

Statement of **SND 463** of [REDACTED]

I was born on the [REDACTED] and must have lived with my mother until I was three when I went into Nazareth along with my sister [REDACTED] who was two years younger than me. My brother [REDACTED] who was two years older than me went to Temonbacca at the same time. I didn't know I had a brother then and only met him when he came down to Nazareth to school and I knew he was my brother then, though I never really bonded with him and he left the school after a couple of years, but at that time I did not know where he had gone.

From 1940 until 1950 I recall that the home was very strict. In particular there were two nuns **SR 139** and **SR 24** and I found them to be very cruel. They had leather straps as part of their uniform and it hung down long enough for them to use without taking it off. They both used bamboo canes that had black tape on them to make them last longer. They used the straps and canes regularly and **SR 24** would also sometimes hit girls on the head with a bunch of keys. This happened to me once when I was talking while getting ready to go to bed.

There was another nun there too, **SR 34** but she wasn't cruel like the other two. In fact I took her name for my confirmation.

At the time there was decent food but not fancy. We got porridge in the morning and ordinary food like soup, bread and potatoes etc. I can never recall being hungry.

As far as **SR 34** was concerned she was always very kind to me when I had a bad time every month and she used to put me to bed and give me a hot water bottle to put on my stomach.

One thing that sticks in my mind as being very cruel was one Saturday when we were out playing in the fields one of the girls ate berries and when she got back to Nazareth she was very sick. She went to **SR 139** who gave her face a slap for eating the berries and making herself sick. She actually died that night from the poisoned berries.

On another occasion I recall **SR 139** slapping another girl constantly with a cane as a punishment for something she had done. I recall that quite a number of us were lined along the corridor to witness this. I think the severe punishment was because the girl would not cry.

I personally was never beaten or strapped excessively.

**SR 9** came about the 1950s and had come from the boys' home in Belfast. The whole atmosphere in the home changed then and she was there until long after I left in 1954.

I can say that **SR 9** was strict but she was very fair and reasonable. She certainly could not have been described as cruel. With her there the children were happy and able to run about freely. She would give you a slap with a ruler for specific acts of boldness or being cheeky.

**SR 9** was great into music, ceili bands, orchestra, piano and girls were sent out for singing lessons outside the home. We were also entered into the feis in Derry and Nazareth was well known for success. We all enjoyed the music and the freedom we had then. We used to go to concerts in various places like St. Columbs' Hall, Buncrana and the like.

As far as bathing was concerned, there were six baths and we would go into the bath three at a time. We were never left standing naked as we had to wear a white gown called a chemise while we were waiting to get into the bath. After we got out we put the chemise back on again and then went to the dormitory and put on our nightdress and went to bed.

It is quite wrong to say that we were bathed in jeyes fluid. In fact there was plenty of hot water and a squirt or two of jeyes fluid was put in it. I never heard any girl ever complain about the jeyes fluid and really we thought nothing of it at all.

I remember that we had to polish the long corridor every week. We actually enjoyed doing this because we stood in a line three abreast with cloths under our feet. It is nonsense to say that this was a difficult job as we were always laughing and enjoying doing this.

After primary school I remained at Nazareth and **SR 9** put me into the sewing room and I learnt to use the machine. I remained in the choir and about 1951 I was at the feis in the Guildhall with the choir. We came first and a photo with our names appeared in the papers and as a result my mother's attention was brought to it.

My sister **SR 9** and I were told one Saturday that our mother was coming up to see us on Sunday. This is the first I had ever heard of my mother. I had always treated the nuns as my family.

My mother and a friend came to Nazareth then. At that meeting I found out that my mother had taken my brother, **SR 9** out of the home years earlier to live with her and another sister **SR 9** whom I had known nothing about before. My mother then started to come and visit on rare occasions but **SR 9** and **SR 9** came more often.

When I was seventeen my mother took **SR 9** and I out of Nazareth even though I did not want to go. This was because we were old enough to go to work.

My mother never showed us any love but **SR 9** and I went back to Nazareth every weekend as that was where we were happy. **SR 9** later asked me to go with the Gaelic singers to America for ten weeks. Prior to going to America I was practising with the singers at Nazareth. One evening when I got there **SR 9** called me in and asked me if I knew that my sister **SR 9** was back staying in Nazareth. I was shocked when I went to see her in the infirmary as she was black and blue after being beaten with a stiletto heel of a shoe by my mother. **SR 9** continued to go out to work every day but went back to live in Nazareth full time.

I stayed with my mother for another two years and then was able to get a flat of my own. I then brought **SR 9** to live with me. Both **SR 9** and I continued to visit Nazareth nearly every weekend. After **SR 9** and I had our own children we used to bring them to Nazareth and have our tea there. It was a home from home.

I wanted nothing to do with this Inquiry but I was really annoyed at the horrible stories that appeared in the press about the 'vile nuns' and people being made to eat vomit. I was particularly annoyed about the attacks on **SR 9** as she was so good and many of the girls called her **SR 9**. She was not only good to me and my sister but many of the girls felt the same about her.

When **SR 9** and I got married **SR 163** baked our cake with three tiers and **SR 9** and **SR 128** both came to our wedding in the church. After the wedding we came back to Nazareth to see the children in their classrooms and to see the other nuns. I have photos of this occasion in my wedding album.

When **SR 9** died she was buried in Paisley in Scotland and a whole bus load went from Derry to the funeral and there we met other girls who had come from all over to be there.

I just felt that I had to come forward to correct the very wrong impression that was given by the people who spoke to the Inquiry.

After **SR 9** died some girls got together and made a poem and my daughter **████████** made a stitched panel and I have it on the wall of my living room.

Signed

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