



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



<b>Reference Code:</b>	MAGOHP/38
<b>Oral History of:</b>	Maureen Sullivan
<b>Pseudonym?</b>	No
<b>Status:</b>	Survivor
<b>Keywords:</b>	Good Shepherd Magdalene Laundry, New Ross, Co Wexford; St Aidan's Industrial School, New Ross, Co Wexford; sexual abuse; House of Mercy, Athy, Co Kildare; auxiliaries as part of regime; funeral and burial practices; Magdalene Laundry supplying rosary beads to Lourdes; St Mary's School for the Blind, Merrion Road, Dublin 4; suicide; depression; difficulty maintaining relationships; difficulty celebrating birthdays; inability to show affection; fear of going to Irish counsellor; consequences of going public with experiences; Magdalene Survivors Together group; survivor groups; Residential Institutions Redress Board; McAleese Report; lack of access to hard copies of McAleese Report.
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<b>Transcript:</b>	52 pages
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<b>Interviewer:</b>	Dr Sinéad Pembroke
<b>Records/Papers included:</b>	No
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## Notes on Redaction and Transcription Process

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Interviewee Initials: MOS

Interviewer Initials: SP

### 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 assigned pseudonyms
- Small sections of the interview which may identify third parties have been removed

### List of Pseudonyms

Pseudonym	Status/Relationship to Interviewee
James Callaly	Interviewee's solicitor
Hannah	Auxiliary/trustee in New Ross
Rose	Trustee in House of Mercy, Athy
Sr Colette	Third party religious
Betty Hughes	Interviewee's counsellor
Tom Donegan	Survivor group organiser
Anita Moore	Survivor group organiser
Sheila Young	Survivor group organiser
Ursula Boyle	Industrial school survivor

### Basic Data from Interview

Name/Pseudonym	Maureen Sullivan
When Born	1952
Born outside marriage?	No
Raised by	Family until fourteen
Education	Primary school
Order	Good Shepherd Sisters
Laundry	New Ross
From	1964
To	Approximately 1966
Duration of stay	Approximately two years
Age on entry	Twelve
Entered Via	Was sent to the laundry after she reported her step-father's sexual abuse
House Name/No	Yes
Haircutting/punishment?	Yes
Circumstances of Departure	Interviewee was sent to work in a private laundry
Emigrated?	Yes, but subsequently returned to Ireland

<b>Physical ailments?</b>	Didn't say
<b>Of Note</b>	<p>Interviewee slept in the Industrial School but worked in the laundry.</p> <p>Interviewee's mother was led to believe the interviewee was being educated in the Industrial School while she was working in the laundry.</p> <p>Interviewee's house name was retained in two other (non-Magdalene) institutions after she left New Ross.</p>

[Interview begins]

SP     *Okay so thank you very much Maureen for agreeing to do the interview today, which is the 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2013. So the first question I'd like to ask you is can you just tell me about your life as you were growing up?*

MOS    Well, my father died before I was born, I had two brothers, and my father died in February 1952 and I was born in August 1952. And my mother remarried not long after my father had died and then the second family came along. So my child...childhood was very horrific; I had a step-father who used to punch us. If we just walked by him, he'd give us a punch so my mother couldn't see it and I think we kind of grew up with that, being thumped and punched, and we were the last to be put sitting at the table. And we always had to do all the chores like empty the buckets because you...people used to go to the toilet in the buckets in them days...

SP     *Hmm.*

MOS    ...we had to empty 'em and we were only tiny, and it used to kind of spill over us, and it was just awful and there was no way of washing yourself. And we were quite poor, my grandmother on my father's side really loved us, she used to come in and see us and that...that was the *only* good memory we have...

SP     *Hmm.*

MOS    ...when we were children, is of our granny coming to see us or if we went out for a weekend to her. Other than that we had no toys, we were never taught how to read or write, and then at the age of eight he started to sexually do things to me. And I never told anybody, I never said anything about it. I was confused, I didn't know what was happening me...

SP     *Yeah.*

MOS    ...I knew it was wrong, but I d...I was frightened, I was terrified of him...to say anything. And then I think I was around twelve when the nun at school was complaining how I was never at school and I miss a lot of school, what do I be doing? And she just said, she says, 'you're very pale, you're withdrawn, you don't communicate with anybody'. And...I mean some of the words she

was even using, I didn't even understand what she was talking about. And so she said I could trust her and she gave me a sweet with lovely fancy paper on it, that we never seen and it was the first time I ever seen a sweet like that. And I think I just fell for it and told her what was happening to me and so then she sent for my mother. And then the following day she just said – the priest was called – and the priest...I know I always remember the words is that we weren't a family unit and the nun said, 'Maureen is going to get a good education, we're going to send her to a lovely place in New Ross and she can come back with her head held high to Carlow'. And my mother went down...I remember it was Children's Allowance day, whatever that was way back in them years, but she said to me, she says, 'it's Children's Allowance,' she said, 'I'll go down to the post office and I'll collect the money and buy you a pencil case'. And it was one of the new pencil cases after coming out, you slid the little lid back. Well I was *delighted* with it and this laundry van pulled in and I had a little case with a kind of a s...broken strap around it to keep it kind of tied together and my books in a little bag and my new pencil case and I was put into this laundry van with a man, strange man, didn't know who he was and he was belonging to the laundry, the nuns sent him up for me, and he took me to New Ross. Pulled into the yard in New Ross in the Good Shepherd Convent, the Magdalene Laundry, and two nuns came out to meet me and I got out real friendly, not knowing any different, what was ahead of me. And I said, 'wait till you see my pencil case, it's really, really pretty and there's flowers...a flower on the front of it and it disappears when you cl...when you open it and then it comes back when you close it'. And all this nun...she said, 'don't be so *ridiculous*,' and took my books, took the pencil case and that was the last I seen of them and I was showed around the Magdalene Laundry. Never had a birthday, never had a Christmas in it. The State lies even in my papers that I was home for Christmas, I went home on a Christmas Eve. Untrue, my mother wouldn't have had no way of taking me home for Christmas Eve, there was no transport. W...I was shown around the laundry, the first day that I went there I was shown around the laundry. All these *terrified* looking women, really scary looking women, all *grey* looking, and short, cropped hair and...oh it was very, very frightening.

SP     *Yeah.*

MOS    And then next day I was up very early and they thought I was gone, alls I know is I went [through] a load of corridors to where I was sleeping. And then the next morning I was up very early, I know there was other children in the dormitory but I never seen any of them because I was gone so early and I'd be over to the Magdalene side. And I had to scrub the floor in the chapel and dry it

and then it had to be polished and then we had to...you know, make sure everyt...that everything was polished and done right.

SP *Sorry how old...you were twelve?*

MOS *Yeah.*

SP *What year was this?*

MOS *I think it was ninet...we're...see we're not sure because...*

SP *Yeah.*

MOS *...they're lying about times that we went in there...*

SP *Okay.*

MOS *...th...they've lied quite a bit about...*

SP *Hmm.*

MOS *...James, [pseudonym] well, the solicitors found that they tell lies and they change papers about the time that you went in there. And I think I might have been even a little bit over twelve, but they were trying to say I was thirteen, but you're not thirteen until the day that you're thirteen. But...*

SP *So we'll say it's around 1964, would it be?*

MOS *It was '64...*

SP *Yeah.*

MOS *...yeah I think it was '64, yeah. And so then I was showed this...back down to the laundry that they showed me the following day and then they took me to the farm and...no sorry I went to*

Mass, came back and had a little bit of porridge, that was very watery porridge, it didn't taste nice, not like the stuff you get off your granny, and a mug of watered down milk. And then they brought me down to the laundry, and I couldn't reach the colander [calendar, roller iron] that's what they used to call it, or...calendar or colander, some people...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...called it colander, and they took me down to the farm and the man measured me and he made a box for me and they brought up the box and that was my job, was to stand up at the calendar feeding the sheets in. And there'd be two girls at the other side taking them off and there was another girl over at the other side feeding the sheet in with me.

SP *Hmm.*

MOS And I just did that all day every day, and I thought, 'oh is this ever going to change?' None of the women was...if they did try to talk to you, there was a nun sitting watching us in charge and you'd get a *dig* of the ro...the big rosary beads into the ribs. And I was...didn't know any different and...of course you learn, because you're getting beaten up so much you learn, and I'd be saying, 'excuse me,' to the women. And...oh I was told my name was Frances, 'your name is Frances from here...'

SP *So you had your name changed?*

MOS Yeah, my name was changed to Frances and, 'you answer to Frances now'. And I *couldn't* get used to that, so the...most of the beatings and the thumping was over that, I couldn't answer to Frances, it took me days to get used...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...to it. And then if I said to any of the g...the women that was there, 'excuse me', the nun would come down and she'd say, 'you're not to be talking, you're not *allowed* to talk to these, these are penitents'. And I was going, 'excuse me Sister, I d...' 'It's not Sister it's Mother'. And I'd go, 'excuse me Mother, I don't know what penitents are, what does penitents mean?' 'Never mind, you don't want to know'. And then of course it was late at night you see when you'd be going

over, you finish and you go in and you do your recreation time, which was their...if they had an order...order for rosary beads, Aran sweaters. We done *all* them until about nine o'clock at night. And I remember one night I was so *tired* that I collapsed in the corridor on the way over.

SP *Hmm.*

MOS And she...w...whe...she woke me up. She said, 'what's wrong with you?' I remember it was funny stuff she was putting under me nose and your nose felt really weird from it.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS And she said, 'what's wrong with you?' And I said, 'I'm so *tired*'. And when I'd go into the dormitory, the girls would be in bed and I'd be too tired even if they wanted to talk to me, I was so tired I was gone off to sleep straight away. The next morning if you were too tired to get out of the bed, you were thrown onto the floor. There was one time me elbow was really sore, where I hit off the floor (*coughs*) it was a wooden floor and back down to...the same day, the same thing, coming...late...back late at night to bed, up early in the morning. And I'd say...I...I'm not sure how long I was there but one day two of the nuns came in and they were *flying* down the corridor with me, 'come on, come on, come on, quick the men with the suits are here, the men with the suits are here'. And I was told to stay in the...it's an underground...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...place...and, 'you have to stay here and say nothing and don't speak and don't make no noise'. And there was...I don't know what they meant, 'don't speak,' 'cause there was no one going in or out of it so there was no one to speak to. And...and I used to always think that somebody was going to come, that that's why they were telling me not to speak, but nobody ever arrived there. And one day they...I'd been a long, long time there, hours and hours and hours, and I've often wet myself with the fright, I...I...because there'd be little rats and...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...mice playing all over the place and you'd be terrified. And then one day they forgot about me and it was real late at night and I was hysterical, I was just so *frightened*, I was...I don't know,

something happened to me, I do know that something happened to me, and...because they were saying, 'should we call the doctor?' And the Reverend Mother was saying, 'you're fine now,' and, 'drink up tea'. It was the first time I got tea in a nice cup, it was a lovely fancy cup they brought in and they gave me a biscuit. And they said, 'what's wrong with you, what's wrong with you?' And I said, 'I thought I was never going to get out, I thought my life had ended and I thought I was going to die'. And I said, 'I wanted to die because,' I said, 'I was so terrified because there was rats down there'. And, '*oh you're fine now, you're grand now, sure you're out now,*' and you could hear them giving out to each other, who forgot me, who forgot about me. And I think they probably wanted work done and that's when they realised at the recreation time, because I was in there most of the day and the night...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...and that's when they missed me, when it was time to take me over the corridor to bed, that's when I was missed.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS And I don't know, I think it took me a long, long time to get over that...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...it just *terrified* me. And...

SP *Did you...where did you eat?*

MOS I eat [sic] with the Magdalene women.

SP *Okay.*

MOS *Yeah.*

SP *So basically...was everything done over at...*

MOS *Everything* I done was with the Magdalenes.

SP *Except sleep?*

MOS Yeah, except sleep yeah.

SP *Okay.*

MOS Then...when they hid me again down in the tunnel I'd just go hysterical and then they used to lock me into a room and it was a store room, because they used to think I'd run to get out because I used to panic when I'd go down there. And they said, 'because you're panicking now we have to lock you in, but we won't be long, and we won't forget about you, that won't happen again'. And they wouldn't, and they'd come back and get me and I...but I'd be shaking. And then when my mother was...they came down and said, 'your mother is coming to see you'. And I says, 'oh I have to tell mammy that I'm not going to school and that my penc...my new pencil case is gone,' I couldn't get over me pencil case being gone.

SP *Actually yeah, wh...what happened, did they take that away from you?*

MOS They took it away, I never seen it. You see, from the day that I went there I handed [in] me school books so I never seen me school bag.

SP *Okay.*

MOS They were just taken and that was it. And I just said, 'I'll have to tell mammy to...that she has...she's going to ask you, you know, for me pencil case, I need me pencil case'. And so that's...they gave me a terrible...there was one nun that gave me an awful beating, she thumped me into the stomach and I was left in the tunnel. And they said, 'you can't be telling tales like that to your mum,' and, 'you'll upset your mother,' well they didn't say mum, they said mother, 'you'll upset your mother,' and so the visit was supervised. I shouldn't have said nothing but I didn't know. And they sat in the room with my mother all through the whole visit and my mother got lovely sandwiches, biscuits, cake, everything was on the table all laid out beautiful in a beautiful parlour, polished table, lovely chairs. And my brother was with her, and my mother said, 'how are

you getting on at school and everything?' And I knew just to...I says, 'oh grand, great, yeah, lovely'. And I was changed into my own cl...my own clothes...

SP *And actually...*

MOS ...I wasn't wearing the Magdalene clothes.

SP *...so what were you...what would you wear?*

MOS In the Magdalene I wore...it's a kind of stripy dress with stripes on it and a collar, and there was buttons up here on the front of it. But that was taken off me going to see my mother...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...and the very minute my mother was gone it was put back on me again.

SP *What did they dress you in when you saw your mum?*

MOS It was a red dress, I think my mother had sent it down to me in a parcel, so I was put into that.

SP *And you never saw that dress again until...*

MOS No, never seen that dress again. And anyway, my mother left and of course my mother thought everything was... 'oh this is *wonderful*,' and...but she said, 'you're very pale, you're very pale and thin Maureen. Are you eating...is she eating now Sister?' And she said, '*oh she...we don't have an ounce of trouble with her. She's a great pupil.*' And I didn't know what pupil meant and I was, 'oh God I wonder what does that mean?' And I think my mother didn't even know what it meant either to be honest, because my mother wouldn't have been an educated woman.

SP *Hmm.*

MOS And they were, 'oh that's great, oh I'm delighted, oh I'm so happy now,' and, 'we'll call and see you again,' and all this kind of thing. So anyway, it looked like the visits from the inspector was getting more regular...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...and like it was happening more often, and the next minute my case was packed and I was sent home...well not home, I was sent to the laundry in Athy. And...

SP *So how many years or months or...did you spend in...?*

MOS I'm not really sure, I...I was two years in New Ross...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...and we think a year...a little over, in Athy and then I could've been two years in Dublin...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...yeah. And...

SP *And what was Athy?*

MOS Athy [House of Mercy, Athy, Co Kildare] was something the same – Frances [interviewee was made to use her house name] but very small compared to New Ross, real small laundry...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...and you were allowed out to deliver the stuff to the hotels in baskets. One girl got one side and I got at the other and there'd be a trustee<sup>1</sup> stand...coming behind us, she'd walk behind us and that's so that we wouldn't run away or...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...do anything wrong. And you'd just go into the hotel and you leave the basket down. And...

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<sup>1</sup> See page 12

SP *It...was this though...was this a private laundry or like...what...because it's not under the scheme for...*

MOS No.

SP *...redress...*

MOS No.

SP *...so I was just wondering what...*

MOS Yeah, I don't know.

SP *Okay.*

MOS It was run by nuns...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...the Sisters of Mercy.<sup>2</sup>

SP *Okay.*

MOS Oh yeah...

SP *The Sisters of Mercy.*

MOS ...it was run by the nuns, yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

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<sup>2</sup> According to the 1963 *Irish Catholic Directory*, the House of Mercy in Athy was run by the Sisters of Mercy, where 'a number of poor girls of good character are supported, clothed and trained to be servants. Girls about fourteen years of age are admitted on the recommendation of their parish priest.'

MOS And children used to go to school in a school beside it because you could hear the kids playing and everything. And then you polished the...or...scrub and polish the church as well, the same...it was the same routines. And then in the evenings then you had your recreation time, the rosary beads again and the...the Aran sweaters and there was...I think some of the girls used to do the little mats for tables, crochet.

SP *Hmm.*

MOS Now I never done them, I was so good at the beads you see, because I learnt it in New Ross, they put me on the beads and th...y...you done that until about eight or nine that night.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS The dormitories in Athy was real small. But...

SP *You s...you said there was a school nearby?*

MOS There was a school nearby.

SP *Was that like an Industrial School...*

MOS No...

SP *...or a day school?*

MOS ...it was a day school...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...because there'd be no noise after three...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...or that.

SP *Yeah because I was just wondering where...*

MOS Yeah.

SP *...you were sleeping.*

MOS Yeah, it was a smallish dormitory and the girls would've been about...maybe older than me. There was a few very old women in it...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...but it wouldn't have been like New Ross, it was different to New Ross. Some of the girls would've been...when I think back on it now, I suppose there was about 10 of us but some of the girls would've been, maybe twenty, twenty-five, thirty and then there would've been real old ones but there was only about one or two real old ones...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...and they were trustees. And they would take us down the corridor to find out what corridors we had to scrub and polish and we...they'd be watching us all the time for the nuns and if we done anything wrong they'd go and tell on us.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS Yeah, and it's a restaurant now, the church is a restaurant now.

SP *And just going back to New Ross, were you paid for an...for your...for your work?*

MOS No, *God no.*

SP *And were you...were you locked in?*

MOS Yes, you weren't allowed out in New Ross.

SP *And were you ever told...kind of...like what your release date was or...*

MOS No, no.

SP *If you...*

MOS No.

SP *...were ever getting out?*

MOS No, you were t...alls you were ever told...I was told the day I was making me Confirmation. A few days before that I had lice in my hair and I went to the nun, I told her...I said, 'I've got lice in my hair'. And I remember it like if it was yesterday, she...another nun held me on the ground and the...shears [sic] my hair off with a *big, big huge* scissor, I've never seen a scissors so big...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...and they just *chopped* my hair off. Now your hair is cut short when you go there anyway, but this was *really, really* cutting my hair. And they said, 'now what...' then another nun came in – because this is how I remember it – so not only the horror of what they done and parts of my scalp was bleeding, but another nun came in and she said, '*oh no* I don't believe it, sure she's making her Confirmation, she's to go to the outer church'. And I didn't know what that meant but that was the outside...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...that's where they made their Confirmation, was outside.

SP *Hmm.*

MOS And they said, 'well what are we going to do now? What are we going to do now?' So that's when they start putting stuff on my head to cure my hair and...or my scalp, sorry my scalp was all

bleeding. And I think they said that I had...I was crawling very bad and that they cut my hair short, but I never seen a photograph of my Confirmation or...never had nothing, just came straight back from it.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS And...actually I think I was put back to work in the laundry that evening...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...yeah, I *definitely* know that I done the recreation work that evening anyway because one old woman came over to me and she says, 'did you make your Confirmation today and now they have you working,' And the nun got up and she says, 'what are you talking to her for?' And she says, 'what did you say to her?' And then she caught me and she says, 'what did that woman say to you?' But I said, 'I didn't hear her properly,' because I was afraid to get her into trouble.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS And...

SP *And do you...did you...did you find out what any of the other women were there for or did you ever...*

MOS You weren't allowed to ask them.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS You weren't allowed to talk or ask them. There was one girl, I was polishing the church with her one day, and she was going up and down the floor with me and she says, 'I'm here b...' she says, 'because I had a baby'.

SP *Hmm.*

MOS And I just said to her, I said, 'and what did you do with your baby?' And she says, 'oh the nuns took it'. And I says, 'what will they do with it?' And she just said, 'I don't know,' she says, 'what they're going to do,' but she started crying.

SP *Hmm.*

MOS And the nun then came in and she says, 'no talking, have yez been talking?' And we said, 'no'. You see they were watching you all the time, you couldn't talk, you couldn't communicate...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...with anybody or th...else they'd have a trustee,<sup>3</sup> they had trustees there as well...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...watching you.

SP *And who was a trustee?*

MOS They'd be quite old, they'd be there for a long time. I know in...in New Ross it was a lady by the name of Hannah [pseudonym]...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...and in Athy it was a very old lady by the name of Rose [pseudonym].

SP *Okay.*

MOS *Yeah.*

SP *Oh, so they were just...say they would have gone in like yourself or something...*

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<sup>3</sup> The term 'trustee' was possibly used in Athy. Generally, 'consecrated Magdalenes' were known as 'auxiliaries' in Good Shepherd Magdalene Laundries.

MOS Yeah, or something like that...

SP *...but...*

MOS ...I don't know.

SP *...and they...they're...*

MOS Yeah.

SP *...just much older.*

MOS Yeah, yeah.

SP *Okay.*

MOS They were c...they were trustees, some of them were trustees.

SP *Yeah. And what were they like to you, were they...?*

MOS They were cold, they wouldn't talk. I think they probably...more than likely they were afraid...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...they were institutionalised and they were just trained that way. But if Hannah seen you talking to anybody and the nun didn't, Hannah would be, 'you're not to talk to her, there's to be no talking, you're not to talk about anything'.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS So I mean, th...no wonder I'm so bad at communicating, you know, with people.

SP *And what was the food like?*

MOS *Oh, awful, awful.* And you'd be so hungry, you didn't get time to...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...realise what it was like because you'd gulped it so quick, you'd be starving with the hunger. And then the nuns would be up sitting and they'd be eating lovely food and you could smell it. And they tell you then that (*laughs*) that we were treated great, our food was *awful*.

SP *What kind of food was it, do you remember?*

MOS Well, if it was the stew it was mostly of...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...it was w...all watery...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...that's what I remember about it, *pure water*.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS And there was no meat and I'd say there was one little lump of meat and it'd be cut up into loads of little bits and it was pure water. And you would get a good bit of potato because they sowed their own potatoes.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS Anything they sowed themselves [sic] or they had free you could be sure that you'd get plenty of.

SP *Hmm.*

MOS So the vegetables and the potatoes wasn't too bad, you could get a good bit of them...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...but meat or that, you didn't get anything like that. Or if it was fish you'd get the tiniest little bit of fish, on a Friday we always got fish, and it would be very tiny. Never got much fruit, that's why my teeth fell out, when I was going to...my teeth was falling out when I was sixteen, they started to fall out of my head.

SP *Yeah. And did they give you like an evening meal or...?*

MOS No, you got bread and dripping; you know, bread and dripping in the mornings and a little bit of porridge, and watered down milk. And then you got your dinner at dinner time and then in the evenings then, you got the watered down milk and bread and dripping...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...that was your night time thing. Yeah, but that was the last meal you got...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...you didn't get anything after that.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS *Very, very rarely you ever got a biscuit or anything unless there was visitors or if there was someone coming like a priest, or...*

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...the...one time they had a brass band come in to play for us and there was biscuits laid out everywhere, so I think we all went around filling our pockets! (*Laughs*) But never was there anything like that, you might get a little bit of...they used to call it semolina...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...a tiny bit, and that would be on a Sunday...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...it wouldn't be during the week.

SP *And you said that...inspector...so you never actually saw the inspector, you...*

MOS Oh no I'd be gone...

SP *...you'd be hidden.*

MOS ...yeah, I'd be gone so quick out of the laundry...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS I remember one day the nun pulled me so quick that I kind of fell over on the box that I was standing on.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS And they'd be just...*wugh*...you'd be gone up that corridor so quick and down into the underground and you'd be hid there in the tunnel.

SP *Who did you do the laundry for do you know? Who...whose...like was it local hotels or...?*

MOS I know in Athy it was for all local hotels and restaurants and places but in New Ross you weren't allowed to know because there was a...an 'in area' where it came into, they called it the Sorting Room.

SP *Hmm.*

MOS And then it would come up in big...then there was the Washroom. The van would come in and the laundry would be taken out and it would be sorted in that room. Then it would come in big

wheelie trolleys up and it would be put into washing machines and then the sheets would come up to us when they were washed.

SP *Okay, so that's...*

MOS And you'd have two girls shaking them out and then they'd fold them and then when they were folded then we'd catch the edge and then feed it in and we'd make sure that it was going in properly...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...that it didn't be creased that we'd let it in to be ironed, the thing would iron it. And then the two girls at the other side would take it off...

SP *I see.*

MOS ...and if you got burnt and complained about the burns, there was nothing you could do about it only get...I used to get a facecloth and wet the facecloth and put the wet facecloth around it and that helped you to get to sleep at night. But the good thing about it, you were so exhausted and so tired that the burn wouldn't keep you awake. And then it would come up on a big scab on you, you know, and it's...then when it burst or something, the blisters would burst from the burn, it would come up in a big scab and they still wouldn't give you something for it.

SP *Okay so they wouldn't call a doctor?*

MOS *Oh no.*

SP *Okay so y...if you...so you were never...a doctor never came in?*

MOS *No, no.*

SP *Okay.*

MOS *No.*

SP *And were there any other accidents there while you were there?*

MOS Yeah I often seen women getting burnt. I seen one woman and she pulled down a big hot thing on her hand and she start screaming and the nuns just rushed her away.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS You'd see women...old women disappear, I know one woman fell one day and I heard Alice saying, 'she's dead, she's dead'. And I mean that is *terrifying* because they just took her away, they all carried her out. We didn't know where she went to, what exactly happened to her, did anybody on the outside know what happened to this poor woman, where was she buried? We would lovin' [have loved] to go to the funeral. There was no funeral, no nothing, we didn't know nothing about it...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...we weren't told anything. So it was very scary...

SP *Hmm, and...*

MOS ...very frightening.

SP *...and actually like, during your time, did anyone else ever die there that you did go to a funeral to?*

MOS No, no we weren't allowed to go to funerals, only trustees.

SP *Okay.*

MOS Yeah.

SP *And was there actually a burial ground there?*

MOS Yes, it was over in the cemetery across the road...<sup>4</sup>

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...I only found that out after when I went back down to visit. I didn't know that at th...and I...there.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS And there was a nun burial ground in on the premises...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...but not for the Magdalenes.

SP *So the Magdalenes were buried across the road?*

MOS Across the road, there's a mass grave for them...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...yeah.

SP *And how is...how is that kept? Is it kind of...*

MOS No it wasn't kept nice and I think Frances Finnegan<sup>5</sup> got all their names up on it...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...she made them put their names up on it. I go down to it every so often and I put flowers on it and the lady over in the shop is going to...if I leave her the money to put fresh flowers, she's

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<sup>4</sup> A map of Magdalene Laundries and grave locations is available here: <http://jfmresearch.com/home/magdalene-names-project/map-of-magdalene-laundries-and-grave-locations-2/>

<sup>5</sup> Dr Frances Finnegan, author of Finnegan, F. Finnegan, F. (2001) *Do Penance or Perish: Magdalen Asylums in Ireland*. Piltown: Congrave Press.

going to do it every year, at a certain time of the year for me. So we're thinking the 19<sup>th</sup> February might be a good time, that the apology was given and so I'll go down and visit and she'll have all the flowers ready for me. You know, it's nice to put flowers...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...on their grave.<sup>6</sup>

SP *Yeah.*

MOS *Yeah.*

SP *And so on a s...like you know the routine that you described, was that...how many days a week was that?*

MOS That was every day.

SP *That was every...did...*

MOS Oh yeah.

SP *...did...was it a Sunday as well or...?*

MOS We didn't work in the laundry on a Sunday. On a Saturday, you got up the same time, early in the morning, you came down, you done all the Recreation Room, which was huge. Some women would be cleaning the windows, other women would be doing the floor, then you wash it, then you polish it and then you go up and down it with the little piece of blankets under your feet and you'd shine it. Then you'd go out and you'd do the corridor, then you'd do the Reverend Mother's office, and then you'd do the nun's stairs and then you'd do their corridors, that brought you up to about five in the evening and...or six in the evening because you know when you get your dripping and watered down milk in the evening that it was near recreation time, as they called it. And then we'd come in and we'd do the rosary beads up 'til nine o'clock of a Saturday evening.

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<sup>6</sup> Since 2012, the JFM Research annual Flowers for Magdalenes event has taken place at Magdalene graves around Ireland: <http://jfmresearch.com/home/flowers-for-magdalenes/>

And then Sunday it was...and Saturday evening in the afternoon you'd do the church. Then Sunday you'd do candle sticks...holders, you'd take all the wax off and you use the stuff on it to clean them and shine them, that's what you done of a Sunday. So *every day* it was a day of work and we often done corridors of a Sunday.

SP *Hmm. And when you were like...with your recreation...*

MOS Hmm.

SP *...were you allowed to talk or do anything?*

MOS No, no you're not...

SP *So as you said...*

MOS *...you weren't...no.*

SP *...you were doing like rosaries...*

MOS Yeah.

SP *...Aran jumpers...*

MOS Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS Just...the nun would come down and she'd check and she'd say, 'oh the crucifix has to go on them [rosary beads] now, they're the crucifix[es] for the pink ones or they're the crucifix[es] for the black ones,' or...th...that's all...that's the only words would be said to you, and, 'now it's time to go, *come on, come along!*'

SP *And all this...these things that were done, they were sold on...*

MOS Yeah.

SP *...to...like...to...*

MOS Oh yeah.

SP *...the public?*

MOS Out to the holy shops and out to Lourdes...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...and places like that they all went because I often heard them saying, 'there's an order in for Lourdes'. And there was...be special beads, there'd be some beautiful beads sometimes...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...and, 'they're very special now,' and, 'don't dilly dally over them because you'll make them dirty'. And...and then when they were done they'd be polished off by another girl...would be polishing them and they'd be all done out with paper put over them and...oh yeah.

SP *And so like...yeah, so you went in there thinking that you were going to get an education...*

MOS Yeah.

SP *...and...*

MOS So did my mother...

SP *...yeah....*

MOS ...because otherwise why would she go down the town to buy copies...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...and...and a pencil case?

SP *So is that the reason why your...your mother put you in or why you were put in there?*

MOS Well I think my mother put me in t...to protect me.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS I think she had nobody to stand by her, I think the priest and the nuns, they told her what to do.

SP *Hmm.*

MOS I think she really in her heart believed that I was going to get an education. That I do believe because why would a mother go down the town, that had no money, she didn't have much money...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...to buy me a pencil case, new pencils, a rubber and copy and she brought them up and she said, 'look, and I will check,' she said, 'they're for you, and *learn well*'. And you know, I always remember them words from her.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS So I...I do know she trusted these people.

SP *And you never got an education?*

MOS *Never got an educa...I never seen my books from that day.*

SP *Hmm, yeah.*

MOS To this day I still don't know what happened them.

SP *Okay. So...so you stayed there two years and then you went to Athy...*

MOS Then I went to Athy.

SP *...and you don't know the reasons why?*

MOS No.

SP *They just kind of...how did that happen, they just told you?*

MOS They just said, 'you're going to a different place, and...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS *...it's...y...th...oh they're lovely people, they're nice people – bye!' And I was gone so quick...*

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...laundry van again.

SP *And did they give you any of those belongings that you had come in with?*

MOS No, no I didn't even get me confirmation suit that I wore, because I liked it, and I said, 'could I have my confirmation suit?' And they said, 'ah, wouldn't even fit you'. No, got nothing.

SP *And how long were you in Athy for?*

MOS I think on the papers I was about a year.

SP *Okay.*

MOS And then I was moved from there to the blind school [St Mary's School for the Blind] in Merrion here in Dublin. But it wasn't as harsh, and the nun said to me, 'oh Frances,' and I just said to the

nun I said, 'do you know that's not my real name?' And she says, 'oh well it's best to stick with it now,' she says, 'you're used to it'. But the blind people were lovely...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...they were really nice, and they'd speak to you and one...a blind woman taught me how to swim a little bit. And...

SP *And what were you doing in there, what was your role?*

MOS Cleaning all the corridors, cleaning the dormitories, washing up after the blind people, carrying their dirty laundry down to the laundry. But I asked if I could have the break from the laundry so I used to...only have to do it sometimes. So it was mostly washing and polishing corridors that would be most...making the beds, changing clean sheets once a week and things like that.

SP *And were you paid for this?*

MOS No.

SP *Okay.*

MOS My...

SP *So up until this point you've never been paid...*

MOS No.

SP *...for anything?*

MOS No. And my mother came to see me in Athy and she came to see me in Dublin and my shoes was too small for me and my feet were beginning to get really hurt. And I said to her, 'I...my shoes don't fit me'.

SP *Hmm.*

MOS And she said, 'sure surely,' she said, 'they're paying you here, they're not paying you any money here?' And I said, 'no,' and she says, 'well I think it's time to ask the Reverend Mother now,' she said, 'for something,' she said, 'for you working that hard,' because I was telling my mother how hard I...because my visit wasn't supervised in Dublin. And I told her, I said, 'I work really, really hard and I've been working since I went into New Ross'. And I'm saying...she says, 'and didn't they teach you in New Ross?' I said, 'no I never went to school'. And I know my mother was kind of angry and she was all, 'that's awful,' and, '*God almighty* and they call them the Brides of Christ,' and, '*are you sure?*' I mean it was me, *I was wrong!* And so she said to ask the Reverend Mother for some wages, she says, 'this is terrible, you should be getting paid now and I'll try and get you a pair of shoes and I may try and get back up to Dublin and it's going to be very difficult, and...' But she had nothing to worry about because I went and I asked the Reverend Mother that evening, because you could only see the Reverend Mother I think it was once a week, we couldn't see the Reverend Mother all that often. And I went up and I said to the Reverend Mother I said, 'oh I had a visit from my mum, she came up to see me'. And, 'oh,' she says, 'that's good,' – because I was in polishing the place, that's how I come to see her – and she says...I said, 'my mother said I should be getting paid now. My shoes won't fit me and my feet are really, really sore'. And she says, 'that's fine now, the room will do, that's fine you've done enough'. And I went up to my dormitory that evening and another lady that was in charge of us in the little dormitories came in and she told me to pack my case, brought up my case, wherever they kept the cases I don't know. But my clothes was put in the case, the little bit I had, and I was left at Heuston Station, back down to Carlow to the house that I was abused in, that I complained about. I mean didn't they think that that man wouldn't want me there, I wasn't wanted there, I was told I couldn't stay there so I had to go out to my grandmother's and sleep on the floor.

SP *And did they not t...did they tell you why you were leaving, why your bags were...*

MOS No.

SP *...packed?*

MOS No, no.

SP *So you had to return and you was living then with your...at your...on your grandmother's floor?*

MOS On my grandmother's floor.

SP *Hmm.*

MOS And in them times they were concrete floors and that's how I had to sleep because my grandmother had a kind of a straw mattress bed and you'd fall down in the middle of it, she had no way of putting me into bed or anything, but she was a very kind woman.

SP *She was the grandmother...*

MOS Yeah.

SP *...on your father's side?*

MOS Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS But she brought down blankets and everything off the bed that she had for herself and put 'em on the floor so that I wouldn't be hurt on the floor to...to...because it was a concrete floor. And I lived like that for...God I don't know how long. And then I got a job in the laundry in Carlow. And...

SP *This...was this...is this a public...like a private laundry?*

MOS Pr...private laundry, yeah, yeah.

SP *Okay.*

MOS Yeah.

SP *And how did you feel about going back to work there...*

MOS I didn't...

SP *...like in a laundry?*

MOS ...but what could I do?

SP *Hmm.*

MOS It's the only thing I knew how to do, I didn't know anything else. And I was starving with the hunger. I didn't know about...I don't think I'm not sure if you go to the dole office then I don't know.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS But I never heard tell of it in them days, so I was really, really hungry and my teeth was coming out by the new time and I was a mess.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS And then we got...I got a bit of a job in the Sacred Heart Home where my mother worked and *oh*, there was nuns working there and I thought, 'no I need out of here'. But I got paid, they paid me there.

SP *And in the laund...the private laundry did you get paid?*

MOS Yeah, I got paid yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS And so then I thought, 'I'm heading to England, I'm getting out of here,' and I went off to England.

SP *And so while you were living with your grandmother, wh...how was your relationship with your mum? Was...*

MOS I hardly ever seen her.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS I didn't see her all that much, she was busy, she was nearly...you see there's thirteen of us altogether, she went onto have ten children...

SP *Oh right.*

MOS ...in the second family.

SP *Oh, she had ten children with your step-father?*

MOS Yeah, yeah.

SP *Oh okay.*

MOS Yeah.

SP *And there was two of you is it?*

MOS Three.

SP *Three, and...*

MOS Yeah, two boys and meself.

SP *Ah, okay.*

MOS Yeah.

SP *Jesus. And so what happened to your other two...d...you said one of your brothers...*

MOS One of...the eldest that went to Artane and the middle chap, he went out to my grandmother...

SP *Oh.*

MOS ...and my grandmother took care of him. Yeah, we just weren't wanted...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...and we had no one to turn to. I mean the way the church...and the church is to blame for every *single* bit of it. The priest said to my mother that it was the family unit that counted, that we didn't matter anymore and...I'm sure there was a part of my mother that missed us otherwise she wouldn't have come to see me at all. I'm sure there was a part of her that was fighting that, 'what do I do now they're grown up, the other children are not grown up?' But they had a far better life than we had.

SP *Okay.*

MOS And the father spent money on them and they had a better...their home life was getting better than ours ever was.

SP *Hmm.*

MOS And so then we went off to England.

SP *And you know the eldest...your eldest brother that was in Artane, how did he...and yourself, how did ye feel about the other brother who got to stay with your grandmother?*

MOS Oh we didn't mind, it's just that he...we often said to him, 'you were lucky'. But he was unlucky at the time that he had to go in around my step-father because my step-father used to box them in the head as well, it wasn't only me...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...that he used to treat like that, he used to treat them very badly as well. And well I g...I get on great with the brother that went to my grandmother's but you can always tell there's a sadness there in the three of us...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...you know, and it's a sadness that will stay with us for the rest of our lives. And we are treated differently, and to this day even with our mother's will, even though we're in it they've cheated and took all the money out of it so that we get nothing.

SP *Okay.*

MOS And to fight it...a solicitor told us yeah, that she knows that the will is done wrong but to fight it, it would cost us money and we haven't got it.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS So I mean, that's why I think eventually probably with coming out with my story I will have to leave Carlow...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...which I won't mind too much anyway. It will be the expense of it will be the biggest problem.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS But...

SP *And when...so why did you decide to leave Ireland and go to...to I think was it London, wasn't it?*

MOS Yeah, I just know that I felt that things are not right in Ireland. I started to realise that I didn't get my education, I started to realise bits of what they done to me was wrong, I felt like the...the corruption all around it, the lies of these people and yet they're looked up to like as if they're gods.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS And...and I thought, 'I need to get away from it,' and then I knew this chap, which I became friends...he was a friend of my brother's, and the nun whipped us off and got us married and...but I wouldn't have nothing to do with him and there was no sexual relationship there. And I need...I said, 'I'm out, I'm getting away from here,' I said, 'this is all wrong'. And it was very wrong on him too, but they just wanted to marry me off so that I'm...nothing would ever come out about my story about what was done to me because what they done to me was wrong.

SP *Uh huh*

MOS I mean the police should have been called...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...and they were covering up for themselves. So I just needed to get away and get out of here...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...and I'm glad that I did.

SP *Hmm. And how do you feel towards England?*

MOS Oh I feel ver...I had a very positive time in England. I was given a home, I was given a start. I met this lovely English lady, and her sister worked in the college in Holloway Road and she taught me how to read and write in the evenings.

SP *I was going to ask that actually because you...you speak so well now and everything, because...*

MOS Well she helped me...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...that lady helped me and I told her my story and she was really, really good to me. I could never say that I met an English person over there who had any animosity towards me whatsoever, hospitals...when my daughter was born I was always treated very well.

SP *Yeah. And so you don't...you ne...there were no regrets of leaving Ireland?*

MOS No regrets, no, no. Even the time that I went to take my own life when times...when things started coming back to me and when I start remembering back to what my step-father done to me, I went to take my own life, they were so good to me, they made sure that I had to sign a form that I was going to go for counselling and that's when everything all started to come up again. So then my mother wanted me home and London was getting very, very crowded, life was getting difficult to live there and it was getting...you know, it was over...over-crowded really...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...over-populated, and I wanted to give my son some sort of a chance in life. So I thought I'll take him to the countryside, and then my mother says, 'no don't move up the country in England, come on home'. So I come home and my son started school, done very well here, and...but then I was only home about a year, and I was getting the courage to try and ask my mother questions then when she was...she had the stroke, but she had left my step-father...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...for years, she had left him, over what happened.

SP *And what kind of questions were you...did you want...did you get the courage to ask...*

MOS Eh...

SP *...or that you wanted to ask her?*

MOS The one question that I wanted to ask is why was she brainwashed by the church that the police wasn't called?

SP *Okay.*

MOS Why didn't she say, 'this was wrong, it shouldn't have happened? She's only an innocent child, she has no father to stick up for her, I'm the only one here'. And I know she probably would've said that she was frightened and scared and she had a load of children, there was no women's refuge at that time, where would she have went? I...I kind of understand but I just needed to hear it from her but unfortunately I haven't got that, I never got around to that, it was too late because she couldn't speak with the stroke, her...that was affected.

SP *And tell me, how did you suffer or what...what did you suffer long-term or...from all of this that happened to you?*

MOS I could never have a relationship. I get ver...I suffer terrible with depression, I went on tablets one time but it put...they nearly put me into a coma so now I don't believe in tablets. I go a lot out into nature, that helps me a lot. I can't be in a job around a lot of people, I need...I could never hold down a proper job, I need to just walk out, I just get disturbed in my head and I just walk out and I go off for walks and then I come back. And I'm lucky that I have this little part-time job that I can do...you know, I can behave in that way.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS So...

SP *And did you feel sort of...shame or stigma about...*

MOS Yeah because we were told...y...you always felt that there was something wrong with you, that you went into them places. But it...it was...I mean I done no wrong...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...it was my step-father that done the wrong and *they* done the wrong by covering it up.

SP *Yeah, yeah.*

MOS Yeah. They should be...really I'd love to meet that nun now that was in the school where I...the Presentation school where I was going, Sister Colette [pseudonym] and she...she should have stuck up for me more and the priest, he should have stood by me more and my mother.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS But my mother I can understand because she had to go back home to the home and face him and look after...you know, ten children. I do understand a little bit of it, it must have been very terrifying for her, she would have no way of being able to sort it out herself, but the Gardaí [Irish police] should have been called to them.

SP *Yeah. And how do you feel towards religion?*

MOS I have *no time* whatsoever for it. *How* anyone can say that they believe in God and they've studied the Bible and they run a church, could cover up abuse like that, it's beyond me.

SP *And as a parent, how...how did you feel you know, being a parent, how was it?*

MOS I think with my daughter...I think would have got the roughest time with me because I didn't have a clue how to do anything. My son had a better time because that English lady helped me with a lot of things and she taught me a lot of things. And I don't suppose I ever could...I can never put my arms around my children much or give them a cuddle, or...I never cel...I mean they do think I'm a bit f...funny, I never celebrate a birthday because I never had birthdays when I was young, so I never celebrate them. And a lady that I know, she lives in Kilkenny, was the first woman to ever really make me celebrate a birthday, she brought me out a cake last year and I mean it was very emotional. And my children does always say, 'will we go for a meal?' And I mean I wouldn't even know that it be me birthday and then they have me sitting down and they'd say, 'do you know what day today is ma?' And I'm going, 'no, not really,' and...because they know I never look at calendars or anything. And I'd say...they'd say to me, 'today is the 12<sup>th</sup> of August'. And I'd go, '*oh yeah, yeah it's me birthday, oh gosh*'. And they'd say, 'yeah,' and they'd take out the big flowers and the cards and...you know, things like that.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS Yeah.

SP *And did you manage to tell anyone...so like, did you tell anyone about your time in...in these places or in...in New Ross?*

MOS Never until I went for the counselling...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...and when the woman said to me, you know, 'why did you try to take your own life, you're very lucky to be alive, it's lucky that they were able to pump you in time'. And I just said, 'I got flashbacks of my childhood,' and I think it took her a long time to get it out of me, I just...she said, 'oh what was that?' And I...I said, 'no I'm not...I'm not saying,' because when I told that nun and I trusted that nun, I was sent to New Ross and I was locked up.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS You know, I was as much as put into slavery; I was a child and it was child slavery for something I didn't do and the person that was punished, it was covered up for.

SP *And you told me you never told your husbands...*

MOS No.

SP *...why...why did you not?*

MOS I don't know, I think that that fear was always there and like the counsellor said, 'you can trust me and it'll never come outside this office and it's in your file and nobody will ever know about it'. And...and I did trust her for some reason and it's...like, 'oh...it's alright to tell her but you must never tell anybody else'. And, 'look what that nun done to you,' and, 'look what happened to you, what will happen to you now for it?' And then I was going for counselling here, I used to pay for it meself when I arrived home to Ireland. I got very bad, I thought I was going to take my own life again. I got very bad, the memories all started coming up and then I got in touch with Justice for Magdalenes. And *(pause)* I...I...I was very, very bad to be honest, very, very sick and not well

and...and then I just said to...my mother said to me one day, she said, 'what's the matter with you?' She said, 'it looks like...have you been crying?' My eyes was so swollen. So a friend of mine told me to...that she knew...I wouldn't go to an Irish counsellor, and I said, 'no I'm not going for counselling,' I said, 'I wouldn't go to anyone in Ireland'. And she says, 'Maureen,' she says, 'this lady is from England,' she said, 'she just lives here'. And I said, 'oh I'll go to her'. So I went to her, Betty Hughes [pseudonym] was her name, so.

SP *Why didn't you want to go to an Irish counsellor?*

MOS I suppose...the tr...the...of the nun came back to me again. What will happen to me...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...if I tell anyone in Ireland? I couldn't trust them. And so then I went to Betty Hughes and she done great work on me...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...brilliant work, and she used to give me healings and things like that. And then she got me in touch with the Fellowship of Isis, which would be the Egyptian Goddess. And so I went down there and I got to know a load of people and I started becoming stronger and stronger and then I got this strength that when Tom Donegan [pseudonym] said, 'would you go public with your story?' I thought, 'well, I've been hiding it for so long and *they* hid it, now it's time to let it out...

SP *Yeah and how...*

MOS ...now I'll tell...I'll on them, what they done to me'.

SP *...how many years ago was...did all of this happen?*

MOS I think about five years, six years ago, yeah...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...yeah.

SP *And your children, did you then tell your children?*

MOS I...yes I said to 'em, 'look I was in a Magdalene Laundry, it wasn't my fault, I wasn't there, I was only a child'. And I explained to them about their st...my...my step-father, that they didn't know anyway. My daughter knew but my son, I don...I think my...no, my son never met him. And I just said to them, 'if this would hurt you or *shame* you in *any way* I won't do...I won...I'll leave it where it is, we'll put it to bed'. I said...but...so my son said, 'why do you want to sort of make it public now?' I said, 'to shame them for what they done, the cover up that they done'. And so I said, 'don't answer me straight away,' I said, 'think about it'. So they came back to me after three days and they said...just said, my son said, 'go for it, I won't be ashamed of it,' he said.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS And my daughter says – well she'd be the type anyway, she's brought up in North London – she [said], 'well I don't care,' she wouldn't care.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS And so, that's how it all came out, so I said, 'right, it's t...' I didn't want to hurt the other family, it...I didn't want to hurt a dead man, there's no point, I couldn't...I couldn't hurt him...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...but I did want to hurt the church...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...for covering up. They should've done the decent and the right thing and they should've called the Gardaí or...and told the Gardaí what happened or got a doctor involved. But no, *everything* was covered up and *dumped* me into a Magdalene Laundry.

SP *Yeah. And tell me, what...what...since...since you came out publicly about your story, so what has happened?*

MOS Family wise, they get relatives and in-laws and out-laws to kind of...[give] me dirty looks...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...and they'd look you up and down and...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...the...I was in the...the *(pause)* the vets the other day...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...and I had my little dog in to get her checked up and everything, and a r...relative came in and just said, *(makes sniffing noise)* 'oh it's like the plague,' and things like that, and...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...and not letting us have anything to do with our mother's will and...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...things like that. We'll always be punished for it...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...and...b...my children are ignored and dirty looks and...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...and you see if this had all...that's why I'm so bitter towards the church, if they had done all this years ago, this wouldn't be still happening today. It goes *on and on and on*.

SP *Yeah. And you were part of a group, because you were...you...you went through the redress process first...*

MOS Yeah.

SP *...didn't you?*

MOS Yeah.

SP *And th...and then you were part of a group [Magdalene Survivors Together] to campaign...*

MOS For the Magdalenes, yeah.

SP *...for the Magdalenes. And can you tell me a bit about...?*

MOS Met a lot of the women, some of their stories is horrific, some of them was a little bit like mine which s...surprised me. So they were good...very good at covering up. Turned out very sad in the end, [deletion to redact identifiable people] our stories wasn't properly highlighted and wasn't properly put into reports that was being done and I feel that that's very, very sad.

SP *And what would you have liked to have happened instead?*

MOS I would have liken [liked] everything to be done correctly and everything...be...be told about things, what's exactly happening, and these leaders to be more honest...to be more honest with us.

SP *So you weren't told what was going on?*

MOS No, we weren't told what was going on. We didn't know from one end of the month to the other what was happening.

SP *Hmm.*

MOS We were told at the last minute and then the...we were all excited and everything about the apology, we thought that was lovely, and then when we went to meet the President, to look around and see new women...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...that didn't want to be on camera or anything, but the women that...the older women like...I don't know, can I say a name?

SP *You can say but I'll be removing it.*

MOS Well, a...an elderly lady that was in the group with us, and because she disagreed with something...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...she wasn't there.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS And yet Anita...or Sheila Young [pseudonyms] was there, that was never in a Magdalene Laundry. And another woman by the name of Ursula Boyle [pseudonym] was there, was never in a Magdalene Laundry, and other people brought over from England that was never in a Magdalene Laundry.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS And the Magdalene women that didn't do as they were told wasn't there and I f...felt that, that was a *terrible, terrible* injustice to these women, that they're upset to this day, they're *heartbroken* and we're just so sad about it all, it's abuse all over again.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS *Yeah.*

SP *And you went through the redress process, for the...*

MOS Yes.

SP *...the first one? [Residential Institutions Redress Board]*

MOS Yeah.

SP *What...how did you...what was that like?*

MOS Awful. Not very nice. You were treated like...you were treated like a criminal. And I thought, 'well why am I sitting here at a big table to these people...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...and judges and psychiatrists and everybody else?' Where was the people that done us wrong? Why weren't they sitting at the table?

SP *Yeah.*

MOS Yeah. *Awful, awful* progress [process] the way – sorry I said that wrong – *awful* situation that was set up. Abuse again all over. Keep them down, don't let them get too far or don't let them get confident in themselves, don't let them say too much.

SP *Yeah. And how long...you said...so you actually met with the judge and the panel...*

MOS Yeah.

SP *...of people...*

MOS And I...

SP *...how long did they have you in there for?*

MOS Oh I suppose it was about...I suppose an hour...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...and you feel...Jesus you feel terrible.

SP *Did...did you...how did you feel coming out?*

MOS *Awful, I felt awful.* Now, you just feel...*oh...* I don't know what words to put on it, that...all is I could say and the way I have to deal with these things, going down the stairs in that building that day – I wouldn't take the lift because I didn't want to be in a closed...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...place, I just went down the stairs 'cause I...so I could have fresh air. And I thought, 'if these people can have luck in life for doing that to people, that we...' our *childhood* was taken from us, we were treated so badly all our lives here and then when we *did* get our stories out, to treat us like this. I even notice the lady...they had a lady typing, but I noticed when we brought up about the abuse, she'd stop the typing.

SP *Hmm.*

MOS And when I said about the cover up with my step-father the typing stopped. *(Pause)*

SP *And did they leave you to go home on...or go home...*

MOS Oh yeah.

SP *...on your own like...*

MOS Yes.

SP *...no counselling or nothing...*

MOS No, no nothing.

SP *...after the...*

MOS No.

SP *...event?*

MOS Uh huh.

SP *Okay. And is there anything else that I haven't asked that you'd like to add or...?*

MOS No, I just feel that...well I...the...the apology was great yeah, I did like the apology. I thought that...and I hope in my heart that the tear[s] and the...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...emotional side of the Taoiseach was genuine.

SP *Hmm.*

MOS Meeting the President was...wasn't the pleasant journey that it should've been for us because of the leaders [deletion to redact identifiable people].

[Deletion to redact identifiable people]

MOS [Deletion to redact identifiable people] Why wasn't there Magdalene women brought in when this discussion was going on?

SP *Hmm.*

MOS We were brought in front of the Dáil for cameras every other time...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...why...how come we weren't brought in on that? I don't suppose we can overturn it, I don't know. [Deletion to redact identifiable people] I think that is wrong. No matter what the church ever done to me I don't ever want to be responsible for doing wrong to anybody else or cheating or go in and tell a lie, because it puts a black mark on every Magdalene woman. And the Magdalene...the majority of the Magdalene women there, their stories are true...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...and I feel sad about that, that other things was brought in that is untrue.

SP *Was your story used in the McAleese Report?*

MOS I...see, I don't know, I don't think so.

SP *And you never got to read it the...or you never got to...*

MOS No, we asked for it and we were told, no that they [hard copies] weren't being given out...

SP *Okay, yeah.*

MOS ...and that I could download it if I knew how to use the computer.

SP *And it is that size. (Indicates large size)*

MOS Yeah, yeah.

SP *(Laughs)*

MOS And I don't know how it can be that size and yet the abuse not brought into it because we did sit and tell Nuala<sup>7</sup> and we told Martin McAleese about being thumped and beaten up in the tunnel.

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<sup>7</sup> Nuala Ní Mhuircheartaigh, legal advisor to McAleese Committee

SP *Yeah.*

MOS Now, I said I'd seen no sexual abuse...

SP *Hmm.*

MOS ...I d...which I didn't, and...but I did see women getting beaten, I heard roars up along the corridor, I heard women screaming, I seen women disappear, you'd never see them again. There was *awful* abuse that went on there. There was one woman, I remember she had to stand outside the...the dining room because she wasn't allowed to have food for something she'd done. The...*awful* things went on in...in Magdalene Laundries, and...and *none* of that was put into the [McAleese] Report.<sup>8</sup> I've been told by a lot of people, and I...I trust them.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS *Yeah.*

SP *Well that is one of the things, that the...it says that there was no evidence of [systemic] physical abuse in the...in the laundry, that's one of the...*

MOS *Yeah.*

SP *...things that was written.*

MOS *Yeah.*

SP *So it's interesting that you say that.*

MOS *Yeah.*

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<sup>8</sup> Testimony which was given verbally to Senator McAleese appears in the McAleese Report, however none of the written testimony submitted by Justice for Magdalenes (JFM) on behalf of 22 witnesses was included. This interviewee did not participate in the testimony-gathering process organised by JFM.

SP *Actually I forgot to ask you this, but did you ever try to run away?*

MOS I was thinking of it, I often thought of it and you'd look out and you'd see...if the laundry gates was open and you were going up along the corridor say for your dinner or something, and you happened to look out, you'd get a glimpse of the outside. But you'd be thinking then, 'what if...' – the stories you hear when you're a child – I used to think, 'well what if the banshee got me or the boogie man got me?' That's what you...what would go through your head...

SP *Okay.*

MOS ...and I was thinking should I sneak out in one of the big trolleys that they had for the laundry to be put into. But no, I was too frightened.

SP *And do you remember anyone...did anyone run away while you were there?*

MOS Yeah I've heard...it's...there was a woman brought in one night and there was screams and screams, oh the screams was...everyone was putting their hands up to their ears.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS And this woman ran in, she says, 'oh and there's the Garda car, the Guards, the Guards, the Guards are here!' We were going, 'oh my God!' And then the nun came in, 'who's talking, who said...what did you...who said Guards?' And the woman said that she said it. That was it, she was taken out of the Recreation Room and we never seen that girl, we knew who run away because we never seen her after that.

SP *Okay.*

MOS Yeah. But we...the roars, I'll never forget it.

SP *And actually if a nun turned around to you tomorrow and said you...you weren't there...held against your will, that you could leave whenever you want, what would you say to her?*

MOS How could a twelve-year-old leave a building on her own and not know even where she...I was never in New Ross before, I didn't even know it was in Wexford...

SP *But is that...*

MOS ...until I got older.

SP *...is that true, could you have even left...*

MOS That...

SP *...the building?*

MOS ...no, you could *not* leave the buil...the building. Even your dormitories was locked, *everywhere* was locked. You were watched 24/7, not only did the nuns watch you but you had the trustees...would watch you as well.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS They'd watch you in the bathroom, they'd pass remarks on your body. *Terrible* remarks was passed on your body. I seen women crying...

SP *Yeah.*

MOS ...the things that was said to 'em. A nun would come in, 'look at the state of you, your diddies are rotten,' and, 'oh look at your big fat arse,' and things like that was said. *Awful*. You *could not* get out of there because you were watched *all the time*.

SP *Yeah.*

MOS *No way* could you get out.

SP *And just to sort of end, I just want to ask, of all your accomplishments, of all your achievements, what are you most proud of?*

MOS *(Pause)* I'd say I would have three things that I'd be most proud of. I...didn't hold any animosity towards my mother and I went up to see her every evening when she got the stroke. I...am proud that I did tell on them, that I can tell my story now, of what they did to me and the cover up. And I think the third thing would be of my children and that I achieved getting my own home. And I know it was hard and I never had a holiday and I never went anywhere nice, I never had nice clothes, but still we have our own home and I'm...I'm proud of that.

SP *Very good.*

MOS Yeah.

SP *Well Maureen, I have nothing else to ask you, but do you have anything else you'd like to say?*

MOS No, I'd just like to say thank you very much for inviting me here and to take the interest in my story and the way yez are going to put it into history. I think that's very brave and I think it's a great thing to do, and the stories should never be forgotten.

SP *Thank you very much.*

MOS Thank you.

[Interview ends]