



Magdalene Institutions: Recording an Archival and Oral History A project funded by the



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| Reference Code: | MAGOHP/48/ANON |
| Oral History of: | Martha |
| Pseudonym? | Yes |
| Status: | Survivor |
| Keywords: | Good Shepherd Sisters; Waterford Magdalene Laundry; sexual abuse; incest; sexual abuse in Magdalene Laundry; Interdepartmental Committee on the Magdalene Laundries; McAleese Report; inter-generational effects. |
| Date of Interview: | 28 th February 2013 |
| Transcript: | 98 pages |
| Interviewer: | Dr Katherine O'Donnell |
| Records/Papers included: | None |
| Access Conditions: | Anonymised interviews are freely available to the public. Immediate release of transcript; interviewee's identity to be revealed in 10 years. |
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To cite this transcript:

O'Donnell, K., S. Pembroke and C. McGettrick. (2013) "Oral History of Martha". *Magdalene Institutions: Recording an Oral and Archival History*. Government of Ireland Collaborative Research Project, Irish Research Council, pp.1-98.

Notes on Redaction and Transcription Process

Interviewee Initials: M

Interviewer Initials: KOD

Key

... = Short pause (or where words are repeated or the speaker changes direction mid-sentence)

(*pause*) = Long pause

blabla = spoken with great emphasis

(*blabla*) = Additional audible expressions, body language

[*blabla*] = background information that might be helpful

Notes on Redaction Process

- Named individuals have been given pseudonyms, apart from Rose Brien Harrington (referred to on Page 93) who has also participated in this project and who has chosen to be identified.
- A hospital ward and a hospice unit have been given pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of the interviewee.
- The interviewee has chosen her Magdalene 'house name' for a pseudonym, instances where the house name is used in its own right are marked with '[house name]' (on pg 37, the interviewer addresses Martha by her pseudonym).
- Dates are accurately transcribed.
- Certain locations have been redacted in this interview to protect the interviewee.

List of Pseudonyms

| Pseudonym | Status/Relationship to Interviewee |
|----------------|---|
| Martha | Interviewee |
| Sr Borgia | Third Party Religious |
| Sr Regina | Third Party Religious |
| Sr Mary | Third Party Religious |
| Theresa | Auxiliary in bedroom |
| Deirdre Hughes | Third Party Magdalene |
| Susan | Third Party Magdalene |
| Patricia | Third Party Magdalene |
| Lucy | Interviewee's grandchild |
| Lindsey | Interviewee's counsellor |
| John | Interviewee's brother-in-law |
| Dr Lynch | Interviewee's doctor |
| Gráinne | Interviewee's daughter |
| Michael | Interviewee's son |
| Mrs Ryan/Fiona | Other grandmother to interviewee's son's children |
| Jennifer | Mother to interviewee's son's second two children |
| Joanne | Mother to interviewee's first two children |
| Veronica | Unclear, possibly social worker |
| Nicola | Interviewee's daughter |

| | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| Ellen | Interviewee's daughter |
| David | Interviewee's former partner |
| Sophie | Interviewee's |
| Aisling Fleming | Senior Social Worker |
| Roger | Interviewee's partner |
| Alan | Interviewee's brother |
| St Philomena's | Name of ward in hospice |
| St Peter's | Name of hospice day care unit |
| Lillian | Interviewee's sister |
| Eileen Murray | Interviewee's mother's solicitor |
| Richard | Interviewee's neighbour |
| Joan | Hospice worker |

Basic Data from Interview

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Name/Pseudonym | Martha |
| When Born | 1956 |
| Born outside marriage? | No |
| Raised by | Family until eleven |
| Education | Primary |
| Order | Good Shepherd Sisters |
| Laundry | Waterford |
| From | 1967 |
| To | 1970/71 |
| Duration of stay | 3.5 years |
| Age on entry | Eleven |
| Entered Via | Gardaí/family |
| House Name/No | Yes |
| Haircutting/punishment? | Yes, haircutting, physical abuse, sexual abuse in laundry |
| Circumstances of Departure | Family took her out |
| Emigrated? | No |
| Physical ailments? | Not mentioned |
| Of Note | |

[Consent process before interview]

KOD *So you read the information sheet?*

M Right.

KOD *And you've had time to think about whether or not you'd do it, and you talked with people...*

M I have yeah...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...and I'd be happy to do it.

KOD *Great. And you understand that your name, the names of other people won't be identified in the study, and, you agree that the information can be put up on the web, and people can download the transcript and listen to your voice?*

M Uh huh, that's a good thing.

KOD *Great. So, you would like to use a pseudonym?*

M Yeah.

KOD *What name will we give you?*

M Martha, the name I had in there. [House name in Magdalene Laundry]

KOD *Right (laughs) Martha.*

M *(Laughs)*

KOD *Do you consent to your true identity being revealed after 30 years?*

M Yeah of course, after we'll say 10 years even, I wouldn't have a problem.

KOD *Okay.*

M My two sisters I'd say won't like that! *(Laughs)*

KOD *I'll put 10, okay. And you're ready that, once we get your typ...transcript typed up, it can be released?*

M Of course, yeah.

KOD *Okay. And the same goes for the audio tape of your...your...*

M Yeah.

KOD *Alright. And then, do you have any other wishes, about your...how your interview is transcribed or released?*

M Well no, but I just would like it to be known. I would like it to go into the history books and I would like...do you know, the younger generation of today including my own grandchildren to know that that's the way it was long ago. It wasn't the...the perpetrator that went in...that got into trouble it was the v...the victim.

KOD *(Writing down wishes on consent form) 'Wants it...in the history book...*

M If you were a girl.

KOD *...in the history books'. Yeah.*

M You know, you'd have had to have been a girl like, for that to happen.

KOD *Yeah. (Continues to fill out consent form)*

M If I'm making sense.

KOD *Right. So your name is Martha [pseudonym]*

M *(Spells out surname) [surname removed]*

KOD *So if you could just sign that there Martha*

M *No problem Ka... (Signs form)*

[Brief pause for form signing]

[Interview begins at 02:18]

KOD *So we're gonna talk for as long as we want and we'll go back and forth over the story, make sure you're happy with everything.*

M *And I'll go in proper direction this time...*

KOD *Right!*

M *...I'll stop distracting you. [Referring to conversation prior to interview]*

KOD *Yeah as you can see we have a whole load of questions just to kind of you know, structure and remind us where we're at and that...*

M *Right.*

KOD *I'll keep an eye on this [interview guide]. But yeah so I want to take you back right to the beginning like, where and when you were born? How...*

M *I was born in a...at home. [Location of birth removed]*

KOD *Grand. And when was y...when was that?*

M That was in 1956. I was the youngest of...of eight. She had...my mother had me at late in life, forty-something so she'd been on the change of life when she really had me. Which is why she probably couldn't cope.

KOD *Yeah.*

M You know, I was the youngest. I don't really remember me mother being there, if I'm going the right direction [in telling her story]?

KOD *Yeah.*

M I don't remember my mother being there...a lot. I remember my older sister, first day at school, communion; it was always my sister.

KOD *Right.*

M I don't remember Mam being there at all.

KOD *And would that older sister have been much older than you?*

M She would yeah, she's seventy-something and I'm fifty-six, so she'd have been very adult [at] that time.

KOD *Yeah, right. And it was her who did most of the rearing really?*

M It was, yeah.

KOD *And what about your father, was he around?*

M He was he worked in [workplace removed] and [in] between that he'd be in the pub. That was the thing then.

KOD *Yeah.*

M And we rarely seen him. He was a good man for the wages...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...a good man for bringing in the money, but he was never there, never there.

KOD *Yeah.*

M Never.

KOD *So did he like hand over the wage every week?*

M Oh yeah that's something he was always good for, but never as a father.

KOD *Yeah.*

M I think it had to do with...they buried their first child at four, he got burned alive. And then, I suppose they weren't that...me Mam had shock treatment and that, she couldn't...you know...me sister took over.

KOD *And your mother had shock treatment...*

M That's right.

KOD *...around the time she was having you?*

M Yeah, no I think that would have been before me, I just think she had me too late in life.

KOD *Uh huh, [she] was tired.*

M Yeah me dad went and got a job in England, me Mam went with him but...she came back four years later with a new coat for me, I remember thinking, 'do you really think that's going to make it up?' And she came back when I was ten-and-a-half and sure six months later I was in Waterford [Good Shepherd Magdalene Laundry].

KOD *Right.*

M You know, so...it was only for the four years like.

KOD *So she was gone for...*

M She was gone for four years.

KOD *Around the time of your communion was it? Or when did she go?*

M Yes she was gone by then...

KOD *She was already gone?*

M ...because my sister was there for the communion, yeah.

KOD *And how many other...so there was...was your sister the eldest of the eight?*

M She was the eldest but the rest of them would have been a year or two behind us, they'd have been all coming up there you know?

KOD *Yeah.*

M I think...I think me other sister was...she'd have been eleven or twelve and the other one then above that would have been seventeen you know what I mean...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...they go up, so.

KOD *And what about your growing up before you went into the Magdalene Laundries like, where'd you go to school, how did you get on there?*

M I went to school in [location removed]. I was going into...I mean I can't be sure but I think fourth...fifth class...fourth...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...I was eleven and I wasn't going to school. I was going over to my friend's house, I really I wasn't going in, I was going to the gate and...

KOD *Pretending to go into school, yeah.*

M The school inspector...you know, was on to me about not going to school. The reason I wasn't going to school was because me brother used to come into me room and finish [referring to attempted sexual abuse]. I told my parents, I told my sister I told everyone and no-one was doing nothing, and I suppose as you would say now, a child was acting out because I was known as a naughty child because...

KOD *And when did your brother start to come into the room to you?*

M Since I was about four...four. It got really bad when I was about nine or ten, like when he'd come in. He never did anything because I'd always scream at that time, [it was] different in the convent because you'd locked doors, but I'd always tell someone or shout to someone, but nobody ever did nothing, so he was just left.

KOD *And how old was he?*

M Well he'd have been three years older than me, so he was seven so, it came out after that he was abused himself but he continued this 'til he was nineteen, so he *did* know what he was doing...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...now, he *did* know what he was doing.

KOD *So he started when he was seven to come into your room and you knew this...that what he was doing was bad?*

M Yeah he wasn't doing much at that point just...

KOD *Yeah*

M ...trying to put his hand in under the covers and...whatever, and...and I...I did tell them...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...you know and they do know. My sister said she caught him once with me when he...when I was about nine.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M Again, nothing was done. So it did continue. You know obviously it came out after, some neighbour or something had been abusing him, so he was coming in...

KOD *Yeah...*

M ...doing it. Again, after that anyway, you know I didn't go to school

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...and the school insp...one day me mother said to me, 'the school inspector wants to see you!' But it wasn't the school inspector, it was the legal department the...I don't know what they called them?

KOD *I don't know either.*

M Principal Officer or?

KOD *Was it the Cruelty Man? [Inspector with Irish Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Children]*

M Something to do with the guards anyway...

KOD *Okay.*

M ...and you had to go upstairs in the [location removed], that time they had an office upstairs in the [location removed] Garda Station [Irish Police]. Right? And me mother brought me in as far as the door and she says, 'go in now, he wants to see you,' she said, 'and I'll wait here,' and, 'I'll...you know he'll drop you home'. So I said, 'fine' and I went in and I sat down and [I was] talking away about why I wasn't going to school. *Not once* did they ask me *why* I wasn't going to school! Giving out reams [about] what was going on with school and...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...I wasn't going in and blah blah blah. And I mean he didn't ask me what really happened. So anyway at the end of it he says, 'come on and I'll drop you home' and he locked all the doors [and said], 'come on you're going to Waterford'. [Good Shepherd Magdalene Laundry] And I cried the whole way there (*voice breaks*) and I remember saying to him 'but what about me Mam, won't she be worried?' And he said, 'no, she knows'. So down to Waterford we went. Got in the door anyway and she cut me hair and she took all me clothes, gave me rags to wear and straight to the laundry.

KOD *Do you think it was because you were being abused? Do you think that people knew that...*

M Well I think they couldn't deal with me brother. They do realise that now, because he went on to abuse half me sister's kids and half me other sister's kids because they didn't believe me...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...and they took him in and he did the same to them. There's no point in coming back to me now, because they didn't listen to me, if they had he mightn't have gone on to do it to the grandchildren. None of them did anything about it because they all have kids now, in high jobs...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...whatever but, I have one niece that's very badly affected and my sister...my older sister can't deal with it with me, she obviously can't even talk about him and you know...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...but like that he did go on to do that so he was...he was bad through and through. I remember him pulling me Mam's hair to the ground, he was bad, he was violent. But anyway, I went to...I went to work in the laundry and she said to me, she said you know, 'you don't talk, you do your work, you don't talk to anyone, this is your name, you won't be known as your own name anymore, and do your work'. But I wo...I wouldn't say I was a naughty child but I did ask a lot of questions...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...and that got me into a lot of...trouble as well you know? Because, I remember one day she...I was getting sick I didn't like bread and dripping I mean, it did make me sick. And she said, 'eat it!' and I said, 'no,' I said, 'I don't like it'. You know, I was only a child, like you know [how] children [say], 'I don't like [it]'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M And she put me head into it and forced me to eat it.

KOD *Is this your mother? No, this is in...the nun...*

M Yeah.

KOD *...yeah, yeah sorry, yeah.*

M She put...pushed me head into it and forced me to eat it and I got very sick and then she gave me a dig to the side of the face and, so I mean I...I was a child like, like...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...and I can't... *(Sighs)*

KOD *Can you remember, so you remember being brought from the...upstairs in the [location of police station removed]...*

M To the laundry...

KOD *...into the car, locked into the car...*

M I'm not telling it well.

KOD *No, you're doing great! And being brought all the way to Waterford, and did you know what Waterford was?*

M Do you know? No, I didn't know where I was going. And I saw the big gates, I saw the...I d...I really didn't know where I was going. And even in there, down in the laundry, you know I wouldn't have connected the two of them, you know I didn't...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...just didn't know what was going on. I was totally, after a while I did...but I didn't like...

KOD *And did...so the very first day you were brought there, was it in the morning or the afternoon, the evening?*

M I...I had the meeting with him at ten in the morning so it would have been straight after that so...they worked 'til six, so I was put into the laundry for the rest of the afternoon, that was from about one o'clock, to...

KOD *And you remember being taken by him and being dropped, and can you remember, like was there one nun or two nuns who opened up the door to you or?*

M There was one,

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...the head...

KOD *Head?*

M ...the head nun...of the...no there was another one and then the head nun...

KOD *Right.*

M ...that came to the office, there was...there was one [who] opened the door.

KOD *And did they tell you where it was? Did you even know it was in Waterford?*

M No, she just said, 'you're here now,' she said, 'you do as you're told, you don't answer back, you don't speak, we're changing your name, you won't be called [pseudonym] anymore you'll be called...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...Martha [house name]'. No, I said...I cried because I wanted to go home...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...to my Mam. And she said 'but they don't want you, why do you think you're here? You were sent here because you've the d...you're the devil's child. You were sent here because you were, you know, bold or..'.. And, [she] brought me down to where...she cut me hair first, I mean I was bald, no hair at all she just cut me hair completely. And my sister never questioned that either, you know? [When she came to visit]

KOD *Uh huh.*

M And straight up to the laundry and I...I found it very hard to do the work. My first week there I collapsed, and I got a couple of hours off work and back. I think it was the food as well and the heat because we weren't getting a lot to eat and I was only a child and she put me on those big presses I couldn't even reach. And she said, 'well if you can't reach there is a stool there, reach!' And I had to do it I was on the shirt machine first, and then I was on the Hoffman presser and it was just...

KOD *And what year was this?*

M This would have been '70...'67.

KOD '67.

M '67. [I] would've been eleven. I was eleven going in.

KOD *And...and you knew nothing about laundries or anything like that?*

M No sure what would I know at eleven, I was going to school.

KOD *And did you have any other relatives that were in industrial schools or laundries or anything like that?*

M No. I was the only one.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I felt very...I was the only one...

KOD *And did you remem...like did you believe her that your mother wanted you in there?*

M I didn't know what to believe because I always knew from a very early age I wasn't wanted.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I always knew I was different to my sisters.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M Life was different.

KOD *Yeah.*

M I got no attention, I mean I would go up to my Dad for it but [he would say], 'ah go 'way I've no time for that'. I mean I didn't get it from [the] start...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...so I didn't really know...you know, I knew...I was thinking me Mam was worried, I wanted to go...I wanted to go home to her...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...but then I [had] another thought, 'Why am I here? Why not my brother?' And I was only a child thinking [that].

KOD *Uh huh.*

M 'Why am I here?' Because I done nothing wrong. But it was easier as I say, to get rid of me.

KOD *And did you think that it did have something to do with your brother trying to come into your room?*

M Ah yes, yes, they thought I was trying to make trouble, I was being the dirty bitch telling...saying those things. I was being the...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...the wrong one, sorry for being so blunt...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...but that's the way it was. I was causing trouble, I was...I was a problem child. So get rid of me. You know? But I do believe she thought I was going to school, I don't believe she thought I was going to a laundry, but then I won't excuse her either, she never came to visit me the whole time I was there, or my father.

KOD *Can you remember the very first night? What it was like to be there?*

M Scary.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M *(Whispered)* Scary. Scary, em. Scary, I was scared. I was scared. I didn't know what was happening. Very scared.

KOD *And when they were cutting your hair and they left you nearly bald can you remember like, trying to resist that or ask them?*

M *(Sighs)* I didn't know what was...I did, I did, I did try to resist it. But there was another nun. They [would] hold you while she was cutting your hair so I...I couldn't move anyway, I was scared at that point...I.... And...and then I saw them one day with a woman unconscious on the floor. They just lifted her away by the legs and the arms. I didn't know *then* what I probably think happened now. She was down there a long time, but, I never see her again [sic]. *(Voice breaks)* And I was scared because I...I thought, [are] we gonna...is this gonna happen to me like, I had no childhood, I grew up very fast.

KOD *Yeah.*

M I had to, 'cause...

KOD *Were there any other children in there?*

M There was, there was a couple of us but they separated us like, you'd go with six there'd...there'd be five old women and then the next table, five old women and a young girl, the next table – they separated you totally. I mean, to this day I can't talk about it without getting... (*Voice breaks*)

KOD *Of course.*

M ... upset because it ruined me life like...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...*ruined* me life totally. You know? I had enough of it before I went in there, but when I went in there I thought, I didn't...I never expected *that* like, you know? I never expected to be...I mean, another day I answered her back and she put me into a cold bath...do you know those scrubbing brushes, the hard ones that you scrub the...she scrubbed me whole body with that...a child like, and I had sores and welts all over me body...and I...

KOD *She scrubbed you with like...a scrubbing brush for a floor was it like?*

M Yeah.

KOD *Yeah?*

M That was the point, scrub the devil out of you like, I mean, I [was only] a child. She did, and then she put me outside the door for ages in a flimsy...you know, I wasn't even dressed for it, and she left me there. Another day she locked me in a closet, but I think the worst frightening one of all was the day she put me head into the water and kept putting it down and bringing it up and putting it down and bringing it up, I thought I couldn't breathe, and I think I was about eleven-and-a-half then. But I mean it was scary, it was...it was...*prison* I don't think would have been as bad, it was scary. You know?

KOD *And was it the one nun who did all of that stuff?*

M No three. (*Sighs*)

KOD *Three different ones?*

M I'll name their names if you want I've no qualms doing that.

KOD *Yeah.*

M Sr Borgia, Sr Regina, Sr Mary. [Pseudonyms]

KOD *And did they act together or did they just do...like?*

M Well, a couple of times they worked together yeah, where two would hold you and one would...and then there was the sexual abuse as well. I mean, I'm not going to dramatically go into that...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...it's going in where it's going [oral history archive], but...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...there w...I was sexually abused in there, *and by the nuns*. But, when I heard Enda Kenny [saying] it didn't happen in there, that really upset me.

KOD *Yeah.*

M But I think a lot of the women aren't coming out with that side of it...

KOD *Yeah.*

M I mean, I know yez won't mind me saying it, my consultant psychiatrist said [there was] one other lady who came out there a couple of months ago, but they're very slow in coming out with the sexual abuse.

KOD *Yeah.*

M But *it did, it did* [happen] and I can't stress this enough, *it did* go on in there...

KOD *I believe you.*

M ...the sexual abuse among the nuns...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...it did go on. Because women are too ashamed to come out with that side of it.

KOD *Yeah.*

M I did, I told the consultant psychologist and I did tell, I *did* come out with it but I would like more...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...at some point to come out and say, 'look, they did,' because they did...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...you know. It wasn't just put down[s], I mean every day you were told you were no good, 'why didn't your Mam...why didn't...your family don't want you, nobody wants you, look at you'. And even when they were hitting you and abusing you and sexual abusing you it was, 'we have to rid you of the devil, we have to do this, look what *you* made me do now, because [it is] *your* fault'. (*Voice breaks*) And I went through life thinking it was my fault and I suppose up in the Dáil last week [in the Irish Parliament on the day An Taoiseach issued an apology on behalf of the State] I realised it wasn't...wasn't my fault. None of it. (*Pause*)

KOD *Was that your first time realising it, when you were up in the Dáil, that it wasn't your fault?*

M Because my family never spoke to me about it.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I mean I done that interview with the radio, I was a bag of nerves, but they would condemn me for that.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M You know. *(Crying)*

KOD *So, your first night...*

M Sorry *(crying)*.

KOD *Not at all and like we've loads of time as well, Martha alright?*

M I'm probably the only one now that did this [crying during interview].

KOD *Are you joking! Most of the time, I'm the one who's crying too, you know?*

M It was bad.

KOD *Yeah.*

M *(Still crying)* I don't know will I ever be right but the only thing I can hope for is to live, and learn to live and cope with it, you know?

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I'm with him seven years now [referring to her partner who had come to bring Martha to be interviewed] and how long will I be with him for?

KOD *Yeah.*

M I totally can't...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...until I rid myself of who I am. It's not going to work...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...do you know? But I just wish...a lot of people...when he said that about no physical abuse, no sexual abuse [referring to Report of the Interdepartmental Committee aka *McAleese Report*], I cried for the whole week.

KOD *Yeah.*

M *The whole week.* Because, it's like...

KOD *And when you're saying 'he' you mean the McAleese Report...*

M Yeah.

KOD *...when that said...*

M It did go on.

KOD *...no physical abuse, yeah, no sexual abuse, it was...*

M *(Still crying)* It went on *every day of the week.* I mean she locked me in a closet one evening and left me there for the night. I mean that does mean...you see, a lot of them are not coming out with a lot of this.

KOD *Yeah.*

M I mean I heard other girls screaming so I *know* they were...getting sexually abused, getting locked in closets, and getting told you know, 'you're a dirt...you're dirty like, we have to do this because you have the devil inside you, you...you're this horrible child and nobody wants you and we're the only ones there,' and I mean they *drummed* it into us...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...*drummed* it into us and it...it got to the stage where I believed it and I picked the wrong relationships because I never thought I was good enough.

KOD *Yeah.*

M For anyone good, for anyone.

KOD *Yeah.*

M I never thought that...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...you know.

KOD *And in the dormitories as well...or, I presume there were dormitories that you slept in?*

M The door was locked at night but the nun would come in, you could wake at three in the morning I don't know if you...if anyone ever told you this but you could wake...I'm scared to this day [to have] the lights out, because the lights would be out and if we...and she'd be at your bed and I mean she could drag you out of that bed! You know, if she felt you...she wanted to give you a belt or sexual abu...or whatever she felt like doing on the night.

KOD *Uh huh. And there were three in particular that would do that?*

M *Yeah.*

KOD *Yeah.*

M Three that I...

KOD *Yeah, that you...*

M ...can say...you know like, they're alright, the majority of them are good,

KOD *Would you say that?*

M I've no doubt there was good ones there too, I don't know.

KOD *Did you meet good ones?*

M But I know out of the whole lot there was only three of them...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...that made my life hell, that's what I know. I mean I don't know if the rest of them are good but they never...do you know, there was only three I can say that actually treated me...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...horribly. And the...one of them, the girl in charge of us but they were told what to do. I don't hold anything against her because they were *told* what to do.

KOD *And was she called an auxiliary or was she called...*

M Yeah an auxiliary, she was there all her life so they were aux...the n...but I never blamed her for anything she done because the nuns were the ones telling her, 'you're doing this, you're doing that'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M And if she didn't do it she'd probably get the belt...[get a] beating herself...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...so they did do a lot... *(Sighs)*

KOD *And what kind was the...the physical abuse and the sexual abuse like, you got locked in closets, you got your hair...*

M I was...

KOD *...you got your face pushed into water, was that a bath or was it a pail or?*

M Bath.

KOD *A bath.*

M Bath, [they would] put your head in and they kept ducking it up [sic] *(voice breaks)* you got hit on the side of the face quite often and...pulled your hair back and...do you know what I mean? Side of the face once down the toilet and...me tooth fell out and like, this time my sister said, 'what happened your tooth?' And I said...the nun would always be there you see, they never gave us the chance to...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...to talk. And the nun said, 'oh she fell'. And you know, I couldn't say nothing like, it was her, it was her! Oh I...I tell ya, I...I...do you know...I...I'm very bitter to them and I hate them...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...and I'd just love to go back and have one nun on her knees in court and just...

KOD *Are they still alive those sisters?*

M I don't know, I don't know but I mean, the ones, the younger ones at the time would be still alive and they knew what went on, they mightn't have took part themselves, but then they could have been at someone else, do you get me?

KOD *Yeah.*

M Maybe, because I did hear other girls screaming and I did hear girls...you know. And, we didn't talk but you'd know they were going through the same as you and the sexual abuse was quite bad too.

KOD *And what kind was the sexual abuse?*

M *(Sighs)* Anything that they could get their hands on in the kitchen. Any...I mean, I can't really go into that...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...in too much detail because of where it's going and I have you know I suppose *(whispered)* the solicitors said I can't but...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...anything they...I suppose, judge...use your own judgement, anything they could find in the kitchen or...anything, there was always two or three of them there for that. So, one would hold you down and one of them would...it was quite bad but...I...I mean, if more came out...my suggestion would be look, if the nuns are denying this let them take a lie detector...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...because I'd have no problem taking one.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M Do you understand where I'm coming from?

KOD *I do.*

M And prove the case *for* the McAleese Report because 'tis all wrong...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...and that report should be dumped, it's all wrong. I'll give him his due he did look after us...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...I'll give him his due, great apology [referring to Taoiseach Enda Kenny], but he's missing what really happened in those laundries and this is what I want invest[igated].

KOD *Okay.*

M I mean, I can't do much about it, if more women don't come up and say, 'look this happened to me too...'

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...and 'this happened,' do you know I mean I can't get this recognised on my own.

KOD *Yes. Well I believe you.*

M You know and, do you know? *(Sighs)*

KOD *I believe you.*

M I know, I know my psychologist said that...you know what I mean, she knows...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...but I just wish I had more people to [come forward]...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...because this needs to be recognised...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...that this was part of the history too, the physical and sexual abuse that went on in there *by the nuns...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...you know, and if they were still alive, I mean you could say, 'look she'd a birthmark there, she...' I mean I can prove what I'm saying is the truth.

KOD *Yeah.*

M Do you understand where I'm coming from?

KOD *Yeah.*

M And I've no problem doing this...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...but you can't get at the nuns. You *can't* get them to come in [to testify], I'd have no problem proving it. To Enda Kenny, the whole world, the whole of Ireland. But I think all of them were very ignorant at the time.

KOD *Yeah.*

M I've *no* problem proving that it happened.

KOD *Yeah.*

M And I just wish more women would come out. I know I'm going on now but it...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...because it did happen...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...and a lot of them are keeping quiet about that side of it.

KOD *Yeah.*

M But why? The nuns should be answerable for what they did. Why?

KOD *Uh huh.*

M *(Sighs)*

KOD *And, the dormitory, what was that like, how many were in the room or?*

M Well there'd have been about...there'd have been a few beds at that side, about six beds, six beds this side like, there'd have been about twelve to a dormitory like and, I mean in mine there'd have been...you see, the auxiliaries, two auxiliaries to one dormitory so this side it would have been her and her five.

KOD *Uh huh, right.*

M Say five women and one girl and then I'd be at the other side with Theresa [pseudonym] five women, her and five and...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...five women and me. But they never left us together and that is common knowledge they never ever left you together. They never...in case you'd talk, they always separated us.

KOD *And so do you remember any of the names of the women that you were with? Did you know their names?*

M We didn't no, because they'd have had...[house names]Theresa mightn't have even been her name. They were all called different names.

KOD *And Theresa was the name of the auxiliary was it?*

M Yeah, on my side.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M Yeah, but you see you didn't get your proper name so you didn't know people's names. I remember one girl came in after me and she looked about, ten, if she looked a day but...she was probably older now, and I remember her saying to the nun, 'can I talk to her? She looks lost'. She was bawling now as well. And she said, 'you wouldn't know what she did!' You know, and I said, 'but she's lost'. And she said, 'you know the rules, don't be talking,' you know what I mean? 'Get back to here, get over there, do your work,' that's the way they were. I mean I felt a worthless child when I grew up. I...I wasn't a part of my family, I stayed away from them for...I felt worthless like, up there, and this was only recently a couple of months ago. I didn't feel I was good enough, I was beneath everyone and...you know? And that's desperate.

KOD *And how...so what would a typical day be like then?*

M You...you get up in the morning at six o'clock or seven o'clock...no, you got up at s...no...yeah, it was either six or seven, I couldn't be sure. I know I said on the radio seven...seven was it...I think it was. But you'd say your prayers first anyway. You'd go down for breakfast which would be bread and dripping and that's all you got, horrible now like, it made me sick many's the time. But if you didn't eat it you got a beating so you ate it. Then you're straight up to the laundry at eight o'clock and at eleven years of age you worked there

'til six, without a break. And then at six o'clock you went down. Do you know the small plates you give the children?

KOD *Uh huh.*

M You'd get a small plate with your dinner on it, it could be chips and eggs and beans it could be, but you'd count the chips like...you'd count what you'd get I tell you there wasn't a lot there, you *dare* ask for more, it was like *Oliver* [Oliver Twist].

KOD *Uh huh.*

M And then you go down...then you'd say *more* prayers, I mean you were praying in the laundry as well, as you were doing your work, it was prayers morning, noon and night and you said your prayers at the evening, and then when you were finished that you go down after that and you'd go straight to bed. Straight to bed again until the morning. But...

KOD *And did you have any lunch or any other kind of break, no?*

M No, no that was your food, that was your day, breakfast and tea, breakfast and your dinner in the evening, that was it. You didn't get anything all day.

KOD *And what about...like, days off or holy days or Saturdays?*

M Sundays.

KOD *Sunday was the one day off?*

M Sunday was the day off but then they'd get you to do sewing and that, you always had to do something. You couldn't be sitting like this.

KOD *And did you g...*

M Couldn't have a lie in either.

KOD *So you were still up early morning on a Sunday?*

M Still. Going down and sitting and doing the sewing or doing knitting or the crocheting or whatever they'd have you doing, but you didn't get recreation at all, you didn't. *(Sighs)* No speaking, it was just...no dolls no toys as I told your man, even if they did bring them into you, you wouldn't get them anyway, which they didn't but...there was just nothing.

KOD *And did you go to Mass?*

M You went to Mass yeah on a Sunday morning and Christmas Eve you went to twelve o'clock midnight, it was the only night you were up late. You'd come back and go straight to bed. But you...you went again then on Christmas morning and that was it. If you did go out for a walk, the nuns went with you and the auxiliaries went with you, so...

KOD *And how often would you be taken out for a walk?*

M About every couple of weeks you might go down the town but you'd go in a group. Like there was no question of you being left out playing...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...or left out on your own.

KOD *And what clothes would you wear when you were going out would they be different from the ones you'd wear in the laundry or?*

M No they'd be rags, I mean they took all my clothes and I seen my clothes on other girls but they just...gave some of us rags but depending if they...you were liked or you were...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...or they...they had their pets like, they did have their pets...one or two...but...but then again they all got treated the same at the end of the day because that bald girl she got my clothes.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I never said it to her because I knew...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...it wasn't her like, but I often felt like saying, 'they're my clothes,' you know! *(Laughs)* But you'd get a beat...beaten if you did. *Rags*, constantly in rags. I remember my sister came down once and she said, 'what are you doing in them?' And from then on she'd [the nun] put on good clothes when me sister would come. But the minute she was gone they came off again and...back into the rags.

KOD *And how often would you have visitors?*

M Once a month.

KOD *And was it always your eldest sister came down?*

M Yeah.

KOD *And did you ask her why you were there?*

M I couldn't ask her nothing 'cause the nun was in the room. You'd pay for it after if you said anything like you know? I remember once I was doing the pressing and she pressed the handle down and I burned me hand a bit and I'd a visit that day, and that was to...[warn] you know...'don't you dare open your mouth,' like, because if you did you paid for it when you got back, so I didn't. But I remember one day she was called out from...I don't know...my sister...I was asking her about that the other day because I...like...kind of...I wanted a clear view of it. One day she came down and the nun got called to the phone, and while she was gone I said, 'please don't leave me here, *please*, there was a woman unconscious we never seen her again,' I didn't know what now I didn't know like she knew it was one of the b...like they were...but I said, 'please,' I said, 'don't leave me here'. I said and I quickly told, 'that's why me hair was cut, that's why me tooth is out. *Help me! Get me home!*' So when the nun did come back in fairness, she did say...that was when I was there...the three-and-a-half

years, she did say 'I'm taking her home'. But the nun said, 'no way she's not ready to go yet, she's still too wild to be put out there,' and she argued the point. And whatever made my sister do it, she said, 'I insist,' she said, 'I'm going to the Guards [Irish police],' she said, 'either you release my sister now and I'm not going home without her'. And that's how I got out of it, in the end...she wouldn't go but she would have gone to the [Gardaí]...at that point. She tells me now even though she can't deal with talking about it she says, 'I could see in your face the fear,' and she said, 'I knew...I...there was something not right and I had to get you out'. So, when the nun...that was...only for she going for the phone, if it was up to my mother Katherine, I'd have died in there.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M She would have *never*...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...took me out, I was just lucky that had her [eldest sister] to listen to me and get me out. But I was after...I was damaged at that point because I had three-and-a-half years of being beaten, sexually assaulted and put down on the ground.

KOD *So you were fourteen-and-a-half then? Is that right?*

M I went in at eleven, yeah fourteen-and-a-half yeah (*sighs*). So she took...fourteen, fourteen, yeah, fourteen, and then I went out and still I'm not sure if it was the [location removed] or whatever, so we lived out in the [location removed] over to the thing, it was fourteen-and-a-half, but we'll...

KOD *Uh huh. Yeah, yeah.*

M ...we'll say fourteen...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...for correction. I was about fourteen-and-a-half when I went babysitting for my sister in the end. So I went home, I didn't even know my address for me mother, she was after moving house while I was there, it was out in [location removed] so she took, but...but I mean, I could go on for an hour and tell you the emotional abuse, but I'd be saying the same things over again, *every day of my life*.

KOD *Tell me.*

M 'You're not wanted, nobody wants you, you're the devil's child, you've the devil inside you, we've to rid you of the devil,' – when they were sexually abusing you – I was... 'we've to rid you of the devil, look what you made me [do]...we *have* to do this because...to rid you of the devil'. (*Voice breaks*) I mean they were horrib... And something like that just...no wonder they went mental, half [of] them.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M 'Cause I went through a bad stage when I came out, to...to this day, up to a couple of months ago. I get terrible outbursts and I know it's to do with it,

KOD *Yeah.*

M I got [sic] a couple [of outbursts] on him [partner] now as well like you know, and lucky enough, because of what I went through he kind of takes it. But you know I'd be shocked at myself afterwards because it's so bad...affect...it does like, you know.

KOD *Yeah of course. And what would your outbursts be like now?*

M Sorry?

KOD *You know when you surprise yourself, you have these outbursts every now and again or...*

M Well I haven't had one now since...in a while, but I...the last one I had would have been about a year ago. But (*sighs*) sometimes I do and sometimes I say, 'oh my God,' do you know, but

the...the... I've a young fella at home he'd drive you up the walls, this goes on for hours and he, he's always right like.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M He's an awful deep fella and he comes out...and I have to say, 'for God's sake would you go 'way from me I've enough in me own head with the laundries would you go 'way from me!' *(Laughs)* Like I just...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...can't deal with...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...anything else like, but, [the] counsellor do be [sic] laughing at me – because he has his own counsellor - and he says 'she agrees with me! – You don't!' *(Laughs)* I says 'you get paid to listen to me.'

KOD *So can you tell me, do you remember any accidents in the laundry?*

M Accidents in what way?

KOD *Like did any of the women or girls have any injuries or accidents?*

M Of course yeah, but you got nothing done, you didn't see a doctor, I never saw a doctor the whole time I was there. I never saw no doctor, I mean they always...I mean...I remember when I collapsed a couple of times that I saw no doctor. And girls would fall off or...or catch their hand that they c...whatever in the shirting machines you know, if it was bruised and unless it was hanging off you wouldn't see a doctor.

KOD *And wha...and wha...they'd get their hands caught in what kind of machine?*

M The shirt machine.

KOD *Shirt machine, right.*

M Oh God they used to have that machine you pressed the button and it goes right into squash the shirt, to...to press it...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...that's all I can describe it.

KOD *And where was the laundry coming in from? Whose laundry were you doing?*

M We were doing the...well...we were doing the...as far as I remember we were doing the football teams, the basketball teams, the...the prison service, the Garda [Irish police] service, 'cause I remember doing the suits, we were doing all their laundry, trust me, 'cause I remember all the suits used to come to me because there was a couple of Hoffman presses but we'd do them between us. We were doing all the Guards suits and we were doing the...the government, the officials' suits and we were doing the...the...the headmasters' suits and all [the] robes, we were doing the priests' [robes], we were doing everyone's...the mental home...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...and the prison service. State involvement...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...we were doing...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...and the public. And the public used to come into a door on the side and pay for their laundry and it was the same in all the laundries because my fella used to go to Peacock Lane [Sisters of Charity Magdalene Laundry] with the basketball...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...he was in basketball all his life and he used to pay as well so...

KOD *Yeah.*

M well, do they would do that laundry.

KOD *And did you ever ask to leave...the nuns themselves did you say, 'can I get out?'*

M Yes.

KOD *You did?*

M They said, 'you'll never get out of here, you won't be able to get out of here, you're not ready to get out of here,' you know. I asked them why I wasn't going to school too and that's why I used to get so much beltings I suppose because I asked too many q...[questions] like but I did. I was *scared* and I was *afraid* of them but sure a child don't know, do you know...they're going to...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...flip up and...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...complain. But sure I often said it to them like, 'why am I not going to school?' Me Mam gave me books and all going there, copy books and pencils and biros and books. She thought I was going to school.

KOD *So did she leave you in the [location of Garda Station removed] with...with copybooks and pencils?*

M She knew damn well what was going on but sure her precious [son], she kept him at home and you know what, it was the sorry day she did because he gave her an awful life afterwards. And I've a lot of me sisters who came back to me and said, 'oh my God we should have never left him he's after abusing the kids'. But my attitude was, 'look you didn't listen to me, suffer it now because I did tell you...'

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...I did but...nothing was done, nothing was said.

KOD *And so you...you asked 'can I go to school' or 'why am I not going to school'?*

M ...going to school and I got a clip 'round the ear for it and told shut up and I was to go to work, that all...that's all I was fit for. Work. I mean as I said I'm probably not saying *everything* now but I mean I'm trying to give you the gist of the put down...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...the physical abuse without going on and on about the same things that they...

KOD *Yeah, yeah no...*

M ...that they did you know?

KOD *...it's perfect,*

M There's an amount of it...

KOD *...perfect Martha yeah.*

M I mean I could go on and on for hours...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...but it would be more or less the same.

KOD *And...and you were locked into the dormitory at night?*

M Yeah.

KOD *Was there bars on the window?*

M There was and there was bars on the doors too, there was...doors were locked, you couldn't get out, I mean you would want to go through about Fort Knox to get out of there you couldn't, you just couldn't.

KOD *And did you ever try to get out of there?*

M I tried to run away once when we were in the town, you know, when we were walking and you tried to slip out of the line but sure you were caught in five minutes because the Guards were straight up you know, so they did.

KOD *So the Guards caught you or who c...*

M About five, well it was only about five minutes they were just only barely gone up the road and the Guards caught me, brought me back up. I mean you were caught like I mean, you...you...just...you were just caught...I just went out of the line for five minutes but then the Guards were nearby when we were walking. They were *always* nearby like sometimes they walked [with us] as well but they were *always* nearby.

KOD *Sometimes they walked with you when you were out?*

M Sometimes they would be there if it was...something special going on now, but they always...when the nuns would go out...I've a feeling...couldn't be sure, they rang the Guards because the Guards were always not too very far away from where we were walking so obviously...

KOD *So you slipped out of the line, was there anybody else with you or were you by yourself?*

M There was another girl, we both got caught. Girl from [location removed] but we both got caught anyway, but – two minutes – look I'm down the stairs there, I'm caught, you know what I mean, you couldn't...

KOD *And did the Guards...was it one Guard [that] caught the two of ye or?*

M The Guard walking...

KOD *Oh yeah.*

M ...he just said like, 'c'mon shouldn't ye be up there?' and brought us up. But you couldn't do it...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...you couldn't...just couldn't do it.

KOD *And did you know that girl was also from [location removed, same city as Martha]? From [location removed]?*

M Yes but I couldn't talk to her...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...she had a different aux...[auxiliary] you couldn't talk to her, she wasn't there that long think she was there about two months, they got rid of her. There was another one there I can mention her name now 'cause she's dead, Deirdre Hughes [pseudonym] from [location removed] but again she tried to escape out the farmyard then...she was working in the farmyard, but sure they caught her straight away. You know, but there was...there was two...there was a couple from [location removed], yeah, but you couldn't talk to them, couldn't *pretend* you knew them...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...because, do you know, then one would be separated or moved like...I mean Susan [pseudonym] was there two months and then Deirdre was there for about...they were moved to other...places...maybe they did make the connection there was three...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...from [location removed], but they were moved.

KOD *And did you know them previously?*

M No, no. But I...I...I knew Susan from [location removed] I knew Patricia [pseudonym] from just [to] see, but didn't...wouldn't have known her personally and Deirdre would...God love her she was a bit slow and she'd quite ah...you know th...you know...everyone knew her

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...but nobody actually knew her.

KOD *Yeah.*

M She died in [location of hospice removed] actually when I was working there at the time, yeah she did...she died in [name of hospice removed] I used to work in [name of unit in hospice removed] like.

KOD *And did she, so she got out eventually too did she?*

M Well I don't know I think they may have put Deirdre in some...[psychiatric institution]

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...you know for a while you know, I don't know. But I...I know Susan got out and she ended up going to prison later on but she [was] probably better off there, because, it would have been better...

KOD *Yeah.*

M *...I often said it. (Sighs).*

KOD *And Deirdre, who brought Deirdre back when she escaped from the yard?*

M The nuns...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M *...the nuns, the nuns.*

KOD *And were you allowed out on the grounds there, you said it was farm or farmyard? No?*

M No unless you were working there and the nuns were working with you like, I was in the laundry kind of, they'd leave us never out [never let us out].

KOD *And did the nuns...*

M And we were never allowed in the poly place [for polymarking the laundry] either. What the poly is, is the, when the laundry comes in they'd tag the laundry, pass it through for the washing, pass it...cleaning and pass it through to us and only the people from outside were down there.

KOD *Okay.*

M We weren't allowed go down or communicate down there so.

KOD *And they were s...kind of...the paid hands there is it?*

M Yeah they'd be paid hands yeah, yeah.

KOD *And...so...in terms of the...kind of...the place itself, because I don't know Waterford at all, when you got out for your walks it was about every couple of weeks or so?*

M Yeah.

KOD *Can you remember being in a religious procession or any kind of special parade or anything like that?*

M I can't, I...I actually can't, I...I kind of remember once but I...I couldn't be sure because I'd have been eleven then you know?

KOD *Yeah.*

M I can't remember any one...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...you know, from about twelve I'd have started I suppose to wise up where I was and...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...what was going on, at eleven I just...I was in this horrible place I didn't want to be in and I was afraid I cried meself to sleep every night. *(Sighs)* I...I didn't know, I just...

KOD *And...*

M ...still at that stage where I wanted me Mam...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...you know? I wanted me Da [father] I was...do you know, still that little child...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...and I suppose I didn't take a lot in or...just knew I was in this horrible place where I had to work...but I...I wouldn't have, I knew I was...they were being horrible to us, I knew that what they were doing to me was wrong, but then I felt maybe I *do* deserve this, maybe it *is* my fault, maybe I *am* this horrible child, maybe I *do* have the devil ins[ide].

KOD *Uh huh.*

M You know, I kind of psychologically...that's the way I'd have thought back then.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I suppose when I got to about twelve I realised, '*flip sake!*' you know, that I was there and I wasn't going anywhere and my fear then was, 'am I gonna die in here?'

KOD *Uh huh.*

M Am I going to...because when I seen one or two of them unconscious for a while after getting an...emm and

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...and never see 'em again. I thought, 'well they must be gone to hospital or they must be gone some...to...home or they must be gone...' But I've a funny feeling they were...do you know...I hate saying it now, but I've a funny feeling...they were dead.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M Do you know? Now what I know now, looking back.

KOD *And how many women and girls were...were there...were in there when you were there?*

M Oh Christ, count, count them up, I'd say there'd have been about...in Waterford there'd have been about...five hundred.

KOD *Passing through at any one time? How many were there?*

M *(Pause)* I don't know, I don't remember, I know there was...I'd have counted I'd say about three hundred at least, I might be exaggerating [with] five [hundred] but...

KOD *Right, so at the one time*

M Yeah...

KOD *...there was about three or five hundred...*

M ...yeah...

KOD *...there? Okay.*

M Yeah, that's what I'm saying yeah.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M And some of them would be the nuns' quarters, some of them would be the laundry, some of them would be the kitchen, some of them would be the sewing room, some of them would [have] been...you know like...

KOD *In the farm, yeah.*

M You know, I could be exaggerating with the five [hundred] now, it could be three but I mean I know there was quite a lot...

KOD *Hundreds.*

M ...the dining hall was packed.

KOD *Yeah.*

M So I know I couldn't...look back...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...I kept going...to remember how many exactly...

KOD *Yeah, yeah.*

M ... but...three maybe four [hundred].

KOD *Right, and you'd never heard of it you said, before you went there?*

M Well, would you hear about it at eleven of that kind of place, no.

KOD *And what...*

M I mean me mother often said, 'I'll give you away to the nuns if you don't be good but I mean I wouldn't have known...'twas...that didn't...my exception [experience] of the nuns was [name of primary school removed], they were the nuns.

KOD *Yeah.*

M Do you know? But I wouldn't have thought of the laundry like.

KOD *Yeah.*

M And the State said there was no involvement, but there is...there's your involvement there in the State.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I went from the Garda station.

KOD *Uh huh. And when you were sick there, I mean you must have got colds, you must have been sick...*

M I was sick...

KOD *...what happened you then?*

M ...When I collapsed and whatever, I was really bad that week, I think she left me in bed one day, I never seen a doctor. I had to work like that so I collapsed again. Again I was up to bed for two days and back down and I collapsed again. She gave me a couple of hours, and straight to work. So three times I actually collapsed in that laundry from exhaustion...a child. I've an eleven-year-old grandchild, and I look at her now...couldn't imagine it like...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...couldn't *imagine* our Lucy [pseudonym] going in there in and doing that...just couldn't imagine it. (*Sneezes*) I couldn't imagine it. I just couldn't...I...I 'tis unthinkable.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M Couldn't imagine it.

KOD *And they never gave you any medicine and you never saw a doctor?*

M No, no, never saw a doctor, never saw a doctor the whole time I was there, never. Never saw a school inspector, never saw anybody coming in and checking up, nobody ever asked me why I wasn't at work, nobody ever asked me why I had these black eyes or these...or why I had this mouth...like the time with me tooth...why I had...(*sighs*)...why I had...do you know...well, they wouldn't have seen it but even the...the auxiliaries never did nothing, they saw your body like I mean you all went in, you know what I mean? And nobody ever asked me why...

KOD (*Coughs*)

M ...that school inspector never asked me whether I had a problem at home, they didn't. It's a bit like *The Magdalene Sisters* [film] where the girl goes...I suppose [it was] the girl that time [who was incarcerated after she was sexually abused]...they couldn't deal with...you know...ah...(sighs).

KOD *And so, was it just the one sister who came to visit you there?*

M That's all yeah. And the first two months she didn't come because they told her I needed time to settle in, she didn't come for the first three months and then she started once a month some visits they'd cancel if – 'oh she's not well, we think it's better [if] you don't come'. They covered themselves alright in a lot of ways, but she did ask me about the tooth, that's one thing, she did say and she did ask me about the hair, but I couldn't, do you know, the nuns said, I remember the nuns saying at the time, 'oh there was an infection, we had to shave the heads...this was...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...[to] cover themselves, cover their own selves at every angle like, you know. And my sister kind of believed that.

KOD *Right.*

M And the tooth kind fell out because I fell down the last two steps of the stairs...she got...they covered...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...their abuse at every angle. (Sighs) I wasn't surprised they found plaster casts on the bodies up in Dublin [referring to human remains exhumed from the High Park grave] because I mean, they did...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...they did beat them. Some of them, I told you, you never got up. I thought they were going to hospital...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...they did do it and...and they still deny it because they believe their own lies.

KOD *Yeah.*

M Do you know? You know, God only knows I'd love to be able to tackle one meself to be truthful.

KOD *Uh huh. Did you ever go back there?*

M *(Sighs)* I've never been to Waterford, it's too upsetting for me, I've never been back, never...

KOD *You've never been back to the city at all, no?*

M Can't face Waterford, I mean, I go down there but there's no way I'd ever go back [to the laundry building], be...it just was...horrible experience...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...even the road going down...

KOD *Yeah.*

M I could never do it again, so I've never been back.

KOD *And what was the worst thing about the place? Can you pick one worst thing?*

M I can't, because it was all...the nuns were evil bullies as I said, they...they enjoyed inflicting pain. I will never forgive them for the physical abuse and I will never forgive them for telling me when they were sexually abusing me that I was the devil's child...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...and that it was my fault because they had to rid my...me of the devil and take him out of me, and that was what they said.

KOD *And did any nuns work alongside you? How many nuns were...*

M No, the nuns didn't work alongside us at all, no, they only walked around, they didn't work alongside [us], they didn't do any work, they walked around watching *us* do the work and [we] didn't even get fed, let alone...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...anything, you never had a...a sweet or an ice-loll or anything, you never had any money because you never...you never got...you never could get out anyway, you know, they were evil bullies.

KOD *And how many nuns were there?*

M In the place?

KOD *Yeah.*

M God, you wouldn't see half of them, they'd be up the convent you know, oh I know I suppose in general...you'd see...there'd be two walking up and down along the laundry, and there'd be two I suppose up in the farmyard, but see, I don't remember...but there'd be a good few like, there'd be a lot more down in the convent that you'd never...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...ever, never got near the convent...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...all you'd do is smell the roast beef down there and the chicken and the...and we up there with our...

KOD *Yeah tell us more about the food, you said in the morning it was bread and dripping...*

M Bread and dripping, that's all we got, we never got anything else and I...I didn't like it, you know...fried...fried bread or...you know what I mean...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...I just didn't like it, like (*sighs*) some of the girls did, some of the women were used to it, do you know what I mean, I just didn't like it. I didn't like porridge either, do you know what I mean? The aux...the auxiliaries used to get the porridge, but I didn't like the porridge either anyways so I didn't...

KOD *So you didn't get the porridge because you weren't an auxiliary is it?*

M No, they got the porridge, and the nuns...and we got the bread and dripping and the nuns got the bacon and eggs because you could smell it. I'm not being funny.

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...but you could, if you know, if you were walking down the hall you could actually...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...smell it coming. The dinner would be...maybe you get two slices...or you might get a slice of chicken, a potato, cabbage; I mean it would be small like...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...it wouldn't be...it would be what I'd give the grandchild now...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...rather than...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...[what I would be] getting myself. And that was it, you'd get that in the evening but you didn't get anything in between, you...you...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...worked all day, and that was it, you didn't g... (*Sighs*)

KOD *What else do you remember about any of the other girls or women who were in there with you? You recognised some from [location removed] anyway, at least two of them?*

M I did, I haven't seen them since though so...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...you know, I've seen Patricia and as I said she died but I wouldn't have known that girl anyway...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...only passing in the street. I'd like to meet the Magdalenes from [location removed] actually...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...I'd like to do a reunion of some...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...description, but that's all. I'd like to meet a few that were in Waterford as well, because there is more stories to be told but they're not...

KOD *Yeah...come for...yeah...*

M ... coming out with them. Actually if I had my way, we'd have a whole Magdalene reunion...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...up in Dublin or something. We'd have everyone...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...Waterford, Cork, Dublin. Because I think we all had the same experience, we all went through the same thing. Alright, some have...as I said, th...they haven't really come out with...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...a lot of it, but do you know, still we were all there together and we...no, I think it would be lovely.

KOD *So the day that your sister s...argued with the nun and said she was going home with you, she was able to take you home right then....*

M She was able to take me home that day but...hours because the nun kept insisting I wasn't going anywhere.

KOD *So she was arguing for hours was she?*

M Yeah, she told her no way was I going, I'm not ready to go and I was still this wild child and she...you know, 'you're going to have your hands full,' and (*sighs*) I wasn't like that, it was just they were trying to keep me, but my sister insisted that she was going to the Guards then if

they didn't leave me home because it was the school inspector, I don't think he gave me mother so much choice, I don't know did he, you see...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...I don't remember that far back but I'd imagine he didn't give her much choice...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...you know, about me going there, but she could have sat me down and told me...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...you know, and explained what was...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...going on. But me sister just said she'd go to the Guards if they didn't and she w...I think she would have that day, she could see the fear in me eyes and I just went home with her husband in the car, telling me 'now what's going on?' ...and I told him (*sighs*).

KOD *So she wa...she drove down did she or her husband drove down?*

M (*Sighs*) Husband drove down, he used to come with her, just for the...to drive her down and...drive...so when we got home, I didn't know where my Mam was and then she brought me out to my Mam and she said, 'you'll have to keep her at home'.

KOD *Did you tell them what was going on when you were in the car, did you tell them...*

M Yeah I told them everything yeah, *every single thing*, and when she got to me Mam's, me Mam had moved when I was in [the laundry], I said I didn't remember, she said to me Mam, she said, 'you gotta listen to her now, you've gotta keep her out of there because blah blah blah, this is...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...what happened' and she went through the whole thing with me Mam and she left me home, but then the same thing...nothing had changed!

KOD *Your brother was still there?*

M My brother was still there, my brother was still coming in, do you know, every night and I was still screaming at me Mam and Dad, so I started going out at night, I started staying with me friends, I started staying...of course I was the spoiled child again because I'm staying out all night.

KOD *Uh huh. Were you...did you go to school or...I mean, you had such a....*

M No.

KOD *Yeah.*

M No, no, that was a different school, but like that, I stayed at friends, I stayed...I was safer out there...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...if anyone can understand me, I was *safer*.

KOD *Of course.*

M And of course I was this wild child again so, I kept telling her...not...no-one was doing anything and I went up to my sister's, I told you, to babysit and me brother-in-law...course who listens...he knew them...who listens to Martha – nobody...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...he knew them and no one would believe me.

KOD *Was this the sister who brought you out?*

M My si...no, another sister, my younger sister, she'd be four years older than me. Her husband, he was [nationality removed], he lived in [country removed] and he raped me...he came back earlier than her. And I told them, and she wouldn't believe me you see, when I told them at home and they didn't believe me. Now he has admitted to it...to her they split up, well now...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...well they split up after it, but he has admitted it to her, now...

KOD *And how old were you then?*

M ...and then they all knew you see, all of a sudden because he had admitted it, you know.

KOD *How old were you then?*

M I was fourteen, I was just out of Waterford.

KOD *Just out.*

M I was fourteen and a bit, yeah, I was just out of Waterford, and she asked me to babysit one evening and I said, 'no problem, I'll mind my niece and nephew,' and I did. He came back early and he raped me but she...actually, her daughter and her son, her son would have been about eight, about eight, he remembers it, he remembers hearing me scream...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...and he told his Mam. But then she confronted him anyway and he admitted it but, he abused his daughter as well but he won't admit it to her, that's in England. So finally they believed me because he admitted it.

KOD *Right.*

M Finally they believed me about me brother because he abused their own kids...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...but nobody ever believed me (*pause*) and I find that hard to take.

KOD *Yeah.*

M (*Sighs*)

KOD *But, you know, to me you seem very strong.*

M I wasn't, I think that's thanks to Lindsey [pseudonym of counsellor] outside now because she is doing wonders but, I get me moments...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...when I sit there and cry and cry and cry...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...and can't deal with and wonder but...

KOD *When you were inside the laundry, how did you cope? Like, did you have any particular...I don't know...we'll call them coping techniques, or survival techniques?*

M I didn't.

KOD *You didn't?*

M I just survived every day I went there, got through every...just...survived what they were doing, despite the put downs, despite the physical abuse, despite the sexual abuse, but I

don't think...I think at that stage I was...the child was robbed you know, the child was damaged...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...the child was...I was just...(sighs) I...I can't find the right words but I...I was just...survived it.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M It was horrible, but I survived it.

KOD *And you say you heard other girls and women being...*

M *(Whispered)* Yeah.

KOD *...abused because you could hear them screaming...*

M We all did, we all knew what was going on but nobody could talk to each other (sighs) we all knew what was happening.

KOD *Did you ever see anything else?*

M A woman on the floor unconscious...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...I mean they'd take you away you see, they'd take you down to the bathroom, the showers or the...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...down to the convent to the office...or to take you...th...they'd take you places they weren't doing it in front of all of...you know...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...the people...but you could hear, you know, you could see the girl being taken away and...and I...you know, I...you'd hear them come into the dormitory at night and dragging someone out of bed, and that could be by the hair or 'get up,' oh, The...The Magdalene Sisters [film]...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...'twas (*voice breaks*) 'twas very true, and you'd see them dragging them away like, you know, and it could be me many's the night. But it was horrible...like...you know...

KOD *And was there any nun who was kind to you when you were there, any nun who was a good nun?*

M No, no.

KOD *No?*

M Not really, I mean there was a nun that...that...that I did meet in the convent there...that never did you...that never did what them three did...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...but there was no-one ever nice, you know. You, you'd have to pull out of the way when they'd pass, they were better than every...you...you were nothing, you were there and th...and that's the way they had it, you were nobody and you felt a nobody.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M *Yeah.*

KOD *And did you try and fit in when you were there or did you try any kind of act of resistance or rebellion?*

M You can't, you knew better after the first day or two, you just knew better than...just...you couldn't...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M You were afraid to, you were scared, you just couldn't do it, I mean...you know (*sighs*) I mean I listened to them women's...I...I had kind of let it go a small bit to the back of me mind and listening to the women a couple of weeks ago, brought a lot of memories back, brought a lot of sadness back, and what I can say is [it was] much worse...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...you know, it was worse, it was...it wasn't portrayed for the McAleese Report as it should have been...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...it's bad, which is why I'd be quite prepared to prove my point if the nuns can prove theirs.

KOD *And so you were fourteen when you got out of there, what was it like...when you were outside the laundry, like how did you feel, like...I suppose...*

M When I came out at fourteen?

KOD *Yeah.*

M Again I didn't go...again I was afraid to go out like, you were always exp...looking behind your back...you were always expecting the same thing [to] happen, I didn't trust anyone in the town...didn't trust anyone at all, I was always afraid the same thing would happen, I had no confidence then, it was...the damage was done then...our self-esteem and then when it happened, me brother kept it up and when your man, when John [pseudonym of brother-in-

law] raped me, I suppose I felt, 'this is what I deserve in life, this is me like, this is...' I'm trying to find the words to explain it properly...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...but this is what I am...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...this is, you know...must be me, like there must be something wrong with me and I suppose when I met the first fella and he was violent, I felt that's all I deserved.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M It's all I knew anyway, so I suppose you're vulnerable to them type of [people] as well.

KOD *Yeah, so if you had like...one word or one phrase that describes the time in the laundry, would you have one word or one phrase that would sum it up?*

M Torture, horrible, brutality (*sighs*) horrible place...just...there isn't really one word, it was just the most horrible place you could wish to put a child to, no child should ever have been put there, no adult should have been there, nobody should have been with those nuns, it was just...horrible place, I can't describe it bad enough...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I can't think of a....

KOD *Torture is good.*

M Torture yeah.

KOD *And, before we get into any kind of details, how would you describe the effect of it on you psychologically?*

M Damaged, distressed...because...God...I mean, I...will never be right...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...I mean I'm a year...it's eight months now with the consultant psychologist and she said – from her work with me – the best I can hope for is to learn to cope with it and learn to live with it but I'll never be right.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I'll never be back to *me* again like, I never...I'll never have that...because you can't bring it back, you know, you know you can't...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...you just have to get on with life and learn to cope with it, if I can do that.

KOD *And how was it that eight months ago you went to a psy...consultant psychologist?*

M Because at the time I was getting the outbursts and I was really bad and I didn't know what to do. I went to an...an old neighbour of mine that had been through the Industrial School and I asked him would he give me the number for...tell me how to get help. And he gave me the National Counselling [Service] number and I rang them and I told them my story, I cried the whole time on the phone, 'twas very raw then.

KOD *Yeah.*

M And they got me...an hour later I had a phone call from Dr. Lynch [pseudonym] and I'm attending ever since.

KOD *And you go every week?*

M I go every Monday.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M Every week, she's very, very good. You know what I mean, she has done a lot of out of it [pro bono] work with me and...and I find her brilliant...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...I really do...I find her...you know...

KOD *And you were saying your daughter and your son have also gone into counselling?*

M Well my first relationship as I said was a very violent relationship and...

KOD *How old were you then?*

M I had two kids with...at nineteen...when I...I was twenty when I had my first...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M *(Pause)* Probably would have never stayed with him but for the fact that I didn't think I did deserve anyone else, I felt, that's my whole life that's what I mean. I had Gráinne [pseudonym] and when she was three I had Michael [pseudonym]. I was getting badly beaten every...most nights, like he was always in the pub then. When I had Michael, his [former partner's] brother had died in [location removed] he got stabbed by his wife for beating her, she got away with it too...because of that. And, every time I would go out of the room the child would fall. [I was] taking the child to the hospital, because I had my suspicions that he was actually...you know, but I couldn't prove nothing like, but I was going to the hospital, that's the fella [her son] in England. *(Sighs)* And eventually anyway I...I was there one evening and he came in at half-past-twelve and he dragged me up...I had the child in my arms and he dragged me by the hair and gave me a dig. The child fell out of me arms and...the spikes of the pram...he was six weeks old...and...

KOD *The spikes of the pram went into his forehead?*

M Yeah. He still has the scar to this day and he's th...he's thirty-three now Mick, [it was] 1979 when he was born. *(Sighs)* And with that anyway, I said, 'can I have the money to go to the hospital?' I hadn't a penny and he said 'no' he said, 'don't do anything'. So I sat there from four o'clock 'til seven o'clock and I got the first bus and I showed the bus conductor and he brought me out to the regional [hospital]. And the nurse saw what happened and I said straight out, 'can you take care of the children for me?' I was...blah, blah, blah, blah, blah'. And she said, 'you can't go home you've a fractured skull'. They kept the child in, but the child wasn't allowed home anyway until he went, couldn't get rid of him, he was kicking me door in and whatever. *(Sighs)* So eventually I went to Social Services for help, 'can you get me another place?' I said, 'I can't go back there, I haven't got my child, my child's in hospital, I have to get Gráinne out of it like,' and blah, blah, blah, blah. And they sent me out to this house out in [location removed], which they should have checked him out first anyway, but that's beside the point, he'd three kids, wife was in the mental home, but she was gone anyway. And eventually I ended up with him. I was with him for fourteen, fifteen years. I brought my kids into it [the house] because of course Social Services, they must know what they were doing...and *he abused both kids*. Mick was...Gráinne was five when he started, 'til thirteen...

[Loud motorbike noise in background]

M ...and she got pregnant at twelve and I killed her [got angry with her], I absolutely went mental because I thought she was after being with a fella up the road, not knowing nothing, innocent...it was his [Martha's partner] child, she told me years later...but she lost it anyway, she miscarried. It wasn't your man's child ['fella up the road']. And Mick he used always have marks, and I used to say, 'what happened to you?' 'Oh a fella up the road' he had something on his ear one day, and I said 'what happened to you?' I said, 'I'll go up the road to his mother,' 'no, no Mammy, you'll only make it worse'. Sure it was him. Gráinne belted him over the head with a brush one night, knocked him unconscious, and I couldn't make out why that was, what's going on, she was cutting her wrists and... *(Sighs)* Anyway, she told someone when she was thirteen and I went up to the Garda Station [Police Station] and they didn't have enough evidence from the child so he put something [a listening device] on me and I went down and I said...I said – I had to do it like – I said, 'please,' I said, 'did you do it?' I said, 'I won't leave you, I just need to know'. But har...you know...it was the hardest thing I ever

had to do because I had to make sure he talked and he *admitted everything*. [He said,] 'don...don't tell them now, tell them I didn't...back me up now,' and I went straight back up to the police station anyway he got five years in [location removed]. Prison – to walk the streets. My kids obviously had been damaged for life, they got refused compensation because he was a relative, because he lived in the same house. And that devastation of them [sic], that they got no closure at all like you know, they just....

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...but they got refused. M...Gráinne, up to the time she had three children, as I said, at that time, seventeen [when] she had her first...couldn't cope with them, she was still locked away, she could go out dancing, she couldn't dance around, but the top psychologist in Social Services got in Ireland said: she was still locked away in the child...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...and where she could live with you and she could talk to you and she could go out dancing, she couldn't give them her 24/7 because it wasn't in her: she was a...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...child

KOD *Uh huh.*

M So it was me was taking the kids and hiding them, and they in the school and I said, 'you're going to have to do something'. So eventually, Social Services did go up there, they...they realised she wasn't coping and I wasn't helping either remember I was t...was taking the children out. (*Sighs*) So they went into care. I had them for three or four years but then they went into care and she never got them back, but she have three more now and, thank God, she came out of it, moved on, and she's a great Mam to them now.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M Michael is an alcoholic. He's off the drink a couple of months. He lost his kids. His first two, his girlfriend died, but the...his...her mother had the kids, the first two, Mrs Ryan [pseudonym of grandmother] and she'd be eighty-odd the woman, fair play to her.

KOD *Wow.*

M Yeah, but I can't take them to Ireland, I've asked, but because of their schools and everything are in London....

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...I can't have them. Michael is an alcoholic and he's off the...he's fighting at the moment for his other two kids with Jennifer [pseudonym of mother to Michael's second two children]. Joanne [pseudonym of mother to Michael's first two children] is when he had the two and she had four more by another relationship. And she's been in the Social Services Unit for the last fifteen months and Michael is there for the last five. They were supposed to go home today or tomorrow, but they...but the two babies anyway, his own two, but they'll...again, he'll have to work, because the boys seen a lot with the drinking and the arguments...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...and the rest of it, he'll have to work a bit with visits...watching visits, before he gets the boys. Yeah, I'd say he's up again, do you know what I mean, I mean what do you do with an alcoholic you when he would go through about 15 bottles of vodka. But you see he...it comes out when he's drunk...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...all the abuse comes up when he's had a drink and he drinks to forget but it doesn't...

KOD *It makes it worse?*

M Yeah.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M You know. So, I think he'll be...hopefully he'll be okay now, but I'm worried that he'll get the kids back and the three of them will slip back in the same boat...so that's another three children gone like...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M *(Sighs)* I have one boy at home, he's on disability all his life, he's three years, four years behind and that goes on and on, it's part of the disability.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M He's lost one child to care and another child to the other family and Michael's over, he's lost the two kids to Fiona [pseudonym] like I mean, if Fiona [pseudonym of grandmother (Mrs Ryan)] dies in the morning he's got to be ready to take these two children on, you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M And, Gráinne has three and...just...the whole...like...like I've 24 grandchildren, but you know *(sighs)* there's so many of them in care, you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M Just ruined the whole...and I suppose I can only blame myself since I wasn't consistent and I wasn't strict, I molly-collied [sic] I loved them...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...I left them get away with everything, I didn't put the boundaries and...do you know?

KOD *Uh huh.*

M And that's to do with the laundries, oh my job was to *protect*...oh God...nothing would ever happen mine, like you know. Didn't protect them very well, because I...I didn't...didn't see them being abused, I didn't know this was going on like. (*Sighs*) I went to England then because they couldn't help the children here with the abuse, they didn't have the facilities for [number of children removed].

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I had no-one there. Some of the problems were...can't use...toilet now but I mean, some of the problems were...they'd go everywhere.... [Further explanation below on page 79]

KOD *Right.*

M Everywhere. You'd have to wash the walls and they'd be...all the signs were coming out then in England and I was on my own, I had nobody. My family told me, let him do a runner, and because I didn't and I saw him through court cases they ignored me for years.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M So that's the way they are. So a social worker came one day and she said, 'you've got to put them in for a while, because this is not working out because they're doing all this and you're dragging yourself down and,' she said...you know, 'will you do this voluntary for six months?' And I said, 'I will,' but it was the biggest mistake I ever made.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I tried to kill myself that night, I took an overdose. My daughter would have been seventeen at that time, Gráinne. And she knew I was down, she knew I couldn't manage without the kids, but then again, I wasn't and me mattress, ceilings, chairs broken, tables broken, I can't stress [it enough], I didn't have a door in the house.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M They were at it...they were coming out at every angle like and windows broken and...I was one person...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M *(Voice breaks)*...trying to deal with all that and I failed miserably, because that night I took an overdose. I remember the following day Gráinne went to work and...it was...when she was gone to work like, it wasn't the night, it was the morning like, she went to work at six, and when she was gone I took it. And she rang and rang and rang and couldn't get an answer and she rang the social worker and she said, 'will you go down and see me Mam? Me Mam is not right, I don't know'. They kicked the door in anyway and when I did wake up at the hospital I looked at Gráinne I said, '*why did you...I wanted to...I honestly wanted to die!*' because I was sitting there imagining what he was doing to them as well, and thinking of me own life and thinking *(voice breaks)* I can't cope with them...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...but I can't cope without them, *I was at my lowest!*

KOD *Uh huh.*

M And then no social workers were asking me, 'how can we help you?' – I was supposed to be strong for the kids and I wasn't really strong and then I got...

KOD *These were the three kids you had with him?*

M This was...this was...oh I'm sorry, I didn't explain that properly, I had two kids with him and then...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...I went on to have [number of children, removed to protect interviewee's identity] with the fella who abused Gráinne and Michael but they weren't...

KOD *Yeah...uh huh.*

M ...the two kids, Gráinne and Michael...

KOD *...and then...*

M ...and then I went on to have the rest of them, I had...

KOD *Yeah.*

M *(Sighs) (Pause)* I don't know...I lost them anyway for a while and I got an underactive thyroid gland but I didn't know it at the time and I started forgetting things...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...amnesia here and there and I didn't care, but it was only afterwards the doctor diagnosed that I'd had it like, you know...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...and I do to this day forget everything in all honesty. But anyway I wasn't getting my kids back so they decided they were going to adopt the kids and I knew I had to do something because nobody was listening to me, nobody was trying to help me.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M And I...I...I knew I was a good Mam...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...just...down...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...because of the life I'd had...no family, and I had no-one and I had a second court case I lost. So I met my ex around that time and I swore I'd never go with anyone again but my kids, they said to him, 'we felt safe with you, Dave' [pseudonym of former partner] because they used to have these family meetings and they'd all sit down around the table, and they'd all discuss their things of the day. So there was no secrets, everything came out, you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M You know what I'm saying?

KOD *Yeah, yeah.*

M He was a brilliant man too, but just not for me, he was too...you know what I mean...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...he just...we didn't... And...he was always out. But anyway, I rang the *guardian ad litem* when...I...I'd lost the first two cases and the barrister said, 'ye failed this miserably the Irish failed her, and now you're failing her. Give her her child, she's a great person. There's a social worker here dealing with...' Veronica [pseudonym] and she said the same...she...when I came back she knew I was...it was just I didn't get the chance. So anyway, I said, 'look,' I said, 'can I have the kids on me own on Saturday?' I said, 'I need to tell them I've lost'. I was coming home. But I had to look [convincing] because I wasn't getting them. I said, 'can I...' do you know, 'can I *do* that?' And she said, 'okay, I'll allow that'. So I rang Nicola [pseudonym of daughter] which...I'm...three of them...there was only three in the...I rang Nicola and I said, 'Nicola,' I said, 'you're going home Saturday, don't tell the younger ones,' – even though Ellen [pseudonym of daughter] was older I knew Ellen would tell – but I said, 'don't tell the younger ones, but I need ye ready...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...at the door, for when I pick ye up'. She said, 'right Mam,' she said, 'okay'. She c...David in the meantime got his Dad's car and it was parked around the corner. I wrote him a letter and posted it from London and said, 'I'm really...' – I knew they'd search his house – 'I really have

to go. So sorry to involve you in this, can't be with you because I need to get my kids home. Sorry to have to leave you. Bye, Martha' I posted it that day, to his address in London. It was...it had to be planned because I didn't

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...you know at the time, I can talk about it now but that time it would have been illegal ... when I got to the door she says...I said...they said, 'where are you taking them?' I said, 'down to the shops' [I] said, 'just to get them something to eat and blah, blah, blah' Nicola came up and said, 'Mam, I put five vests on Sophie [pseudonym of daughter], I put four knickers, I put three pants,' she said, 'I put the same on me and Ellen, the same'. Around the corner David was in the car, his dad was after paying for the tickets to get us home. Got to Heathrow, on the plane, and rang them when I got to [location removed], I said, 'I'm in Ireland,' they said, 'you couldn't be, that's too quick, I said, 'I'm telling you, I'm in Ireland,' I said, 'I'm not going back'. So they sent a whole van load of Guards [police] down to David's house. He showed them the letter and they searched the attic and all, but of course we weren't there, we were all home. But I did it normal, I went up to book [a] B&B and I went up to Social Services, I rang Social Services, I said to Aisling [pseudonym of Social Worker], I said, 'just letting you know,' I said, 'to tell the English I'm here. Please do not judge me,' I said, 'on what they're saying, please judge me on what I'm going to tell you, because,' I said, 'I didn't get a chance over there'. 'No problem Martha I'll be down in a minute,' and she gave me...she said, 'I'm not moving your kids from you, I knew you before you went, I know you're o...you're a good Mam, but you had a very lucky,' she said, 'you'd have lost your kids, we'll fight it here now with the European courts for you'. S...grand anyway and stayed in the B&B and the following week she came up to me she said, 'you have a week now to...you have three days to get a house or they're coming over, the English'. David was home and all at the time. So, [I] got a house on the [location removed] Road, the first house I got, and they came, and the *guardian ad litem*, the social worker with the colouring books but my social worker was there too. Me mother was in the kitchen – she was alive at the time, pottering around – and David was there with me Mam, and she looked at David, I said, 'look,' I said, 'I have to say something,' I said, 'you weren't giving me the chance, you were taking my children and I'm a good Mam,' and I said, 'ye weren't giving me the chance,' I said, 'I've been diagnosed with an underactive thyroid gland here,' I says, 'that's why I forgot one or two things,' I was...I do it today all the time. So anyway, I said, 'and they won't be colouring for you, but Aisling Fleming

[pseudonym of social worker] I said, 'you're quite welcome,' I said, 'you're the social worker who can come to the house to do colouring with my children, but,' I said, 'ye lot...I'm not allowing ye to do nothing' (*sighs*) – where did I get my strength from? I said, 'now leave my house,' I said, 'you're on my...my ground now, ye didn't give me a chance, I'm not giving ye one – go, go'. And they were looking at Aisling Fleming and they were waiting for her to say something, but she smiled over at me and walked out that door, and I'm sure they were looking at her as if to say, 'are you letting her do this?' But she said, 'look,' she said, 'I work well with Martha,' she said, 'I've no problem with Martha,' and I think a week later Aisling said, 'I'm closing your case, you don't need me' but I had to stay on until they were gone. And we...and it never went to the European courts, the Irish won it from here to there...I got my kids, but 'twas a long fight. So, like I said, it has affected [me] in every single way.

KOD *Uh huh. And how are they now, those three?*

M I done a lot of good work with them, we done the family meetings then for a while, I would say I split up with David because he was very loud and my kids needed to be treated with glass for a long time.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M And his arguments, he'd argue over a pint of milk, I just couldn't bring that into the house. So we weren't suited, so he left eventually, but he was...he was with me seven years. And I must say that we did a lot of good work with the family meetings. I went to...I done a psychology course, I done another psychology...part of a course, about how to deal with situ...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...you know, how to...I done a social...well I done a few courses anyway, to help me, myself, to understand and deal and talk about it and then help them and I must say now, I have very good kids today, thank you God, I mean the girls are fantastic. Gráinne is going to counselling now, and like I said, she was...she wouldn't have listened to me before, she did now [sic] and she's working her way out of this relationship...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...she knows 'tis not good...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...she knows her daughter's getting pushed...you know...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...and, you know, she knows to get out of it...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...but, that's the story of my children. I came back to Ireland and I was on me own for years, and I met Roger [pseudonym of partner]...but I was on my own for years, for a long...for a long time. My family came back years later, because they...they ignored me once I left the perv [pervert] go to prison – as I calls him [sic] – because they wanted me to leave him [to] just go away...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...but I wouldn't do it, so they ignored me for years after and now, they're not talking to me again, because I went on the radio in Dublin and God love their shame, because I've none...

KOD *And, so your relationship with your eldest sister who got you out of there, how has that been over the years?*

M *(Sighs)* It hasn't, because she can't talk about it, I mean, all I want her to say is, 'okay, Martha, me Mam was wrong. Okay Martha, I could have done something sooner'. I *told* her...like my other sister said to her, the one that's okay, 'but Martha told you he was coming into the room, she *told* you about John [pseudonym of brother-in-law], she *told* you...but you didn't listen, when it was your own kids you listened...understand'. And I get very bitter, I get very annoyed, *(voice breaks)* and I bring it up constantly and I shouldn't, you know what I mean? We're going to fall out and we're all older.

KOD *Yeah.*

M But I...how do you *deal* with this?

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I mean, the child comes out in me sometimes...poor little me, why does this happen?

KOD *Yeah.*

M Why me like?

KOD *Yeah.*

M Why did they have different lives to me?

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I know now you'll be laughing, but you know?

KOD *Yeah, yeah, no!*

M And then their attitude is just...don't talk about it. My attitude [is] I *need* to talk about it, I *need* to...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...get these answers from them.

KOD *And what...so what you want to hear from them is, 'you're right Martha'?*

M 'Martha you were wronged.'

KOD *You were wronged.*

M 'Martha you were wronged. You weren't wrong, you weren't this bad child'. And even when I was talking the other day, I said...sh... 'come here,' I said, 'what was I doing in there anyway?' – I never knew like – 'you were a bad child, that's all you were,' I said, 'the ignorance is still there with you!' I said, 'did you hear? What did I do at eleven that was so wrong?' 'I know, I know, but you weren't going to school and you were saying these things,' but I said, 'I was right in everything I said!' Where? But they still...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...do you know? I was this terrible child. *(Voice breaks)* Do you know?

KOD *And what about your mother, did she ever say sorry to you?*

M No! And you know what? My Mam...I was very angry with me Mam when she died. God forgive me, I was always good to my Mam but in there [Martha points to her head] I was saying, 'do something like, don't take it to the grave with you'. I had a chat to her before she lost her...before she got the dementia, I had a chat to her. And I said, 'Mam,' I said, 'can't you admit now that Alan [pseudonym of brother] was wrong, because he did the grandchildren as well?' No, the grandchildren were all lying so he...until the day that woman went to her...but... Even though now, he...she sold her house, gave him all the money to buy a house in [location removed]. She wouldn't let any of us see...he wouldn't let any of us see her then. Me Mam couldn't see us because he was beating the crap out of her but no-one knew it, because we couldn't get him. So, my first instinct was when I went to [hospice location removed] and I walked into St Philomena's Ward [pseudonym of hospice ward] out in the...I don't know if you were ever in the...

KOD *Yeah, yeah.*

M ...St Philomena's Ward out in St Peter's [pseudonym of hospice day care unit]. And here was my mother sitting in St Philomena's. And I remember I went into the matron at the time, I forget her name now, but she was a lovely lady like. It wasn't Majella [pseudonym of hospice worker] now 'twas the matron herself and I remember saying to her, 'what is my Mam doing in

there? My Mam has six daughters, any one would have her, what's she doing in here?' 'Oh he brought her in yesterday, but he waited 'til the five years 'til he didn't have to pay anything,' do you get me? He knew what he was doing all along. And he told her...us she had no family and no-one one...and he wasn't taking her back out. So I gave her me sister's number, the oldest one to the matron rang her and Lillian [pseudonym of interviewee's sister] said, 'I will take her, I have a granny flat and all ready for her, I had it ready for her, no problem'. But she rang him to say that, he said he'd take her himself. So I went up to the laundry to work again, I was up in the laundry – 'twas all I knew girl!

KOD *Heh!*

M And I came – but I was getting *paid* this time – I came down and I went in again and, this day, she called me down anyway, the health nurse was there, you know the health nurse...

KOD *Yeah.*

M and she said 'I've been talking to the doctor' and she said, 'look could he have been hitting your Mam?' I said, 'look, I remember him pulling me Mam's hair to the ground,' I said, 'he was a bastard to me,' I said...I said, and I said, 'me Mam couldn't see no wrong in him, I remember him doing it'. She said, 'she's black and blue all over her body,' she said, 'we *can't* send her to your sister, because he'll take her back and we've no rights at the moment to stop him and so, [name of nursing home removed]' said, 'take her down the [location of nursing home removed] Road, ye can all see her, and we'll keep an eye on him'. Grand anyway, so that's where she went. I went down and he...the nurse [inaudible] in there one day, but they stopped him coming in, but I was going out the door that day, me Mam had asked me to get Eileen Murray, you know Eileen Murray? [Pseudonym of solicitor]

KOD *Uh huh.*

M The solicitor...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...to come over...because she had signed him like...like...into her will...to find out, and as I was going out he done that [Martha makes a punching motion] to me and my sister said, (*voice breaking*) 'don't do nothing Martha!' And I gave him a belt back and I said, 'between the nuns now,' I said, 'and the rest of ye, no-one is doing that to me again,' I said, 'don't you dare!' I said, 'get out now and don't be coming back!' But anyway my ex, Dave before we split up he went up and he...it wa...it isn't the right way but he did, he gave him a dig for every time and said, 'there,' he said, 'that's for the...*every time* you hit her mother!' They were up in court and the judge says to him, 'I have to give you a hundred [donation to charity], I don't want to give you nothing because I know why you did it, but I can't,' and he said, 'well I'm not...I'll go to jail then,' and he said, 'I'm giving you nothing,' he said 'will you give a hundred [to] charity?' he said yeah I will, there you go,' and my brother-in-law did the same because he was with him. So with that anyway, he'd robbed her post office account, he'd robbed her bank account, he cashed in all her Social Security...her s...her social insurance policies. But we buried her, and he refused to give us the deeds to the grave, we had to go out to [name of cemetery removed] and get them. The life he gave that woman, but she told me herself, 'I used to have a son, but he was adopted,' that's what she told me, she got the dementia you see, she couldn't...

KOD *Right.*

M ...relate to him like, he wasn't hers anymore.

KOD *Yeah.*

M 'He beat me to a pulp, I don't know how I'm still here!' She did say that before the dementia as well. And the neighbours interfered and he told the neighbours, threatened the neighbours as well out in [location removed], so there you go that was the bad egg...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...that caused...first of my troubles. Those big black gates...door with bars on it, caused me other...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...and one or two along the way. I...mean, my life was just full of...it must have been written down, because that's all I know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M *(Coughs)* I don't know if I've explained but...

KOD *You've done brilliantly.*

[Noise of vehicle in background]

(Pause)

KOD So...

M And as I said, I've lost half me grandchildren through the life we got, you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M And, at least I have a man now I can...peace, quiet like..... you know, peaceful...

KOD *So you...*

M *(Sighs)*...the kids are a good support, but...

KOD *So over the last...I suppose we're talking...10 years, even more, you've really built up a lot of those relationships again with your children and now you've got a good man...*

M I think I always had a good one...they never kind of...they always loved their Mam...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...they've [sic] always knew I was good, but I just let them down in a sense I suppose that I couldn't deal with...it was a lot to deal with at the time...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...they all had their problems, I didn't have a door in one house, a chair, a feeling that every morning that I couldn't put them for a bath [when] it was happening like and then when they started doing it in school that was enough.

KOD *Right.*

M You know, I...I mean I wouldn't have had much choice but it didn't bother me until that day.

KOD *Yeah.*

M But I mean [inaudible].

KOD *So they kept going to the toilet, they kept...*

M Yeah, I'd ignored the signs.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M You know, I just...couldn't comprehend. I did me best...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...but it wasn't a hundred and ten percent, I suppose Martha wasn't there a hundred and ten percent. Martha was somewhere else.

KOD *And that's...so you took them over to the...England once you...once the partner you were with was being put in jail and that's where all the symptoms came out, of the abuse?*

M *(Sighs)* It was hard to deal with I'm telling you.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I dealt with him and then Ireland hadn't the resources for [number of children, removed to protect interviewee's identity] children...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...they didn't have the office to deal with it, they didn't have the...you know so...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...I had no choice...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...it wasn't big enough here to deal with my family, for what happened.

KOD *Yeah, yeah.*

M I had to go there.

KOD *Yeah.*

M I was sad, being on me own there, you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M So...so... *(Pause)*

KOD *And what about your...what about...how do you think about...two big things I suppose – how do you think about the church like, what do you think of the church, what's your...*

M I wouldn't go to Mass.

KOD *When did you stop going to Mass, or how...did being in the laundry...*

M I haven't been going to Mass...since I...since...back then...I suppose thirteen, fourteen...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M Suppose, when I realised...you know. *They* were as bad as the church...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...because they knew it was going on too. I haven't been to Mass...and when you hear about all the boys, they were abused, and I really wouldn't want to go into the church.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M You know. I wouldn't. Actually, I got that thrown at me the other day *by* a priest...

KOD *What did you get thrown...*

M ...I can't say now because...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M Eh (*whispers*) I'll have to think [inaudible] (*laughs*)

KOD *Right.*

M But it was to do with...I used to get help once a week.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M Because I haven't got a lot.

KOD *Yeah.*

M But they cut me off because I was doing this!

KOD *So you were getting the help from the...*

M When Enda Kenny [inaudible] they found out that

KOD *Heh!*

M Because they're a...they sa...they're a church organisation, and they...and I mean...and now, I'm not being funny like, I don't have much, but I do need it like...

KOD *Yeah, yeah.*

M And they were coming [inaudible] and they said, 'oh, nothing to do with the Magdalene Laundries, we're the church, we're nothing to do with the State'. So my consultant psychologist said, 'ring the parish priest,' and ask him if he'd have a word with them, and I got, 'oh no, I'd have nothing to do with that, we're the church'.

KOD *So there was a charity coming they were giving you a h...a help out...*

M *Yeah.*

KOD *...because you needed it...*

M Thirty quid a week, but I mean it was...you know....

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...a help like...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...the coal...and because of the Magdalene Laundries they won't give it to me now because they're a church organisation!

KOD *I don't believe it! So because you're talking out about being in the Magdalene Laundries...*

M Because...they...they asked me one day and I said I was...and I said, 'yeah, I was in the Magdalene Laundry', they said, 'did you [inaudible] I said, 'yeah, I was there'. And the following week [they said], 'this is your last week, because, well, we've been coming up for so long, but we're a church organisa...church'. I'm telling you! And the priest!

(Pause)

KOD *And how do you feel about the Irish...society in general, the Irish State?*

M I don't bec...how do you mean, Enda Kenny and them or...

KOD *Yeah...*

M ...or the Irish people in general?

KOD *The Irish people in general.*

M They're still ignorant to it. A lot of them still are ignorant to it.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M They're st...they're st...they're not believing what they're hearing, they're still ignorant to the fact[s], a lot of them. I feel that the quicker it goes out there in the history books [the oral history project interviews], the quicker they...they *have* to...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...look back. Because I mean, what history is [there] for y...for young people to come along in 20 years time and say, 'Jesus, did this really happen?'

KOD *Uh huh.*

M But I think a lot of the Irish people haven't...I don't know...what's the word? They haven't realised it yet, or dealt with it yet.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M They're still ignorant, they're still burying under the carpet...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...you know, like they did for years? Like my mother did.

KOD *Yeah.*

M Like my sister did. Like she'd still want me to do it today.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M Take back the radio [inaudible], [name of radio station removed], take it off because 'tis disgracing them with people they know. But 'tis... 'tis pure ignorance like

KOD *Uh huh.*

M Maybe that's me, but I think it is.

KOD *So do you think that your sisters have ever told their friends what happened you?*

M No. *Oh God* no. And when I done it on my [Facebook] page they were afraid that some of them might say but...

KOD *Saw on your Facebook page when you had the clip from the radio show you did?*

M I don't care, I put it on me Facebook page what have I got the shame for?

KOD *Uh huh.*

M The whole world can know! You know? I'd go up and talk to Enda Kenny now, but I...I may as well, I d...d...don't care, you know?

KOD *Yeah.*

M Because I *know* I did nothing wrong, you know? And I...you know, it registered with me too when the radio fella said, 'had you ever had a child?'

KOD *Had you ever had what?*

M Had you a child? And I said...you know 'God, I was a child,' like.

KOD *Yeah.*

M And...my granddaughter's eleven like.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M *(Sighs)* Anyway!

KOD *So did you ever actually make any formal complaint to anyone, like nuns or the Gardaí or a solicitor about your time in the laundry?*

M No, I know now it sounds strange but you're so afraid girl, you're so under the thumb, you're so...y...you knew better than to open your mouth to anyone, even your family unless...I mean that day, I was fourteen, I was more brave but...but you were afraid to open your mouth. And even that day I was afraid, afraid that me sister wouldn't get me out and I'd have got killed that night like, because you *were* afraid...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...you know? Couldn't, couldn't tell anyone. They were there *all* the time. They were on every visit sitting there making sure you said nothing.

KOD *But after you got out, did you ever...in all the years since, have you ever made any kind of complaint to anybody?*

M I didn't deal with it to be honest.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I think I dealt with what Gráinne was going through, I'd [x] girls and [x] boys, [number of children, removed to protect interviewee's identity] I think I dealt with the...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...their problems. I think my own was always there.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I...blocked it somehow and I think it's only a year ago really that I started dealing with my stuff, but my kids are reared now...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...my baby's twenty-one. So I think for years I just forgot about my own stuff, but...it was never Martha is there, Martha was always just nothing.

KOD *Yeah.*

M Martha was always just grandmother, I was never me and I think the time came when I said, 'right Martha...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...who are you?' Deal with it.

KOD *Yeah.*

M Do you know that...anyway, now I don't know who I am, but I mean I'm getting there, I'm getting there, I'm getting there you know, but...I have to deal with it.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I had a lot of problems with the children, a lot of their problems to take...to deal with and it wasn't easy.

KOD *And, who is responsible for what happened to you?*

M [The] State, and I do agree with them, the families...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...and the nuns. And I do agree, they should be made...and I mean, I can't understand why they're not being made...you know, they should be standing up and taking the consequences I suppose would be the word.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M I can't understand why they're saved from court because *priests* have been brought to court, [Christian] *brothers* have been brought to court. *What* in the name of God is so special about the habit they've got...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M *Why* can't the nuns be brought to court?

KOD *Uh huh.*

M And made stand up there.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M And made prove they're...because they can't. I'd also like to say, I don't how they sleep at night because if...I couldn't if I was them. *How they sleep at night...*I only hope the man above will catch them when they go, because they should be answerable, they should be...

KOD *Yeah.*

M I mean, I'd willingly go up (*sighs*) I'd love to get one of them, the nuns...two of them...I'd love to get the three of them, but one will do...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...you know. So I'm not going to...

KOD *And did you ever make any application to the Ryan Commission, Laffoy Commission, the Redress Board?*

M No. I...I went when the Industrial Schools were going through...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...but they said they weren't doing the laundries...the laundries weren't...they weren't doing the laundries at all.

KOD *Yeah.*

M They didn't say they *were* going to do the laundry. And that would have been a long time ago now, that would have been the first ones, that would have been...God almighty the girls were in secondary school there, that would have been years and years ago like...

KOD *Yeah.*

M And I was told 'no'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M The Industrial Schools weren't paid out but they were all going...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...at the time like, years and years ago. But I was told 'no' they weren't doing anything, or whatever.

KOD *And so when...so you say it's about in the last year you've really started to deal with it...*

M Yeah, well I felt like yeah, we *did* work for nothing, we *are* entitled to our wages. It was slave labour and it was terrible conditions and we were treated terrible and I suppose it was only then that I realised that I...I...do you know, rather than the stigma, I'm going for compensation...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...which, I felt...you know, I was going for what I was entitled to, what I deserved...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...this is why I ended up going to Richard. [Pseudonym of neighbour]

KOD *And, can you remember when you first heard about any of the campaigning for Magdalenes, can you remember...*

M I didn't...

KOD *Didn't...*

M I usen't [sic] go on that page, the Facebook [Justice for Magdalenes Facebook group] but when I asked this neighbour for help, and he gave me the National Counselling Service and I got on to them, he introduced me to his solicitor and I went to see her and she said, 'did you ever hear of the Justice for Magdalenes?' and I said, 'no,' she said, 'did you ever hear of the Magdalene Survivors? [Magdalene Survivors Together group]' I said, 'no,' I said, you know, I said, 'I was there, I received no money, I received...' I said, and we started it from there, but I knew no-one [at] that time. In fact I only found the Justice for Magdalenes [Facebook] page about five months ago, and since then I've got a lot better because I'm on there and I'm listening to stuff, I'm getting other people's...you know? And I put me *own* [story] up, and the night I put me own up I turned off the computer...the night I said...like, the night I put me own story up about what happened me in there, I don't know if you read it, but I did put it up and then I turned off the computer and I thought, '*oh God*, I've done it,' and I put it back on and all the comments were there and I remember there was something like a hundred and odd comments, 'twas brilliant support .

KOD *So you got great comments, about a hundred comments...*

M Yeah.

KOD *... up on the Facebook page?*

M ...brilliant support like...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...and I said to my sister, 'will you look at it?' and she said, 'I will,' and she came back, she was on Facebook and she came back and she said, 'great speech, great support'. And this was what I got back off her, which wasn't...

KOD *That's your eldest sister who doesn't...*

M No...

KOD ...*know you're on...*

M ...your one that's okay...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...but like she *still* couldn't say nothing...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...'great speech, great support,' and I'm like you've just read me saying, 'they cut me hair, they locked me here, they done this, they done that'. I'm telling you, they're still scrubbing me with that and I was...I...you know, 'I told you everything, I told you about the beatings,' and you're saying 'great speech?' I rest my case. She listened to the radio and made no comment, she just..oh, she said...what was it that she said, 'you done well,' and I mean...*but they can't deal with it.*

KOD *And this is the sister who deals with it best?*

M Uh huh. The other two won't even talk about it.

KOD *So she...all she could...*

M She had no comment on me radio [inaudible]...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...[inaudible] to take it down, the other two were giving out.

KOD *And why do you think she can't...*

M Full of guilt a lot of them I'd say they can't deal with the guilt now, they all know now they're guilty. They're guilty, riddled with it, because my older sister would have had a lot of...say

down in Waterford, so she had to have known. I assumed...I thought I was going to school, when they gave me me books going down.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M But, I know if it was my eleven year old grandchild I'd be down checking every week, and I...and I'd actually be asking to see her classroom teacher and I'd be asking to see how she...well she's doing and I'd be asking to see books, and I think 'twas a total neglect of the Irish community

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...total neglect of our families, and it was a total neglect of the government

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...because they were *paying* these nuns and not checking up!

KOD *Uh huh.*

M The Guards' [Irish Police] laundry and the Guards were bringing us back...do you know?

KOD *Uh huh.*

M Was it corrupt? It was! They did know! They had to have known!

[Sound of siren in background]

KOD *And do you feel now, on the Facebook page of Justice for Magdalenes, do you feel you're part of a community now?*

M I do, I do, I do. I mean, if I want to get something off my chest, I've no-one to talk to when I'd get...I used to get emotional...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...[if] I'm not sure about anything, you know, if I...you know, Rose¹ has been a tremendous support to me as well.

KOD *And how did you meet Rose?*

M On the Justice for Magdalenes [Facebook group] again, I said that I was going to Dublin and told her if she wanted to go see the nuns or whatever that I would go and we'd support each other in there and when I was going to Dublin I said I was getting the half-seven [train] and she said, 'I'm getting the ten [o'clock train],' I said, 'go on I'll wait for you then,' and we both went to Dublin together. And, you know, she's just a lovely woman, but she's great support online as well, you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M That way.

KOD *And what was...you went up to Dublin but...like why did you go up there?*

M Because I needed to hear that apology for myself, because that was a big day for me, that was...

KOD *This was the day that Enda Kenny was expected to give an*

M That was the final...it was the closure in the chapter...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...I won't say I'm going to be closed for a long time to come, but it was the closure that...when he gave that apology, it was so heartfelt, and I mean he apologised for the families, he

¹ See MAGOHP/14 – Rose Brien Harrington interview

apologised...I think he went way beyond what we expected and what was meant of him [sic] but I think...it's only my opinion.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M But that...you could feel the relief flooding through, we were all in tears and...you try not to, and hugging the next person if they needed it and – you were there!

KOD *Uh huh.*

M It was just when I saw the tears [Enda Kenny crying during the apology] and I mean I think...he knew, *he knew* looking at us that that was *so much* needed for us.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M And we clapped [inaudible] you know, it was just a *wonderful, wonderful*...it was what I needed, it was...because for the first time then, the child wasn't wrong, the child didn't do anything wrong, the adult didn't do anything wrong – the system did it, the system failed us, that's exactly what that...that was the significance... the system failed us all the way. And I needed to know I wasn't wrong. Now I know there is no... and my sisters do – they know... it, they're not at that.. I've no shame! The shame is on you! And *I do say it now* because that's what Enda Kenny did for me that day...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...he took the shame, the stigma and he made me feel a better person because I wasn't wrong. He was...they were wrong...families were wrong...nuns were wrong. I shouldn't have had all the blame. (*Whispered*) They were all wrong.

KOD *And what was it like to sit up in the [Dáil] gallery with other women?*

M Do you know, I felt very important up there! (*Laughs*) You know, we really did! I mean, to be up, sitting there, I think it was lovely of him to allow everyone – that was down to you, because I didn't think you would be allowed in like, and I wasn't going to stand outside and

wait. But no, it was lovely, it was very...for the first time in my life actually, I felt so important, that we were allowed hear what he had to say, and I think it was beautiful, it was an important day for me, I cried the whole ways [sic] back on the train because...and Rose rang me in the meantime, 'how did you get on and blah, blah, blah,' and I was saying, 'oh Rose,' like, 'it was beautiful, 'twas lovely like,' I was on a high, you know. And I...I got back to [location removed] actually at half-eleven and Roger met me, and he said – he goes out on a Tuesday night like, he goes over to the [name of pub removed], I don't drink a whole lot, I was never a drinker. I could probably be heavily drinking – and I said – I'd a bag with me and he says, 'are you getting a cab home or what are you doing?' And I says, 'no boy, I'm going with you!' – I was that...I mean it was just, *I was so happy!*

KOD *Uh huh.*

M And I said to him, '*it's been a brilliant day, great day for me*, I need to be with other people and I need to just come down off my high'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

M And then – I don't know if I've explained it right...

KOD *No, brilliant!*

M I was on a high for days...it was just brilliant! I'd love to thank the man personally, but...he was...he was brilliant, he...he...that's what I needed.

KOD *Yeah.*

M That's when the shame left me. And it wasn't 'til then...I never spoke, there was some girl in [location of hospice removed] texted me on Facebook, she said, 'Martha I never knew you were a Magdalene'. 'I never talked about it,' says I, 'but you know, there's no shame now, 'no,' she says, 'there is no shame,' you know, 'and you've got your kids and your grandkids'. But little things like that now, I'm coming out, and I don't feel embarrassed...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...but like. So I'm going on and on but...

KOD *And so, you were stopped by a journalist, you gave your story on to the...Dublin radio, [name of radio station removed] and you put the clip up on your Facebook, so that was telling everybody in...*

M Oh yes...

KOD *...online?*

M I think everybody should know, and it shouldn't be hidden this is why I'm doing this today...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...whether I'm doing it right now...I'm doing it...

KOD *Brilliant.*

M You know?

KOD *Yeah.*

M And sometimes I find that hard, to make myself understood, or get it across right I mean, but...you know?

KOD *No, it's been fantastic, you've talked for hours!*

M I know! Are we finished? *(Laughs)*

KOD *Whenever you want to finish. Is there anything else you'd like...*

M No, is there anything else you need?

KOD *No, I don't think so. Where do you think it's going to go from here for you? Do you think...*

M I think since I started coming out I'm getting a lot stronger, I'm getting a lot more open, I'm getting a lot more honest. I think I've another two or three years to do in counselling [inaudible] looking after me, but 'tis alright...

KOD *Another two or three years with the psychologist is it?*

M I mean that's w...I'm a survivor, I survived this, there was days...there was times when I thought I'd die in there...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...but I survived...to tell the story. Me life hasn't been great but let's hope me...me old years will be...you know...a bit better than...you know...bit better than...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...more comfortable anyway. Because I think he [Enda Kenny] has made us more comfortable, but it will never take it away, but...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...'twill...at least I'll have a more comfortable...comfortable life.

KOD *Brilliant.*

M Though I'll never get over it.

KOD *Great.*

M Now, I didn't realise, you should have told me!

KOD *What?*

M Time was... *(Laughs)*

KOD *No! We have lo...all the time in the world!*

M I don't know how I portrayed that across now, but my biggest aim is to get it across in the right way...

KOD *Uh huh.*

M ...and I'm not very good at doing that.

KOD *I think you're fantastic at it, I'm just going to turn it [recording device] off now, will I?*

M Yeah.

[Interview ends]