



## Oral History of Martina Keogh

<b>Reference Code:</b>	MAGOHP/44a
<b>Pseudonym?</b>	No
<b>Status:</b>	Survivor
<b>Keywords:</b>	Sisters of Our Lady of Charity Magdalene Laundry, Seán MacDermott Street; love of animals; stigma of unmarried motherhood; sex work; St Joseph's Industrial School, Kilkenny; St Patrick's Mother and Baby Home, Navan Road; St Kevin's Hospital; tenement houses; sexual abuse; St Joseph's Industrial School, Clifden; Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB); impact of RIRB; St Mary's Industrial School, Lakelands; Cheeverstown Convalescence Home; St Anne's Reformatory, Kilmacud; Magdalene Laundry as alternative to prison or remand; institutionalisation in older Magdalene women; Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement in the Magdalen Laundries; forced adoption and family separation; lack of education; literacy issues; Magdalene <i>ex gratia</i> scheme; church involvement in education and social services; Ruhama; impact of family separation; stigma of illegitimacy; horizontal violence in laundries; deaths in Magdalene Laundries.
<b>Date of Interview:</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> March 2013
<b>Transcript:</b>	117 pages
<b>Number/Format of Audio Files:</b>	One .wma file
<b>Interviewer:</b>	Dr Katherine O'Donnell
<b>Records/Papers included:</b>	Interviewee deposited a number of items which are not yet available
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## Information Regarding Interviewee

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Interviewee is now deceased.

## Notes on Redaction and Transcription Process

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**Interviewee Initials:** MK

**Interviewer Initials:** KOD

### Key

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

(*pause*) = Long pause

*blabla* = spoken with great emphasis

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

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

### Notes on Redaction Process

- Named individuals have been assigned pseudonyms
- Certain locations have been removed to protect the privacy of the interviewee and third parties
- Dates have been accurately transcribed

### List of Pseudonyms

Pseudonym	Category
Stuart	Interviewee's brother
David	Interviewee's father
Liam	Interviewee's step-father
Frances	Interviewee's daughter
Vincent	Unclear
Ruth	Girl in Clifden
Caitríona Fogarty	Girl in Clifden
Sister Benignus	Third Party Religious
Ben	Interviewee's friend in Clifden
Sister Agnes	Third Party Religious
Sister Kieran	Third Party Religious
Sister Brigid	Third Party Religious
Judge Fitzgerald	Judge who sent interviewee to Kilmacud
Tony Ryan	Interviewee's former employer
Deirdre	Interviewee's friend
Rachel	Interviewee's friend
Erica Taylor	Woman in Mountjoy Prison
Sister Brendan	Third Party Religious
Dorothy Flanagan	Magdalene in Seán MacDermott Street
Eleanor	Magdalene in Seán MacDermott Street
Esther	Magdalene in Seán MacDermott Street
Helen	Magdalene in Seán MacDermott Street
Betty Kavanagh	Magdalene in Seán MacDermott Street
Jane	Interviewee's friend
Irene	Magdalene in Seán MacDermott Street
Sister Borgia	Third Party Religious
Sister Gertrude	Third Party Religious
Sister Joseph	Third Party Religious
Joanne McNulty	Unclear

McGrath	Surname of Magdalene in Seán MacDermott Street
Josephine	Magdalene in Seán MacDermott Street
Louise Finnerty	Woman who works in animal rescue organisation
Bishop Barnes	Third Party Cleric
Mr Jones	Manager at High Park
Marion	Interviewee's mother
June	Interviewee's sister
Gladys Fitzsimons	Unclear
Sister Eve	Nun in Ruhama
Daniel/Danny	Interviewee's grandson
Emma	Interviewee's granddaughter
Michael Dennehy	Industrial school survivor/group leader
Seamus	Man who interviewee helped
Doris	Woman who interviewee helped
Ronan	Interviewee's grandson
Geraldine Murphy	Magdalene survivor
Jenny	Interviewee's former neighbour
Glenda	Jenny's sister
Jackie	Bully in Jenny's flat complex
Amy	Interviewee's great-granddaughter
Alice	Unclear

#### Basic Data from Interview

<b>Name/Pseudonym</b>	Martina Keogh
<b>When Born</b>	1953
<b>Born outside marriage?</b>	Yes
<b>Raised by</b>	Family
<b>Education</b>	Industrial School/National School
<b>Order</b>	Sisters of Our Lady of Charity
<b>Laundry</b>	Seán MacDermott Street
<b>From</b>	1969
<b>To</b>	1971
<b>Duration of stay</b>	Two years
<b>Age on entry</b>	Sixteen
<b>Entered Via</b>	As an alternative to being sent to prison on remand
<b>House Name/No</b>	No
<b>Haircutting/punishment?</b>	Yes
<b>Circumstances of Departure</b>	Was let go
<b>Emigrated?</b>	No
<b>Physical ailments?</b>	Problems with her lungs and knees
<b>Of Note</b>	Some time after she left Seán MacDermott Street, the interviewee was subsequently employed as a paid worker in High Park.

[Conversation prior to interview]

MK Apologise.

KOD *Yeah I think we had him [Taoiseach Enda Kenny]...*

MK Hmm.

KOD *...he had to apologise.*

MK Yeah and that's why he was choked up, because he was mortified. He had to...he had to bow down to the women.

[Information and Consent Process]

KOD *Alright, so what I'm just going to just go through with you here is this form, just so that you know what...what the whole thing is about.*

MK Hmm.

KOD *So what we have here is we've got a whole explanation of what it's all about and I can leave you a copy of it.*

MK Yeah.

KOD *If you like.*

MK Yeah. Sure then I'll read it tonight?

KOD *Yeah, so it just introduces me Katherine O'Donnell and then it talks about...as you know the oral history and it's basically to just try to get all of you while you're are in the full of your health so that we'll know the history better...*

MK Hmm.

KOD *...and we are able to honour you better...*

MK Uh huh.

KOD *...and it's going to be held in two different places. It's going to be held in UCD...*

MK Lovely.

KOD *...so anybody can come in and have a look at it and it's also going to be up on a special site on the web.*

MK As history.

KOD *As history.*

MK Yeah. That's good.

KOD *Okay, so we've already talked about the fact that you don't want to use a false name.*

MK No.

KOD *You want to use your own name?*

MK Yeah.

KOD *Okay, I agree with that. And it will be made available to the public?*

MK Yeah.

KOD *What we'll do is we will ident...take out...if you name other people...*

MK Oh I won't yeah...

KOD *...which you will...*

MK *...will I?*

KOD *...oh no you probably will, you'll be mentioning people.*

MK *Will I...yeah.*

KOD *We...we'll take their names out.*

MK *Put a false one in, yeah.*

KOD *So that's what we'll do.*

MK *Yeah, I suppose...yeah.*

KOD *Yeah okay, so this is all just about...kind of the confidentiality and how we keep it very private until it goes live in October.*

MK *Yeah.*

KOD *So we don't have any kind of direct benefits, we've no money to pay you or anything like that.*

MK *No, I don't want anything like that, no.*

KOD *Okay, there is no compensation.*

MK *No, I wouldn't accept anything for the work that's being done like that.*

KOD *Great and what I have here as well is we've done out a whole support list but you know, you're very well connected Martina so you probably don't need any of this stuff.*

MK *What is it for?*

KOD *It's just...if...some people have never been to the national counselling service or they are not getting any kind of counselling or whatever, so we give them a whole list of...*

MK I never did that but as I said, I think it was the animals that helped me.

KOD *Yeah, you did your own therapy, yeah.*

MK I think it was the animals because I put so much love into them and they gave so much back that I think that was my therapy.

KOD *I know, I agree, I think animals can teach us an awful lot.*

MK Oh they're fab...oh my God the love...the love you can...it's unbelievable, the love animals can give and think I've been that all my life with animals, you know.

KOD *You've always...yeah.*

MK They've always been...yeah.

KOD *So, I'm just going to go through this, you're going to be identified immediately.*

MK Yeah.

KOD Okay, so you're Martina.

MK Yeah Martina Keogh.

KOD *Keogh. And the typed transcript, which we'll do...we'll type up the tape...that's going to be released immediately.*

MK Yeah.

KOD *And the audio, you're happy that that's going to be released...*

MK Yeah.

KOD *...available? Just...is there any other wishes that you might have about...?*

MK No.

KOD *No.*

MK No. You don't mind if I smoke?

KOD *Not at all.*

MK Are you sure now?

KOD *Positive, yeah.*

MK Do you smoke?

KOD *No, I don't. Never did.*

MK Did you not...that's the only...I don't drink you see, only sociable...very, very seldom.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK I do have too much work to do with the animals and all the pets, you know.

KOD *So, I'll just have your...I'll spell out your name here, it's Martina Keogh...*

MK Yeah.

[Dog barking in background]

KOD *...and then if I could have your signature.*

MK Yeah.

KOD ...so we know you've signed it...brilliant.

MK On the same or underneath?

KOD *Just underneath there brilliant.*

[Dog barking intermittently in background]

[Pause to sign consent form]

MK Did you ever get the book I wrote?

KOD *No, I never did.*

MK I wrote...it's in the library. Martina...memoirs of a—*Memoirs of Martina Keogh*—as a...as a prostitute when I worked in prostitution.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK I wrote a book on it.

KOD *Oh gosh I didn't know.*

MK *Everybody's asking me to write a second one, everyone.* [Third party identifying information removed.] Sure they're still sell...still selling it on the internet...brand new and I don't get any royalties for it but because I can't spell, I can't write to anybody...

KOD *Right...*

MK ...or do anything, you know. There's nothing I can do, sure, [third party identifying information removed.]

KOD *Yeah.*

MK I'm not pushed. [Third party identifying information removed.]

KOD *God, well we'll definitely talk about that because I must look that book up, brilliant.*

MK You can get it from the library or you can buy it off the internet.

KOD *Okay. I'll have a look.*

MK Yeah, it's...everybody...everybody that's bought it...people stopping me and they were saying to me, '*oh Martina, write another one*'.

KOD *Wow.*

MK Because it's a continuation of it.

KOD *Yeah, yeah.*

MK You know.

[Interview Begins]

KOD *Well, let's take you right back...*

MK Hmm.

KOD *...so you were...where were you born?*

MK My mother wasn't married.

KOD *Uh huh.*

[Interviewee moves to different part of the room]

MK She...my mother was pregnant on Stuart [pseudonym], my brother Stuart, and because of the stigma on the unmarried mothers she ran to England with her...with my...with my father, she ran over to England with him, and then she got pregnant on me and then David [pseudonym] died, my father died then, David was his name, he died. Then my m...my mother came back from Kerry and because of the stigma again here being born, she couldn't go anywhere. So she gave me to some woman to mind...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and she...Stuart was with some other woman and she worked...me mother worked in hotels and paid this woman but then my mother found out that I was being neglected by her so she took us off her and then we were put to Kilkenny, a home in Kilkenny [St Joseph's Industrial School, Religious Sisters of Charity] and then my mother just married this man...for the sake of...I think she was in fear of the church. Again, my mother God love her, she had this fear of the church that she was going to be put into a home and Stuart and myself taken off her, so she married this...she met—the auld fella, we call him—Liam [pseudonym], she met him, she married him and then she had four other children for him and...which wasn't an easy marriage, God love her. He abused her, roaring, scr...never hit her but *verbally*, *verbally* abused her, and done things with me as well, and then I was kind of running away to get away from him and then I was put into all different homes.

KOD *And when were you born?*

MK I was born when...I was born in the fifties. Where was I born? Oh in the...oh my mother came over when she was pregnant on me...it was called...years ago it was called the workhouse in...James...

KOD *Hmm.*

MK ...Kevin's Hospital, that's where I was born...because it was a poor...for the poor people to go in and give birth.

KOD *And in the 1950s sometime...*

MK Yeah.

KOD *...are you...are you...do you know exactly when or do you have an idea when?*

MK Ah yeah, I do yeah.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK But it's...I don't know why it wasn't a hospi...was that a hospital...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...was it a workhouse or...?<sup>1</sup>

KOD *I don't know what it was, I must look that up...*

MK It was...yeah, it was a poor...work...a poor house for...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...mainly unmarried mothers...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...for to have babies, like a hospital though, and then how she got us out I don't know...

KOD *Wow.*

MK ...how she got me out I really don't know, because I know the priests used to come after the unmarried mothers...like a witch hunt after unmarried mothers in them days and they'd take the

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.stjames.ie/AboutUs/History/>

mother off them and put them into the Navan Road [St Patrick's Mother and Baby Home] and they tried to put me there when I was pregnant on my Frances [pseudonym].

KOD *And this was some time in the fifties?*

MK Hmm, '53.

KOD '53.

MK Yeah.

KOD *And so you were growing up then in South George's Street, she was in?*

MK Then, my mother moved in then with the auld fella when she married...when she married him. We moved into...she got me back from Kilkenny home then and I still remember like coming...I still remember moving into this big, big...one room...it was like a big tenement house in York Street and then we were there and because I was lonely, even though she had three other children, I was lonely for the...from where I had come from and you started picking...going around taking baby mice, playing with the mice and playing with cats and that and that's where my animals came into...

KOD *Wow.*

MK ...and I was kind of shut away from everybody and I just focused on them. She moved from there then because anybody in them...them days that got Dublin city houses or got Dublin city flats all...were all tenement house...you know.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK And there was...ah there was a great...we had great fun in the tenement houses, great times.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK Although they were cold and everything...I mean, once a week you'd be sitting around the bed taking the hoppers out of the b...out of the blankets...

KOD *Ah!*

MK ...you know, from the turf!

KOD *Yeah.*

MK And my mother used to *dose* the bed with T...DDT. *Oh*, you'd be sleeping in it, going into your mouth, she was very clean.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK We never had hoppers but we were *very clean*...we had them but my mother would kill them.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK No choice, and then we got to Whitefriar Gardens and we didn't know ourselves with the...with the running water and the toilets, we used to go out the back...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...to go to the toilet or it was a bucket in the room, you know.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK Cold...cold, very cold that's the only thing I remember, very cold at night. You'd have blankets and *coats* all over us. You'd be all in the one bed.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK No choice because it was only one room we had...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and there would be my mother and my father and all the sisters and brothers all in the one room and...in the bed. But then things started to go wrong then, with the auld fella, started interfering with me, so I started trying to run away, to get away from him but you couldn't tell anyone then in them days that was happening. You'd be...I did once and I was ba...I was battered and the guards [Irish police] called me a liar. Told me I was dangerous because my mother had married my father, I should have been grateful. I should be on me knees thanking him for giving my mother a home.

KOD *And did you go to the guards?*

MK I did say it to one of the guards when they arrested me, when they asked why I was a runaway and I told them and such a *slap* in the face I got for to...stop telling lies and when they knew then I wasn't...me mother...my father didn't own me...I was told by a guard in Kevin Street Garda Station, I should have been grateful that my mother married...that he put a roof over my mother's head with me, and you want to hear the abuse I got off them, over that. So then when I was finished all the institutions, I decided...I was...then I went to Clifden [St Joseph's Industrial School] That was a horrible place was Clifden. *Oh my God*, that was...I've never, never, yet ever experienced a place so bad as Clifden.

KOD *And how old were you then when you went to Clifden?*

MK I...ten.

KOD *Ten.*

MK *Oh it was terrible.* They left me in a hospital and everything, they beat me to a pulp, and I wasn't believed at the Redress Board [Residential Institutions Redress Board]. I was told because I didn't tell a male doctor, because I was afraid he'd ask me about my chest. I didn't want to be showing it to him, you know, a man doctor.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK If it was a woman now, I wouldn't have minded...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...but because it was a man, I wouldn't. So I never mentioned it, I just told them they left me to the hospital and they beat me and I had a big operation. And the jud...the fella...the man...there were three men at the Redress Board...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...which I was not happy with and your man told me, Vincent [pseudonym] told me, why didn't I mention it to the psychiatrist, but I said to him there was loads I didn't mention to him. I just didn't feel comfortable, I didn't know him.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK You know and he wasn't really that nice. He was real official.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK So they called me a liar but I just stood up and said, 'well the nuns have won again,' and they lied and all to...they lied on me. They said that...I couldn't read or write...they said I wrote a let...I went home as true as God...God was on the cross, I don't know if he even ever was on it, but as true as Jesus, I never got home for a summer holiday. They said I was sent...that I went home for summer holiday and I wrote a letter thanking them for being so good to me. Never did in my life...that is *true as God*, may I drop dead and never see my kids again, that's not true.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK They wrote that letter and gave it to the Redress Board.

KOD *And tell me before you went to Clifden when you were ten did you ever get any schooling or were you...*

MK No, because I was in Lakelands [St Mary's Industrial School]. I was...I'll tell you...I was in...I was always put into it for being...I was always not eating a lot so I was put into Cheeverstown convalescence a lot. Then I would come back out and I would go to school and because I'd fall asleep in the back of the class I was...I was destructful, I was bold, they'd just throw me down the back so they wouldn't teach me...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...because I'd be behind all the other kids, then I would be put into...then I would be put into Sandymount you know Lakelands. Then was put into...oh where else...Kilmacud [St Anne's Reformatory] and I got a bit of schooling there but you only go a...you know, so I learned to read there and spell a bit, not much now. Then I was put from...then...from there, no...from Lakelands then to Clifden and then from Clifden when I came out I was put into Kilmacud. Not much really no...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...not much, because I was kind of getting shifted everywhere in my life. I think I was in five homes. So it was always a year in one a year...two...a year and a half...so I was always getting shifted around.

KOD *And Clifden you thought was the worst of them?*

MK *Oh my God that was a nightmare...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...nightmare. I was so far away from home and even like if you like...tried to run away you couldn't because you didn't know where you were. You were *way out, way out* in Clifden and all you could see when you walk out the...the farm...there was a big meadow so two fields in a row, you wouldn't be able...sure, you wouldn't know where you would be, you'd die if you did...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...I mean you wouldn't...you wouldn't have...nobody would find you.

KOD *And were there any girls from Dublin with you?*

MK There were five of us, six of us...five...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and I was the sixth but we were all put down...we weren't allowed into the classroom with the other nuns and the other pupils. The five of us...the six, five girl, Ruth, Caitriona Fogarty [pseudonyms] and the whole lot of us...because of myself we were there from the courts we were put down...it was like a room at the back of the farm...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and a blind nun Sister Benignus [pseudonym] taught us.

KOD *And you were put there from the courts for truancy for not being in school or for not...*

MK Not...for mitching school and robbing a pair of bathing togs, which I did rob the bathing togs...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...because I had no money and I wanted to go swimming. And I had no money or no nothing so I...how dopey I was, I didn't even have the...the sense to go down and rob the ones off the counter, I went down...I got on the window and took the ones off the doll!

KOD *Oh no! (Laughs)*

MK And I got caught (*laughs*) I got four years in Clifden.

KOD *Four years.*

MK Four years I got in Clifden.

KOD And Sister Benignus was your...

MK ...she was a...she was the tutor for us yeah. She was very ill...*oh* she'd *smack* that cane down. You spent mostly your hands under the desk trying to hide them because we were trying to write, she...you wouldn't know when she was going to give it to you at the back of the hands so you spent most of your time at the desk...and you wouldn't even be sitting on the chair...the...the thing...you'd be kind of down and sort of...when you'd see the cane coming up you'd get under this desk so she wouldn't hit you. It was really like...it was more...it was dreadful. And then the *food* was *oh!* I mean we used to go in the pig f...the pig farm, I used to go in the farm and rob the pigs' bucket, and we used to get potato peels out of it and bring it in to Caitriona that worked in the...the bakery and get her to put them in the...we'd put them under the tap and put them in the ba...and she'd roast them in the thing. But we'd rob the eggs and give them to her, for her to do that and then she'd give us an egg with it.

KOD *Wow.*

MK And then we'd go up and rob the cocoa out of the sheds. We'd slit the bags and eat all the cocoa out of the bags...

KOD *Hmm.*

MK ...because we were *literally starved* in it. *Literally starved.*

KOD *And at fourteen, what happened to you then?*

MK When I...

KOD *Did you come back [inaudible] or...?*

MK ...no, I got out when I was nearly eleven, after eleven...

KOD *Okay.*

MK ...I was eleven and a half I got out, my mother...when my mother found out about the operation and things like that, my mother was asking too many questions, so they sent me home.

KOD *So they beat you so badly you ended up in hospital?*

MK Yeah sure I've that scar there, see it? (*Shows scar*)

KOD *I see it yeah, on your arm.*

Mk And then I've two there as well and one there.

KOD *So underneath your breastbone...*

MK ...at the side and right there.

KOD *...and at the side.*

MK I remember the night it happened. I was...but I was so young I thought just one chest [breast] grew at a time, and the pain of it because when the nun beat me, myself and...*oh*...Ben [pseudonym], that's the name I'll always remember him by that song [third party identifying information removed]. That's...I never forgot that. I don't know the song just that bit and the big girls used to be singing it and Ben and I hung around together and we were *villains* for going down...I was mad again for animals and there was Neddy the donkey, she had a baby and someone said she had a little b...course I ran out the meadow to have a look at her and of course couldn't find her. So we went down looking for her. Weren't supposed to do it. Course, in the meantime we were picking blackberries and when we came back we didn't realise the time, who was at the back door only Sister Agnes [pseudonym] waiting for us with a big red tomato face on her. She brought us in the pantry and she put Ben...she made Ben take his trousers down. She *lashed* him out of it. So, it came to me and there was no way I was doing it, *no way*. I thought, I had enough of that at home being abused there was *no way*, so she started pulling me and I pulled...and her veil came off and with that she just shoved me. And if you r...know the doors in the...old doors in the kitchen...they're panelled in the middle and two

glass...and a brass knob and when she pushed me, me hand went straight through the glass but didn't the knob hit me here...

KOD *Ah.*

MK ...and it was full fo[rce] and the *pa[in]*, I couldn't breathe. But weeks after, about five...or I don't know how many, now it could've been...I noticed I was...that [one side of her chest] was getting bigger but it was...*pain* was unbearable and everyone was saying, 'let's see, let's see,' I was saying, 'no only one [breast] grows at a time'.

KOD *Hmm.*

MK Shows the innocence.

KOD *Hmm.*

MK But one night I was crying in the bedroom with the pain, I couldn't sleep. And Sister Agnes goes—in front of everyone, '*pull up* your dre...your nightdress and show me'. I said, 'no, I'm...it's gone, the pain is gone,' and she hit me with the stick, and I went to bed and I was crying and Sister Kieran [pseudonym], she was a lay...I didn't know she was only a lay nun at the time, she came in, she was a nurse, and I *always* remember bringing me into the bathroom and the *very words* I remember she said, '*Jesus,*' that was all I heard her saying, '*oh Jesus,*' and with that she just put me nightdress back down, put me into bed, and came back for me and I was brought over through the farm, out this...out...and a *big, big c...* lovely cottage, *massive* and everything was snow white in it, and I was put on a bed and I remember the doctor saying, 'she's in trouble,' that's all. And I was saying, '*oh* what did I do, what did I do?' I was *rattling*, '*oh* what's going to happen me I'm in trouble,' but it wasn't, he was saying...it was only afterwards I found out, he was saying that he was going to give me a needle to burst the abscess but if it didn't...if burst on the nipple I would've lost it, but it didn't, it burst right beside it. Then I was rushed to...Galway Regional Hospital in Galway and I was operated on. I was weeks in there on injections and getting the filling out every day you know...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...to dress the drain, and the nuns...the only time the nuns came up to threaten me, is [to] tell me I wasn't to open my mouth about *anything* in Clifden, what happened, if I did I would be beaten severely so I didn't, and even though the nurses and all kept saying, 'what happened?' I wouldn't tell them, you know. They never told my mother I was in hospital, you know.

KOD *And you were ten or eleven at this stage?*

MK Yeah ten I was. I never told them, but it was when my mother's friend came down to see me. She said, I remember her saying to me, 'Martina, you're very thin and pale' and I said, 'yeah I'm only out of hospital, I had a big operation,' but when my mother kept asking the nuns what the operation was for, they wouldn't tell her and they wouldn't give her...and then one morning at five o'clock...this is how I remember it, Sister Brigid [pseudonym], I was...*remember* as plain as anything, taking me out of bed, bringing me down in the darkness, and I remember this big brown clock where she brought me in, some part of the kitchen...never was in it before, but it was a big, big, big brown clock on the wall and I knew the time at that stage...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and it was five o'clock, and next of all I was handed over to two men in the back of a car. *I was shitting myself.*

KOD *Hmm.*

MK I didn't know who they were or where they were bringing me or anything. I was *so nervous*, it was black dark I couldn't see out, they never spoke to me and they just left me in the back and I was going, 'oh God, they're going to murder me, they're bringing me off, they're going to kill me'. That's all I kept saying and I was in bits and then I remember, then all I could see was the brightness and I could just see all fields and then...I remember then that I was just brought into the hospital, and I needn't tell you, I was over the moon. I didn't care where I went then once there was other people...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...because I didn't know these two men from Adam.

KOD *This is when you are going into the hospital?*

MK Into the hospital yeah. I didn't know them, they'd no ambulance to go to Clifden, you see.

KOD *Right.*

MK And then when I was brought into the hospital. I was great...oh God the relief...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...that these men handed me over to them. So that's when I was...I was a long time in there, a good few...eight or nine weeks in the hospital.

KOD *Wow.*

MK Yeah.

KOD *And your mother started asking questions?*

MK Yeah, and that's when the nuns...just because she constantly kept wanting to know why was I in the hospital...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...why was I so long there, what was the operation for, what happened. And they...they wouldn't answer her, they wouldn't answer her letters. They even had the *cheek* not to answer them.

KOD *Jeez.*

MK They dis...dismissed her...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, like again, being poor.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK And what could my...my mother went to the police, the police told my mother not to bother. She told me after, she said, 'Martina, I did go, they told me not to bother, I'd never beat the nuns and it would fall back on you'. So my mother never did.

KOD *And when...how did you leave Clifden?*

MK That's when they...one morning then, oh it was months after...at five o'clock, I remember because I seen the clock they took me up and that's when they...they brought me there. Again, I was handed to two men again...but I wasn't so frightened that time...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...the second time. I had a...I...I knew they weren't to going to kill me. [Dog barking in background] So they put me on a train...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...with a...with a little bag and a ticket in me hand and my mother met me then in Dublin.

KOD *And you were eleven at that stage?*

MK Yeah. And my mother...I was a year and a half...eleven and a half, my mother met me in Dublin then and I...with all me sisters and brothers.

KOD *And what was your life like from eleven on? What happened you then? What did you do or...?*

MK Me...I...I think I went to school...some school...I think I had to wait for a while, but I was running around and I knew like, obviously...I...I knew the tenement houses well and I knew everywhere, I knew where all the animals...animals would hide.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I knew where the kittens would be and I knew...I used to rob food out of me Ma's press and bring them over to the kittens. And I'd go round down the butchers in Camden Street and get all the scraps and bring them down to the animals and then I'd take...I'd take the mice in a shoebox...

KOD *Heh!*

MK ...and I put loads of newspapers and I would have them all there, but I had them hid...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...hid down in the basement under the...under the tenement houses, and I'd go down there and play with them and then...we got...then when we got Whitefriar Street, that was bad because then we had separate bedrooms, we'd different bedrooms then...so that was when the auld fella used to come in when they all would be asleep and abuse me then. So, then I started running away...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...because I didn't want to...I started sleeping on the streets or picking animals up. For some reason I had a...I don't know why but animals seemed to...when they knew...when they met me, they seemed to want to stay with me, even big German Shepherds and I would go into the...the...the...the plant shed and I would sleep with the animals in there so as no one would find me and the auld fella couldn't touch me.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK And then I kept going and going and then, the more I was trying to get away, I was getting picked up and I was the bad girl, and I was out of control, that's what the judge told me mother. Even now, if I didn't commit a crime I was still told I was out...even though I was sent to all them schools without committing crimes mostly...only Clifden, most of them was because I was running away, I was out of control. The judge...one stage said to me...Fitzgerald [pseudonym],

the auld bitch, she said, 'I'll c...I'll put...I'll put manners and...you'll be controlled,' and she put me into Kilmacud you know...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...where all the bigger girls was and I was only fourteen going in there, but I wasn't allowed go down, I had to stay up in the hostel part because I was too young for down there...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and then when I left...they threw me out, but then most of the times I'd be running away and I'd be around town and...you know, I mostly defended for myself...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know.

KOD *And were you able to get any kind of work or what did you do?*

M No, because I was never...me mother used to bring me to factories there when I was fourteen...fifteen but I could never work in them because it always reminded me of Clifden or the nuns' factories and the building always kind of...I felt it was closing in on me and I'd be...I'd run out of them straight away. Once it was a big building, I was gone.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Even with the education around there [near her home] because the nuns do it I can't go around...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...because there's nuns involved. I can't...it's just something...

KOD *Yeah, did you ever hear about the Magdalenes when you were growing up?*

MK No *never* even...no, sure I was from the south side.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Never...I was from Aungier Street. Never knew there was a Magdalenes...didn't even know what a Magdalene was...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...didn't even know what anything was. I was stupid, kind of an innocent you know. And then when I was in...I used to sell, as I said, papers for Tony Ryan [pseudonym], when that happened then with the...Deirdre and Rachel [pseudonyms] got into the fight with some girl and I remember standing there, and with that, the police came back with a watch in their hand...his hand. Seems while Rachel was fighting with the girl, her watch fell off...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and...but when they went back they found the watch and said, '*now yez are done,*' and I'm going, 'I didn't do anything'. I remember it. 'Get in you little fucking bastard you,' and got a hold of me by the scruff of the neck and threw me in the squad c...in the big, black maria, and I was saying, 'I didn't do it,' and then he hit me, he give me a clatter and I gave him one back and he said, 'you are definitely getting charged, you little bastard you'. And then that was...I was charged with them.

KOD *And how old were you then?*

MK Only what...I think...I can't really remember...was I sixteen? I know I was too young for the 'Joy [Mountjoy prison].

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Because I went to the 'Joy, [Mountjoy Prison] I told them I was older and when me mother found out then, me mother went to the courts and said, 'no she's not that,' so they put...they wouldn't put me back to the 'Joy...they wouldn't.

KOD *And why did you say you were older?*

MK Because I wanted to stay with the other two.

KOD *That was your two friends who were in the fight is it?*

MK Yeah, they were going to Mountjoy, yeah...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and they said to me, 'you don't tell them your age because they'll w...they'll put you somewhere else'. So I was telling them...I was telling them...I told them I was seventeen or eighteen. So they put me up to the 'Joy on remand, but they knew up there because they kept keeping me separate...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, in there because I *remember* that Erica Taylor [pseudonym]...I'll always remember that, that lived a long time with me though, everyone in the pub used laugh at me. She was calling me and she was giving it loads and I...I thought she was looking for a fight.

KOD *Who is this, the one...*

MK Erica...Erica Taylor. She was a lesbian girl...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and I thought she was looking for a fight off me so I said, 'well if you want one, you're getting it...if you want it you're getting it,' not realising what I was saying so I went in to fight her and the screw turned...came in and I was pushing her and she...and the screw was like, 'what are

you up to?' 'She was looking for a fight, I'm giving her one'. The screw said, '*get out,*' she says, '*get out, sweet Jesus get out*'. I remember she put me...she said, 'you really are innocent aren't you?' 'Well,' I said 'if she's throwing her shapes at me and calling me out for a fight what was I to do?' She just looked at me and gave me a cigarette. (*Laughs*) It was only after that I found out, *oh I felt so fucking stupid I did, you know.*

KOD *So Erica Taylor was famous.*

MK *Ah, she used to tell everybody in the pub then when I'd go and she'd say, 'look, remember her, thought I was looking for a fight off me and she was coming to give me a fight the little fucker!'*

KOD (*Laughs*)

MK You know, the size of me, and Erica was only was only a bit bigger than me. But Magdalene Laundries...the whole lot of them used be in knots of laughing thinking of it, so yeah, well, I know now...better now...I know what it's all about now...

KOD (*Laughs*)

MK ...you know. She used to have great fun then but then I was sent there from the courts then to the Magdalene Laundries. *Never heard of it.* Didn't know a thing about it, all I remember is the police bringing me there.

KOD *And you were about sixteen and they brought you in there?*

MK I could've been that yeah.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I could've been sixteen, and I went in there and all I saw, *oh Jesus!*

KOD *Can you remember the very first night...*

MK Ah...

KOD ...*the very first day?*

MK ...the nun...they took all my clothes off me, gave me an auld grey dress or something and because my hair was short they couldn't cut it anyhow so...and auld stockings...woolly auld stockings and black...back shoes, were horrible, and an apron. And I was looking around and all I could see was *poor old women there* and I was, 'oh good Jesus, where am I?' I started getting frightened then...I...I got a bi...big fright. I didn't know where I was, and I was shaking and I was going, 'oh my God, where am I?' *Never*, even in the schools I hadn't seen this, so this was new to me and I'm going, 'oh God'. Then I was made to go into the laundry—*straight away*—for about two hours and I was put into...on a...an ironing board with an iron and all tubes coming out of them and I was made iron. I hadn't a clue sure, even how to iron. The more I couldn't iron the nun was pushing me...*shoving me and digging me* into the back of the neck. At one stage I lost the head and told her to go and fuck off, and I got battered for it. You know, so you learned to keep your mouth shut, you know, if you weren't used to it being a Dubliner like me...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and outgoing and [to] be put in there, 'oh my God'. Then I was shown a bed at the top of the...we were given tea, slice of bread and a boiled egg...and then one cup, one mug...one cup of tea and that was it, and we were shut...brought upst[airs], then we were put into a room and then upstairs...I think about seven or half-seven we were put to bed. It was like prison really...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and the doors were locked behind us and we were put into this big huge dormitory done...divided with a partition, you know and you weren't allowed talk or nothing.

KOD *And how many were in the dormitory?*

MK Ah about fifty, I'd say...I'd say about twen...fift...no, more, I'd say around fifteen on each side, and then there was...if you go through that then there was bigger women had rooms out there.

They used to work and come back in the evening...in the convent I think...but they had their own rooms out there, but it could have been about twenty each side...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, and they were all older because there was very few young ones in there. I think there was only about ten of us, the rest was all very old, God love them...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and they were all kind of...you'd know by them...then, I really wouldn't understand that much but now I'd understand it, they were all like, institutionalised. Some of them were gone...that they would talk like babies you know, like with the nuns and, 'mother...*oh, yes mother*'. They would be all excited if the nun tapped them on the head and *I'd be looking up, 'oh Jesus, where am I?' we'd be saying.* And then I kind of got used to them then, and they would...if they caught you doing anything...the only thing...they'd tell on us, you know. We'd go mad at that then, but we couldn't do anything, they were too old, you know, but they *really, really,* were institutionalised. If you were sick you...you were made work. If...you had them [periods] it was dreadful, you were given a cloth, *it was horrible. Oh, I used to feel so dirty...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and then we were told we were...the devil was in us when we had them.

KOD *When you had your period?*

MK Yeah...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...the devil was in us. We...they'd give you two cloths and that done you for the...that done you for the whole lot, and they were...*oh God!*

KOD *And did you have to keep washing them out?*

MK Oh every d...three times a day I'd wash them and put them on me wet.

KOD *Ugh!*

MK That's...I had to because I came from a very clean home, anything like that I wasn't used to.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK And they wouldn't even give you pads or anything you know, and I said to the nun, could I buy them, because I had money there. 'No, no'. Because my mother used to send money up to me but she...I think she only came up to me about twice, and I don't think the nuns liked her coming in. They used to...she used to say they always had excuses, we were doing something you know, but that was so as we wouldn't tell her what the work we were doing I suppose. When you think about it now, they would have reason not to want to family there and they wouldn't let us have pads, sanitary pads or nothing. *Horrible* it was. I used to rob the toilet rolls and everything, you know.

KOD *And so your mother came up to you but only got in twice?*

MK Twice that's about...I think that's more...even if was twice...could only have been once because when you think about it now the nun would stand there but you would say to your Ma...the first time I said to her, 'I was in the laundry,' (*imitates nun coughing*) that's all I got from the nun (*imitates nun coughing*) you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK That was...when I looked up, the *face* on her, you know, so...

KOD *So you weren't supposed to say you were working in the laundry?*

MK No, no, no, because the first thing my mother would have said 'that's great you're getting paid,' like, the *first* thing she would've said.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK No, but she...kind of when I looked up then I changed the subject. It wasn't too long, I think I was only about 15 to 20 minutes with her and she left a few things in but I didn't get them anyhow. Like they were left on the table, but they weren't given back...they weren't given to us.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK We weren't allowed luxuries, and...

KOD *But she gave you some money?*

MK ...yeah she left money in for me, yeah. She always...yeah, if she couldn't come up she would leave it in, it would be taken at the door...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...they'd leave it and it would be in an envelope, you know.

KOD *And did you...*

MK But we never got paid in there so.

KOD *Uh huh. And did you get that money from her?*

MK No, the nuns keep it and you would be allowed to get stuff from the shop...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...like, you didn't get any shampoo, toothbrush, tooth...you had to buy them yourself, you know so.

KOD *So you bought your own shampoo?*

MK Yeah, soap...

KOD *Toothbrush.*

MK ...and toothbrush and toothpaste yeah, and face cloths, you bought them yourself, and cream. Because I used to do Celtic, Sister Brendan [pseudonym] used to do the Celtic. Which was an...also...and beads...but the Celtic was...definitely, definitely robbed us. We'd get one seventy-five, pound...one seventy...one pound seventy-five pen...pence for the Celtic but they'd get twenty Euro, twenty pound for it in the shops.

KOD *And what was the Celtic?*

MK It was an Irish tradition...it's done on Báinín.

KOD *Oh Báinín...so you...so you were knitting was it?*

MK No, it was done on wool, like we'd say a dragon.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Next time I meet you I must show you them. I have them somewhere, I'll get them out for you. I have some done here. I do still do them now and again, but they're like square...like cushion covers.

KOD *Okay.*

MK And you'd...you'd sew...

KOD *You'd embroider them up, yeah.*

MK Yeah...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...but it would be wool...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...it would be done in Báinín.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK And you'd do them in the evening and when it'd be bright in the bedroom you could do it, you know in the summer.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK You could do it because of the brightness so you could get...and we we'd do about two, two a week so we would get one-seventy and one seventy is what? Three...isn't it, three Euro, three pound, that time?

KOD *Two-forty.*

MK Two-forty and then five, two-fifty, you would get for two of them...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and we have that and that would help to buy our...buy what we needed in the shop.

KOD *Okay. So that's the way you got your...you were able to get your shampoo and that, yeah.*

MK Yeah and our soap, our bars of soap, I'll never forget it, we used have to buy it and I used to say to myself, 'Jesus you're in here doing work and you have to buy your own stuff,' but you never were allowed to buy food now.

KOD *And where would you...would you be allowed to go out to buy them?*

MK No, I *never* went outside the door, never, from the day that I was locked in there for the two years, I was in there 24/7 for two solid years.

KOD *So they would send somebody else out to buy it?*

MK No, they had a shop...

KOD *Oh, they had their own shop there?*

MK ...in the cloister...

KOD *Okay.*

MK ...yeah.

KOD *Right.*

MK Yeah, they had...because I...I...like I mean, the whole...I could tell you every top and bottom to the place...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...I could. Because when you walk into the convent you took a left, the door was there, then the door was into the women's...the wom...the Magdalene Laundry into the convent part...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and then you'd walk down...the kitchen was here...the pantry and...not the kitchen, the pantry and the dining room was there...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...then you walk...the chapel was there...no sorry, the little shop was there, then the chapel. Then you walk down...the door to the yard was to the left...the door *facing* you at the end was

the baths. There were three baths each side and that's where you bathed yourself. But it was...I think six got...got the one bath...out of the one bath, so everyone would be fighting to get on queue first.

KOD *Right.*

MK You know and...

KOD *So there would be six using the same bath?*

MK ...six of us using the same bath, water, yeah and you would be made to get in or you would be bathed with the nun, and then the auld ones would rat on you, God love them, the ones that would be in there, if you didn't get in...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...so I used to splash the water and pretend I got in...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...and then I'd wet the thing and put it on me...you had to bath yourself with a thing on you...a white...like a white gown.

KOD *You had to wear white gowns?*

MK *Oh yeah, you couldn't get in the bath without that because you couldn't look at your own body.*

KOD *Even though you...and you would be in the bathroom by yourself or...*

MK No. no it was like a cu...curtains in between...

KOD *Okay.*

MK ...and sometimes the auld one...and I'd say, 'you come in here again and you'll be sorry'. Because when the nuns wouldn't be there...we'd be able for some of the auld ones, you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK And then I would splash the thing up, I'd wring it and put it on me...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...you know, and I would kind of wet me hair, but I wouldn't get into the bath. Then at night time then I would wash myself with cold water from top to bottom, you know. That was the only thing that was left open at night time was the bath...was the toilets one side and all the hand basins on the...toilets to the left and the hand basins to the right.

KOD *Uh huh, and how often would you have the bath?*

MK Oh once a week only, every Saturday.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK That was the Saturday, that was...then Sunday then you do...Sunday you do your work, it was a rest day so I'd just do the Celtic...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, to try and make a few bob to buy me...me soap and things like that...always have it there for that...

KOD *Right.*

MK ...but I never got outside the door.

KOD *And what was the working day like?*

MK Well we'd get up in the morning, we'd get up around half-six or seven...a little bit before seven anyhow...you make your bed, you washed yourself, made your bed and then you went...you stood in a line. You went down the stairs, you went to Mass and you'd be starving and you'd be feeling weak, you know, from all night, then you...you'd go up for Mass then, in to have your breakfast which would be again a boiled egg and a slice of bread and a mug...cup of tea or mug...no a cup, they'd be white, and then you'd go out then and you'd do your chores. You could be made do...I could be on a big cloister, three of us, would be...it could be Dorothy Flanagan, Eleanor [pseudonyms] and meself on the cloister and we'd have to wash it and polish it, and then...you'd polish it on your knees you know...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...with the...with the hand and then from there then we'd go into the laundry at about half-nine and we would be there then until dinner hour. Then we'd go back...we'd get about a few minutes around...you'd have a little smoke or whatever and then...you'd...you'd go back into the laundry until five or half-five and then you'd go in and get your tea, and then you'd go into a room and then you would sit there and then you go back...but do you know who used to come and I never liked him, [name of singer removed].

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Never liked him. He'd come in with all his friends, but I know meself what went on. I'm not so stupid and I...you could knock the names out, Esther, Helen, Betty Kavanagh [pseudonyms]. Them three would be going...they'd go out to [name of singer removed] house and they'd say they cleaned it, but they never got money for it and I would say, why would you go around cleaning their home—[speaking to her friend who is leaving] Jane [pseudonym] I'll see you tomorrow! I'll see you tomorrow! That's me friend...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...she works in [inaudible]—I'd say, 'why do you go out there clean his house and not get paid?' (*Imitates the women*) 'Oh we love doing it,' you know, for the nuns. God love them, they were so institutionalised.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK They would've gone to hell and earth for them.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK And it was, '*mother this and mother that*'. And they had favourites and if the nun was talking to you the women would beat you.

KOD *Right.*

MK Because God love them, that's all they had and what c...you know.

KOD *So they'd get jealous of the attention?*

MK They'd get jealous yeah, and we could *never* understand that because when you're reared in a family with a gang you're in and out of the...the...you know, tough luck if you got something, if you didn't...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you didn't get it you just on with life and...so [name of singer removed] would come in...I think that's the way...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and he would come in with these...and they would be...*all the nuns would be all over them* and *oh God* the more they'd do that, the more I'd want to be sick, and the *more* they'd do it...I *hated* that ugly looking thing. I *hated* him and he'd be *singing* and the more he sung I would be...I'd...*oh the ugly bastard* and then he'd be always...you weren't allowed...he wasn't allowed to talk to us and he'd be kind of *laughing* and the *nuns* would be like children themselves. I think *they* were institutionalised as well.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK So I remember one Tuesday, and I always remember it was of a Tuesday, because it was...it was the day...it was...we were only two days back on the laundry. I woke up with an awful pain in my right side, but it was nagging me a few weeks, it was kind of...but it was coming and going. This Tuesday I woke up and the nun wouldn't listen to me, I kept saying to her, 'oh I have a *pain* in my side, it's killing me'. No, she wouldn't, 'ah the devil is in you, it's badness in you,' you know, 'go down and work it out...the devil...there's demons in you'. And I couldn't do the laundry that day and I *kept* getting into trouble and she kept hitting me and at one stage I...I don't know what stopped me, I think it was fear. I had an iron in me hand and I was going to give her a bang of it, because she kept *pushing* me and she...and the pain was unbearable and I just put the iron down and I just said to her, 'no I'm not doing it'. And she said, 'that's okay, you're getting punished...no tea...no supper, nothing, and no breakfast'. I didn't care, to be honest with you. And, 'you'll...you'll...no recreation, go straight to your dormitory after the laundry'. I didn't care...no supper...I didn't care. But that particular day because it was [name of singer removed] was coming in, she had to let us in to [name of singer removed]. So we went in and I was sitting there but the pain was so bad I got up to leave. I had to, and I only got outside the door and I got *very* sick, but this tall woman was coming in, 'oh you poor little...' I remember she said, 'oh you poor little thing,' she said to the nun...I was holding my side...she said, 'that little thing has appendicitis, appendix,' she said, 'get her...I'd get her to a hospital'. She must've been a nurse. So, they got...no they drove me in a car, and then I was brought...and I was brought up straight up for an operation, it was my appendix. And then when I was only three days there they shoved me out and put me into the infirmary, stitches and all, to the infirmary in the Magdalene Laundries. It's like as if the nuns there didn't want me there in the hospital. Normally in them days you'd spend ten days in the hospital...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...but they threw me out, the nun, 'get out, come on, out'. Oh, she was real rude, real not nice to me because I was in the Magdalenes, you see. So, I was put in the infirmary and then I was made get up then and work, with stitches in me, with stitches in me side, I was made to clean the...sweep the stairs and wash them. That's all I was made do...I wasn't made get down on the floor...just all the stairs and there was what...*Jesus* there was a lot of them and then I could go back to bed after dinner, back to the infirmary, you know. And then they brought me...got my stitches out and I was put back into my own dormitory and made work. No rest or nothing.

It was like they had no feelings for anybody. We weren't human or...we were like robots. It didn't matter, no matter...we didn't get pain, or we didn't feel pain. That's the way they treated us. And then when it was Christmas we got no presents we just got...what did we get, I think a bar of chocolate and apple or an orange or something like that. That's all we got. I know it was fruit. And I can't remember if it was an apple or an orange, I really can't. I know it was something that you eat...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know. And a few sweets and a bar, and a few sweets on your plate, in the refectory you know, that they called it.

KOD *And did you...did you know you were going to be let out after two years?*

MK No, no, I never knew because they used to say, because...because I wouldn't do...do the laundry...I wasn't quick enough because I was too small. I mean if you saw them big *wheels*.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I mean they left my lungs in an awful state. I used to be breathless trying to pull the sheets, now as you see what happened, I only moved today this is after happening. I used to be made pull the sheets out of the thing, feed them...and then the wheel was as big is this room. Sure I was t...I mean sure, I was tiny and then...I was always getting the corners wrong, I could never get them right. I was *always* getting into trouble. So then they shoved me on the compressor.

[Dog barking in background]

[Irrelevant conversation about dog barking removed]

MK Then they put me on the compressor with...and they asked Irene [pseudonym] to show me, I always remember now, as long as I live. She was showing me but because she was not quick enough *didn't the nun put the compressor down and caught her hand, oh Jesus!* You'd want see her...oh my whole insides turned. I nearly got weak. When they put...the *skin* was all...and she was *screaming* and the nun just sprayed stuff on it.

KOD *She just sprayed stuff on her burned hand?*

MK Sprayed stuff on it and, 'shut up,' she was roaring, and Irene was screaming. I was in shock.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I wouldn't touch the machine after that. I wouldn't touch it, I didn't care if they killed me but after I seeing her hand...*oh Jesus*, I'll never forget it to this day. I took nightmares for months after that.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK And oh, she was vicious, that Sister Borgia [pseudonym], one vicious. She just got, 'ah hurry up,' and...right on top of poor Irene's hand, and then they sent me over to the...you put a thing...shirts on it...and you'd press the thing and it t...thing came up and you put...and ironed or something...they weren't...they were special things. I didn't have a clue, I just kept pushing them in and out. And...I didn't have a clue what I was doing either, and then they'd put you back on the ironing. Ah they were...they put you everywhere, but you wouldn't have a clue like. I mean they expected you to walk in and do something to perfection when you wouldn't ever probably [have] ironed.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Or never was...I never knew what a laundry looked like until I went in there. And...you see, there was *loads* of women in it, *loads* and then you'd have a big basket...basket that size and they'd be *full* up with stuff and you'd say, 'that's great, I'm nearly finished' and next of all, they'd come over with *another big load*. *Oh Jaysus*, I used to...I used say, 'is there ever going to be an ending to this?' *Oh my God* I think...I said, 'if I was going to spend my life here, I'd kill meself'. I think I would have, but they would always tell you you'd never get out if you do anything wrong, and it wouldn't be...wouldn't be...stupid stuff like maybe you wouldn't ask her could you go to the toilet, you'd be bursting and you'd just run out, '*you'll never see the face of daylight again*,' and you'd say, 'what did I do?,' and you'd get a slap on the face, '*don't answer me back*,' you know. And...you'd be...you would be afraid to hit them or afraid to do anything

because you wouldn't know what...you wouldn't beat them, you wouldn't...there would be too many, they'd hold you down. I've seen them holding women down and beating them. So you wouldn't win with them, no matter what. So I learned to shut me mouth, and just to call them names under my breath behind their back. And then...you'd be carrying on, doing nothing...doing...thing...but you never saw anybody from the outside world, and people, they'd say to me, 'oh Jaysus Martina I never knew you were in it, and to *think* we all left our laundry...our laundry from Seán MacDermott Street,' all around the area...Ballybough, Sheriff Street, Railway Street, the F...off the Four Lamps, all there...around there. *Everyone* left their laundry in there and never knew that there was women being exploited and beaten and abused like us. They never knew that, and they only used to say it afterwards, 'Jesus if they ever kn...if we'd have known, we'd have never done it'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK But then again they weren't to know, and then I remember then when me time was up after all the...I think I was after getting *used* to what was after happening there, for the two year, I was g...kind of getting so used to the abuse that I begin to think that it was natural and normal, you know.

KOD *And what do you mean, you saw the nuns holding people down and beating them?*

MK Do you know if the nun went to hit somebody and the woman wouldn't let her, well the other nuns would come over and hold her for the nun to...or they would get the w...the older women. But with the younger ones, the older women used to be afraid to do it with us because we used to say, 'when the nuns are gone we'll kill you if you do it,' so they used be afraid, and then they'd get...they'd get battered then for not holding us. So Sister Brendan, Sister Gertrude [pseudonym], Sister Borgia. I'm sure there was a [Sister] Joseph, no, I think Joseph was in High Park (*coughs*) because I was there as a kid as well in High Park Con...not the laundry the convent [Industrial School]. What was the other nun's name, the was a big tall nun, can't think of her name. I used to just know their names because they were always...they were always with us. They were with you nearly 24 you know...once the dormitory was locked that's it you never saw nuns then, but all day they were always...I swear to God they were like a bloody...the air and the plague on top of you, you know what I mean.

KOD *And were they working with you?*

MK *No they wouldn't, they'd be on their rosary beads praying or they'd be...telling you what to do. They never worked...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK *...lazy sods...and...*

KOD *And would all of them be people who would beat you, was there any good nun?*

MK *Sister Brendan wasn't bad now, you know, she wasn't that bad, she...I couldn't...I couldn't say she was cruel to me...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK *...but the other ones was. But she'd sit in a big office kind of...it was like a thing up...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK *...you know...and you'd go up the three stairs and there was glass...*

KOD *Yeah.*

MK *...but it was all wood.*

KOD *Yeah.*

MK *She would sit in that. She was to watch us. She wasn't too bad when she'd sit in it, but if Borgia or the others was in it, well they...they were the danger. They were like...you know, snakes ready to attack you...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...if you...if you just rested your hands or say if you stopped for a minute just to give yourself...if you were sweating and you wiped your face, they would be over, (*makes harsh noise*) 'keep going'. You would just be made go work, work, work. It's like as if...

KOD *They...they would hit you is it?*

MK *Oh yeah they would!* And I don't understand...

KOD *With their hand or with...with something?*

MK ...they had a leather strap thing—I don't understand—or keys if they had they keys in their hand—how, I explained that to McAleese [Senator Martin McAleese] and how he said, 'they never..'. and I *said* that to him about the abuse...you know, and I said...

KOD Senator McAleese said there wasn't any physical punishment?<sup>2</sup>

MK ...*I told* him about the two girl...about the girl running away and I said, 'when she was brought back, the nuns *battered* her and cut her hair to...cut her hair'. Now the blood...there was no blood...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...but they cut her hair to the bald...to the...it was all bald patches and she was made go in the church and lie on the steps with her hands out. Lie straight down and...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...while...while the Mass went, and she...her hands stretched out.

KOD *Because she...she ran away?*

MK She tried to...she was caught down the end of the road.

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 19 of the Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalen Laundries: <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/MagdalenRpt2013>

KOD *And who caught her, who brought her back?*

MK I'd say the nuns maybe drove down maybe, caught her or the police caught her, or somebody caught her. See people when they'd be passing, if the nuns...they would help to...to...I know women that did run away...the public would hold the women until the nuns put them in the car...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know. So, I've seen the beating that w...that girl got, and I wouldn't run away again, I tell you, I wasn't running away...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...because I hadn't a clue where I was and that's...now if it was the southside I might have had an idea, but I wouldn't have had a clue on the northside and I would have been caught...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...because I wouldn't know where to have gone to.

[Phone rings in background]

KOD *And you said there was her and somebody else or something?*

MK There was her and the other girl. I don't know what happened the other girl.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I can't rem...all I remember is this girl. I think maybe when I seen her, everything just went blank...

KOD *Yeah, yeah.*

MK ...and I think I just blocked the whole thing out. When I seen the beating she got. Now what happened...whether I was there when the other girl was getting it, I really couldn't tell you. I think I was in such shock when I seen what was happening because I'd never seen that, and I just was blank and I think I just shut my mind off to everything.

KOD *And how did they beat her, how many people?*

MK With straps. Two of the nuns held her, the other nun bat...now they didn't have her on a chair, they battered her, they had her on her knees when they were cutting her hair and Sister Gertrude was pulling her hair and cutting it and the girl was just there and then she had to pray and she had to *thank* the nuns for that, and pray, and *thank* them for saving her soul. That's what she was made do, *thank* them for saving her soul, and then she was...I don't know what happened to her after that because we were all made go down...back down to the laundry because it happened out...just at the laundry door...we were made go back in, and then when there was the Mass she was made lie down, as I said, like in a crucifix, for her penance...

KOD *Right.*

MK ...and that priest said Mass and ignored her.

[Phone rings in background]

KOD *And did you know who she was...what her name was or?*

MK I'll turn this [phone] off. No, no, I...

KOD *Did you know the names of others who were with you, you mentioned ...*

MK I know Dorothy Flanagan...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...Betty Kavanagh. Betty was older than us though, but she was kind of a young old, you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK She was a gas char[acter], I know where she lives, but she's actually sim...gone simple from...if you want I could bring you down to her house but whether she'd see us or not...she's gone a bit simple...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...from the whole traumatising.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK There was Dorothy Flanagan, Dorothy Flanagan. There was two Scottish girls, one of them had a car crash. She ended up in the Gorman [Grangegorman psychiatric hospital]. She got brain damage. They were from Glasgow. I don't know what they were in there for. It wasn't very much in anyhow, I think it was from running away. There was...

KOD *And were they brought over from Scotland, do you think?*

MK No they were over in Dublin and I think they were caught, the police caught them and they got...they were put into the Magdalenes. Dorothy, Dorothy Flanagan, Rach...Rachel was one of them. The blondie girl don't ask me what her name was. I forget. Then there was a little blondie one I don't know her name. Then there was...she...I...she was actually at Gloucester Street with me, Joanne McNulty [pseudonym] knows her mother...knows her because she has a child for her...her son. She remembers me in Gloucester Street Convent.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK McGrath [pseudonym].

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Well that wouldn't be her single name, that would be her marriage name, but she said she knew me.

KOD *Right.*

MK Oh I know the women's names now. Helen, Josephine, Betty [pseudonym], but most of them would be all on holy names...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...that you wouldn't remember, like saints' names.

KOD *And did they give you...*

MK Ah, they tried that. I told them me mother would go mad if they changed me name. I said, 'my mother will go mad if you change my name,' I said to the nun. 'Don't you answer me back'. But I didn't know what I was...I was real brave going in.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I didn't know what I was in for 'cause...and she said, 'and we are going to give you...this...this name'. (*Coughs*) And I stood me firm. I said, 'well my mother will go mad if you change my name, my mother likes my name and I'm telling her'. And I got a slap into the face, 'you shut your...you don't...shut that mouth of yours, don't back answer,' and all this, 'don't back answer your betters'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK And so when I went into the laundry then, I realised what I was up against, and I knew there was nothing I could do because *all* the doors was locked, every door behind you was locked. You never went anywhere where there wasn't a door behind you locked.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK So how they say it wasn't a prison, I don't know, because I mean even the 'Joy was the same, for the eight weeks I spent in the 'Joy...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...everything was...there was nothing different.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK The only thing, you weren't abused like that in the 'Joy, you didn't work like that in the 'Joy but you did in the Magdalenes, I can tell you.

KOD *And what about in the Industrial Schools, was the beatings the same in the Industrial Schools?*

MK Well you see, when you're a kid, as I explained to McAleese, you differentiate the two of them, when you're a kid and you're beaten, you have other children to console you...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and you have other children there that you played with. And as a kid you'd hug one another as kids, and you'd go out the field and you'd be all together and a child...but when you're older it's humiliating.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK It's degrading...it's all...and you're...bec...and then there's things said to you about your body that...it's more degrading and there's nobody to talk to because you're older so you don't discuss things. So therefore, it eats you more inside.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I tried to explain that to him, but he wouldn't listen...he kind of didn't (*imitates Senator McAleese*) 'hmm,' you know, I didn't really...I didn't trust him from the minute I met him. I said that to your woman I says, 'I just don't trust him'. I said it to Louise Finnerty [pseudonym] of Cat Protection, I said to Louise, 'there's something about him, I don't know what it is'. I honestly...I just couldn't warm to him.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Now I'm not like that. I can warm to anyone.

KOD *Yeah.*

[Dog barking in background]

[Irrelevant conversation relating to dog barking removed]

MK I couldn't warm to him, and he brought...

[Dog barking in background]

[Irrelevant conversation relating to dog barking removed]

MK ...he brought in sandwiches. I...he took one and the others wouldn't...so he left them there, so I ate them...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...because I was actually hungry and I was nearly...he left me waiting, which was also degrading, three quarters of an hour, three quarters of an hour waiting for him which I felt was very degrading.

KOD *Oh he met you one by one was it?*

MK He met us one by one, yeah...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and...unless you were in a group. I don't know whether he did it that way as well, but I was on me own. Because I was...I'm not in a group so...he...I thought...he...he met...he left me waiting which I thought was very degrading to me...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and just said, 'sorry something came up'. I was cold because every time the door opened, the cold would come in, I was freezing. Or he could have been down having his dinner...he could have brought me down and I could have bought me own.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK No they didn't bring me down to the restaurant which I was...that's where I...someone says he was down having his dinner, he says he...something came up. Maybe that was it, he left me waiting. So eventually I seen him. *I couldn't take to him...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...from the minute I met him I didn't like him, and I knew...I wasn't surprised actually when he didn't do the proper report. I actually was not one bit surprised...you know. I [inaudible]...but I did ask for copy of that and they won't give it to me.

[Dog barking in the background]

KOD *No, it's only up on the net, you have to print it all out yourself.*

MK And I've no net [internet] you see...

KOD *I know.*

MK ...and that's why...why won't they give the copies of them?

KOD *Well I'll try and get you a copy and post it to you.*

MK Would you? Be great.

KOD *Because I've been making copies and handing them out to the women.*

MK Because I'm trying to get the...

KOD *...they're huge, yeah...*

MK ...to get the report yeah, I'm trying to get the report but he won't...

KOD *...I'll arrange to drop it round to you.*

MK Yeah sure come in, you know where I live and that, but then, when I did report it and I did say about...I said to him also, I said, 'also they put our lives in danger because,' I said, 'it did happen in a home in the country, it went on fire and so many women were burnt to death in the la...up in the dormitories'. The fire...the State also failed that, the fi...the health and safety of a fire, because there was gas...it was a joke. There was fire stairs out at the back but you couldn't get out because there was bars on the window.

KOD *Right.*

MK So that was a joke.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK And if the place went up on fire we were burned to death.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Now, the nuns would have got out because they had their own entrance and their doors weren't locked, but all the women that was...the Magdalene women, we would have been burned to death. We were all up at the very top of the building and *every door* locked...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...behind us. The door...you wouldn't have been...once you were put into that dormitory you could not leave 'til the next morning. The door down there and the door there was locked.

KOD *Were you able to talk when you...?*

MK *No, no, no, oh Jesus no.* You couldn't...once you went in there...you weren't...the older women that was in charge of the dormitory...you couldn't because they would tell on you. And you would be...you would get a beating so it wasn't worth it. The beatings...you just held your head down and just try to do your time and that was it.

KOD *And could you talk to any of the women you were working with or...?*

MK *No, no, no, no,* you had got a...if you were caught talking you'd be...the nun would run over and give you loads. And '*what are you...*' (*makes harsh noise*) and giving you loads, you know, and that...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and you'd say 'I'm only asking her a thing about this,' and she wouldn't believe you, '*ask me,*' but she wouldn't...you weren't allowed talk. You had to just keep working, focus on your work and that was it.

KOD *And so the names of the women that you know they are all just their holy names, you don't know anything else about them or...?*

MK I do know...now that...some of them I see, God love them, roaming the streets to this day, I see them as so *pitiful*. In Whitehall there's still...my friend actually...I have a good friend, her mother lives there and she goes down there at the post office and it was actually her said it to me. She said when she heard all about the Magdalenes, she didn't know at the time I was there because...I...I mean I'm not ashamed of it. I was for a long time and I hid it. It was a terrible stigma you hid and then I said, 'why should I be?' I didn't do anything wrong really to go in there. I didn't beat people. I didn't humiliate them. I didn't degrade them. [Dog barking in background] I didn't starve them. I didn't punish them. Why should I be degraded and feel...feel

bad and hide my life? So she was telling me, she said, '*oh, Martina,*' she said, 'have you seen the *poor women* from that convent, from the...' Because they built all apartments...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...in High Park [nursing home and sheltered accommodation at Beechlawn, High Park].

KOD *Yeah.*

MK And they have them in all the apartments there, she said, '*it's pitiful,*' she said, 'they're only like children'. I said, 'I know'. She said, 'did you see them?' Says I, 'no,' says I, 'I worked with them'. She says, 'what do you mean?' Says I, 'I was in a Magdalenes in Gloucester Street for two year. 'Oh my God,' she says, 'I didn't know that,' says she, '*Jesus love you*'. So, I was glad that she didn't kind of...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...because, now it had a terrible stigma to it and it still has.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK (*Lights a cigarette*) She was quite nice about it, and now, she's still a good friend. She didn't...it didn't take anything away from our friendship and...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...anyone knows...my friend...that girl now, Jane, my best friend for 30 years, she knows all about me...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...and she always says, 'the fucking bastards, see that,' and when she was a kid she used to leave her mother's laundry in there...

KOD *And...*

MK ...and she'd say, 'to think I was giving it to you to do my laundry!' (*Laughs*) Messing, having great fun, you know, God love her.

KOD *And what kind of laundry was done there?*

MK I'll tell you, there was...there was All Hallows, the hotels, guesthouse, B&Bs, convents, school...boarding schools, shops, restaurants, hotel...you know, all the hotels...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...restaurants, people...the public, as well, and all came up from the country as well...some of the...some of the stuff came up, and prison...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and *everything*...some of the time you'd get the sheets from the prison, there could be a breakdown you'd have to...there could be an extra load in, but you still had to fit that...all that in with your own.

KOD *So you wouldn't usually do the prison but sometimes you would?*

MK Hmm.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK If there was a breakdown...

KOD *In their machines, in their systems...*

MK ...in their machines, yeah...

KOD *Right.*

MK ...and...would you like another cup...cappuccino?

KOD *No, it's perfect I'm still drinking this.*

MK There was loads, *oh*, they'd come from *everywhere...everywhere...the...anywhere* where there was washing needed to be done, it came from there. It was all privates, private. They never...they'd...I know there are institutions, like...what do you call them, orphanages places?

KOD *Oh yeah, the other Industrial Schools and...*

MK Yeah, yeah...

KOD *...yeah.*

MK ...a lot of it came from there as well, yeah.

KOD *A lot of contracts?*

MK Although they had their laundries they would be very...wouldn't be equipped. I was working on the laundry in Clifden when I'd be there to wash a few little bits, but it wouldn't be anything major.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK All the big stuff went out, so that's where that would all would come from, but it would be all the colleges, every...All Hallows College, well every college, the blind school up in Drum...Grace Park Road.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK They'd be all...the priests'...the priests' stuff...all priests would bring their...I think every priest in Dublin brought their stuff to the Magdalene Laundries.

KOD *Hmm.*

MK It wouldn't be just this one, it would be other laundries...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...but it would be all priests' bags with the priest's name in a book and there would be a poly marker and then you'd just take that out, and I mean even hankies, we had to handle, it was dreadful, and dirty underwear, it was *really degrading*. I mean that was...I've a terrible weak stomach as well, I'm not ev...I can't bear anything like that. We'd have to poly mark that and then put all that back into his with the book and...and the new poly mark on...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and that then...all his...th...all them numbers came up...the poly mark numbers...if...say if was socks then it was 122 well then you'd know 122 was belonging to that bag, you know...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...in the book. So that's how it was all done but every...and nuns put their laundry in there as well...and everything. You'd have all them big feckin' habits, and the priests, you'd have their...for the churches, they sent them vest...what do you call them?

KOD *The vestments?*

MK All them in...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...*oh*, and the things they put over them...the altar boys. *Jesus they were dreadful, dreadful to iron*, and they were starched so we'd have to iron them...dreadful.

KOD *And did it...were you religious before you went in, did it change your...*

MK *Never...*

KOD *...attitude to religion?*

MK ...no, my mother never liked the religious because my mother saw what happened in Kerry and my mother knew a lovely girl that she was...and she fought the Barnes [pseudonym] fella, dirty bastard...and having babies himself...he put this lovely...my mother always said it, 'Martina, she was lovely'. She went to school with my mother and she got pregnant from a farmer and Father Barnes, Bishop...or whatever he is now Father Barnes, put her in to...she wouldn't give the baby, she fought him and they put her into a mental home and they took the baby off her and gave it to a farmer, to...gave her to a farmer and my mother was *literally terrified*, and that's when she ran out of Kerry. When she discovered she was pregnant on Stuart, she ran out of Kerry and over to England...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...with David. She met...I don't know where she met David. My mother was a great w...hard...great grafter, a hard...a very hard worker and spotless but she had *vengeance* for the church, she *hated* them, *hated* the church, and even with us she'd never...my mother never went to Mass. We'd...*never, never* would I see my mother of a Sunday...so we kind of went along with my mother but the auld fella was terrible religious...but then I mean when you put it...the perverts...why wasn't he...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...going to where he was welcome, to perverts...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know.

KOD *And do you remember any women dying in there?*

MK Oh yeah. Ah, this women died and we went to her funeral. It was *horrible*, it was around the back of the convent she was buried. Now, in Gloucester Street we never were, we never did, I think they were buried in High Park, but I was in High Park I remember the funeral there.

KOD *You remember when you were in...younger in the Industrial School?*

MK No...I...I worked actually, no I was [inaudible]...

KOD *(Coughs)*

MK ...sorry, this...

KOD *It's grand.*

MK ...I got a job, it was on the paper for poly marking in High Park.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Now I didn't know High Park was a Magdalene Laundry either. It was only when I got there and I got the job and I was working in the poly marking, it was a big room but there was four outdoor [external] staff only...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...but the women were in the laundry and I got to know the women and...because I'd talk to any of them. I knew...I said, 'this is the same place as Seán MacDermott Street'.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK I said, 'what the *feck* is going on,' to myself. I knew by the carry on and I said it to...Mr Jones [pseudonym] was the manager, I said, 'is this a *Magdalene* Laundry?,' and he said, 'you're here to work not ask questions'. So I got paid...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...but then when a woman died we were there then one day when there was a funeral, but even though we were staff we had to go to it. We had to, we w...we were asked to go to it...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...but I didn't mind, but it was a horrible...it wasn't like a funeral, it was...the old people were there, God love them, and they didn't cry. I don't think they were allowed cry, but they were all there with the funeral and it was very cold, and she was just put in the grave and that was it...nothing...just...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and that was it. It was like in the back of the...the back of everywhere...it was out of...out of reach anyhow, but the nuns all had a little cross on their graves, because when I was coming down, you looked into through this place and you see graves with all white crosses like, that...about that size on all the graves, but that wasn't like that for the...where the woman went now.

KOD *Was there any gravestone on her grave?*

MK *No, no, no, God no, it was only like a piece of field you put a body into...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, so the coffin went...the coffin went into and that was it.

KOD *And when was this in High Park when you were working there, can you remember how old you were or...?*

MK I...oh God, I was about twenty or twenty-one when I went to work there.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Then I saved up enough money then to...because I had a flat then, because as I said, I said...after I kind of...me Ma said, 'Martina, why are you running?' Because what happened was, I got a flat off the Corporation [social housing] and because my mother couldn't find me, my sister signed for it and I almost lost it. When I went in your, man said, 'you're not the one that was in yesterday,' but then me mother told him the truth. She said, 'look,' she said, 'she's afraid of the nuns bringing her back to High Park...the Magdalenes in Seán MacDermott Street, and lucky, he was symp...sympathetic man.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK He said, 'okay, I can understand'.

KOD *So yeah, let's go back. You...you eventually got out after two years?*

MK Yeah.

KOD *Can you remember the day that you got out?*

MK Not...I can't remember the date, I can't remember the month. I can't remember the time, all I know is it was a day...it was in the day I was thrown out.

KOD *Did...were...did you know the day before that you were going to be leaving?*

MK No, no, only that day I was told I was going. My mon...there was money given to me for me bus fare and that was it.

KOD *And did they give you clothes?*

MK *No, nothing!*

KOD *The same grey...*

MK No, no, they gave me my own stuff back.

KOD *Okay.*

MK Which I think I had grown out of at that stage. I think the sleeves were too short on me, you know, I got that bit bigger.

KOD *And did you know why you were leaving or what was happening?*

MK Nothing, no.

KOD *Do you know why they...they threw you out?*

MK No, haven't a clue, me time was up.

KOD *Okay.*

MK Me two year was up.

KOD *So it was the two years from the courts, and you think that's why you think they...*

MK Yeah. I knew yeah, my mother then would be asking questions, you see.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Because I think if you had a mother...if the...the mother didn't...if the mother wanted you kept there, but you see my mother had a hate for religious orders of what she seen and because she went...she had to run away from them herself, so that's why my mother understood me...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...running away because when I said, 'Ma,' says I, 'they said they're going to get me again,' and me Ma said, 'they won't touch you'. I said, 'Ma, they *will* touch me,' and I used to...said...I was gone.

KOD *And did they tell you...*

MK *Oh they told me, 'you put your foot out of place and you'll be back in here for life and you'll never see the face of God again...face of daylight again'. And I was just literally stunned and I was...I was afraid for anyone to know who I was. I went around with different names.*

KOD *So...so, they let you out, can you remember what time of the day it was or...?*

MK *It would have been late that day, it would have been after dinner, because I got me dinner.*

KOD *You got the dinner, and did you know when you were having your dinner that you are going to be...*

MK *No, until I was told, no. The nun, Sister Gertrude brought me up...sent for...called me, put me into a room, gave me me clothes and said, 'you're going home,' that was it.*

KOD *And they gave you bus fare?*

MK *Gave me bus fare and threw me outside the door.*

KOD *And did you know where you were?*

MK *Not a clue where I was! I was asking people wherever...where George's Street was, and they were all bringing me up to North...North Great George's Street, showing me there.<sup>3</sup> Sure I must have went up there about 20 times that day, and the...yeah, I kept saying, 'this is fucking not George's Street, where I live!' And then I was getting worried because I thought everywhere...I thought the whole world was after changing when I got outside. I was getting...panicking then because I didn't know where I was and then there was a little woman I met and I said, 'look love could you show me, it's not that George's Street'. 'I'm after being up there,' I said, 'I want to know...I want to go home to George's Street. I live over there'. She said, 'where...where...what...what are you doing over here then?' Says I, 'I'm after being in that convent for two year'. And she looked at me, (*imitating the woman*) 'the Magdalenes?' And I*

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<sup>3</sup> Interviewee lived on South Great George's Street.

said, 'the Magdalenes?' That was...I never heard of the word 'til she said, 'the Magdalenes?' I said, 'yeah'. I said, 'I thought it was a convent'. 'No love, that's the Magdalenes you were in. *(Imitating the woman)* Are you sure you're not running away?' Says I, 'no,' says I, 'they let me out the door,' and says she, 'when I'm going down I'll show you where you get the bus'. And she said, no...a 16 that's all I remember. She said, 'you get the 16 over to George's Street,' and then when I got on the bus I gave him me bus...and then I got to Geor...as soon as I got to George's Street I knew where I was.

KOD *Even though it's only like a mile from...*

MK That's it, it was over the Liffey so it was like a...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...being on another planet.

KOD *Heh.*

MK And as soon as I went over to...over the bridge into George's Street, I knew by Dunnes Stores and I got off at Dunnes Stores, because I knew then where I was, and I went straight into Dunnes Stores and I robbed a bottle of orange and a biscuits and I...I went down...went down the lane, ate them, I was starving, ate the biscuits, drank the orange and then I walked home. I went home and then me Ma said, 'where are you going?' I says, 'I'm running aw...', I says, 'I'm not staying here, they'll find me'. She says, 'they won't find you'. I said, 'they will find me,' I said. So I started sleeping on buses, started sleeping in everyone's pla[ce]...everywhere I could get a bed, and that's how I got pregnant.

KOD *And how did you get pregnant?*

MK I sl...a fella told me he would let me stay in his flat on the condition that I would sleep with him and at that stage I think I would've done anything rather than go back to the Magdalene Laundries, but I didn't realise I got pregnant so you know, so that didn't enter me head. Then when I got pregnant then, I hid, and I hid the pregnancy until I was eight and a half months. Now I went home because I was sick and tired and me Ma says to me, 'you're very pale'. I

says, 'yeah I'm tired'. So, I never told...I got a job in Jacobs [biscuit factory] and I was eight and a half months when they...when I was found out, I was pregnant. And the priest sent me mother...meself up to...I thought I was going to get a check-up for me pregnancy...I'm a...it was the convent up in the Navan Road.

KOD *The Mother and Baby Home?*

MK Yeah and there was a big tall nun there and she said 'Marion [pseudonym],' she...she asked my mother her name, she said, 'Marion Keogh'. She said, 'Marion Keogh, this...your daughter is due her baby any day'. Me mother said, 'no, she's not due any day, only found out the other day'. She said, 'well I'm telling you,' she said, 'she's due her baby any day,' and me Ma started crying, and she said, on the way home, she said, 'Martina, why didn't you tell me?' Says I, 'Ma, I was afraid'. She said, 'you shouldn't be afraid of me,' she said, 'you know I wouldn't let anything like that happen to you,' she said, 'I didn't let it happen to meself, I wouldn't let them take your baby'. But they tried to get me mother to put me in there and my mother told the nun, 'no way'. So me mother let me have the baby there, and then when the baby was born, the parish priest kept coming to the door so I left the baby with me mother and I done a legger [ran away].

KOD *And the parish priest ke...kept coming to...*

MK Kept coming to me door, yeah...

KOD *...to try and...*

MK ...to try and take the baby off me, and me M...and put me away, and me Ma...me Ma...I was gone then, I said, 'Ma I'm going, they'll get me they'll put me back there, and I know I will'. I couldn't even bond...

KOD *And how old were you then Martina?*

MK ...I was under twenty.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I *couldn't* bond with the baby or nothing...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...because I was afraid to bond with her because I was afraid to stay there in case they'd come see me with the baby then and take the two of us away. I wouldn't...I left the baby with me mother and then I was gone missing again, and then I was everywhere and anywhere. And then I was doing...sleeping with men for money for food...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and different things like that. You know, so really they destroyed me life.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK They...I was just too afraid, you know, because I had to get money for bed and breakfasts, I had to get money for food and...

KOD *So you kept moving around?*

MK ...I was moving everywhere and...and false names I was giving. I was just *literally afraid* that them nuns would find me and I said, 'may God forgive them, they robbed me of two year, they robbed me of the child...bonding with me baby'. 'Cause I was...I was...if you seen the...if you...you didn't want to really...I can only describe it, when I read p...read the papers of peop...now I've never had it with men but I put the same fear, people do say to me, 'but how does she stay?' I do say, 'hold on, if she said she was fear, the fear of God I can tell you, is dreadful'. And then they say to me, 'did a man do that?' I do say, 'no, but somebody else did'. And that fear is dreadful, it's...*honestly*, it's like a pain in your stomach that won't go away and nobody can...you can't talk to anyone about it, and you can't tell anyone because you're afraid and it *eats* you away that pain, it's unbear...and every time I'd see a nun I would duck into a shop and run into a shop. I was just...it was just dreadful, it was dreadful, but then one day...

KOD *And you'd use false names?*

MK Everywhere I'd go I'd use false names, yeah.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Then one day when my mother...I went home, she said, 'Martina, we couldn't find you'. Says I 'why?' She said, 'a place came for you, for a Corporation place,' she said, 'but June [pseudonym] signed for it, but will you come in...will you come back tomorrow, and we'll go over together?'

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK And we went back and the man said to me mother, 'that's not the same daughter that came here'. She said, 'no'. So, up, and we explained everything and I think the man was really sympathetic and he was *lovely*, and he said, 'look don't worry about it,' he said, 'just sign there yourself,' and I got Dominick Street and only then did I feel secure, but for two years I wouldn't live there.

KOD *Even when you had the...*

MK *No, no* I wouldn't live there for two year. It was like as if I was after getting so used to being nobody and nobody knew me. No one...nobody knew where I was and to live there, I wouldn't have been...I wasn't able for it, and I remember giving it to Gladys Fitzsimons' [pseudonym] daughter. She was pregnant, she was living in Summerhill and Gladys was saying her daughter takes fits from the pregnancy. She said, 'I don't know what I'm going to do, I've no room here'. Says I, 'Gladys, you can give her my flat I don't want it, not yet'. I was even afraid to live there for two year, I wouldn't live in that flat until I was twenty-one. Eventually I...me mother said, 'look Martina sit down, no one is going to touch her, they can't take you now, take the baby, do what...' you know. I...then I put her into boarding school to wait, so they wouldn't take her, and I was paying for her and when I got there then my mother said, 'look Martina,' she says, 'I'm not well'. She said, 'I'm honestly not well,' she said. 'I can't mind Frances any longer for you,' and she says maybe the time now comes, you might have to calm down...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and rear her. 'No...believe you me,' she said, 'as sick as I am at the moment,' she said, 'no one will t...no one will do anything on you'. So I started to get that confidence in me then because I had to stay at home then for a while and I had to be more in Frances's life and things like that, but I'd lost the best years with her because I was too afraid. I was literally terrified to bond with her because I was af...I couldn't leave her if I knew I was...if I got too fond of her I wouldn't be able to leave her.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK So I had to cut me feelings off and just go off missing. Stay in bed and breakfasts everywhere I could, and staying in flats everywhere and anywhere, you know, so that's the way, that's the life.

KOD *And...and around the age of twenty you got a job working as a paid hand up in High Park in the Magdalenes?*

MK Yeah, I was twenty...no I was twenty-two I think, when I got that job then. Frances was born when I got that job.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK So I knew I was safe enough then...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...because my mother had made sure then...my mother said, 'look,' says she, you know, she said, 'Martina you really can stop'. I think she was three, Frances was, yeah, she was three and a half. She said, 'Martina,' she said, you can,' but she said, 'if you trust me, *nobody* will touch you,' she said, 'because I'll die under their feet, nobody will t...touch you,' she says, 'and anyhow,' she says, 'you're of the age now when they can't touch you'. So that kind of...was delighted...so then I got...I decided then the best way [was] to get a job to support Frances...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and I got a job in High Park Convent then. But I was...like I was paid there, I wasn't in there...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...I wasn't like in the Magdalenes doing it for nothing. I got a good wage, and then I had a flat down the road and then I'd go over to me mother's every day to see Frances, you know. And then when Frances became...I put her into boarding school then...

KOD *You put her into board...*

MK ...to be educated...

KOD *...boarding...*

MK ...in Dún Laoghaire...

KOD *...oh right.*

MK ...for her to be educated. Because I...I wasn't educated as I said, so while I was making the money I might as well do it and give it to her, put it on her. So that...from then on then I put my whole life into Frances, but then I was...I was just terrified to have any more kids, I didn't want them. The joy was gone out of them, the nuns took that away.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I was always afraid to have a child in case it was taken off me and I was put in the Magdalenes. I just didn't want them.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I loved...I love kids, don't get me wrong and that...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...but I seen then, I turned my attention then mostly to continue on with the animals and put people aside...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...take them and leave them, just give me the animals. They can't hurt you, they...all they want is for you to feed them, love them and you t...you give them back love, where a human will hurt you no matter what they do...even no matter what way...no matter how you much you stand and help them...no matter what you do for people they'll *always* turn around and hurt you.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK You know, and I don't want to be part of that, I just want to be part of looking after the old people there, looking after me dogs, looking after...loving my family now, my grandkids *idolise* me, they never go...I've...if they don't...if I'm not here and they knock, they're ringing [to know] where I am.

KOD *Heh!*

MK They are always here with me, and that's kind of...I'm happy now...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, but it took a long time to get here...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and I never wanted to be in a relationship with people or...even with fellas I didn't want a relationship because I always said that would get me into trouble, that's what I want, far away from them I wanted to keep, you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK And then...

KOD *So do you think some of what the nuns were saying about...about there's a devil inside you do you think you believe that?*

MK I always believed I was no good yeah, and you know, I always believed I wasn't good enough for nobody and they told me that. They do tell you that, you're inferior you believe that...inferior, that everyone's better than you. Now I know different, but they always put that into that...you know, you're nothing, you're nobody, never speak to your betters or your...you know all that kind of...and that...you do have that in you and then when you leave you kind of still carry that. You always think everybody's better than you and you always stay in the background and you don't do much with your life because you don't want people to know anything about your life. I couldn't go back to...really, any education because I don't want anyone to know anything about me. I didn't want anyone prying into me affairs, why I couldn't spell, you know, why I learned to read, why I couldn't spell...I learned myself to read but why I couldn't learn and...and spell but I c...I can't spell—I couldn't write a letter now.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I can't even find...I can't even write me letter to the courts...a letter to the courts to get me files. I can't do that, and I don't know why Mc...they [the Magdalene *ex gratia* scheme] want them. It means I can't do it [apply to the scheme] I don't know how to do it.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Things like that I don't know how...

KOD *Right.*

MK ...and I still don't know how, you know. Because everywhere you go, the *government* again has given the religious the education and that's the last place people like me need to go, is to where there's...where there's nuns. That's the last thing we need...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and I think...

KOD *Do you mean under the Redress Board, that they gave the nuns...*

MK No, they have religion...they have a thing in Mountjoy Street, but they have a place around the corner, but it's run by religion.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Everything around here seems to be all run by religious.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Everything is...they took over even the...the...the meals on wheels. Everything that...it's like the government gave them the power over everything, you know, and I don't like nuns. Now I have one good friend a nun and I would not knock her. She is very good. I met her in Ruhama, Eve [pseudonym], she's in [location removed]. She's very good, and she's done great things for me, she's...if I'd met women in trouble I've rung her immediately and I've said 'look Eve,' when she was in Dublin, 'I've met a friend, oh Eve, she's really bad in a way'. Because she was never involved in that, and why should I paint her...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...as that person?

KOD *Even though she's the same order?*

MK She wouldn't be the same order no...

KOD *No?*

MK ...she was a Good Shepherd.

KOD *Right.*

MK No, but I would not like to think that I would put everybody today in the category of then, going back...of then.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK No, I don't think I'd like to live with that bitterness, I don't think I'd like to be...the bitterness is gone, I've no bitterness left in me now.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I've no...I've fear...I've a lot, yeah, but no bitterness. I've easy forgiven...I'm easy to forgive. Maybe it's because I don't mix a lot with people. I don't socialise a lot with people. I prefer to be here with me animals.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Maybe...I don't class her...and then when I'd ring her if I'd seen any of the women in bad...in bad...in a way. I'd say, 'Eve, I'm after meeting such a girl, *oh Eve* she's in a bad way. I'll meet you here but as soon as you come, I'll leave...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...I want...I don't want you to talk to her in front of me, maybe she wouldn't want to'.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...and I'd say to her, 'would you do me...' and she'd say, 'Martina where are you?' I'd say to her, 'I'm in town' and the girl would be in an awful state, maybe cut or b...you know, something like that, maybe after being raped or...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...from being on the streets, and then I'd have a cup of tea with her and I'd say...and Eve would come in and then I'd say, 'look Eve, I have to run there love because I'm in a...I'm late as it is,' and I'd leave Eve with the woman. And then Eve would go out of her way and help the woman. Now she was...she really didn't...she was very good and I wouldn't knock her for all the...I'm sure most of them nuns that were like that...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...are dead and buried and I hope they are, and I hope, God forgive me, if there's a heaven I hope they are not there. I really do.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I would love them to suffer. If they...if they say...*if* they say—which I have very, very little belief in religion and the afterlife—if it is a truth, if you do bad in this world, you go to hell. Well sure to God I hope they are all in hell...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...because they did nothing but bad, and they never did good, they've only done bad and that to me then...I don't know...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know.

KOD *And when you were working up in High Park, did you ever think about talking to the women who were in the Magdalenes part of it?*

MK Oh I used to meet them when I'd be...when they'd be...I'd have me cup of tea. I'd go out and sit...sit in the stat...there wouldn't be...there'd be a statue at the front as you walk in...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and there was kind of a step and then I'd sit out there in the sun and have me tea, and you'd see them going in and out and I'd be talking to them and they'd be...God like, some of them...I knew...I understood because I seen them in Gloucester Street, in the Magdalenes in High...in...what do you call it...but then it got too much, I couldn't stay in the job.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK It...it was getting too much that when I'd be seeing them I think they...they kind of put the fear back into me. It was something that was there, but it was limbo...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...and I was kind of after getting over it but then the more I was talking to them, I think the fear was coming back into me. So, I decided to leave it altogether. Just one day I never bothered going back. I just collected me wages and never went back, and then I got a job in cleaning, you know...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and then I...I gave up the streets. I got it then...my mother died, and I knew I had to do me best for Frances because I...I knew it was up to me because I...I was on my own more or less now then, you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK So I knew then I wasn't going to let anyone take her so I had to look after her and I did, and I did a very good job, thank God, she's lovely. She's never been in trouble in her life. I protected her as much as...every way I could. I never let no one abuse her, and she never...she never needed for food or anything like that. [Dog barking in background] Then I...she has lovely...four lovely children now. Daniel [pseudonym], he's lovely, Emma [pseudonym], the little girl, she's gorgeous.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK You know, so I think I done...if ever I...if I ever done anything with *my* life, I done good with...with me daughter's and her grandchildren...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...me grandchildren. They've good jobs now and...you know, so...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...but I would leave this world...I would...I would leave this world I think...I would leave it knowing that it wasn't a very happy world (*voice breaking*)...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and it wasn't a world that I actually liked being in, and I don't like being in it...but I wouldn't kill myself.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK But I would leave it knowing I never had a happiness, or I never had a family, or I never had things...the opportunities that other people have, and maybe that's what I leave when I leave. I don't know. It's just not a nice world and anyhow...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...it hasn't been to me now. [Dog barks in background] But I love me animals and that kind of keeps me going.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I don't get depressed though. I don't. I kind of work my way...I'm always cleaning the home. I'm always doing things just to keep my mind...but the world itself...people itself...my family are not kind of close because I don't...like...now my brother, I'm close to him, but my brother went to England because he ran away from Ireland. He was abused in Daingean [Industrial School].

He mitched school and got Daingean, and he was beaten to a pulp in Daingean. Scalded, I don't even know...I only hope he was never raped in it, but he was fifteen and he went off to England. We lost him, you know. We lost everything really on...all because we were poor, and if that was a crime may God forgive them, you know.

KOD *Uh huh. And what about the other four that were in the family?*

MK They were okay because the father owneded [owned] him...them, they were okay...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, but I did find out after that my sister was being interfered with, June, but I don't talk to her because she was the very one that condemns me for bringing it out...

KOD *Hmm.*

MK ...and she condemns me, called me a liar, said it never happened and yet then she brought it out eventually, you know. So, I couldn't go near her then.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK No, I don't talk to her. It's 15 years since I spoke to her. I don't want to either. Because they were strangers really you know. They were never really...I was never kind of with them and the auld fella made sure they were never...they were really full sisters, they...he always said he'd f...he'd never feed...he wasn't there, he never work to feed my mother's two bastards, and that's all we ever got so...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you grow up like that. You grow up, it was...it was...it's a hard world and I wonder...I mean, if they were for God...people like the nuns and the priests if they were there to work for God and he...he was supposed to be so lovable and passion...why did they treat us so cruel? Why did they bring our past up to us? Why did they constantly tell us we were bastards? They actually did use that word. And nobody wanted us only them and they...why were they so cruel?

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK How would you beat a child? I mean I just can't understand that, I still can't understand how you could take a little child and beat...I couldn't.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I couldn't hurt a little child, I couldn't. I think I would kill anyone if I caught them hurting a child or an animal...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...but then again were they working for the devil or whatever, you know?

KOD *You mentioned being on the streets and working as a prostitute.*

MK Hmm.

KOD *Do you think that had any relationship to...?*

MK Well it was...oh...yeah, it was...it was...yeah, it was because it meant I had my own money and I was able to go where I wanted and I didn't have to answer to anyone. Nobody knew me, even the men and I had no *feelings*, you know so.

KOD *You started it when you were kind of running...*

MK Running away, yeah.

KOD *...running away from being afraid of being taken back...*

MK Yeah.

KOD *...into the Magdalene.*

MK Yeah. And it meant that I had my money, I could eat then when I wanted to. I could...I'd always have money to go to the thing, I had money for Frances, that was the main thing...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...that I gave my mother money for Frances, and once I knew I was giving the money, I knew she was safe...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...and I knew my mother then had food for her and she didn't have to worry. So that was my main priority.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Every week I went up with £200 to her.

KOD *Wow, it's a lot of money.*

MK Yeah I did though.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK But I didn't care what she got...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...once she got the best.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK But once she...like I mean, she couldn't have me, she had to have the best.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK So that's why I did it and I worked hard for...once I had her money then the rest of the money I got was...I'd work, we'll say, from eight 'til about three in the morning...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, flats and that. And then, that was...that was the main thing, you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK That was my life. Bed...bed, drink...bed, drink, bed, drink, to work...bed to work...drink, bed to work, drink that was all I ever d...it was...it was like just...I didn't exist. I only existed, I didn't live...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know.

KOD *And was there a turning point when you...?*

MK When I met Sister Eve, yeah. That's why I'll always be grateful to her. I mean I shouldn't be really, well I am because I got...everyone was afraid of me because I didn't bother with anyone and I would never let...no one hit me. I would say to them, 'if you hit me, I'll kill you stone dead if you hit me'. Nobody beats me again, it was enough when I was a child, everyone beat me, everyone abused me, everyone d...belittled me, everyone degraded me. No one was going to do it when I got older and I learned that I was my...my own self, my own person and things like that. Even if I didn't think much of myself.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I was letting no one beat me so then I learned to keep the women [at] a distance. I talked to them though. If they were in...if they needed help, but then when I met Eve, I decided I'd go

back to education and I done a bit...bit of thing...but then I only wanted to do the grooming with the animals...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and I kind of did that, and that was...once I was with the animals I put my full life and heart into it...anything for myself no, but for the animals, yeah, and then, as I said, I gave it up and I worked then in the pound for eight year with the dogs, with the animals. Anywhere there's animals I'd go, and probably still would..

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know.

KOD *So you worked in the pound?*

MK Hmm.

KOD *Oh great and that was your job?*

MK Yeah, loved it.

KOD *You got paid for that?*

MK Yeah, loved it, but I used to...it was...I used to take all the little dogs home with me you know, and I'd get them...I'd tell people I was looking, I'd say, 'come on up to the pound like, there's lovely little dogs up there'. I'd give them...you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Anything that'd come, anything that was to do with animals, but then I learned to bottle feed them because I realised they were dying and they...they were being put down because nobody could feed them. So, I learned to do that, you know, which is quite difficult...you know, for kittens and pups and that. Yeah that's what I do mostly now is bottle feeding...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, because I'm waiting to have an operation on my knee. I'm going in for a knee replacement.

KOD *Oh God, that's supposed to be very painful.*

MK Yeah, I'm...I'm in agony with it now I needn't tell you...

KOD *Right.*

MK ...but when I get the knee done it'll be grand.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK You know.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK And then I can (*clears throat*) I do bottle feed them here, so that's most of the work I do (*clears throat*) but I still kind of don't trust...I'm just still not fully into mixing with people.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I think the nuns rob that off you. I don't think I...I'm not one for going out to places or...or things like that. I still would rather be on my own.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I feel *safer* on me own in the house. I feel safer that nobody can hurt...I don't know why...that nobody can hurt me once I'm in here with the dogs.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I don't know whether that will ever leave me or not or whether it'll die with me or not, I don't know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK It probably will die with me...I'll probably go to my grave with it, you know.

KOD *What about...you know, said you went before the Redress Board for the...for the institutions.*

MK Oh they were horrible...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...they were horrible there. I...I think it was...to me, it was a disgrace, it was intimidating, it wasn't nice. Their barrister spoke and they were...you know, and he kept *on and on and on—seven times*—on about being abused by my father. He got that through the records. And that kept coming up, and I looked at my barrister, I couldn't believe it. And I was just about to get up and get out...walk out when she said, 'but this is relevant to the case'. They *kept on* about the abuse. They...them three...there was a judge there, why did he allow them say that?

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Again, it was humiliation on me...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know. And then they didn't believe me at one stage about the...about the beating and the operation, and they just...I don't know, they weren't there...they weren't nice. There was no compassion, there was no...they were up there like as if they were judging you...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, and it wasn't nice, it wasn't really and I know people came out and...I know people that threw themselves in the Liffey after coming out, and people committed suicide and people drank themselves to death. They just didn't want to be...want to be alive.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK They felt nothing in it. They just felt they were humiliated and degraded all over and I did say to Catherine Lynch [Kathleen Lynch, former Minister of State for Older People] when I was up in the Dáil with...when I was in thing...[third party identifying details removed], I said, 'look if it ever, ever is coming (*coughs*) to a thing please do not let it be like the Redress Board...'

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK (*coughs*) ...I said, 'because that pl...because that was just horrific'. It was a nightmare. Now they goes and they practically done...they practically kicked us in the teeth again [with the Magdalene *ex gratia* scheme]. They want all this information.

KOD *This is for the Magdalenes?*

MK Yeah, even *more* than they want...I mean our social welfare cards should be enough with our ID on it. It means traipsing us all the way over to Pearse Street, sitting there for hours. Where are we going to get the information when the dates we went in? Well I'm lucky I could get it from the courts, where do...other old women going to get it? Why we were in there, which is irrelevant.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK How long we spent there? *Prove* we were there. The proof. Now where is the Magdalenes...some Magdalenes going to get that? The priests that put them there, they're dead, and their parents.

KOD *Hmm.*

MK So where are *they* going to get that proof? That should be all changed.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK *Why we went there, should be no relevant [relevance] to them either.*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK *When we left...sure[ly] to God no one in their right mind would expect anybody to...to know the date and when you left and where you went. I think that's nothing got to do with it...where you went...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK *...and then the Redress Board, I think it is a kick in the face to us. It...it's an insult to the Magdalene women, that form that they want us to sign...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK *...and if we don't sign it we're not...I don't think we're going to get anywhere.*

KOD *Yeah I mean definitely an awful lot of women can't remember when they left...*

MK *I can't remember when I was put there even...*

KOD *...they're not sure of the year.*

MK *...what d...what month I went in. I honestly can't, you know. I'm sure some poor old devil, *God love her*, I'm sure them women...sure if they're alive today there's a thousand of us, how in the name God could them old people...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK *...remember what day they went in and the date? That would be the la...last thing when you don't know where you're going...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, and then when you're put...you go in there, you go into such shock your whole system shuts down. When you see what you're going into...you don't remember nothing...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know. I mean, you wouldn't even know it was Christmas only that the songs were being played. Easter you wouldn't know...you got a little egg in a...in an egg cup at your table that morning (*laughs*) and I was never a sweet eater though.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK For some reason, I was never...and I used to give mine away, you know, I could never...especially them Cadbury crème eggs. I could never eat them, and they'd be in your cup and you'd know it was Easter, and then you'd know by Mass. You wouldn't know by anything by any...anything...the only thing you'd know is there would be more sermons, more religion, and the more you'd be...*oh my God*, they'd be doing your *head* in. Everything would be into the chapel for this that and the other. *Jesus* it would drive you mad. *Oh I dreaded it* and you'd n...had to go in because there'd always be nuns in the church, they'd...they'd know if you didn't go in...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and you w...you had no choice but go in, it was dreadful. It was just forced on you.

KOD *And...I've just got a few...just a few more questions.*

MK Hmm.

KOD *So were you ever in any survivor groups and when did you start to kind of talk about the Magdalenes?*

MK (Coughs) When was it...I didn't really talk much about the Magdalene women, about the Magdalene Laundries, I didn't. Because when I...when I went there I didn't have a clue about the place but the older I was getting I realised what it was about, prostitution, having babies outside of marriage. Now I g...I came under those two cat...categories and when I came...when I learned about it...and for being a sinner and a fallen woman. Now I didn't know what a fallen woman was and to this day I...I'd love to know what a fallen woman is. You know...I don't...and I think it is a word that should be wiped out. No...it shouldn't even be mentioned, a fallen woman...it's a *horrible* word...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and what *does* it mean, and I would never really be bothered with that word. I would never...I didn't know what it was, to be honest with you. So I never kind of never kept that and then about ten years ago, I start[ed] saying, well you know if...I...women were beaten in the institutions, sure[ly] to God why was the Magdalenes...when the nuns beat them without ...they were given no choice but to do the work. We were given no choice when we eat, when we got up, when we went to bed, when we done the work, when we bathed, when we spoke, all...they done all...made all them choices for us, and beat...beat us if you broke a rule, and then you had to do Celtic even though you were...your arms could be killing you, to buy stuff. That was the only way you could get bars of soap, toothpaste, as I said. Why would I be ashamed to do it, you know, when they...so I just happened to say to somebody, 'well that's wrong,' you know, the Magdalene women, the women that was in the Magdalene Laundries, I never really knew it was...they were called Magdalene women at that stage, and then someone said then...who was it then I went to...God, I don't know how I started talking really about it.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I really don't...how I really came out about...I think at Michael Dennehy's [pseudonym of survivor group leader] meeting there was a few Magdalene women there and that, and I said, 'yes, I was in Gloucester Street and they said, 'is that a Magdalene Laundry?', and I said, 'yeah'. But it never really hit me to the extent...I think I blocked it, until I actually realised what it had...what it had done to destroy my life, what it had actually done to me...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and then a rage came into me, when I realised that they'd robbed me from everything. They...they'd robbed me from me daughter, a family, they le...I went into prostitution.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I met the wrong people then after that. Then loads of different things that they robbed me from. And then I began to say...tell the truth then, why I was in the Magdalenes. I said, 'look,' I said, when people say, 'ah they must have commit[ted] crime,' I said, 'no I did not commit a crime, I was not involved in that fight. *Because* I came from a poor family, that was my crime'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK And I had no one to speak up for me. That woman that was obviously well to do, she was able to have a barr...solicitor there to speak for her, but I'd nobody...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and when my mother got up to speak, she was shut down by the judge like a...like as if she was a piece of dirt. I'm sure my mother felt that size. And Tony Ryan asked the guard could he get up and...and the guard done that to him (*makes a gesture*). And nobody was there to speak for me and I was standing over here...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, so, I think that all came up and then I realised, well then, I was from the Magda...I was a Magdalene woman. There's one thing that I *will* disagree with and I won't accept, I'm not a 'forgotten Maggie'...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and *that* I don't like and *that* I asked Stephen O'Rourke<sup>4</sup> to change. I said, 'that's an insult to us, I'm not a forgotten Maggie...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...I have a family, I have [a] home, I've lovely chil...I've a lovely girl...I've lovely grandchildren'. I've good friends,' I have lovely friends, I have to admit, that come to me, they always...I'm not a house hatcher...

KOD *Hmm.*

MK ...I'd let them come to me.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK I don't just like going into other people's homes because I'm not comfortable.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I've never learned to be comfortable going anywhere so I'll always be comfortable in my own surroundings. So I've never gone out of that space and I've never learned to...to do it and I still haven't done it so I'm not pushed about it either.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I'm happy enough here with the animals, so they come to me. But I *don't* like that word, 'forgotten Maggies'. I just don't like it. It's like a word as if we were...people are shunning there...when we...even though we're out here, it's just...forgotten Maggie, I mean, Maggie is a horrible...Maggie anyhow is a slag name for Margaret...

KOD *Yeah.*

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<sup>4</sup> Interviewee is referring to Steven O'Riordan, who made a documentary entitled *The Forgotten Maggies*.

MK ...you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK And I don't know why he put that word on that documentary...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...Ma...forgotten Maggies. *I just think it was a horrible word.*

KOD *Yeah.*

MK You know, but he wouldn't change it, he wouldn't.

KOD *In terms of...you were in the group, in Michael Dennehy's group?*

MK I went...yeah, no, I wasn't in his group. I just went to his meetings...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...to find out what was going on, because I do like to know what's going on. I do like to know everything you know, and I do like to get...I do like to learn things.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I've always...I always loved to learn new things but at...but at a cost. If it costs me to go into a big building where there's nuns, no...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...I won't. I'd *love* to do the computer. I *really would* love to do the computer...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...and I would...if I get my money then I'll buy me computer. I'll buy me own little laptop but I'd love to know how to do it, I don't know h...I'm...I'm lost, because all my friends...even Jane is a grandmother, she has a...and she's always saying to me get one...

KOD *They all have them now, Martina, you know.*

MK ...I just don't have them...

KOD *Right.*

MK ...I just...because I don't know how. Because again, I'd have to go round to that big building...

KOD *Okay...*

MK ...and I don't want...

KOD *...where there's nuns.*

MK ...there's nuns there, no. And I just feel that when I go into that building I just feel everything drops away from me, my confidence goes...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and I just don't feel as if I should be there...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...and I'm not good enough to be there, so I don't bother.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK And I'd love to learn the computers, I really would...you know.

KOD *So I've just got one last question then. Do you think you are a different person before you were in the Magdalenes?*

MK Yeah, I was really happy young one at times, yeah. I could be real funny, and sometimes I still can be. I could be real funny yeah. I was real...I played with everyone, I mixed with everyone in the flats, I mixed with...*everyone* knew me. Then when I came out of the...bit by bit they were draining me from the schools...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...but then the Magdalenes tore anything that was left there. They just sieved it right away out from me. I became more bitter in meself, in...more to meself....

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...not with other people...but I did draw the line if anyone went to hit me. I did draw the line and I said I...I would...I would kill them if they hit me. I was letting it go...to anyone, I wasn't going to go out and be ab...never beat up anyone, but no one was going to beat me...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and that was my policy, but thank God, it never came to that.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I did...I did actually, yes I did, in B...in Gloucester Street, Betty, she kept coming at me with a cup, and only that there was three women there I kept taking the cup off her and putting it back on the counter. I s...kept saying, '*don't* hit me with that'. I kept...I said, '*don't*,' I kept taking it back off her and I said to her, after about the fourth time, I said, 'if you come with this...that mug towards me *one more times* I'll split you with it'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK And she came, and I just remember taking the mug off her. I remember nothing else. And all I remember is she hit the deck and she was open from there to there. I nearly got sick. I was shook inside, and the nun came in and I said, 'look she just kept coming for me,' and I said, 'I tried to defend...push her back with a brush,' I said, 'to push her into a corner,' I said, 'and I put the brush down, I tried to walk away five times but she kept coming at me with the mug'. And the other women said, 'yes she did,' but they tried to do me for attempted...attempted murder. Gloucester Street said that, they did...tried to do me, got the guards for me. At that stage I think I was gone beyond caring really...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...to be honest with you. All I kept saying was, 'Jesus, I'm in here for something I didn't do, I come in and I assault somebody. They're not going to believe that she kept coming at me with the mug'. I asked her...kept...nicely to her, kept saying, 'don't come...put the mug down,' and she wouldn't. I don't know *why* she was at me, I don't know why she started at me.

KOD *And who was she, Martina?*

MK One of the women.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I...

KOD *One of the older women there, no...?*

MK No, she was only a younger one.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I don't know why she was at me. I really don't, I can't even remember why...why the altercation took...I mean, it couldn't be that serious if I don't remember it...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...but she kept coming at me with the mug. I think she could just have been in a bad day herself, and...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...I could have said something to her that could have ticked her off, you know.

KOD *And what happened her afterwards and what happened you?*

MK Oh she came back after a few weeks, she came back and I felt very guilty, I apologised to her. I couldn't do enough for her, I felt v...I couldn't do enough for her, I kept giving her...every time I was able to buy my smokes I kept giving her one. I was buying her bars of soap, buying her shampoo. I was try...I couldn't do enough for her to make up for what I done. And then one day I realised...I said, 'no matter what I do she's not going to forgive me'. So, I stopped then. I said, 'well look it, let her,' and I just moved away from her. I said, 'that's it,' and then, the police was...the police was...the day the police arrested me...they didn't arrest me yeah, but they came...the nuns took me and the police started giving me loads in a little room, and they were going to do me for attempted murder, I'd go to prison for life. I'd spend my life there and, oh Jesus, I was in an awful state, I was going to spend my life in prison and something I...I said, 'look, she kept coming at me with the mug'. I said, 'go in and ask the girls that were there in the...in the room, they'll tell you she kept coming after me, and every time I asked her, took the mug off her, I'd put it down and she'd come back for me again'. So then I think when they took the statement then, they realised then it wasn't my fault. They didn't charge me anyhow, but it was kind of hanging over me...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, but it didn't...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...kind of...I didn't bother. I done everything I could for her. I made up for it...but I...just didn't work in there, I don't think anything would have worked in them homes. I think everyone was just too bitter.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Everyone...the longer you were there the more bitter you got, the more sen...senile you got more...depending on the laundry you got. I just kind of thank God it never kind of happened to me, you know. Although, ev...when I came out of the Magdalenes, Jesus, everything was very strange. It was like a *complete world* I'd never been in. It was so strange for weeks after. I couldn't get me...I couldn't get me bearings together. Everything was strange, the traffic was strange, going in to buy a cup of tea was strange, everything I done was strange. It took a while to get used to it. I really...because they took everything away from you. It took a long while now, a few weeks, I'd say about...I'd say three or f...about three to six months to get used to it...getting back into the world...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know.

KOD *And so could you understand better then how the older women were institutionalised?*

MK Then I did, yeah I started, 'God love them,' I was saying, 'Jesus help them'. If they ever get out, they'll be lost because they were def...I mean, I wasn't...I never spoke to the nuns, only if they spoke to me. I would never sit with them in the room...they were all over them.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I'd be telling I want to go to the toilet, and I'd stay ages in the toilet just to keep away from the nuns. I didn't have a conversation with them much, only when they spoke to me, which was very seldom, they'd usually roar at you. And they didn't like that either because I was more independent, but I...I just didn't like the way the women were going, and I didn't want to be like that, falling over them, 'yes mother,' and laughing at *stupid things*...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...that the nuns would say. *The nuns were lapping it up*, and they...that made me more determined not to, because I hated nuns so much that to give them the satisfaction to *laugh* would have killed me. So, I didn't but then I...I did get to understand the poor women, you know...that's why then, I said to myself in High P...when I did get a job in High Park, I understood them a lot, me heart went out to them, but then again, we weren't even allowed mix with them and we were outdoor staff. We weren't allowed mix with them.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK We were...I used to see them, as I said, having a cup of tea, I'd talk to them. I just said, 'no, this is not for me, I can't do this any longer'. Just one day I went home and never went back in.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I just went up and collected what money was owed to me and I done a legger, you know.

KOD *And did you ever get, kind of, inside the main laundry of High Park when you were an outdoor staff?*

MK Oh we'd have to go in with books if there was a mistake with the...with the...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...yeah, we'd have to go in there yeah, but we weren't allowed talk to the women. Well of course, even in the Magdalenes you're not allowed talk to them...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...so that was nothing new, I knew the score...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know what I mean, so that didn't surprise me, but it was the same type of set up as in Gloucester Street because I remember if I did have to go in, I'd look all around, you know...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and I'd see the same carry on. The women do be there...the poor women, *God love them* they'd be so, so...some of them were so old. *Oh my God*, there was some women I'd say they'd be about eighty there...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...they were so bent over, and the poor little things would be fluttering with the p...p...wih the pillowslips or whatever they'd have in their hands and God love them you'd see...

KOD *So they were still working?*

MK *Oh yeah*, oh they worked up to they dropped dead. Oh they did, yeah, because I...I've seen them in Gloucester Street, dying. They'd collapse and they wouldn't be able, and next you'd hear they would be up in the infirmary and then you wouldn't hear...they'd be gone, and they'd only be less than a week out of...out of the laundry and somebody would say, 'where is she gone, where is she gone?' 'She's gone, she's dead'. And of course death never really...you dread it, sure when you're young like that you wouldn't really want to know much about death and you'd never...you'd just say, 'ah God love her, she's g...she's dead,' and that would be it...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...but you'd never realise...go into...imagine, she was working only last week, the poor thing, and now she's dead. You'd never go into that because when you're young.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK But now I'd say, well God forgive them to work them to the bone, you know, their hands to the bone—that's an exp...a Dublin expression...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...I don't know if ever you heard it, did you?

KOD *Yeah.*

MK They worked them to...their hand...like, I mean, my mother used to say that, 'Jesus Christ they worked them poor women's...to their hands...to the bone, you know'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK They'd be dead, like I mean...they'd be still working, there was no retirement in it.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK There w...I don't even think there was a place where they could retire in it.<sup>5</sup> Because all [that] was in it (*coughs*) was a...when you went in, as I said, there was a room, a recreation room. Everything seemed to be on the one cloister, you went in...the shop, the chapel, the door out to the yard, the bathroom, the door out to...up the stairs, up to the bed... bed, dormitory. You'd go out another door into the back yard, you go into the laundry and that was it. That was all. So there was no retirement little place for them...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, and there was a big, big yard out and then maybe if they were on their dinner hour, you were allowed walk around with the nuns...supervision with the nuns. Only the older women now, we weren't in case we jumped the wall. The old women would be walking with the nuns saying the rosary, and all y...we'd be standing looking out the window and all you'd hear them was praying. The window would be open but there would be bars on it. They'd be praying the rosary, that's...that was their hour...dinner hour, their break from the laundry. Praying, they were saying the rosary.

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<sup>5</sup> Suitable sheltered accommodation was not constructed until the early 2000s. Less than a decade later, these women were moved to Beechlawn Nursing Home in High Park.

KOD *And did you get any recreation?*

MK No, no we got none. We'd get what, maybe a half an hour in the evening and that was it. You'd get your tea...you finished in the laundry at about half-five...you'd get the recre...you'd go in and get your tea and you'd do your...some women would be doing their housework, housework or whatever, but then you'd be...everyone would be brought up the stairs then about half...about seven or half-seven you'd be brought up to bed.

KOD *And what was the food like, your tea?*

MK The tea, you could get a boiled egg or you could get dripping, bread and dripping, you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK You could get bread and butter one night. That would be it, and tea.

KOD *So you'd have your main dinner in the middle of the day, is it?*

MK Yeah and that would be it yeah, and there wouldn't be much. It would be very small, and then...

KOD *What would you get for your main dinner in the middle of the day?*

MK You'd get, now, I have to be honest you, you wouldn't...it wouldn't be slop now. You'd get about two little potat...little boiled potatoes, you'd get a slice of meat and a bit of cabbage. Or then you could get fish, small bit of fish, which I wouldn't eat. Or you'd get cabbage or car...carrots which I didn't like either, veg...I wasn't a vegetable person...peas yeah. And you'd get a little bit of dessert, but I usen't eat that, I'd give it away to the older women...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, like the older women, if I took a shine to her.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK I used to give her little things and I'd always give her my fish or if I didn't want any of the dinner, I'd give it to her and I'd give her me dessert...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and I'd take her empty plate when the nun wouldn't be looking. I drop her empty dessert plate and put it in front of me, you know.

KOD *Right.*

MK But other than that you wouldn't get much. And then you'd just get whatever, you might get a boiled egg for your tea. It was mostly boiled eggs for the tea.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK You might get a boiled egg. That's what we got in Gloucester Street. If you got anything else I can't remember. I wouldn't have been that traumatised in it not to remember what you got to eat. I remember the boiled eggs because I do love boiled eggs.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Still do like, and every time I boil an egg it always reminds me of Gloucester Street...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...because that was all I think we ever got in there. I think it was the easiest and the quickest way to fill us, you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Two slices of bread cut in half you'd get. I remember the bread strike, I'll always remember it. Dorothy Flanagan and myself decided we'd go into the k...we'd hide in the kitchen part in the dor...in the...the...the ref...the refectory it was called, where we'd sit...the dining room, or refectory, and then we knew the...we knew the kitchen, the pantry was there, and we knew

there was a thing you could pull up and you could get into the kitchen. We said we'd go down and rob the bread, and then we'll keep it and min...give it to the other girls, you know, the younger girls that we...because they'd give the older women a little more than they'd give us, and because the bread was on strike so we'd only...we were only getting a half a slice of bread, and we were made to do the same work for that half a slice of bread for your breakfast and your tea, you know. So of course, we didn't realise, and we were there and next of all, whatever t...they were all gone up and anyhow, and we ...I went to go in, and wasn't the bloody thing locked that you go down...everything was locked. So, we were stuck where we were, and we had to g...we had give ourselves up. We got *bleeding battered* the next morning, we did. I think I got about 20 clatters from the leather strap for doing it.

KOD *For trying to steal some more bread.*

MK Well we...no, we didn't tell them what we were doing. We didn't...we just told them we went in there and we hid for the fun and we fell asleep, that's all I said, but I don't know whether they swallowed it or not but I know we got clattered, we go...oh Jesus my hands were sore from their...the straps and one at stage then I wouldn't put me thing...and I got it across the shoulder and the arm here. I w...I used always remember the sting, you get them on the shoulders there and I often wonder is that why, when you grow old, all them bangs you got on the shoulders, that they hurt you.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Always say, them auld feckers...on your knees, you were always on your knees scrubbing and cleaning. You know, if you weren't on your knees you were standing. Like, you never sat down...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know. No one, even the old women, God love them now. See, we...we used to do the stuff the old women weren't able to do like, we'd have to scrub the walls, and scrub the floors, scrub the stairs. The older women weren't able to do that, so they'd use the younger ones for that, younger...us for that, and we'd be on our hands and knees p...scrubbing. Then another would come behind drying and another would coming along polishing it...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and it was always everything was on your hands and knees. So then we were...if you weren't on your hands and knees, you were standing all day. And I don't think they ever believed in chairs to sit down. You never sat down, only at your dinner or your tea or your breakfast. That was all you ever sat down. The rest...you were on your hands and knees or on your hand...mostly on your feet in the laundries.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK They were just...I don't know...they were just...it was like a different world though...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...and it was great to see like yourselves [Justice for Magdalenes] coming out with the Magdalenes, and just coming out and saying things you know about...that was going on because no one believed you. I mean, I remember anyone I said it to, they wouldn't believe you didn't get paid. They honestly would not believe that we worked all them hours five days a week, some Saturday mornings if there was an emergency, you were made work. Some, very seldom but you did if...if it was a special order at Christmas, you'd have to work of a Saturday morning, and none of us got a shilling. They wouldn't...no one could believe that and yet the money was raking...I mean I often saw the *bundles* of money in the...in the...the where the nuns would come in...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...where the nuns would be taking the money in. There would only be another girl and the nuns, and she'd get the parcel for the nun. The nun would be sitting on a chair and it was like a little...a little hatch and the nuns then would take out the...give out the parcels to...and the money would come in and she'd put it into a box beside her. There would be *boxes* of it, *boxes* of it during the day, *boxes* of it going. Now where did all that money go...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know? That's why...I never...to be honest with you, I don't dwell on it too much because if I think I do, I get sad inside...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...and then I don't want that. I don't...definitely want that. I want to get on with my life and...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...I want to try and make what I've left to be happy, what I've left. Not that there's much to be happy about but I try to make it as good as I can, and I try to do a lot for old women. Like the old man...Seamus [pseudonym] the old man that I go into. I'd do anything for anyone's animals. I do everything. I'm busy that way. I don't think I...I try to dwell on it anymore because it's just too...it just brings it all back and then you go to bed at night and you're lying there and you are wondering why were you in there? Why are you in this world? Why were you born into a poor family? Why were you being abused when you didn't know what you were doing, when you didn't know what was happening to you? Why were you beaten for nothing you didn't do? Why this...why, it's all why and...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...you're lying there and you are not getting any answers and you're eating yourself away and you're tired then and you're unhappy and you get this horrible feeling of loneliness over you...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and then I just snap...I come down and make tea and I read—I love reading—I'd snap out of it that way or I pick the dogs up and I cuddle them and I try to walk around then during the night and I get myself out of that and...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...I just...other than that...like now just...you just nearly cry with it all...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...you just wonder why it was all like that, you know. You just start crying. I've often did...I probably would have a cry here. Walk around be lonely in the night time on me own here. I'd wonder why I hadn't...never married, never had a big house, never had loads of kids, never was happy with the kids...you know...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...why all that was taken, but as I said, I try not to go back on it because it's only hurting me, nobody else...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...you know, and there's no one, nobody there...care...nobody outside cares...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and nobody wants you to...and I wouldn't blame them. Nobody wants you pushing your burden onto them because it's not fair on other people...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and I wouldn't push it onto me friends. I laugh and joke with them as if there's nothing wrong with me...

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...and I mean, it's not fair on them. They didn't like...put me in there so why would they have to listen to me, and even the people do say to me, 'Jesus Martina, I never knew that, why didn't you tell us?' I mean, you don't need to be pushing your burden onto other people...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know. I go up to Frances's, have a laugh and joke. I could be very unhappy with everything in life, I mightn't have a good day, I might be lonely, I might be tired, I might be...you know. I go up to Frances's and I just change. I'm like another person. I go in to...make everyone else laugh, and I have to say some funny things...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and I make them laugh. Then I leave and I come home and I've kind of got out of it then....

KOD *Yeah.*

MK ...bit then, and then I just look at the telly and I watch the news, and then I'll read me paper and I'll make something to...I'll make them... and I go up to bed and I read and I watch...I listen to [name of radio show host removed] and I just find some of them hilarious, you know, I really do. I really wonder is it true...I'm barred off him anyhow, because of that...he was really going on and on about Magdalene women one day and that really got me...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, and I really...rang in and I said to him, 'well, you know,' I said, 'I seen you on the telly, do you...did you wake up this morning and comb your hair with a pork chop?' And he didn't like it and I said, 'well how do you like that now? When you're slagging the Magdalene women,' I said, 'I mean, calling them Mag...Magdalene Laundry wo[men],' I says, 'they're not Magdalene Laundry women, they...they're women with names, they're...they've some mother, they had a mother, they had a father somewhere along the line with it, they've brothers and sisters, they're mothers their...themselves'. I said, 'why are you slagging them?' And he said, 'I'm not slagging them,' but they are, 'cause...you know. [Dog barking in background]

KOD *Yeah.*

MK And then I'd knock it off and that, so I just didn't bother. I said, 'well look, don't ever let me ring this number again just bar me off it'. She...she says, 'okay'. I don't ring them anymore, I listen and then if I don't like the subject I just turn it off. Half of the times I don't like it.

KOD *Hmm.*

MK Because sometimes I find that it's degrading to women.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK You know, it could be something really degrading to women. I don't even know why even women should listen to it...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, but last night now I just fell asleep. Sometimes if I'm like this [interview] coming up now, if I'm thinking I just go to sleep.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK I'll put it out...I just shut everything and just fall asleep and...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and then I woke up...I woke up at twenty to nine this morning really and I shouldn't have. I should have been in Seamus's at nine for him, you know, because I like to go in and give him...he's old and he's only out of hospital, and he has two cats and I look after them for him. And I do go in and then my friend goes in at...in for a cup of tea in the mornings after she's finished with Doris [pseudonym], you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Now today I have to bring Doris down...she can't walk. I have to bring her down now after dinner. I have to bring her down to Clerys to get her feet done.

KOD *Great.*

MK You know, I don't mind doing that for Doris...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...because she can't walk and I mean she's disabled. And Doris believe you me got a hard life from her dis...because of her disability and you know, it was years ago they threw them into... people that were slightly backwards, slight...they threw them into mental homes and forgot about them, and that would have happened Doris only thank God, Doris had a good...a good...a good...maybe family that was...

KOD *Looking out for her.*

MK Yeah.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Not all them children were so lucky...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...so but she didn't get an easy life, Doris. I'm sure she was slagged a lot and she fight...she's a little fighter...she's eighty-six, she's a little fighter.

KOD *Great.*

MK She's gas, but today now, she's after getting a wheelchair yesterday and she's not happy with it. She's giving it back, but I said to her, 'look Doris, will you just let me bring you down to get your feet done'. Because she can't walk with her foot and it's paining her every day...and the pain (*spoken more quietly*) they broke her hip in the hospital...they broke her leg in the hospital.

KOD *God.*

MK Hmm. The fella slammed her down on the thing and she could feel the bone here breaking...and [she] told them, 'no, nothing just put your leg up, it's just muscle pain'. She was in agony for

four or five hours. Then they realised it was broke they had to rush her up for an operation, but she can't walk anymore now.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK She's very slow on her frame so...

KOD *Slow on her frame, yeah.*

MK ...we have to...I mean, somebody has to do it, you know.

KOD *Has to look after...so just one last question so...*

MK Hmm.

KOD *...Martina, and thanks a million for all of this, but...so what would you be most proud of in your life?*

MK Most proud of was...the goodness I do with animals.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I've done a lot of good with animals. I don't judge people and I'm...I'm really good for that...I'm glad I'm that, I don't judge anyone now. People tell me all of a sudden about things, about themselves and I do say, 'so what, it has nothing to do with me,' I just...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...'what you do is your own business love, I'm not here to judge,' and then they're r...they're at ease. I brought a lovely daughter into the world. I'm proud of meself for what I did for her. I'm proud of meself that I helped her to rear her four...her four grandchildren. I've put them through college as well. They've all got good jobs now. Two of them are bodybuilders and instructors.

KOD *Great.*

MK My great...my granddaughter now is going in for...she's eighteen now, she's going to be into college in Finglas.

KOD *Great.*

MK She's going in to be a fitness instructor. Ronan [pseudonym] is ADH. He is very int...*very intelligent...very...we just have to wait and see. I hope I'm alive...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...to see him...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...older that I can help him as well. My daughter is very happy, you know. My kids...my grandkids are very happy. My grandson has a lovely little girl, although granted the medical part of it can be very rough on him, but he's very grateful. And...she's gor...ah you'd love her, she's gorgeous, *oh she so cute, and loves animals, ah.* But I'm grateful to that, that I don't judge people and I don't...I'm not bitter with nuns today.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I wouldn't be, I don't think it's right for to lash into the nuns because they weren't born probably and they didn't do it. Maybe you know, they are...there probably are nuns but if someone doesn't hurt you, why would you want to hurt them...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know, and hurting the ones that hurt is not going to make it right either, you know. So, I'm grateful I have that thing that I'm able to judge between the (*whispered*) like *Geraldine Murphy [pseudonym], she's very bitter. Oh, so bitter, it's very hard to take, even I can't take it.*

KOD *Yeah.*

MK I've had to ask her to stop ringing me. I took her phone out of me...I said, 'look Geraldine, really you're a woman, what in the name of *Jesus*...why can't you do something for yourself? Why are you so bitter, why do you roar...you cry for nothing'. I...now talking to you there, I was...felt emotional but that would be genuine 'cause that wouldn't be me all of the time.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I would normally not be as emotional, it's Magdalenes made me very...because they put the fear into me and I think it was...it's the fear that comes back up, you know, and that's the part that would make me emotional.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK But she blames *everybody*. I'm t...I really am proud that I don't do that.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I'm proud that I can...you know, split the two, knowing that there is good people, there's educated people, but why should I condemn them? They didn't ask to be born into a rich family.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Geraldine's attitude is, 'they're fucking rich, why should I...why should...why should I be poor?' You can't live like that, so I'm proud I can...you know, I can re...analyse them two but I'm proud of a lot of stuff I do...that I'm compassionate. I'm glad I'm not bitter. I'm glad I c...I can...I'm not one for putting people down. I don't put people down...what they are or what they do...I'm glad for that. I stand by bullies, people that are being bullied, I stand by them. I *hate* bullies. I just...*oh* I despise them. I would rather stand with a bully. I did in the flats one day...there was a lovely girl down there. Oh my God poor Jenny [pseudonym]. *Oh*, this girl gave her a dog's life. One day I couldn't stick it and I just went over to this girl and I said, 'now look it, she can't take you on, she can't fight you, fight me now,' I said, and she looked at me, I said, 'because I'll tell you if you do I'll fuck you over that balcony, I'm *sick* of you bullying that girl'. The girl was literally shaking. So she walked away from me. I went into Jenny's house, I sat with her. The police

came, I said, 'well I'm telling you now guard,' I said, 'I myself am fed up, that girl is being bullied by this girl'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I said, 'oh,' I said, 'right now, I'm this...now,' I said, 'I'm coming in on it because no one is going to bully her again' I said. Says he, 'well fair play to you'. That girl looked t...I had to sit with that girl for nearly ten hours, she was nearly on the verge of a breakdown with three young children, and her partner was no...he was also giving her a terrible life...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and this woman...a *woman* doing it to another woman and all because this...Jenny wasn't married, she was married...she had a baby. I feel so sorry for her...the baby was born very badly deformed and it was a boy, it died, but why would...why did God give her a healthy baby boy and not give it to her? *She gave that girl a dreadful life. I mean until eventually...and then when I...she...I stood by, I said, 'look Jenny please don't let her come to your door, ring me, there's my number, I'll come down, don't take it'. Her sister wasn't well either at the time, Glenda [pseudonym]. Her...Glenda's relationship with a woman had broke up after I think 15 years. Glenda was devastated. Poor Jenny was devastated for Glenda.*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Glenda was coming in drunk to her as well and poor Jenny was trying to deal with Glenda and things like that, so do you know, that girl stood up then one day, she said, 'do you know what, Martina,' she said, 'you're after giving me great confidence,' she said, 'in meself,' she said. 'I realise everyone's not bullies, I'm not going to be afraid of her, the next time I'm going to stand up to her'. 'Good girl,' I said, 'good girl'. I said, 'and I hope I'm not there when you do it...'

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...I said, 'but you do,' and she did, and that girl stood up...and I'm proud of that, that I gave her her life back, 'cause she's not afr...well she'd not a bully she's not a fighter but she's not as

afraid anymore as she used to be. Because it ended up Jackie [pseudonym] was the biggest coward. Jackie backed down from her then...

KOD *Yeah, yeah.*

MK ...and I said, 'I told you bullies are cowards'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I said, 'bullies are literally cowards'. My grandson got bullied and eventually when he grew up, he put the bully down.

KOD *Hmm.*

MK This fella was a boxer...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and Danny [interviewee's grandson] done it. Now my Danny wouldn't fight...he's an *awful* quiet fella. He doesn't talk much. He's *real* nice, never in trouble...*never* done anything and he just lived in fear of this fella. Lived literally in fear of him growing up...took nightmares and everything, but there was nothing we could do because he was only two years older than Danny, but he became a boxer, and I used say, 'Danny, don't worry love, you'll make something of yourself,' and that was more the reason that I put me time into them...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...because he was being bullied and I did. Now Danny has a great job, but this young fella...D...met Danny one day, 'oh go on you fucking faggot you,' because he was working in college and Danny says, 'what's your problem?' So he went to make a swipe at Danny and Danny got him and *battered* him in fr...*everyone* was just...on the balconies, I believe, *everyone* was *delighted* because everyone was afraid of this young fella, all the young fellas.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK *Everyone was ringing me, calling me, 'oh fair play to Danny he put that bully down, I never...' I said, 'I never thought he'd do it either'. Because when I heard it, my whole insides turned when I heard...*

KOD *Hmm.*

MK *...he was down there fighting. I flew down, but again I got down I couldn't catch me breath, I was...oh I could see Danny on the ground dead, and when I seen Danny coming up towards me, oh the relief. I said, 'what happened?' He said...says he, 'he went for me,' but everyone, all the neighbours were, 'ah now, Danny fair play to you,' because he was after beating their sons...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK *...they were too afraid to...but like that, bullies are always put down and that's what I told Jenny and Jenny got that confidence. I'm glad about that. I'm glad I'm able to give things to people.*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK *You know, not much material but I'm always able to give them advice on...life camp, it's bad but there's always little happier things. I can be very happy some days.*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK *Most days I'm very happy. It's very seldom I have a bad day, very seldom. Life is happy and it's what you make it yourself. Other people done it to you when they had control but now I have control of my life, and I do...I do...I do little things that I make myself happy...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK *...and I'm quite happy with that.*

KOD *Brilliant.*

MK You know, so that's what I'm good...I'm glad I'm not bitter. That's the main thing. I'm glad I'm not...and I'm glad I don't bore people.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I don't go around wanting everyone to listen to my life story, that's the last thing I want.

KOD *Yeah, yeah.*

MK You know, and it's because...why would you want to bore people. I'd like a p...a person to know me as me now...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK And I'd like someone to...to like me as the person I am...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know and that's...that's all I want in life. It's not very much to ask, but I do have good friends and I do have nice people and I...I'm happy enough now, and I'm grateful for that. [Dog barking in background] I'm glad God gave me a mind that I can...you know, do things for people, and I'm not covet[ous], I'm not selfish. And I could have a row with you one minute and I'd talk to you the next minute.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I don't keep things in.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK So I could disagree with you on one thing and say, 'well then yeah, that's her, yeah, if I disagree with her, well she's entitled to her opinion, I'm entitled to mine,' and then I would never hold that...and I would say to you then, 'yes by the way, you are...yeah, you're entitled to your thing...your own opinion and I should be entitled to mine if...' you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK Things like that, well...and I'm not very well educated, put it that way...for spelling, now, I would be great doing everything if I could *bloody well spell*.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK I could be anything. My mother said, I could be a politician.

KOD *You'd be brilliant.*

MK She said, I could be a...my mother always...I could have been a vet...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...because there's nothing I don't know about dogs, and I've I...self-learned myself about infections, about fleas, the allergies, about if dogs are sick, eyes, I've done everything, all that.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK The vets can't even do the stuff that I can do, you know...

KOD *Wow.*

MK ...and Louise brought me down that bouquet because I bottle fed kittens for her and things like that, but I could have been somebody if I could have learned to spell. If I'd only...I had the courage to ask somebody to teach me to spell...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...I could have been anything...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...anything, but then again it wasn't meant to be, maybe it wasn't...maybe the animals wasn't...I wouldn't be able to do what I do for the animals.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK So maybe it wasn't...what I do is maybe more important and I love what I'm doing so I always say that, you know. People do say to me, 'you should have been a vet'. I say, 'yeah I should have been,' but then again I go, 'no, don't brood over it, you weren't meant to be...they were meant to be what you're...what you're to do...rescue animals was meant to what...'

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK And then I get happy about it and I'm happy, but I still would like to spell though.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK I would love to learn to spell. I would love to do a computer because I would save up hard. Because I don't drink, I would save up and buy a...by a little...you know one of them iPads...

KOD *iPads, yeah.*

MK ...I would buy one, but there's no point in me saving up to buy one if I don't know how to use it...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...you know. Amy [pseudonym of interviewee's great-granddaughter] can do things on it that I can't...

KOD *Yeah!*

MK ...and she's only three! *Oh I do be so mortified* when I see Amy doing the things that I can't even do on this [her phone] she can go in, and I do say, 'oh God, Frances look at her on that, even I can't even do that!'

KOD *(Coughs)*

MK Oh I just...you know, have you got a cold? And I...so I would...I will...I will learn to do it...If I get someone to...I might ask...I heard Alice [pseudonym] is very good on the computers.

KOD *Yeah.*

MK She might, but I wouldn't... travelling...it's a long way to go, you know.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK I need to get someone with a laptop and show me the basics. If I could do the basics then I believe it's simple enough to learn.

KOD *Uh huh, it is.*

MK Yeah, you know, but I'll get there someday don't worry.

KOD *You will.*

MK Well I want something good to do for myself, I'll do it, and I'll look after myself well, you know. I always say I'm number one. I...I...I always say that to myself, 'you're number one Martina whatever...do what you can do for yourself and then do what you can do for others, but always put yourself first a little because you need to do that'. You know you can put yourself before

everybody and get very little respect. I did that in Dominick Street and I got very little...you know...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MK ...and I taught...that thought me a hard lesson. I think I was trying too hard, you know, and I've stopped it now and I've stopped all that now and I just do everything for the animals and...[speaking to dog] now dirty girl! The back door's not open.

KOD *Oh right.*

MK And, you know.

KOD *Thanks a million Martina I'm just going to stop this [recording] now.*

[Interview Ends]