



## Oral History of Bridget O'Donnell

<b>Reference Code:</b>	MAGOHP/45/ANON
<b>Pseudonym?</b>	Yes
<b>Status:</b>	Survivor
<b>Keywords:</b>	Sisters of Charity Magdalene Laundry, Donnybrook; Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of Refuge Magdalene Laundry, Sean McDermott Street; St Francis Xavier Industrial School, Ballaghderreen, Co Roscommon; Convent of Mercy, Athlone; St Patrick's Mother and Baby Home, Navan Road; St Brendan's Psychiatric Hospital, Grangegorman; Board of Health; Dublin Board of Assistance; Banada Industrial School, Sligo; medical abuse; house name of Satan used; Barnardos; Legion of Mary; St Anne's Hostel, Stillorgan; difficulties with solicitors at Residential Institutions Redress Board.
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<b>Transcript:</b>	100 pages
<b>Number/Format of Audio Files:</b>	2 x .wma files
<b>Interviewer:</b>	Dr Katherine O'Donnell
<b>Records/Papers included:</b>	No
<b>Access Conditions:</b>	Interviews are freely available to the public. Immediate release of transcript.  Anonymised interviews are freely available to the public. Immediate release of transcript; interviewee's identity will not be revealed in the future.
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## Notes on Redaction and Transcription Process

Interviewee Initials: BOD

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
- Some sections have been removed for confidentiality reasons
- One section removed at request of interviewee

### List of Pseudonyms

<b>Bridget O'Donnell</b>	Interviewee
<b>Bridget Dunne</b>	Interviewee's Maiden Name
<b>Noeleen Dunne</b>	Interviewee's Mother
<b>Jonathan Taylor</b>	Interviewee's Maternal Grandfather
<b>Margaret Taylor (nee Dunne)</b>	Interviewee's Maternal Grandmother
<b>Maureen Dunne</b>	Interviewee's Maternal Great Grandmother
<b>Theresa Clarke</b>	Registrar at Birth of Interviewee's Mother
<b>Patrick Kelly</b>	Industrial School Inspector in Sligo
<b>Sean</b>	Young boy in Interviewee's Mother's house
<b>Henry</b>	Interviewee's Eldest son
<b>Pearse/Martin Kavanagh</b>	Interviewee's Father
<b>Sister Agnes</b>	Nun in Convent of Mercy Athlone laundry
<b>Sister Maria</b>	Nun in Convent of Mercy Athlone laundry
<b>Auntie Maria</b>	Nun who was also known as Sister Maria
<b>Martha</b>	Worked in Carmelite Priest's house
<b>Sister Breda</b>	Nun in Ballaghderreen Orphanage
<b>Sister Regina</b>	Nun in Ballaghderreen Orphanage
<b>Frances</b>	Magdalene woman in Athlone laundry
<b>Irene</b>	Magdalene woman in Athlone laundry
<b>Sister Jude</b>	Nun in Convent of Mercy Athlone Orphanage
<b>Father Benedict</b>	Carmelite priest in Donnybrook
<b>Patty</b>	Magdalene woman in Donnybrook laundry
<b>Deirdre</b>	Magdalene woman in Donnybrook laundry
<b>The Smiths</b>	Family from Moore Street
<b>Siobhan</b>	Magdalene woman in Donnybrook laundry
<b>Carol Ann</b>	Magdalene woman in Donnybrook laundry
<b>Philomena Murphy</b>	Child in Ballaghderreen Orphanage
<b>Cynthia O'Reilly</b>	Novice Nun
<b>Michael</b>	Interviewee's second son
<b>Charlie Moriarty</b>	Interviewee's was a housekeeper to this Farmer
<b>The Kennedys</b>	Interviewee's was a Housekeeper to Family
<b>Geraldine</b>	Mother of Kennedy Family

<b>Ava, Pauline, Gloria, Simon, Dora &amp; Peter Kennedy</b>	Kennedy Children
<b>Richard O'Donnell</b>	Interviewee's husband
<b>Dr Hopkins</b>	Plastic Surgeon
<b>Lord and Lady Monaghan</b>	Friends of the Kennedy Family
<b>George Dunne</b>	Workman for Lord and Lady Monaghan
<b>Molly</b>	Worker in Guinness
<b>Grainne</b>	Interviewee's daughter
<b>William</b>	Man in hospital
<b>Sister Veronica</b>	Third party religious
<b>Sister Aloysius</b>	Third party religious
<b>Mr Oakes</b>	Interviewee was child minder for his children
<b>Tony Oakes</b>	Interviewee was child minder for his children
<b>Susan</b>	Sister of Interviewee
<b>David</b>	Susan's husband
<b>Mandy</b>	Susan's daughter/Interviewee's niece
<b>Bill</b>	Susan's grandson/Interviewee's grand nephew
<b>Theo</b>	Susan's grandson/Interviewee's grand nephew
<b>Marie Adams</b>	Survivor from industrial school
<b>Kate Delaney</b>	Journalist
<b>Connie</b>	Neighbour
<b>Marion</b>	Neighbour's sister
<b>Caroline</b>	Neighbour's daughter
<b>Terence</b>	Neighbour's teenage son
<b>Assumpta</b>	Interviewee's Mother in Law
<b>Butler</b>	Interviewee's Solicitor

### Basic Data from Interview

<b>Name/Pseudonym</b>	Brigid O'Donnell
<b>When Born</b>	1942
<b>Born outside marriage?</b>	Yes
<b>Raised by</b>	Ballaghaderreen Orphanage, Co. Roscommon
<b>Education</b>	None provided – Interviewee cannot read or write
<b>Of Note</b>	<p>Incorrect date on Interviewee's birth cert</p> <p>Interviewee never knew her birth name growing up</p> <p>Interviewee never knew her Mother had remained in contact with the Orphanage</p> <p>Nun infected with TB was separated from the convent nuns and put in the children's part of the orphanage</p> <p>Witnessed rolls of money in biscuit tins and 'booklets' with USA on them and children's photos</p> <p>Nuns in Donnybrook laundry signed Magdalenes' names on electoral votes</p> <p>Interviewee discovered later that her three siblings were later sent to America from St. Patricks on the Navan Road</p>

<b>Order</b>	Sisters of Charity
<b>Laundry</b>	Donnybrook laundry
<b>From</b>	1954
<b>To</b>	1960
<b>Duration of stay</b>	6 years
<b>Age on entry</b>	Twelve and a half
<b>Entered Via</b>	Convent of Mercy, Athlone laundry
<b>House Name/No</b>	Satan; Red Boy; Number Five
<b>Haircutting/punishment?</b>	Yes/ heads shaved/beatings/weekly stripping naked and degrading comments to Magdalenes/confinement in cellar
<b>Circumstances of Departure</b>	Transferred to Sean McDermott Street laundry

<b>Order</b>	Sisters of Our Lady of Charity
<b>Laundry</b>	Sean McDermott Street laundry
<b>From</b>	1960
<b>To</b>	1961 approx
<b>Duration of stay</b>	1 year approx
<b>Age on entry</b>	Eighteen/nineteen
<b>Entered Via</b>	Donnybrook laundry
<b>House Name/No</b>	Did not say
<b>Haircutting/punishment?</b>	Did not say
<b>Circumstances of Departure</b>	Went to work as a housekeeper for a farmer

[Beginning of consent process]

KOD *Here we go. So Bridget [pseudonym], what we've agreed with your son is that you're going to use...not your real name. Okay?*

BOD Okay.

KOD *And we were going to call you Bridget. And let's give you a surname. Do you want a different kind of surname? Like Bridget...do you want my surname?*

BOD Yeah.

KOD *Like O'Donnell?*

BOD O'Donnell.

KOD *Bridget O'Donnell [pseudonym].*

BOD Uh huh.

KOD *That was actually my great-grandmother's name, okay. So [referring to consent form] I consent to my true identity being revealed after 30 years.*

BOD That's grand, no problem.

KOD *Yeah. I'm going to leave that blank for now if you don't mind because I need to check with your son again because...*

BOD Uh huh.

KOD *...we know that he's protective of you and I think he's doing a good job there.*

BOD Well, the O'Donnells are very much just family, no outsiders.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD And it's on *all* that side. It's on Richard's [pseudonym of interviewee's husband] sisters, they're all the same.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD It's *in* the family, kept in the family. Mother was like that, Mother was very secret, and I could never understand because I was very outgoing.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD And I couldn't understand what all the secrets were. And I used to say, 'but what's the secret?'

KOD *Right.*

BOD Everything is kept in the family.

KOD *Okay, well...*

BOD So that's where he has. They have the *same* rhythm.

KOD *Yes.*

BOD *(Whispered) Because they were brought up with it with by their father.*

KOD *Okay.*

BOD You know?

KOD *Well, that's not a bad thing.*

BOD Look it, whatever happens inside...

KOD *It minds you.*

BOD ...the four walls, this never goes outside the door.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD They used to say.

KOD *So your typed transcript then is going to have pseudonyms, that's different names in it. It's going to guard the identity of your family and other people...*

BOD *Okay.*

KOD *...who aren't directly involved in the project.*

BOD *Okay.*

KOD *So you're happy that that transcript will be released...*

BOD *Yeah.*

KOD *...as soon as we can? The end of September, around 28<sup>th</sup>?*

BOD *Okay.*

KOD *Okay. Now, your audio tape, that's your voice.*

BOD *Right.*

KOD *Do you want that to be released as well or do you want that not to be released?*

BOD *Will you recognise my voice?*

KOD *I don't know. We can think about it. Maybe not. If you've any doubt at all, I'd prefer if we said it wasn't going to be released.*

BOD The voice...maybe I'll be picked up on, people that know me...

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD ...for over 40 years may say, 'I'd recognise that voice'.

KOD *I think that's a good idea.*

BOD Uh huh.

KOD *Okay, so we're going to put down that the audio is destroyed on completion.*

BOD Okay.

KOD *Okay? All right. That's great. So we've no other wishes then in relation to how your interview is transcribed or released?*

BOD Uh huh.

KOD *I'm just going to put in a note here that we have agreed with your son, and then I'll put down Bridget's son to come back and read through the transcript with himself and yourself.*

BOD Uh huh. There's another boy here too.

KOD *He might want to be involved in it as well?*

BOD Uh huh, and he's the older boy.

KOD *Okay. We'll say with family.*

BOD Uh huh. Because I have a daughter too...



KOD *Before final release.*

BOD Uh huh.

KOD *Okay, so when he comes back in with a cup of tea....*

BOD ...we'll get him to look at it, yeah.

KOD *...we'll go through that as well.*

BOD Right.

KOD *So the following named person, and again, I'll just check with that, does he want kind of himself and his brother or just himself, are authorised to act on my behalf in the event I am unable to do so.*

BOD Okay.

KOD *Okay, so here we're going to put down your real name. I won't mention it on the tape even and we need your signature. Now, today's date is 28<sup>th</sup> of the 6<sup>th</sup> (June) and it's 2013. Okay, so let's just have your signature here for that and when I come back with the transcript, we'll come back with a copy of this. Oh, you're left-handed. We'll come back with a copy of this and the transcript.*

BOD That's the way I do my signature so no one can copy me

KOD *That's very nice. Very good, that's a good idea. Okay so, we've agreed we are going to take it from the very beginning.*

BOD Beginning, yeah.

KOD Okay.

[Interviewee's son enters the room. Assigned pseudonym: Michael]

KOD *Oh actually, here's your son, so I'm just going to turn this off for a second.*

BOD We're going to ask you to look at something before we go with what we're doing.

KOD *Yeah.*

[Conversation regarding refreshments removed]

KOD *So what I've done here with your mother, I've given her my surname, so that's her pseudonym. We've agreed that the audiotape will be destroyed. Just that won't be made public because people will recognise her voice, that's what she was saying.*

M Do you think so?

BOD *Yeah.*

M *Okay.*

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD *Yeah.*

KOD *She'd a little bit of doubt about it, so I just said let's go with being most conservative.*

M *Okay.*

BOD Yeah. There's people I'm living round too long, nearly 30, 40 years. They would recognise my voice.

M Well, that's if they went searching for it, you know.

KOD *It's just you don't know. You know, it could end up on the radio, you know.*

M        Yeah. It could end up on a show or something like that.

KOD      *Yeah. Yeah.*

BOD      And then someone would recognise that voice.

M        Okay.

KOD      *I just think be...*

BOD      Safer.

KOD      *Yeah.*

M        Well, I'd like the utmost of discretion, like I don't want...

KOD      *Well, then the best thing to do is really destroy. The audio will be transferred from here to a computer that has a locked password and I'll do the transcription. So nobody else will have access to this audio. And as soon as we're all happy with it, I'll come back, read through the transcript with you and your brother if you like, but certainly with your mother.*

M        Yeah.

KOD      *And just we're all happy with it and then we can destroy the audio.*

M        Yeah, as I say, I just don't need everybody knowing your business, you know what I mean.

KOD      *Yeah, I agree.*

M        So what are you asking me to do now?

KOD      *So just have a quick look and then...*

BOD      Just have a look at it to make sure what I signed for.

M Oh right. And you want to use...you're using a pseudonym, Bridget O'Donnell. That's two you've got now. It was Bridget Dunne [pseudonym].

BOD Well, that was my single name

KOD *Yeah, but again Dunne is...*

M Someone could trace it back I suppose, yeah.

KOD *Yeah.*

M I consent to my identity being revealed after 30 years. Well, I'd say no.

KOD *Yeah, we left that blank.*

BOD Well, that's why we left it blank until you came in to see what you'd say.

KOD *I would think no.*

BOD No.

M The interview to interview and audio release. I would like my typed transcript to be released immediately. Yeah, that's not a problem. Released at some time in the future, no. I would like the audio to be released immediately, released at some time in the future, destroyed on completion, yeah.

KOD *And then I've put in the note where we've expressly said we'll come back, read through the transcript with you.*

M Read through the transcript before final release. Yeah, that's...

KOD *And then I left the other thing blank. In the event that your mother is unable to act...*

M Oh, the following named person...

KOD *Yeah.*

M ...is authorised to act on my behalf in the event of being unable to do so. That's me, is it?

KOD *Yeah, if you wouldn't mind, that would be great. There you go.*

M Signature or just put my name?

KOD *Just put your name would be fine...because it's your mother who is agreeing to all of this, so we have just her signature.*

BOD Thank you.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD Now we'll have a cup of tea. Shove that table over here, will you, please? Thank you.

M I'll leave you to it. How long does this take, a few hours?

BOD Oh, a few hours, I'd say, yeah.

KOD *It actually does, yeah.*

M Yeah.

BOD Yeah, it won't be in a hurry.

KOD *Yeah, we'll spend plenty of time.*

BOD Yeah, yeah, so don't be annoying anyone.

KOD *Yeah. I'd say we'll be at it for a while.*

M        Okay.

[End of consent process]

[Interview Begins]

KOD     *Okay...nice plates. Okay, so we were just at the beginning.*

BOD     Yeah.

KOD     *And we were going to start with your whole family.*

BOD     Yeah.

KOD     *So your mother and father, what do you know about them?*

BOD     Mum (*pause*) am I to start at my grandparents or only my mother?

KOD     *Yes, why not?*

BOD     Which way? I wouldn't have known anything only before I married to my husband in '73, he knew I was uneasy about not knowing who I was, so we went to Stanhope Street to see a nun that I knew in the convent that I was reared in. And she had said, 'Let's leave things the way they are because if you start opening, you're going to open wounds and maybe they said that they could come after you'. That's her words and Richard said, 'but where...has she a mother and a father or how did she come to be in an orphanage?' And she said, 'well, I do know,' she says, 'Noeleen Dunne [pseudonym]', she says, 'was her mother, *but* if she's anything like her mother was gifted with her hands and gifted to do everything, she is definitely Noeleen Dunne's daughter'. So, Richard said, 'and where would I find the records of that?' So, she said, 'well, will you leave it with me and I'll make my way out to you someday'. So we agreed on that. So, one final day, it was a Saturday and out this nun came. Her family drove her out. She did not want to be seen by her orders that she was coming out somewhere. So her family, she had a weekend with her family, so her family drove her out. I think she was a sister and I'm not sure

if it was the sister's husband or a brother came and they waited outside and she came in here on her own. And she said to me, 'your mother was taken from your grandparents at seven and a half,' she says and she says, 'they found her wandering, your mother was wandering down in the town and they decided to take her into...the State to take her or whatever they're called'.

KOD *Yeah, into care?*

BOD Into care or something like that. But what she said she couldn't understand was how they could just come along and take a child from its parents, just like that, for no reason, when you look and see...

KOD *So you have the birth cert and this is...*

BOD *Of the Taylor... [pseudonym]*

KOD *...[exact date removed] 1919.*

BOD Uh huh.

KOD *And it says it's in [location removed]...*

BOD [Location removed]

KOD *[Interviewee's mother's birthplace removed] Sligo.*

BOD Sligo.

KOD *[Reading birth certificate] Noeleen...female. Jonathan [pseudonym] is the...*

BOD Father...

KOD *[Location removed] Sligo.*

BOD Margaret Taylor [pseudonym], Sligo.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD And her name is Margaret Taylor.

KOD *Yeah, she's formerly called Dunne [pseudonym].*

BOD *Yeah.*

KOD *He was a soldier.*

BOD Uh huh. That was my great-grandparents on the other side.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD Dunne.

KOD *Dunne, mother...something at birth, [location removed] Sligo.*

BOD Were they a witness to the birth? I was trying to see that.

KOD *Okay, oh yeah.*

BOD Something like that, could have been a witness to the birth.

KOD *Yeah. Maureen Dunne [pseudonym] mother...it's hard to...something...present at birth.*

BOD *Yeah.*

KOD *Yeah, so that's the signature, qualification and residence of informant. That's the people who are registering it, so her mother was there, that it looks like, and it looks like her name was Maureen [exact date removed] 1919. Signature of the registrar is Theresa Clarke [pseudonym]. Okay, so that's the birth cert for your mother Noeleen Taylor [pseudonym].*



BOD Mother.

KOD Noeleen Taylor.

BOD: Noeleen Taylor.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD But she was never called Noeleen Taylor.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD Now, so...

KOD *She was known as Noeleen Dunne.*

BOD No, she was Taylor all along, but I'll explain how we...I'll explain how it happened. The British people were here. Right? The Catholic Church got emotionally upset. There was too many Protestants coming in here to this country and there were a lot of army. There was a war going on and that kind of thing.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD So they knew they were losing power of the Catholic Church. So they went around gathering up children that were married to soldiers, especially soldiers that weren't at the home all the time. Maybe they were here for a month and gone...

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD ...for six months, so most of them children then were suddenly oh, supposed to be rambling and all this kind of talk. They were never rambling. A seven-and-a-half-year-old wasn't rambling.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD You know, but they came and they took them out of the home and got all this paperwork done. So they were taken and put into orphanages. But their names were *changed* back to the mother's name.

KOD *So your mother was born in 1919. So when she was taken in, that would have been about the year...*

BOD She was seven and a half.

KOD *...1926, so the British army had left the country and we had our own Free State.*

BOD Yeah.

KOD *And so her father would have been a British soldier.*

BOD Soldier.

KOD *And it looks like they were married because her mother's name was Taylor.*

BOD Course they were married.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD Yeah. Course they were married. And when you think about it, look at this, now, we're coming back.

KOD *She isn't called Noeleen Taylor, she's called Noeleen Dunne seven and a third years, born [exact date removed] 1919. She's admitted [exact date removed] 1926, Sligo, by a priest.*

BOD Right.

KOD *Charged...charged with wandering under a section of an Act. Something...of children...it's hard for me to read this. Date [exact date removed] 1945. Previous character was good. State if illegitimate and they're saying here, yes, okay.*

BOD But that's what they did with most of us that were married into the Protestant side of the family.

KOD *Yeah. And there's a lovely description of her here. Her height is 3'8", her figure is straight, her complexion is fair, her hair is fair. Her eyes....and he's written down 'large blue'. Names of parents. Mr...it says Mrs Taylor here.*

BOD Yeah, yeah, think about what they...

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD Yeah.

KOD *Yeah. [Location removed] so they were living in the same place. Character...*

BOD No father. See the way they stopped the father.

KOD *...character...it says beautiful, I think.*

BOD Yeah.

KOD *Oh, excuse me.*

BOD Doubtful.

KOD *Doubtful.*

BOD Doubtful, doubtful.

KOD *Of doubtful character. Wife. Circumstances and other particulars. Wife away from husband 12 years. Well, that's not true. We saw that there.*

BOD We only found out she was never away at all because we went down to Sligo.

KOD *Religious persuasion, C for Catholic. Okay, particulars as to leaving the school by license or discharged. Something term, [exact date removed] '35, returned...in school...went to Temple Street Hospital as a maid in 1936.*

BOD Now, they don't know I have all these.

KOD *Okay. So at seventeen, she went to Temple Street Hospital, your mother. So they were insisting that she was Noeleen Dunne and that she was illegitimate and that her mother's character, your grandmother who...down here as Mrs Taylor.*

BOD Yeah.

KOD *Even though...*

BOD Yeah.

KOD *...so that wouldn't make sense if they're trying to say...*

BOD Doesn't make sense the way they...

KOD *And then character is doubtful. Again, it doesn't say bad or what doubt, and then wife away from husband.*

BOD The doubt....I'd say the doubt, to me, the doubt was that she started to question them and they were trying to tell her, this is what I got now down in Sligo, that they were telling her they were going to educate her and it'd be better if she let her go to...and they went up every Sunday looking for her.

KOD *Right.*

BOD They thought she was up in the convent up across the road.

KOD *Her parents, is it?*

BOD Yeah, her own parents were going up every Sunday with bags of stuff to her and they'd take the stuff off her and say it's better you don't see. She's settling down brilliantly and she's doing very, very well in school and it's better that you don't see her. You'd upset her. She wasn't there at all. She was out in an orphanage.

KOD *And here on her note of discharge, her educational state, they've left it all blank.*

BOD Oh yeah.

KOD *Reads...we don't know, writes...we don't know, calculates...we don't know.*

BOD No.

KOD *Previous instruction for how long, we don't know. Mental capacity, they haven't filled it in.*

BOD No.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD They were good at that, I'm telling you. So then it comes to this here then.

KOD *Oh, this is the Children's Act that they detained her under. The 1908.*

BOD That's why I wanted to look at this.

KOD *That's what... the thing I couldn't make out. Okay, order of detention in a certified industrial school. Patrick Kelly [pseudonym] is the inspector in Sligo. The court district of Sligo. Noeleen Dunne. He's the Complainant and it's versus Noeleen Dunne in Sligo. She's a Defendant. Whereas Noeleen Dunne [who appears to the court to be a child under the age of fourteen years having...*

BOD But she was only seven and a half when she went into the orphanage.

KOD *Seven and a third, having been...*

BOD But why did they go in and say fourteen?

KOD *...born as can be ascertained on the [exact date removed] 1919 and who resides at [location removed], Sligo in the county of Sligo has been found wandering and having a parent who does not have effective proper guardianship over her and whereas the county council of the county of Sligo has been given an opportunity of being heard and the court is satisfied it is expedient to deal with the said child by sending her to a certified industrial school. The persuasion of the said child appears to the court to be Catholic. The said child shall be sent to a certified industrial school at Banada, Co. Sligo.*

BOD Banada.

KOD *Banada. Okay. Being a school conducted in accordance with the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. The managers whereof is willing to receive her to be detained from and after this day until [exact date removed] 1935. Wow, that's sad, and then we have it down here. It's all signed and stamped. They've literally put stamps on it, [exact date removed] '26. Gee, there's Ireland petty sessions and two stamps that come up to a shilling. They still have...using the stamps of King George and they have written over it. Signature, the district justice of the county aforesaid.*

BOD So that was that of my grandparents. Now, then...Noeleen then was in Temple Street and...

KOD *She was a maid at that stage, yeah?*

BOD She wasn't actually, she was a dressmaker.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD She sewed the nightdresses and the sheets for the cots and the thing.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD But they were called maids that time anyway.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD It didn't matter what kind of work you did. You were a maid anyway.

KOD *But she was really good at sewing.*

BOD Yeah. She was brilliant.

KOD *And it a children's hospital.*

BOD Yeah.

KOD *So she did all that, yeah.*

BOD So one night she just got tired of the treatment in there because they were treated like shit as well, from one orphanage into another, as she thought. So anyway, she decided her and another person wouldn't go back. So they went to Clerys ballroom for dancing that night and they met a girl at the dance and the three of them got into dancing because they were...my mother was brilliant at dancing. I'm brilliant at dancing, right?

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD So my mother then decided that she wasn't going back. So she met this girl, and this girl...

KOD *You're showing me photographs now.*

BOD Yeah. I want to explain to you now.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD The girl that she met in Clerys, that was her *aunt*.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD That was her aunt.

KOD *Showing me a picture of three women and pointing out the aunt, yeah.*

BOD Yeah. The aunt was here, that was her aunt and that was her sister.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD That was staying with the aunt.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD Right? So the other girl that she met at the dance brought her back to this lady's house that night because she said to her, 'where do you live?' And she said, 'oh, I was in Temple [Street], but I'm not going back'. So she said, 'come on to my aunt's house,' she says, because she says, 'I'm not allowed to travel out to Glenageary,' she says, 'when I come in to dances. I'm supposed to stay with my aunt in Cabra'.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD So she brought her back and the next morning anyway, she came down and aunty was downstairs and she said, 'aunty, I brought a girl home'. And she said, 'and did you have enough room,' she said, 'to sleep?' She says that was her answer back to her.

KOD Yes.

BOD 'Oh yeah, we were grand'. So the next minute, my mother stepped out and she said. 'Where do you think you're going?' says this lady. And she says, 'I just want to say thank you very much'. And she says, 'if you can't find a place,' she says, 'come back here. I'll have a place for you. You're welcome back'. So she says, 'and you're not going out of the house without your breakfast. Come in here and have a breakfast,' she said. So Noeleen left and walked around a few places and came back to her that night at half six. And she lived for 61 years with them.



KOD *Wow.*

BOD 61 years, Noeleen lived with them. My mother Noeleen is buried in their grave in Deansgrange.

KOD *Gee.*

BOD Actually the two boys would have classed her as their mother because one boy was five and the other was only seven, and Mammy died. Their mammy died and she just stepped in and took over and the father just used to give her the wages and she just ran the household.

KOD *Wow.*

BOD And she was 61 years with them.

KOD *Gee.*

BOD In Rathfarnham. They lived in Cabra and then they were able to buy a place because the father had a little bit of extra money because he got promoted up in a job. So they went to Rathfarnham and that's where they lived there all their lives, for 61 years.

KOD *Very nice.*

BOD Right. So Noeleen never told them anything about her life. She said she was an orphan. Now, I understand why she blocked that out. She was afraid because she ran out of Temple Street that they were still looking for her, so the best thing to do was not to tell the family either.

KOD *Right.*

BOD Because she didn't want to hurt the family if someone came looking for her.

KOD *Right.*

BOD And it could have been police.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD In her mind, it could have been police that were going to come for her. So they all along thought Noeleen was a complete orphan. But when their mother died, Séan [pseudonym] used to say to her, 'Noeleen are you sure now? Are you *sure* there's no one belonging to you?' No, no, no. So then Séan told me that she...

KOD And Séan was one of the boys she reared, yeah?

BOD Yeah, Séan told me that they had an aunt in Sligo themselves, so they used to go down. It was Mammy's sister, their own mother's sister, and they used to go down to Sligo, and as soon as they hit Sligo, Noeleen would book into a hotel and say, 'I really don't feel well. I'll book into a hotel'. She did not want to be seen in Sligo town or anywhere.

KOD *Yeah. She was afraid.*

BOD In case someone would recognise her. And they could never...they never put two and two together at all. So I arrived on Séan's door...

KOD *So hang on, when did your mother give birth to you? So she's sixteen years.*

BOD That's why I'm going back to it now.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD Where my mother was and how I was born.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD I went to Barnardos, it bothered me and bothered me. I have to have parents somewhere, you know. So I went to Barnardos and Barnardos said they'd start looking into it for me. That's going back a few years. So she happened to leave the room and I noticed the piece of paper and I kept looking at it, I kept saying...so I took down the address on my hand while that address was on there and I covered my hand like that (*makes a gesture*). Nosey parker.

KOD *(Laughs) You brought your sleeve down over your hand, yeah.*

BOD So anyway, I went to the house with my son.

KOD *So Barnardos had some kind of file for you?*

BOD Barnardos had found, but the Barnardos didn't want to jump into it because they didn't know how these children would react.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD You know?

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD So I went and as he opened the door, kind of kept looking like that at me and he said, he just said, 'Honest to God', he said, 'I was sure', he said 'you were Noeleen Dunne', he says. But says he, 'Do you want something?' And I said, 'I am Noeleen Dunne's daughter'. And he said, 'but she had no children'. 'Oh,' I said, 'she did'. I said, 'she had two of us, two girls'. And he said, 'No, she had nobody because we begged her on her death bed. Noeleen are you sure? Are you sure now you have nobody?' And she said, 'No, no'. I knew the fear was in her and she just couldn't. So that's how I got to find out, start getting the history then myself. So Noeleen went with this fellow. Now, Michael's the image of him, if you look at Michael.

KOD *God, he's really good looking.*

[Identifying information removed]

BOD And he went with Noeleen for three and a half years and I was born. Now, he was out of the country, [identifying information removed] somewhere in America. I don't know where it was, for Ireland.

KOD *And do you know his name?*

BOD P...P...Pearse [pseudonym] his front name was Pearse something anyway, but then when I found out, I looked at the full title in the thing. It's Martin...Martin Kavanagh...Kavanagh [pseudonym] was the name. But I thought they were saying Pearse Kavanagh or something, I don't know what it was anyway. But he is my father, but he was out of the country. Now in the meantime, he didn't know that Noeleen was pregnant because he had gone.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD Noeleen then decided she had to look for a place because she couldn't go back to the orphanage again because she would have been taken into laundry, you know. So she found a place, [part location removed] Upper Ormond Quay, and she stayed there until she was nearly due to have the baby. And she worked for that lady, and that lady brought her up to the Navan Road and she had me. Now, they say there then, this is how it came to me being in the Navan Road was that I have to get...did they write anything there about me there? I don't know if they wrote it there on that piece of paper.

KOD *So this is from the Board of Health, Ballaghaderreen, Dublin Board of Assistance.*

BOD Does it say anything about me there, no?

KOD *Oh yes, there's a Bridget Dunne born [date of birth removed] and it says something here, [exact date removed] '58.*

BOD Well, we'll go back to that later.

KOD *And they have your name crossed out.*

BOD Because I know why.

KOD *So you were born on [date removed].*

BOD 1942, but I know why that was put in later.

KOD *And then there's a note here.*

BOD Yeah, that's what I want you to read.

KOD *Bridget Dunne [pseudonym] went to Convent of Mercy, Athlone to work in the laundry. She was impossible to control here and the Dublin Board of Assistance gave her permission for her discharge earlier than sixteen years. So does that mean...? So that's you!*

BOD That's me.

KOD *So you were sent to the Convent of Mercy to work in the laundry.*

BOD Yeah.

KOD *You were impossible to control and the Dublin Board of Assistance gave you permission to leave earlier, when you were age sixteen.*

BOD Well, I'll explain this to you now. When I was sent to the laundry, I was eleven and a half and they're trying to say I was just under fifteen. I wasn't. I was eleven and a half and I would have been twelve that Christmas.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD That Christmas, because Sister Agnes [pseudonym] travelled with me. I went to see Sister Agnes in Cappagh Hospital and begged her to tell me the truth. She did tell me the truth. But anyway, I was sent to the laundry and Sister Maria [pseudonym]...it'll tell you how God works things. Sister Maria, I was there for three months and Sister Maria said to two girls, 'take her out to confessions'. So they brought me out to the confessions to the Cathedral. So this man was standing on the Cathedral thing and I said to him 'Isn't that wonderful stonework?' I said, 'fascinating,' I said. And he started to tell me the story about his great-great-grandfather that brought the stone from the mine and where the mine was and he started telling me the history of it. So the two girls come out and say, 'come on, come on, she times us, she times us'. I said, 'ye go on, I'll follow ye'. So that was fine. I was talking away. Came down the avenue, was singing away to myself and the next minute this door opened, my hair was pulled in and I was

told to go and wait in the dormitory. I waited in the dormitory. Next minute, I heard a man's voice about an hour afterwards and a nun talking to him. And up the stairs. 'Now, here she is'. And he came around one side of the bed and she came around the other side of the bed and she held my two hands tight as she could be, tight as she could be like that.

KOD *Up over your head.*

BOD Up over my head.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD Right? And she said, 'now,' she said, and she gave me a belt. 'Now,' she said, 'we'll see'. So I didn't know men. I didn't know anything about a man, so I raised up my leg and kicked him, but I got him in the private parts, but I didn't know what the private parts were. And he's down making noise and I'm saying, 'What is he making that noise for?' And the next minute, I heard him say, 'definitely, definitely tomorrow, I'll sign the paper for you'. That's how I ended up in the laundry. Now, I'm going back to my childhood. That's how that was written there.

KOD *Do you think they were examining you for virginity?*

BOD He came and opened a suitcase, I've never forgotten it, he brought the suitcase like a doctor's case, he opened it and there was only a pair of rubber gloves in it. I could still see the rubber gloves. He put them on and he said, 'now, would you open your legs?' And I gave him a kick. I said, 'I'm not sick, why are you examining me when I'm not sick? I know I'm not sick'. And the next day, I'll tell you the rest after.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD We'll go back to childhood anyway.

KOD *And that was in Athlone?*

BOD Yeah.

KOD *And so they said they let you go there because you were impossible before you reached the age of sixteen. And where did you go to from there?*

BOD Well, before that, the gas part of it is, God... I always said God and Mary will watch over me. I was invited to a house in Dublin and I'll show you now the photographs. I was invited to a house and I was invited for tea. So when I was invited for tea, they kept saying Aunty Maria [pseudonym] was coming, but Aunty Maria wouldn't mean anything to me, but Aunty Maria was coming for tea. So I left it at that, Aunty Maria is coming for tea and so oh yeah, Aunty Maria is coming for tea. So looking for him. Aunty Maria is coming for tea. Now, this girl worked for this priest. He was a Carmelite and he brought me to her house for the tea that day and as we were sitting there, the doorbell went and who comes in only the same nun from Athlone. And Martha [pseudonym] says, 'oh, this is Aunty Maria, this is Father Benedict's [pseudonym] friend'. I said, 'we already met'. And they all looked at me like this. Now, he was a sergeant, her father was, and he was sitting over there in the chair with the newspaper like this and he put it down and looked at me. I said, 'we met,' I said, 'but would you tell them,' I said 'I'm still hanging on to the baby'. What's that all about? I said, 'she abused me'. Maria? 'Oh look it,' she said, 'they imagine things, don't mind'. I said, 'hold on, I'll tell you the story and you can stand there and listen to it,' says I. So I told them. I went to confessions, spoke to someone on the steps of the Cathedral. We were admiring the stonework. I'm a divil for admiring things, beautiful things. The man was telling me the story about his great-grandparent that brought it from the mine. And I was coming back and I was singing away, and the door opened, my head was pulled in, I said, and I was told to go to the dormitory. I waited in the dormitory and she came up, held my hands behind my back, gave me a slap in the face and then held my hands, and then brought this man. And this man told me to open my legs and I gave him a kick and he went down and he was making funny noises. I didn't know why he was making funny noises and the next day I was shifted. 'Maria!', I said, 'and she's still waiting for the baby. Where's the baby?' I said...oh, she says, 'why don't you leave things be? Didn't you get on well now? Aren't you doing well now?' I just looked at her. I said, 'you piece of shit,' says I and I walked out the door and never waited for the tea. Martha came running up the road, 'Bridget, wait, wait, wait, I'll bring you home, I'll bring you'. 'No,' I said, 'please don't. Just let me go on my own way'. 'Well, let me bring you as far as O'Connell Street because you'll lose your way from here. You don't know out here'. Oh, I said, 'strangers pick up very quickly how to keep going'. So Martha went back anyway, so that was all right. How I ended up in the orphanage first was that Noeleen had me out of wedlock. Now Noeleen knew in her heart and soul she was going to marry this fellow, [identifying information

removed] but she didn't get a chance. They kept her there and she finally signed the papers to say I could go to an orphanage. Now, in one of these papers, my mother, I don't know which one it is, my mother was in touch with me all those years. And all I heard was from the time I was six and a half, 'you'll be like your mother, a prostitute'. This nun used to sit up on a high throne and she used to say...pick out a certain girl and she used to say, 'oh, you'll be like your mother, a prostitute'. And we thought that was a big job. We always thought it was a big job, so anyway.

KOD *So which orphanage did they send you to next?*

BOD Ballaghaderreen.

KOD *Ballaghaderreen.*

BOD I went to Ballaghaderreen to the Sisters of Charity. I don't where...these are the photographs, I've only two or three and I don't know if you want to keep, but that's me in there.

KOD *Oh.*

BOD And that's me somewhere else there. They were just two photographs I got from someone down in Ballaghaderreen.

KOD *Right.*

BOD That gave me them and they took them years and years and years ago. They're one of the old photographs. He said the photographs were that small in those days. He was trying to...

KOD *And he was able to blow them up.*

BOD To blow them up. So anyway, that was all right. My life then started at five in the orphanage.

KOD *At five. You weren't there as a baby, no?*



BOD I went there as a baby, but I just was a baby growing up, but at five years of age then, I didn't go to school at all.

KOD *Right.*

BOD Never was inside a classroom only when an inspector was coming.

KOD *Okay. And that's why you can't really read...*

BOD Read or write.

KOD *...or write today, yeah.*

BOD But I used to have to do this whole house would be where the children used to sit for meals. I used to have to wash the floors and polish them.

KOD *At age five?*

BOD At age five. Then from there, you went out and you did all the corridors. The corridors were long corridors. Up as far as the steps to where you go into the nuns. Now I never went up that far, just to the steps. Then from there, you went to the dormitories and you actually made the beds and cleaned the floors in the dormitory. But I always remember one day, a nun standing there and she was talking to somebody and she says...I would have been coming up six at the time, 'who taught you how to make a bed?' And I looked at her, 'myself'. So she pulled the bed off altogether like that, the whole lot off the bed and she said to the lady, 'watch this'. She said, 'make that bed,' she says. So I made the bed again. 'Would you believe it?' she says, 'six years of age can make a bed like that'. And she says, 'I want you to teach a few children how to make a bed like that. I never saw a bed made so perfect'. I didn't take any notice of her, you know. So anyway, I got in charge of the dormitories then, cleaning, making sure the beds and then when visitors were coming, there were special quilts taken out of the big press and you had to put them on the bed and all the dormitory was the same. The whole dormitory was the same with the bedspreads. Then they all had to be refolded when she was gone and back into the press. So that was fine, did that. Then as I came to seven, there was other people coming up and I was sent to do harder work. So then I started to do the bread for breakfast, lunch and tea.

You had to...there was one nun and she'd cut the bread on a machine and you had to keep taking it and buttering it and putting it into boxes and the nun used to write breakfast on that one, and then lunch for that one, and tea for that one. And then from there then, I was sent to the kitchen to do all the vegetables and that's where I spent until I was nearly eight and a half. And then when I was eight and a half, I was sent to the laundry in the orphanage and then I noticed...I was put on this big throne and I was washing all the nuns' sanitary towels...cloths. But if you couldn't get them white, you got beat and you couldn't do it. They were green moulded, they were. So one day didn't I notice the nun had a big drum, this size, and I could smell kind of chemicals off the drum. But I waited till they went on retreat, so didn't I get a tin box, the old Jacob's tin box, and fill it up completely with the powder. I mean I was awfully bright. I knew how to work my own brain. And brought the tin and I used to hide it underneath the press where I used to have to do and I noticed I'd leave them steeping and the whole fucking lot would come clean, you know. So that was all right then. An inspector came then. Now, an inspector, I can tell you actually for all the times I was there, I saw inspectors twice. Only twice. But this inspector came in anyway.

KOD *Into the laundry?*

BOD No, no.

KOD *Into the school?*

BOD Into the orphanage, into the orphanage.

KOD *Into the orphanage, yeah.*

BOD Came in. She was a small lady, she had a walking stick and she walked like that and we were all in the rectory and she says, 'well, how are you all, children?' And, 'very well,' we all answered and I said, 'why have you got a horse's leg?' (*Laughs*) 'I beg your pardon?' 'Why have you got a horse's leg?' Because I said, 'our horse has the same leg'. And she looked at the nun and the nun said something to her, but our horse had the same thing she had, but I didn't know she had polio.

KOD *Oh right.*

BOD Our horse had the steels up.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD And the thing around and we used to have to take...they were always taken off if there was someone going somewhere important and we used to have to wash them and polish them with beeswax. We used to polish them and shine them, but hers looked the very same and I was asking her how she had a horse's leg.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD You know, brains.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD And Sister said, (*whispered*) 'yes, very, very unbelievable, no idea of it'. So she came over and she pointed her finger at me and she says, 'mark my words,' she says, 'little girl, little girl'. Could never forget the way she said 'girl'. She says, 'I have your time laid out for you and remember that'. 'But why have you got a horse's leg?' I said, right into her face. Sure I didn't see anything wrong with it.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD If she'd only said I've a broken leg, you would have accepted it, but she was making it all, so I was asking, still asking the same question. So when she was gone, I was put under the bucket house where all the mops and the buckets were. That was my punishment for talking out of place. And she said, 'you'll do that now again,' she says, 'that'll teach you a lesson'. So I used to get beaten and put under the bucket house where all the mops and the buckets were. And then she might be forgetting all about me. I could be two weeks there before she could think of me, so I started this thing, practising how to sing real loud and all I could sing was hymns because that's all we knew. (*Singing*) *Sweet...* 'Shut up!' you'd hear, you know. But I kept it up. So then I'd be let out. So then an inspector came again, another one, and he said, 'how are you?' And the whole lot and I said, 'can I ask you something?' Oh, the nun said, 'not again.'

What is she going to come out?' 'Why do we get bars of soap in our mouths if we cough in the church?' He said, 'what?' I says, 'Sister there gives us a bar of soap if we cough in the church because we're disturbing the priest'. And he looked at her and she looked back at me and she was getting redder. I could still see her getting redder and redder in the face. And I said, 'and the children that wet the beds get the sheets put on their heads and we all have to stand across like that so we get no breakfast'. And Sister said, 'you've no idea, she's a born liar. She doesn't know where to tell the truth, that girl. We're having so much trouble with her. People are coming in from outside complaining'. Sure we never saw anyone. You know, she'd make up this story. So he looked at me, never said anything, he just walked on, never said a word, just smiled and walked on, never said a word. I never heard any more after that. So that nun then, what they used to do is, if they had trouble in the orphanages, certain nuns were there, to be sent to that place to control. Yeah, we knew exactly which nuns were going where. Every move I knew from every convent where they were going. This nun was sent to America...the bitch. Sister Breda [pseudonym], I've never forgotten her, and she was sent to America because they had trouble in schools, in some convent in America and they had to control it. So anyway, Sister Regina [pseudonym] came. A Dublin girl. Quiet, gently spoken girl, but she had TB when I was younger. I remembered her having TB because we used to have to keep very silent. She lived up separated from the convent of the nuns over to the children's part.

KOD *Jesus.*

BOD They put her over in the children's part (*raises voice in indignation*) and kept her away from the convent in case any of the nuns would get it. And one nun used to come in in all white and covered her mouth and used to go into her. And then we used to have to do her room in case the doctors had to come to check her out or that. Nice, very quiet spoken person. So Sister Regina one day said to me, 'Bridget, I was just looking at records in the office,' she says, because she's taking over. And she says, 'they're sending you away'. And I just didn't make anything of it, you know, thought...it would enter your head why they're sending you away. I thought she meant I was going away on a holiday because she mentioned, 'oh, on holidays,' she said real quick after in case I'd react. Course she didn't want any trouble, you know. So anyway, that was all right. So she said to me, 'we want you to do...we're having a bishop coming and we want the corridors in the convent and the hall all the way down polished'. And we used to...I used to have a cloth under my foot. There was a cloth under my foot and that's the way you did it. Polish, polish, keep polishing until you got a shine and you kept polishing and

polishing until you got to the very end. And as I did, I got to the office of...they called them the Prior. I don't know if you ever hear that word before. The Prior was the person that dealt with everything got to do with the order, the money, the agreements, the payments. She was called Prior, I think. And as I did, I got in, I noticed all these shamrocks all done out for America. So I'm doing out the room because that's where the bishop would have been going down to see. So I noticed all these, about this size, books. And nosy as I was, I opened the book and I saw USA and a photograph of a child in it. Then I started to go through them all. I could have been caught and murdered, but no one came, so I had a look. There I was, I remembered her. Where is she now? And I thought how can she be in a book? Where is she? So a few days after that, and the Prior was coming down and she said something to me, 'take that bucket and bring it down,' she says, 'and fill it and bring it back to me'. Because she was putting shamrocks steeping or something. And I said to her, 'those girls in them books over there, where are they now?' Oh Jesus, there was murder, there was murder. I had no right to look at those books at all. But I was nosy, typical nosy girl, opened up, because I was dusting the table, so I just looked. So she said, 'and what else did you see?' That was all that was worrying her. What else did I see? Now, in my heart and soul, I knew I couldn't read, so I couldn't really say. And I said, 'the boxes of biscuits under the desk,' I said. I repeated what I saw, not thinking I was going to get murdered. But they weren't. They were rolls and rolls of money.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD Rolled into biscuit tins.

KOD *Right.*

BOD Didn't dawn on me it was money. It didn't even dawn on me it was money. Only later on, I copped on it was money, you know. They were just rolls and elastic bands on them and marked how much was on each roll. So anyway, that was fine. I kept working then in the laundry. I was put into the laundry and they kept well check of me. I could have no rights to, from the kitchen inwards or the dormitory outward because of what I saw in your woman's office. Because often, she'd have to get it cleaned and she didn't want me in near it again. So that was all right. One day, I was just called. One evening, Sister Regina called me and she says, 'Bridget,' she says, 'we're taking you tomorrow,' she says. 'You're going on a little holiday'. She was told to say holiday. And I says, 'where?' She says (*softly*) 'I think it's a laundry, but don't say I told you,'

she says. So anyway, the next morning, a car and Sister Regina was driving it and the Prior was in the car. It was a beautiful, oh, I've never seen anything like, it was a beautiful day, scorching. Got to the thing anyway, got in and...

KOD *What age were you now?*

BOD I was eleven and a half. I would have been twelve that Christmas. And got in. And I was left standing in the hall. The two nuns went through a door. I was left there. Then this one came down, Frances [pseudonym], the one I went to her house for tea came down. 'Follow me'. Here she was, 'follow me'. And you just had to follow her. And the next minute, this door opens and it's a laundry and everybody's in the laundry. The calenders are going, the steam is everywhere and everything. 'Irene [pseudonym], put her to work'. So I was on folding sheets. Now, I had known how to do it in the orphanage anyway, so they didn't have to show me how to do sheets. I was well able to do it because when you fold a sheet, one person down there, one of you, and you fold in, then you've to let one side down and then turn it in and then turn it in and then fold in and then close it and I knew how to do it. So anyway, after a while, I was put on an iron to iron. And I was too small. I could not reach the gas iron because I was small, wasn't that big. And they got a tomato box, one of the gardeners came in and he made a tomato box and there was kind of like a thing underneath to keep it steady. And I got up and I stood on that and I was able to do the ironing. So three or four weeks went on and next minute, this man and woman are standing in the laundry and Sister is walking like this (*showing walk*) in front of them and she's talking away to them. So they were heading over to me and I said, 'oh, what did I do now?' under my breath and she says, 'this is the lady'. No, 'this is the person'. That's what she said. '*This is the person*'. She didn't say this is the lady, this is the person. So they said, 'we're fascinated at the way you do the shirts and the collars. We never got them done as good as that. Where did you learn how to do that?' And I looked up and I said, 'the orphanage'. Because that's what we did. So they said, 'we're very, very happy, really contented with the way you do the shirts and the collar'. Because the collars were singly off the shirt.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD And the collar. The shirt was out, but you had to stiffen them and then iron them and they had to be a certain way and the cuffs the same. So I got that job, Hayden's Hotel, because they

used to send in a box of sweets or a box into me to say they couldn't thank me enough. Hayden's Hotel. I remember the man and the woman very well.

KOD *And which laundry were you in?*

BOD Athlone.

KOD *Athlone. Yeah.*

BOD Athlone, Hayden's Hotel in Athlone.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD So then it all started with the nun sending me out to confession, said I had sex with that man I was talking about, the thing, and brought this man in. So that was fine, went to be told I was called up, my name was pronounced and she used the same names as we used in the convent. My name was never Bridget in the convent. I never knew I had a name Bridget. My name was Satan, Red Boy or number five. They were my three names I would answer to. *(Raises voice as if calling) Yes Satan, yes Red Boy or number five.* Number five was the number I had to carry for the whole way right through in the orphanage. So I kind of looked up at her when she called me that and I said, 'oh, not again'. So she said, 'just pack your bags,' she says. I went upstairs, packed everything, came down. I was put into a taxi. Then one came, she waited for a few minutes at the train station, told the man not to open the doors until...she was waiting on somebody. And the next minute, these two nuns come up and they were two Sisters of Charity, which I recognised from the orphanage, came, Sister Jude [pseudonym] and Sister...oh, what was that nun over the laundry? Oh God, it was a funny little name she had. And Sister opened the door and she said, 'there she is'. And they looked at me and said, 'you're a very bold girl'. I don't know what I was bold for. Got in on...waited at the train station, got in on the train. The Sister moved in there, I moved in the middle, and the other Sister, and then the next minute, when the train moved, 'The name of the father and of the son and of the holy ghost, may we have make the...' Said 15 decades of the rosary all the way up. *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray...* 'Very bold.' She was telling everyone on the train. Everyone that passed, she was telling them. Holy Mary, Mother of God. 'Very bold'. 'I want to go to the toilet,' I said. She gets up, she follows me to the toilet and I said, 'I'm only going to the toilet'. She came in and stood in the

toilet with me and held the door open that much to make sure I wouldn't make a run for it. Back again. So we got to Dublin anyway and the next minute, as we got to Dublin, I was fascinated at the lights, fascinated at the lights. And I kept saying, 'my God, look at all them lights'. And the nun, Sister Jude just turned round and said, 'yeah, you'll get many a light to where you're going, you're going to the asylum'. Didn't make any sense to me, asylum, didn't mean anything to me. We drove in a taxi. A taxi man picked us up, drove us down. We got...one nun got out and said something through a kind of a speaker and the gates just suddenly opened, and she got into the car and they drove us up. Got there, the two nuns got out. I got out the other side and they said, 'no, no, back in, back in the car, back in the car'. So I sat in the car. The two nuns went up the stairs, said to the man as they were going up the stairs, 'lock the doors'. And the man said to me, 'they seem to be locking door everywhere'. They rang the hall doorbell and the door opened and someone came out, and then the nun came out, and she came down and she said, '*follow me, follow me*' she kept saying to me. I followed her. I didn't go up the stairs, the two nuns did. Followed me and she brought me down a long avenue, kind of like a footpath, all the way down, and there was a cellar down at the end in Donnybrook and I spent nearly five months in that cellar. And she kept beating me and beating me. And it's only as I got older and understood what was the problem. It was like when she was having her periods, she would go on the bandwagon, completely on the bandwagon. Now, she could have been going through change or something, but she went pure berserk. 'Now, you'll have your baby'. And I thought I was having a baby, that I had to take the beatings for to have a baby, in my mind. So this day anyway, she decided I think I've done enough to this one. I'll bring her up to the laundry. So I came up to the laundry. And the next minute, they're all looking. 'She's a child, she's a child,' you could hear them muttering. She called a girl and she said...

KOD *How old were you at this stage?*

BOD I would have been just...I wouldn't have been thirteen until the Christmas. I would have been twelve and a half. I would have been thirteen at Christmas, and this was in the summer I was brought. And the next minute, she pointed to one girl and she said, 'would you bring her up there and show her how to fold?' And I was folding towels, I never forgot the towels. I was folding towels and she was showing you which towels go where because they all had names on them. You know, they could have been army barracks sort of place or they could have been an institution somewhere else or it could have been a hotel, so you had to go by. So I was able to kind of look at the writing and follow the writing on each of them. So that went on for a couple



of weeks and this Sunday anyway, the Legion of Mary used to come in to visit. And this priest came in this day and came straight over to me and he said, 'what's your name?' And I moved. I moved away from him and I just looked at him like that and I said, 'do you think I'm going to tell you? You're all the same,' I said. So he said, 'okay, relax,' he says, 'relax, I'm not doing anything. I only want to know what age you are'. I wouldn't tell him, wouldn't say, wouldn't talk to him. When he was gone, because he sat beside me, when he was gone, I was brought, I was called to the office. And the same thing I saw in the orphanage I saw in Donnybrook, the rolls of money in the tin boxes. And it kind of hit me, you know, the tin boxes were all full of a load of money and there was money on the desk counted. So she says, 'I want to say something to you,' she says and the next minute she came out from behind the desk and gave me such a slap on the face. And I said, 'what's that for?' And she said, 'you tell him anything,' she says, 'anything,' she says, 'you're dead'. So anyway, Wednesday came and we're sitting down having dinner and my name was called out, '*Red Boy or number five, please come to the office*'. Went up, she's in the office counting money. 'He's here again. You talk,' she says, 'you're dead'.

KOD *This was the priest?*

BOD Yeah.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD He's in another room. So I went in. And he says, 'how are you?' I said, 'why are you calling? Why are you coming to see me?' I said, 'I get beaten every time you come to see me,' I said. 'What did I do on you?' And he said, 'nothing, nothing,' he said. 'I want to enrol you in a miraculous medal for Mary to watch over you'. He says, 'I don't understand what you're doing here,' he said, 'you're a child'. 'I'm going to have a baby'. 'Oh,' he says, 'you're going to have a baby'. 'Yeah, and I've to get the beatings to get the baby,' which I thought. And he's looking at me and he said, 'what?' 'I have to get the beatings. I had to go down to the cellar and I have to get beaten because I have to get a baby and I want a baby'. He thought I was a pure loony bin. So when he left anyway, two days after that, I was in Grangegorman.

KOD *They put you into the psychiatric?*

BOD      Into the psychiatric, said I was a mentally disturbed child. And I sat there. I was man mad, completely disorientated and couldn't get my head around it. I'm sitting on the bed and people are screaming and they're roaring and they're shouting and they're coming over and they're rubbing you and they're looking at you and then they go away and they'd come back and they might pull something off you. I just sat there and just looked at them all and I just said so sad, so, so sad to see all this. I said, 'what caused them to be like this?' Here I was to myself. So three months came anyway and there was a change of doctors or something in the hospital. They was all a lot of cleaning up, moving files, doing this and that. You know the way you kind of start seeing things around you? So anyway, this doctor came around, a tall man, I never forgot him. And he said to me, 'what's your name?' 'Satan'. He looks at Sister because they used to call them Sister. She had a blue thing around her head and she had a blue, pale blue kind of smock on her. 'What did she say?' And she said, 'what did you say?' I said, 'well, my name is Satan, Red Boy or number five'. And he looked at her and said, 'what is she in here for?' 'We don't know. She was sent from the laundry'. 'Oh,' he said, 'for God's sake, he said, disqualified me. Now, she knew why I was there, but she didn't want to tell the doctor. So anyway, I thought out I was going and the next minute, she made a phone call to the laundry to say, 'they released her'. They were up and outside the door when I was coming out of the hospital. The two of them came up, and each side held me tight and threw me in. Now, they actually threw me into the car and locked the door and brought me back to the laundry and I was there for eight years. And I think Father Benedict was getting really, really annoyed that he was getting no answers and he said, 'look it, I'm going to send two women in instead of me coming in if I'm making misery for you,' he says. 'I'll send two women in and they'll be looked on as Legion of Mary and if you have anything to tell them, they'll pass it on to me'. So these two played the game with the nuns and said they were Legion of Mary and she was saying, 'oh, it's wonderful. Now, there's two girls over there. They've no one to visit them. If you could visit them'. But they knew they weren't there to visit them. They knew they had to visit me and they couldn't do anything. They had to play their cards because the nun was watching them too. They were very...oh, they were as cute as hell. So anyway, the girls, they were talking to the girls. The next minute anyway, they were working their way over towards me, so they said (*softly*) 'we have just one message for you. If you've anything to tell us for Father Benedict. We don't want to be seen talking to you because we're being watched'. And they were walking on as they were talking. I could hear what they were saying. So I just said, 'would you tell him to look and see can he get me out of here? They're all purely mentally disturbed in these laundries and everything else'. So that calmed down then. That completely calmed down. I don't know

why. Father Benedict stopped coming in. Now, I think he got an ultimatum that he had to stop interfering because you don't interfere with different orders or different places. Whatever goes on there is kept in there. So he didn't come for...oh God, he mustn't have come for about two and a half years and I just got on with my life in there and Friday night I hated with a vengeance. There was one nun and every Friday, if you did anything, your hair was cut up short. Completely. You were like...she'd just get scissors and just lump your hair and your hair would be standing up like. And then if you were really out of trouble, if you were really out of trouble, you were shaved. You were shaved like a boy. So I was mostly shaved like a boy all the time because I was always standing up to someone. So anyway, she said...Friday night then would come and this one used to come down on a Friday night, little...fat, fat and ugly, and she thought she was something and she'd come down. 'Now ladies, now, *(clapping hands together)* Patty [pseudonym], come on out here now and tell me, who would you think has the best boobs there?' *(In a frightened voice)* 'I don't know, Sister. I don't know'. 'Oh, get back in the line. Deirdre [pseudonym], come out here now. Who would you say has the most hair?' And she'd be pointing with the stick. 'Has the most hair there now?' *(In a loud, harsh voice)* 'Get your hand off yourselves'. And we used to have to stand like that. And we used to be all terrified, so this day I said...

KOD *And this was on a Friday?*

BOD Fridays was mostly the time that she had the...see, what happened there in the convents was there was good nuns, there was bad nuns, but when there was retreats, the nuns that ran the orphanages and ran the laundries had the freedom to go and do what they like because the other nuns were in retreat and they saw nothing. They were kept up in their own area, whatever. So anyway, that was all right. Patty said...well, Patty didn't know anyway, so I said, 'look it, I'm just sick and tired of this,' I said. 'This is going on Friday after Friday making shit of us,' I said. 'if one of ye take your clothes off. Now, I'm only a nipper and I'm standing up to all these people who are a lot older than me. I said, 'we're not taking our clothes off next Friday. Adults, we're adults, we're not children'. And this little fart telling these they're adults and not children. Now to me, I thought I was a big girl anyway. So they said, 'well, if you do that, we'll give you our bread and jam'. Oh, I thought the bread and jam was going to be brilliant. 'Oh yeah,' says I. Came the following Friday, nobody was stripped. Don't strip, don't do it if she shouts and roars and raises that cane up. She came in, 'What, *(claps)* why are ye not stripped? Get your clothes off ye'. I said, 'you get your clothes off and we'll see what you have'. *(Whispers)* Well, I'll tell

*you, she lost it.* She went berserk. All the girls just ran and covered, terrified of her. I didn't. I stood there and she belted me and belted me with this big long cane. I had marks everywhere and I just turned, I think God was on my side, I never felt one blow. She could have been hitting me and I never felt it. The marks were there, but I never felt it. And I said, 'thank you, Lord'. I said, 'thank you'. And I said to myself the Lord is watching over me and I just said, 'I had enough shit from the whole lot of ye,' I said. 'Between the orphanage and yourselves,' I said, 'you're all sick maniacs,' I said. 'Why don't ye go out and get men for yourselves?' And the girls looked at me. 'Why did you say that?' I said because...I don't know. I was saying men, but I didn't know what the men were for. But I just said, 'why don't you go out and get men for yourselves?' I think it's that I heard the other older girls talking about boyfriends and men and that and I kind of, it stuck into my head. So I was brought down into the cellar again, left in the cellar. Now, the cellar was small. And this night anyway, the girls were out in the front of the Magdalene Laundry in Donnybrook and they used to always knock at that door, without the nuns knowing it, 'Anyone in there?' 'Yeah'. 'Is that you? Is that you, Satan?' 'Yeah'. 'Is that where you are?' 'Yeah'. 'Will you leave the door open when you're going in?' 'I will'. Oh, here, she's coming and nah, nah, nah she walked away. And she walked on down and she checked the door. Went on, came back up and the bell rang for them to come in, and just as the bell rang, the nun was going up ringing the bell and she opened the door and left it open and I jumped a six-foot wall. How I wasn't killed. The wall was bigger than myself. I got up on an apple tree and I said, 'I'll jump'. I think I was like a bird. I just jumped. I stood up and then I kept running. But where do you think I ran to? Into a priest's house. Oh, and when I saw the...oh, I nearly died. He was, here he was, 'now, sit down. Don't worry, I'll help you. What is your problem?' In the meantime, he's after ringing them. And yet of all the situations I was in, I had never ever had a policeman at my door, ever dealt with a policeman in my life, never robbed nothing, never stole nothing, never did anything wrong on nobody. The neighbours all around here will tell you. I'd do anything for a neighbour if they were sick or anything. I might take their kids or I might go over and clean up and cook for them or something. But I never did anything wrong, so I was saying to myself one day, in the...I was in the cubicle thing and I was saying to myself, 'what did I do so wrong that I have to go through all this? What is causing this problem?' Didn't know what to make of it. Then it dawned on me. Are they angry with me because of my mother? That they couldn't find her and got back at me because of them never being able to find my mother? Now 99% of the time, I have to tell you, if children were left or children were going somewhere, they were left before their ages or anything else, which I know. The orphanages were paid the money until you were sixteen. One way or the other, that money would be paid into the convent because

everything, darling, as worked around the Catholic Church. It didn't matter what the Catholic Church said. Nobody stepped in. It was right. And what was happening was there were children getting sent out of the country like billy-o, but they were still on the list and they were still getting paid by the State. The State were actually gobshites and de Valera...I blame de Valera on a lot of it. De Valera used to come to visit us. De Valera was like in cloud land where I was concerned. All he wanted to know was that the convents were fine and that everything was rosy. He didn't want to hear the problems. The same with the higher people above there. They did not want to hear the problems. All they wanted to hear was 'Is it running smoothly?' Now, I know that I was never crossed off the book in the orphanage because they couldn't have sent me to a laundry at eleven and a half. So they were fecking cute enough. They kept me on the files, but when I went to look for the piece of paper, what do you think they wrote on the side of it? Oh.

KOD *She was impossible.*

BOD *Yeah.*

KOD *And we sent her off before the age of sixteen, but they didn't say when.*

BOD *Yeah, yeah, yeah, but...*

KOD *They put in...*

BOD *1958.*

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD *I was there till 1953 because I remember my birthdays. That's how I was counting that and look at that. That was only wrote in later because when I went to look for files and that, you know.*

KOD *Yeah. They put in [exact date removed] '58 later.*

BOD *Yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah. I know that, but that's what I was saying to you. The system. Because I could talk and knew what was going on, I think I was a problem. I was a problem child. Right from the beginning, from a very young age, I think they saw this. This one is a problem because*

I was put up for adoption five times and every time someone would pick me, the nuns would say, 'oh, but her mother is a prostitute and there's trouble in that side of her and you'll have fierce trouble with her'. I thought a prostitute was a brilliant job. When I went for my first job, what would you like? Prostitute in the government because I thought that was a job in the government. That would have been a nurse or a doctor or something. In my mind, I didn't think you had to be able to read and write to be a doctor. I thought once you were able to something, you'd be able to do it. So the man looked at me when I said 'prostitute' and he said, 'would you excuse me for a minute?' And he brought a lady in. He said, 'would you tell the lady what you told me?' 'I'd like to be a prostitute like my mother, a big job in the government'. And the lady said, 'no, darling,' she says, 'that word is not a nice word to use'. She said, 'that's selling your body to a man'. And I said, 'how could you sell your body to a man?' I said. And then she started to say, 'well, do you know about a man and a woman?' 'Yeah'. 'Now, tell me how you know'. 'Well, a man wears trousers and a woman wears a skirt'. 'Yeah, but do you know anything else about them?' 'Well, a man grows hair and a woman doesn't'. 'Anything else?' 'No, they have deep...they have a big apple here and they talk very deep'. She was waiting on me to say something about sex, but I didn't understand it.

KOD *And what age would that have been, do you think?*

BOD I would have been about nineteen, nineteen.

KOD *And you were in the laundry at that time?*

BOD I was just after leaving in 1960. I went to Gloucester Street in 1960 and I don't know when I came out of Gloucester Street because that priest came for me.

KOD *Father Benedict?*

BOD Father Benedict came for me and brought me to Wexford.

KOD *Okay. So let's go back a little bit and tell us about what the daily life was in Donnybrook. What did you wear? What did you eat?*

BOD The daily life was you got up at five. Then you had to wash yourself and get yourself organised because you were going to Mass. Then from Mass, you went into the laundry and straight away it was non-stop work, work, work, work, work from seven until around one o'clock, half one. Then you broke and then there was a bit of lunch, but like there was adults, there were older people, a good bit older than us like in the laundry. I'd say overall, there was only about six of us that were youngish. Some of them would have been seventeen, eighteen, and I would have been young, but they would have been still young in my mind. And then when it came half one for lunchtime, half one, you had to stand like that and then she'd say, '*march!*' (*Makes marching sound*). And you had to march to the timing. You couldn't run. You had to march to the timing and then you got to the refectory and you just got...there was one behind a thing and she just...the nun and they just stopped up what you got, you know. After that then, you scraped your plates and you put them one side.

KOD *And what was the food like?*

BOD Well, I missed so much food I didn't know what it was like. All I remember *is bread*. Because I remember dinners, but I never remember getting them because I was always punished for some...I'm still waiting on this baby that we're talking about, the miracle baby.

KOD *So they'd punish you by stopping food? Is that what you're saying?*

BOD Yeah, yeah.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD They would always stop food if you were in trouble. And Christmas now was the hardest with the one apple or the orange on the bed. That's what you got, just an apple or an orange. And you just worked the same way Christmas. Christmas day now for about four to five hours. People would be coming in with gifts for...we don't know if they were for the nuns or they were meant for us, but there'd be baskets of fruits coming in and that, but I think they were meant for us in my mind, so that was all right.

KOD *But you never got them?*

BOD I never saw them. They were always in the convent. But that was the same in the orphanage. People used to come down from Moore Street. The Smiths [pseudonym]. We used to have a set of twins in Ballaghaderreen and I think it was their mum and dad, only they used to call them uncle and aunt. Used to come down and they were Moore Street people and they used to bring boxes of oranges, boxes of apples, boxes of bananas. They just disappeared. Once they were gone, they disappeared. And...

KOD *And what did you wear in the laundry?*

BOD You wore...I wore a kind of a chemise, a chemise-y thing. There was none...you never had had your own clothes. I never saw my own clothes. Chemise-y thing and a thing on your head. It kind of went up like a nun. [Inaudible] You tied it on the back and you had to take care of that to make sure that it was clean at all times and that. And then every so often, they'd ask for your heads to be checked to make sure nobody has...

KOD *Lice, yeah.*

BOD ...fleas or lice or whatever and...

KOD *And how many of you were there?*

BOD In my mind, being so young, it reminded me of an orphanage. It could be only 50 to 60, but when you're a child, it looks like there's thousands of people beside you.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD In your mind.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD But there's not. As you get older and grow up and start coming out, you can kind of put the whole thing into perspective. It was only about 60 there and it wasn't millions.

KOD Yes.



BOD In my mind, it wasn't really because there was always people everywhere and the laundry was going all the time, but as I got older, realised it. But before I left Donnybrook, the priest came and he said I got my wish, he says. And I said, 'what was that?' He said, 'we're moving you'. Now I thought he was moving me, taking me out, but I was moved to Gloucester Street. Because I was still under the laundry, I was still under the orphanage, I was traced. I was put there by the orphanage or by the...I was put there from the time I was signed into this crowd, the Ballaghaderreen crowd.

KOD *So they're still getting the capitation grant for you, that's what you're saying?*

BOD Yeah, yeah.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD But I think what happened there was, that's why they wouldn't let go of me, in case Benedict would have found out...

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD ...that they were getting paid for me still. They had to hold a grip on me. So he couldn't take me out completely, so he begged could I be moved because he used to say to me, 'what happened your face today?' Well, I might have got a hiding from them or I'd be black and blue and I used to say, 'I fell, I fell,' because I was afraid I was going to get another beating.

KOD *So would they beat you often?*

BOD Oh yeah, just nonstop, for God's sake. There was only a few of them. It wasn't...there was some very good nuns there, but their hands were tied. They could not interfere. It had nothing got to do with them. They all had their own individual jobs.

KOD *And did the nuns work in the laundry or...?*

BOD There was only one worked in the kitchen, but there was three over the laundry and they were the three that ran the whole of the laundry and what went on up in the convent then, you wouldn't know because I think some of them went out to teach. Some them would have gone out to do work in the hospitals, that kind of thing, because you'd often see them with the white and you'd know they were going to the hospital with all white on them and they'd have the white thing as well. So they were going to Vincent's, I think. They were going up to Vincent's. Up there towards Grafton Street, there was a Vincent's Hospital there because once or twice I saw them going in and I recognised them and I said, 'Jesus, I recognise that nun. Is that where they used to be going?' So it was.

KOD *And tell me, so there was a few in their late teens, around seventeen or eighteen?*

BOD There would have been, yeah.

KOD *Did you get to know any of their names or anything about them? Did you have any friends from there?*

BOD Well, we never used our own names anyway, so I wouldn't have known them by names. Because when they left, their names were given back to them, you know. I never knew any of them, you know. Never noticed. Some of them might say Siobhán [pseudonym], someone else could be Frances. But they may not have been their names at all because that's the name she gave you, you know. And that's the way you had to follow out. You never because they never wanted anyone to know anything about what was really going on. So anyway, Father Benedict came and I was put in a car and I said, 'oh, thanks be to God,' thinking I was going out altogether (*whispers*) I was brought to Gloucester Street, *not to another laundry*.

KOD *And what age were you at this stage?*

BOD Could have been coming up eighteen, nineteen. Now, no one had the rights to me at all at this stage. Why didn't Father Benedict see that? But I don't know what arrangements they gave him.

KOD *Well, actually, it does seem now from the McAleese Report, we know that they allowed themselves the right to...if a girl had been in an industrial school, that she could be kept by the orders until I think the age of twenty-two. So it could have been...*

BOD But why?

KOD *I know.*

BOD Why? When the laws were a family...when a child was sixteen, they could leave the home. So why didn't that? Why was there a different law for me or for anyone else that was in orphanages?

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD And I kept saying to Father Benedict, 'why am I going into another laundry?' And he just said, 'darling, my hands are tied. To get you out of that one that is cruel, I have to put you here. That's the way it is'. So I went in anyway and I met the nuns with the heart here in Gloucester Street. And Gloucester Street was worse. I mean with the people that you were working with were fine because we all had to pull together, we knew what we were there. Now, we did have one bitch in the Magdalene Laundry, but we knew we had three of them, and there was one and she used to come down and she'd be all friendly with you and she was elderly. And she'd be saying, 'how are you?' and, 'that old bitch up there, you know'. And then she'd be talking about the nun and you'd get into it. She was bringing all the stories back and we could not figure out where the nuns were getting the information from. Not for God nor mercy. And we might be ironing, Sister would say, 'who's talking down there?' 'Carol Ann [pseudonym] is, Sister'. And we used to all look at her like that and one person said to me (whispers) 'Satan?' 'What?' 'That's one for you to beat up' (*laughs*) and we're ironing away. So one day, we caught her in the back of a door, 'I'll tell you, you're getting old, but you'll be glad of us because they won't be there for you'. And here we were to her. 'Oh, I wouldn't dream of telling them anything. I wouldn't dream'. We said, 'we know where it came from. It was you'. 'No, no, no, no, Sister forced it out of me'. 'No, Sister didn't force it out of you,' I said. 'You're a screwball'. And she went up and she told Sister, 'they called me a screwball and they had me against the door and they were trapping me in the doorway' and everything else. Oh, we got a hiding for that one. But then we start

copping on. You had to be careful how you talked and who you talked to because the nuns had their cronies.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD The nuns were feckers for that carry on. And we used to...Christmas time in the orphanage, I used to notice I never got a new toy, never in all my life, never new shoes, never new clothes. I always got second-hand everything. And I always said to myself if I ever get married and have my children, not one stitch of clothes will I put on them second-hand because I'm like a second-hand Rose. And I used to go to Harrods in London to buy my children's clothes. And my husband used to think I was mad. I'd say I don't care. But he used to have to let me get it out of my system. I was going back on my childhood, letting him see, but then after I was in Gloucester Street and got out...

KOD *So you thought Gloucester Street was worse than Donnybrook.*

BOD It was because...

KOD *Tell us how.*

BOD Do you mind if I smoke?

KOD *Not at all.*

BOD It was because they were coming in from the courts, people that were robbing, they were Dubs, they were from the flats, they were from...they were hard chaws, you know. And they'd come in and if you had something, she'd take it and you'd say, 'excuse me, that's mine'. You didn't say it a second time. They beat you up. They were gangs, you know, in the laundry, which was harder to take. Where the other place, you knew we were all in there for one thing, either some of us were in there because their fathers thought they were pregnant, half of them weren't pregnant at all, or either they were dating a fellow and the father didn't want or either the father, you know, people signing them in for different reasons, I don't know why. A lot of them didn't have babies at all, it was all in their fucking minds. But anyway, Gloucester Street was worse because we had the flats and they were Dub Dubs and they were tough Dubs, you know, and

you did not say no to them. That's what I found harder to take. And I used to say, 'Mother of Perpetual Succour, please get me out of here. Please'. So one day, I don't know how long it was I was in Gloucester Street because I used to just cry myself to sleep in Gloucester Street. I couldn't understand why I went from one madhouse to another mad...worse. And one day, I got a part in a play to do. This one used to come in from outside to put on plays and when they put on plays, people from outside came in. They paid big money. Now, there'd be a lot of bishops and priests, oh, for feck's sake, and nuns all coming in, bowing and all, a load a crap and they had the concert. So I had to do...I got the main part and I was [name of part removed]<sup>1</sup> and when I laugh, I think of Bridie [pseudonym], Brigid, Bridie, you know, I said to myself were they giving me...were they trying to tell me my name, you know, when I go out?

KOD *Because you still didn't know what your real name was?*

BOD No, no, never knew my own name growing up until Father Benedict said it to me. Your name is...well, Father Benedict said, 'your name is Bridget' and then as I got older, people used to say Bridget, so I just went by Bridget, you know. So anyway, oh, in Ballaghaderreen, the nun that went to America used to hold every Friday night fights. Fights. Children against one another. She used to sit there and it was like a sports day in her mind and you had to keep beating the child until whoever wins.

KOD *Wow.*

BOD [Identifying information removed]. And Sister used to hate, so this day she put up this girl against me. Philomena, oh God, I could still see her, Philomena Murphy [pseudonym], was it Philomena Murphy? I think she was, the girl with the red hair, beautiful curly hair. And they said redheads are vicious, so anyway, up she came. Oh, everyone is sitting around. They're all screaming and, you know, kids, they jump up and down, 'go on, Philomena, go on. Go on, Satan, go on'. And they're shouting and shouting to see who'd win. So it happened, every fight I won it, but I hated doing it because I thought that to me was the lows of the low, fighting for no reason. What were we fighting for? To get her riled up, where she was training you to be vicious. So one day, Sister Regina was just learning how to work the institution because she was going to be taking over eventually and she's sitting there and she couldn't believe it. She couldn't believe it with her own two eyes. She has the children fighting? And she said, 'what

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<sup>1</sup> The character had the same name as the interviewee.

are they fighting for?' 'Watch this,' she says. So all the kids, now a group of them knew that we had something set up, so anyway, five past pupils came back for a weekend and we were saying to them, 'Sister said that you're prostitutes'. Oh Jesus, sure we were only repeating what we heard. And the nuns wanted to find, so they went after them. The nuns wanted to find out who told them, so they went around the whole refectory where everyone was sitting and I'll keep beating until I find out the truth. So I stood up and I said, 'I did it'. 'Oh Satan, I knew it was you, Satan, I knew it'. I took the beating because I couldn't see any more getting the beating. I was able to take beatings. I was very strong. I could take the beatings, but I couldn't take to be accused on something I didn't do. Now, I was involved in telling the girls what the nuns said about the prostitution because they did say it. And this day anyway, the girl said, 'you know that Friday thing that they do with the fighting? We're going to be there, but we want you to fight the nun'. I said, 'what!' 'Are you crazy?' I said. 'Can't do that, she's one of God's people'. I said because we always went by the cross, you respected your religion and all that. 'No, you must fight her'. And I'm saying, 'oh God, no, I couldn't do that, I couldn't do that'. You know. 'You will do it,' they said. So I said, 'no, couldn't do it'. But I said, 'I will say it in front of everybody. Will you come out and have a fight with me? but I won't go and fight with her'. 'Would you do that?' 'Oh yeah'. They said, 'you'd do more than what we'd do'. Now, they were putting me up to beating her. So anyway, the whole thing was set up and out she comes and everyone is cheering. The next minute she has a list made of who's fighting who and I butted right in in front of everybody and, 'excuse me,' I said, 'we have a very good thing tonight, I'm fighting Sister Breda'. Everybody cheered, they were all getting excited. It wasn't out of badness they were getting excited, they were excited because the nun was going to fight. They thought that was great. And Sister Regina was sitting a little bit up from her. She was a bag of nerves, the tears started to buck down her face because she didn't know what was going to happen and *she got afraid*. What is going to happen here? You know, will it get out of control? Will someone be murdered or stabbed? I could see what she was thinking. So anyway, they was all go, go, go and the next minute anyway, Sister Regina, I could hear Sister Regina saying, 'they're only children. This has to stop, this cannot go on, this is being vicious'. And the next minute, she just got up and she walked out, walked away from the playground and they all were shouting, 'are you going in to take your veil off, Sister?' Thought she was going in to have a break and come back out again. And about three weeks after that, she was gone out of the orphanage. She was gone to America. She was gone to America, but she knew she was going.

KOD     *Yeah.*

BOD You know, but I would love to have fought that one. I really would have loved to have fought her, but didn't because I knew it's not a thing you do, you know. But the girls...the past pupils were happy because the show was made of her, you know.

KOD *So Father Benedict, was he able to visit you more often in Gloucester Street?*

BOD Yes, he came regularly, yes.

KOD *And why do you think he took an interest in you?*

BOD That's a good question. Why out of all the people there, why would he pick me? And I think he picked me because I was a child, trying to figure what I was doing there. Because he's been going in there years before I...

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD ...went there and he used to just go in and talk to them all, you know. But then they all saw he was kind of connecting to me and they were trying to figure out where this was going and he enrolled me in the miraculous medal. I have it out there, just this morning I took it off to clean it cause it was getting a bit dirty. I leave it steeping in a drop of whisky. It's a gold medal, I still have it to this day. And then he brought...when I was finished in Gloucester Street and actually we did the play. I was coming down the stairs from the place after the play and the next minute, I was dragged into a room that way and my case was packed and all and I was in a car outside the door. And I went to Wexford with Father Benedict and a nun from Sion Hill. Her name was Cynthia O'Reilly [pseudonym]. She was a novice, Cynthia O'Reilly. I never forgot the girl's name and she was driving to Wexford and the next minute, Father Benedict said something to Cynthia O'Reilly. And he started to get nausea and I looked at Cynthia O'Reilly and I said, 'I think his appendix has bursted, look at the colour of him'. 'How do you know that?' I said, 'by looking at the colour of him, I think his appendix has burst'. So we got as far as Enniscorthy anyway and we got into his aunt's house and his aunt had a pub and a guest house and the whole lot, and the helicopter came. His appendix had bursted.

KOD *Gee.*

BOD Yeah. And he was lifted and brought to Vincent's in...up the green there. Vincent's Hospital that used to be there. And I was brought to...I was to be sent out to an old man out the country in Enniscorthy. He was a farmer. Now he lived in this house, Michael came with me. Oh Michael cried and cried and cried to come home. He say, 'Mum, look at the weird statues in here'. There were statues everywhere, but that's where Father Benedict and his three brothers, they used to go down there for retreats. But there was nothing only religious statues and Michael got afraid and said they were looking at him and everything and Michael used to cry, you know. Never wanted to be down there. So anyway, I rang Father Benedict, he was still in hospital, so I rang him and I said, 'look, Father,' I said. 'I don't like being down here,' I said. 'He's an old man, he keeps running over the fence saying he's counting the cattle'. And he was over to see a woman, he was, over the fence, but it never dawned on me until this day I saw this woman and she had hair all over her face. And I'm looking at Charlie Moriarty [pseudonym] that was Father Benedict's cousin and I'm looking at this woman and I said, 'Charlie, who is that? You told me you were coming over to count the cattle'. And he was over to see her. She was half...she was very manly. You know, she'd a mass of hair on her and her hair was short like a man, but I thought it was another man, but then I found out Charlie and herself were dating. But anyway, Father Benedict [said you're very ungrateful anyway, all because I asked him. That was no place to put me down there with a single man on my own. So he said I was ungrateful. But that'll tell you how innocent he was in lots of ways.

[Section removed at request of interviewee]

BOD And I walked away from him. And I walked down Donnybrook, never forgotten it, because that's where he lived. The Carmelites in Donnybrook, and I walked away from there and down the avenue, walked down, all the way past a Magdalene laundry and kept walking. And I came as far as the hotel there, the Montrose Hotel, and just as I was getting to the Montrose Hotel, this couple met me and they said, 'excuse me, could you tell us where there is a laundry'. They were Americans. 'Could you tell us where there is a laundry?' And I said, 'up the road'. And they said, 'and we're looking for an Irish colleen to take back to America'. The following three weeks, I was in the United States. I would have been twenty-one at the time. Came back. No, I wouldn't have been twenty-one. I was back before I was twenty-one and I went into a factory and I didn't like the factory. All I kept thinking in the factory was orphans, orphans, orphans because all I saw was groups of people. I couldn't handle groups of people. As I was getting



older, I was getting too nervous of groups because I always imagining I was going back into the circle. So I decided no, I stayed there for two weeks and your one had sent for me in the office to say that she was going to train me to do another job and that she can't understand how gifted I am. So I just looked at her, but then I was put on the samples going out all over the world. They send these samples or something. And they couldn't understand. They were timing me. There was a gentleman and a man above him again and they were standing there with a clock like that and I had to do two big crates. But I had to put pink cardboard, turn the biscuits over, cellophane them, tie, stack them, all that. So they were timing me and they kept talking away, but they were still timing me and I was able to do 1,000 in 20 minutes.

KOD *Wow.*

BOD And they could not get it, how this girl can do that like that. And they said, 'did you learn to do anything like that?' 'No, no,' I said, 'but if you look at the rhythm, if you have rhythm, you'll get the rhythm'. And they said, 'what's rhythm?' I said, 'I looked at what I had to do, I knew I had to do them. You were timing me to see how many I could get done. I looked at that when I started to do it, I said, well, it only needs to be one Sellotape on sticking the cellophane and then one on each side, if you know how to'. And all I could think of was the dormitory and the beds, how you brought the thing in and up. And your man kept saying, 'I can't believe...we get people to do that and I think they get 50 done a day and you can do 1,000'. So they asked would I stay on and that and I said no, I don't like this crowding at all. But anyway, I said I'd stay on for a while and I went to move into a flat with a girl that I knew in the factory. So she went on and got a job in Guinness. So anyway, my first week's wages, I went in and you had lockers. Now, I didn't understand wages because I never had wages, so Geraldine Kennedy was giving me seven and six when I was working for her, but she was putting it in a book and she was saving it. Now, she gave it to me like. She didn't dishonest me, but I was getting seven and six off her for a week's work. And then when I got my money and bonus, there seemed to be all these notes. I didn't know what they were. I knew it was money, but what kind of money? So I put my money up in the locker. And just as I was...just turned around the way I came back to do something and there was the girl and she took my money out of my locker and I saw it with my own two eyes. And I said, 'you're after being at my locker. Could I have my money back?' And she went out to the office, said, 'oh, she's after accusing me of taking her money, I've taken her money, taking her money' and all this kind of crap and then her parents came in on it and (*pause*) back to Grangegorman I went again. This was continuous like that because the State

had a hold on me all the time. It didn't matter what I did. So I said, 'she took my money'. I seen her with my own two eyes with it in her hand. I didn't give her time to hide it because I came back too quick. I went back to do something before I came back out onto the floor. And no, no, no, no, no, but the father and mother took charges anyway, so I was put into Grangegorman and I was left there for a long time after that. And then about six or seven months after that, I don't know what happened, but they were changing lockers in that factory or something and that girl's locker was getting moved and whatever way the supervisor, they were moving out stuff out of the lockers, didn't they find my name and the whole lot in her locker. And they called her up and they said, 'why had you got Bridget's money in your...?' 'No, I didn't,' she said, 'someone must have put that in'. 'So she wasn't lying. She was punished for something she didn't do'. And then I was sent for back to make an apology, to say they were all upset. Now, her parents were up as well. And I said, 'oh, forget it.' I said, 'it doesn't matter one way or the other'. I knew what I saw and I said, 'to be honest with you, I never grew up with lies,' because when you were in an orphanage, you didn't really tell lies because you would have been caught anyway on the lies, so there was never real lies. You just said what you saw and that was it. But when you're brought up at home, it's a different thing. You'll hide something from your mother or you'll deny that you did it or you'll blame your sister on it. But we never went round blaming anybody. If you did it, you did it and that was it. So I couldn't understand this thing of someone standing there saying she didn't do it. Could not get that at all across. Why would she stand there and say that? So on all the records of me being in and out of Grangegorman, that I was man mad. It had nothing got to do with men at all, but that's typical nuns again, making excuses. So then I met Richard O'Donnell [pseudonym] through a friend that I knew from an orphanage. She wasn't from my own. She was from Goldenbridge, who I met in Guinness because I went to Guinness and got a job in Guinness. And I lost that job because I couldn't read and write. You had to serve all the people, but you had to write down everything from every table, but I memorised everything.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD But I was able to pay in the money and all that, do you understand me?

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD You got a float. You get a float of money. But I was able to remember that, but they just said because I couldn't read and write, I'm not really up to the standard for the job, so I was let go of there. Then I went into the Rainbow Café in town and the same thing, serving people and all the rest. But this night, I said to one girl, 'Jesus, I'm getting an awful lot of tips'. But I thought when he gave me the float, that was the only thing I was to give him back was the float.

KOD *Oh right.*

BOD But sure, I wasn't paying for the food that they were getting and I thought it was all tips to me because it wasn't explained to me. I was told this is what you do, this is a float, at the end of the night, you must have your float, and that was it, but when I ended up at the end of the night, I used to have loads of money on the thing. And then your man said, 'get the hell out of here'. *(laughs)*. But I gave him the money because I said to him I've all this money over. He said, 'how could you have all that money over?' 'Because they gave it to me'. And then he copped on there was no receipts for me.

KOD *Right.*

BOD I was memorising, you know. But I thought because I was paying it out of the float, I was still paying. But yet he was getting back his float, but I still ended up with a lot of money. But the money, when I thought about it, the money was tips for me. Because I was so nice to the people, so it wasn't really his money either because he always got back the money for the food and the tips whatever way it was.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD But anyway, he fired me. And I said, 'oh, for God's sake, I'm not going to do well in this'. So after that then, when I decided to go to America, I went to America, I didn't like it, I was in California, in Beverly Hills, posh old snobs, and minding two children there. I didn't like...the climate was far too warm, but I lost a fierce amount of weight. I went down from eight stone to four and a half stone. I had a bleeding nose. It was the smog. It didn't agree with my body.

KOD *Oh right.*

BOD So they brought me to a doctor and the doctor said, 'she'll have to go home, this climate, she's not able for it'. So I came on a flight and I happened to ring Father Benedict and say I was coming back from America and he said, 'oh, I'm so delighted because I was very worried about you out in America'. 'Oh,' I said, 'I was quite capable of taking care of myself in America. I saved a lot of money out there'. And he sent someone out to the airport to pick me up and he said, 'where are you staying?' And I said, 'ah, I'll find a place'. So I went in then to work in the Gresham Hotel for a few weeks so I knew I'd have board, I'd have a room. So I did that for a while and then I met my friend from the other orphanage called me and she was saying she's getting married. And I didn't understand that my husband and the fellow she was marrying, they were all pals. They were all pals and I met Richard at the wedding and used to see him on and off and on and off, then kind got closer and closer. We kept seeing more and more of one another. And I went with him for seven years to make sure I was not going down that road to have anything. I said I'm not going through what my mother went through. I'm not going through what anyone went through. I'm going to take care of *me*. So went with him for seven years and we went then looking for birth certs and that because I had nothing. I *had nothing*. So we went to look for a marriage cert or a birth cert to get married. I had to look for a baptism to say you weren't married before and all this kind of crap. And I found that when I went to do that, the nuns had me down seven years younger again on the one they gave me. They had me down for I was born in 1948. I was born in 1942. They thought they'd get me back into the laundry. Control again, controlling. So anyway, got married to Richard and Father Benedict married me in the church in Donnybrook, not in Donnybrook, in [location removed]. We had our reception in [location removed]. We went on the honeymoon and came back and I had a bad car accident and I often think the nuns set that fucking accident up because the fellow was working for them, but anyway, that's beside the point, you can't say it because you don't know. But anyway, ended up in the hospital out there in Dun Laoghaire, St Michael's, and Richard kept coming out to St Michael's after having the accident, he kept coming to see me, every night without fail, he was out. I had lost one side of the face completely, that's how I lost my teeth because the whole face was ripped apart and the nose was ripped as well. The whole thing was off, so I had to wait for three solid years. They were doing plastic surgery. Dr Hopkins [pseudonym] did it, he took the skin from here and made a face. He couldn't bring back the bone because the bone of the teeth was gone. So anyway, I was the first one in Ireland then to get a very large compensation, which they never heard of it before. But because I had known the snobs, as I would call them, Father Benedict then, the Kennedys knowing someone else and someone else, that I met Lady Monaghan...Lord and Lady Monaghan [pseudonyms] and they had a

fellow working for them called George Dunne. They were looking for, George Dunne had a sister and they met up. They met up in Dalkey where Lord and Lady Monaghan lived. George Dunne came and I was there and Lady Monaghan said, 'Now, George, this is your sister'. And I looked at him very quickly. I said, (*whispers*) 'no, no'. You know, but I played it by ear, I didn't want the hassle. So I said right. He made arrangements then to meet and Richard made sure to meet with him this time and he was wanting to hold your hand and you're looking and you're saying, 'No, there's something wrong here'. So we went back in to look at records of Dunnes to find out. Noeleen Dunne and Tommy's mother was Dunne, but the gas part of it was before we went in to look at the records, the girl, Molly [pseudonym] that worked in Guinness, the girls that worked there, there was a conversation, talking, and Molly was saying, so they said we have a sister Noeleen that had a child George, but she only had one child George and Noeleen's not all there, they said. Noeleen is a little bit up here gone. And Molly made plans and I went to Cork Street to meet then and they said she was in the same time as my mother was in. So there was two Noeleen Dunnes.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD But George Dunne thought he had a sister and he was building up with this sister and George Dunne thought by saying I was his sister and the nuns joined in and said, 'oh yeah, that's her brother' and all this kind of crap. A load of shit, never checking out nothing. So Richard, he came out here one time anyway and Richard sat him down and he said, 'now look it, George, you know in your heart and soul, Bridget has asked you nine times and myself to bring us to see her mother and you keep putting it off, excuse after excuse after excuse. Now, I want to tell you something,' he said. 'You were born on the Navan Road, but you come from Cork Street. Bridget here comes from Sligo. Her mother comes from Sligo, so there's no connection, George. Now, would you just take your bag, George and everything else and leave because I don't want Bridget building up that you are her brother and then to find out you're not'. So we went in to check the records and he wasn't. The Sister said no, that he wasn't. He was an only child and he went out to Artane because the mother had no control of him, so he was put into Artane. But then he went to work for Lord and Lady Monaghan and all this kind of crap that went on with it. So that's how that happened then. Then I decided when I married Richard, we'd have children. Henry was our first one and I was saying Henry and Richard's mother came into the hospital and she says, 'What are you going to call him?' Oh,' I said, 'Henry'. 'You're not calling him a Protestant name,' she says. And I said, 'hold on, Assumpta [pseudonym],' I said.

'I will call him what I want to call him. And he's going to be called Henry and that's the end of it'. 'Oh, a Protestant name, Protestant name,' she kept doing this. So Richard was laughing and Richard said, 'she's a mind of her own, let her do it. She's not going to change'. So that was fine. We had Henry, Michael and Grainne [pseudonyms]. Now, there's three years between them because that's the way I worked it. I needed a break to rear the first one and then when the first one was happy and able to get on, then the second and the third. So then one day, a thing came out about the orphanages. We had to go in to see...well, I knew nothing about...I didn't hire solicitors or anything, but I got a letter from a solicitor Butler [pseudonym] to come in to him and I went in and he said, 'oh, we're representing you. Weren't you in an orphanage?' I was figure out where he'd got my name from and to this day, I'll never know. But anyway, I said yes I was in Ballaghaderreen. 'Well,' he said, 'we're representing the thing now'. And Richard came with me, like the boys protecting me, Richard came everywhere, and when we went in, we had to see...there was five of them sitting up, all with their cloaks and their wigs on, and they were questioning me and I just told them the whole story the way I told you. And I said...he said, 'we'd like to speak to your husband for a minute'. And Richard came in and they asked Richard, 'was your wife a virgin when you married her?'

KOD *No! It's the Residential Institutions Redress Board, yeah.*

BOD Richard turned around and he said, 'is that any of your business? That's between me and my wife'. And he said, 'if you had done your job, you would have known that my wife had a little operation done'. 'Oh, we'll take a break and we'll be back at two o'clock'. In...what do you call that place over in Glasnevin? All the religious orders go there for operations. Oh, what do you call it?

KOD *The Bon Secours?*

BOD The Bon Secours. De Valera,<sup>2</sup> we went to in Ballsbridge. He was trying to explain to my husband that I looked a big girl outside, but I was quite tiny inside. Now my daughter, my daughter's wrists and they're only this size, and her feet are small and my mother was the same when she was very young. She was tiny. But he had to do an operation, but he had to do one a little bit bigger than the normal because I was too small. Even to have sex, I would have been too small. And they came back at two o'clock. They never even apologised. So before that

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<sup>2</sup> Éamon de Valera junior, who was a gynaecologist.

anyway, they questioned me about other things and I said, 'excuse me, you little fucker,' I said. That's exactly the way I said to him. I said, 'would you give me your wig and your cloak and let me stand up there and you come down here and stand where I am and I'll ask you the same questions you're asking me. You're asking me dates. Now, when I ask you something, where were you three weeks ago and who were you with for a cup of coffee?' And he said, 'that doesn't come in'. 'Oh yes, it does,' I said, 'can you answer the question?' And the solicitor is looking at me, 'oh God, this one's not afraid'. And he said, 'no, I can't really, I don't remember'. And I said, 'you're asking a child where they were when all these things happened? They only happened under one roof'. But I said, 'typical,' I said, and here's what I did. Turned round, the solicitor's looking at me and I just turned round and I said, 'it's typical,' I said. 'The religious orders, you'll never go against them. You're all bowing to them, kissing their arses, but each and every one of you, I wonder how you got your jobs. Were you educated by the religious orders so that you went upmarket?' And he said, 'I think that's below the belt'. 'No,' says I, 'can you answer the question? Were you trained by religious orders or did you go to normal schools?' And he said, 'no, trained by religious orders'. I said, 'thank you,' I said. 'So you're not going to let them down. That's why you've got a cushy job,' and walked out the door. Never saw them after that. So was sent for about three weeks afterwards to your man's office, Butler. And this young solicitor was there and Richard and myself went in and he said, 'oh, we got an offer,' he said. 'I've a cheque here for [amount removed]'. And Richard said, 'it's up to Bridget, I've nothing'. And I said, 'no, I wouldn't accept that, not for what I went through,' I said. I never did anything on anybody in my life. I said, 'I never broke the laws,' I said. I never had a policeman to my door for my children. I never. 'I don't think one policeman would even know me,' I said. They do know me to say, 'hello, how are you, Bridget? and that, but,' I said, 'I never did nothing in my life wrong. I says so how could I have been out of control?' I said, 'wouldn't I have been out of control still today against everybody? But,' I said, 'someday, my day will come'. It came, but it took time, but it came, I said, for me to tell what did happen me. So he just turned round and he just said, 'well,' he said, 'if you don't accept this cheque'. Blackmailed me. 'If you don't accept this cheque,' he said, 'you'll get a lot less'. And my husband said, 'what do you think?' I said, 'that's blackmailing,' I said. And Richard said, 'well, sure we know, but do you want it to go on and on and on, Bridget?' 'Well, it's not the money, Richard. *(Louder voice)* *It's not the money,*' I said. 'It's people coming and telling me they did wrong on me. The money is *nothing*. Money doesn't get you everything in life. You could survive on a bit of money, but it's not the point, Richard'. And he turned to him and he said, 'that's how strong she is. She's always said it, money doesn't deal with what I went through'. So I was trying to explain to that solicitor, and he just said, 'if I was

you,' he said, 'you may have to wait two or three years longer for this to go through'. He said, 'if I was you, I'd just sign it and just take it'. And I said, 'you're blackmailing me, aren't you?' And he just said, 'well, you'll get less if it goes back'. Which is like they were getting 33.5%.

KOD Gee.

BOD That's what they got. That's what they got, the solicitors. That's why they decided with the laundries, there was going to be no solicitors because they knew the solicitors ripped off the orphaned children. We didn't get half of what we're entitled to through the solicitors. I mean I've a letter from Butler. When he heard the laundry, he was on the phone to me to say he'd represent me. And do you know what I said to him? 'Fleck off, Mr Butler,' I said. 'You done me very wrong,' I said. 'You were no more interested in my story than the man in the moon, you were interested in your pocket'. That's all I said to him, put the phone down. He never rang me again. Oh, he did, he rang me to say that one of the judges had to ring me for that [the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalen Laundries (IDC)] was looking for anyone that was in the orphanages and he came to Butler to find out was there any of the people that went through the institutions in laundries and Butler wrote to me and just said, 'I just gave...I didn't want to give your name, but I'm writing to you to show you the form. This is the form that was sent to us to give to you. Judge thing has decided on finding out who was in laundries'. That's how I came to the meeting, but I went to him then, I went to [the IDC]. [A person representing the inquiry] was after interviewing a load of people and next minute, it was my turn.

[Section removed for confidentiality reasons]

BOD So I just met her in the Dáil, but she was there that day and he was after finishing off with a group of them and I came down and I said...and I said...just started to say, and he turned, he turned, oh God, he (*whispers*) *turned on me like that* [the inquiry representative]. Now, I was shocked. If I had a tape, I would have taped him. As soon as I said abuse, he said, 'look it,' he said, 'it's time up,' he says and he said, 'you're the first to say that there was abuse'. He said, 'there wasn't physical abuse, there was just mental abuse' or something he said. I said, 'excuse me,' I said. 'I stood every Friday like that to show my privates'. And he said, 'I don't want to hear it,' he says. 'My time is up. We have to go,' he says. 'You're the first one to say that and



all the people I have interviewed'. He cut me off like that, but I caught her in the...remember we went into the apology, what do you call that?

KOD *In the Dáil?*

BOD Yeah, in the Dáil, I met her and I said, 'I wasn't impressed with him, and I wasn't impressed with you either,' I said. 'I thought he was an ignorant piece of shit,' says I, and she kind of said, 'well, he was taking it in'. 'No,' I said, 'he didn't want to hear of abuse because he knew on the Tuesday he was going to be in Rome and he was not going to dirty his bib for nobody. See again, defend the Catholic Church,' I said. And she said, 'well, I'm awfully sorry,' she said. 'No,' I said, 'you shouldn't be sorry. You should have stood up and I should have been interviewed like everyone else'. Because I wasn't telling what he wanted to hear. 'Oh well, it was hard work and I used to have to get up at seven in the morning and I used to have to do the bit of work,' and all this kind of crap. He was happy hearing that, but as soon as you mentioned abuse. He knew he was going to Rome. Now, the government was wrong to put him in that situation. He should not have been put there, to have done that interview because he only picked about...I'd say altogether, he only interviewed 100 people. And those 100 people, he knew who to pick. Just if only he had to get one or two that was a bit mouthy and unfortunately I happened to be in that group and I came that day and I think he got a shock when he saw me. When I said who I was. But I did tell her off. I told her off in the Dáil. I didn't. Were you there the night that your man was taking back the badges? Was that you?

KOD Yes, yes.

BOD *(Laughs)* And he told you off for something. *(Both laugh)* Me and Michael were falling around the place laughing outside, and he let us out with ours and he wouldn't let you in. I thought that was really...now, he'd know he sees you all the time, you know.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD That was a load of shite if I ever saw it. But anyway, what happened then there was that then the judge that came up, he didn't do great either Mary.<sup>3</sup> There's something about...I don't know what it is about. They don't want to seem to bend *(tapping for emphasis)* the religious orders.

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<sup>3</sup> The interviewee referring to Katherine the interviewer.

What is wrong with them? You have to see...like I've seen it. I went in the other day into a hospital and this gentleman was sitting and I said, 'how are you?' I went...I was going to visit him. I said, 'how are you?' And he kept jumping up and jumping, I said, 'what's wrong with you?' So I said, 'come on and I'll bring you out for a walk'. And I got the wheelchair and I brought him down and he kept jumping up like and I said, 'what?' He said, 'my bum is sore'. So I said, 'come in to the toilet,' I said, 'and I'll have a look at you'. And I brought him in to the public toilet. Well, Mary, the shite was from there to there in the man and he must have been in it for a while and it was stinging him. So I said, 'come on up and I'll bring you up to your room,' I said. And I brought him up to his room, took the nappy off and I came out and I said to the nurses, 'excuse me,' I said, 'William [pseudonym] needs a wash and a shower and that'. So they said, 'okay, we'll do him'. I said, 'now'. Because they were all sitting around talking. So anyway, they came down and one was a Sister of the ward and another nurse and they were shouting at him and said, *(raised voice)* 'don't sit on that toilet, don't sit on that'. So I went in and says, 'excuse me'. I opened the door. 'Excuse me, you're talking behind his back, he doesn't hear you. He's deaf. Do you not see the thing on his ear? Deaf. You must come in front of him to speak to him and please,' I said, 'would you speak to him like a human being? Do not shout at anyone like that'. And I said, 'watch me,' I said. 'William'. 'Yeah'. 'They want you to go over and sit on the black chair. They need to give you a shower because your bum is dirty'. 'Okay'. And over he goes and sits on the...that's all they had to do. Lot of those people have jobs in there that don't want the job. They only want it because they're getting paid. You know, don't go into a job. My motto is, do not go into a job where you don't think you're capable of doing it with the kindness of your heart.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD And especially, it's like everything else. It's always someone behind there always saying, 'don't let anyone see what you're doing. Don't let anyone see what you're doing. If you're caught, you are in shit'. It's all cover up, cover up, cover up, cover up. That to me now I think is totally wrong. You know, that's the way I see it anyway. You know, to me it doesn't matter. That's what I'm saying now with even with the nuns saying to the government that they have 100 people that they're taking care of at the moment and they think they are doing their duty.

KOD *The nuns are taking care of 100 former Magdalenes, yeah.*

BOD Yeah, but why are they taking 100? Because they're getting paid by the State because they're all pensioners. They're not doing it out of their own pockets. Who do they think they're fooling? The nuns wouldn't do that for nothing. Are you joking me? But everything is done to routine. Whatever they say, that patient agrees because if you went to interview them now, just say if you went in to interview them, and here's what you'd get now. I've seen it all the time. I've seen it in the laundries and everything. 'No, Sister Veronica [pseudonym] said that, that's true, Sister Veronica said that'. And they go by. It's kind of like a record. Everything has to be, you know, and whatever...in their minds it's true, they never ask questions. I always, and that's where it got me into trouble, but I didn't care anyway. I turned out better in the end because I always said to them you'll never break me, you'll never ever break me, I said. I may not be able to read or write, but I said I've a brain. And one nun said to me, 'yeah, you think you have a brain, in the Magdalene Laundry. You think you have your brain, it'll be broke before you leave here'. Because she said, 'You'll never get out to talk,' she says. It's what she said to me. And I said, 'talk about what? Most of it, the ones I'm talking about is you'. 'What did you say?' 'Nothing'. Because I knew if I said it again, sure I would have got a hiding. But that's the way the system ran and that's the way of the system, and I'll tell you something, they ran it from America, Canada, South Africa, everything was run by the system of the Catholic Church. Everything.

KOD *And how do you think your time, especially in the laundries, affected you afterwards? Obviously you've got a great brain. Obviously you're able to talk and you will talk.*

BOD It didn't affect me because I completely said that was manmade stuff. It wasn't the Lord made it for me. It was manmade stuff. So I had to look up and say who was the better one out of the person? It was myself and that's the way I saw myself. I kept telling myself I'm better than that. I may not be able to read or write, but I said I'm intelligent enough to know right from wrong. So nobody can take that from me. That's the way I saw life and I always made a promise from the day I walked away from the laundries and the institution of the orphanages, I would never ever meet up with a past pupil. I never did. Because I went out to Cappagh Hospital and God love them, some of them had never given up the institutions. They were coming back all the time to the nuns and they'd be bringing them presents out of their wages and bringing presents and I said to Sister Regina once, 'I recognise two of them women gone out there'. And she said, 'oh, problems'. But I said, 'are you helping them?'

KOD *So you were just doing like an injection into the arm, like heroin problems you think, yeah?*

BOD Well, all she did was, she didn't say. She just said...

KOD *A needle in the arm.*

BOD So I knew straight away what she was meaning.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD And she just said to me. I always said it, she says, and she always called me Bridget. Now, she was a good nun, she was a good nun. She always said to me, 'Bridget, I never worry about you because I know you'll survive. You're a fighter, you don't give up, but you don't know when to keep your mouth closed'. And I said...and she says, 'don't get me wrong,' she says, 'you were right. You were right to stand up to say you knew right from wrong, even when she threw you down the flight of stairs and you ended up in a hospital'. I heard this merciful scream in the orphanage and I was washing the stairs down and I ran down because I knew it was in the washroom and I thought the little one caught her hand. It was a child's scream and I thought she might have caught her hand in something in the washroom. And when I went to open the door, I slammed the door open and the nun was behind and the nun was beating the shite out of the child. So I hit the nun on the back of the head with the door. That was an accidental thing. She came out, she swung me around, swung and threw me down the flight of stairs. And when I got to the flight of stairs, the door opened at the very and it was the witch. Used to be the lay people that used to be living in the convent, and she stood on me like that (*makes a stomping sound*) and she said, 'what are you doing down there?' I said, 'she threw me down the flight of stairs'. She turns to the little one she was after beating and the little one sobbing, 'did I throw her down the stairs?' Now the little one would have been only about six and I would have been about eight. 'No, Sister, no, Sister'. Terrified. She couldn't say, 'yes, Sister'. You know, and I looked up as brazen as you like and I'm on the floor in agony. I said, 'yes, you did. You're the devil,' I said to her then (*laughs*).The next minute, the witch got me and she said, 'get up'. I couldn't get up. She dragged me all the way down with my hair and down to the bucket house and threw me in the bucket house. But wasn't the leg broke in three part. My leg was completely...

KOD *Wow.*

BOD ...and about two weeks afterwards, the leg was out like this, but they panicked. They panicked and they had to get the horse and tram. They had a horse and tram. And they had to bring me down to some fellow down the town, a friend of theirs that had a car to get me to the hospital. And when I got into the hospital, all I could see was people running all over the place and the next minute, I was about two months and my leg was up in the air now in a bed, you know, and they all went round like nuns. They all went round like nuns. Even the lay people went around like nuns, you know, and had my leg up like that. And then the doctor said, 'we can't do anything with it until we get the swelling down'. And the swelling came down anyway and then they put a kind of a cast on it. Kind of like a metal cast. In those days, they didn't have the plaster, you know, the white stuff.

KOD *The plaster.*

BOD He didn't have that. They had this metal thing. And then they got me, for a few days, I couldn't leave the hospital, so they got me to learn how to walk and eventually I did walk. But the doctor said, 'she's young, she's very young, so the leg will heal. She's strong,' he says. 'She's a strong girl'. And after that then, I was on crutches for about six months. And then it just came off fine. I was still jumping around after that. It never kept me quiet. But that's my life now.

KOD *And did you tell the Residential Institutions Redress Board all of that or...?*

BOD Oh, they didn't want to hear it. Ah! Oh no, the Church didn't do anything wrong, but then I knew who to tell my stories to, who was really interested in my story. There was a lot of them there, no more interest than the man in the moon and they were going back reporting back to the convents. A lot of these nuns have friends everywhere and I mean everywhere. You know, and I knew, you know, and I had to protect them.

KOD *Your children?*

BOD That's what I always said. I always said to them and they knew it. They used to always say, 'someday, Mum, someone will come to your door and you will tell your story'. But I said you have to know who to tell the story to. Not any Dick and Harry, you know. But the laundries were bad. They were bad. They were cruel, cruel, cruel laundries, which there was no need for it.

There's no need for cruelty. But then you have to understand, they lived in a bunch of women. You know, a bunch of women living together is bound to have some effect. Do you not think so?

KOD *I don't know. I don't know if that's it.*

BOD What else would you put it down to? Now, a lot of them would have been going through change as well.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD The change of life, which they may not have been...maybe they needed some kind of a hormone to help them out, but in those days what did we have? Nothing.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD You had to go through your penance. They used to call everything penance. You have to do it for your penance.

KOD *I don't know. I'm trying to figure it out myself. I don't know because that kind of cruelty is hard to understand.*

BOD And there used to be two or three priests that used to come into that laundry too. Bet you know what they were coming in for. Picking...calling certain women and they were gobshites. They picked the weakest of the weakest that knew no better.

KOD *And they took them out?*

BOD Hmm?

KOD *So they picked on...*

BOD They knew exactly, they knew exactly who to call, people that knew no better. A little bit simple and if they were only loved and treated right, they would never have got...their brain would

never have got to that stage of mental disorder. You know, if you think about it, why were so many mental homes? All through abuse, it all came down to abuse. And the abuse started in the Catholic churches. You know, Catholic churches were wrong. Now, I never gave up my religion. I have no qualms about my religion. I'm a Catholic. Anything that happened me was manmade. It wasn't made by the Lord, so I have nothing against the Lord. The Lord has nothing got to do with this, you know. I remember Sister Aloysius [pseudonym] saying it a couple of times. She came to my wedding, a little nun, she used to say, 'You'll survive, Bridget, you'll survive,' she used to say to me. And she said, 'I'll tell you, I admire you,' she says to me. I remember her one day standing, talking to my husband and she says, 'Richard, I admire her. When something is wrong, she'll stand there and she will argue it and tell you that is a lie you're telling. Why don't you tell the truth?' Because what good is a lie? Why go about telling lies? People said they were fibs, but fibs, you can get away with a fib one time, but where does the fibs stop? You've got to start telling...make up more fib and more fibs, you know. That's my...that's the way I looked at it anyway, you know. I mean you look at those faces on them photographs, the fear that's in those faces would tell you enough.

KOD *Yeah, some of them...that little fellow looks frightened.*

BOD The fear would tell you that they were afraid.

KOD *Yeah. So this is a photograph of the children.*

BOD Children in the orphanage.

KOD *Some of them look happy.*

BOD Ah, the ones that looked happy there were people that had families coming to visit them.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD You could nearly pick us out.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD The ones who had no one and the people that had. The people that had people coming to see them, it was unbelievable the treatment they used to get compared to us. Was unbelievable. You knew.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD You knew they were different and that's why you were always arguing with them in the playground or doing something with them. Go way, you scab, you. But we never understood.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD We could not put it together.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD Why they were picked out, but then as you got older and realised it, their families were connected. They were coming to see them, you know what I mean.

[Bridget's son enters the room with tea]

BOD But that's the basics I'm trying to say. Where...who...it's like Kenny at the moment, he's in government and he keeps going back. Every speech he makes, he goes back to the Vincent...Fianna Fáil. We know what Fianna Fáil did in the last government. Kenny we're not interested. Would you get on with what you have to do? Now, what do you think of the compensation?

KOD *I think the money is low.*

BOD I think it's cruel, I think it was cruel. But who came up with that idea?

KOD *Okay. Well, I think the compensation...I was one of the people who argued for the compensation scheme and I think there's a lot in the compensation scheme that's good.*



BOD But I don't need any of their help. I have a pension. I'm too late to learn to read and write, I'm not interested. I have a brain. I can use it. They can't do anything for me anyway. So to me, I think, you know, I don't know.

KOD *And what did you think of his apology?*

BOD I never looked at him. I never looked at any of them. I could not look at any of them. Even if it was Fianna Fáil, I would have done the same thing. I could not raise my head up knowing that in my mind, I knew in my heart and soul, for years, I carried the thinking it was me, me, me, me. But as I got older, I knew it was not me, me, me. It was them that did the wrong on me. Most of them, even Kenny as a young boy going to school and all that would have known about those institutions and don't tell me they didn't. They did. They used to come. They used to come in the door. Do you know, the bishop used to come three times a year to the Magdalene Laundry with a brown suitcase in a car? Always timed himself well. He used to come early morning and I remember outside cleaning and polishing because this bishop was coming. And he used to drive up in this beautiful black car. Never forgotten it. And he used to get out and all the nuns would be standing on the front porch and they kissing his ring. And I used to say, 'what the hell are they kissing him for?' You know, if you were bending down, you know. And I noticed all the tin boxes about two hours afterwards were all empty. He was coming for the money. The money was going out of the country. And then they used to have novices. I know for a fact he had novices and the novices used to travel to America and he always had children, bringing children out as a Sister, and the passports were all made up. Children walked out of here out of Ireland as if there was no tomorrow. If you looked, even my own sister was taken out of the Navan Road.

KOD *So you did have a sister?*

BOD I did have a sister, yes, three years younger than me.

KOD *And she was adopted?*

BOD Yes.

KOD *Taken to America from the Navan Road?*

BOD Yes, yes.

KOD *And how did you find her? How did you trace her?*

BOD I'll tell you now. A family came here to work. How it all started was a family came here to work and they were looking for an au pair and...a fellow on this road knew the guy and he said, 'look it, I'll ask someone. I know someone on my road and I know she loves children and you can trust her with them'. So he came down and he said, 'look it, there's a man looking for someone to mind children. They're from America, he's here on a contract, would you go down and have an interview with him?' I said okay, so off I went down to have an interview with him. When I walked in, one kid is coming out the bedroom window with a sheet, the other fella is holding the sheet, and they're sliding down the window. When I went in the sitting room, they emptied out a coal bag all on the carpet. They hadn't a clue, they were American. They hadn't a clue, never saw coal before. So anyway, when I walked in anyway, the boys started to butt in. And I said, 'excuse me, Mr Oakes [pseudonym], excuse me, boys, outside the door till I'm finished ready. When I have finished talking to your father, I will call you in one at a time'. And when he heard that, he said, 'oh Jesus, I've got the right one here that's going to control it'. 'Dad, Dad'. 'She said out,' so they went out and they were listening in the keyhole and anyway, he was telling me that he's had problems with his wife and I said, 'where is she?' 'Oh, she's out somewhere'. And I said, 'and why do you want someone?' (*Whispers*) 'No idea, but Bridget, she has to go'. So he got her a ticket to go back to America and I was minding these kids and the granny came over to see them at Christmas. So the granny invited me, well, I had to bring them back anyway to America, to make sure they got back into America because the father was already gone back. So anyway, brought them back and met granny and their grandparents on both sides met them and we were talking one day in the kitchen in Tony's [pseudonym] mother's house. And I was just saying, 'I often wonder,' says I, 'when I was young, I used to think my mother and father were doctors in America'. Now it was said as a joke because I used to think...anyone who'd say...because people outside used to say, 'there's the house children' and I used to shout across, 'we're not made of cement and water. We're humans'. And I used to get a clatter for saying that, but I didn't care. I used to always say it anyway. But then she said, 'come on, let's get on the Internet and we'll have a look'. So we were having a look on the internet and lo and behold, we found Noeleen Dunne had another child. Now we didn't know for a long time she had another. We always thought she only had one child.

[Bridget's son arranges sandwiches]

BOD So anyway, we looked it up and we found that Noeleen Dunne had another child, a daughter called Susan [pseudonym]. But Susan and three other children were taken out of the State, out of Ireland. Legally, didn't even go in legal, were brought out by a nun and Susan went to this one. Now, they were...he was a lawyer and the father was very good to them, but the mother couldn't have any children. She was a solicitor, but she couldn't have any children. But when he died, he left a thing for each of them. And the solicitor came one day, his solicitor, to look for the four children. She said they were at school and she said, 'what do you want them for?' He says, 'your husband left them a little small amount of money and I have to follow his orders out and that kind of thing. They're in a fund, in a trust here in our office' or something like that. So they came in that evening from school. Susan said she never remembered it. She always remembered walking in the door with her two brothers and the other brother was coming on behind them. And she turned around and she said, 'well, you four bastards,' she says, 'you can fucking sort yourselves out,' she says. 'I'm not taking care of you anymore'. She got annoyed because the father left them something. Now, before the father died, she became pregnant, but I think it was a change of life baby, but he's fully handicapped.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD And she kind of put it out on them. So she sent Susan back to a convent and the one boy ran away, they couldn't find him.

KOD *A convent, and this was in America she sent her to a convent?*

BOD Yeah. Yeah.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD Sent her up to a convent.

KOD *And how old was Susan at this stage?*

BOD Sixteen. Sent her up to a convent and one boy ran away to San Francisco. He was one of the first to die of AIDS.

KOD *Ah.*

BOD He had nowhere to turn, just kept walking the streets and got into...another fellow ended up in prison, continuously in and out of prison, and the other fellow went with a guy for 25 years. So their lives were...Susan always blamed her on the corruption of what she did to them, you know, because she said, 'everything was fantastic when Dad was alive. Since Dad died, everything went down'. Because she seemed to blame them on the child that she got. And it wasn't their fault. It wasn't their fault that the child was born like that. And she was old, she was nearly forty-six when she had him, so it was definitely a change of life baby she had. But in those days, you didn't know what a change of life baby was because people didn't understand. Losing the periods, getting them, losing them, getting them. It was only as time went on and medicine came better and better, they were able to figure out...

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD ...that there's a time where a woman has to be aware of when she's...you're either too old and the hormones are never, you know. So she kind of...so Susan didn't turn out very good in the first couple of years. She married a fellow the nuns forced her to marry in the orphanage that worked as a maintenance and she married him and he shot himself. He had two children and he shot himself. His father before, his father did it first. His own father shot himself. Shot...the mother and the aunty were in the kitchen and the father raised the rifle meaning for his wife, but got the aunty instead. It went through the aunty's heart, the aunty went down. Then he went into the bedroom and shot himself, the father did. Then his son did exactly the same thing, he shot himself. So Susan didn't have it easy and then the children as they got older held it against her thinking it was her fault.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD You know, people blame everybody on their own problems instead of sorting out problems. You know, so I said, 'don't worry about it, Susan'. But she married another fellow, David

[pseudonym]. He was the nicest man. I was delighted she had some couple of years of life. She was married for 25 years to him. So he died because they had to cut his tongue out with cancer.

KOD *Oh.*

BOD And he died and not one bill was left unpaid. He had everything paid and left her a lump sum, told her everything was hers. Not even his own son got it. Because he was married before as well. And he left everything to her, told her it's yours and yours alone, said let your children survive, we didn't get anything off them, so let them. So she came over here for three weeks with her daughter and the kids were laughing at them. The daughter kept talking and the sister was saying nothing. And I just was at the dinner table one night and I just said, 'hold on one moment, Mandy [pseudonym], why are you talking for your mother?' And I turned, I said, 'have you no voice? Does she do all this?' I said, 'it's time you stood up and spoke for yourself. You are her mother. It looks the other way around, she's your mother and you're the daughter'. She just smiled, you know. So we knew then there was something there, that she was holding it against her over her father. And I just said, I just told her then, 'you cop on to yourself, he chose his life, she didn't choose it for him, he chose it. So grow up and cop on to yourself'. I said, 'you're twenty-seven years of age, you're acting like a child,' I said. She didn't like me after that and well, I didn't care if she did or if she didn't. But we still keep in touch with Bill [pseudonym], her two children, the two boys, one is twelve now and they sent us that when he was born. 'Well, Aunty Bridget'. You know the way they talk, (*puts on American accent*) 'Aunty Bridget, when are you coming to see us?' And I said, 'when your mother gets sense'. But she'll never get sense. 'Have you seen grandma?' 'No'. 'Why did you not see your grandma Theo [pseudonym]?' 'Well, Mam doesn't let'. 'Well, you just take the phone, haven't you got a phone, a mobile phone?' 'I have'. 'Well, when you get credit, you ring your grandmother. What's between you and your grandmother and your mother has nothing got to do with you. You just keep in touch with your grandmother'. I said like that to him. 'If you keep in touch with your grandmother, you might be left the place'. (*Laughs*)

KOD *And did Susan ever get to know...was her father the same father as your father, no?*

BOD No, no. He was a mechanic.

KOD *And did she ever meet your mother?*

BOD No. None of us met her.

KOD *And do you know anything about what happened her?*

BOD I only know she lived with them people for 61 years. A happy woman, and that she died and they gave her a choice, are you sure you don't want anybody and she said she had nobody belonged to her.

KOD *Right.*

BOD And they buried her in their mother and father's grave out in Deansgrange. She had a great life. They said she had a wonderful life. They had a wonderful life, so I'm happy for that,

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD That doesn't bother me now.

KOD *Good.*

BOD Because I was wondering, God love her, did she have a hard life? Where did she end up? What did she do? What...? You know, things like that.

KOD *You have lovely photographs here, she looks beautiful.*

BOD And there's another one of them there. Someone said she's like Margaret Thatcher in this one. Someone said she's like Margaret Thatcher in that one.

KOD *I think she's better looking. I can see what they mean.*

BOD Yeah. Well, it's the suits.

KOD The suit and the pearl.

BOD Margaret Thatcher used to wear them suits.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD And I'll give you the other three now, here (*pause*).

BOD Now that's her there again.

KOD *Oh, she's very pretty, like yourself.*

BOD I think she's like me.

KOD *Yeah. She's very like you.*

BOD Like me, and there she is there again.

KOD *Oh, lovely. Beautiful fair hair. She's gorgeous.*

BOD And yet she worked...

KOD *I like her clothes.*

BOD And yet she worked...she ended up working in Telecom and she worked for 40 something years in Telecom after all that.

KOD *Gee.*

BOD Yeah. But wasn't it very sad that she didn't come to look for us?

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD Something she was frightened of. She was afraid to make that move in case the nuns would come. You see, when something is stuck in your head there, there's nothing will change it for you. Nobody will change that.

KOD *Yeah. Yeah.*

BOD Because you're terrified someone is going to come behind you and take you. So the best thing was to hide.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD You know and she hid. She hid for that reason because she was afraid. She was protecting me.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD And that's what I put it down to, that she was protecting me, more than protecting herself. That's why she wanted no contact because she was afraid that they'd do the very same to me, you know, but if she only realised they did. I ended up everywhere, you know, but you have to get on with your life. Life goes on.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD Like I mean all the people I met now through the Magdalene Laundries, a lot of them are not all there. No, they never...it's like the orphan children, a lot of them didn't get out of the circle. They kept going back to the convents, back to the convents, back to the convents. The only way you get out of the system is to go away from the system and do for yourself, you know, and thanks be to God, I promised myself I'd never meet up with a past pupil and I never met one past pupil. Isn't that funny? In all the years and I'm seventy now. And the same with the laundry, I've met none of them. I didn't even meet any of them in there when I was in.

KOD *Do you think you'd recognise them?*

BOD I would, I'd recognise a few of them. I'm very quick at a face. There was none of them. They could be all dead. They were old when I was in there, for God's sake.

KOD *What do think is the best thing? What are you most proud of?*



BOD I'm most proud because now people...they've opened people's eyes to what really was going on, that the system wasn't all what it was made out to be. That to me was more important to me than anything else. Someone heard me. Someone is believing me. Before that, you were just...you couldn't talk because you were always afraid something would happen you, you know. That's the way I saw it anyway.

KOD *And so who do you think heard you and who do you think believed you?*

BOD Well, I would say honestly and truthfully, Gerry Adams' team came in and I honestly truthfully, they did believe.

KOD *So when you were in the Dáil that day with the Justice for Magdalenes group and Gerry Adams came in.<sup>4</sup>*

BOD And his partner, the girl that does...

KOD *Mary-Lou [McDonald].*

BOD Very good speaker.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD And another skinny one that does be in the backbenches sometimes. She lays into the government all the time, whatever you call her, a little skinny one. Do you remember, she was caught for driving or something?

KOD *Clare Daly.*

BOD Yeah, she came in and a few others came in and to me, that showed we're with you. We know. But not one out of Fine Gael or Fianna Fáil came in.

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<sup>4</sup> On the day of the State apology, Mary Lou McDonald TD (Sinn Féin), Maureen Sullivan TD (Independent) and Dara Calleary TD (Fianna Fáil) arranged access to the Dáil gallery for women who were in contact with Justice for Magdalenes.

KOD *They didn't come over to you?*

BOD No.

KOD *Well, Dara Calleary came in. You probably didn't meet him.*

BOD No, and no one came up to me, you know.

KOD *But that meant something that they came over and...?*

BOD Yes. That meant well, someone recognises us. We're not, you know.

KOD *Good.*

BOD And you know, that tape is off, is it?

KOD *Yeah. No, It isn't, but I can turn it off right now.*

BOD *Turn it off.*

KOD *Okay.*

[End of Audio File 1]

[Audio File 2 Begins]

BOD And they were blood related and you didn't even know it. That's where...

KOD *Will I turn this off again?*

BOD Yeah, no, you can put it on if you want. That's where the system is all wrong.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD The records should have been out in the open to find out, you know, in case brothers or sisters are marrying brother and sisters and don't even know they're brother and sister or a half brother and sister. Maybe their mother had a child from a different man, but their mother is the same woman, you know, or vice versa, you know, and then they're finding out that things are wrong with themselves and why is something wrong and that, you know. And then I'll tell you why, I know why most of those records were kept closed, very much so, and I can tell you straight out. There was a fierce amount of priests had babies and most of them were shifted to America on false papers. Their names and all were changed. On false papers. That's why the records could never be opened because of the Catholic Church being so strong there about it. They couldn't let out their secrets, that's what it all boiled down to. They knew in Rome, they knew everywhere, you know.

KOD *And is there anything you'd like to add?*

BOD Not really, no. I'm just saying that I'm delighted now that I got this out of my system and that I know now someone did come to hear what I have to say because years ago, you know, you were always just told, 'oh, go way, it never happened. Oh, not at all, no, the convents were this, that and the other. And are you not grateful because you were taken in? You were a bastard'. That's what I heard, you were a bastard, and I said, 'was I?' I said, 'I didn't choose to be a bastard'. I said, 'what went on with my mother and father has nothing got to do with me personally,' I said. I was born, so I said, 'have I to suffer?' That's why the record I made years and years ago, or tape I made, I said the child that was born out of wedlock, the child that was born out of wedlock that had to suffer for something that had nothing got to do with her. And I did suffer for something that had nothing got to do with me at all. And I knew why the nuns held on to me because they had full control of Noeleen Dunne. Because they signed, they took all her rights away, crossed off her father's name and did everything else along with it. They did.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD That's what they did. They had full control of her. So when she had a child, they were going to do the very same. We need her for the laundries. We need her. Noeleen was a good worker. We'll have her, you know.

KOD *You mentioned some nuns were good.*

BOD There was.

KOD *And it seemed like that you had contact with some of them afterwards?*

BOD No, one nun kept in touch with me always, always, Sister Aloysius. She always...she knew it from the time I came because she said she always remembered that they were standing on the orphanage thing and she said, 'we were fascinated, you were so small,' she said. 'You were small for your age. You weren't very big,' she says, and she said, 'I could still see you standing there at the gates and you turning around and saying look at all the magpies. Now,' she said, 'how you came out with that big word,' she says, 'I was fascinated and we turned to one another and we said, 'do you know, she's right, we're the colours of the magpie, but we're not magpies, you know'. And she said she always said it. She used to even come through the dormitory sometimes and she used to know that we were after being beaten or something and she used to say (*whispers*) '*just remember,*' and I used to always remember her when she crossed over, she had to bless herself, and she used to say, 'always remember that's another nail she has put into crosses into Jesus head, that nun, always remember that'. And she'd walk on.

KOD *That beating you was like putting a nail into Jesus' head?*

BOD Just hammering another nail down, her problems, she couldn't handle them and she put them out on children. But I asked her because I knew where she came from, she came from a very wealthy home, that Sister Aloysius because she brought me to her family's home. They were very wealthy. They lived in Donnybrook, but they were very comfortable. And she told me a lot of them that became nuns had already children out of wedlock that went into the orphanages.

KOD *Really?*

BOD Uh huh. She said they weren't all nuns that came in to take their vows, she says. And she said most of them, she says, most of the nuns that came in to take their vows were forced by their parents to go in and a lot of them came in and they worked in the convent with the nuns and eventually they just took their vows because they were so long there. They just decided to take their vows.

KOD *Oh, you're talking about the auxiliaries, is it?*

BOD What's an auxiliary?

KOD *Some of the women tell me that there was like two different classes in the Magdalene Laundry. There were the ordinary women and then from that group, there were some of them that had more privileges, they had power.*

BOD Oh, there was privileges all the time, there was picking and choosing all the time, but most of them that the nuns had taken care of in the different orders were the people that were with them all the time. They agreed on everything they said. But the ones that stood up to them were the ones that were on the lower bracket. You just didn't get anywhere with them. Nowhere with them, you know, didn't matter. Yeah.

KOD *And Sister Aloysius, why do you think that she didn't stand up for you more? So she knew you were being beaten.*

BOD She couldn't.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD No, she told us why. Sister Regina told me the same thing. Sister Regina said, 'I'll tell you a case, Bridget. There's a certain nun, I'm not saying what order she was in'. But the only order she would have been was yours. 'Well,' she said, 'you're clever enough to pick that one up, aren't you?' I said, 'yes'. She said, 'she interfered with something she saw and it was something bad she said she saw and she told a few of us about it and asked us would we go along with her, but we were chickens.' But she said, 'she went on, she went into it on her own, she was determined, she was a very strong-headed person,' and she said, 'we never heard or light of her again. She disappeared'. And she says, 'as I got older, as I came out of the novice and came to be a nun and then got older and older,' she says, 'we used to go round to different convents visiting and that'. And she said, 'she was thrown into a place in Athy, a place where you were shit. You were like...' She tried to explain to me, 'you know the hospital down, St

Raphael's down in...down past Portrane'.<sup>5</sup> I said, 'no'. 'Well, there's a hospital down there and when you were completely not accepted in society, that's where they dumped them'.

KOD *A psychiatric hospital?*

BOD Yeah, a psychiatric, and she said that nun she says went mental in the end. That nun was put into a padded cell because she couldn't accept that she was crucified for something that she stood up for her rights. But she said, 'we all learned a lesson. We kept our mouth closed'. Because she said, 'I couldn't have coped going down there,' she says. And Sister Jude said the same. So whatever authority was up there, they could not interfere. Whatever went on, that was it. And I even said, 'isn't that a cruel, cruel thing?' And they said, 'That was society, Bridget. That's the way it was and that's the way it will always be until someone puts an end to it. And it has to be someone that's powerful enough to see wrong and right'. She said, 'it's still going on,' she says. Now, this is a couple of years ago. She said, 'that's still going on, the abuse is still going on, and it'll go on until someone has guts enough to stand up,' she says, 'and say enough is enough'. And I said to her, 'Sister, but why do you have to be locked up in a convent to be able to do things? What is that for, can you tell me?' And she said, 'we take a vow that when we come in, we own nothing, we own nothing. Now, if my parents died or all my family died, the property goes to the convent, the property goes to the church, so I get nothing. Now, my parents are paying for me here. You don't think the State is paying for me here because I'm one of the wealthier ones,' she says. 'My parents is paying for me here. You know, if I get sick, my parents will make sure that their insurance will cover me in a hospital or that kind of thing'. And I said. 'And have you not got insurance?' 'Well,' she says, 'you can go to a hospital and there's nuns running it, but you wouldn't get the VIP treatment unless the money is being paid upfront'. So she said, 'your parents will pay for that if you have good parents that can afford it, but most of us,' she said, 'I could count them on a hand, I'd say about six parents were paying for their children. The rest were all in there through...forced in, forced into an order, you know, through parents'. You know, you were the...you were above society when you had a sister or a brother that entered the order and a nun that entered the order. Everybody bowed to the family, 'good morning, good morning, wonderful to hear about your daughter getting to be a nun'. But they were forced in. They weren't telling the people the truth that they were forced in, you know. She said, 'most of them were in...most of the convents,' she said, 'I can actually vouch to tell you, they were not happy people. They weren't happy people. They were sad

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<sup>5</sup> Interviewee is possibly referring to St Ita's in Portrane.

people. That's why they were angry. They were angry with everybody'. And then she says, 'If they got the job through the orphanages or the laundries, that's where they put their anger out. It's because what they lost out on...they were showing, you know'. And she said, 'that's the way life was and that's the way society was, and you know, people didn't understand going into a convent. Everyone thought that we were there because we were in there because the name of Christ. We weren't. A lot of them did not go in there,' she said, 'in the name of...they went in there because their parents forced them in'. And she said a good few of them had babies, you know, but they came from a middle-class family, they wouldn't have come from the poor. She said, 'It would have been the middle-class parents'. She said, 'oh, there was a good few doctors had children,' she says. Marie Adams [pseudonym] do you remember Marie Adams? [Identifying information removed] and she...I know for a fact, darling, Marie Adams didn't suffer nothing. And I know that for a fact because Marie Adams used to go...we had a place and we used to see Marie Adams every summer and when I saw her on the television, I looked again. I said, 'that's the young one that used to be down in the mobiles. She used to be down with her aunt'. She never got...she never went...she was educated even, the money was there and she was educated where half of us got nothing, she got everything. You know, so I couldn't understand how she came in with this. She was living off other people's stories. She was against her father, she was against her mother, she was against society, so she played the game with everyone else's stories because nothing did happen her. I don't know what to say. Anyone that had family coming to visit them were treated like lords. They were. They were treated like lords. I even saw that in Gloucester Street. There used be parents used to come to visit the ones that were in their for trouble from the courts and they'd come to visit them, you know.

KOD *And did anybody come to visit the Magdalenes in Donnybrook?*

BOD You never saw who really came, you just saw people being called up. 'You have a visitor'. That was all, but you never saw the visitor, so you don't know who they were. They could have been mother, could have been father, could be anyone. But none of us would see them because they were called up. You'd hear your name called out. 'Please come to the office. you have a visitor,' but they'd never say who the visitor was, you know. So you never knew. but you always knew someone came for them.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD Yeah. There was always a continuous thing, people being called out, but you never knew if they had family or not. You know, it could be a sister calling, it could be a brother calling, it could be an uncle calling, an aunt, a mother or father, we never knew. No one ever knew.

KOD *Did you get to make any friends in either of the Magdalenes, did you?*

BOD No, no, I didn't want to. I decided from a very young age, a very young age, I would have been only eleven or twelve, thinking about it. I said, 'I'm on my own and I have to do it for myself'. So I never made friends with nobody. Nobody. Because I knew if I came out, I would stay in the circle if I made friends (*softly*), but I didn't. I said no and no was the answer and that was it. I couldn't because I knew I'd be ending up going back and forward to the convents and I'd never get out of that circle. So that's how I never made friends with the orphanage or I never made friends with the laundries. I just did what I had to do, talk to people, be chatty, be nice to them, but when I left, I left and I never looked back. I never looked back. I couldn't look back because I knew if I did, I was in shit. So that's the way it was, you know. No, I didn't want to do that because most of them, God love them, they stayed in the circle and they never came out of it and that's what happened them. Was there many in England in the laundries?

KOD *There was some kinds of similar Magdalene Laundry systems over there run by the Catholic nuns, but they don't seem to have been the same. We haven't done enough research yet, to be honest. They don't seem to be because the State wasn't behind them or involved with them to the same extent. They definitely don't seem to have been as bad.*

BOD And what about orphanages, no?

KOD *Yeah, they had orphanages.*

BOD Yeah, because orphanages would have been...

KOD *They wouldn't have the same percentage of the population. They wouldn't have had the same amount of control.*



BOD Ireland had a fierce amount of control, a fierce amount of control, you know, but nobody...I remember one time there was a fierce amount of trouble in the orphanage where I was. Ah, it was over a lot of things, I don't know what was going on. It was a lot of the older girls and I remember the Reverend Mother was getting involved in it and the Prior and all the rest and I remember them writing to the bishop and they got a letter back. I remember Sister thing was talking about it and she said the letter was, 'we don't want to hear about problems. Sort it out and get on with it'. They didn't want to hear the problems. I don't know what the problems were. There was something got to do with two girls and they were going to go somewhere to report what was going on or something and they didn't want to hear it. It's like all the rapes of the priests, the Catholic Church in Rome and nowhere wanted to hear about it. They knew it was happening, but they never thought it would come out in the open air. Eventually it did, but it took a long time to come out, you know.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD But I don't blame those priests either, going through that emotion of raping and everything because they went in as young boys. Sure they hadn't a clue. And they were going in as young boys and then what were they dealing with? Think about it, what were priests dealing with once they entered there? Answer me that question. Can you tell me what they were dealing with?

KOD *You mean when they were in the industrial schools?*

BOD No, no, when they went into the orders. When they decided on their orders. What do you think they were doing?

KOD *When they were fourteen or so and entering...?*

BOD Fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD They were surrounded by nuns. They were surrounded by girls. They were bound to get sexy. They were bound to and there was no parents or mothers to help them. They were in a group of people not knowing what to do. And then the point was when there were showers, everyone

had to strip off. There was no privacy. There was no privacy in the orphanages. There was no privacy in the laundries. You were naked in front of everybody, but there was people that had their emotional feelings that didn't like it and the children being...but that's not the way it was with the institutions. All the showers and nothing. It was like the laundry. Sister Breda and the nun before that, the question I asked was, oh, I would have been about eight at the time, 'Why do you have to bath children that are fourteen years of age when you're getting us to bath the babies at three and four years of age?' I didn't say it a second time. Because she was a sex maniac, she was. She was feeling them girls. I remember one girl coming out and roaring crying out the bath. Roaring crying out of the bath, now really crying and no one could get satisfaction out of her, nobody could get her to control her crying. And the nun went off and went up to the convent and went up to her own area of the convent for her tea and that. And everyone kept saying, 'what is she crying for? What are you crying for?' And we noticed the nun came out she was quite red out of the shower. Now I saw her coming out of the bathroom, the nun, and she walked by me and went on up and as she was passing by, she gave me a clatter, 'what are you doing there? Get down,' she says, 'to the recreation,' she said. 'You shouldn't be hanging around here'. But eventually, she told a friend that she was very sore down there. Your woman was after sticking her finger up her and the girl panicked and she couldn't tell, but...typical, I said it. I was always the one that said everything. I just said it, 'you did something awful,' I said. And she said, 'what do you mean?' I said, 'you did something awful. It's a mortal sin what you done'. And she didn't know what I was talking about. Sure I didn't know what I was talking about myself because I was young. And she says, 'what do you mean?' I said, 'you hurted that girl,' I said. 'What girl?' And we used to...I used to often wonder, from two to four used to be the time the nuns went for prayer and she used to be always down in the orphanage because she was over the orphanage, but she used to be always down in the orphanage at that time and she used to call out certain girls and I remember one time when I was very young and there was older girls there, and one day they said to me; I was sweeping, and they said to me, 'do you know what goes on in there?' 'No,' says I, 'but I'll tell you something,' thinking I was doing good for them, 'I'm telling you,' I said, 'if you go out that door and around the corner, there's a window and you can see in that window'. And she said, 'how can you see in that window?' Because the bottom part was blackened out, but if you got up on the window, you could see in because the top parts weren't. Never thought anymore and about two days afterwards, these girls came up and they were after being out in the town, I don't know how they got out. They must have been known when the nuns were, well, they were down the town anyway and they brought back a

bag of Nancy balls. And you could put lipstick on you with the Nancy balls and we were delighted with ourselves.

KOD *So the sweets, and you'd lick them.*

BOD Yeah.

KOD *And then you could put the dye on your lips.*

BOD Dye on your lips.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD So anyway, she said, 'would you get up and look at the window?' 'Oh yeah,' says I. Ah, sure I was a fecker. I was always in trouble, permanently in trouble. 'Oh yeah,' says I, for the Nancy balls, I did it. So I got up on the window and the nun had her veil off, completely off. She had her collar off, the white thing here. She had a red a red thing here. It was like a vest.

KOD *Was it binding her?*

BOD Yeah. Yeah. It was something in red.

KOD *Flannel?*

BOD Yeah, it was something red. All I saw red and (*excited voice*) I jumped down and I said, 'you wouldn't believe. Oh, she has hair, her hair is down to here, her hair, she hasn't got long hair, she has her hair down'. Delighted telling them and I said she had no collar and the thing here and she had a red thing here. Delighted to tell them. I didn't tell them and the other little one was sitting on her lap, so I don't know what was going on and that's when they put it together. I didn't because I was too young to put it together. And then they said...that's how they got it out of the other girl. Well, we know what's going on, so you have to tell us what she's doing to you. And they said we know what she does in the office and that to you and you don't tell us, you're dead. Sure the poor girl told them because she was afraid they were going to beat her up. So that's how they found. And I just said it, 'you hurted that girl, you put your finger up'. I

didn't know where she was putting her finger up, I just said you put your finger up, that could have been up like that for all I knew, you know, because it didn't dawn on me it was somewhere else she put her finger. I said, 'you hurted her with your finger, you put it up,' and I thought she meant she put her finger up at her and she hurted her (*laughs*), but the older one knew what they were talking about. So then I was locked under the bucket house again. That bucket house. It was a great bucket house. I lived more time in there than I did out of it. I could still see it to this day, that convent. I went down to look at the convent and it's all gone. But I could walk the exact footpaths to where everything was and one person said, 'how do you remember?' And she was looking at the map and I was able to tell her exactly. 'How do you remember that?' 'When you lived long enough and cleaned long enough, you'd know the place,' I said. 'Well,' she said, 'that's amazing. Everything you said marks exactly to where it was'. I said, 'yeah'. I said, 'why did they not take down the convent part?' They left the church and they left the convent where the nuns were. Well, they said, that's a museum now. 'For what?' says I, 'for what? Everything else is built round in houses, for what? For more abuse to go on? Why don't they get rid of the whole lot?' And they said no. Most of the places they sold, the convents are left. They don't take away the convents, they just take away the institution end of it, the orphanage end of it, but the convents are there. If you go back to any of the places, Banada, all the convents are there, but there are all kind of people renting them out. They weren't going to lose all that kind of money. They were going to get money somewhere and that's where they got it, from renting out. They have retreats there and all this. Retreats. You know, if you ask yourself why all the secret about things, that to me is wrong. If you have something that you're not hiding, you wouldn't be wanting a closed door retreat. Everything should be open if you're being honest and straight. What's all this? Do you remember your woman down in Achill as well, that had the big house in Achill and she was supposed to be having all this healing and the blood going through in her? And then she's not even in the country. She's out of the country and she's getting millions for that house down there. Who? People can be fooled into anything if you don't stand up and ask questions and people years ago in Ireland never asked questions. They accepted what was told to them and that's where all the mistakes went wrong, you know. Charlie Haughey, they were all the same. I remember Charlie Haughey, de Valera, them all coming to the orphanages. Charlie Haughey was only a boy at the time. He even came to the Magdalene Laundry one time. Charlie Haughey was only very young at the time. He was a handsome looking geezer, I'll say that about him. Very good looking man.

KOD *And which Magdalene Laundry did he go to?*

BOD Donnybrook. Donnybrook.

KOD *Was he coming in looking for votes or what was he doing there?*

BOD I think he was in with the nuns for the votes or something, but I think he was after being at a rugby match in Donnybrook and then he called in because it was around the voting time, but the nuns were signing the votes for us. We never signed them.

KOD *Do you remember that?*

BOD Yes.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD Yes, I remember them going up and the nun was saying...telling you, 'we'll put you down because this fellow...' And they were signing our names on everything. We never even voted. We didn't even know what vote meant. But they were voting us because I remember they had to tell us because we could have been ignorant, but they had to say something to us and they'd tell you who they were voting for and oh, I've already done it. You don't need to do it.

KOD *And who were they voting for?*

BOD It was de Valera at the time, I remember. And one or two of them wanted another fellow for Fine Gael, but he didn't get in that time. I don't know who it was at the time. That was against...with de Valera, I don't know who it was, but I remember then another time Lemass, Lemass or something. Lemass, was it?

KOD *Lemass.*

BOD Was there such a person or such a body?

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD I remember Lemass and he came to the laundry.

KOD *Lemass.*

BOD I remember him coming to the laundry and he walked around the laundry all right and just smiled at us all and then when they were going out, he was walking out in front with the chief of the convent part of it, the one that was running the whole thing, and Sister turns round and says to him, 'now, you have all your votes, they're all voting for you'. Sure we didn't know what she was talking about and one past pupil did know it because she was out and she back in again, I think by the courts they put her in, I don't know what happened, and she said, 'fuck him, if they think I'm voting for him'. And we said, 'what's votes?' 'Ah, they'll run the government, they'll tell you all what to do, they'll tell you when to sleep with a man and not to'. This talk, comments, and we just laughed and we left it at that. We didn't know what she was talking about, but it'll just tell you, the nuns ran everything. You didn't have no say in nothing, nothing, nothing. Your life was their life and what they said, that was it, you know, and I think that's why God gave me the brain. He said if you have nothing else, you have the brain to talk and talk about it and that's why I wouldn't give my stories to all these women going around looking for stories and, you know [section removed for confidentiality reasons].

KOD *Oh.*

BOD What was her name?

KOD Kate Delaney [pseudonym]

BOD Kate Delaney, she lived in [location removed]. Kate Delaney, I remember her coming out and I said, 'look it, Kate,' I said, 'I am not sure. You're not going to win this, the power is too strong'. And she looked up at me and she said, 'why do you think so?' I said, 'you're a bit early,' I said, 'it won't happen for another 10,' I said. And she looked at me and she says, 'why do you say that?' I said, 'that's the way the system works. The next generation have to come up and the next generation after us is more intelligent and they're asking more questions and the generation after them are even asking more questions. So by that time, that's when you'll see it'. And you know that now, your generation are asking questions. You're not waiting to be told. Well, no, this is what went...no, you say, 'wait, hold on now, I need to know'. They don't like to

answer you because you're questioning them, where years ago you never questioned. I was told and that was it. Yeah. It's like the banks. You heard their jokes and everything else on their tapes and everything else. Sure where was the government? Sitting on this and allowing them, but they ran the system again. Why do you think Bertie Ahern jumped out of government? He knew it was coming up, he knew it was coming up. He knew there was trouble. He knew it, he knew it. But he didn't stay around to get it and who do you think they put in? A big fecking gobshite that was drunk. I feel sorry for him. I did feel sorry for him. He was put in there because Bertie Ahern knew trouble was coming on the rack and he wanted out. That's what happened. If you read between the lines, and Bertie Ahern was brought up by the religious orders and he would never, and same with your man on the Late Late Show years ago.

KOD *Gay Byrne?*

BOD Oh yeah, Gay Byrne was a right...Gay Byrne wouldn't say one sad thing about a priest. And you know in his heart and soul, he knew fecking well there was things going on, but he always covered it up. Go back on them all. Every one of them that covered up, they all were involved in it. The cover up, the cover up, the cover up. And how do you think they got their votes? Through covering up. As long as they made sure they were going to keep covering up, they were getting the votes, the votes, the votes from the religious orders. That's what was happening. Yeah, yeah, that's what was happening.

KOD *So is there anything else we should...?*

BOD Not really, no, I think I've said my piece. But I'm living a happy life now and that's the main thing. But I don't know if...now, we got forms to fill in.

KOD Yes.

BOD From your man.

KOD *From Quirke?*

BOD Yeah, Quirke.<sup>6</sup> Now, they say you have to be 10 years to get the 100,000, but why? What has that got to do with it? The ones that were 10 years, I'm trying to say to you, I bet that you didn't meet anyone that was 10 years there. I bet you a hundred bob you didn't because they are all out with the nuns.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD So why would they be getting a hundred? Because they're not going to get paid. Make that promise. They're not going to get paid because they won't even have a clue, you know. So I think we should be...to me personally, the money doesn't mean anything to me. I don't give a shite one way or the other. I'd give it to a charity if I could. But what I'm trying to say is it seems to be again blocking off the abuse.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD And only paying us just to shut us up. They don't want to hear about the abuse. Do you understand what I'm saying?

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD Why should anyone have the rights to abuse anybody? I never abused my children. I never smacked any of my children. I would not smack a kid for nobody. I would sit them down and say, 'hold on, can you tell us what happened?' You have to listen. There's always two sides to a coin and 99% of the time, the child is telling you exactly what did happen. The adult is adding on their own story. A child, 99% of the time. Children don't. They say it the way it is. But straight away, it's twisted because Mammy said, 'no, no, it happened that way. 'No, no, darling, this is what happened' and as soon as the mammy says that, they agree with Mammy because they think Mammy's right. You know, if you really get the child before an adult talks to them, you'll get the real story, but you never do because the parents have butted in. It's like a mother that's in prison in America and the uncle got a hold of the young fellow and she had a handicapped daughter and she told the daughter not to go out to the back yard and she went on a little trolley and jumped into the pool. Now, it was only a paddle pool and she slipped and hurted her head, but she went down she drowned. But Mammy went out to take her out and she was holding her

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<sup>6</sup> Mr Justice John Quirke, who devised the Magdalene *ex gratia* scheme.



to try and get her back, but the uncle had the young fellow for three days and the uncle hated this woman cause she had left his son. And when the young fellow was told, the policeman said, 'but what happened then?' 'Well...' You'd know he was put up to it, it was too obvious, but they say now they'll have to wait till years to come, so is the mother to die in prison before they really find out what the child really knew? 'My mammy put her hand up like that and she choked her'. That was the uncle saying that, no child. The mother did take her hand to try and get her to vomit up the water, but the way that the boy did it, it was like if he was preaching. Show me again now what you do, show me again, and yet that uncle would not let the police talk to him without him being there. And I'd say the child kept looking at him, telling him what does he want? I have to tell him what my uncle said. But the mother is in prison, where the child had died accidentally because she jumped in, but she hit her head and didn't come out of it until the boy ran in to tell her that she fell in. Now, they don't know. The boy could have pushed her, you know. They could have been playing and he pushed and she went in and banged her head and...well, that's life. You know, life goes on, you know. It doesn't matter what way you look at it. But I always say the truth comes out in the end. I don't care what you say. It may take years to come out, but it comes out, you know.

KOD *Do you think the truth is coming out now?*

BOD Yeah, slowly, slowly. But it can never happen again. It can never happen again. Institutions, it doesn't matter if it's the VH [inaudible] crowd or whatever crowd. The same with the nursing homes. It's the very same with the nursing homes. You know, you go in there, you can walk in there any day. Nowadays, they're more tutored to watch you coming in. Who are you coming to visit? You could be just walking in. Now, you can't do that. Who are you coming into visit? You have to have a name. And then they're watching you that you go straight to that person, no one else, in case you're there as a reporter watching things because that's how a lot of the information came out. It was people just walking in and out of the homes.

KOD *Yeah, yeah.*

BOD But the way they were treating them. It was like now a couple of weeks ago, they had a programme on about the people minding the old folks at home, coming in to do for them at home and pinching them and pinching them and doing things to them and then saying to them, 'oh, I love that'. And they're partly senile or they're partly Alzheimer's or something and they

say, 'What are you going to do with that now? Do you want it?' Out of fear, they're asking do you want...but things are walking out of their homes as well, so they have to be more careful to see what's going on in them. I mean some of them signed their houses over to them. And their diamond rings are now gone. You know, you don't go in there to look for something from these old people. You know, what they have, they have. I mean I got a most beautiful plant. There was an old lady around the corner and she has only one child, her and the child, they weren't getting on, they were always bickering, they were too close of a like. She'd come in and say, 'how are you, Mum?' 'How do you think I am?' 'Where were you for the last three weeks?' 'Oh, don't start, Mum. I'm not here to listen to your crap. I'm off'. This kind of thing. So I started to go in anyway and then her sister, Marion [pseudonym] used to come over nearly every day, but now, she was a very headstrong girl, you know, the woman was. She was headstrong, but her brain was perfectly there. The body wasn't, the body wasn't there, but the head was there. But she might say to you, 'Go out and make us a cup of coffee'. And then you'd say, 'I'm off now'. 'Where do you think you're going? Sit down here, I'm not finished talking to you'. You know, this kind of thing and you had to be kind of strong and say, 'hold on now, Connie [pseudonym], I have a home, I have children. I'm going home. I'll come back later to see how you are. Goodbye, Connie, I'll see you later'. But if you didn't do that, you'd never get out of the house. But the week I was there on my own with her, she kept telling me now, 'I want you to go out there and ring Marion'. So I rang Marion. 'Where are you?' 'I'm at home'. 'Your sister Connie wants you. It's urgent'. 'Okay, tell her I'll be over at 10 o'clock'. Okay, now Marion is going out to Spain the next day. So Marion came over at 10 o'clock and I was there and she was saying to Marion, 'now Marion, that book is yours'. 'Yeah, but Connie look, why don't we leave it until we come back? I've already talked to you about it on Wednesday. Why don't we leave it until you come back and then we'll put the name on it when we come back?'. 'Well, I can put your name on it now'. 'No, Connie, it has to be done properly, you have to go down to the post office, fill out a form, the whole lot. No, we'll wait till you come back'. So Marion left anyway. And Saturday, Sunday, she kept going on to me, 'now, you know where the book is, you tell Marion that's her book. That's hers'. So I said, 'Connie'. I thought she was talking about her pension book and I said, 'Do you want me to go down and collect your pension? I'll go down'. 'What the hell are you talking about?' she says. I said, 'you're going on about the book, Connie'. 'I'm not talking about my pension book, I have no pension book, I've only a card'. 'So what book are you talking about, Connie?' 'Did I not tell you?' She calmed down. 'Did I not tell you?' 'No, tell me what?' 'I got my lump sum from an accident I had, but Caroline [pseudonym] the little fucker,' that's what she said now, Caroline, that's her daughter now, Caroline, the little fucker, now, she

says, she has enough. She has this house and she has the house in the country and I'm after paying off her credit card and I'm after giving her money for a holiday. She has enough, she's a mean piece of shit, never came to see me. I want Marion to have that book and that money'. She died, no name on the book. So I get a call the other night, people at my door. Caroline. 'How are you, Bridget?' 'I'm grand, Caroline'. 'I just want to ask you, did Connie say anything to you?' I said, 'yeah, she asked me to do one thing for her'. 'And what's that?' 'She told me to tell Marion she knows where the book is and that she is to take the book, that Caroline the little fucker has enough, she had the place in the country and she has this house, they're her words, Caroline. That's all I know and they're her words I'm following out'. So Caroline said, 'Well, she did want to talk about giving Marion some money some time ago, but I don't think Marion should get the amount that's in the book'. 'Oh,' I said, 'she didn't say how much was in the book. I never saw the book. All I knew she kept talking about a book'. 'Well,' she said, 'there's a very large sum of money in the book'. 'Well,' I said, 'Caroline, all I want to say to you is please carry out her words because you'll never have an ounce of luck. It's not worth it. If it's down to me, just give it'. 'Well, I was going to put in a new kitchen,' she says. 'Well now Caroline, you mightn't have an ounce of luck if you do it because she could haunt you'. So she just said, 'Thank you, Bridget. Have you been talking to Marion?' I said, 'No, I have not seen Marion since the funeral and it wasn't the time and place to talk'. But everybody...I got about 20 cards. They were all saying to me at the funeral up in the graveyard, the Mass was finished down there and we went up to the graveyard and the priest said, 'now, eternal rest grant unto her, Oh Lord,' and then he said, 'in the name of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit'. And I had an old speaker here worked on a battery and I played the flute.

KOD *Oh lovely.*

BOD And they're all looking.

KOD *I didn't know you could play music.*

BOD Yeah. They're all looking. And then I took the mouth organ up at the second part and I played Amazing Grace. We never knew she played music. I said, 'I just want to let you know there's a time and a place for everything'. I said it like that (*laughs*) and they all laughed. I said, 'none of you ever knew I played music, but there's a lot of things you don't know what I do,' I said and they start roaring laughing, so they all start clapping and they said, 'we can't thank you'. A lot

of the aunts were there, a lot of nieces were there and they kept saying, 'we can't thank you enough for what you done for Aunty Connie, Bridget. She kept saying she could trust you. You're not into questioning her, taking anything'. Even when I offer her money, she used to say Connie, I come here as a friend, not to look for something, just keep your money I have money myself and she'd say, 'well, I only wanted to give her just a few bob'. No, she wouldn't take it off me. No, I used to say, 'you'll need it, you'll need it for yourself'. So people used to say, 'I would have taken it off her'. Well, I said, 'that's you, but that's not me'. I said, 'if you can't do a charity for somebody and look for something in return, that's not charity. That's not charity, that's looking for something in return. You don't look for anything in return. Just do it and walk away. It's over and done with, you know'. So that's my life now, darling.

KOD *Thanks so much, Bridget. That's really great.*

BOD Whatever comes out of it. If it helps you in any way, but I think you have to...when you look at all the bits and put it altogether, it's not so much looking at the...what has happened in the older generation, you have to look because it all starts from babies onwards. It's like now there's a lot of places where children are put in because they are out of control. There's places where there's babies and they have different things wrong with them and, you know, you have to look to see how everything is done for them. Because 99% of the time, as I say, is if someone is continuously being nasty to you, you go round very angry all the time with yourself, and people are wondering why you're angry, but you're angry because you're not able to control what you could have controlled right from the beginning, was to say what you're angry about, you know. And I always think if you talk about what you're angry about, you do be able to think straighter and go on with your life, but to bottle it up and bottle it up and bottle it up and bottle it up, then get in trouble with the police or get in trouble with someone else and you know, the whole thing. Sure it's like a neighbour here, I went up one time up to the house and just knocked at the door and I just said, 'can I come in and have a word with you?' And they said yeah and they looked at me and I said, 'you need to talk to your son,' I said, 'he's going downhill badly'. 'What do you mean?' I said, 'why do you think,' I said, 'he's getting the beatings all the time? He tells you a different story nearly every second week that he was getting off the bus and someone jumped him or he was in town and someone jumped him. No,' I said, 'nobody jumped him, but I want to put you in the picture. Question it, don't leave it, every time he's told you something, you've left it. You've gone out saying oh, we'll go on down and he'd say no, Dad, don't do that because they'll beat me up again. Why do you think he doesn't want to go to the police station? Because

99 times when they start to check it out, it's a different story altogether. So just ask him why he's getting a beating up. There's a reason behind it. I'm doing it now as a mum to protect him because he is a good kid, but he's going downhill fast'. 'Get your fucking foot outside my fucking door and don't you fucking dare come up here and tell me about my child' and all the rest. 'Oh, I'm getting you a solicitor'. 'You do that,' says I, I said, 'just please help him'. That's all I said to him because as I say, 'I put the blame on you now you're being told'. So they found out he was pushing the drugs, he was. In the end, he broke down and told them. He was getting hidings because he didn't have the money to pay back. So weeks went on, he came down about nine months after, him and the wife knocked at the door and said, 'we're very, very sorry we didn't listen'. I said, 'I didn't go up there to get the child into trouble. I went up there for you. When some child...if my child came in here and told me he got beaten up, I'd have to sit him down and ask where were you, why, what happened, what caused it, but you were accepting what he was saying and not questioning it. That's where he knew you wouldn't question what he was doing. You don't let them come in and tell you they got beaten up and just let it'.

KOD *And did you know what was going on?*

BOD Kids...it's very hard when you have grown-up children, they're all in the circle. They all know one another.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD But when you hear them talking among themselves, you pick up what they're saying and you put it together.

KOD *Right.*

BOD And I just heard them saying, one time, ah, this is going back years ago, I just heard Henry saying to a friend that was in the house, 'well, I blame the parents, they seem to be accepting everything he's telling them'. And that's when I put it altogether and I heard them saying, 'well, if he doesn't...why if he selling the drugs if he hadn't got the money to get out of it now and be done with it?' And that's when I went up because I knew it was Terence [pseudonym], lovely kid now. He turned out a brilliant kid afterwards, you know, but he was just going down the wrong road, trying to be someone because he was getting money for selling the...but in the

end, he was getting the hidings for it because the people that he'd give it to would be all his mates and they wouldn't pay him back, you know, and they all tried and anyone that tells me their children don't try it are just for the bloody birds. Every child will hide a secret from you until you actually catch them. And I always remembered the kids here and Henry was smoking and Dad had counted his cigarettes and there was two missing. He came in and he said, 'what are you doing, Henry?' Oh, says he, I'm getting an apple. So out Henry goes with the apple. So that night at the table, Dad said, 'Just wondering, I'm missing two cigarettes and I don't know what I did with them, you know'. Henry's face got pure red, never raised his head up, he kept his head down. And he said, 'you didn't see them, Henry, did you?' Waiting for him to lie to him now and you don't lie to Dad and didn't answer him. He said, 'are you deaf, Henry? Did you hear what I said?' 'Well,' he said, 'I took two belonging to you, Dad'. That's all he had to do was ask. Don't steal. Ask if you want something, ask, don't ever steal. He says, 'because I'll cut the legs from under you,' he says, 'that was stealing'. And Henry looked over at me and I said, 'oh boy,' but he was teaching him. It wasn't his to take, it wasn't his to give, you know. I never thought he'd come up with two cigarettes, but his cigarettes were counted. I remember one time asking him, he taught me a lesson because I hadn't a value of money. I remember saying to him one time, 'Give us €200 there'. And he said, 'for what?' I said, 'just give me the two bloody hundred, will you?' He gave it to me, so that weekend, I didn't see my housekeeping money. Went to Sunday, saw no housekeeping money, Monday still no. So I said to him, 'excuse me, you didn't give me my housekeeping money'. And he said, 'what?' 'You didn't give me my housekeeping money'. And he said, 'which housekeeping money is that now?' I said, 'this week's housekeeping money'. 'But why should I give it to you?' he says, 'I don't owe it to you'. 'What the hell are you talking about?' I said, 'would you fecking give me my housekeeping money?' 'What about the 200 I gave you?' 'Yeah'. He said, 'what do you mean?' I said, 'the 200 you gave me, yeah, I spent that, but I want my housekeeping money'. 'No.' he says, 'if you had said give me two hundred, but you said lend me 200. That was borrowing and you said you'd pay me back, so you don't get your housekeeping money, it's in my pocket'. That was the hardest lesson I learned. Never borrow unless you can pay it back.

KOD *Was he a good husband to you?*

BOD Yeah, he was a brilliant man. Oh God, he was very quiet. People never knew I was married to him. He worked up in [name of company removed] for 21 years and no one knew he was married to a Bridget O'Donnell until he died. And they were all saying, 'huh? Jesus, the quietest

man under the sun'. Now he was very quiet, but if you did something, you had to tell him the truth. He couldn't bear you to tell him a lie, he'd lose it for you telling him a lie. He said, 'it doesn't matter how bad it is, tell me. It can be sorted out, but when the lies go on, they get worse and they get bigger and then you have no control of it, you know'. He used always say that to the kids. A lie is worse than the thief because the liar will always keep making up more stories and more stories. The thief will cry after robbing it, but the liar never does. The liar will keep adding on the lies. And that was a lesson we learned. No, no, I had a great life. Everything I have is my own. He built all them himself [referring to furniture]. He was great mechanically minded.

KOD *Yeah, they're beautiful.*

BOD He was great mechanically minded, he was.

KOD *Mahogany built ins, they're lovely.*

BOD Yeah, he built that in just for the records and the tapes the CDs and that, you know, and he didn't even want any wires showing from the television. See the way he put them up.

KOD *Yeah.*

BOD Tightly and neatly down behind because you'd come in, you can see all the wires from the television. Ah yeah, he was a good man. And I got that from a guy in Russia, from the Ukraine, that came all the way from the Ukraine, that tea set.

KOD *Oh, it's beautiful.*

BOD Yeah, and those matching. They all came from the Ukraine, all the way. I was praying they wouldn't break, but they didn't.

KOD *They're gorgeous.*

BOD Yeah. Yeah.

KOD *Okay.*

BOD Well, that's it now.

KOD *Thank you very much.*

BOD I think I've that much.

KOD Yes.

BOD Done and said and...

KOD *Turn this off. Thank you.*

BOD Whatever comes out of it anyway. But when do you think we'll get paid for this, the laundry anyway?

KOD *They're going to do it quickly. I'm not sure when.*

[Interview ends]