good beds, pillows and quilts were only for show. The benefactors were people who gave money to the home or who took some of the children out at Christmas. They also assisted some of the boys with finding employment. We never spoke to the benefactors, and we were told that we had to behave ourselves when they were visiting. At Christmas some of the boys would be allowed to go to a party at Macky's Iron Factory. We looked forward to the party as it was a bit of an adventure. We received oranges or apples on Christmas morning. We did not receive any toys, nor did we have toys to play with in the home. Only the good boys were allowed to go out on trips or to the Christmas party, but it was difficult to be good enough for the nuns because they were always wanting more work out of us or finding fault with anything we had done. We could never please the nuns. One year I thought I was going to get to the circus, but as I was waiting to go Sister **SR 157** told me that I had to stay to scrub the corridors, so I did not get to go that year.
12. I can remember two inspections by the school's inspectors. **SR 118** told us in the morning that the school inspectors were coming. The inspectors gave us an exam, but it was only a formality. I never spoke to the inspectors directly as we were there just to be seen as a group of children. We had to be on our best behaviour all of the time and we were watched constantly by

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either the nuns or the older boys. I do not recall any social workers visiting us in the home.

13. I went to the primary school at Nazareth Lodge, but I did not receive a high standard of education there. I believe that the nuns and teachers did not want us to be too clever or to speak up. I went to the school that was in a building across from the playing fields. I had to clean and look after the school, which involved cleaning the toilets and the classrooms.
14. The main subject that we were taught was religion, and we had to know the Catechism inside out. **NL 85** was a teacher at the school from around 1949. I believe that he had been involved in  in the . I think that **NL 85** was also  and he knew no bounds when it came to extreme discipline when he was teaching us PE. It was like he was teaching the troops again. I learned to read and write but I basically had to teach myself the rest of it throughout my life. The rest of our lessons were taught by **SR 118** and **SR 100**. They tried to teach me Latin so that I could be an altar boy but that wasn't my calling. I didn't like the Priest or the nuns or what they represented.
15. I slept in a dormitory with at least 40 other boys. If any of the boys wet the bed we all had to get out of our beds and we were made to strip and kneel with our hands above our heads. **SR 118** sat on a chair reading a prayer book silently in front of us. When she thought that our punishment had lasted long enough she put us back to bed. This could have been after an hour, or after 3 hours; time did not seem to matter to her. If anyone failed to remain in the correct position, they received a battering from **SR 118**. She wore a belt around her waist that she used to hit us. I remember this belt having a large buckle. If her belt was not available, **SR 118** would use a brush shaft to hit us with instead.
16. **SR 118** knew no bounds for punishment. If she was in the right mood you were ok, but God help you if she was in a bad mood. She could find fault in everything that we did. Her favourite move was to grab someone by

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the ear and hit them with the belt that she wore around her waist. If a boy wet himself she would make him lie down face first and she would wallop him across the body. If you coughed in the Chapel she would have brought you out in front of everyone to give you a wallop. **SR 118** also had her head boys who would go around with sticks to give us thumpings. On other occasions we were made to strip off and were beaten about the bottom by **SR 118**

17. There was nobody that I could talk to about what was happening in the home. If we went to confession and told the Priest or complained to him, he would tell the nuns and we would have received another beating, either from the nuns or from the older boys. We would be hit with brush shafts or belts. I had a bit of a rebellious streak and spoke my mind. I believe that the nuns wanted to break my spirit. The older boys must have felt that they were getting glory from hitting us, because they acted like they had power over us. Some of these boys had been institutionalised since they were infants, so they did not know any different. It was a way of life for them. I recall that one of the older boys was called **HIA 192** **HIA 192** was an evil boy, and regularly hit me. I woke up some mornings after being battered in my bed at night, and there was often blood on my pillow. I cannot really blame the other boys because they did not know any better, I can only blame the people that were administering the rules and regulations. I had seen freedom and kindness with the **SR 118** who would have corrected me and told me off if I was bad, but they never hit me.

18. When we were taken out on our Sunday walks to Ormeau Park it was like an open jail. We were dressed in our Sunday best and we had to be on our best behaviour. We were not allowed to talk to anyone, nor were we allowed to stop or play. The discipline did not stop when we left the home; it applied as long as you were in the group of boys. It was like we were prisoners.

19. One morning when I was cleaning the classroom I noticed that the pet mice were lying dead in their cages. I went back over to the main building and told **SR 118** but she accused me of killing them. **SR 118** beat

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me, and I lost my temper and called her something bad, so she gave me another hammering. **NL 85** came and gave me a caning until the blood was coming out of my hands. I was locked away in solitary confinement for two weeks because I told them that I was going to run away. I was put into a room on the second floor that was otherwise used if one of the boys was ill. I was brought my food and when I cooled down I was allowed out again to play. I received no medical treatment for my injuries, nor do I remember a doctor or dentist seeing us at the home.

20. I remember **SR 157** being more lenient than **SR 118** but even she had to watch who she could show affection to, and when. **SR 157** was a kind woman, but she could be strict. Before I left the home the nuns started a tuck shop and they used to give us about a sixpence occasionally that we could spend in the shop. Myself and 3 other boys would be taken by a nun to a pitch on the Falls Road to play hurly with other schools.

21. I finished school when I was 13, because the nuns had jobs for me to do around the home. I was put into the children's section of Nazareth Lodge to help look after the younger children. I was given a class of about 20 boys to look after, with jobs like making sure they were awake on time in the morning, and getting them washed and dressed. Later I was moved to help in the laundry. I was also required to help prepare the vegetables in the kitchen from time to time. We had to work wherever we were needed at any particular time. Finally, I was put to work in the garden. We grew vegetables in the garden, and because I was brought up in the country I was responsible for picking them. When I worked in the garden one of the nuns gave me a mug of tea and two slices of fried bread as a treat.

22. We were constantly hungry in the home; it was like a passenger with us all the time. We could not ask for more food if we were hungry. There was as little heating as they could get away with putting on and a blanket for the beds rather than duvets, so we were not warm in the home either. We were given overalls to wear, and I believe that **SR 118** used to make them. Sister **SR 118** made me learn how to make socks along with my other duties. We

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only wore shoes if we were going out for a walk. All of our clothes were numbered so that we could be sure that we were wearing our own stuff, and when we were old enough we had to help with dressing the younger boys.

23. I never ran away from the home, although I did think about it. After I was battered by **SR 118** and **NL 85** I wanted to run away. I thought about going across the fields rather than down the road, because no one would have looked for me there. I knew that if they found me and brought me back I would have been tortured, so I was too frightened to leave. I had seen boys being hammered and I saw brush shafts being broken over them when they ran away. After the nuns were finished with the runaways, the older boys would attack them too. I was living on a knife-edge all the time in the home.

24. We went on a couple of holidays with the nuns. We went camping at an army camp at Dundrum Castle and to the Glens of Antrim for a fortnight. We also went on day trips to Ardglass. I had a great time on these trips, but I have no other positive memories of my time in care.

### Life After Care

25. When I was 14 **SR 118** took me to the city and I was given a new set of clothes. She told me to have a bath, gave me my new clothes and took me down to the parlour where a farmer and his wife, Mr and **██████████** were waiting for me. I left Nazareth Lodge and was put out to their farm in **██████████**. I worked on the farm with **██████████** and his son, working 7 days a week from morning to night. His son soon left and I was left to run the farm with Mr **██████████**. The farm was a large operation, with 600 or 700 pigs, hens, cattle, an orchard, grain, a pub and a shop. In addition to my duties on the farm, I had to wash the household dishes and scrub the floors. I had to sit at a table under the stairs to eat my meals, and I was not allowed a bath. I lived in a hut with a tin roof beside the main farmhouse.

26. I went to Mass on a Sunday and was given half a crown to go to the pictures on a Sunday night. I was better fed in **██████████** but I was worked just as hard.



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This placement did not work out for me, and after about a year the farmer tried to put me back into Nazareth Lodge, but the nuns would not take me back. I was taken to the Salvation Army on the [REDACTED] and I stayed there for about a month and got a job in the [REDACTED] in Belfast. I worked there for about a year, but I decided that this was not for me, and so I went to Scotland when I was 16. I did not want to remain under the Guardianship of the Catholic Church until I was 21. [REDACTED] nephew helped me get a job in [REDACTED] where I worked for 2 years. I moved to [REDACTED] where I have spent my life.

27. I gained employment working for two contractors for the [REDACTED] and I worked my way through life. I visited [REDACTED] and she was glad to see me. I was married in 1962, but my wife passed away 30 years ago. I have a son and a daughter, 3 grandsons and a granddaughter.

28. I went back to Nazareth Lodge in 1955 to get my birth certificate. Sister **SR 118** told me that she did not have my birth certificate, but she gave me my baptism papers. I went back to the Lodge out of necessity, but I would not have gone back voluntarily. I later received my birth certificate from the Mater Hospital. I have since learned that my name was on a list of children to be sent to Australia on two separate occasions. I can remember the children who were sent away getting onto a double-decker bus with their suitcases.

29. My time at Nazareth Lodge made me independent and gave me self respect. It was hard, but I believe that you have to be able to show compassion and fairness to others. It was an experience, but not one that I would want to repeat. My time in care at Nazareth Lodge has affected the role that religion has played in my life. I have been to a Catholic Church twice since leaving the home, and they were both for special occasions. Other than that, religion does not play a role in my life.

30. I feel that I was mistreated and humiliated in the home, which has left me psychologically and emotionally scarred to this day. Sometimes I have nightmares about the beatings that I received. I was put into Nazareth Lodge

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as a child who had not done anything wrong. The Sisters of Nazareth and the Catholic Church have restricted me in my search for my information from 1955. They have passed the buck amongst themselves, costing me time and money.

31. I did not report any of the abuse that I suffered to the police, as they would not have believed me in those days. Although I suffered physical abuse, no-one tried to do anything immoral to me in the Lodge. I sought medical treatment from a doctor 30 years ago as I thought that I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

32. I tried to find out about my birth mother and father since the 1950s but I was blocked at every stage by the Catholic authorities. Had they provided me with the information when I requested it, I could have seen my mother before she died. Since my mother's death, I have discovered a brother who died before I met him and half-sisters in Canada and Scotland. This information was withheld from me, for which I feel very angry. I believe that the Catholic authorities have stolen my childhood and my family from me.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature, with the text "HIA 87" printed in white inside the box.

Dated

28 JUL 14