

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 370

Witness Name: HIA 370

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 370

I, HIA 370 will say as follows:-

PERSONAL DETAILS

1. I was born on [REDACTED] I was one of five children. I believe I was four or younger when I went into care. I understand my Mother kept the oldest child with her, and my Father's side of the family took another child. Three of us went to stay with my [REDACTED] my Mother's brother and then we went into Nazareth House as he had to work. I don't know why we were placed in care, no-one has told me and my Mother hasn't acknowledged it. My [REDACTED] later married and he and his wife, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] were brilliant to me but when I asked him what happened he just hugged me. He died a couple of years ago. According to my Mum's sister in [REDACTED] the family disowned my Mother.

Nazareth House – 1966/7 - 1971

2. Life in Nazareth House with the nuns was terrible. I hated life in the home. I was treated so bad, I got punched, slapped about and bullied by the other children. The nuns beat me, it wasn't one in particular, they all did it. I only remember the names of two nuns, [REDACTED] and SR 148. They slapped you with a belt that was hanging on their habit. I was hit on the shins of my legs and I would have to wear long socks to cover the bruises they caused. If you

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questioned why you were beaten you would be hit even more. We weren't allowed to speak or to cry. I would cry out for my Mum and my sisters. The older children hit the younger ones as well. I remember being beaten by one nun with a big long belt that she wore on her habit, she left me bleeding on my bum and legs and I have scars from this on my legs to this day. If you yelled when you were hit you were hit more.

3. The clothes that I was wearing when I went into the home were put on somebody else and I remember saying 'They're mine' and being beaten for saying it. I remember I had a wee cardigan, a dress and ankle socks with frills round the top. They were given to girls who were going out of the home visiting. It was horrendous. I was given guttys to wear but one shoe was too small and the other was too big. The small one cut my foot.
4. I wet the bed and I was punished by being left to sleep in the wet because the bed wasn't dried. I would try to find the dry part of the bed and sleep across the top where the pillow is. I was also punished by having to wash the wet sheets in a tiny wee sink. Sometimes I soiled the bed and I was stripped naked by the nuns for this. You were made to sleep with your arms crossed over your chest. I sleep like this to this day.
5. I had to scrub the floors as well even though we were only about four or five years old.
6. I was often hungry and the food was not very good. I remember porridge and eggs. I often went four or five days without eating and I have struggled with food for my whole life.
7. I slept in a room with a number of other children. I remember a man coming round the beds. I could hear him coming because his breathing was heavy. I was scared of him. A wee girl in the next bed to me would shout out 'Here he comes' and she would scream, she was trying to tell me he was coming, she was scared of him too. He carried a walking stick and he used to whack our legs with this stick. I could hear the walking stick hitting the floor as he walked

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up to the bedroom door and he trailed his leg as well. He would come to me and put his hands in my pants and touch my lady garden, my genitals. I tried to get into bed with some of the other children but they told me to go away, that I was going to get them hit. I remember getting into bed with another wee girl, she was sleeping and I remember this man leaning over me to touch the wee girl. I'm sure he touched her sexually. We were around four or five years old at the time. I don't know who this man is and I don't remember seeing him during the day. This happened nearly every night of the week.

8. One night I was trailed out of bed and taken to a room like a kitchen where I was stripped naked and hosed down. I think this may have been because I soiled myself. I was made to keep my eyes to the front so I don't know who did this to me but I'm sure there was nun there because I saw a habit. She grabbed me and started thumping my back. I also remember a man there as well. The nun was shouting 'You're dirty, you're dirty'. I went to bed soaking wet. I was panicking and couldn't breathe because of my asthma.
9. I don't remember going to school when I was in the home. I only remember being in the Chapel, praying on my knees. My first memory of school was when I returned to live with my Mummy.
10. I used to ask for my Mummy and sister alot. When I mentioned them I got beat. Then I was told that my Mother was dead, I screamed and screamed with shock and loss and went through a grieving stage. Later she turned up in a taxi, when I saw her I nearly died. I tried to hug her but she pushed me away and hugged my younger sister, [REDACTED] instead. She wouldn't tell me why I was there. I've been trying to build a relationship with her for years but she hasn't acknowledged my experiences. She didn't even come to my wedding.

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Life After Care

11. We went back to live with Mummy when I was about seven or eight years old. She wouldn't let us speak about the nuns. She told our oldest sister to hit the three of us if we spoke about the nuns.

12. I left home at 16 and met my husband when I was seventeen. We married when I was nineteen I gave birth to a wee boy but I lost him. The doctor told me it was because of stress. My husband told me that I was suffering from depression couldn't cope with me. He turned to the drink but we stayed together and I had my daughter. We separated after five years, he said I had depression and wanted to stay in the house all the time. I left him because he was drinking heavily and tried to get me to drink with him. I had a nervous breakdown when my daughter was a couple of years old and I was in Holywell for a few weeks but my oldest sister was scared that I would speak to the Psychiatrists so she took me out of there in my pyjamas. I think she was doing what my Mammy told her to. I attended a day clinic after that but my sister told me not to mention my past.

13. I had another relationship but that didn't work out either. We had two sons who are 19 and 16 now.

14. My daughter is 28 now and I have four grandchildren. They keep me going. We are very close and I am very protective of my children and grandchildren.

15. Sometimes I wake up in the night to the sound of breathing and I get up and check all the doors and windows. I won't leave the house at night at all, not even to go to the bin.

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16. I did start to drink heavily to block things about my childhood out. I learned that my problems were still there when I was sober and I got help from Alcoholics Anonymous and stopped drinking. I have been depressed and used medication for this but I don't anymore. I am much happier now in my life but I still feel that part of my life is missing. I have accepted that I will never get this back and that I may never find out why I was in care or find out who did these things to me.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

HIA 370

Dated

9-7-2014

CHRISTIAN NAME	BIRTH PLACE	DATE OF BIRTH	WHERE BAPTISED	PARENT'S NAME	OCCUPATION
HIA 370	Belfast.	[REDACTED]	Holy Trinity.	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

WHEN RECEIVED	RECOMMENDED BY	DISMISSED	DECEASED	OBSERVATIONS	No.
23. 9. 1969.	..	6. 10. 69			3154

3151

3152

3153

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] of Little Bns of Assumption
asked to have the children admitted.
The mother had to leave the district
she was living in because of
intimidation. Address: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

NAZARETH LODGE . BETHLEHEM NURSERY

DISCHARGE BOOK

Date 6th October 1969

This is to certify that I have received my child^{REN}
in a clean, healthy condition and free from infection.

Signed

Witness

NL 5

BY [REDACTED]
DATE 17 Oct 1969
NAZARETH HOUSE,
Hammersmith, LONDON, W.6