

MAGDALENE INSTITUTIONS: RECORDING AN ORAL AND ARCHIVAL HISTORY



Oral History of Sinéad

Reference Code:	MAGOHP/53/ANON
Pseudonym?	Yes
Status:	Survivor
Keywords:	Sisters of The Good Shepherd Magdalene Laundry, Limerick; Sisters of Charity Magdalene Laundry, Donnybrook; Sisters of Charity Magdalene Laundry, Peacock Lane, Cork; Legion of Mary Regina Coeli Hostel; St. Joseph's Industrial School for Girls, Mallow, Co. Cork; escape attempt; transfers between laundries; institutionalisation in older Magdalene women; rule of silence.
Date of Interview:	30 th August 2013
Transcript:	42 pages
Number/Format of Audio Files:	1 x .wma files
Interviewer:	Dr Sinéad Pembroke
Also Present at Interview:	Maureen (interviewee's friend)
Records/Papers included:	None included
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Notes on Redaction and Transcription Process

Interviewee Initials: S
Interviewer Initials: SP
Interviewee's friend: M

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
Sinead	Interviewee
Sister Agnes	Nun in Mallow Industrial School
Sinead Joan	House name in Good Shepherd Laundry
Moira	Magdalene in Good Shepherd Laundry
Smyths	Family name of Interviewee's Aunt
Michael	Interviewee's brother
Patrick	Interviewee's brother
Ellen	Interviewee's friend
Maureen	Interviewee's friend present at interview
Roisin	Interviewee's Godchild (friend's daughter)

Basic Data from Interview

Name/Pseudonym	Sinead
When Born	1956
Born outside marriage?	Yes
Raised by	Her Mother until she was two years of age, then St Joseph's Industrial School for Girls, Mallow, Co. Cork, left at fifteen years of age
Education	Primary standard 6 th Class
Emigrated?	To the UK for a short time when she was fifteen years old
Physical ailments?	Did not say
Of Note	On arrival at the Good Shepherds Laundry all personal belongings confiscated from the Interviewee including her childhood teddy bear. When the hotels who used the laundry services were busy with weddings, the women and girls were forced to work extra long shifts till after 9pm at night to accommodate this.

	Knitted Aran jumpers in Peacock Lane Laundry and crochet scarves in Donnybrook Laundry which were sold and the money withheld from the Magdalenes. Interviewee secured a job for herself so she could leave the laundry.
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Order	Good Shepherd Sisters
Laundry	Limerick
From	1971
To	1973
Duration of stay	Two years
Age on entry	Fifteen
Entered Via	Mother, Nun, Social Worker
House Name/No	Yes
Haircutting/punishment?	Food deprivation for escape attempt
Circumstances of Departure	Transferred to Donnybrook laundry

Order	The Sisters of Charity
Laundry	Donnybrook laundry
From	1973
To	1975
Duration of stay	Two years
Age on entry	Seventeen
Entered Via	St. Marys Laundry, Limerick
House Name/No	No
Haircutting/punishment?	Did not say
Circumstances of Departure	Transferred to St Vincent's Laundry, Peacock Lane, Cork

Order	Sisters of Charity
Laundry	St. Vincent's laundry, Peacock Lane, Cork
From	1975
To	1977
Duration of stay	Two years
Age on entry	Nineteen
Entered Via	Donnybrook laundry
House Name/No	No
Haircutting/punishment?	Did not say
Circumstances of Departure	Went to a live-in position in a hospital in Cork

[Interview begins]

SP *So thank you very much, Sinéad [pseudonym], for doing the interview today. So the first question is can you tell me about your life, starting from the very beginning, so when you were growing up?*

S Right. I suppose it's when I was two, my mother, well, she had me out of wedlock, like you know, and she was working, I think it was in a college [location removed]. So I was kind of...she had me till I was two, I was living at home with her. And then I suppose at that age then, she couldn't manage. I suppose she was still in her job and the whole lot. So she must have had a chat with one of the nuns in the college, and they suggested about a convent down in Mallow, an industrial school in Mallow. So she brought me there then when I was two. So I was there then up to...I think I was fifteen. Yeah, I left then when I was fifteen and I went over then thinking that I could, you know, stay over in England then, and I got a job over there then in Woolworths. I used to love the job now in Woolworths. It was lovely. It was packing, packing the shelves and things and I liked it. And there was a girl there working and she was lovely and I was kind of palling with her, you know. And she used to drink out in the...do you know the way young ones would be drinking? She'd drink kind of by the field, there'd be a few of us there. But I wouldn't be drinking, I wouldn't be drinking at all. And somebody must have seen her drinking and I was in her company. So my mother...and I came back anyway. She said, 'where were you?' I said I was down with my friend down there and I said, 'they were all in the field, they were drinking'. I told her they were drinking. I said, 'but I wasn't. I wasn't drinking like'. And they don't be messy, they weren't messy, they just had a bottle and that was it. So she must have thought about that anyway. So was it two or three days after? She had my bags packed. So I came back from work. I says...I could see the big, do you know them old-fashioned brown cases?

SP *Yeah.*

S I had my case, she had a case packed, and I says, 'oh, what's going on?' She said, 'no, I'm after getting in touch now with Sister Agnes [pseudonym] in Mallow school,' she said, 'and I told her that you're palling around with the wrong people'. And I says, 'sure I'm not drinking or anything,' I said, you know, 'and I hand you up my wages from the job'. So she says, 'no, I wouldn't be responsible,' and she said, 'my husband' that would be my stepdad, 'he said that you might be a handful, you know. So he says that you'll have to go back to the convent again'.

So I couldn't go back then to the convent because I was too old then to go back to Mallow school. So Sister Agnes then got in touch with the Good Shepherds in Limerick and I landed up in Limerick then. I was sixteen then. I landed up. All I could see was the big buildings again and I was saying to her, 'please, please, please, please, please, Mam, don't, don't. I'll tell you I'll be good, I'll do anything for you, I'll be very good'. Like do you know the way you'd be like?

SP *Did your Mum bring you to Limerick?*

S She came up with Sister Agnes and I think it was...they call him...it was some social worker, a man anyway, and he came with my mother then. And she had to bring me in then because she had to sign. She'd to sign a form or something inside there. And she just put me at the door and said goodbye and was gone into the car. And I was shouting and screaming, tell her to take me away. And when I looked, she was gone. So I was there then with that social worker man. I didn't know who he was. And this nun, oh, when I saw her. She had a big veil, do you know, the old-fashioned things on them. They were like...I called them like a penguin. Do you know them kind of...

SP *Yeah.*

S ...big old-fashioned thing? So I was there anyway and she says, 'what's your name?' I said, 'Sinéad'. So she said, 'no, no, no. Have you any other name?' I said, 'no'. 'What name did you take for your Confirmation?' I said, 'Joan [pseudonym]'. Because I used to like the name Joan. So she said, 'you'll be now called Sinéad Joan'. And I stood up in my pants and very seldom I wear dresses and I had my jeans on me anyway, and your man went away and she brought me into the sitting room then and she came out and she had a skirt. So she said, 'you've to put this on you now'. If you saw it, a real old-fashioned thing. 'Oh God, no, Sister,' says I, 'you can't take my jeans off me'. I said, 'all I have in the bag is jeans'. So she took them off of me anyway and she handed me the skirt. And then there was other girls there then around my own age group and they would be my size and she got a few clothes off of them then. So that was that anyway. So then she said, 'I'll show you where your room is'. So she brought me up to this big long landing of the dormitories, as they called them, and showed me the room. And that was my room then. There was just the single bed there and there was a locker and a wardrobe and just the window. That was it. A small tiny thing. So I says to her, 'where will I wash my face?' So there was a kind of an old big place then with all the sinks and all in line, you know. So she

took out...oh, she examined my bag then and she took all my...say I'd perfume now and, you know, things I'd be after buying when I was working over in England for about eight months. She took all them off me anyway and she left me just the deodorant. And I had lovely soap from Woolworths because Woolworths had lovely stuff and I used to have lovely little things, like you know. And my hair was kind of long and I had lovely little slides and all them things. Oh, they were all gone, when I looked in my case, she had them all gone. And, all the fashion things she was taking out of my case like and she handed me back the case then and there was just two or three jumpers she left me in it and my underwear and stuff like that all right and socks. And she handed...she brought in the other clothes then and put them into my case. And I had a lovely teddy because I used to, do you know...I had one little teddy since I was about two and I used to love it. And well, when she took the teddy off of me, I nearly...I nearly attacked her. I was roaring crying for my teddy. And I know now I was sixteen at the time, but still the teddy to me was lovely, like you know. So the teddy was...she took the teddy off anyway. I didn't see the teddy no more. So then she brought me down then to this big place with all the washing things, like my first time ever to see a big laundry. I never saw a washing machine so big in all my life. So I says to her, 'what's this?' And she said, 'this is where you'll be working now'. Oh my God. And I looked around and all I could see was...everyone I saw that I passed were all old people. 'Oh my God,' I said to myself, 'what am I doing in here?' So I says to her, 'is there any young girls here?' 'Oh, there is, you'll see them now in a minute,' she said. And she says, 'this is where you'll be working now,' she said, in that, do you know, packing the...parcelling up the washing and counting them and things like that. So I said, 'I've no other choice only to say all right, you know'. So then a bell went then. I said, 'what's the bell for now, Sister?' 'It's tea now'. It was six o'clock then. It was time for their tea. So went in then. What did we have for the tea when I was there that night now? I think they'd a boiled egg or something. A boiled egg and toast, yeah. So when I was inside in the...I don't know what they'd call it, the dining room, I'll call it, the dining room anyway, I was looking around and there was *all* old people. And I was looking and looking and I was seeing is there any young ones. So I said to the woman beside me, 'where do the young girls sit?' And she said, 'there's one of them down there. There's another one'. There was only about five of us. So I said, 'oh yeah. How long are they here?' And she said...one of them said, 'there's one there now, she's only after coming there about three weeks before you. And the other girls are there about a year'. 'All right,' I said. So when I finished my tea then, I went down to one of the girls then and I was talking to her. So I asked her what her name was. I think she said Mairéad [pseudonym] or someone. I was talking to her away then and next minute this nun came right over to me. She said, 'you can't, there's no

talking in the dining room. You know, you can't talk to each other. There's no girls allowed...no young girls allowed to talk to each other'. So I didn't know what, do you know, I didn't know what she meant, so I said, 'oh right, right'. So that was it. After that then, where did we go? Where did I have to go after that then? After that then, after our tea then...oh, yeah, we went into this big room then and a television and we were just all sitting down, just watching the telly. And none of us had no interest in it, like do you know. And then about half seven then, the nun comes in. The bell rings again then. And all around the place then, they were all starting to kneel down. Says I to her, 'what are you doing?' 'We have to say the rosary now'. For God's sake! They said the rosary then. And after that then, up to bed. Up to bed then and I'm trying to think now, in Limerick, did they lock the door in Limerick? I don't think they locked my door at all. I don't think they did.

SP *Where you in a cell as well like?*

S Yeah, there were kind of all kind of small rooms, you know.

SP *In a small room.*

S Yeah. No, I don't think...

SP *It wasn't a dormitory or anything?*

S Oh, God, no. I don't think, no, no, my door wasn't locked. I wasn't locked in at all, no, no. That was grand anyway. But I was reading my comics. I had my *Four Marys*, my *Bunty* and my *Judy*. And I used to love the comics. I used to always follow the *Four Marys* [identifying information removed] and I used to follow the comics and them, and *Judy* and all them. And I was reading it away and I was having a laugh away reading the thing and I was kind of saying 'Maybe I'm getting out next week'. I was trying to...I was kind of starting to cry and then I would say, 'ah no, we'll be out next week, Sinéad. She was only putting you in here now as punishment'. Thinking to myself that I'd be out in another week. So that made me happy then for that night. So I was reading it away and the light went out. 'Oh God,' says I, 'the bulb is after going very quick'. *(Laughs)* So I got out of the bed and there was a woman next door to me and I knocked at her door and I says, 'I'm Sinéad, I'm next door to you'. So she comes out. I said, 'you wouldn't have a bulb?' Says she, 'for what?' I said, 'my bulb has gone in my bedroom and I'm reading my

comics'. And I said, 'I've no light'. 'You'll have no light now,' she says, 'until tomorrow morning,' she said, 'and it'll turn on at seven'. So she says, 'I have a flashlight'. But sure God help the poor soul. She says, 'I have a flashlight if you want it'. And I says, 'oh, yeah. Great'. So she says, 'I always have a flashlight because when the lights go off,' she said, 'at least I have the light to go up to the toilet, do you see, and I read'. She says, 'I'd be reading under the thing, you know.' So, ah sure God help her, the poor soul. She gave me the flashlight then like and then I was reading it away then, but my eyes were sore, like you know. Next morning then, a bell was going again then. Jesus, this is seven o'clock. Up to Mass then for half past seven. After Mass then, you'd come back then and you'd have your breakfast. What did I have for my breakfast? Do you know, I think I had cornflakes. Yeah, yeah. I don't think the food now when I was there, it wasn't too bad there at that time when I was there, no.

SP *Do you know what year was it?*

S I suppose that would be...what age now? I'll be fifty-seven now. What age would I have been? It might be in the seventies.

SP *You were sixteen when...*

S I was sixteen, now I'm fifty-seven now, so I'm not good at things like that now.

SP *Sorry, what year were you born?*

S I suppose it'd be...I was born 1956. I suppose it would be in the seventies.

SP *Yeah.*

S I'd say it'd be about the seventies. No, no, I got...no, I had cornflakes that morning.

SP *It would have been, yeah, the seventies.*

S Yeah, it would have been the seventies. No, I had cornflakes and I had...I didn't have toast. No, we didn't have toast. The odd time we would. I had cornflakes and I had bread and butter. Yeah, and yeah, that was all right then. After that then, went down to the laundries then. You'd be

working there then in the laundry away until around one o'clock or half twelve, I think, it was dinner. Half twelve around, half twelve or one then, the bell would go then and then everyone now they'd stop the machines and up for the dinner then. And no, do you know now, being honest, I know, sometimes I'd have the dinner and I wouldn't like the dinners, but at least they were all right. I got potatoes and I got vegetables and I got chops, and there'd be something else. But there might be something that you wouldn't like and you just wouldn't eat it, like do you know, if it wasn't. The food wasn't that bad. And we'd eat that then. And after that then, oh, you couldn't talk, you couldn't. None of us could talk to each other at work. And you couldn't talk. Because I was there yapping and the nun came down and I was wondering why the girl wasn't answering me and I thought she was dumb. I says like, 'she's fecking deaf this one'. I said, 'she must be deaf, this one'. And I was talking away to her and I was saying, 'is it awful?', I said, 'here? How long are you here?' I said. Do you know, small talk. And she'd be like this with the finger. I said, 'there' something wrong with her'. (*Laughs*) I was saying to myself, 'there's something wrong with her. Is she deaf?' And I went over to another woman and I said, 'is she deaf?' And she didn't answer me either. 'Oh, God,' I said, 'there's something wrong here'. So the nun comes over and I said, 'Sister, you see the two women there, are they deaf?' She said, 'no'. And says I, 'what's wrong? Are they dumb?' (*Laughs*) 'No. No, you can't talk'. She said, 'if you talk now,' she said, 'you'll go to your room'. 'So I can't talk?' 'No, you can't talk at work,' she said, 'you're here to work,' she said, 'and that's what you come in here for, to work'. She said, 'and that's it. So no more talking now. You can't talk,' she said, 'until you're finished work'. Oh, I couldn't talk at all. And you'd be dying to laugh or have an old joke, but you couldn't, like you know. And they'd be there, and the poor women, God help, they'd be talking to themselves, maybe one, and you'd be all over the place, you know. So after that then, you'd do all that then, and then you'd have your dinner. And then you work away then. And the...oh, and then we used to come back down, say now if the hotels, if there was weddings on and if they needed things, some nights you'd have to work late. I might have to work then till round about nine o'clock, half nine or something. And you can get no cup of tea after that like. After six o'clock, you wouldn't get no more to eat until the morning. At nine o'clock then, if you were working late, you might get orange juice. (*Laughs*) The orange juice and a biscuit. But you'd be tired then like. I'd say they'd be going on to the rosary then, but I'd say, 'Sister, I'm tired'. I'd be so tired, I'd go up to bed and she'd say, 'come down for...' 'No, no, no. I'm tired, I'm going up to bed'. And that would be your life then there, all that time then. And there was one morning then, oh, yeah, the first week I was there then, I had a week's work done. Now, says I, 'I must go

down for my wages'. Because I was used to my wages when I was working in Woolworths, you see.

SP *Yeah.*

S And I said, 'I'm going down for my wages'. So I went down anyway to her and I said to one of the women, 'where's the head nun?' And she said...we used to...we couldn't call them 'Sisters'. You had to call them 'Mother'. I used to have to call her 'Mother'. And I'd say whatever the nun's name was, and she'd say, 'she's up in her office'. So I went off up. And she said, 'what are you going up to her for?' 'Oh, I'm just going up to talk to her for a minute'. (*Laughs*) I go up to the office and then knock at the door and she'd say, 'come in'. And I'd say, 'hello Mother'. You know?

[Brief (irrelevant) conversation with third party removed]

S I went up to the office anyway, knocked at the door. So 'hello'. She says, 'hello, Sinéad Joan'. And I said, 'hello Mother'. So I said, 'Mother,' says I, 'I'm after working the whole week now,' says I, and 'it's seven o'clock and there's nobody coming around with my wages'. And she said, 'what?' I said, 'there's nobody coming round with my wages, you know, for my work for the week'. So she says, 'one minute'. So she came over, I don't know what she was doing. She told me to wait outside. She handed me this brown envelope and I was all delighted with myself. I thought I'd never go down to my bedroom to see how much I was getting. And I opened it, a pound. You know, the old money, the old...that thing.

SP *Yeah.*

S I was like...I went in the woman next door. Says I, 'did you get a pound?' Said she, 'I got nothing'. Says I, 'I went up to her because I worked a whole week'. I said, 'and this is my wages,' I said. So I went back up to her again and I said, 'Sister,' or, 'Mother, you must have made a mistake,' says I, 'because I only got...' 'That's all you're getting,' she said. 'You'll get no money here'. She said, 'that's it. And that's if you want deodorant or soap for the week,' she said.

SP *Yeah.*

S So I said, 'you're joking?' 'No, no, no,' she said, 'that's it'. That was it. I mean I did a couple of months there then, and one day then, there was another girl there, a young one, the same age as myself. And I was saying to her, 'will we run away?' And there she was, 'what?' 'Will we run away?' (*Laughs*) And then she says, 'will we?' I says, 'I think I'm going to run away'. 'And how will we get out?' I says, 'I don't know, but we'll get out somewhere anyway'. So I was there about eight or nine months, I'd say. Yeah. And I was kind of getting my bearings around the place, you see. So I said, 'you know the way that they go for a walk on a Sunday?' I said, 'when we go for a walk on Sunday with the old person, we'll lose her,' says I. 'It should be easy to lose her in town'. I said, 'sure she won't be able to run after us. We'll take off'. So the two of us took off anyway. She went one way. I think she had relations in Cork...in Limerick, and I didn't know no one. My aunt was away down in [location removed], so she was too far away, like do you know, for me to run down there. So she had somebody in the city. So she said, 'come up to my sister's house'. 'Oh no,' says I, 'no, she might ring them and we'll be back'. I said, 'no, you take off'. So I was walking around anyway and this Guard saw me. I was walking around, you see, and he says, 'hello, are you lost?' 'No, no, no,' says I, 'no'. And because I had my case, and I was sitting on my case because I said, 'she's gone home', I said, 'and I can't go up to her family,' I said, 'on my own. It's too far in [location removed]'. I said, 'my aunt,' I said anyway, 'will tell my mother and I'll be brought back'. So there was no use my going down to [location removed] So I sat on the case there. So he says, 'where are you after coming from?' I said, 'nowhere'. And then he said, 'where are you from?' 'I haven't a clue,' says I. So I said to him, 'the convent'. So straight away then brought me back. Oh Jesus! When I got back then, the nun was there then. Oh, she didn't feed me at all that night then. She told me I had to go up to bed then without the food then and the next day then, she brought me back down then, and I had to redo the work again then. And after another year then, I think I was transferred for someone up in Dublin then or something, for...

SP *So, sorry, they sent you back to Limerick, was it, the Guard?*

S Yeah. Yeah, into Limerick then.

SP *Yeah, yeah.*

S And then when I was there then, I was there another year then. I'd say I did two years there. Yeah. And I did two years there then. I think one day then, she called me and she said she was

transferring me up to Dublin. Says I, 'to Dublin? What am I going to Dublin for, Sister?' She said, 'they're short for someone,' she said, 'and you're very good,' she says, 'at the counting with the sheets'.

SP *The sorting?*

S At sorting, 'and there's somebody above,' she said, 'and I told him about you, and they want you to go up to Dublin, and she's coming down to Cork, or to Limerick'. So I was saying, what could I say like? I said, 'okay'. Went up there then. I was, I'd say, I was...it was the same kind of work again then and they didn't change my name up there now at all.

SP *They kept you...*

S They kept my name as Sinéad there. The only place my name was changed in was the Good Shepherds.

SP *Okay.*

S In Donnybrook, in Dublin now, my name...I kept my own name, Sinéad.

SP *It's all right. Don't worry.*

S They kept...

SP *I'm going to remove it.*

S ...yeah, I kept my own name there. But it was the same. It was all old people again and the same kind of work, and then all this old carry-on and do you know, you couldn't go out there. You couldn't...say now, do you know, to go to a picture in the evening there now. I mean I was sixteen, seventeen, nearly eighteen like. You couldn't go to a picture or, you know. If you were going out then, you had to have an elderly person with you and you were to be back for six o'clock for your tea, you know.

SP *And was it cells as well?*

S Oh, the same kind of things again, like you know.

SP *Yeah.*

S And I don't know, it was kind of hard old work and I used to think the poor women that were there, sure they weren't able at all for it. It was very sad.

SP *They were elderly as well.*

S They were elderly, you know, and some of them could hardly walk, and they tried to go down. I used to feel sorry for them. And I think up there then, some of them had a thing where they had to go to the toilet. Some weren't able to come out and they'd have to go to the toilet in a pot. And we'd see them going out in the morning, emptying the pot. Do you know, it was very sad, very degrading for them, God help us, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

S And I often heard one of them now crying, and I was talking to one of the women there one night then, and she was elderly, she was about in her seventies. To me now, she was very old that time. I was only eighteen, she was seventy. She was very...to me then, she was very old. And I had a grand little chat with her and I was asking her, 'how long are you here now?' And she said that she had a baby or something when she came in, and oh, her family put her in there then and she said she's in here ever since and she didn't know where the baby was and she was crying. And my heart went out to her, like you know. She said, 'when I see a young one coming in,' she said, 'I think of what age my child would be'. I suppose I was eighteen then, I suppose when she could see me then. She was crying when she was talking and I was asking her why she was crying, then she said, 'when I saw you coming in,' she said, I was making it up when she was saying, 'my daughter now would be about your own age group'. You know? Sure God help her. You know, little stories like that they'd be telling you now.

SP *Yeah.*

S God help them.

SP *When did you get the opportunity to speak to her?*

S Oh, actually, I made it my business because I heard her crying...

SP *Yeah.*

S ...inside in the bed. She was beside me.

SP *Oh, she was, ah, okay, yeah.*

S She was crying and I asked.

SP *Yeah, this was when you were like supposed to be asleep?*

S Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

S And she was crying and I made sure that I wanted to see who was sleeping next door to me.

SP *Yeah.*

S And the poor old person, she was there, and there was nobody watching her and I says to her, 'you were crying last night'. And she says, 'what?' I said, 'I often hear you crying going to sleep there'. She said, 'I was'. And then she told me then. I was asking her, I said, 'why are you upset?' And then she told me then. She says, 'I often think of her. It's when I see you walking down and I'll be thinking about...' She said, 'I was thinking about my daughter,' she said, God help her, 'and she'd be around your age group now'. She said, 'and do you know, after a while now,' she says, 'that'll go out of my head again. It's just when I see a new person, a new young person coming in, that'll bring it, I'll be thinking about her'. She said, 'how is she and I could be passing her on the road. She could be...there's a school there'. She says, 'sure she could be going to school there and I wouldn't even know she was there'. And that did happen, but there was years after that there was a school...a town...schoolgirls coming in like. And some of them,

God help us, I heard of one or two, their mothers were inside in the convent, and it's years after before they found it out like. It was sad.

SP *Yeah.*

S And you know, I feel sorry for the poor woman. But it was the same old little things like that, God help them. We couldn't even go out or you know, around night then, around knitting then and sewing and all this old carry-on. There was no life, like do you know.

SP *Yeah. So you were knitting Aran jumpers?*

S I was knitting Aran jumpers and then...oh, no, I was doing Aran jumpers in Peacock Lane.

SP *Oh, okay. Yeah.*

S What was I doing up in Dublin? What did we used to do in the evenings there? What used we do in the evenings there? God, what was it I used to do in the evenings there now? I think it was crochet. Yeah, I used to do crochet up there. You know the crochet scarves?

SP *Yeah.*

S Yeah, yeah. I used to like the crochet. Yeah, I used to do the crochet scarves and there was no...I used to love music. When I was in the school in Mallow, I loved. That kept me going in there, that I could go into a piano room. I could go into the music room and I could close the door and say, 'do not disturb'. And I would sit by that piano all evening and all day Sunday. And not God nor man would take me out of the thing, and I missed that when I went to them places.

SP *Yeah.*

S I'd nothing to pass my time.

SP *Yeah.*

S And just looking at...just sitting down looking at all the old people and saying, 'oh, my God. What a life'. And I missed that kind of...that got me away from it like, do you know, the music, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

S And I asked them there then in Dublin. I said, 'is there any music room?' 'Music room?' The woman laughed at me. 'There's no music here'. She said, 'you'll get no piano here'. I said, 'no?' 'No pianos here, Sinéad'. Oh right. And I said, 'do you know, in the other school,' I said, 'I was in, we had...we could go up if we wanted to, and we had a band in the school and all'. And do you know, it kind of, it made me a bit happy there, you know, up there. In them laundries, you couldn't be happy because there was nothing there for you to pass your time or...like in Mallow, I was happy because I was doing something that I liked. But in the laundry, all you're doing there is laundry. There was nothing. It was all...it was like in the army. Everything was regimental. A bell for this, a bell for that and that old carry-on, like you know. I was...

SP *Sorry to interrupt. You know the crochet?*

S Yeah.

SP *Was that to be sold on or was that just...?*

S I think they did, yeah. I think they sold that on.

SP *So you were actually making things?*

S Oh, I was making it, yeah I never got paid for that now. The only one I got paid for was for my Aran jumpers was from Clarinbridge. They might give us about...I think they might give you £10 or something, but the nun would take that. You wouldn't get that then unless you wanted to buy...say if I needed a jumper now or something, she might give me that then to buy a new jumper. You'd use your wages for it, ask her for it like.

SP *But you wouldn't actually get to keep the money?*

S Oh, no, no, she'd have it. And if you wanted to get something new then, like a new nightdress or something, she might give you that money then. That knitting money like.

SP *Yeah.*

S That's what I'd call it, my knitting money, you know. And sure the poor girls would be saying, 'We'll have another one done now, and we'll get another few pound for that, for my knitting'.

SP *Yeah.*

S Because Clarinbridge would pay them then, you see, and they used do it for some shop then too all right. Yeah. After Dublin then...oh yeah, in Dublin then, I said to myself one day, 'I'm getting out of here now' to myself. Because I said, 'I don't want to be in these places when I'm older at all'. I said...I started off when I was two, and I was saying, 'Jesus, if I don't make something of myself to get out, I'll never get out'. So I think I got a job for myself then in a house in Dublin. Yeah. I got a job in a house then in Dublin, but I didn't like her. She was...I think she was a ground hostess. A ground hostess, is it?

SP *Oh.*

S What do you call them?

SP *Yeah.*

S Yeah, she was a ground hostess. And her husband then was in some kind of a big job too. And they had one child. And I was minding the child now. She was a little small one, she was only three.

SP *How did you get the job?*

S I got it myself off the paper.

SP *Oh, you got it yourself?*

S Oh, yeah, yeah. When I go out on a Sunday, I'd get a paper and I'd throw away the paper before I come back, you see, because I'd be looking up the jobs. I was cute enough in my own little way. I was cute enough. I'd be looking up the jobs and then I'd take the number, you see, and I hadn't a clue how to use a phone, but I asked somebody in the shop, 'could you just ring that number?' And then I'd go onto the phone then and I'd say to the woman who'd make the phone call, 'do you know, will you ring that number then?' And she'd say, 'when they talk, I'll put you on'. And then I'd say, 'when I'm finished, what do I do then?' 'Just hang it up'. See, I couldn't make the call.

SP *Yeah.*

S But I'll ask a stranger to do it and then I'd know then, she'd say, 'I'm through now'. And she'd say, 'keep putting in the 10 pences now or whatever it would be'. You see? So I did that.

SP *And so on a Sunday you were allowed out, was it?*

S Oh, on a Sunday, we'd go for a walk, but it'd be an older person.

SP *Yeah.*

S You couldn't go on your own.

SP *Yeah.*

S Ah but sure, the old person that I'd go out with, I'd be saying to her, 'if you don't now, I'll run away. I won't come back with you'. *(Laughs)* I'd be threatening her. *(Laughs)* She'd be in trouble then, you see? Otherwise like, she wouldn't let me do it.

SP *Yeah.*

S 'If you don't let me make this call now, I'll not come back and you'll be in trouble then'. And she wouldn't be let off the ward then either, you see, or she wouldn't be in charge to bring a young one out, you see, no more.

SP *Yeah.*

S So God help us, the poor woman. I'd be blackmailing her. And she'd let me do it again. And I told her then I got a job, so she said, 'where is it?' And I think it was...where was the park now? It was Castleknock.

SP *Oh, yeah, yeah.*

S Castleknock. It was posh now.

SP *Yeah.*

S Castleknock, it was, I got a job. But I didn't like it.

SP *Yeah.*

S Didn't like it at all. So I went away from there then and I stayed in a hostel. There was a hostel in Dublin then.

SP *Okay. So just...*

S Regina Mundi.

SP *Oh yeah, yeah.*

S I was in there then. I went into Regina Mundi or whatever they call it.

SP *Is it Regina Coeli?*

S Regina Coeli, sorry.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

S That was it. Regina Coeli, yeah. I think it was up by Seán McDermott Street somewhere.

SP *Yeah, yeah, Yeah.*

S Up there I went then because I knew I didn't like the woman there. So I asked her. She told me there was a hostel. So she drove me down to the hostel and I was there in the hostel then.

SP *Sorry to interrupt, but you know when you were in Donnybrook and you got that job?*

S Yeah.

SP *Did you tell the nuns?*

S Oh, I told them. I told her I got a job.

SP *Okay.*

S And she says, 'how did you get it?' I said, 'when I was out on Sunday'. *(Laughs)* 'And how did you get the job?' I said, 'I was talking to...' I told her. I couldn't tell her I made the phone call because I'd get the poor woman into trouble. I said, 'I was talking to a woman in the café'.

SP *Yeah.*

S And I said, 'she told me that she was looking for someone to mind her child and I told her I'm free'. And I said, 'that's how that happened,' I said.

SP *Okay.*

S Because I couldn't get the poor woman into trouble. So they rang the number then.

SP *Yeah.*

S And she said that yeah, I did get the job, like you know. So they left me off anyway. But I only stayed about three weeks with her. I didn't like her.

SP *Okay.*

S And then she brought me down to Regina Coeli.

SP *Coeli yeah.*

S That hostel, oh I didn't like there at all. I was afraid of my life to go to sleep there.

SP *Yeah.*

S Oh Jesus. I used even go to sleep with my things there because I'd think that my stuff would be robbed. I was there anyway and I think the head person that was there then asked me where I was from originally. And I said, 'well, my relations don't bother at all with me,' I said, 'but I have an aunt in [location removed]'. And said she, 'where's that?'. 'County Limerick'. 'What's her name?' So I said Murphy's [pseudonym]. So she must have looked up the phone number and she must have got through to my aunt, you see.

SP *Yeah.*

S So my aunt...well, I was wanted on the phone then about three nights there. I was afraid of my life. I was glad to get out of there because I was nervous there.

SP *Yeah.*

S And my aunt was on the phone then and she said, 'I'm after ringing the Good Shepherd's,' she said, 'and they're taking you back down,' she said, 'to Cork, so to a place in Cork,' she said.

SP *This is your aunt who said that?*

S My aunt, yeah. So who did she get then? I think it was some social worker she got in touch with then.

SP *Okay.*

S And then I was landed down then in Peacock Lane. And it was the same. The same laundries and the same rigmarole again there, like do you know.

SP *Yeah. And so do you know Regina Coeli?*

S Regina Coeli.

SP *Who was it run by? Was it one of...?*

S Oh, it wasn't nuns at all anyway.

SP *It wasn't nuns?*

S No, no.

SP *Okay.*

S What were they now?

SP *It wasn't the Legion of Mary, was it?*

S I think it was the Legion of Mary, that's it, yeah.

SP *Yeah. Yeah., because I just vaguely remember.*

S Yeah, you're right there now, yeah, yeah. They got in touch then with the aunt, you see.

SP *Yeah.*

S And then that's how...and then I landed up then up in Peacock Lane then.

SP *Yeah.*

S And I was...what age was I going in in there then? I was about nineteen then going in there, yeah. And it was my twenty-first then. I woke up anyway after another year. I woke up. Do you hear me? I woke up. (*Laughs*) My twenty-first was coming up and I'm telling all the women, 'I'm twenty-one my birthday's coming up now,' says I. Because I mean, to me, the big thing now is twenty-one. 'My twenty-first is coming up,' I said. I was telling myself, 'I'll be twenty-one'. And here they were, 'really?'. I got up that morning and I said, 'today is your birthday'. And I was singing inside in the room. And of course a few of the women heard me. (*Laughs*) And I was singing 'happy birthday' to myself. I opened the door and this woman was saying, 'happy twenty-first'. You know, she was giving me a big hug. And she said to me what am I going to do, well, sure what I am going to? I can't go out sure. And she said, 'I've a nice bar of chocolate for you'. I said, 'you're very good'. So I got loads of...a few of them were giving me bars of chocolate, God help them, you know, for my twenty-first. And I was working in the laundry and there was this man. He used to bring in the work, you know. And I was after telling him the week before (*laugh*) that it was my twenty first was coming up. So he says, 'twenty one, yeah. And what would you like now, Sinéad, for that?' I said, 'do you know what I'd love now? I'd love a bottle of orange and a bag of Taytos'. Because I used to love cheese and onion. 'And a bag of Taytos cheese and onion'. So I said, 'will you bring them in to me?' And he says, 'I will'. I says, 'I'll remind you now again next week because you'll forget that'. 'Oh, no, no,' he says, 'I won't forget. I couldn't forget that now'. So the day of my birthday anyway, my birthday was the Sunday do you see, so I said, 'ah now, I have to wait for my Taytos tomorrow'. So Monday came and I made sure I saw that man. So he says, 'I have your Taytos and I have your orange'. Sure God help him. Well I hid that bag of Taytos and that bottle of orange (*laughs*) and if anybody went over to my corner, I'd be looking to see was that orange and Taytos, my celebration. (*Laughs*) I had to make sure that wasn't done away with because I'd have been very upset because that was my little party for myself and my little bars of chocolate. So I went upstairs and I hid them under my pillow. (*Laughs*) And I said, 'they'll be fine now'. And I had a lovely little party for myself. And I asked the woman next door would she like a sup of orange. (*Laughs*) And I gave her a square of chocolate and we had a little thing together then. But after that then, I says to myself, I said that night in bed then, never ever again, says I, when I'm leaving one of these places, I'll never venture into these places again, never'. And walking away like, on a Sunday like that. The woman was visiting St Patrick's Hospital. So I told her, 'I'm going in here. Is that a hospital?' She said, 'yeah'. 'I'm going in here now,' says I, 'and I'm going to ask for a job'. 'Sinéad, you can't'. 'Ah,' says I, 'I'll be fine, I'll be fine'. She said, 'I'll meet you up'. 'Oh, I'll meet you at the door,' says I, 'the gate here'. 'You won't be in trouble'. 'I'll definitely

come out and meet you,' says I. 'I don't know how long I'll be though'. So I says, 'I'll meet you there, so wait there, I said, and if I'm not there, come in. You know I'm only in there'. So I went off up anyway into this hospital and sure I thought it was a nun that was running the place, you see. I asked this woman, 'where is the matron?' And she said, 'she's in her office'. So I asked her to show me where the office was. So 'Matron' was written on her door. So I knocked at the door and I was surprised to see a lay woman like. I thought she was going to be a nun. *(Laughs)* And when I opened the door, I goes to her, 'oh!' And she said, 'what?' I goes, 'where's your veil, Sister?' She says, 'I'm not a nun at all,' she said. And I says, 'oh! Right'. So she asked could she help me like and I said, 'I'm looking for a job'. And she said, 'oh no, I've nothing at the moment, but I'll take your name'. So I said, 'right. Oh, could I sit down to talk to you?' So I sat down and made myself comfortable on her chair...on the chair. And I told her. I explained to her that I was only out on a Sunday, that I was up in the Peacock Lane Convent and I'd never get out of it. I said, 'there's women there now, they were my age going in and they're still there, God help them, through no fault of their own'. And I said, 'I'd be afraid that I'm going to be there for the rest of my life and I want to try and get out of them places, you know'. So I said, 'you'd never do me a big turn, a big turn, would you put me down on the books and if anything comes up, I'll be back every Sunday to you'. So she says, 'there'll be something coming up now soon,' she said. So I said, 'will I come up next Sunday?' She said, 'no, I'm off next Sunday now for the weekend'. So the following Sunday, she said to come up to her. Oh my God, I went back up to her anyway and God help us. She had a tray and lovely sandwiches and a cup of tea. Made me feel at ease for myself. And then she told me I could start a job then the following week, to tell them in the convent. I went back then to the convent and I told them that I was after getting this job then. And I said to her, 'Sister, I'm after getting a job now, I'm going on now...'. I was twenty-one-and-a-half then, and I said, 'you'll never see me in convents for the rest of my life. I'll never again go into a convent'. I said, 'I've enough of you and I'm going now and please God, and it's a live-in job, so I know I'll stay there because there at least there's nobody going to say where are you going. I can have my own little room and all, like do you know'. So I got that job then and I never looked back after that then. But when I went out, I found it hard though, you know, to try to mix with people and to cope and, you know, or even to count money and things like that like. You'd be kind of...if anyone asked you then where you're from, I'd always say I'm from [location removed]. And they'd say, 'who's in [location removed]?' And I'd say, 'ah, sure my aunt is there'. I wouldn't like them to know my business in case they might look down on me or...

SP *Yeah.*

S ...do you know, to feel that you weren't fitting in then. And then you'd be back to square one then again, you'd say, 'Jesus, I'm not fit now for the outside world either and I'll have to go back'. But I didn't want that to happen to me, you see.

SP *Yeah.*

S So I kind of...I used to kind of avoid situations now like if they're around the table now and somebody might be saying about their mother was sick or their sister, or do you know, all the conversations about family. I'd always try and pretend I'm just getting another cup of tea or something like that. I'll change the subject, the way they wouldn't have to ask me anything, you know. Or even relationships, to meet anyone. Do you know, it kind of...it will affect you like because you wouldn't...you don't know what to say to people, do you know, or I'd avoid kind of situations like that then. I'd rather not see the person. Even if you did like him, I'd say, 'no sure, I can't sure'. He's no one to meet, like do you know, things like that. And I'd avoid the situation then and, you know, it would affect you like that like. And you know, I think...and then, I lost out I think in family, in a family home, how to live in a family home and not knowing my...I mean I know I have brothers, but to me, they're strangers. I mean like I have friends in Cork now. I'd know them more than my own mother, do you know.

SP *Yeah.*

S You kind of wouldn't...if I met my mother now in the morning, I'd talk small talk to her, but I wouldn't...I'd still feel...I wouldn't still feel so comfortable with her that I could open up to her, you know, like I do with my other friends.

SP *Yeah.*

S That I could talk about anything to them now or if there's anything troubling you, you could talk to them. But even my mother today now, I'd avoid asking her any questions or...I just talk small talk to her, like you know.

SP *And you were saying like you don't even kind of like ask her why?*

S Oh, I never asked her. I never asked her. Never, never asked her why she put me into them places. She would...she never even told me about her being raped that time. It was my aunt when I was inside in Mallow school, you see.

SP *Yeah.*

S I was getting a bit crabbit then you see. And the girls...one of the girls in the class used to say to me, 'you're all orphans'. And I used to say to her, 'what's an orphan?' And she'd say, 'you've no mother and father'. 'Well, I must have a mother,' I said, 'because there's this woman, she comes over from England,' I said, 'and the nun is always telling me she's my mother, so she must be my mother'. 'Ah, she's only telling you that,' she said, you know. So (*laughs*) in the end anyway, I asked my aunt and she said, 'she is'. So I said, 'why did she put me in here so?' I said, 'because if you're the mother,' says I, 'you're not in here'. And she says, my aunt...my mother would never even have told me that she was raped or anything. It was my aunt had to tell me. Because I was writing my mother awful letters telling her that she...I'd have been better off if I had been up for...and I would be about ten or eleven now...and the girl...one of the town girls in the school had to help me to write the letter. I used to say to her, 'I'd have been better off if you'd put me up for adoption instead of putting me away and what you did, like you know'. And I used to say, 'I'll never forgive you for it, you know, for what you did to me, like you know'. But today now, she could...I never asked, I never brought up anything why she did it or she didn't to me either.

SP *Yeah.*

S She never said, 'No, Sinéad, I'm sorry for putting you away when you were that small now' or never...there was no...even from my own brothers, she'd tell them I was adopted. She didn't tell them who I was until I was in my forties. No, she said, she was ashamed herself because she was raped. 'Ah, for God's sake,' I said. Sure them days, you know, them days, that time now, it was all, you know...

SP *Yeah.*

S ...you know. But I said, 'they'd have understood that'. But I said, 'they thought...' I mean they knew themselves who I was, but they were just waiting for her to say it, you know. So things like that, I wouldn't be able to talk to her about now or even still today now, I wouldn't discuss things like that.

SP *Yeah.*

S Or she never, never for my birthday sent me a card. Christmas. When I was in all them schools and laundries, never. Never got a card off of her or a letter or any...even for my twenty-first, I thought the nun was joking. I said, 'Sister, you have to have a card. You have to'. I was contradicting her. She had my card and she just wasn't giving it to me because I just couldn't believe she wouldn't even send me a card thinking of me, saying to herself, 'well, my daughter is twenty-one today now, you know. I'll come up to see her'. Or you know, or over to see me or anything like that. And do you know, all that then would kind...you really think then that you're not wanted. You weren't wanted. And my favourite song when I was growing up was 'I'm nobody's child'. Do you remember that song?

SP *Yeah.*

S *(Singing) I'm nobody's child.* That was my...anyone asked me to sing a song, that was my song. Yeah, my mother would be laughing. That's my song, I'd say. And do you know, she never...only when I was coming in then to my mid-forties, I couldn't believe it, I got a card, a birthday card. My first card. I've nothing now that my mother in...I've nothing that she ever bought me. Like she'd send a birthday card now, that would be it. I've no like jewellery that she'd be after giving me. I've no jumpers she's after buying me. I've nothing.

SP *And do you want to say, what I've found really...how you went over to England for her and everything that time?*

S Yeah. Oh, that's right, then.

SP *Even though she hasn't done anything?*

S Oh, yeah. I was, yeah, it was only about three...two years ago, I think. Two. Yeah, it was about two years ago. Well, she was kind of in touch. She'd ring the odd time there now. On a Sunday, she'd ring, but very seldom I'd ring her, like do you know, and she'd say then, the first thing she told me, imagine, at forty-five, and she was telling me, the first time she'd ever told me after the phone call, 'I love you'. I was just flabbergasted on the phone, do you know. 'Do you hear this one?' To myself like. I mean if somebody else told me they loved me, I'd say, 'oh yeah, I love you too,' like do you know. But from my own mother after forty-five years to be telling me that then. Sure, I was grown up then, do you know. I mean when I needed the loving and the relationships and things like that, when I needed her, she wasn't there. So this phone call came one day anyway to me on my phone and it was my mother. So she was saying, 'how are you?' I said, 'I'm grand'. 'And how are things?' I said, 'fine'. And then she says, 'I might have to go into hospital'. [Irrelevant conversation regarding refreshments removed] So I says, 'oh, sorry to hear that,' I said. I said, 'what's wrong?'. She said, 'I have to get my hip done'. 'Oh, right'. Ah, says I, 'sure you'll only be about a week in there,' I said, do you know. She said, 'I want to ask you,' she said, 'I want to ask you a big favour,' she said. So I said, 'if I can. If I can help, I will,' I said. So she said, 'you'd never be able to come over to me for two weeks?' So I says, 'why?' She said, 'I can't,' she said. 'Patrick's [pseudonym] wife and Michael's girlfriend, I wouldn't really know them'. I was going to say to her, 'sure you don't know me either'. Do you know, I was going to say it, but I said, 'don't'. And I says... 'Do you know, to get me dressed in the mornings now and to give me a wash and things like that, do you know'. So I says, 'leave it with me,' I said, 'I'll get back'. That was on a Sunday she rang. I said, 'leave it with me,' I said, 'I'll get back to you during the week'. I said, 'when are you going into the hospital?' She said, 'two weeks' time'. So I said, 'I'll ring you maybe Wednesday'. So I had to go down then and get things organised, like do you know. Go down to my credit union and ask could they help me out like because I didn't want to...do you know, I'd feel awful guilty then if anything happened to her, even though I really didn't know her. But I was saying, at the end of the day then, I was saying, 'she's my mother'. And if anything happened to her then, I'd say 'oh my God, Sinéad, why didn't you go over?' Do you know, she'd make me worse then.

SP *Yeah.*

S I'd be really going mad then saying something happened her because I didn't go over to help her. So I rang her on the Wednesday then and my godchild then booked the flights. So I told her I was going over then on the Saturday. So I flew over then and I was there for the two weeks

then. But still, over there now, there was nothing about talking about why she put me away and why she never took me back out or wasn't saying...oh, the only thing she ever, ever said to me was, 'I'm very proud of you'. She said that over there then. And I said, 'what? Very proud of me, why?' 'The way you've made a good thing of your life,' she said, 'you're not on drugs or drinking or...you're a very respectable person and I'm so very proud of you'. And I was saying...all I said to her that day was, 'and it's all with my own making'. That's the way I said it to her. And I said, 'do you know,' I said, 'mam, it's all friends'. I said, 'if you've good friends and if you know how to choose your friends,' I said, 'I always say, I always have in my head show me your friends and I'll tell you who you are,' I said, 'and if I was friends now and I didn't think that they were suitable for me, then I wouldn't be bothered'. I said, 'I always make sure I've good friends like and ones that wouldn't put me astray because I didn't want that, like do you know'. I said, 'I always try to stay on the straight and narrow, you know'. But that's the only time she ever said to me that to me was that she was proud of me, you know. And I came back then and after that then, she kind of rings me now every kind of two weeks. But it's only in my late forties that she kind of started getting in touch with me because she was getting older herself then, you see.

SP *Yeah.*

S And I suppose now, she never said she regrets it, but now I know myself that she does. She does regret what she did, like I'd say.

SP *Okay. Yeah.*

S Putting me away that now she needs a daughter. She needs because I don't think she likes Michael's girlfriend and I don't think she gets on then with Patrick's wife. They don't get on. The two of them don't get on. And you see, then the only one then that she could have was me.

SP *Yeah.*

S See, I suppose. Now, I'd say she...she doesn't say it, but I know myself she does regret it. I'd say she's sorry all right, but she won't. She's very stubborn. She won't say it.

SP *And why won't you bring it up?*

S No, I couldn't. I wouldn't like to hurt her either.

SP *Yeah.*

S No, I wouldn't hurt her, like you know. I'd be saying, 'she's old now and I wouldn't like to upset her again then,' and I'd be saying, 'here, you know'. Even though, and her husband died now three...he's seven years dead now nearly, five or six years dead. But God help us, she misses him, oh, she does. She misses him. It's like somebody now took her hand away from her, you know. And then for me to be bringing all this up to her again and I says, 'I couldn't be bothered'. I'd be saying, do you know, what's done is done. And touch wood, I says to myself, 'I'm getting on in my own life and I'm happy with my life now and I don't want to be...' That to me now would be going back in time and I don't want to. I always look to the future.

SP *Yeah.*

S That happened. That's then. This is now. That's the way I look at my life. I'd be saying 'That's in the cupboard now and now it's closed'.

SP *Yeah.*

S And now it's a new chapter again. That's the way I always used to deal with things until all this about the laundries came up.

SP *Okay.*

S Then I says, 'my box has to open again in my head like'.

SP *Yeah.*

S When the laundries (*laughs*) came up, sure they were telling me, 'Sinéad, go on about the laundries now'. 'That box is closed,' I said, 'and it's never going to open,' I said. And then I was going on and on and on. And then my friend was saying, 'Sinéad, the laundries. You worked in the laundries, girl. You should have been paid. And why should you suffer now like that?' And

do you know, well, I was thinking after, I said, 'do you know, you're right. What was due to me is due to me,' I said, and I said, 'I'll open my box'. So in my head, the box opened again then.

SP *Yeah.*

S And when that's all finished now again, that box will close and that'll be it. You know, that'll...my life has to go on because if I had to think of all the...if I had to get up every morning and feel sorry for myself and say, 'I was in this laundry, I was in that laundry,' I'd get depressed. So I have to kind of get up in the morning and say, 'this is another day, another day and life is good'. Do you know the way you'd be?

SP *Yeah.*

S That's the way I am and I'm a kind of a happy-go-lucky. Like my friend now, she's the same. We're happy-go-lucky.

SP *Yeah.*

S And we used to say, she's like myself. She has that in the box all the time like that.

SP *So you use humour to...?*

S Yeah, I laugh about things, yeah. I laugh away. Sure if somebody now told me somebody died, I'd start laughing. It wouldn't be that I wouldn't...it's just that I'd laugh.

SP *Yeah.*

S You know, I'd laugh things off, like you know. And deep down now, no. I'd be just smiling away about things and somebody would tell me something and oh, I'd laugh.

SP *Yeah.*

S I was in a company now one time and there was this girl and she was reared with her family now, God help us, but she must have had an awful time, God help us. But we were out one

night in a pub, and this is a couple of years back now. And this woman...oh yeah, this woman, she was in the pub anyway. She was a youngish woman, like you know. And after a couple of drinks, she started to cry, you see. So I was there looking at her and I said, 'are you all right?' And she said, 'do you know what I'm thinking of now?' She says, 'I'm thinking of the time...' That she was raped or something, you know. And do you know, if I was like that now, I'd have been thinking about my mother that time, you know. And I says, 'ah, sure for God's sake,' I said, 'sure these things happen,' I says, 'look, don't be getting upset about it'. I said, 'isn't that your daughter, isn't she a beautiful girl?' I said. 'isn't she getting on great?' I said, 'good God,' I said, 'just put that in a box there look and close it'. And she said, 'no. When I drink,' she said, 'I get very upset about things. I think about things that happened to me,' she said. And I said, 'do you know, I'd be the opposite'. Do you know, I wouldn't think about things. So like say now, if I...that's why I gave up that kind...there was another friend and myself now, we used to go out with her, but we gave up her because I said, 'do you know now, being honest,' I said, 'Ellen [pseudonym], the next time she asks us to go out for a drink, we're not going out with her at all because she'd bring you down, you know. She would bring you down and she'd upset us'. And I said, 'listening to her now,' I said, 'she's not thinking positive at all'. I said, 'she's thinking of her past all the time'. And I said, 'I don't want to be in a situation like that at all, negativity'. Negativity, is that what you call it?

SP *That is, yeah.*

S 'I don't want to be around anyone that's negative like that now,' I said, 'I like to be positive'. And that was it. We never...I never bothered then. We never bothered going out for a drink with her anymore. If I see something like that, if there's somebody putting them down and crying about this and crying about that and...I know now it'd be hurtful to them all right, but all the time, all the time. You'd be saying, 'oh my God'. Because they would bring you down.

SP *Yeah.*

S And I'd be saying I don't want to be around someone like that at all then. There was loads now that I just dropped like that.

SP *Yeah.*

S Because they were very negative. And when I'd come home, then I'd be kind of upset myself.

SP *Is this friends outside of the laundries or...?*

S Yeah, outside.

SP *Yeah, yeah.*

S Like ordinary people now kind of.

SP *People that you make friends with now?*

S Some of them now would have awful lives too, but they'd be depressed about it and they'd be crying about it.

SP *Yeah.*

S And I'd be saying, 'oh my God,' I said. 'If they only knew'. To myself like, 'if they only knew. They don't know how lucky they are'.

SP *Is that how you got through? You know, while you were inside...*

S Yeah. Yeah.

SP *Was it through positivity?*

S Oh it was. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

SP *Did you have sort of dreams, like hopes and dreams and stuff?*

S I used to always say to myself, 'Sinéad, someday, you'll get up and you won't always...you won't be here. There's no way you'll be here at that woman's age'. Whatever that woman's age would be there now. You won't be here.

SP *Okay.*

S Think positive now and God is good. I would say that.

SP *Yeah.*

S And I'd say, 'God is good. You'll head out all right'. *(Laughs)* And I have that. Do you know the way you'd have it in your mind? Every night going to bed, 'I'll get out, I'll get out, I'll get out'. I'd be like that to myself in my head.

SP *Yeah.*

S And that put me through because I'd no music there. The music in the other place kept me going, but I had nothing in the laundries. So all in my head was positive all the time.

SP *Yeah.*

S 'You'll get there'. I'd be saying to myself at night. 'You'll get there'. I'd say if anyone heard me they'd say, 'She's off her game'. *(Laughs)*

SP *Did the nuns ever tell you that you were ever going to be released?*

S Oh no. They'd never tell you that. Oh God, no, no.

SP *So as far as you were concerned, you would never be released?*

S Oh, no, no.

SP *I mean I know inside your head you were saying it.*

S Oh, I was saying it. I will.

SP *But they never told you?*

S Oh, they'd never say now, 'we'll get a job for you' or 'we'll look for a job. You know, you're a good worker'. Or...sure they wouldn't.

SP *Like because when you were in the industrial school, you would have had...you knew that up until sixteen and then you were let out.*

S Oh, yeah. Sister Agnes, the head nun there in Mallow School, she was very good to me.

SP *Yeah.*

S She knew I loved the music. And when my mother then took me out then out of there, I was fifteen. I was only over there with my mother then about three or four months anyway.

SP *Yeah.*

S And Sister Agnes used to always...was saying to my mother, 'you're taking her to school over there, over to finish her schooling', because I never finished my school.

SP *Okay.*

S I only went as far as sixth class. Because she said, 'Sinéad will go places,' she said, 'in her music'. She said, 'she's forever at music,' she said, 'she'll go places'. And do you know, I was going mad because I'd do it all by ear. But I'd be saying, 'no, I'll be too old now to learn'. But that time then, when I was going into my thirties, and I often used to say, 'Jesus, it's a pity I never did my music'. But I'd be sitting there and I couldn't be bothered now. I'd be too old to learn that now. But I know myself, I would have made something of myself, like do you know, that kind of a way.

SP *Yeah.*

S And all I needed was someone just to push.

SP *Yeah.*

S Instead of, do you know, like instead of putting me into more institutions.

SP *Yeah.*

S Instead of just saying, 'she'll go places now, that woman' or 'that girl there' at that time, at that age like. If somebody just to say, 'we'll put her into the school of music'. Or just somebody...all I needed was someone just to push me because my life would have turned in a different direction like, do you know what I mean?

SP *Yeah.*

S I know I'm still proud of myself like.

SP *Yeah.*

S But I mean I'd have done a lot better because I know myself I could've had, like do you know. With my music and everything. Couldn't I, Maureen [pseudonym]?

M Yes.

S Yeah, everyone always says that to me because they say for music. I wouldn't be now academically, I wouldn't be that good at that, but music-wise...

SP *Yeah.*

S Oh, I would. I could hear a tune now on the piano there or on the radio and I could say now, even today, I could take that now and I'd listen and listen and play it away until I have the tune off myself. That's the way I do it, you see. But in all them kind...I lost out on all that kind of thing. Education-wise now, I wouldn't be academic at all now really.

SP *What did you work at after?*

S It was always just cleaning.

SP *Cleaning.*

S Cleaning jobs, that's all we got, wasn't it?

M Yeah.

SP *So you then went to work in the hospital.*

S Yeah.

SP *But then afterwards it was other cleaning jobs?*

S It was all cleaning jobs. Didn't it, Maureen?

SP *Oh, did you stay in St Patrick's for a while?*

S Oh, no. I was never in St Patrick's.

SP *Oh, not St Patrick's, sorry, the hospital that you got the job in?*

S Oh, St Luke's.

SP *St Luke's, sorry, I got the wrong hospital.*

S Yeah. Yeah. Oh, when I left Peacock Lane then...

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

S ...I stayed in St Luke's then.

SP *Yeah.*

S I stayed there then.

SP *And that's where you stayed...?*

S I stayed there then for...how long was I in St Luke's for? I think it was two or three years, wasn't it?

M Yeah, I'd say it'd be about three maybe.

S Was it three? About three years then, yeah. You see, what was wrong with me then, I couldn't hold down a job.

SP *Yeah.*

S I was going from one job to another. I didn't know what I was doing, didn't know where I was going, you see, until I got myself, do you know, organised. Do you know, I could stay in a job today. I was surprised I stayed three years there.

SP *Yeah.*

S Do you know, you'd be kind of saying...you were trying to figure out where you belonged.

SP *Yeah.*

S Do you know, and then to try and get your bearings, say, 'will I be happy here, will I?' And then, do you know.

SP *Yeah.*

S It kind of all affects you all right like. I think it would. In me now, in the psychological part of me now, it's just that I missed out on things in life.

SP *Yeah.*

S That I could have made something better of myself and I know I could have had all right really if I had the right people to guide me along the way, like you know.

SP *Exactly.*

S And in family life and do you know, even meeting someone to settle down with. I'd love to have. Sure, my friend, Ellen [pseudonym] there now, she's my best friend. She's very good to me, isn't she?

M She is.

S I remember now when she was pregnant with Róisín [pseudonym], she comes down. I was in a flat [location removed] in Cork and I was gone from the places a while. And she'd come down anyway and she was telling me she was pregnant, you know. And I was saying, 'oh, I'm delighted for you, Ellen, I'm delighted for you'. And, when the child Róisín was born then, she comes down. Oh my God, she was a little dote. Oh, I was afraid, afraid even to lift her. Afraid of my life I'd leave her fall. All this, and she used to come once a week. She was living out in the country [location removed] and she used to come every Thursday to me. And this Thursday she came anyway and I said to her, 'Ellen, you know me now, I have to tell you,' I said. Do you know, she'd tell you that. I mean I often used to say it to her and she'd be laughing at me. I said, 'do you know when you came down and you told me you were pregnant?' I said, 'I was delighted for you,' I said. 'But, deep down,' I said, 'Ellen, I was very jealous of you'. She says, 'really? Were you?'. I said, 'I was,' I said. 'Being honest with you, I was'. I was very jealous of her then. I said, I told her like. And she gave me a big hug. 'I know what you mean,' she said. And then when I could see Róisín walking, I was saying, 'ah, sure you have everything, you know'. I said, 'Isn't it nice, like you know?' And I used to be saying and she used to be skitting and she used to say to Róisín, 'Sinéad used to...'. I was, Róisín, I was very jealous of your Mam when she...'. You know, I used to say, you know, I missed out on all that. And then for relationships then, you know, you don't know. You could kind of say, 'I don't want to be getting too attached to them'. And then if they got too attached to me at all, they were gone.

SP *Yeah.*

S Oh, they'd be gone. If they said, 'I'm mad about you,' I'd say, 'what are you mad about me for?' To myself then at night, I'd say, 'is he mad telling me he loved me? Is he? What does he want?'

Do you know. *(Laughs)* I'd be saying, 'there's something wrong with him'. Do you know, you had no one to say that they loved you growing up or...

SP *Yeah.*

S ...to give you an old hug. And if they did then, I'd be saying, 'Jesus, there's something wrong here, there's something wrong with him'. But you know, that would affect you. It would affect your life, like you know.

SP *Yeah.*

S And if they said, 'Sinéad, I love you,' and I'd , 'oh yeah, yeah'. But they'd be gone tomorrow. They'd be gone the next day because I'd say, 'There's something wrong with him'.

SP *Yeah.*

S How could he love me like and my mother didn't even love me? And I felt, do you know, you feel you weren't wanted all your life and why is this man now saying he loved me for? And I'm like, 'off you go'. I'll be gone off him because the next thing, he'll be asking about my family'. *(Laughs)* I'd be saying, 'I'll be gone then'. But in things like that now, do you know, you'd have no...your confidence, is it confidence?

SP *Yeah.*

S And you'd feel if somebody is showing any affection to you, you'd back back from them. There's always going to be, what would you say now? Even still now, that's why I don't want to meet nobody.

SP *Yeah.*

S I couldn't be bothered. There's always...they get...

SP *A barrier?*

S There's a barrier. They can only go to here, but I won't open that. I won't open my door for them anymore then. Do you know, this door that I locked up. This door that's locked. But if they come too near that door then, it's still slammed. They're not coming in and they're gone then.

SP *Yeah.*

S See, that's the way I have things in my head, you see. That's my door. I have it like that. Do you know the way?

SP *Yeah.*

S But that kind of...it did.

SP *Yeah.*

S Psychologically that part now, it did affect me like that all right. Other than that, thanks be to God, that I didn't go on to...I have no drink problems or I'm not on any medication or, you know, things like that. The only fault I have is my cigarette, actually, God help us.

SP *(Laughs)*

S Sure, and my friend would be killing me. 'When are you giving them up? When are you giving them up?' She's like a broken record. *(Laughs)* But at the end of the day, I says, 'that's my friend. That's my friend at night'.

SP *Yeah.*

S You know, I can sit back at night. I know now *(laughs)* they're a killer like. But that's my little friend at night then. I'd be saying, 'come on, friend. Have a cup of tea, my friend is with me'. Do you know the way?

SP *Yeah.*

S That's the way, you know, and that's the way I go then with that. And my friend would be, 'Are you still on them things? Oh God, give them up, give them up'. But I would say to her, 'that's my little friend, do you know'.

SP *Yeah.*

S That's the way I'd be then. That would calm me a little bit. Well, I'm not mad like or anything like that.

SP *No.*

S But it's like a sedation to me. Just like going down, settling me down then in the evening and relax, like you know.

SP *Yeah.*

S I'm happy out then with that. And thank God now, my life is grand now, thank God, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

S I would never, never, ever, ever again would want to see one of them places.

SP *Yeah.*

S No, no. I couldn't. Even my friend goes up to visit. Do you think I'd go up? No, I wouldn't go up there. I'd be saying to her, 'no, no, no, no'. I wouldn't. No, no, no, no.

SP *Well, Sinéad.*

S Sinéad.

SP *Thank you so much.*

S You're welcome.

SP *There's just one question I just wanted to ask. It's actually about when you ran away.*

S Oh yeah, yeah.

SP *Now, like did they punish you when you got back?*

S When I went back.

SP *Or did they like cut your hair or anything like that?*

S Oh, no, no, no.

SP *Did you ever get your hair cut? Did they ever cut your hair?*

S No, they never cut my hair.

SP *So sorry, just because I know this happens with other people. That's why I was just asking.*

S Oh no, they didn't do anything like that now.

SP *Okay.*

S No, when I came back then that day, I was straight to my bedroom like.

SP *Yeah.*

S I didn't get...the only thing I missed out on that night was my tea and I was starving the same night.

SP *Yeah.*

S My tea. No, that was it then, no.

SP *Yeah. And then they moved you?*

S There was some of the nuns now...

SP *Didn't they?*

S Oh, they did.

SP *Yeah.*

S There was some of the nuns nice there now all right. There was others then, they weren't. There was some nice, wasn't there, really now? There was some nice.

SP *Yeah, yeah, yeah.*

S Because they weren't all like that type, do you know. I'd say the others, some of them were bad, but the other ones were fine, do you know, you know.

SP *Yeah, and were you ever asked to be a Child of Mary?*

S Oh God, no. Oh janey, I'd tell her, 'go away out of that'. *(Laughs)* Child of Mary, I'd say to her, 'you must be joking'. *(Laughs)* No way, no way. Oh yeah. Oh, this cigarette bill...if they'd be smoking cigarettes, that's what I'd say to your woman. I was there and I was saying, 'there's a lovely smell in there'. *(Laughs)* We didn't know it was a cigarette, you see. And this woman said, 'do you know what that smell is now, Sinéad Joan?' And I'd say, 'what?' 'That's the smell of a man'. And I'd say, 'isn't it lovely?' *(Laughs)* I'd say to her, 'oh God, the smell of that is beautiful'. And then I'd says...that was grand then. And two days after, one of the workers was there, you see. He was a man.

SP *Yeah.*

S So I went reeling over beside him like and I was like this now *(sniff, sniff)*.

SP *(Laughs)*

S And I says to him, do you know what I said? 'There's not a smell (*laughs*) there's no smell of a man off you'. Honestly, he was looking at me stupid. Says he, 'what?' I said, 'no, the smell of man I get, it's not off of you anyway'. I'd say the poor man must have thought I was off of my game. And it only happened a week after that, this man was coming in for the laundry and he was by, you know, the sliding door thing and he was smoking. And I happened to be out there at the time bringing out the packing, the things for them. And I smelled that lovely cigarette smell. I didn't know it was the cigarette smell at all at that stage. And that man that I was after saying that to, I said, 'that's the smell now,' says I. 'That's the smell of the man I was saying to you'. And he started skitting laughing at me. 'Sinéad' he says, 'come here'. He said, 'that's not a smell of man at all. That's cigarette smoke'. 'Oh, is that what that is?' 'Oh, who told you that?' I said, 'one of the women told me that's the way a man smells'. (*Laughs*) Well, I'd say he went home saying, 'Jesus, what kind of people are in that place?' God help us, huh? Ah janey.

SP *Well, Sinéad, thank you so much. Thank you. It's wonderful.*

S You're welcome.

SP *And it was wonderful speaking to you. Thank you both of you for being so honest.*

S You're welcome.

SP *No, really, thank you.*

S All right. (*Laughs*)

[Interview ends]