



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



Reference Code:	MAGOHP/39/ANON
Oral History of:	Nora Lynch
Pseudonym?	Yes
Status:	Survivor
Keywords:	St Joseph's Industrial School, Clifden, Co Galway; Good Shepherd Magdalene Laundry, Sundays Well, Cork; brainwashing of auxiliaries; interviewee refused to answer to house name; rule of silence; rebelling and questioning laundry regime; manufacture of scapulars in laundry; manufacture of dresses for local retailers; process to become Child of Mary; hunger striking; auxiliaries as part of regime; stigma of laundry and illegitimacy; Residential Institutions Redress Board; separation of friendships and alliances in laundry; self-education.
Date of Interview:	24 th July 2013
Transcript:	78 pages
Number/Format of Audio Files:	One .wma file
Interviewer:	Dr Sinéad Pembroke
Records/Papers included:	No, however the interviewee has kindly donated the medal referred to on page 32 of the attached transcript. Images are available here: http://jfmresearch.com/home/oralhistoryproject/transcripts/survivors/nora-lynch/
Access Conditions:	Anonymised interviews are freely available to the public. Immediate release of transcript and anonymised audio; interviewee's identity will not be revealed in the future.
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Notes on Redaction and Transcription Process

Interviewee Initials: NL
Interviewer Initials: SP
Interviewee's husband: DL

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
- Certain locations have been removed to protect the privacy of the interviewee and third parties
- Dates have been accurately transcribed
- Interviewee's name has been redacted from the image of the medal referred to on page 32 of the transcript

List of Pseudonyms

Pseudonym	Status/Relationship to Interviewee
Mrs Lynch	Interviewee/survivor
Patricia Fitzpatrick	Older girl from Industrial School
Suzanne/Suzie	Child from Industrial School
Sergeant McFadden	Garda in Galway
Jackie	Interviewee's sister-in-law
Rose	Interviewee's house name
Lorna	Third party Magdalene
Marcella Donnelly	Third party Magdalene who interviewee knew from Industrial School
Sister Ignatius	Third party religious (Magdalene)
Elizabeth	Marcella's house name
Martha	Third party Magdalene who interviewee knew previously
Samantha	Martha's house name
Sr Frankie/Frances	Auxiliary
Sr Agatha	Auxiliary
Sr Gertrude	Third party religious (Industrial School)
Breda Foley	Older girl from Industrial School
Sr Julia	Third party religious (Industrial School)
Dr Richards	Doctor who came to Industrial School
Dermot Long	Advocate for Industrial School survivors
Mr Edwards	Consultant at hospital
Dympna	Third party Magdalene
Mrs Moriarty/Molly	Woman interviewee worked for after leaving laundry
Edward/Eddie Moriarty	Son of interviewee's employee
Brenda	Third party Magdalene who interviewee knew previously
Sr Sadie	Third party religious (Sisters of Charity retirement home)

Nuala Byrne	Interviewee's mother
Roisín	Woman who interviewee played with as a baby
Mr Byrne	Interviewee's uncle
Carol Byrne	Interviewee's cousin
Betty	Pet name used by interviewee's family for interviewee
Maurice	Interviewee's uncle
Doris (Maurice's daughter)	Interviewee's cousin
Donal Lynch	Interviewee's brother
Thomas Lynch	Interviewee's brother
Paddy	Interviewee's uncle
Caitríona	Interviewee's aunt
Aileen	Interviewee's aunt
Daniel	Interviewee's husband
Sr Benignus	Third party religious (Industrial School)
Sr Paul	Third party religious (Industrial School)

Basic Data from Interview

Name/Pseudonym	Nora Lynch
When Born	Approximately 1940
Born outside marriage?	Yes
Raised by	Family until four years of age, then Industrial School
Education	Industrial School until fourteen, with one day of cookery training from a nun after that point.
Order	Good Shepherd
Laundry	Sundays Well
From	January 1958
To	23 rd October 1963
Duration of stay	5 years 9 months
Age on entry	Seventeen and a half
Entered Via	Industrial School
House Name/No	Yes, but refused to use it
Haircutting/punishment?	No
Circumstances of Departure	Went on hunger strike (see below)
Emigrated?	Yes
Physical ailments?	Yes
Of Note	<p>Interviewee recalls a fourteen-year-old girl (under the pseudonym Marcella Donnelly) who was sent to the laundry because she was 'too advanced' for the other children in the Industrial School. 'Marcella' was in her forties when the interviewee left the laundry.</p> <p>Interviewee was told if she went through the process to become a Child of Mary she would be released from the laundry. Interviewee was eventually released because she went on hunger strike.</p>

	Arrangement was made with a specialist in a local hospital to see the interviewee out of hours so that a Magdalene would not be seen going into the hospital.
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[Interview begins]

[Background noise from lawnmower engine can be heard until 07:28]

SP *Okay, so thank you very much Nora [pseudonym], for...for doing an interview with us today on the 24th of July. So first things first, can you start off by telling us about your life from the day that you can remember?*

NL I remember being taken from Dublin and put on a bus...all the way from Dublin to Clifden County Galway [St Joseph's Industrial School, Clifden] with this woman. Brought to a school, it was very dark when we arrived, and I didn't see anybody 'til the following morning. I was in for a shock, 'cause as soon as one of those nuns saw me, and the woman who was in charge, Patricia Fitzpatrick [pseudonym], I was in for a shock. They didn't handle me like my great aunt used to. 'Go downstairs' – never forget it – and, 'you're in charge of her'. There was a young girl, she was supposed to look after me, and her name was Patricia. And, 'she's got to look after you, you're four years old, so therefore...'. So Patricia washed me, and put me sit...dressed me, and put me sitting down, and brought me some bread and butter and sugar. One of the other little ones came up and snatched it off me so I started crying and Patricia took it from her and gave it back to me and the little one came over and scratched all me face. I'll never forget that. So Patricia went off and she made two lots and she gave one to Suzanne [pseudonym] and one to me. And everything was fine...until we reached a certain age, about six years old and I was to make my First Holy Communion. And going to Confession and we got to make something up, to tell the priest. And we weren't to tell them what...what we were [going to] tell the priest. So I went in to the Confession and I told him I broke a cup and saucer, and he burst out laughing, and I started crying. And didn't he tell [inaudible] I said, 'I thought you're not supposed to tell what you say in that Confession,' he said, 'but that wasn't a sin,' because he told everybody and everybody was laughing. And I was upset over it, so I didn't trust anybody after that. But things were a little different as I got older. Lots of beatings. Put in charge of somebody when you were eight years old to look after others. You had to clean their hair, pull the things out of it, and if there was anything in it you got the beating, they didn't like, you know?

SP *And they would have been much younger?*

NL Oh yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

NL So you were kind of responsible for somebody else before you were old enough yourself. But I seemed to be in trouble all the time. Then when I turned thirteen and I got this...sores on my arms, and I was hiding them because if there was anything wrong with you, you were beaten or punished. So when it got to the stage where it was all coming round my face and one of the nuns noticed that she called, the nurse from the hospital in to have a look. So she prescribed something which one of the older women had to look after which wasn't very good, because instead of letting me go *in* the bath she used a tin small bath and at thirteen years old you were put into this bath and you don't fit in it, so you actually kneel in it and she's scrubbing you with a hand scrub. And then she pours all this stuff over you, red stuff, sometimes it was purple stuff, wasn't getting any better, it was getting worse and I was supposed to be going in for a music exam. So what they did was they called the ambulance, took me into the Regional Hospital in Galway. And I quite enjoyed it in hospital it was great; I was getting fed, although the questions they were asking me, I had no idea what they were talking about, and one of the nurses had to explain to me what this that and the other was. So I was in there for a fortnight and I had the time of my life. But I was in for a big shock when I got home...back to the school I should say, it wasn't home.

SP *Hmm.*

NL But while I was in the hospital they shaved all the top of my head anyway, to try to have a look at the psoriasis. And they did prescribe creams, this that and the other, and certain things not to eat, this that...but it didn't work like that when I got there. *Oh* this woman used to put the creams on and when you're developing at that time you don't want anyone to see you, but she used to make sure everybody saw me and then she used to call me *names* and which the other kids used to pick off, and every time the names were repeated I was upset. So I kind of...instead of being outgoing, I suffered in silence – cried a lot. And I had to go back to the hospital again, when I was what...sixteen, because the psoriasis was very bad again, I was there for another fortnight, and I had treatment when I was in there, it was like summery lamps. All the nuns used to come and visit and give you money and this that and the other like, you know. And I think it was...it was like bribes and I used to send out the...some of the cleaners

that used to work there, used to get me this that and the other like, some clothes and some underwear and pretty things that I was never used to. And, then after a fortnight I was back to the school again. And I turned...it was June, I just turned seventeen...and...I was doing alright then I was in charge of the children...back in the nursery looking after the children. But...I'm skipping quite a lot of it but...then one winter's day I had a very bad throat and we were all told to go for walks down by the sea, because where the school was...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...there was a seaside there, Clifden, County Galway.

SP *Yeah.*

NL Do you know that?

SP *I do know it.*

NL *Hmm.*

SP *It's usually very nice, not in the winter though.*

NL Yes it's usually...in the summer it's beautiful.

SP *But not in the winter.*

NL That's where we learned to swim...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...we used to jump from the rocks, there was a big castle up there, it was all broken down but it was our imaginary playground like, you know. So we went there winter and summer. So...no coats on, no scarfs, no gloves no such thing anyway. So I was sent back...when I came back we were going up to the...the washrooms we used to call them, and there was big mirrors in this one so I was in there and I was washing myself and I looked in the mirror and I was

laughing at myself because me mouth was crooked. And the whole lot of us was laughing and the next thing was the one in charge came in and she says, 'what are you laughing about?' And she looked at me and she said, you better go to the Infirmary, and I went in to the Infirmary and you know what she did, she gave me a dose of Epsom salts and I was to stay in bed 'til the Reverend Mother saw me. And when she came in she called over the nurse from the hospital and the nurse says, 'I think she best go to the hospital'. So...not the Cottage Hospital, that was just outside the...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...but in the meantime didn't one of the other girls, Suzanne, she came down with the very same thing. Turned out it was Bells Palsy but they didn't know what it was at the time...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...and I was sent off because I had the psoriasis bad again you see...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...I was sent back to the Regional in...in Galway, and Suzanne was in the Cottage Hospital. But after a fortnight you come out, 'cause the...it wasn't that...all they do is teach you how to do exercises...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...when it's Bells Palsy like, you know, and they were very good...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and of course after they came to visit and the money came in and I had sent out the girls to get me *my bits and bobs* (*spoken with posh accent*). So, of course...Christmas I wore my lovely brown skirt and my lovely polo neck yellow jumper and my beautiful wedge heel shoes, I thought I was the bee's knees.

SP *And where did you get these...these lovely clothes from?*

NL At...at...

SP *Was that from...*

NL ...the bribery money!

SP *...the bribery money...*

NL That's right.

SP ...at the hospital, yeah.

NL Yeah, the hospital...the bribery money.

SP *Hmm.*

NL And so, next thing was I was coming down...I'd the two children with me, always had the children, I was carrying about the turf for the fire, singing along and this nun came up behind me...

SP *(Coughs)*

NL ...and a slap across the face, dropped them, the children were screaming. She told, 'go in to the nursery,' and, 'you're not going in to the nursery again' she says, 'you're finished with in there,' she says, 'the way you're walking'. I says, '*how am I walking?*' And, 'don't answer me back'. And another slap, and she had a couple of them holding me down, they pulled the clothes off me and pulled the shoes off, 'and you can go down to the laundry and st...work down...you're not going back to the nursery again'. So...when it came to dinner time, twelve o'clock, everybody goes up for the Rosary and *then* to dinner, I didn't go. I picked up a coat from the back of the laundry door, put it on, went down to the police station and told them what happened. So I had a cup of tea, down there, and he says, 'I'll take you back,' told him what happened, I says, 'I'm not going to repeat myself again'. So he says...he had to go away for

something or other and he'd be away from me for a fortnight, but he would sort it all out when he came back but in the meantime he asked me if he...if I wanted a lift back. I said, 'no,' he says, 'well I'll have to go and report it anyway,' so he went up and he reported it and while the...Sergeant McFadden [pseudonym] was away, come Tuesday of the following week, I was called in to the sun room and we were going away to be trained, Suzanne was called in also, and...we were both being called in. 'Sit down,' we had still had the same clothes on us that...'cause I never bothered to change them, I just said, 'well, if I'm not walking right,' and...you know, 'what am I doing wrong?' And they couldn't tell you what you were doing wrong, so you leave the same things on, same knickers and all. I could smell for all I cared. And that's...it was all...I don't care anymore, like you know. So anyway, we were sitting there in the hall...in the front hall and the cases were brought in and she says...the taxi arrived, we were put into the taxi, a nun on each side of us in the back of the taxi, and one in the front by the driver. And she says, 'goodbye now,' she says, 'you brought it on yourself'. I says, 'we're going away to be trained?' She didn't say anything she just says, 'drive on'. So we were stuck in that taxi from Clifden, County Galway to Cork. It was dark when we got there and we were brought in to a hall in the convent 'cause the nuns were...the nuns used to sleep separate from where the girls were, now we didn't know there was girls or anybody there, we were going away to be trained.

SP *That was the exact word, 'trained'?*

NL That...trained.

SP *Hmm.*

NL So Suzanne was crying and I said, to Suzanne, 'don't cry,' I says, 'look, at least Patricia Fitzpatrick is not here. That was the first time I mentioned her name. 'She's not here, the witch is not here,' I says, 'it's got to be better'. I was the brave one; Suzanne wasn't, bless her. So in about half an hour these three came out, these three nuns came out, and they says, 'you'll be well looked after here,' and, 'do as you're told, especially you Nora,' they said. I says, 'I don't care,' now that was me, 'I don't care'. So anyway, next thing they went off, a girl came, she had a little black dress on her and a veil on her head, I asked her was she a nun she says, no she was an auxiliary. I says, 'and where do you live?' She says, 'I'm going to take you now where you're going to live as well'. I says, 'so are we going to be trained here?' and she laughed. So

anyway we were brought up the back stairs, into...past these bedrooms, there was *loads and loads*...I says, 'does lots of people live here?' Suzanne was still crying bless her.

SP *Hmm.*

NL And she says, 'oh yes lots of grown up girls live here'. I said, 'do the nuns sleep with them as well?' she says, 'no,' – I was the chatty one – and she says, 'you'll be alright'. So anyway we were brought into...it was like...do you know if you're walking on a ship?

SP *Yeah.*

NL And it's all glass...you're looking through glass?

SP *Yeah.*

NL And I says, 'and what place is this?' 'This is where...' she says, 'you have to take all your clothes off'. I says, 'what for?' She says, 'because there's a uniform here'. I says, 'well if we're gonna be...if we're here to be trained, why are we wearing uniforms?' And she says, 'oh you'll like your uniform,' she said, 'but you're very thin'. I says, 'well...neither of us are fat are we?' I says, 'you're not fat either'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL That was the conversation we had. And she says, 'you'll be okay,' she says, 'we'll look after you'. And I says, 'Suzanne's upset,' and she says, 'she'll be alright, we'll look after her'. So she gave us...oh yes, we wore stockings for the first time, black stockings with suspenders...suspenders belt. We were better dressed than ever we...we were. I thought, 'this is great'. And we had shoes. I wasn't wearing my size sixes that they gave me (*laughs*) I was wearing me right size shoes, and clean pants...and a new bra. I said, 'that's too big, I'll have my own back'. She says, 'we've got to wash everything,' so she gave me...gave me another one my size, 'cause I didn't know what size I was anyway.

SP *Hmm.*

NL So I'd a little black dress with a white crochet collar on it. She says, 'you're very thin'. She says, 'what do you weigh?' I says, 'I don't know, I don't know, we don't weigh ourselves. *(Laughs)* We don't weigh...' So she made us hop on the scales, I was five-and-a-half stone – at seventeen and a half – five-and-a-half stone.

SP *Wow.*

NL Suzanne had not been long at the hospital so she was a little more...heavier than I was.

SP *And...and the reason for your like...being so thin was the food...*

NL Yeah.

SP *...you were telling me about...*

NL Yeah.

SP *...the food, and the lack of food, wasn't it...*

NL The lack of food.

SP *...in Clifden?*

NL We always went in for the pig's bucket...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...we watched the nun carrying it out and we'd dive on her and we'd...you know...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...eat whatever was put in there.

SP *Hmm.*

NL It was for the pigs, but they had better food than we did. We had awful food.

SP *Were they the leftovers of the nuns?*

NL The leftovers.

SP *Yeah.*

NL Yeah. Because we were starving we always ate...I was telling you earlier, if we saw a core of an apple when we were out walking we'd pick it up, wipe it on our clothes or spit on it and eat it.

SP *Yeah.*

NL Even o...orange peel we used to do the same.

SP *Hmm.*

NL Used to steal the apples from the...the nuns' orchard. And if they brought us in to do the weeding or anything there, we'd eat the gooseberries and all the rest.

SP *And they...*

NL Not even ripe.

SP *...they'd never give you an apple?*

NL Oh no.

SP *No, from this...*

NL Oh no.

SP *...orch...so they had farms and orchards...*

NL Oh yes.

SP *...in Clifden and you never sort of...saw the produce?*

NL No we'd steal the...we'd go up to the *(laughs)* and we'd pull the onions out – I'm laughing at it now – we'd pull them out, wipe them in our overall, spit on it...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and then eat it, even the turnips.

SP *Yeah.*

NL Which they call swede over here. Even the cow's mangels, we used to eat them as well. People say you go funny if you eat them, well we never went funny. *(Laughs)* We were so hungry we [would] eat anything, we'd have ate a scabby cow!

SP *Yeah.*

NL No we never had chicken or anything like that.

SP *Okay.*

NL Oh we had...Christmas time when we were in school, we had turkey. But you know what part of the turkey? The neck.

SP *Ah!*

NL It's true.

SP *Ugh!*

NL It was so bad, when I came over...the first Christmas I was over here in my brother's house, and he says to me, 'do you want some turkey?' I says, 'no thank you'. He says, 'have you ever tasted it?' I says, 'yes, the dirty brown thing with all the bones in it?' He says, 'no!' He says, 'come here,' his wife Jackie [pseudonym] says, 'come here,' she says, 'now this is the part of the turkey that's the best,' I says, '*I never seen it before in my life!*'

SP *They gave you the neck. Ugh.*

NL It was the neck. *Every Christmas*, it was the turkey stew.

SP *Did you ever get like an egg as a sort of...a treat or anything like that?*

NL No, we didn't get no eggs.

SP *Okay.*

NL We had a bit of...when they killed the pigs...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...in the back yard, all the blood that flew out of it, they used to make pudding out of it.

SP *Yeah.*

NL And we used to love it though, we were starving. They used put oatmeal in it and all the rest. And what else? Oh we had some of that pig with all the hairs on it, that's the part we got, with all the fat and the hairs on it. *Ugh.* It was horrible.

SP *So that's the reason why you arrived so thin?*

NL Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

NL We were always starving. (*Laughs*)

SP *Yeah.*

NL We were always starving. But anyway, cutting a long story short we got into Cork and I said to...she...oh now, what was her name...can't even remember her name...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...she was a lovely girl anyway.

SP *And she was...*

NL I wouldn't think...

SP *...the auxiliary, was she? Yeah.*

NL She was auxiliary, but I'll tell you now, there was a difference with the auxiliary...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...that was a different. Not like the nuns, auxiliary...it's different, she was actually *brought* in like we were years ago...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...into the place, and she was in there for so long she was...what do they call it, 'mind washed'?

SP *Yeah.*

NL Brainwashed?

SP *Yeah.*

NL Saying she could become a nun, so they'd become auxiliary, but you don't *actually* become a nun.

SP *Hmm.*

NL Just an auxiliary for the rest of your life.

SP *Right.*

NL It's all *brainwashing*.

SP *Yeah.*

NL So anyway we went to supper that same night, had supper at eight o'clock in the evening. And they were all stand...I was put into one group which...there was groups of twelves with one auxiliary in charge, because there was lots of people there...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and Suzanne was put in to *another* one. Now Suzanne was left her *own* name...

SP *Okay.*

NL ...but *my* name was changed...

SP *Oh.*

NL ...to Rose [pseudonym].

SP *And why did they do that, because I do know that it was normal practice to change your name, why did Suzie get to...*

NL Suzanne.

SP *Suzanne I mean, sorry.*

NL I don't know.

SP *Hmm.*

NL And I asked that same question because we were both standing there when I says, 'why has m...' I says, 'I'm not going to answer to this name, that's not my name'.

SP *Yeah.*

NL And they says, 'we *always* change names'. I said, 'well *why* aren't you changing Suzanne's?'

SP *Hmm.*

NL She says, 'I do what I have to do'. I says, 'well / do what / want to do,' and she says, 'I see you and I are not going to get on'. I says, 'we were sent here to be trained, what kind of a place is it?' I was the one that was asking the questions. And she says, 'you will be trained in character'. 'What does that mean, character?' And, 'you'll have to learn to do as you're told'. I says, 'but when a person reaches a certain age they can do as they like to a certain extent'. And she says, 'no, in here you do as you're told'. I says, 'well what kind of a place is it?' She says, 'you're here to be trained to behave yourself. And,' she says...I says, 'and what kind of work will we be doing?' 'Oh there's plenty of work we'll explain it later, tomorrow morning,' she says, 'but first you've got to go for your supper now'. I says, 'we didn't have dinner'. So she says, 'well you'll have something to eat now when you go in there'. So we were brought out and, 'your name is Rose'. I says, 'I'm not answering to it'. So she s...she said...the nun said to...what was her name...oh I don't...I don't even want to know her name...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...she was from Limerick anyway...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...and she was one of these auxiliary...but a 'yes ma'am, no ma'am, three bags full ma'am'...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and she says, 'your name is Rose,' and I says, 'no, my name is Nora'. So I stuck with that.

SP *Hmm. How old were you at the time?*

NL I was seventeen and a half.

SP *Okay.*

NL Suzie was only sixteen.

SP *Right. okay.*

NL And I says, 'are all these people being trained here?' She laughed. And one of the girls that was in our group she says – Lorna [pseudonym] – she says, 'training *my foot!*' she says! And she said, 'enough Lorna!' she says. So I was put sitting by Lorna, we all went into...and there was six on each table and I was next door to Lorna and I says, (*whispered*) '*what's for tea?*' She says, 'what's there?' She says...I says, 'there's beetroot and there's lettuce and spring onion and bread and butter,' I says, 'but the bread is dry,' she says, 'no you have to butter it yourself'. And we poured the tea from each table, 'oh,' says I, 'that's good'. She says, 'do you want sugar?' I says, 'I never had sugar in my life'. So, I didn't have sugar anyway I said, 'no I'll just take it as it comes'. So anyway, oh I...I was *ravenous (imitates sound of eating)* and she says, 'are you hungry?' I said, 'we didn't have any dinner,' not that we ever had much dinner anyway, but she says, 'you're the chatty one, you're supposed to be silent in these places'. I says, 'what do you mean?' I says, (*whispered*) '*what kind of a place is it Lorna?*' She says, (*whispered*) '*shh if she hears you she'll take...she'll take me off*'. I says, 'shall we talk later?' She says, 'yeah, (*whispered*) *but we're not supposed to talk*'. I says, 'why? Are we in retreat?' She says, 'no, but we're not supposed to talk, we've got to pray'. I says, 'why do we have to pray?' 'For our sins'. I says, 'I didn't do any sins!' Says she, '*shh!*' (*Laughs*) She says, '*shh!*' And I says, 'have you been here long?' She said, '*shh*, since I was eleven,' she says. I says,

'why, did you do sins too?' She says, 'no'. I said, 'but why are you here?' She said, '*shh*'. And the other girls were s...you know laughing because...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...I was questioning and was getting no place.

SP *Yeah. And how old was this Lorna at this stage?*

NL Lorna was in her forties.

SP *Oh my God and she'd been there since eleven?*

NL Yeah. In her early forties. So, anyway after that we all...there was somebody got up and they were sitting in the middle of the road...in the dining room and she started reading and I looked up and I says, 'oh there's Marcella Donnelly [pseudonym]'. And she says, 'do you know that girl?' I says, 'yeah,' I said, 'I was only very young when I knew her'. '*Shh*'. And the one...the nun was sitting up there Sr Ignatius [pseudonym] I think her name was, her hands under her...'cause they wore the cream...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...thing, and the hands under the...I think she was holding her boobs, now that's what I say now but I didn't know that at the time. You could see her, she was trying not to smile and I was waving and she wouldn't dare look down, and afterwards she came...when we got outside she says, 'I'm not called Marcella anymore'. I says, 'what's your name?' She says, 'Elizabeth [pseudonym]'. I says, 'I don't understand these names'. She says, 'what name did they give you?' I says, 'Rose. I'm not going to answer to that'. She says, 'you must,' I says, 'I won't'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL So she says, 'everybody will call you Rose'. I says, 'I won't have to answer it though'. She says, 'no you don't have to, but I'll give you a little warning, the quicker you obey, the quicker...' I said, 'what kind of a place is it?' She says, 'well did they tell you you were going away to be

trained?' I says, 'yeah'. She says, 'well you'll soon find out what this is all about'. So anyway we were in the place and they were all sitting round saying their prayers and...you know these scapulars?

SP Yes.

NL Now. They were making them. 'I hate sin' they were writing on it and they were kind of embroidering on it and they had to get so many thousands done. So she says to me, 'do you want to do it?' I said, 'no, I'm not writing "I hate sin" I don't know what sin is'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL So she says, 'you have to'. I says, 'I don't have to do it if I don't want to'. So she says, 'but just hold it and let on you're doing it'. I says, 'no'. I says, 'that's not being trained,' she burst out laughing. So anyway, I didn't do it and then come eight o'clock everybody got up and they went upstairs and I says, 'where we going?' She says, 'we're all going to bed'. And I says, 'do we have our own rooms?' She says, 'no, there's so many beds in each room,' she says. So I went off and...what was that one? (*Coughs*) What was her name? What name did they give her? Because I never found out her real name...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...it was a boy's name anyway and I said...she says, 'you'll have to follow me'. So Suzanne went off with someone else and I went off with her and she says, 'you're sleeping next to me,' and she says, 'and before you get into bed you can strip off and you wash over there and then if you want to go to the toilet you go out there'. Now, there was what – three, six, nine, twelve beds in each place, in some there was more than that.

SP *Hmm.*

NL It was 24 people using three toilets. But we did have six wash basins. But you had to strip off...had to strip off first before you got into bed and pray all the time while you're doing it. Well I said, 'this is ridiculous, I washed this morning'.

SP *(Laughs) Yeah.*

NL But you wash again and you wash your teeth. Now they had provided us with everything: towels, toothpaste, you know this toothpaste, the round thing?

SP *Hmm.*

NL Soap...now, what kind of soap, oh it was *Lux* soap, we never had that before. Which was good. And I said, 'I'm not taking my clothes off'. She says, 'you must,' she says, 'you get dressed...undr...undressed under your nightdress'. I says, 'that's stupid, how am I going to get undressed?' You know, I...she says, 'you'll get used to it, I'll show you what to do'. I says, 'no I'll do it myself'. So anyway, I put this big nightdress on, a huge thing, fanned like that. And you did...anyway they were big wide things. So anyway, you got that, this was all the funny parts. You were up at six in the morning and you prayed from once you opened your eyes and then you prayed all the way down and then you went to Mass. And you had your breakfast...you went into your breakfast and you...you had to pray while...every time you were walking anywhere and sit down with bread and butter and a mug of tea and then you go out to work. 'You come with me,' and I was brought into the Ironing Room, Suzanne was brought into the laundry. And there was dozens and dozens of shirts that had come through the mangle or something that we had to...well I had to iron them...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...and I had to get them all done before dinner. Twelve o'clock. And I'm looking at this, I have never ironed a shirt in my life! The collars and cuffs were done on the machine, I had to do the rest. And it's [an] electric iron fair enough, and you've got to stand there and you've got to pray all day long, all...everybody is praying and there's Rosaries being said...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and the Litanies being said, and the Stations of the Cross being said.

SP *Jesus.*

NL And they pray, pray, pray, and I says, *'I am fed up with this praying!'* and of course I was called up. 'You be quiet and do as you're told'. I says, 'no this not training, this is working in a laundry, I don't want this'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL Suzanne was brought in to the Sewing Room where she was able to make dresses, cut out dresses and make dresses for the shops in Cork. And then wasn't Martha [pseudonym] in there as well, that I hadn't seen the night before and I went in and I says...I wouldn't do what I was told...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...I went in, followed Suzanne in and there was Martha. I says, *'Martha!'* She says, 'I heard you were here,' and she says, 'what you think?' I says, 'well put it this way Martha,' she says, 'I'm not Martha anymore'. I says, 'why?' I says, 'what's your name?' She says, 'Samantha'. 'Samantha?' I says...she says, 'I did the very same that you're doing, but because it's a nice name I am going to be called Samantha'. I says, 'I don't like mine'. She says, 'okay,' she says, 'I'll call you Nora and Suzanne will call you Nora, and so will Marcella, but you will have to call us by our names'. I says, 'if I get used to it'. So she [said], 'just try and do the best you can,' she says. 'But,' I says, 'so we're not going to be trained?' She says, 'you're not' she says, 'but Suzanne and I are, and Elizabeth is'. I says, 'and why me?'

SP *Hmm.*

NL 'Because they were warned you were trouble'. And I says, 'trouble?' I says, 'I'm not trouble'. 'You're very stubborn Nora,' she says, 'so they've got to keep an eye on you'. I says, 'why?' She says, 'you'd only...never be left out, you won't go outside any doors'. I says, 'what you mean?' (*Whispered*) *'I'll get into trouble now for telling you these things,'* so she says, 'the best thing you can do,' she says, (*laughs*) 'is go back in there and do your ironing'. So I went in. I didn't get through all that ironing. I was on the floor more times than not...fainted so many times, brought up to the Infirmary.

SP *Why were you fainting, because of the heat?*

NL The *heat*.

SP *Yeah.*

NL The heat. I don't know I was...being brought up in Clifden Co Galway, the air was completely different and then inside these four walls where the steam, the atmosphere was completely *stifling*. The smell of the washing...so...oh they had me there for a couple of months.

SP *To do the ironing?*

NL To do the iron...I never got through the ironing.

SP *Hmm. And then why was Martha there? Like how did...how did she...?*

NL Because she was a hospital patient so many times, she suffered from...rheumatic fever...

SP *Oh yeah.*

NL ...several times she ended up with a dicky heart.

SP *Oh okay, yeah, yeah.*

NL But Marcella was sent there because Marcella was fourteen when she went to school...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and she was too advanced for the girls in the school. So that's why she was sent there and she was in her forties when I went.

SP *Jesus.*

NL But we always heard about Marcella Donnelly in school. She was a...the girl that used to tell the girls in the school all sorts of things like, you know? Because we wouldn't...we didn't know nothing like that.

SP *Hmm.*

NL But it was more about the worldly ways of things, nothing sexual because we didn't even know there was such a thing...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...as sexual, are you with me?

SP *Yeah, yeah.*

NL So she was...she wasn't in the school long, Marcella. She was too advanced for us children, so she was sent away to be trained, she was *very, very* intelligent...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...Marcella was. Now the work she was doing was making the vestments for different religious orders you know...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...like this...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...the priests...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...she used to do all the embroidery and all that kind of thing, cut them out and make them and she could turn her hand to anything. And she s...did warn me several times, 'Nora,' she says, 'try and settle down 'cause the quicker you settle down it'll be easier for yourself'. And I says, 'no,' I says, 'I think I have gone from bad to worse,' and I was *very* upset.

SP *Hmm.*

NL I was very upset and, 'I have going to work out what I'm going to do, I'm not staying here'. And she says, 'now the first step for you to do,' Marcella says, 'is go in and see Sr Ignatius, she's over us. And you sit out there in the morning after breakfast,' she says, 'you go in there and when she's ready she will see you'. So the next morning Nora was sitting on the chair outside waiting to see. She says, 'come in'. So I went in and she says, 'good morning Rose'. No answer. I says, 'good morning, and my name is Nora'. 'Well while you're here you're called Rose'. And I says, 'why?' 'Because if you go out of this place,' she says, 'nobody will know you as your own name'. I said, 'I don't see how that can be done,' I says. I says, 'I was christened Nora, I'm going to stay Nora'. She says, 'but I have re-christened you to Rose'. I says, 'you call me what you like,' I says, 'I'm not answering to it'. She says, 'now what...what can I do for you?' I says, 'I don't want to be here'. She said, 'what do you mean you don't want to be here?' She says, 'I have got to teach you how to become of good character'. I says, 'good character, what is character?' She says, 'to make you fit for the outside world, prepare you for the outside world'. I says, 'but how am I going to know what's on the outside world if I'm not let *out* into the outside world?' She was so frustrated with me, every question I put she just had to think for an answer.

SP *Hmm.*

NL Because I says, 'I can't understand why I was sent here to be trained, when I'm put in ironing shirts and I'm fainting all the time!' And she says, 'don't worry the doctor will be brought in to see you'. So about a week or so [later] I'm back in the...in the Ironing Room again...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and Lorna bless her, she used to come up and take bunches of the shirts down and she'd iron them, and she'd say, 'don't tell on me'. She was very, very childlike, at *forty-two years old*

she was very, very childlike. And she says, 'try and get them done,' she says, 'I know you're...you're weak,' she says, 'and you're falling down all the time'. And she says, 'did you eat your breakfast?' I says, 'I had my bread and butter'. So she says, 'are you upset?' I says, 'they told me I was coming to be trained'. 'God help you,' she said, (*laughs*) 'God help you!' So I was about a month in the place and I was still in the Ironing Room and I was called upstairs to the Infirmary one day, and the auxiliary says, 'the doctor's here to see you'. So when...I was brought in through another bedroom, I don't know whose bedroom there was six...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...six to nine beds in it anyway, and she says, 'good morning Rose,' and I looked at her, I says, 'you going to call me Rose as well?' And she says, 'and what would you like me to call you?' 'My name is Nora,' I said. So she said, 'okay Nora,' and Sr Ignatius was there. And she says, 'would you like,' Sr Ignatius said, 'would you like to get undressed?' she says. I said, 'you telling me to take off my clothes and you're standing there staring at me?' I says, 'and next minute you're telling me to cover myself up, I was immodest'. So she says, 'but you must take your clothes off to see the...' I says, 'well you turn your back then!' 'I have got to keep a...' I says, 'you don't have to,' I says, so she turned her back. And when the doctor examined me she says, 'you've got bad psoriasis,' I says, 'yes and it's worse since I came here'. And she says, 'I can give you some creams and stuff to help'. And she says, she...she, 'get yourself dressed,' so I got dressed and Sr Ignatius turned around and she says, 'is there anything we can give her?' She says, 'I...I prescribe iron tablets, *Haliborange*,' she says, 'the girl needs building up'. She says, 'her weight is *way* below,' she says, 'what she should be weighing, nothing there but skin and bone'. And she says, to me, 'what kind of work?' I says, '*I'm standing in the Ironing Room*,' I said, '*ironing, dozens and dozens and dozens of shirts*'. And she says, 'I think that work is too heavy for her, with her state she's not up to doing things like that'. But I still had to go back to it. And they'd come up, the one...the nun that was sitting up she'd say, 'you're not saying your prayers'. I says, 'I'll say my prayers when I need to say my prayers'. I was rebelling. And I said, to Lorna, 'how am I going to get out of here?' She says, '*oh nobody ever gets out of here*'. I says, '*why?*' That was one question I had to get...I *cried and cried and cried*. I went on hunger strike to start off with, I sat outside that woman's door *morning after morning*, I was about...oh, six or seven months in the place and I was still sitting outside her door. And, 'you still haven't done the scapulars and you still haven't...I'll get you some embroidery to do,' 'I don't want to do it, I want to get out'. 'But we've got to train...' I says, 'you're not training me,' I

says, 'I'm not stupid'. *I cried, I cried and cried* all the time and then she must have said something to Marcella, because Marcella says, 'now listen, if you do as you're told, at least try to do as they're asking you, they will let you out eventually'. I said, 'but when?' Not when you're seventeen and a half and you want to get out someplace...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and you're nearly eighteen years old, coming up to eighteen years old and no, nothing is happening. So anyway, I went out on the chair again and sat there, and went in to see her and I says, 'I want to get out of here'. And she says, 'now I'm going to make a bargain with you. If you become a Child of Mary I will find you a situation and let you out'. And I says, 'and how long will that take?' She says, 'it could be a year...it's up to you'. I says, 'why does it take so long, what do I have to do?' So she says, 'after you've worn a rosette of purple for six months,' I said, '*six months?*' She says, 'yes, six months, we've got to build your character'. 'Six months. And then what?' I says. She says, 'then we change the rosette to green for another six months'. I says, 'that's a year! And you want me to wear these things for six months and do the ironing?' She says, 'no actually we're not going to take...let you back in to the Ironing Room anymore, your health won't stand it'. I says, 'I'll be dead'. She says, 'no you won't be dead,' she says. 'I'll put you in to the Packing Room,' she says, 'where...you know how to machine, don't you?' I says, 'yeah'. 'Well you'll be doing any repairs that has to be done to the sheets, any of the washing that gets damaged in the laundry, you'll be doing the repairs. And now I'm going to warn you, it will be in the place where the laundry comes in and goes out, and don't think for one minute you can get out that door. Because you won't be able to, it'll be locked'. And I said, 'why are we locked in?' She says, 'everybody's not here for the same thing'. I said, 'but I did nothing wrong, and neither did Suzanne,' and I says, 'I know for a fact Martha didn't either'. I says, 'it's funny how each one of us have been hospitalised at certain times,' I says, 'and we were sent here'. She says, 'you're very, very intelligent,' she said, 'but you have got to learn how to obey'. I said, 'I don't understand this at all. So if I become a Child of Mary after I wear this purple thing,' I says, 'for six months...' 'And you mustn't lose it,' she says, I said, 'how can I lose it?' She says, 'you get points for every month you wear them and if you wear it for six months without losing your points,' she says, 'you go on to the next colour'. And I says, 'what if I get fed up and I wan...still want to go out?' She says, 'you can come and sit down and talk to me,' I says, 'but you give me empty promises,' I says. 'You're not giving me the answers that I want'. 'But I'm building your character'. I says, 'this character must be very important,' I says,

'what is it?' She says, 'we're trying to make you wise to the world outside'. I says, 'but how can I be wise to the world outside if I'm not allowed even to look out the door?' She says, 'you can go for a walk around the yard,' she says. So I was taken out to the yard. There was a...brick wall, I would say it would be about ten to twelve-foot high...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and if you climbed up it, it was wire, and with me being a skinny little so-and-so, I used to climb up the whole place and look down and when you look down, you wouldn't look down a second time because it...the drop was so big, this place was like a prison. And I couldn't understand why I was sent to prison.

SP *Hmm.*

NL And she was telling me it's not a prison.

SP *And you were never told a release date or anything?*

NL *Oh no, no, no, no.* So anyway I tried this purple thing; within two months I'd lost it and back on the chair I went again. I says, 'you have given me false promises,' I said, to her. 'You are not carrying out what you're supposed to do'. 'I was sent to be trained all I'm doing,' I says, 'is mending somebody's rags'. I says, '*that's* not being trained' – 'we're building your char...' I says, 'now, whatever this character is,' I says, 'I'm not putting up with it'. So I says, 'well I'm going on hunger strike'. So I did, I went on hunger strike. I went into the Dining Room at mealtimes and I sat back...on the chair like this and I didn't eat the food that was put in front of me. And the...the auxiliary up in the Infirmary was worried, so she'd come down after a week or so and she'd say, 'come here, you haven't been up for your iron pills, you haven't done this,' I said, 'no, I'm going to kill myself'. (*Whispered*) 'No,' she says, '*you won't get out that way*'. She says, 'if the doctor has to come in to see you again,' she says, 'you might be sent someplace else...worse'. I said, 'but what have I done?' *I'm crying and crying and crying*, 'what have I done to be treated like this?' And she says, 'they'll tell you they're building your character'. I says, 'is that what they told you and why you're dressed as a nun now?' She says, 'I'm not actually a nun. They did have me trained to be a nurse, but I'm an auxiliary and I won't get any further than that'. And she says, 'now if I make you a nice piece of toast up here will you eat it?' I says,

'no'. She says, 'please,' I says, 'no!' I was very, very stubborn. So I sat there for about a month, every part of me...I was flopping down everywhere and up to the Infirmary, and the doctor was brought in.

SP *So you weren't eating anything at all?*

NL I wasn't eating, so the doctor was brought in and they says, 'something's got to be done'. But they didn't take any notice of what the doctors were saying.

SP *And what...did they have you working throughout that whole period you were weak?*

NL Oh yes, oh yes. But...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...Frankie [pseudonym] used to come down, Frances used to come down, and she'd say, 'Nora, drink this glass of milk for me'. And as soon as I'd drink it, it would come up again, wasn't able to hold anything down. So I overheard the doctor saying, 'we'll have to put a tube in her,' you know...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...'give her some intravenous...'. I says, 'nobody is sticking tubes down me,' he says, 'we're not going to stick it your mouth,' he says, 'we'll put one in to your arm and we'll feed you that way, but you do need something,' he said, 'because you're going to die'. I says, 'I'd rather die than be here!' So anyway Frances says to me, 'now if you promise me,' she says...I says, 'I can't make promises,' I says, 'I'm no...I'm not going to make promises,' she says, 'please,' she says, 'for your own health,' she says, 'you're not going to be worth anything if you want to go out'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL So I had more...took more notice of her than I did of those nuns. Now they never beat us...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...those nuns didn't beat us, but it was *psychological*, and after a month of this thing, being 'good' as I call it, and wearing the purple thing after a month or so, I was up on there again, 'now I've had it for a month'. 'Try another five months'. 'And will you let me out?' 'Not 'til you've passed your green one'. 'And after that?' 'Then you'll have a blue one, another six months, and then if you hold on to that blue one for another six months you'll be made a Child of Mary'. I says, '*and what is this Child of Mary?*' She says, 'you've seen the Virgin Mary statue?' I says, 'yeah, and she still has to answer my prayers,' I said. She says, 'because we're trying to build your character,' I says, '*is it yours to build?*' I said, 'I don't understand,' I says, 'it's torture'. So she says, 'from your mother's background'. I says, 'I haven't got a mother'. 'Everybody's got a mother'. I says, 'and if I ever find her and I'll make it my business to,' I says, '*God help her*, I'll kill her'. And she says, 'you'll go to prison'. I says, '*then I'll have something to go to prison for*,' I says, 'but what is this but prison?' I says, 'I haven't been outside these doors since I came here, neither have any of the other girls, and you won't let me talk to the other girls, you're saying they'll corrupt me, now what is so bad...what have they done that's so bad that I get corrupted?' 'You're an innocent girl'. I said, 'I don't understand you people, if this is what the world is like,' I says, 'I'd rather be dead'. She says, 'don't talk, that's blasphemy'. I said, 'you're blaspheming and you're lying,' I said, and 'you're supposed to be a nun?' And she says, 'listen here now Rose...' 'And you can forget calling me that'. 'Very well,' she says, 'but you're still Rose, and you'll answer to it'. I says, 'no I won't'. She says, 'you're very, very stubborn and maybe this is one of the reasons you were sent in here,' I says, 'no, I wasn't like this in school, I did as I was told,' I says, 'and I still got beaten or I was blamed for somebody else's...so therefore,' I says, 'because I was small I was picked on by the bosses, or so-called bosses'. I said, 'does it have to be this way all your life long being bullied and beaten by other people?' And she says, 'oh you won't get beaten here,' I says, 'you might as well say you are beating me,' I says, 'you're destroying my health'. So she says, 'now if you become a Child...' I says, 'if I hear that once more I'll cut my wrists'. So they hid the knives on the table, I wasn't allowed to use a knife on the table in case I cut my wrists, I didn't know what...there was such a thing, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

NL Because I was...I was an eejit, put it that way, I knew *nothing* whatsoever.

SP *Hmm.*

NL I even started my periods when I was in there, eighteen years old, starting periods have you ever seen the like of it? I thought, 'thank God I'm dying'.

[Unidentified third party enters the room]

SP *And they didn't explain what that was or?*

NL It was Sr Frances that explained it to me...

SP *Okay, hmm.*

NL ...she explained it to me, because when they tried to explain it in the hospital when I was thirteen I was killing myself laughing, I thought they were stupid.

SP *Hmm.*

NL So it all came back to me then when it actually happened, Sr Fran...I said, 'oh now I know what we were talking about'. They didn't give you sanitary towels, they gave you...made up things.

SP *A cloth like?*

NL Like a...it was like a...now what did I call it...a hammock? It was like a hammock made of old sheets with a little loop here and a little loop there and they gave you an elastic thing to tie around your waist. And that[']s what it was. And you couldn't throw them away, you had to put them in a box in the toilet...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...where they were all taken to the laundry were washed and reused, you don't know whose you were using the next time you got them.

SP *Okay.*

NL That's how it was now it's a disgusting thing...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...but that's how it was. And when you're...the first time like this, you wouldn't dare go near that box with this thing.

SP *Hmm.*

NL They didn't even give you a bag to put it into, you just put it in. And there was somebody...an auxiliary standing in the toilets, *all day long.*

SP *Oh really?*

NL Oh yes. There was no doors open, no doors...there was three baths which everybody had to have a certain time to have a bath, and with me having the psoriasis...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...I had to go daily for a bath. But I wasn't to lock the door, there was an auxiliary standing in there, in case I'd do any harm to myself.

SP *Okay.*

NL But the doctor came in once...every so often to make sure I was okay with the psoriasis...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...then the first winter I was there, the arthritis, *oh it was bad.* Said to...it was *raging*, I couldn't put one foot in front of the other. Couldn't hold anything, not even a cup. So they told me to stay back and the auxiliary, Sr Agatha [pseudonym] was her name, she says, 'I've got to take you to see the specialist in the Royal...the Regional in Cork,' she says, 'there's a...but I've got to make sure you don't run away'. I says, 'I couldn't run away *anywhere* at the moment,' I said.

She says, 'I know you poor thing,' she says. She says, 'you're struggling,' I says, 'yes'. So they had a taxi outside and they put the pair of us in and the taxi-man had to lock the doors, and it was *dark*, you didn't know where you were going and you were whipped in the side door of the hospital where the...I think it was about half-past-eight in the evening...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and he treated you like as if you were *shit*. You had come from this place, he doesn't know what you've done, but he looked down on you because of the very name of the place and he'd just lift your skirt. And I says, 'what's that?' 'I'm giving you a gold injection,' he says, 'it'll help you, what good it'll do you God knows,' he says, 'the way they work up there'. And I looked at him. [Inaudible] 'I'll see her in a month's time at the same time'. 'Cause he had to stay behind so nobody would see us being brought in there. It...you've never known anything like it in your life, and the tears rolling down me face and...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...Sr Agatha says to me, she says, 'don't worry, I'll pray for you'. I says, 'is that why you do the prayers all the time?' She says, 'well we pray for each other to give us strength,' she says, 'how do you think we've lasted all these years?' Now she was an old woman. But *she* was allowed out! Because seems there was privileges if...what I didn't know, that if some of the families were sending them X amount of cash each month...

SP *Oh!*

NL ...but they weren't allowed to get it. And Sr Gertrude [pseudonym], Sr Gertrude, the one that put us in there, was sending X amount each month for Suzanne and I, Martha and Elizabeth.) And they didn't tell me anything about it so when I came to...when I was called in to the...Ignatius's room the next day after I had been for the injections she says, 'Sr Gertrude has sent some money for you so you've got to write and thank her for it'. I says, '*no I won't!*' So I never wrote and thanked her.

SP *But did you ever see the money?*

NL Oh yes.

SP *Okay.*

NL Oh now, you didn't see the money as such.

SP *Yeah.*

NL Now, this Sr Agatha that I was telling you about, you had to write the list down of what you need. Now it [would] be say...toothpaste...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...new bras...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...new pants, so you don't have to wear theirs, things like that, and pretty shoes – that was me – and when she said...I said, 'how much did she send?' She says, 'oh it's stocked up since you came and you've got to write a thank you, the other girls have been doing it'. I says, 'no I'm not doing it'. I said, 'she owes me'. That was m...that was my attitude, 'she owes me, she *lied* and nuns are not supposed to lie'. And that was me. I wouldn't, never wrote *once* to her. *Only once*, when I actually became...after, I was there from seventeen and a half...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...now this'll tell you, October, 1963 I became a Child of Mary.

SP *Okay.*

NL And before I came...became a Child of Mary, I had a letter and I was brought in to Sr Ignatius's room again. 'Now, what would you like for your Child of Mary?' I says, 'I shall have a silver

chain and cross'. 'No you can't have a chain and cross, you can have a silver medal¹ with Our Blessed Lady on it'. 'And I want my name on it as well, my *own* name'. 'And are you going to write and thank her for it?' 'No'. 'Well I'm not doing it'. I says, 'forget about it,' I says, 'I'll just walk up the stairs again, I says, 'and fast again until I drop'.²

SP *When you say up to the stairs again?*

NL Now, I had been up several times, I spent about four or five days up there...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...each time. Every time I got discouraged and I...with false promises...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...this that and the other. Now, there's another thing they did for an incentive. If you worked the full twelve months, come up to Christmas, they don't pay you, what they give you is pieces of papers with a number on it, like say five marks, ten marks, if you get twelve marks for ev...for up to Christmas and the...all the stuff that's made in the Workroom, in the Sewing Room...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...is put into a shop...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and they bring in some sweets and different things like that, all that kind of thing. And you can go shopping in the laundry...the Packing Room, they turn it into a shop. And I never had any marks at all, but Marcella and Martha used to give me some and Suzanne. I'd say, 'I can't, I can't go in, I says, 'I have got no marks whatsoever'. But the last six months leading up to this, I had the twelve months. And I gave them to my three pals...

¹ The interviewee has donated this medal to the project. It will be available to view in UCD Archives in due course, and images of the medal is available here: <http://fmresearch.com/home/oralhistoryproject/transcripts/survivors/nora-lynch/>

² See also MAGOHP/73/ANON, Kathleen R, who was also rebellious and sat on the stairs in protest at Sundays Well.

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...they says, 'are you coming?' I says, 'no'. I says, 'now I've got this,' I says, 'I've got a journey to go on'. They says, 'oh no not again?' I says, 'yeah'. Sat outside (*coughs*) I'd sit down there say...say Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. Suzanne would be up to me, Marcella would come up, Martha would come up, Sr Frances would come up from the Infirmary, 'oh you're going to be ill again, we'll have to force feed you through your vein'. No. I was so worn out about the fifth day I'd come down and I'd spend a day in the Infirmary where she'd kind of introduce me back into food.

SP *Hmm.*

NL But I was still going up to have the psoriasis seen to and still going to the hospital to have the injections, especially in the winter time, but...

SP *So how many years... 'cause... 'cause I know, so you got the Child of Mary...*

NL Oh I got the Child of Mary...

SP *...in 1963.*

NL ...1963...

SP *But what year was it when you were put in there?*

NL ...but I went in there...it was January, the second...no, it was the second week in January...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...1958.

SP *Oh wow.*

NL I was seventeen and a half.

SP *Yeah.*

NL You don't forget things like that. It was the 23rd of October...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...1963 when I got out!

SP *And she had told you a year...*

NL Uh huh.

SL *...if you had done the Child of Mary...*

NL Uh huh.

SL *...programme...*

NL Uh huh...

SP *...and if...*

NL But you lose hope...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...on the way. So bad, I spent most of the time going backwards and forwards.

SP *'Cause you...from talking to you, what you're telling me, you sound like such a fighter...*

NL I am a fighter.

SP *...did that start...oh and..and you definitely are, but did that start to...I mean, were you like that throughout the whole period?*

NL All my life.

SP *Yeah.*

NL All my life I've been a fighter.

SP *Yeah.*

NL I don't know what it was...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...even when I was in school, because there was quite a few bullies in school...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...they weren't all little angels you know...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...and because I had this psoriasis...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...I was called every name under the sun 'til I reached about fifteen and then the b...the one that was actually doing the stirring...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...I went upstairs one night, and she was sitting on the bed, and when she get...she says, 'oh look at you,' she says, 'you leper,' she says. So I went up and I says, 'you repeat it,' and she

says, 'you're a leper,' and I went, '*whack!*' I says, 'and you can tell your friends, anymore of it and you'll...and they'll get the same'. 'Oh you're very brave on your own!' I says, 'no, from now on,' I says, 'I'll take *nothing* from yez,' I said, 'I've had *enough*'. And I'd worked myself up so *much*, I think that's why I got this Bells Palsy and all the rest, because I always got sick after...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...confrontation.

SP *Yeah, yeah.*

NL Always did, because it took courage to do these things.

SP *Hmm, yeah.*

NL And I had everybody shouting at me, 'look at you you're like a leopard, you've got leprosy, you've got this that and the other,' and it was bad enough that Patricia Fitzpatrick was pulling my clothes off me at that age like, you know, and sh...shouting and screaming, 'look it's like pounds, shillings and pence'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL You didn't need that.

SP *And how come you were seventeen and a half and still at the...at Clifden you know, you were seventeen and a half, 'cause weren't you meant to be out...*

NL Fortnight before...

SP *...at sixteen?*

NL ...that slap across the face...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...Sr Gertrude called me into their office and she says, 'now you're at a certain age,' she says, 'would you like to stay here and look after (*coughs*) all the girls?' I says, 'what you mean? Be like Patricia Fitzpatrick and Breda Foley [pseudonym] and all that?' She says, 'yes, you get paid at Christmas'. I says, 'no thank you,' I says, 'I'm not going to treat the girls like the way I've been treated'. And she says, 'well, it's up to you'. And I *still* was so naive I didn't know that this was what happened to people who said *no!*

SP *Yeah.*

NL You don't know those things.

SP *Hmm. You know up until that point, were you educated throughout Clif...the whole of your Clifden time?*

NL Once you turned fourteen years old...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...you were taken out of school.

SP *Okay.*

NL Now there was some girls that went on to do their Intermediates [Intermediate Certificate].

SP *Hmm.*

NL Very, very few. Whether you were brainy or not, you didn't have the chance. But there was one nun there, Sr Julia [pseudonym], she says, 'you're finished school now,' she says to me, 'Nora,' she says, 'so therefore,' she says, 'I think you'll be a good cook. You...I'm going to have you two days a week,' she says, 'where I'm going to teach you with the *other girls*,' she said, 'you'll leave the nursery and you'll be in here,' she says, 'for nine o'clock every Wednesday with your dress on and your apron and your little hat on,' she says. 'And I'm going to teach you from

scratch how to cook, from soda bread...and,' she says, 'it'll take about three years, but I'm going to teach you how to do it'. Now anything...you get fed when you're in cooking...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...'cause you hear the other girls saying like, you know. And she says, 'and when you make things,' she says, 'you're allowed to eat them'. (*Whispered*) 'Oh,' I says, 'that's for me, that's lovely,' and she says, now 'if you have it in you to become a good cook,' she says, 'you could actually get a good situation out of it, depends on your health,' she says. But I enjoyed it. We started off with the soda bread, the Irish stew, and I looked forward to those Wednesdays where we were *allowed to eat what...*but some of it was sent into the big girls, they ate separate from us.

SP *Oh.*

NL We called them 'bosses'...

SP *Heh.*

NL ...like, you know. And then we went onto making queen cakes and then we did a two-course meal and oh I enjoyed it.

SP *Hmm.*

NL But every Friday it was learning laundry, how to iron and how to use different chemicals to get the stains out of clothes. Now *this was interesting* and you had to learn and study your notes, which I did, and I enjoyed it. And then that was the first year all done where you made the Irish stew, and the...the second year you were in there you went onto the three-course meal. And then you had to *present it to the girls*, the bosses like, you know. And that was alright, some of them would say, you know, 'oh *this is gorgeous!*' You know, and then you knew, you'd already tasted some if it like you know, so therefore you knew it was good, 'cause Sr Julia *always...*she *always* gave you the praise where praise was due.

SP *Yeah.*

NL And she says, 'do you know what, Nora, 'she says, 'you would make a n...good housekeeper,' and then she says, 'I'm going to put that forward on your form'. It was never put forward, it was put forward but it was never written.

SP *Okay.*

NL I could show you the amount of information, after being there from *four years old*, from the 5th July 'til I left that place, I could show you the papers, what they sent me from Clifden Co Galway. *Nothing* on them. The papers weren't filled in. They were getting so much from the Irish government...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...for each child...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...but we didn't know that. But they called in the doctor once every so often and you had to strip off your pants and vest like, you know.

SP *Hmm.*

NL And Dr R...old Dr Richards [pseudonym] he'd [say], 'breathe in here, and breathe in there'. And then every so often the eye fellow would come up and he'd [say], 'look in this and look in that, can you see this, can you see that?' And he'd move on, he says, 'can you see this?' I was about *fourteen* and he said to me, 'can you see this?' I says, 'no'. He said, 'come a bit further,' and he says, 'she needs glasses'. And he had these black rimmed glasses, you know. And I was wearing them ever s...I even had them when I went into Cork.

SP *Yeah. And you know Cork, it's Sundays Well that's...*

NL *Sundays Well.*

SP ...yeah, yeah. I...the reason why I was saying is because there's two laundries in Cork so I was just clarifying.

NL Oh no this was Sundays Well. I gave Dermot [pseudonym] the papers...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...I had one, 'cause I only got some of them...I wanted all the details when I was going through the first stage...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...of the school business [Residential Institutions Redress Board]. We were...the only thing about Sundays Well was we...they didn't hit us...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...but they tried to brainwash you. And there was some days when it came to Mass, after I got that Child of Mary thing and they said, 'you're going to Mass,' and you know you did a retreat every year, once or twice a year, you had to go into retreat where you couldn't talk – *at all* – and you pray, pray, pray, the only time you spoke is when you pray and I would say to Lorna, 'I wish this bloody thing would hurry up'. I was saying, 'this was supposed to be prayers like?'

SP *Yeah.*

NL And Lorna would be killing herself, 'oh God you'll get me sacked,' she'd say, 'I'll lose me marks! I'll lose me marks! I won't have the full fifty-two for Christmas,' I said, 'I'll give you mine if I've got any'. She said, 'you'll never have any,' she said, 'you're always up on the stairs!' I went up to the stairs *so often*.

SP *And when you'd go up to the stairs that was when you would, like...*

NL That was when you would stop...

SP ...would stop eating?

NL ...eating...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...you stopped praying, you stopped everything.

SP *Yeah.*

NL You...

SP *Did any other girls do the same thing?*

NL *Oh, lots of them!*

SP *That's what you kind of...was that, why...*

NL That was rebelling.

SP *Right okay, yeah.*

NL That was rebelling. And when they saw you...you hold...some of them were there for the week or so...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...but I wasn't strong enough to do that. And then Suzanne used to come up to me and she'd say, (*whispered*) 'we had biscuits today and I brought you one,' and she used to say, 'eat it,' and I'd say, '*oh yes lovely,*' (*laughs*) and I'd eat it. That was my little titbit.

SP *Yeah.*

NL And then Sr Frances from the...she'd say, 'I can't bring you anymore if you're not going to come down,' and I'd say, 'no'. She says, 'you promise you're going to come down now,' I says, 'I'll think about it'. And she'd say, 'God you'll only have to have the doctor again!' (*Laughs*)

SP *And Sr...*

NL And they're not happy.

SP *...Sr Frances is actually...she was an auxiliary.*

NL She was an auxiliary and she was also a nurse and she knew my circumstances health wise.

SP *Yeah. So you called auxiliaries 'Sisters'?*

NL Yes.

SP *Okay.*

NL But they weren't actually Sisters.

SP *Yeah, yeah. No that's why I was just...*

NL Yeah, no.

SP *...yeah. Okay.*

NL They weren't actually Sisters. (*Laughs*) So anyway she used to come up and she says, 'I have to give you your iron tablets because we don't want the same thing to happen'. She says, 'you don't like going out to see that Mr Edwards [pseudonym] do you?' I says, 'no, he looks down on us,' I said. And she says, 'what do you mean?' I said, 'you know you have to go out for your injections as well,' but she says, 'yes I know, but now I'm wearing this habit,' she says, 'it's not the same anymore'. She says, 'I'm allowed to talk,' she says, 'and go outside'. I says, 'and I'd have to wear one of those things winter and summer?' I says, I says, 'no way'. I says, 'what did you do wrong to come in here?' And she says, 'you wouldn't want to know,' she says, 'I wasn't

your age when I came in,' she says. I says, 'is it true all you girls had babies?' And she says, 'no, not all of us'. She says, 'I was a bit wild,' she says, 'but my parents put me in here'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL And I says, 'and you had to go through the same thing I did?' And she says, 'no, I wasn't as stubborn as you'. I says, 'so you're stuck here all these years?' She says, 'be wasting my time going anywhere now,' she says, 'I'm in my sixties'. I said, 'oh God, oh I think I'd die,' I said. She said, 'you could die at any minute if you don't eat,' she says. So one Sunday, I was...I was just about to go up those bloody stairs again, it was a Sunday in October...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and I had the tap on the shoulder, it was Sr Frances, and she says, 'I want to see you, come with me,' she says. 'But,' I said, 'I'm going up to the Infirmary,' she says, 'no,' she says, 'I'll wait 'til they're...we'll stand in here, and wait 'til they're all gone'. I says, 'well it's either in there or up there!' She says, 'no you're not going up there, not this time,' she says, 'I want to see you'. So, she took me in to Sr Ignatius's room and she says, 'now Nora, I'm going to tell you, they're letting you out'. 'Oh my God,' I says, 'at long last,' she says, 'your fighting is at an end because it's doing your health more harm than good,' she says. I wouldn't have got out otherwise. So, Sr Ignatius came in, she says, 'now there's a case there and there's all...your clothes are all in it'. I said, 'my clothes will never fit me,' and she says, 'no they'll be too big for you,' of course I was still [thin] (*whistles to demonstrate*)...

SP *From all the hunger...*

NL Yeah.

SP *...strikes?*

NL I was still [thin] (*whistles to demonstrate*).

SP *Hmm.*

NL So anyway, she says, 'Sr Frances will take you in there,' and they had the most beautiful clothes in there; underwear, nightdresses, you name it. Vests and long-legged knickers...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...all them, to make sure nobody would be able to get up them, I thought – afterwards like, I didn't know there was any such thing then.

SP *Yeah.*

NL Because I was forbidden to speak to any of the girls, but we did talk and when...actually came...Dympna [pseudonym] she was from Cork City, and her aunts used to work in the market...used to work in the market. So they used to come every Sunday and when they used to come she used to give Dympna some stuff for me. So Dympna would come in and she put all her stuff on her place and when she was coming down she put mine on and she was...we were stopped from talking to each other because Dympna would corrupt me. Now Dympna wasn't long in there. But when we went to the toilet down where the baths were...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...she'd say to me, 'have you ever in your life done a jive?' I says, 'I don't know what jive is'. She says, 'I'll show you'. I says, 'where's Sr Agatha?' She says, 'she's not...she's gone into town today'. I says, 'right,' I says, 'show us what jive is'. So she says, 'give me your hand,' and we were doing the jive in the toilet!

SP *(Laughs)*

NL She says, 'everybody says you were wild but,' she says, 'I didn't believe it'. She says, 'you liked it, you liked it?' I says, 'yes but I like to know what's going on as well'. So then she says...and...she says, 'you picked it up real fast but,' she says, 'don't tell anybody'. So the next thing there was knock on the door, *(spoken in abrupt tone)* 'you two come out, you're in there long enough,' and the pair of us giggling away. We walk out, I wouldn't even look at her, she wouldn't look at me and she'd say, *(whispered)* 'don't tell anybody'. *(Laughs)* Now, we had to be sly...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...which was underhanded really...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...and that's how they made us, underhanded.

SP *Yeah.*

NL But that day I was going out there, she said to me...I'm going to tell you exactly what that Sr Ignatius said to me, 'we're letting you out now, you're going to work for a doctor and his wife and they've got a big family, they have eleven children'. 'Oh my goodness,' I said.

SP *Jesus.*

NL 'Do you think you'll be up for it?' 'Of course I'd be up for it, what will I be doing?' She says, 'mostly you'll be doing reception and of course helping Mrs Moriarty [pseudonym] with her children'. *(Pause)* 'Okay. So, once I'm out I'm out?' She says, 'yes but you've got to behave yourself because they might bring you back'. I says, 'you can forget that, because I am *never* coming back'. She says, 'I think we've built your character'. I says, 'well if you like to think so Sister'. Very angelic I was then...

SP *(Coughs)*

NL ...because I learned how to *play* them.

SP *Okay.*

NL I learned how to play them.

SP *And how was that?*

NL Was agreeing with everything, but my spirit fell down every now and again after I became that Child of Mary.

SP *Hmm.*

NL I was up those stairs again, you see? I told them they were liars, this that, they can't keep their word and they were sinning and I didn't sin. I had the upper hand.

SP *Yeah. And you know how you...you would...the stairs the hunger strike, like was it your idea or like, is it s...like how did you know to do that as a...as a sort of a rebellion?*

NL Now, I was asking Martha and Marcella because they were there longer than we were.

SP *Hmm.*

NL Said to Martha, 'how can you get out of here if all the doors are locked? How can you actually get out?' She says, 'well some people go on hunger strike'. She says, 'but don't you try it,' she says, 'because you're not strong enough,' she says, 'you know how you suffer with your illnesses'. 'Yeah. But if I'm determined enough I can do it'. She says, 'I tried it several times'. I says, 'Martha, where did it get you? You're still here. Are you going to still be here as an auxiliary?' And she says, 'no'. I says, 'but you're working in the Sewing Room and you can turn your hands to anything in there'. She says, 'but you could do all that before you came here, that's why they didn't let you in here'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL I says, 'so they decided [to] put me in the Ironing Room to iron somebody's dirty shirts and now I'm in the Packing Room,' I says, 'mending somebody else[s] shirts'. And she says, 'and remember the day you stood in front of the door when one of the workmen came in and you went to make your way out?' I says, 'yeah'. And the chap says to you, 'get in, because if they catch you you'll be...send you off someplace else'. She says, 'they would have'. I says, 'and where else could I go that's as bad as this?' 'Oh,' she says, 'there's worse places'. She says, 'I've heard of it going on, they send them up to Dublin'. So she says, 'you missed out that,' she

says. 'But then again,' I says, 'that's where my family originated'. She says, 'oh you wouldn't find your family if you went up there'.

SP *And you know how you said the nuns...it was more psychological kind of...*

NL It was.

SP *...what did you mean by that?*

NL Now psychological...now, if you do this...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and if you do that...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and *if, if* you go to all of these Masses you'll be able to build up your character, and I'm using me hands because the only way I can explain it...

SP *Yeah, yeah.*

NL ...it builds up your character and they think after you've been there and you've seen all these Masses and there was one...after I became a Child of Mary I rebelled I says, 'listen, if I ever get out of here I'll never again go to Mass'. And she says, 'you're blaspheming'. I says, 'how can I blaspheme,' I says, 'when *all* you've told me in the last five odd years,' I says, 'is, "I'll get you a situation and let you out,"' I says, 'you're actually *lying*,' I says, 'you told me this,' and I says, 'and a couple of the other nuns have got me into reading the...into the library, reading books trying to occupy my mind,' I says, 'now fair enough, nobody's raised their hand to hit me,' I says, 'but you're doing things to me which is upsetting my mind'. Now, 'cause I did know all about psychological...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...at the time. I says, 'you[re] promising this and you're promising that and you're promising the other,' I says, 'and you're not coming through with that'. I said, 'so how am I supposed to react? I've done everything I've been asked'. And she says, 'well we have to let you out now' she said, 'because you're damaging your health'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL Now those were her words but what she says, 'I'm going to give you a warning. Don't ever let a man kiss you because you'll get pregnant'. I says, 'what do you mean?' 'Don't ever let a man kiss you, you'll get pregnant'. 'What's this?' I said. She says, 'you'll get childbirth'. I says, 'do you mean I'm going to have a baby if I kiss somebody?' She says, 'yes'. I says, 'that's silly, that's silly,' I says. She says, 'you've never kissed anyone before?' I says, 'no'. 'Not even on the cheek?' I says, 'no, we never had men, there was never any mans [men] in our school (*laughs*) never any mans in our school'. And she says, 'promise me you won't,' I says, 'I promise you whatever it is, (*laughs*) but I want to go out'. So anyway, come about half-past four that day, this doctor and his wife came in and he says, 'that girl is ill'. I says, 'oh no I'm not'. Jesus, my heart was pounding. 'Oh no I'm not'. So she explained to him what was going on and she said, 'with you being a doctor you'll be able to keep an eye on her, because when she gets upset she goes on hunger strike and she rebels'. And Mrs Moriarty came over and she put her arm around me and she says, 'you won't go on hunger strike in my house, dear,' she says, 'I'll be a mother to you,' she says. I says, 'no but when I find *my* mother I'm going to do something to her'. She says, 'we won't talk about it'. I says, 'okay'. So all the way from Cork to [location removed] Co Wexford.

SP *Hmm.*

NL We got there late at night and I was in this *small* little room – *it was mine!* – it was mine. Fair enough. Three of the elder boys were in college, up in Monaghan, and I was in reception, *and* I was chief cook and bottle washer *and* cleaner. But I never had to do the girls' clothes, the children's clothes, I never had to do their laundry or their ironing. She had a woman come in every Tuesday that did the mending, the sew...the ironing. She did the laundry herself but she wouldn't allow me wash *my* clothes in the washing machine because of my psoriasis. And she would not let me bathe in their bath because of my psoriasis...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...'til her husband called her and he says, 'listen, Molly [pseudonym],' he called her, 'it's not catching'. *(Pause)* So he says, 'I've got a bath in the surgery,' he says, 'you can use that one,' he says, 'and I'll give you some stuff to put in your bath because I'm a doctor and I know this is the right thing to do,' he says, 'and maybe Molly will get Mrs whatever her name is,' he says, 'to put some curtains on the window so that the lads are not watching you in the window'. Well he did fair enough.

SP *Hmm.*

NL And I was there, oh about...I was there in...about October, the end of October, I was there when Kennedy...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...when Kennedy was shot. I was in the...raking the ashes out of the little fire in the living room or what they call it, the parlour, and I says, 'seems the President of America has been shot'. 'Really?' she says, she says, 'where did you hear that?' I says, 'on the television'. 'Oh,' she says. So she went in and she called her husband – Dad she used to call him – 'Nora here has just told me that President...' 'Yes that's right,' he says, 'I've just heard it on the radio in surgery'. And of course with him being Irish descent...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and all the rest, the pair of them were crying their eyes out. I thought, 'what the bloody hell is going on here?' They did have a handicapped child, he was...now what would they call it, a mongrel [mongoloid³]...

SP *Oh yeah.*

NL ...he was lovely, *oh he was absolutely gorgeous*, Edward [pseudonym].

³ A term which was used for Down Syndrome at that time, which is no longer acceptable today.

SP *Were you paid for this job?*

NL *Oh I was!*

SP *Yeah. (Coughs)*

NL *I got two pounds a week.*

SP *Was this your first time being paid?*

NL *Oh yes.*

SP *Like you weren[^t]...you wor...were you paid in the laundry?*

NL *Now...*

SP *Hmm.*

NL *...no pay, you got pieces of paper at Christmas time but I never got any pieces of paper...*

SP *Yeah.*

NL *...as I told you.*

SP *Yeah.*

NL *I got two pound a week from Mrs Moriarty...*

SP *Hmm.*

NL *...and if she bought clothes for her girls, skirts or anything like that, she used to buy me a skirt and blouse as well.*

SP *Hmm.*

NL And she'd say, 'I'm going to let you go to the country dancing, Nora,' she says, 'and Dad'll pick you up after, and me and my husband will pick you up afterwards because he'll be out on calls'. So we'd go to the céilí [Irish dancing] or something like that. Wasn't my cup of tea, I was looking for jive! (*Laughs*) But nobody knew the céilí, you knew the jive.

SP *Yeah.*

NL So I just sat there with me handbag, I was out listening to the music, we were drinking lemonade...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...no it wasn't, it was *Orangeaid*.

SP *Yeah.*

NL Couple of the 'aul fellas would come up and say, 'do you want a drop of this?' and, 'no thanks, no thanks'.

SP *And actually how did you know, you know, like did you know how to deal with money then or...you know, the idea of shopping even?*

NL Yes I did, because when I was in school a couple of times I was sent down to pay the papers.

SP *Oh.*

NL This was before I refused to stay there.

SP *Hmm.*

NL I was sent down to pay the taxi and the butcher and the papers and the chemist, you see. She'd give me X amount of money and, 'bring back the change'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL But she always gave me a sixpence for an ice-cream so I used to hide that away. I never bought ice-cream I used to hide it away. *(Laughs)* Thinking, 'I could get lovely shoes out of this'. *(Laughs)* Shoes yeah, from a very early age.

SP *Hmm. I like shoes.*

NL 'Cause we n...we never had good shoes...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...in there, we'd wear shoes and we'd...they'd be flip-flopping, flip-flopping...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...off you, the way it was in school, you had to take all your clothes off at night. Like your outer clothes like your...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...say your jumper and skirt and your overall, 'cause we always wore bibs and you'd put them on the big table in the Sewing Room and it was first down best dressed. But I was always with the arthritis and all the rest...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...couldn't make it down in time and I'd be left with whatever was left to put on. The clothes would be sewn, or the shoes would be like boats.

SP *Did they ever tell you why you had arthritis at such a young age?*

NL Oh no. No, no, no.

SP 'Cause it's usually...you know...

NL I started the arthritis when I was fourteen.

SP *Right okay.*

NL Hmm.

SP *And can you...*

NL Couldn't understand it because they were making me do Irish dancing...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...as well and it aggravated the joints...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...and then they were sending me to the feises [feis, Irish music and dancing competition], they'd do a lot of feises around in the west of Ireland...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and I had to win, according to them I *had* to win...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...every feis, and I did as well...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...although it *killed* me I had to do it, it was just for the name of the school. You were forced to do these things...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and I thought, 'if they ever...I get away from here I will *never, never* be forced to do anything'.
And once I left Cork...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...I left Cork, because when I...I was in...about...I was eighteen months down in [location removed] Co Wexford. And even on my birthday Mrs Moriarty bought me a blouse and skirt for my birthday, and some little sandals. And I says, 'you didn't have to, I've been saving up my money,' I says. She says, 'well you spend that but this is a birthday present'. I says, 'but you're always buying for me when you buying for your girls,' like, you know. And she says, 'yes you deserve...you're very good,' she says, and, 'I don't know why you were in there'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL So, she says...and then I overheard her, she wanted me to do something one day – no it was him – wanted me to do something one day, and I refused. I said, 'no, I'm not doing it'. So anyway, I'm not telling you what it was, but I says, 'no I'm not doing it'. And then I overheard them having a conversation at the breakfast and I was out cleaning the...the hall.

SP *Hmm.*

NL And the kids and all were having their breakfast, and I overheard...it only took one word...

SP *(Coughs)*

NL ...I got up off my knees and I burst open that door in the kitchen and I says, '*nobody* is sending me back to that place. *Nobody*, do you get that straight?' And they looked at each other. They says, 'Nora?' I said, '*nobody* is going to send me back to that place, I did not *belong* there and I *won't* go back there. I am going to go off looking for my family,' I says, 'and that's it'. I've given you over twelve months now'...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...I said, 'and you've been pleased with my work, I've had no complaints from you'. And I just walked out of that kitchen and finished off what I was doing. And I was...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...shaking like that. (*Demonstrates shaking*)

SP *Yeah.*

NL And she came out and she says, 'Nora, we weren't talking about you'. I says, 'I'm no fool'. I says, 'if he keeps going on like this,' I says, 'I'm off'. And she said, 'where will you go?' I says, 'I'm going to look for my family'. She says, 'you promise me,' she says, 'you'll stay here'. So they must have got in touch with Cork...

SP *Okay.*

NL ...because I had a letter from one of the sisters there, the one that used to get me into the reading, and explain everything that was in there like, you know. And she sent me a big box, 'cause her...her family owned big chemists in Limerick and Cork and different parts of Ireland like, you know. This big parcel with *Haliborange* and tablets and this and soap and toothpaste and all this kind of things, stockings you name it, sanitary pads and all this like, you know. And I used to write to her 'cause she was the only one that ever gave me any encouragement. So anyway, the next thing I had a *letter* from Dublin. Mrs Moriarty says, 'got a letter here Nora, from Dublin, do you think it's your mother?' I says, 'I've no idea'. I says, 'I know I've got family and that's where I came from and I *will* be going one of these days to look for them.

SP *Hmm.*

NL But I don't get enough time off here,' I says, 'to go up on the train or anything like that, I wouldn't be able to go back...come back in one day'. 'Cause she did appreciate the help I was giving her with the children...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...like, you know. 'Cause she had Eddie there 24/7, he wasn't allowed to go to school or anything. Very intelligent boy, very intelligent, but they didn't work on it, although he was a doctor...

SP *Okay.*

NL ...but they didn't work on it. So anyway, I didn't...this letter anyway, 'oh I'm having a visit' I says, 'from three of my school friends'. She says, 'really?' I says, 'is it okay if I have this Sunday afternoon off?' And she says, '*of course*,' she says, 'you can bring them here'. I says, 'no,' I says, 'I think it's...better off 'cause I'll want to...we can chat privately'. She says, 'well, there's some extra money this week,' she says, 'and you can go into the hotel and have a nice cup of tea and some...some cake,' she says. I says, 'oh thank you very much'. 'Cause I *liked* her...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...she was good, very, very...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...very, very fair she was, and she did appreciate the home help because she was able to go off golfing and this that and the other and she was on the...you know...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...this committee that committee, and go to the dinner and dances while I was there. So anyway, I opened the letter and it was from Marcella. And in the letter she says, 'Martha and Suzanne are working with me in Crumlin Hospital [Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children] in Dublin,' – and they were all radiographers in Dublin – 'and we're going to pay you a visit on Sunday'. So anyway, when they came down we went off to...came in to meet Mr and Mrs Moriarty, and she was so pleased that I had somebody I knew around like, you know. So anyway – 'she might settle down here' – so I never said nothing. So anyway, when...I...when we did go out and...they said, 'do you like working here?' I says, 'it's too bloody quiet'. So she

says, 'everything alright?' I says, 'well the Mrs is okay,' I says, 'but I'm not keen on him,' I says, 'he drinks a lot, and you know, he's too touchy-touchy,' I says, 'I don't like that'. That's how I left it. So anyway she rang me about a week afterward and she says, 'we've got you a job in Dublin'. I said...and I wrote back and I says, 'is it by you?' She says, 'no,' she says, 'it's a retirement home for Sisters,' she says, 'French Sisters of Charity, but you've got your *own flat*, you can come and go as you please, and you won't be working all day and all night,' she says. So anyway I says to her, I says...I showed the letter to Mrs Moriarty and she says, 'oh I'm ever so sorry to lose you,' she says, 'can you give me a fortnight's notice?' And I did. And then I took the...after the fortnight was up I said goodbye to her and she says, 'I'll send you...' – because I bought myself a bicycle so I could get around Gorey, or go to the dances, you know the céilís...

SP *Yeah, yeah.*

NL ...and she says, 'I'll get Dad to put the bicycle on the train to send it up to you'. And she did.

SP *Hmm.*

NL So off I went, *beautiful flat*, I never had to clean, I never had to do any laundry or anything, everything was done, and you know who did the laundry from there?

SP *Who?*

[Unidentified background noise]

NL The Dublin Good Shepherd Sisters, in Dublin.⁴ One of the girls that came out, she was in the kitchen one day, and I was there and she says, 'I know you'. I says, 'do you?' I knew her straight away. And she says, 'you're Rose,' and I says, 'no I'm Nora'. She says, 'I know, you've always done that'. 'No, I'm not Rose, I'm Nora'. She says, 'but you are,' she says, 'you can't...you hide it,' she says, 'cause you've curly hair,' she says. 'So where are you?' She says, 'I'm working in a laundry but I'm allowed out to do the cleaning once a week'. I says, 'you're Brenda [pseudonym] aren't you?' And she says, 'yes'. But she wasn't all...she...you

⁴ Interviewee may be referring to the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity laundry in High Park, as there is no Good Shepherd laundry in Dublin. However, the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity and the Good Shepherd Sisters have strong historical and contemporary links.

know, she was a bit backward Brenda was. So I says to Sister Sadie [pseudonym] I says, 'that girl knows me'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL And she says, 'you didn't let on?' I says, 'well I couldn't...I couldn't. No,' I says, 'she's not all there, bless her'. She says, 'you're very sympathetic aren't you?' I says, 'yes'. I says, 'I know she was treated like an idiot...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...so therefore,' I says, 'she's not to blame for what she is, people took advantage of her'. So she says...I stayed there for six months anyway...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...but she gave me time off, she says, 'Nora you finish work,' and I got up at eight o'clock in the morning, I went out and I helped Sister Sadie do the breakfast for the retired nuns...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...and then we got the dinner going, we were finished at one o'clock, washing up...they used to do most of their own washing up in the...the factory [refectory] or something they called it.

SP *Yeah.*

NL And we used to just wash the pans and things like, you know. And, two o'clock I was off 'til six. So she says, 'don't worry if...if you're not back in time,' she says, 'I'll cover for you'. But after six months there...I wasn't used to being idle.

SP *Hmm.*

NL I used to meet up with Marcella and Martha and all the lot like, you know. [Unidentified background noise] And we'd go off for a couple of hours and they'd come out to me and we'd

have tea at our place or we'd go to the strand out in Dollymount. Jeez we used to have great fun. And reminiscing about school and the different places and about Cork and all the rest.

SP *Hmm.*

NL And about what they used to make us do, the operettas in Cork and I says, 'little did they know the fools,' I'd be telling them and they...they thought I was a character because we'd laugh. I used to make fun out of everyone, it was the way I was.

SP *Yeah.*

NL And they says, 'you like it here?' I says, 'I do, but it's too quiet'. So anyway I said to the Reverend Mother one day I says, 'it's too quiet for me here,' I says, 'everybody's ready for their graves'. And she says, 'but they all love you'. I says, 'but I...no, it's not me,' I says, 'I want to go off in Dublin and look for my family'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL She says, 'you can do this here'. I said, 'okay'. So within a week I had my birth certificate with me 'cause I...I wrote to the school when I was in [Wexford location removed] and I told them I was getting married, it was a lie – I told them I was getting married and I needed my birth certificate like, you know. So they sent the birth certificate and the baptismal lines and the Confirmation, they sent the whole lot to me. I never got married wasn't even going with anyone. And when I showed Sister Sadie she says...she says, 'you go off, you go off,' she says, and she says...she said, 'go to where you were born and if you don't hear anything there,' she says, 'there's a hotel on that street, there's a hotel on that street,' so she says, 'go in and ask them, I'm sure it's the same people'. So anyway I went to the place, [location removed] it was turned into...it was turned into a bicycle shop. So I went to the hotel, and when I went to the hotel it turns out the woman thought I was my mother. She says, 'ah Nuala [pseudonym] I knew you'd be back'. And I looked around, 'who's Nuala?' like, you know. She says, 'don't pretend you don't know me'. I says, 'I apologise but I do not know you...'

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...I've just been to [location removed] it's turned into a bicycle shop'. She says, 'and after all the men you used to have up there?' I says, 'I don't know what you're talking about'.

SP *Yeah.*

NL She says, 'you're Nuala Byrne' I says, 'no I'm *not*, I'm Nora'. So she says, 'ah, you're not far from the fallen tree then,' she says. I says, 'sorry do I know you?' I says, 'I only came here to enquire about something or other, did you know my mother or didn't you?'

SP *Hmm.*

NL 'Oh so you were the little girl she left? Any wonder she had cancer and this that and the other, she was *nothing but a slut*'. Well I was so upset. I turned on my heel and I went to go out and this girl came running out and she says, 'Nora,' she says, 'I've known you since you were...' she said, 'we used to play together, we were only babies,' she says. She says, 'your aunt works here doing the cleaning every Wednesday. I will get her address and I'll give it to you.'

SP *Hmm.*

NL So if you come back next week' she says, 'I'll give you the address'. And I could hear her mother, 'Roisín [pseudonym] come back here!' Roisín says, 'I'm busy at the minute Mam'. She says, 'there's customers to be served!' Roisín says, 'don't forget come at about half-past two,' she says. So the following week couldn't get round quick enough. When I went in Roisín had the address for me...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...so I said, 'Sister Sadie, I'm having Saturday off I'll do the dinners,' I says, 'if you cover me for the teas,' I says. 'I've got an address,' she says, 'you have the day off,' she says. So off I went out to my uncle's house in *Ballyfermot*.

SP *Hmm.*

NL And got the bus...I had to get two buses out, one in from Clontarf...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...'cause I was out in Clontarf, Prospect Road.

SP *Yeah.*

NL So I had to get away from there and then get another one, I think it was the 79 or something (*laughs*) out in...out [to] Ballyfermot and I went and I knocked at the door...and this girl came out and I says, 'does a Mr Byrne [pseudonym] live here?' And she says, 'yes that's my Daddy'. And I says, 'can you tell him I would like to see him please?' 'Okay'. And she says, 'who shall I say?' I says, 'well just tell him there's a young lady out here that would like to talk with him, and it's very important'. So she went in and while she was running out the back garden telling him 'Daddy there's somebody out there and it's very important, she's a young lady and...' her sister came out and she said, 'hello,' and I said, 'hello'. 'Who are you?' I says, 'I've come to see your Dad'. And Carol [pseudonym] comes back, 'Daddy's very busy he can't come out'. I says, 'well tell him I'm not going away...'

SP (*Coughs*)

NL ...until he does come out'. She said, 'but he's very busy'. I said, 'I'm sorry but I'm not leaving 'til I see Mr Byrne'. So I could hear him having a little swear to himself, 'feck this,' he was saying, 'feck this,' and wiping the...wiping his hands when he came out, he had...still wiping his hands, he said, 'I've been trying to fix my...' and he looked at me and he said, 'Oh Betty [pseudonym]!' I says, 'I'm not Betty,' he says, 'we always called you...that was a pet name, we always called you Betty'. And Carol says, 'Daddy who is she?' 'That girl there is one of the little children that your mother had been telling you about all over the years, about the two little children, that's one of them, the younger one, and she's your cousin'. And she says, 'my Mammy brought you into the world,' she says. I says, 'did she?' She says, 'yes'. And then he says, 'come on in,' he says 'come here kids,' he says, 'look who's here your cousin'. And of course the boys and girls all around. 'And what's your name?' I says, 'Nora'. 'But Daddy's just called you Betty,' and I says...and he says, 'that was a pet name'.

[Irrelevant conversation with third party removed]

NL So that's how it all became...

SP *That's how you found out?*

NL He says...yeah that's how...and he says, 'I'm ever so sorry it all happened,' he says, 'as you see I...I've got a load of kids here,' he had.

SP *Hmm.*

NL He says...but...he says, 'I've got to make a telephone call'. So he went off (*coughs*) and he made his telephone call and he came back and he says, 'I'm going to take you to meet somebody,' he says, 'you'll have to come on the back of me scooter'. So for the first time I side-saddled (*laughs*) sat side-saddle on a scooter. Didn't wear hats then. (*Laughs*) So he brought me out to see his elder sister out in [location removed] Road...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...by the...Croke Park?

SP *Yeah, yeah.*

NL And (*coughs*) when I went in she knew exactly who I was. And then she says, 'oh I knew where you were all the time'. I says, 'and you did nothing about it?' She says, 'I had five children of my own to bring up, and I was a teacher as well,' she says. And her husband came in, Maurice [pseudonym] and she says, 'this is your uncle Maurice,' and he whispered something to my aunt. And the next thing he says, 'I have to leave to go to the workshop,' he's a sign writer, he's got his own business, so he had to go down to the workshop. So the next thing Doris [pseudonym] comes in, his eldest child. And she says, 'who's this young lady we've got in...no need to ask she says, that's one of ours,' she said, 'look at the curly hair'. And, 'that's Nuala's daughter, the one and only'. 'Oh,' she said, 'Nora, I've heard so much about you and I've *always* wanted...you and I are going to be the *best* of pals,' she says. And we are. She's coming up to *eighty-five* in October and we are the best of pals. And that was in 1965 when I found them.

SP *Wow, that's amazing actually.*

NL And from then when uncle Maurice came back in he says, 'I've got in touch with your brother'. I says, 'which one?' He says, 'Donal,' I says, 'not Thomas [pseudonyms]?' He says, 'no we don't know where Thomas is, we've never known since he left the army'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL So I says, 'I shall have to look for him, won't I?' So Donal came over on the...what was it they used to go backwards and forwards...on the animal boat?

SP *Oh right.*

NL You know these...where the cows and all the animals...

SP *Yeah, yeah, yeah.*

NL ...used to be shipped back and...he came over on one of those, he arrived Sat...Sunday morning it was. Sunday morning he arrived, and the first thing he did, 'I'm going to bed uncle Paddy [pseudonym]' he says. Paddy says, 'there's someone here to meet you,' he says. 'I wouldn't be able to see her never mind talk to her'. So anyway he went and he had a kip and he says, 'I've been drinking on the boat, I didn't know where I was going to pick up the courage so...'. He [uncle Paddy] says to me, 'you're better off not seeing him when he's like that'. We didn't know anything about...you know.

SP *Yeah.*

NL So he had to explain to me how he was married and he'd got so many children and he was divorced and he was living with another one and it was all double-dutch to me...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...like you know, and he'd got a couple of more kids with...no, he had another one with this woman like, you know. And it didn't matter if I wanted to come over with him...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...I can come straight away. I said, 'I got to find my mother first'. He says, 'I know where your mother is,' he says, 'she lives in Coventry with...not far from where I live,' he says. So anyway in the meantime didn't uncle Maurice get in touch with the mother, and she came over two days later and we [were] all to meet up at aunty Caitriona's [pseudonym] house. She denied she was my mother and her sisters reared up on her.

SP *Hmm.*

NL Aileen [pseudonym] says, 'I've *always* let you go with everything Nuala, but this! No. I've covered for you all these years,' she says, 'I'm not doing it now'. So she says, '*well I'll see my son first*, what's he doing over here anyway?' And...she...to take [away] the notice that she was the bad one, she was saying, 'he did this and he did that and he was in prison and he was...this that and the other'. I said, 'I'm not interested in what Donal did,' I says, 'I want to know why *you* our mother left Thomas and I? And *where is* Thomas? Don't you know?' 'Oh no I don't'. I says, 'and you don't care? So you just hopped in with every Tom, Dick and Harry...'

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...I says, 'for a few drinks,' I says, 'and the result was us and you left us!' 'Oh I *loved every bit* of you and your brothers'. I says, 'you loved us so much that you left us when I was eighteen-months old,' I said, 'but I tell you what, I feel sorry for you. I was going to kill you but I don't think you're worth that. I don't think you're worth it'. And aunty Caitriona says to me, 'oh Nora, don't get bitter like her'. I says, 'how any mother can do that to her children...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...*not a letter*, and she was taking little letters out of her cigarette box and she says, 'well Donal sent me this when he was in school'. I says, 'yes Donal, Donal, Donal,' I says, 'if you're not

going on about what he's done and where he's been, and now it's Donal again,' I says, 'weren't we wanted?' I says, 'Thomas and I?'

SP *Hmm.*

NL I said, 'you know what I was going to kill you,' I says, 'but you're not worth it, I feel sorry for you'. And I was getting up to leave and my uncle Paddy came he says, 'Nora, don't get hard like her,' he says, 'your character's completely different, don't go there [inaudible]...

SP *(Coughs)*

NL ...and this is why she's denying it'. He says, 'mother let her off with everything...'

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...he says, 'and this'. So I cried a bit...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...and my cousin Carol was there with me and she says, 'Nora,' she says, 'don't upset yourself'. So Carol and I are very...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...very close.

SP *And how soon after that did you go then to England...*

NL A week.

SP *...did you come here? A week...*

NL *Hmm.*

SP ...okay so you went very soon after.

NL I did, I just...

SP *Why? Why did you decide to go?*

NL I decide[d], 'the only way now I'm going to find Thomas is wr...go over to England, get myself a job'. I wasn't a week in England when I got a job you know.

SP *Hmm.*

NL I couldn't believe it...

SP *Uh huh.*

NL ...a week there and it was completely [different] to what I was...ever done. Filing out...you know, forms it was all...what do you call it?

SP *Admin.*

NL Ad...yeah...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...doing all that kind of stuff, although I was finished school at fourteen, taken off of there at fourteen, like you know, I could never write but I used to read a lot.

SP *Hmm.*

NL And thanks to that nun...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...in the Good Shepherds...'cause she knew to occupy my mind the best thing to do was to read and learn.

SP *Yeah.*

NL So kind of self-taught.

SP *And did you ever kind of...tell people about what happened to you, you being in a Magdalene Laundry and...?*

NL *Oh there was a stigma, you wouldn't dare, I used to tell fibs even when I was in Dublin, the...and we met up with somebody and they'd say, 'how's it you haven't got a Dublin accent?' I'd say, 'I went to school down the west of Ireland'. And, 'more than likely that, but you've got another twang'. 'Oh yes I spent nearly six years in Cork,' I says, 'I was being trained,' and that's how I put it...*

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...and I...that was it, that was the end of the conversation.

SP *Hmm. And why...why did you have this stigma?*

NL Because people who went in there most of them were people who had children...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...out of wedlock. And some were picked up, could be shoplifting or something like that, and...or their families didn't want them...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...to go that way, get pregnant...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...if they saw they were...and some of them had children which were (*whispered*) *their fathers*, are you with me?

SP *Yep, I am. And actually I was also curious...is...about how did you deal with religion like...*

NL Now...

SP *...how do you feel about religion now?*

NL ...I do not go Catholic churches *at all*. Now for a long time, I didn't want to know God.

SP *Hmm.*

NL I'm being honest with you. I met Daniel [pseudonym] in the factory and it was Daniel actually brought me around, thinking different. It was, and...because Donal...Donal's an atheist...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...he's been in...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...Artane.

SP *Yeah.*

NL He's an atheist and he said to me, 'are you going to ch...' I says, 'no I'm not going to church, the only place I go to now,' I says, '*dancing up in La Bamba*,' I said. I says, 'anywhere there's a dance I'll go'. I was doing two or three jobs just to save the money. I was working. I was working in a factory doing the what do you call it, the admin work and then Saturday when I'd finish I'd go straight to the shop and I was working in a shoe shop and I was getting paid there as well like, you know.

SP *Hmm.*

NL A shoe shop of all places!

SP *(Laughs)*

NL *(Laughs)* So I could have lots of shoes! so anyway I had sh...a fetish shoe [shoe fetish].
(Laughs) But it was always nice clothes and fetish shoes so I had my own clothes I didn't have to wear somebody else's like, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

NL Fed up wearing somebody's...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...casts off [cast offs]. But I married Daniel, and me mother says, 'are you getting married in a Catholic church?' I says, 'no, what's the Catholic church ever done for me?' I says, 'no, they're a pack of *liars*,' I says, 'no I want nothing to do with them'. 'Where are you going to go to get married?' I said, 'I'll go to the Church of England'. So I went to see the vicar...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...in Stoke, [location removed] Road...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...and I...he says, 'are you not going to get married...' I says, '*no*, not in a Catholic church I want *nothing* to do with them,' I says, 'from the experience I had,' I says, 'I'm not going to go through with it 'cause I'll only have to tell you lies, and I'm not going to tell lies'. He says, 'were you baptised?' I says, 'yes'. 'Were you confirmed?' I says, 'yes'. So therefore I had both forms there and I showed him. He says, 'okay,' he says, 'I want you to come here every Sunday,' he says, 'for six weeks and the three...last three weeks,' he says, 'we'll read the vows'. Now, I've been here since '65 and I got married in '68...

SP *Uh huh.*

NL ...so...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...I have known Daniel since '65 as well...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...you see.

SP *Oh, okay.*

NL I met him in the factory. *(Laughs)* So yes, but even my own brother said to me when I introduced Daniel, he says, *(pause)* 'he's not...not up to your standards,' I says, 'no he's a lovely chap Donal,' I says. He says...'one thing,' I says, 'he's not always trying to get into me knickers'. He says, 'is he queer?' I says, 'no he's not queer,' I says, 'he's a gentleman'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL So, the mother says, 'you're not getting married in the Church of England, I'll stop it'. I says, 'you've got no say in it whatsoever, you've got no say in it whatsoever,' I says, 'because you know, I don't call you mother, I call you Nuala'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL 'I would have thought you'd forgive me'. I said, 'oh I've forgiven you, but I don't forget, I can't forget the years of torture I went through from four years old until I was twenty-three...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...because Nuala, you don't forget things like that'. 'I'll put a stop to it'. I says, 'you can try, you can try'.

SP *And actually did you suffer any other effects from your institutionalisation, like say, nightmares and things like that?*

NL *Oh, don't go there!* I still do...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...especially from the school...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...I'm always running in my sleep.

SP *Hmm.*

NL *(Makes running noise)* Going...not to be caught, to be beaten.

[Unidentified background noise]

SP *Yeah.*

NL In case somebody pulled the clothes off me...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...to have a look at me skin.

SP *Yeah.*

[Interviewee's husband is working in the background]

[Intermittent background noise for remainder of interview]

NL [We're n]early finished Daniel.

SP *Well we can be finished now, I have...unless you have anything else you'd like to say?*

NL Well let's hope they burn the whole lot...places down, that's my motto.

SP *Yeah.*

NL And the deceit of these nuns they don't realise how they've tortured innocent people, that's all I can say and may *God forgive the whole lot of them.*

SP *If...actually if you had a chance to meet a nun from that time...*

NL I actually did I took Daniel...

SP *You did?*

NL ...to the school with me one year when I went over to Dublin, do you remember that Daniel?

DL Yes, it's where you come from.

NL Clifden Co Galway.

SP *Hmm.*

NL I got the taxi from Galway, got the train from Dublin...

DL The train to...

NL ...to Galway...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...then went and ordered a taxi, booked into a bed and breakfast place and got the taxi into Clifden, 'cause there was no buses or trains...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...running there anymore...

SP *Hmm.*

DL [Inaudible]

NL ...and I hired the taxi for the day. And I went in, knocked on the door, and some...novice...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...God help her, she was...she was a silly little woman, God help her, she mustn't have been all there to go in to those places.

SP *Hmm.*

NL So I said, 'I've come to see Sr Gertrude,' and she says, 'Sr Gertrude's not here anymore'. So, 'Sr Benignus [pseudonym] is here,' and she took me to see Sr Benignus. And when she saw... 'oh Nora,' she says, 'I do remember you'. I says, 'this is my husband Daniel'. Now at the time I was very bad with my arth[r]itis...extremely bad...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...I was wearing...

DL *(Makes noise)* Oh sorry.

SP *Uh huh.*

NL ...things on my hands...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...trying...keeping them straight and I had the neck brace and all the rest, and the big corset for me spine...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...'cause I'm in bits.

SP *Yeah.*

NL So, went in and she says, 'hello Nora,' she says. I says, 'well I thought I'd bring my husband here with me today – Daniel,' I says, 'and let him see where I was brought up, and to tell you a few home truths'.

DL The sister...the nun says, 'was the guard on the gates?'

NL No we hadn't got no garden.

DL On those steel gates you should have...the gates was higher than the house.

NL And she...she says to me she says...I says, 'I thought I'd come and see the Reverend Mother Sr Gertrude'. 'Oh she's dead'. And I says, 'I hope she died screaming'.

SP *Yeah.*

DL *(Laughs)*

NL And she says, 'well,' and I says, 'don't you have any children, I never heard anyone'. She says, 'oh no it's been closed down for a long time'. I says, 'and what about Patricia Fitzpatrick?' I

said. And she says, 'oh she died'. I says, 'and I hope she died screaming,' and she says, 'she did scream, she was screaming and she was on her own'.

SP *Yeah.*

NL I says, 'well God couldn't have given better pleasure'.

SP *Yeah.*

NL And I says, 'and tell them I'm not leaving it at that, 'cause one day they're going to have their comeuppance,' I said. 'Oh,' she said – didn't she Daniel? – she said, 'I'm glad I never did anything to you'.

SP *(Laughs)*

NL She did she said that.

SP *Yeah.*

NL And she says, to me, 'would you like a cup of tea?' I said, 'of course I'll have a cup of tea'.

DL She offered me a pint of Guinness, didn't she?

NL 'Would you like a Guinness?' she said to Daniel.

DL I said, 'no thank you'.

NL 'No thank you,' Daniel says.

SP *Yeah.*

NL And the same auxiliary that opened the door came in with a cup of tea, they all were out for the day. All the nuns were out for the day. And I says, 'who is Reverend Mother now?' She says, Sr Paul [pseudonym]. I says, 'well Sr Paul, there was one question I wanted to ask her but she's

not here. But,' I says, 'that'll have to wait for another day. But,' I says, 'I'm not letting it rest of how I was treated...

SP *Hmm.*

NL ...in this place'.

SP *Yeah.*

NL She says, 'I'm glad I never did anything to you'. I says, 'because one day you're going to meet your Gods,' I said. I says...she says, 'have you fallen out of religion?' I says, 'I haven't fallen out with God,' I says, 'but,' I says, 'it's his servants'.

DL 'Did you marry one of the locals?'

NL 'Did you marry a Cath...' I says, 'no,' I says, 'he's a Presbyterian'.

SP *Hmm, yeah.*

DL [Inaudible] (*Laughs*)

NL And she says, 'oh! So you married a Protestant?' I says, 'and he's got much more sympathy than you lot have got around your little fingers'.

SP *Yeah.*

NL And I was *shaking*...

SP *I bet.*

NL ...in my boots, and I says, 'I'm going to have a smoke'.

DL She went in there and a big stereo and then...

NL Oh yes.

DL ...a television and I...*God, I thought...*

NL I says to Daniel, 'we used to have to come in and cl...' the place looked filthy.

SP *Yeah.*

NL I said, 'we used have to come in here on our knees, cleaning all their stuff'.

SP *Hmm.*

NL They had the *best food*, we were starving, I told Daniel everything, I didn't...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...go into marrying him without telling him...

SP *Yeah.*

NL ...everything. Because Daniel has been very, very good for me.

SP *Hmm.*

NL Now don't you get a big head!

J I only beat her...only beat her twice!

NL You wouldn't *dare!*

J I kept the Sundays...I used to beat her sometimes, only on the weekend!

NL You wouldn't even dare raise your hand 'cause I'll kill you!

DL There you are [inaudible].

NL You're holding it the wrong way! (*Laughs*)

DL (*Laughs*)

SP I think with that in mi...with...I think that's a wonderful way actually, to stop the recording!
(*Laughs*)

NL I think so.

SP Thank you so much, thank you...

NL Now Sinéad...

SP ...*Nora*. (*Laughs*)

NL ...you're welcome Sinéad!

[Interview ends]