



Oral History of Mary Jefferies

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| Reference Code: | MAGOHP/56 |
| Pseudonym? | No |
| Status: | Survivor |
| Keywords: | Good Shepherd Magdalene Laundry, Limerick; St Joseph's Mercy Orphanage, Clifden, Co Galway; Convent of Mercy, Spiddal, Co Galway; Croagh Patrick, Co Mayo; rule of silence; food deprivation; wore dark grey & black gown as a uniform; witnessed Guards returning Magdalenes who escaped; transfer between laundries; institutionalisation in older Magdalene women. |
| Date of Interview: | 12 th September 2013 |
| Transcript: | 52 pages |
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| Interviewer: | Dr Sinéad Pembroke |
| Records/Papers included: | No |
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Notes on Redaction and Transcription Process

Interviewee Initials: MJ

Interviewer Initials: SP

Key

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

(pause) = Long pause

blabla = spoken with great emphasis

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

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

Notes on Redaction Process

- Named individuals have been assigned pseudonyms
- Certain locations have been removed to protect the privacy of the interviewee and third parties
- Some dates have been redacted to protect the privacy of the interviewee and third parties

List of Pseudonyms

| Pseudonym | Category |
|---------------------|--|
| Sr Benigus/Benigus | 3rd party religious in convent |
| Sr Regina/Regina | 3rd party religious in convent |
| Irene | 3rd party Magdalene |
| Violet | 3rd party Magdalene |
| Martha | Interviewee's friend & 3rd party Magdalene |
| Mother Xavier | 3rd party religious in laundry |
| Fr O'Neill | 3rd party priest in Clifden |
| Bernadette Maguire | 3rd party Magdalene |
| Mrs Doyle | Woman who worked in hotel with interviewee |
| McCormacks | Family that interviewee worked for after leaving hotel |
| Simon | Interviewee's son |
| Tommy | Interviewee's husband |
| Fiona | Person who assisted Interviewee search for her records |
| Anthony Christopher | Interviewee's father |
| Michael | Friend of Interviewee's Husband |
| Bridget | Interviewee's friend |
| Fr Mahon | Local priest |

Basic Data from Interview

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Name/Pseudonym | Mary Jefferies |
| When Born | 1928 |
| Born outside marriage? | Did not say |
| Raised by | In St Josephs, Mercy Orphanage, Clifden, Galway from four months until fourteen years of age |
| Education | Primary until fourteen years of age |
| Emigrated? | Yes |
| Physical ailments? | Feet and leg ailments have continued |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Of Note | <p>Severe food deprivation in St Joseph's Orphanage in Clifden, interviewee fed herself animal feed from the buckets in the farmyard.</p> <p>Beaten when too ill to work in orphanage.</p> <p>The children in the orphanage carried out turf cutting.</p> <p>Beaten with leather straps and rosary beads.</p> <p>Put to work picking moss off tar roads near Spiddal convent.</p> <p>Climbed Croagh Patrick barefooted as penance and was hospitalised for two days with injured feet.</p> <p>Blue stone tincture used routinely on interviewees 'eyes in laundry resulting in attendance at Eye & Ear Hospital in Dublin.</p> <p>Darned football socks and jumpers in Limerick laundry.</p> |
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| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Order | The Sisters of the Good Shepherd |
| Laundry | St Marys, Limerick |
| From | 1950 |
| To | 1952 |
| Duration of stay | 2 years |
| Age on entry | Twenty-two years of age |
| Entered Via | St Joseph's Mercy Orphanage, Clifden, Co Galway |
| House Name/No | Yes |
| Haircutting/punishment? | Yes |
| Circumstances of Departure | Went to work in local hotel |

[Interview begins]

SP *Okay, so thank you very much, Mary, for taking part today. Today is 12th September. So the first question I'd like to ask you is could you just tell us about your life growing up? So if we start from when you were born.*

MJ Oh, now, this is Mary, yes. When I was born, well, I can't say much on that line, but I went to this orphanage when I was four months old. And then brought up as a little kid there till I came of age, fourteen or fifteen, to start in the laundry. We don't do much schooling after that because we're brought down to the laundry and then we've got to look after the whole buildings, the cleaning, doing, and everything. Painting. We had to do those. Windows, we had to sit out on fourth floor windows to clean them and do everything. We did all the work ourselves in it. So we did our best there. That was every day. The same thing every day. Dormitories all had to be cleaned, beds made, yes, very good, yeah. Yeah.

SP *And just what year were you born, sorry?*

MJ Oh, I was born [exact date of birth removed], 1928. Yes, 1928 I was born.

SP *Very good.*

MJ Yes, yeah.

SP *And I know the name of it, but if you just want to tell us the name of the orphanage?*

MJ Yeah, it was St Joseph's, St Joseph's, Mercy.

SP *In Clifden, is it?*

MJ In Clifden.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yes, in Clifden, it was, yeah.

SP *And so what was the food like in Clifden?*

MJ Oh, don't talk, the food. We never had food. We ate out of buckets sometimes. When we would go down the farmyard, we would pinch all the food out of the animals' buckets and we would eat them. And then when the convent nun would be going down the lane, she'd be bringing the buckets down from the convent full of goods. We used to call them goods because there was all food and slop and everything, and we used to pull the bucket off her and eat it all. Yes, we used to. Because by the time we got up to have our own meal, it was one piece of bread each, oh, eight to a table, and mostly green. It was always green, but we had to eat it because we had nothing else to eat. No. I mean, Christmas time, we had turkey. One turkey between two hundred children. You can just picture what the turkey was like. We'd be all in the big room. Oh, we'd scramble to get at it, to get a bit of it. Yeah. Aye. My goodness, we never knew what food was. No more than money, we never got paid. Never got paid for any work we done there, and we worked very, very hard there. There was ten of us girls, and we really did work hard from morning to night. We were too tired to go to bed at night. Yeah, because we knew we had to be up at four in the morning to get all the rooms cleaned and the fires lit and the boiler house fire going and the laundry boiler going. Yeah. Oh God, times were hard.

SP *What was the routine?*

MJ It was very hard.

SP *What was your routine like?*

MJ Well, we didn't have much routine, but you get from one job to the other to get it all in, you know? And if someone was ill or something like that, we had to go and do their job because when you got ill, you got beaten because you were ill. We did...we did. We got beaten because we were ill. Yeah. If we had a cough or anything, we were beaten for that. We were beaten for that. That is...no medicine, nothing, just get over it. Yeah. Terrible it was, yeah. As for the bath then, one bath of water. There was three baths in place in the bathroom and that'd do. We'd wash about twenty children in all that same bath of water. Yes. Shivering cold in the bathroom. All tile floor, cemented floor. We had the old sheets off the bed to dry us. We never knew what

towels were. Oh no, we never knew what towels were. We had the old carbolic soap. The wet soap, yes. Oh dear, it was terrible. Absolutely awful. Yeah.

SP *And you said you had to look after other children?*

MJ Oh yes. When you came up to...yeah, when we'd count up to about fifty, sixty, we used to have ten children each of us. The five laundry girls, we were called, and we had to have children, to look after them, dress them, wash them, bath them, do their hair, plait their hair, curl their hair, knit them some jumpers and some skirts and some socks to keep them warm. Yeah. I don't think there was any heating in the place. There were only one pipe went around all the rooms. It was freezing at night. Yes. It was really bad. Yeah.

SP *And what about your education? What was your education?*

MJ Oh yeah, we went to school in the morning. We had three different nuns to see to us in the morning, went to three different classes, and then we got finished at two o'clock and we came out. Again, we had to go out to the bog, through the bog, to the church. We had to walk...we had three miles out.

SP *Jesus.*

MJ Canvas bags, to go out and cut the turf. One man out there would cut the turf and we'd have to rake it and stand it up and let the air get through it. Yeah. Walk all the way down there and then when it was done we used to have to carry it then in canvas bags all the whole mile back and again to the school. Yes, it was terrible. Yeah.

SP *And did you make friends with the other girls?*

MJ Oh no, you mustn't look at the other girls at all, you mustn't look at the town girls or anything. If you were caught looking at the town girls when we went for walks, that was terrible, you had to just keep in front all the time. We used to pick sweet papers off the roads going along because we used to see them. We used to lick them and eat them because we were hungry. We never knew what sweets were.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Or oranges or apples or fruit, we never knew what they were.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ No, we never knew what anything like that was. It was terrible.

SP *And did anyone ever come to visit you when you were there?*

MJ Oh no, nobody came to visit you, no, at all, no. We never had visitors. Well, it wasn't the thing.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ We didn't have parents.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ They told us we didn't have parents, that nobody would be coming to visit us and take us out.
Oh, no.

SP *So as far as you were concerned, you had no family?*

MJ I had no family at all, yes, yeah, that was it. I was an orphan.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yes, yes, oh God, aye.

SP *And how did you feel about that?*

MJ Well, we didn't like it because I mean we knew...even though we never knew what families were, we had the sense in our own minds to know that we belonged to somebody. We were

belonged to somebody. We thought maybe one day, somebody would come and see us and take us out.

SP Yes.

MJ But nobody ever came. Once them doors were closed, they were closed. We never went down the town. You know, you used to go, when they went for a walk, we went out the back streets to go for walks, we did, and back in again, yes.

SP *And you were saying as well to me earlier that you didn't celebrate birthdays.*

MJ Oh no, we didn't know what our birthdays were. I didn't know what my birthday was, when my birthday was until I was getting married. And that was in '57 when I had to ring right to the school and ask for my birth certificate. And then they did send it to me in the end. That was when I knew I had a birthday, [date removed].

SP *Yeah.*

MJ I said I never knew my age. We never knew our ages. We were all at the same age. I could have been four all along.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Even when I was going on fifty, I still think I'm four. Yeah, we never knew what birthdays were, yeah. Oh no, we didn't have that.

SP *And what were the nuns like to you?*

MJ Well, there was lot of nuns there, but there was three of them in the school and they were terrible. Sr Benigus [pseudonym] was terrible. She used to wallop me across the legs with her belt or her shoes, yeah. There was one there, Sister Regina [pseudonym], a little wee bumpy one. She used to too as well. She was bad. Very, very bad, she was, yes.

SP *And did they say nasty things about you? Like you know, like insult you or...?*

MJ No, they didn't, didn't insult us. All they did was when they passed by was wallop you across the leg or across the back with their belt. And their belt was made of leather, and many a time I had to wax Benigus's, she said, 'because you'll be the first one to have the blow of it,' she said. I used to have to wax it and shine it, yeah. And then the next thing was I'd have it across my legs. I never had good legs and I still haven't got good legs now. Yeah, and I put it down to that. But they did tell me when I left the school, I remember asking, because I had to ask one day, was when I was having my children, one of my children, Doctor wants to know did I have scarlet fever? Which I told him I didn't, and when I rang the school after and asked them, they said yes, I did, I had it terrible when I was young. Scarlet fever, yeah.

SP *Wow.*

MJ Yeah, I did. And I often wonder what was wrong with my legs because my feet and all, look, they aren't right, yes, yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah.

SP *And so your education was very poor, was it?*

MJ Oh yeah, the education, you didn't learn anything, you just learned your prayers and whatever you had to say, and 'yes, thank you, no, thank you,' all that kind of thing. You had to do all that, but the education, you didn't know because nobody ever came to find out did you learn or did you do anything.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ No, they didn't.

SP *Did you do any exams or anything?*

MJ No, we never did exams, no. There's no such thing as exams like the children do today. Oh no, there was nothing like that, yes.

SP *And you said that then when you were ...how old were you when you went to work in the laundry in the place in Clifden?*

MJ Oh, there, I was about fifteen there.

SP *Fifteen.*

MJ So we carried till I was nineteen before I left there.

SP *Wow.*

MJ So we had to be in the laundry because to see to the whole school.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah.

SP *So the laundry was just for the school?*

MJ Yeah, the orphans in the school.

SP *You didn't do public laundry?*

MJ Oh yes, all the public laundry came in.

SP *Into Clifden as well?*

MJ The baskets came into Clifden, yes. Oh, it came in from Clifden because there was the Falls Hotel, O'Connor's Hotel, there was some other hotel. All the hotel things used to come in, yes.

SP *Okay.*

MJ And then all the people, like some people that lived in the houses because they thought they were rich, they'd send their basket load in, you know, just families, yeah.

SP *Wow. And were you paid?*

MJ No, we weren't paid for that! But God above now, we didn't even know what money was.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ I'm still counting my money now, learning what I've got, yes, yeah. We didn't know what money was at all. And when we went to work...

SP *Yeah.*

MJ ...they told the people from Josephs and then got us to go out to work, they told the people they gave us to, not to give us any money, just to beat us and make us do the work, yeah. That was how we were trained, yeah, yeah. And that was in the same three places where I was with nuns, nuns, nuns all the time.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ I went from one place to the other, yeah.

SP *And what was your routine like in the laundry in Clifden? Like how many hours a day did you work there?*

MJ Oh, we did about from eight in the morning, we did there because we got up, sometimes we got up at four in the morning. If they felt like it, they'd come around, get us all up. We'd have to go down to the laundry, saying some people wanted their laundry. We'd have to go down and get all that laundry out in the baskets, yeah. Oh yes, and we didn't have any time, special time, see, we'd go down when we were ready. They'd say, 'go down when you're ready,' which was hardly worthwhile going down to the dining room because of what we were going to have. We'd only a bit of bread and maybe half a cup of tea that been poured out there all morning.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ For you to come down and it was freezing cold. We'd just take it standing up and move off again and go up, go up and do your work again.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yes.

SP *And so what time did you finish work at?*

MJ Oh, we finished work at about five in the evening time, yes, five in the evening because see, then it was all prayers up and down the corridor, up to the chapel, up to the thing. Prayers, prayers, prayers, I don't know what the hell for.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ So they were never much good. Whoever called them Mercy nuns, God help them.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Mercy, yeah. They were wrong.

SP *And did you ever see an inspector while you were there?*

MJ Oh no, we never seen inspectors or anything like that, no. I think they'd be afraid for inspectors to come in. I mean all the doors were guarded. You would never answer a door if a bell was ringing. You'd have to leave it ringing till one of the nuns went and opened it then. And they would only talk through a hole in the door, yes, yeah. Oh no, they wouldn't open the door to no one. Because we were inside a big wall. There was a boundary wall outside for the road. You'd go in a little hatch door and then you'd go in. There was the big gates inside again there.

SP *Okay.*

MJ So yeah. And they're locked as soon as you got inside.

SP *Did you ever think to run away?*

MJ Well. we didn't. We didn't think of running away because we were frightened because they'd threaten you like with the Guards. The Guards were this...the Guards would bring you back, the Guards...because they did bring back a lot of the people that ran off, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ And brought them back in. So you were as well off to stay there, you know. That's all you did in the grounds and there in the laundry, up to bed and down. And you couldn't talk to anyone in the dormitory. If you talked to anyone in the dormitory, you were put on your knees and you were beaten, beaten on the back. Yeah. Yeah. Couldn't talk.

SP *And so from Clifden, do you want to tell us what happened? So at nineteen, you were released and you were put to work in another...where were you working?*

MJ I went from the Clifden...I went from Clifden, I went to, oh, that was to Spiddal.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ I worked at Spiddal first from Clifden and there were nuns. There was thirty nuns in the place where I went, and that was just as bad because, see, we had to do all of our work quick in the couple of hours we had because there was no electricity to the place. We used to go to bed at six o'clock. Otherwise we'd be out doing the gardens. We used to have to go out and clean all the moss up the roads. We'd be on our knees cleaning all the moss off the tar. That comes up through the tar and we used to clean there. Pick every weed there. Your fingers would be raw.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ And we'd have do to that so many hours a night, every night you'd go. That was our entertainment, was out weeding the roads, yeah. Yes, yeah.

SP *And did they pay you for this work in Spiddal?*

MJ Oh no, no, no. I don't think they knew what money was themselves, I don't know.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ So yeah. But we made all our own bread there.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Made all our own jams and things like that. You know, there was the vegetables, there was the gardens. We had to do the gardens, so you'd all your own vegetables and things.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah. The only thing I think they had to buy in was the wheat and there was very little of that.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah.

SP *And from Spiddal, what happened then?*

MJ From Spiddal, I went back to the school again because when I was playing games with one of the little children from the town in Spiddal, used to come into the convent and help. And I was teaching her how to play skipping and hopscotch and all those little things that we had learned. And they said I was daft, I was gone mad, so I had to go back to Clifden because I was mad. So they sent me back to Clifden again. Yes, yeah. And I was in Clifden then for two years back again. Benigus beat me more because I went back and because, 'I didn't work,' she said, 'hard in the convent and then with the nuns'.

SP *And what were you doing? What was your work in Clifden at this stage?*

MJ Oh well, the same thing. I was back to the same thing again.

SP *Oh really?*

MJ Back to the laundry again, you know. You'd get down to start all over again then. It was time for them in the two years, to get me off into the Good Shepherd. So I went to the Good Shepherd then. They told me they were sending me out to a job and that's where they sent me. But I got to the Good Shepherd, there was a crowd of the people that were in Clifden. They were all in there. Loads of the girls I knew were all in there. We had thought in Clifden, we'd think, 'oh, they have gone to a nice job now and they're all gone off, you know'. But they weren't, they were all stuck in this Good Shepherd place again.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Doing the same thing all over again.

SP *This was Galway, the Galway laundry?*

MJ Galway laundry, yes, yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ We've left the Clifden laundry.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ See, I went to the nuns in Spiddal.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah. And then from Spiddal back to the convent and the convent then to the Good Shepherd.

SP *That would have been, what year was that? That was...*

MJ '40 something, yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ It was around '44, '44, yeah.

SP *At this stage, how old were you? You were about...*

MJ Oh, good lord.

SP *You were about twenty-two or twenty-three, weren't you?*

MJ I was, yes, yeah, I was, yeah, yeah, yeah. I think twenty, was it?

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SP *Yeah, you got out Clifden at nineteen.*

MJ Yeah.

SP *And then you spent two years...*

MJ I was two years back in the school again, yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Because I wasn't a year with that Spiddal one.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ I was only the couple of months. Well, four or five months, yeah.

SP *So you're about twenty-one.*

MJ Yeah.

SP *Twenty-one, nearly twenty-two then.*

MJ Yeah. Oh yes, it was terrible.

SP *And what did you think of then the laundry in Galway? Can you describe to me what that was like?*

MJ Oh, that was bad, that was, the one in Galway, that was bad, see, really, because there was a different laundry to what we had in Clifden, you know. That was the big main laundry for the whole of Limerick, you know, there.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Oh gosh, yeah, no, lots of work that was in that. Big machinery and everything like that, much, much bigger than what was in Clifden, yes, yeah, yeah. Because that was the main laundry for everywhere. Everything was coming in there, so yeah, yeah.

SP *Sorry, just to clarify, it was Galway you were in, not Limerick?*

MJ Galway, yeah.

SP *It was the Galway laundry?*

MJ Yeah.

SP *Because there's two laundries.*

MJ Yeah.

SP *There's one in Limerick and there's one in Galway.*

MJ Yeah.

SP *So just to make sure that you...*

MJ Oh, it was the one in Limerick I was in, yeah. It was the Limerick.

SP *Oh, you were in the Good Shepherd's in Limerick!*

MJ The Good Shepherd.

SP *Oh, okay.*

MJ Yeah, the Good Shepherd's in Limerick, yeah.

SP *I'm glad I asked you then.*

MJ That's right. Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ The Good Shepherd in Limerick, yeah.

SP *When you said Good Shepherd's, you see.*

MJ Yeah. It's in Limerick.

SP *Yeah, because it's the Sisters of Mercy in Galway.*

MJ Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

SP *Oh okay, so you were sent to Limerick.*

MJ Yeah, to Limerick I was sent, yeah.

SP *And actually, tell me, you know when they sent you there, how did they do it? Like what did they say to you, you know?*

MJ Oh, they told, no, they said, 'we've got you another job, we've got you another job and you'd better persevere this time,' you see, they'd said, 'because otherwise we'll have to get the Guards on to you'. It was all threatening with the Guards if you didn't work. And because they said, 'you can't come back here again,' and I said, 'well, I didn't want to go back there again'. Of course, that was another wallop across the back again.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ But yes, it was Limerick, it was, yeah, in Limerick, yeah.

SP *And so they drove you there, did they?*

MJ Oh, they drove me.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Two of the nuns drove me there, but I didn't know who they were. What they did was they were in their civilian clothes. They weren't in their veil and thing they usually wear...

SP *Yeah.*

MJ ...till the next morning. Next morning when I went down, when we came down to breakfast, one of the nuns that brought me in the convent had her veil and thing on her.

SP *Okay.*

MJ And she said, 'don't you remember me?' And I said, 'no'. I said I didn't remember her because I didn't know her at the time because of course she'd a coat and hat on her in the car.

SP *Yeah, yeah, yeah.*

MJ Yeah. And see, it was two of them that came for me, to Clifden for me.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ So they brought me down and then of course they do everything under dark.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ In the nights. It was night time.

SP *Okay.*

MJ We drove through everywhere because you couldn't see where you were going. I thought to myself, 'where in the hell am I coming now?' And I was looking out the window and looking out the windows. Then we came to this huge big building. We got out. She said, 'we're getting out here now'. And then go in the hatch door and then in the big gates again. I thought yeah, I'm for it again, back in there again.

SP *Okay.*

MJ Yeah.

SP *Jesus.*

MJ You go in, then you see all the crowds of girls all around, you know. And then see all you know. I said, 'What are you doing here Irene [pseudonym]...Violet [pseudonym]?' I knew loads of them that were in there from the school.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ They said, 'oh, didn't you know we were in here?' 'No,' I said, 'I thought you were out in a new job, like you know, a proper job'. They weren't. They were in there. Yeah. Oh yeah.

SP *And what was your first night like?*

MJ Oh, cried all night, cried and cried and cried. I don't think I slept for weeks or anything like that there.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ No, no, no, no, terrible. Course we were in dormitories then, see. Yeah.

SP *And did they tell you when you were going to leave or...?*

MJ No.

SP *Like as far as you were concerned, you were there for...?*

MJ Oh, I was there for the rest of my life there.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Because you didn't think life...there was any more life to go.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ So you'd get up and then, oh no, it was terrible, yeah. Yeah.

SP *And did they change your name?*

MJ Oh, they did.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Oh, they did. Now, they did that, they changed my name. After that, you don't have your own name. I had Josepha.

SP *Okay.*

MJ After St Joseph.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Oh, it's him and all...[inaudible] St Joseph they call me St Josepha. That's what I was called, yeah...Sr Josepha.

SP *And did they give you a uniform?*

MJ Yeah, you had an uniform, yes, whether it fitted you or not, you got it on you. Took all your clothes off and you had to go in this big old dark like gown things.

SP *Okay.*

MJ Yes, like gowns they were.

SP *What colour were they? Do you remember?*

MJ They were grey and black.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Grey and black. You wouldn't have bright colours there, see no. Too long for you, you kept it. You couldn't take a hem up on it or anything.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ No, they just had to do you, yeah. And the shoes.

SP *Is that why you dress so colourfully now?*

MJ Oh, yeah (*laughs*), I make up for it now.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yes, I do. I never liked black or browns, I don't, no, I don't.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ No, I wear the green now (*laughs*). I thought I'd wear it today because I was coming to see you. Lovely, yeah. Oh, it's very good. Yeah, lovely, lovely.

SP *And so did they put you to work straightaway then?*

MJ Oh yes, yes.

SP *Like after that night?*

MJ Oh yes, morning, you get on with the job. They just fit in there. That was your place for the rest of your life. You stand there. You're washing and washing, then with the ironing, you stand in the same place all day ironing.

SP *So did you do everything there? Like you didn't have just one responsibility? Did you wash and iron?*

MJ Oh no, you go over, get the bundle of clothes off the side, whatever was there for ironing, you take that, your bundle with you and you do that. Or for the washing...

SP *Yeah.*

MJ ...you take it and put the soap and in the big boiler, a big huge boiler boiling, you put them in that, then they go transfer them into the other big machines, and we did all that. And then while they're washing, you go and do all the ironing you can.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yes, yeah. The pressers were there. You can use the pressers or the gas iron because there were these gas irons plugged in, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ The whole load of them plugged in all along and they were plugged in in there. Yeah.

SP *Wow.*

MJ Where in Clifden, it wasn't. You had...there was a stove and they were all standing on the stove. Go around in a circle on the stove.

SP *Wow.*

MJ Yeah, and someone had to keep the fires going, you know, to keep them, yeah. Yeah.

SP *It's hard work.*

MJ It was hard work, and I mean you go to iron, if any of them irons were dirty and you did something white, you know, like the nuns...

SP *Yeah.*

MJ ...whites and things.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ They used to have their whites white and the things around their necks white, and you used to wash and starch those. And if you took the iron straight off that and put it on them, Jesus, it'd be all black. You'd have to wash it and bleach it and everything to get all the marks out of it.

SP *Okay.*

MJ Yeah. Oh yeah.

SP *And did you have to do everything in silence?*

MJ Oh yes, oh, you mustn't talk.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ We mustn't talk or laugh or anything, you know. If you were finished your work, you had to kneel down beside the board and have your prayer book and be reading your prayer book.

SP *Oh, really?*

MJ Till the others finished. Yeah.

SP *Jesus. So there was a lot of prayer, was there?*

MJ Oh, prayers all the time, prayers all the time, I don't know why, you'd still go to chapel. Martha [pseudonym] won't go to church at all. She won't go to church.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

MJ I'd go wandering off, I'd go talk to her. We've got a nice St Helens. In fact I do a lot of work at St Helens. I do, yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ I do the mother and toddler, mother and baby, every Monday and Wednesday, the nursery.

SP *That's nice.*

MJ Twenty-six of them and they're all my little mothers and babies.

SP *Oh.*

MJ They're all mine, yeah. I love them all, yeah.

SP *So you still like looking after children?*

MJ I do, yeah, I love them, yes, yeah, yeah. I meet the mothers out town and they all, you know, come and give me a kiss and a cuddle, yeah, yeah. Lovely. Oh yes, yeah.

SP *And so just to go back to the laundry, so you worked, was it like morning till night?*

MJ Oh, morning till night.

SP *It was the same hours as Clifden?*

MJ We didn't do anything else, no. When you finished by nine o'clock, you wouldn't read papers or a book or anything like that.

SP *Nine o'clock, wow.*

MJ Nine o'clock at night and you'd fall asleep in the chair or...because you couldn't go up to the dormitories because they were locked.

SP *Okay.*

MJ Till it was time to go up, 10 o'clock, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ They were locked and they wouldn't be open till then.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah.

SP *And what were the nuns like to you?*

MJ Oh, the nuns were bad. They were very bad, considering they were nuns, you know, and you couldn't believe being a nun and being religious and Catholic that they could be so cruel.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yes, yeah.

SP *What kind of things did they do?*

MJ Oh, they'll cut your hair off for a start. I remember putting rollers in my hair made up of bits of electric wires was around the place and I rolled my hair and they went to cut it all off because next morning, I had it all curled out and they wanted to know where I got the things from, the curlers and there were all bits of wires I had.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ So I used to show the others what to do to do their own and what to do, yeah. Or plait it, you know, like that. The plait came off and the plait comes off, yeah. Oh yeah, you couldn't do anything like that or have nice clips in your hair. They'd take them off you, yeah. Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Oh yeah.

SP *And what would they punish you for?*

MJ What would they punish us for? We didn't know what they punished us for...

SP *Yeah.*

MJ ...because we didn't know what we'd done. We didn't...

SP *Yeah.*

MJ ...because we didn't have time to do anything.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ I mean we worked all day...we worked all day, and you get so used to the silence and everything like that. You might give a smile or looking around the place. If you gave a smile then, they'd say...in Spiddal, it was bad. Well, the nuns used to be walking around doing the thing. The kitchen window was low and I'd be sitting there on the kitchen window and one of...you know, they'd be walking around with their hands like that, down here. I smiled. They said I was smiling out at everyone, you know, that I shouldn't have been smiling out. You shouldn't be looking. You know, because you might say 'Good morning,' you know, like that.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ They didn't like that. You mustn't say good morning, you mustn't say anything like that. No. And talk.

SP *And how would the nuns at the laundry punish you? What kind of things would they do? So they would cut your hair?*

MJ Oh, they would cut your hair and they would stop you, you wouldn't be able to have any food.

SP *Okay.*

MJ Whatever was going, but you were just as well off without it because it was always, you know, hard...

SP *Yeah.*

MJ ...green.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Terrible. Because it'd be there all day, wherever. The girls would go round in the morning, just throw a bit on a plate and just then, yeah. And maybe your bit might be eaten by the time you got off if someone else had been down, they'd eaten it, yeah. Poor souls, yeah.

SP *Was there anything else? Did they use a leather or anything like that?*

MJ Oh, they'd used a belt.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ That's what they had those belts for because they'd never use those for nothing. Sometimes their beads because they used to have a row of...

SP *Yeah.*

MJ ...big thick beads around their waist, you know. If they couldn't get the belt quick enough, they'd hit you with the beads.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ You could be cut, you know, with the cross.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Could be cut, you know, it came on the head or on the face or on the back. Yes. Because that was bad then, so yeah.

SP *And there was something else I heard about, like that you would sit on a penance table as well. Did you have that?*

MJ No, we didn't ever have that.

SP *Okay.*

MJ No, you went up into this one room, what we used to call the main room, and you had to go up and you'd have to go up and kneel down beside Mother Xavier [pseudonym] sitting in a chair.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ And used to say...she'd ask you what you'd done and if I said I was talking or I said something or I called someone something, said something...

SP *Yeah.*

MJ ...then she'd get her belt and she'd hit you. Put out your hand, she'd hit you till your hand cut, you know, yeah, yeah, yeah.

SP *And did you have a thing called the Child of Mary there? Like that you would become a Child of Mary?*

MJ Oh, yes, become a Child of Mary, that was another thing in Clifden I couldn't become a Child of Mary because I was bold. But I did eventually have the medal and the thing. I didn't go...oh, the punishment was you couldn't go to see Father O'Neill [pseudonym] because he was the one that was giving you the Child of Mary, make you the Child of Mary. So I did eventually have that and that was the thing that's...there was other things I had to do, oh. Clifden, this was, we used to go to Croagh Patrick and some people used...some of the children used to go to Knock and they'd take anyone to go to Knock shrine. I went to Croagh Patrick because I had to do my penance for being bold, yeah.

SP *Oh my God.*

MJ I had to climb the rock, I had to climb the rock, yeah, and my feet were all blistered and sore and falling down because them rocks are all falling and everything.

SP *It's tough.*

MJ And at that time, it was nothing, but it's done now. They don't do it now and my shoes were gone, they were torn and of course when I came back then and my shoes were all broken,

they'd go, 'what have you done?' Well, I said, 'I had to climb the thing and they told me to go climb the thing'. So I'd another beating off her with her belt as well. But I had to go over to the hospital then. There was a hospital there and we...very seldom did any of the girls go over to that hospital. They were never ill enough to go to the hospital. I had to go over about my feet because they were blistered.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ And I was in there for a day or two and then I came out. Some woman came back and took me out of it and brought me back to the school then.

SP *Okay.*

MJ So yeah.

SP *And in Limerick, did you become a Child of Mary?*

MJ I did eventually become a Child of Mary, but I didn't have the gown or I didn't have the blue gown they give you. I had the medal. I've still got the medals from it.

SP *From Limerick?*

MJ And the candle, yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ I had that. I've still got that, I have, yeah, a candle and the Child of Mary medal.

SP *Was that kind of like a ceremony?*

MJ Well, it is. If I'd gone through the right things, it would have been like a ceremony, came and asked questions about the catechism and all that kind of thing, and then you go to this big room where you have a big breakfast after with your new clothes all on, you know, but I didn't have any of that. But you had to stand there and look at all the others having it for punishment.

SP *Oh.*

MJ To show you, you had to see, yeah, but I didn't know what I'd done.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Because still today, you don't know what you've done. You don't know. You can't do anything wrong there because, you know, you were always being watched and watched and watched and watched. You know, there was nothing for us to do anything wrong, you know.

SP *Yeah. And so the gown, being a Child of Mary, it was blue, was it?*

MJ Blue, a blue gown, yeah. It was a special blue gown we made. In fact, I helped make it for the other girls, you know, yeah. They were nice and then you had the ribbon here that tied, a big white ribbon tied just under your neck.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ But I had to do without that because I went to Croagh Patrick instead, yeah.

SP *Yeah. And what was the thing you had to do for the Child of Mary? Like was it that before you became one, you'd get like ribbons, was it?*

MJ Oh no, you had to go, there was kind of things like novenas.

SP *Okay.*

MJ They called them novenas and you had to do that for about seven days and seven nights, read these special prayers. You had a little book and you had to go like in the sitting room, which was the sitting room, you'd sit there and you'd read your little novena before you went up to bed. Because you couldn't read it when you went up to the bed because you'd be talking loud, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ You'd be reading it loud and you'd be disturbing the others in bed. You'd have to read it before you went up to bed and do your novena prayers, yeah.

SP *Okay.*

MJ *Yeah.*

SP *And so you say that you got your Child of Mary medal in Limerick?*

MJ *Yeah.*

SP *And, oh, what was I going to say? Did you do that for any reason? Like did they tell you that you could get out if you became a Child of Mary?*

MJ No, no, they didn't, no.

SP *Okay.*

MJ It was just the case that each generation of girls as they grow up, there'd be six this year and there's seven next year, you know, they'd have so many, you know.

SP *Okay.*

MJ That was a religious thing we went through with the Mercy nuns. Yeah.

SP *And were there auxiliaries in the laundry in Limerick?*

MJ No, there wasn't. They didn't use auxiliaries...

SP *Okay.*

MJ ...because we were all classed as the one.

SP *Okay.*

MJ You know, you got done with the job and if someone fell ill or couldn't do it, you help out. You'd go over and help them, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ But you mustn't help them, we mustn't help, but we went and helped them.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Because ill or not, you had to do it, see.

SP *Okay.*

MJ You had to get on and do it. Yeah.

SP *Did you ever have an accident while you were there?*

MJ Not that I can remember. Though I did remember I had to go to...when I was in Clifden, I did remember I had to go away to hospital to Dublin when I was in the school because my eyes were bad. I don't know what went wrong. I had something wrong with my eyes, so I had to go away and one of the head women there came and stayed with me at the Eye and Ear Hospital in Dublin.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ And she stayed up with us. She stayed out in a lodge house when I was in hospital. There was another girl came up with me, Bernadette Maguire [pseudonym]. She was younger than me, but she came up because she had something wrong with her eyes as well. So we were up there for three days.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ That's the only time I can ever remember anything.

SP *Okay.*

MJ So I had to have something wrong because Benigus did something, she was putting...she did the damage to my eyes because she was putting...she used to give us...nine of us in the morning, we all had to go up on this corridor, I'd have drops or cream or something they'd put in our eyes. So we had to stand in a row there and she had this thing called blue stone, a big block like a little block of glass.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ And she used to turn my eye inside out, oh, and I used to scream.

SP *Oh!*

MJ And she'd rub that across the eye and I think she must have then broke the skin of my eye and I was screaming on the floor because, you know, she used to do it so rough and then it was her fault I had to go up to Dublin to get my eye fixed. Yes.

SP *Gosh.*

MJ Yeah, it was terrible, yeah.

SP *Do you remember any of the other girls...I mean in the laundry in Limerick? Did they have an accident? Did any of them ever have an accident?*

MJ Well, they did, but if they did, they took them away somewhere. We didn't know where they went.

SP *Okay.*

MJ Yeah. Or even if any of them died, we didn't know, and even Clifden if any there, which...

SP Yeah

MJ ... a couple of them had died and used to go to the infirmary. We had an infirmary dormitory there, and we used to go into that. And the sick place, they called it, and one of the girls died, but then we went to the funeral out the Fall Road. I remember we had a big funeral for her. But there was only one or two we'd know, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ But apart from that, you know.

SP *And in Limerick, were there lots of old ladies there or...?*

MJ Oh, there were lots of old ones there, there was lots there, so yeah, oh, there was loads there... there was loads there. They always had to be two together, you know. You have to have two, two in the group, two there.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ If you went for a walk, you either had to bring two of the women with you for a walk.

SP *Oh really?*

MJ Yeah, but some of them were in there because they had babies at the time, poor things, yes. But I didn't know what it was for. You don't know anything for it, but you learn later on what they've been all in for.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yes, and they'd be afraid, if you were talking to them, that we were talking bad things or something, they used to say, yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Or we'd give them bad things, do you know, if you were talking because they'd be telling you about their little baby and things and the baby being taken off them and all that kind of thing. You weren't supposed to say anything to them or tell the other one what happens.

SP *I see.*

MJ Yeah, yeah, you couldn't talk, yeah, to anyone.

SP *And did you ever do anything like knitting or...?*

MJ Oh, I did a lot of knitting.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ I knit myself some jumpers when I was in there, cardigans, I did, I kept myself busy with that. Oh, I did.

SP *Did you ever have to do lace or Aran sweaters or anything like that?*

MJ No, we didn't do the Aran sweaters even though they were going on at that time, we didn't do those. We did plain knitting...

SP *Yeah.*

MJ ...for the school because we had to do a lot. That was Clifden, we had to do a lot.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ And we had to knit the socks.

SP *Did you do it at Limerick?*

MJ Oh no, you didn't do that in Limerick. You hadn't enough time in Limerick.

SP *Limerick was just...*

MJ I used to do, I had a big job in Limerick, I had, because it was my fault. I said I was good at darning, which you were because you had to darn holes and big holes in everything.

SP *Darn, did you say?*

MJ Darn, yes.

SP *Okay.*

MJ And yeah, we used to do, because we used to have the football teams' clothes come in, you know, the shorts and the jumpers and the socks.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Oh, they brought more muck in on those socks than anything, and we used to have to darn those. Even though they'd be washed, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ And you'd stitch. One girl used to stitch them up, but I took over then, but the girls said you shouldn't do that because the sock won't got, the foot won't go into the sock. So I used to do them a proper darn like a patch, a neat darn.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ And then after that, I was given the job then of darning the socks after they came in. I'd sit in this one little room and I'd darn a big basketful there and their jumpers. But I mean they've got lovely jumpers now and socks, haven't they?

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Because there were thick, thick jumpers and socks they used to wear then.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah. Oh, I used to darn all their socks and the jumpers and everything. God, they were hard, oh gosh, yeah. They were. When I see them playing now, and I used to think to myself, look what they've got now!

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah. It's all like nylon and things. Yeah, but we used to do huge, huge, huge darning. I used to do that.

SP *And so from Limerick, who were you doing the laundry for? Was it for hotels and...?*

MJ Oh, that was for the town.

SP *For the whole town?*

MJ Oh yes, the big baskets used to come in, the big van would be outside, beeping. And we had to go outside the door. The nuns used to go out and take them in and put them in the porch and then you'd go. That's when you emptied them. You mustn't go outside the door.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ To answer or take in the baskets.

SP *Were you not allowed to talk to the men that were delivering them?*

MJ Oh no, no, no, no.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ No, no, no, no. A nun would be there with you all the time watching you, yeah. Yeah.

SP *Okay, so then so you were there for two years, was it?*

MJ I was, yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ I was there for two years in that one, yeah, yeah.

SP *And what happened then? Like two years later, how come you were released?*

MJ I went out. That's when they got me the job in Bunratty.

SP *Okay.*

MJ They got me the job up in Bunratty then. Of course that was a big place at the time. You had to do lots of weddings and everything there.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ There was two of us working in that big hotel.

SP *Did you have any warning that you were going to be sent?*

MJ No, no, they'd just come in and take you. You know, you'd be in the middle of doing your work or whatever. 'Leave that there,' they'd say, 'leave that there, come with me'.

SP *Yeah. And you couldn't even say goodbye?*

MJ No, no, the girls would be wondering where you went.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ But I must have been dull because I'll tell you what, after I'd gone, I thought it was a wonderful thing to go back and see the girls. I did.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ I often think of that. I must have been dull to go back and see the girls. I knocked on the door, rang the bell, Mother Xavier came in and brought me in and gave me a big tray of tea. But you still couldn't see any of the girls.

SP *Oh really?*

MJ Oh no, you couldn't see any of them, no. Yeah.

SP *So you worked in Bunratty then.*

MJ Yeah, I was in Bunratty then. On my day off from Bunratty, that's where I went there.

SP *You went to visit.*

MJ So I must have been dense. Yeah.

SP *But you never got to see the girls?*

MJ No, never got to see the girls at all, you know, never got to see the girls, yeah, no. I didn't go back anymore after that then. Yeah.

SP *And what was it like working in Bunratty?*

MJ Well, it was nice.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Nice because that was a big hotel, very good, very good, kept busy all the time, yes, yeah.

SP *Were you actually paid there?*

MJ No, no.

SP *No, you still weren't paid?*

MJ No, weren't paid there because they had told Mrs Doyle [pseudonym] and her daughter that...

SP *Yeah.*

MJ ...'give her the stick,' you know, or 'give her whatever'. She gave me the saucepans. Many a time, she pelted me with saucepans and everything there. 'So you didn't do that'. It was a little milkman that had the little cart, a little donkey cart. And I was outside scrubbing the steps of the hotel. You had to do that by six o'clock in the morning. And he was coming up with the urns of milk and I was crying out there because Mrs Doyle had already bashed hell out of me. And he said, 'don't worry,' he said, 'I'll get you a little job,' he said. So he did. He got me a little job after, by the end of the week, he got me a little job. Out the Longstown Road, McCormacks [pseudonym], I went out to McCormacks in a house. It was lovely.

SP *In Dublin?*

MJ No, in Limerick.

MJ *Oh, in Limerick, sorry.*

MJ Yeah, yeah, in Limerick.

SP *Oh, okay.*

MJ I was out the [location of house removed], a lovely house it was too. She had three children. She had two daughters about five and seven and a little baby. So I more or less was housekeeper then. See, they used to bring the babies off to go to school. She said then she didn't want me no more, but she was right, like you know.

SP *And were you paid there?*

MJ I was paid there, but it was only given one pound something, but I had my keep.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ I had my keep and my food.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ And everything. And again...

SP *So this is the first time that you've ever...*

MJ Yeah, that was the first time I was free.

SP *...got wages, yeah.*

MJ Yeah, and that was good. Oh, I went down to the shop and I bought myself a nice...I remember the pink blouse I bought, yeah, a pink blouse I bought, I did, yeah. Oh god, and I thought the world of that. I still can see it now, I don't know what happened it, I'm sure I've got it somewhere *(laughs)*. Yeah, yes, lovely.

SP *And so you worked there till the child was school age?*

MJ Yeah, she said she didn't need me no more, so then I went up and looked...I looked for another job and I got another job after that. I went from her then.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ And I went from one job to the other, you know, trying to better.

SP *And they were all domestic jobs?*

MJ Yeah, yes. All domestics.

SP *Live-in jobs?*

MJ Yeah, yeah, yeah they were. One was a factory in Limerick I went to. I worked there with girls, loads of girls there, worked there. That was...it was called...they were making televisions at the time.

SP *Oh.*

MJ It was called Jubilees or something, it was called. We were making batteries and things for televisions. Televisions had just come out.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah, so yeah. Jubilees, I can't think of the name.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah. But we were all rows, it was similar again with the crowds, like similar, sitting all in your desks along, but you could talk and laugh and say and do whatever you wanted.

SP *And you were paid?*

MJ I was paid there with that. Dubiliars, Dubiliars.

SP *Dubiliars?*

MJ Dubiliars, something like that, yes, it was. Crowds there, till again, I got fed up with that and moved on to something else.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah.

SP *So you didn't stay very long in all these places?*

MJ No, I didn't. No, I didn't because the girls used to say, the girls that used to go or leave and they would meet them again and say, 'oh, why don't you come and work here? It's better and better money and better things like that,' and then we started going off and going to the dances and things like that.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah.

SP *So eventually you ended up working in Dublin, didn't you?*

MJ Yeah, I was, yeah, yeah. I went up to Dublin then. I was working. That was a job I answered in the paper and you had to wait for the people to come and look at you. Loads of us be all in the room, it'd be who they wanted, and there I went to work for...they were Jewish people. They were lovely. They were very good to me. They let me go to church and everything, showed me where the church was for the morning to go to church. Never interfered with my religion and they were good.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ They were very good, yeah. Yeah.

SP *And tell me, what was it like when you came out of all these institutions? What was it like being in the outside world for you?*

MJ It was frightening.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ It was frightening. I felt I wanted to be back in there again, you know. You get the fear of God back in you because you were entombed in there, weren't you? So you never seen anything, like from three o'clock really, because they used to be there just walking around the buildings. You couldn't do nothing, you couldn't go out, you couldn't do anything. But to have freedom like

that, you think you're going to have the world, but you can't. You can't get yourself to go out further, to go further afield or you'd be frightened, you know. Yeah.

SP *Did you find it difficult talking to men and...?*

MJ Oh yes, yes, of course, be terrified if someone came over and spoke to you. If you were at the dance and you'd rather be dancing with one of the women rather than dancing with men at the time.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Because you were afraid to touch, yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah. Even when I married, as I said, I don't know how I'm married because the thing was again, I couldn't stand my husband to touch me or to be near me.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ I think that's what threw that, yeah.

SP *Yeah. And so you went over to England eventually, didn't you?*

MJ I did.

SP *You came to London.*

MJ I did.

SP *How did that happen?*

MJ That happened, I went over to England. Where did I go now in England, yeah? Oh, I went to London, yes.

SP *And why did you leave? Why did you come to London?*

MJ Well, I thought it was better.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ We had thought because there wasn't really much in Ireland at that time. I mean people were leaving Ireland. It wasn't that alone, but it was for us to better yourself and to see things, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ And see all the girls dressing up and all the makeup and all that kind of thing because I mean I never...even today, I don't use makeup. Yeah, I don't use makeup.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ And at first was my husband, he was just as bad, he never allowed me to. If I put lipstick on or anything, cream or anything, oh no.

SP *Okay.*

MJ Yeah, so that was thing and I may as well do without it, which I do.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ *Yeah.*

SP *And how did you find moving here? Did you find it easy, difficult?*

MJ No, I didn't because as you say, your place is with your husband and when I came down to Wales, see, this is it. I had lived in London, we lived in London...

SP *Sorry, I meant when you moved to London, sorry.*

MJ When I moved to London.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

MJ See, it was all right. We had a flat. We were in a flat in Ladbrooke Grove.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah, Portobello Road, Portobello Road, I remember there. We were in a flat there and I had a job because I was working then. I was working in St Charles Hospital, which was only walking distance from where we lived. We married. We couldn't have the flat unless we were married, so we got married then.

SP *Okay.*

MJ And yeah, I was five months' pregnant then. We got married, worse luck, and we stayed there for a while, lived in that flat because it was cheap and everything and we had the baby. We had Simon [pseudonym] then at the time. And that was how we moved down. My husband was working on the railway and he used to go home every weekend down to Wales to his mother and family. And he packed up, he said there is a house going that's beside...not far from his mum and the family, and would I like to go down there and then I said yes, we would because it was a squash where we were. And we went down there and he was on the railway, so we got all our bits, what we had, we gathered together, and brought it all down on the railway. It was brought free for us.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ See, so we got a house in Wales then.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ *Yeah.*

SP *And you've been here ever since?*

MJ And I been here ever since, yeah. Yeah.

SP *And tell me, was there shame and stigma attached to what happened to you? You know, you being in those places?*

MJ Oh yes, you could never, never tell anyone you'd been in there. You could never tell it. That's what I said, like the other girls were all the same way. I couldn't knock on a door, I couldn't go with anybody, they went to the door, 'oh!' Get terrified straight away and they said, 'quick, come in and you don't talk, oh, say nothing, don't say nothing'. Oh, it was terrible. You couldn't tell nobody, no, because I remember...

SP *And did you tell your husband?*

MJ No, I couldn't tell my husband that. I couldn't tell my husband, never. I could never. I would have liked to have had a man that would understand me and be able to tell him all about it and well, as I said, it wasn't my fault for being in there and things like that. But we couldn't. That's why I never told my children. I never have told the children.

SP *Okay.*

MJ No, I've never told the children. No, I didn't, no.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ No, never. But yes, it's terrible, yeah, it's really and that stays with you for a long time, you know, yeah, yeah. And I'd be afraid I'd meet someone and that they would say because no doubt, you know, you're so excited to see them and talk. You still want to talk about it, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ See, then, but on the other hand, you couldn't, no. You'd want to have somebody that really understood and a bit of sympathy and listen to you, you know. He wasn't a good husband, he wasn't. Sorry Tommy [pseudonym] ! You weren't (*laughs*). I talk more to him now with the picture on the wall, and I said he sees more of me now in the nude and noddy, yeah, than he seen when we married. Yeah.

SP (*Laughs*)

MJ And then his Welsh songs all come on the telly and I'd say, 'oh, you loved that one, didn't you? You caught me napping Tommy, didn't you?' Oh, good God, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

SP *So you say that your marriage wasn't very happy?*

MJ No, it wasn't, no, no, no, no, no, no.

SP *Did you enjoy being a mother?*

MJ I did, I enjoyed it because that's all I wanted, like I used to say that to my husband, 'I wish to God if they had the FI thing or whatever it was then when I wanted a baby...'

SP *IVF, is it?*

MJ ...I said I would have gone for that. I didn't want a man, I wanted a baby, but I didn't want the man.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah. And you had to have the man to have the baby. Oh, oh, dear, dear, dear. Yeah. Yes, yeah.

SP *And you never knew your family?*

MJ No.

SP *So how was that?*

MJ I was really glad when there was some bits coming through.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Like when Fiona [pseudonym] was getting me those bits and things, you know. I thought at least she's going to...I really had the feeling that she was going to get me something, you know. But like she said she still hadn't found my mother, but she did say he was Anthony Christopher [pseudonym] (inaudible) was my Dad.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah. Because apparently she went and found him in some graveyard in Dublin.

SP *Okay.*

MJ Yeah, she did, yeah, she went to a lot of trouble, like you know, really.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Because it's no joke when you're looking for people like that, is it? Yes. But said she couldn't still find my mother. Oh, she would have liked to have found the other daughter she had.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ But she thought maybe from them, she might be able to get to know something, you know.

SP *Exactly.*

MJ Yeah. Yeah.

SP *And what's that been like, you know, not knowing your family?*

MJ It's sad because I would love when those people come on the telly and thing, have a weep and a cry with them, I have, yeah. They'd go, 'oh God, how did you find them?' Oh, they found them. And I've be at it for years and get no one. You know, I think it's lovely, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ And when Martha told me she had found her brothers, I mean oh God, I'd said, how, you know, I'd love to meet them, just cuddle them. I wouldn't hold nothing against my mother.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ She had her reasons, I suppose, yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ See, I mean when you think of it, I was in the same boat, only that we did marry and I wouldn't have got married only for Tommy's friend, Michael [pseudonym], he said, 'you're a Welsh man,' he said, 'go and do the decent thing,' he said, 'by the girl,' he said. Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Because he disappeared, he did, he disappeared, he did. As soon as I went in to have the baby, he disappeared. Yeah. Yeah. But there you are, see.

SP *And so tell me then, what happened to you, like will it always be with you?*

MJ Which, the schools and things?

SP *Yeah, like kind of all of that that you experienced, is that...?*

MJ No, no, no, no, I've nothing now against them. Like as I said, I've nothing now against them. As I said there, no, it was all wrong what they've done and thing, but God forgive them. But there's nothing more I can do or say, you know. And the funny thing is when I go...when I went up to Clifden, when I went up to the school, not last year, the year before, I went up and the convent

was gone. There was more people, lovely people in this...they built it all lovely glass and the first thing when I went in there, the girl was at the desk and she said to me, 'do you want to go up to the grave? Do you want to go up to the cemetery?' I said, 'what do I want to go up to the cemetery for?' And she said, 'oh well, Benigus is up there and Regina is up there, so and so is up there, Mother Xavier'. I said, 'I don't want to go up to the cemetery, what the hell?' I said, 'they bashed the hell out of me. What do I want going up to the cemetery?' Oh. That's the first thing they ask. 'Do you want to go up to the cemetery?' In fact, I thought about that up in the cemetery, they might come up out of the grave. Yeah, yeah. God forgive me. Well, I didn't go up praying. But no, no, I don't think I would. Yes, I'd let it pass, I suppose, now.

SP *Is that how you've lived on, is to forget about the past?*

MJ Yeah, I do, I put a lot at the back of my mind and forget about it.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ There are days that I sometimes think of it, but I pass it off, you know, that it's not there anyways now to be done again, see.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah, this is the thing. It's finished now. And then when you look and you think to yourself, it was happening everywhere. It was happening abroad and everything.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ And you would think it's only happening there, isn't it?

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Because I remember I went into Athlone one day. I went in with my friend Bridget [pseudonym] where I was staying. And she was saying it's down here now they got the school and down there they got the boys' school then. But they went through torture as well, didn't they?

SP *Yeah.*

MJ They went through worse than what we did, didn't they?

SP *They had a place in Athlone too, didn't they?*

MJ Yeah, yes. I remember her saying. Oh, we don't want to see that. I said what do you want to see that for? Yeah. Yeah. No, no, no. I can, I can block it off because you know, I get busy and do something and block my mind from it, you know, if any of it comes in.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah. I'll think of it tonight now, all that, but as I said, it'll go.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ It'll go. Yeah. Yeah.

SP *And of all your accomplishments, what are you most proud of?*

MJ That I've pulled through, that I've lived till now. I didn't expect...I used to say if I'd see seventy, I'd be all right. But then again, as I said now, I could...I can see ninety now, I'll be all right. After that then, God will take me I suppose, isn't it? With God's help and we don't know, see, do we? No. I live my life to the best that I know, my own way, see. I'm not religious or any way like that. I go to a service if there's one on in St Helen and I go, or Father Mahon [pseudonym] will ring me and he'd say 'Mary, there's something on tonight. Do you want to come over?' Because I always do the teas and things for him. We need your help, you know. And because I'd say, 'put a note in my door' when they are passing. Let me know you need me. Say, 'we need you Mary, that's all'. And then I'm back there. I do whatever.

SP *Yeah.*

MJ Yeah. And I'd clean all the place up for them and everything, yeah. Yeah.

SP *Well, Mary, I think I've questioned you enough. Thank you so much for everything, for being so honest and for talking about this.*

MJ Yeah. Yeah.

SP *So thank you very much.*

MJ I hope it helps you. Yeah.

SP *Oh, it does. And if you've got nothing else to add, I'll stop the recording.*

MJ No, I'll try and find some *(laughs)*.

SP *Thank you very much.*

MJ No, and thank you for coming all this way and lovely to have met you.

SP *You too.*

MJ Yes. I hope we meet again.

SP *We will.*

MJ Okay, lovely, lovely, lovely.

[Interview ends]