



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



<b>Reference Code:</b>	MAGOHP/46/ANON/V2
<b>Oral History of:</b>	Pippa Flanagan
<b>Pseudonym?</b>	Yes
<b>Status:</b>	Survivor
<b>Keywords:</b>	St. Bridget's Industrial School for girls, Loughrea, Co. Galway; physical abuse; rape and sexual abuse; suicide and self-harm; depression; punishment of child because mother could not pay for keep in industrial school; denial of contact with fellow survivors after release from laundry; alcoholism; marital breakdown; emigration; lack of birth certificate; Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB); difficulties with solicitors at RIRB; Magdalen Commission.
<b>Date of Interview:</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> August 2013
<b>Transcript:</b>	48 pages
<b>Number/Format of Audio Files:</b>	One .m4a file
<b>Interviewer:</b>	Claire McGettrick
<b>Records/Papers included:</b>	None
<b>Access Conditions:</b>	Anonymised interviews are freely available to the public. Immediate release of transcript and anonymised audio; interviewee's identity will not be revealed in the future.
<b>Conditions Governing Reproduction:</b>	Interviews can be reproduced, however the citation below must be used at all times.

To cite this transcript:

O'Donnell, K., S. Pembroke and C. McGettrick. (2013) "Oral History of Pippa Flanagan". *Magdalene Institutions: Recording an Oral and Archival History*. Government of Ireland Collaborative Research Project, Irish Research Council, pp.1-48.

## Notes on Redaction and Transcription Process

---

Interviewee Initials: PF

Interviewer Initials: CMcG

### 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 interviewee's privacy
- Dates have been accurately transcribed

### List of Pseudonyms

Pseudonym	Status/Relationship to Interviewee
Pseudonym	Category
Pippa Flanagan	Interviewee
Sr Frances	Third party religious
Mother Regina	Third party religious
Fr Hogan	Third party religious
Fitzpatrick family	Third party other
Adele	Third party survivor
Roisin Flanagan	Daughter of interviewee
Dr Young	Third party other
Alice Flanagan	Daughter of interviewee
Thomas Flanagan	Son of interviewee
Stephen	Grandson of interviewee
Geoghegan family	Interviewee's natural family
Theresa	Interviewee's house name in laundry

### Basic Data from Interview

Name/Pseudonym	Pippa Flanagan
When Born	1950
Born outside marriage?	Yes
Raised by	Loughrea Industrial School
Education	Primary school
Order	Good Shepherd
Laundry	Limerick
From	1966
To	1968/9 approx
Duration of stay	2.5 years
Age on entry	16
Entered Via	Industrial School

<b>House Name/No</b>	Yes
<b>Haircutting/punishment?</b>	Yes (disinfectant bath)
<b>Circumstances of Departure</b>	Sent to work for family
<b>Emigrated?</b>	Yes (Northern Ireland, plus England after laundry)
<b>Physical ailments?</b>	Yes
<b>Of Note</b>	

[End of conversation prior to interview]

PF ...there.

[Interview begins]

[Sound of traffic outside]

CMcG *(Setting up recording devices) [Inaudible] I'm going to set everything....everything going. (Pause) Okay. Okay, so thank you once again Pippa for...for agreeing to be part of this...*

PF Right, okay.

CMcG *...project. So if you could just give me your name for the start of the interview?*

PF Pippa Flanagan. *(Looks inquiringly if using the pseudonym is correct.)*

CMcG *Okay, yeah you can give that name, yeah, no problem. So, before starting the interview, I'd like to ask you to confirm that you agree to participate in this interview voluntarily and that you are familiar with the information and consent forms that I provided to you.*

PF Yes, yeah.

CMcG *Okay. So...just if we can begin by...just if you can tell me something about yourself, about your background?*

PF Well I could start from when I was a child of eighteen months, the...the courts came round and took me from me mother and put me into an orphanage in Loughrea in Co. Galway, and that was the Sisters of Mercy. And it was a terrible life I had with the nuns, fierce, battering me up against the stone walls and...and then I had to get up at six o'clock in the morning to do the range [cooker] and bake bread for the rest of the women, and my life was just completely *(takes a sip of water)*...I was there anyway...I'll just go on to...and then at sixteen, because there was nobody there to collect me from the orphanage, they sent me out to work in Eyre Square [location in Galway city] for two weeks. I couldn't cope for...outside, because I was

just a...my...I could not cope too well because of the...the way I was reared and everything, I couldn't get used to the outside world and that. So, I rang the nuns and asked them to take me back, so they went and took me back and then about a week after it was...Sr Frances [pseudonym] came into the wee work room and says that I have to go now because, 'you're going to a very nice home'. So she took me out the back door without me saying goodbye to any of the children or anything and I landed at this place, the Good Shepherd Convent in Limerick and a knock came to the door and the...they were called 'mothers', Mother Regina [pseudonym] or whatever she was, she took me into the wee room and she says, 'now you're here because you've been bad,' and I had...I hadn't done nothing, nothing whatsoever! And Sr Frances just sat with me and then she turns around and she says to me, 'now, you have to get your name changed because we don't want any people knowing who you are, you're a n...a number'. I...I couldn't understand, I thought...I just didn't. So she rang a bell for another woman to come and get me and she took me to...up to the bathroom and took off all me clothes and I had to get into a bath of...it was disinfectant. Because they said...to wash me s...me sins away and I didn't understand what that meant. So she says, put them clothes on you, and there was a big long dress and I was crying, I says to...'I don't know what I've done to deserve this,' I says, 'I've done nothing wrong'. And I was begging them, and so I knew the chaplain from [location removed] and I asked if I could speak with him. So he came from [location removed] up to Limerick and I asked him if he would get me out and he says, 'no,' he says, 'you'll have to be very good to me, *if...if you do*'. And his name was Fr Hogan [pseudonym]. So, to 'be good to him', you know what that meant. So, I never heard tell [of] him again, I was just left in there, I was there for two-and-a-half years. Now, my first day was in the laundry room sorting out the clothes and I was very sick because with the way the...all the white coats and brown coats, and they were covered with blood and that...we had no protection for our hands, no nothing, we had to lift the dirty clothes up and sew them. They had a special number for each place that they were from. So we were at that from about six o'clock in the morning and then we...I was in the laundry then in the afternoon and it was back-breaking, completely back-breaking. I just could not get used to it, I couldn't. So, they...I was anyway...I was...she s...I asked one of the girls something and the nun, she says to me, 'stop talking in the laundry, it's not allowed'. We weren't allowed to talk or do anything. *(Takes a sip of water)* So, I got on with it anyway, we'd stand on a...on a bench to...for us to be tall enough to get into the big washing machines and pull the irons down, to iron all the clothes. And I was so, so...I was so sick, and because I was sick, they took me to see a doctor and I had to do all these tests with the doctor because they thought I was pregnant,

because...after Fr Hogan and I s...I took all the tests, everything and the doctor examined me tummy, put me through all this like a pregnant woman and I never knew anything about anything, facts of life or nothing, I was pure ignorant when it came to that. So, in the laundry all day, then we'd come out for a b...a break and we all had to line up in a big queue and go in and take our place at the dining table while one of the nuns sat up high on her bench so none of us would talk or say anything or say who we were or anything. It was...it was worse than the...the concentrating camp [sic] to me, that's what it was. And...

CMcG *And did...can I...can I ask, and you don't have to answer if you don't want to, can...did...did something happen with Fr Hogan?*

PF Yeah, yeah.

CMcG *Okay.*

PF Aye.

CMcG *And were they aware something had happened?*

PF They must have known there was something.

CMcG *Right. Okay.*

PF They must have known, because when I...I...he was the chaplain from down in [location removed]...

CMcG *Right.*

PF ...and he had a name for doing that to other women. So I thought like, if I can get out of here I'll do anything, I said, 'I'll do anything'.

CMcG *Right.*

PF And then, he took advantage then and I says, 'will you get me out of here now?' And he says, 'I'll wait for another couple of weeks and see how you're getting on'. And [I] never heard tell of him again, never heard tell [of] him. So, the laundry room...and then we used to have to get up for Mass in the morning, and no mind going into...into the chapel it was called, and we were all...I was in the choir and then I fainted because it was the diff...it was the *food*, it was a different taste of food or something, I could not get used to it, it was steamed or something, everything you know, you were just steamed up with everything. And I fainted and they t...they just told me to go out and go into the dining room. And all that was wrong with me was all this aul' dirt from the clothes, all...and...and parcelling up and... (*takes a sip of water*) and then the next day then after that when all the washing was ready...there used to be Hanratty's Hotel in Limerick and the laundry used to come from Hanratty's, so we had to be very careful in pressing everything and then parcel them all up and put their names on it. Wh...when all of that was all done they came to a big...on into a wee office with a hatch on it, to get their parcels, but the nuns done that, *they* collected the money for what we had done, we never got that from them, not a thank you, not nothing. So it went on and on and on and I was kind of getting used to it, you know, because I said to mesel' [myself] for them two weeks I was outside, how wo...how would I cope, I couldn't cope out on me own. I'd no...I missed all the children, I missed all the people I had been with. I was out there on me own, I hadn't a clue about anything, not even money. When I got me wages, it was £5, (*takes a sip of water*) I didn't know what to...I says, 'what's that for?' I says, to the woman in charge, you know, the woman I was working to, I says, 'what's that for?' She says, 'that's your wages'. And I says, 'what...what do I do with it?' She says, 'I'll take you into Galway and you can buy something'. And rather than go into a shop I'd hide outside, because I'd...I was never in a shop before, clothes shop, sweet shop, nothing, so I pretended I was in it, I was that scared. You know, even the thought of it now makes me very anxious and...you know.

CMcG *A...and how long were you in Loughrea [industrial school] for?*

PF I was in Loughrea from eighteen months up 'til I was sixteen years of age.

CMcG *Wow.*

PF They took me from me mammy...

CMcG *They didn't...[inaudible]*

PF ...they said she was an unfit woman and she wasn't, because she was an unmarried [mother] they took me away from her, the courts, they dragged me through the courts at eighteen months. And I think that's what affected me in my...growing up in life you know, with cutting mesel' and...and doing...taking overdoses because I s...I can't seem to get that out of my head, these...this laundry, I can't get...I still think at times I'm timed to do this and timed to do that, that's still with me.

CMcG *Wow.*

PF I cannot get out. And then I had to...I cut all my wrists there (*indicates large scar on wrist*) because I heard something on the news about what they were doing in Loughrea [industrial school] and they were denying that any of this ever happened, so I was so, so...so angry I laid in bed and lit up a cigarette and just put all the butts on it [wrist] 'til it all came off in big blisters and then I used a knife to cut the blisters off and I had to go on up to...this...I...I...the...when I cut myself I felt better, when I seen blood, I thought, you know, 'this is *releasing* what's inside me, to get rid of...' you know and I used to drink bleach and the...my GP will tell you that too, that I used to say, 'to cleanse me from all I...I went through'. Because there was a woman in Loughrea and she was [role removed] and she sexually abused me all the time. I won't give her name right now...

CMcG *Okay.*

PF ...but sh...when we were out in the yard she used to build a hut and with...papers and that so nobody would see and she would take me in there and then she would do all these things you know, to me. I didn't...I was so frightened, I done everything that they asked me to do because I thought that was...you know, part of life. So I done it anyway and then I went to Sr Frances and I told her what happened to me and she told...took me up to see the [role of other nun removed] and I told them too and the [role of other nun removed] says to me I was just a liar and I was the...Satan's daughter and they kicked me in the corner and kicked away at me and took the big black belts off and battered me 'til I was black and blue. Because they didn't want to know, they didn't want to know what...what was happening, and it was



happening. I know I haven't got the proof, but I have it in there (*points to head*) all...all in there...

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF ...it's all there.

CMcG *And...and, Pippa have you ever sought counselling...*

PF I have been, I have. I have seen counsellors and all, and they're treating me for depression and for all this that I'm doing with meself and as...I had to...in the [location removed] hospital they had to take a bit of me skin off me thigh to put on to that there (*indicates wrist with skin graft*) because where I had to cut in...right into the nerve. And that was all...as I said to me daughters, this was *releasing* me, this was getting it out of my system...of what had happened. But I don't think I have...anything would ever get that away from me, nothing.

CMcG *And...and have you...have you...do you feel you've put the...the harming part behind you now?*

PF Well I hope...I can't...I can't say I have, I just...every day is a new day.

CMcG *Yeah.*

PF And then there's sometimes I never get up out of bed, I lie in bed for weeks and then never let anybody in.

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF And that's...it's just that depression, I go down that road then for a whole week and then I get up and do things and...but the Magdalene Laundry...was just...it was punishment, just pure punishment for something I never had done in my life, I was being punished just because I was off an unmarried...me mother was unmarried and then she had to pay 2/6d [old Irish money] a week into the school. She stopped paying that and that's why I was getting punished, all this battering. I have it on paper and I can show it to you, she stopped

paying...and then because she stopped paying the 2/6d, then they started all this abuse with me, took me outside and...the stone walls and hit me head up against...and the blood used to be pouring down at the back of me...down at the back of me neck and everything. And I've a letter from the doctor to...to say that all this arthritis and everything has come from me childhood and that it's getting...it's getting worse. And then we used to be squeezed into shoes, we were never measured for shoes or nothing, the shoes were just thrown in the middle of the floor and you would just pick up a shoe and just put anything on and me toes used to be all bleeding I used to have chimneys [chilblains] on...or whatever you call them...

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF ...on me toes and I couldn't get me socks off because they were that bad.

CMcG *My God. And...and even after all that when you...like, you...you don't describe a...a pretty picture of Loughrea, even after all that, you were so scared of the outside world, you wanted to go back?*

PF I went back because I was frightened...

CMcG *Yeah.*

PF ...because I thought, you know, I was sixteen, 'I'm a big girl now,' I...I probably could take it, you know, that...because I didn't know any better, just put it that way, I didn't know any better, I wanted to go back in there, I thought maybe it would...it would prevent me from doing...and meeting people, I couldn't understand how the world had worked outside. It was a completely new experience and I couldn't do it.

CMcG *A...and tell me, did you...did you get to meet your mother at any point?*

PF I got to meet me mother when I was twenty-nine, I met her and...a lovely woman she was, but she wouldn't tell me very much about it because she was very upset that they took me away from her, that's why she went to England.

CMcG *Okay.*

PF Aye.

CMcG *Okay.*

PF So I used to go over to see her now and again, you know, when I was up to it, you know.

CMcG *A...and did you manage to forge a kind of a relationship with her?*

PF Well, to be quite truthful, I could never...I couldn't get close to me mother (*puts glass on table*), I just couldn't, I used to be kind of frightened, I was frightened. I don't know what I was frightened of, but I just was frightened, you know, w...we think different, because of the upbringing that we had, we feel as if you can't trust, because that's all we wanted, to be believed, trusted, but no, we weren't.

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF We were not. But the Magdalene Laun...going back now to the Magdalene Laundry now, in...we were in there and everyt...when we were in the room, you know, just sitting, we'd no television, no nothing, you just had to sit there in silence, not speak. And when...on a Sunday we didn't do anything in the laundry, we just had to sit in this wee...big room, just looking at each other...no conversation. If they heard us talking, one of the nuns would come in and then they'd pull you away into a different group.<sup>1</sup>

CMcG *Was there any kind of recreation at all?*

PF Nothing at all, not...nothing whatsoever...

CMcG *And were you able to make friends?*

---

<sup>1</sup> See also MAGOHP13/ANON, Bernadette & Francis Murphy and MAGOHP/73, Kathleen R who also speak of women and girls being separated for communicating with each other.

PF ...all *work, work, work*. I...I made a few friends, but when I asked...when I got out, if I could have their address they said no I can't. I just wanted someone from either Loughrea or the Magdalene Laundry to be a friend when I went outside.

CMcG *A...and when we were talking before you were talking about how that...how important that is for you now that you would like to make contact...*

PF Yes, it would be lovely to...because I feel comfortable in their company because they went through the same as I did and that's why I would really like if we could all get together and kn...know each other.

CMcG *A...and do you feel that would help you come to terms with it as well or...*

PF Well...I...I can't say it would because we went through it but we'll never forget that part of our lives, never, that will *stay* with us and you know, I'm in agony all the time...*pain*, all to do with that abuse that I got in the Sisters of Mercy and the Good Shepherd, all that abuse.

CMcG *Uh huh. Uh huh. And...and can you tell me anything about, you know, about the...the laundry itself, you know, I mean, about the windows, the doors, were they locked [inaudible]?*

PF Oh there was big bars on the windows. I would no mind, the first day that I went in, it was a big brown door and Sr Frances went out first and...Mother...whatever you call them, that's what you called them in the laundry, she says, 'you go on now,' she says, and all I could hear was the big bang of the door, and that bang stays with me. And there was bars on the windows and then we...when we went up to the dormitories we only had to kneel down and say the Rosary and never speak and there was a sky window up above my bed and I says, 'God I'd love to get out [of] it,' you know, but when I looked up there was even bars there, there were no way...when I...when we went outside for a bit of recreation, you know for...maybe a half an hour or anything, the walls were that high (*indicates far above head height*)

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF ...you c...you couldn't have got away. Some...some young ones would climb over and get away but the police would bring them back.

CMcG *Always?*

PF Always bring them back, always catc...

CMcG *And did you ever try?*

PF No, I couldn't, because I wouldn't...I don't think I would have been able to do it, I wouldn't know where to go. But these ones that got away, they lived in Limerick...

CMcG *Right.*

PF ...and they knew, because they had relations coming in to see them and...but I had never anybody.

CMcG *Okay.*

PF *Aye.*

CMcG *A...and was there a good mix of local and...and...and otherwise in there?*

PF Yes, there was, there was...from all over, there was a...a very long...there was a lot that went from the Convent of Mercy [St Bridget's Industrial School, Loughrea] into the Good Shepherd, but by the time I got into the Good Shepherd, they were sent elsewhere...

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF ...so we couldn't be friends. *(Takes a sip of water)*

CMcG *Okay, okay, and...do you need to take a...a second there?*

PF No, I'm just...me mouth...

CMcG *Okay, no problem. And can you...can you recall...I know you said you were...you were up at...did you say you were up at six o'clock in the morning?*

PF Yeah.

CMcG *A...and can you remember anything else about your routine every day?*

PF Oh yes, I...I used to have to bake the wheaten [bread] and make sure that the range was burning, have it going for the nuns when they came in to do the dinners and that. And then I used to have to go to school then and when I went to school all I did was sleep because I was that tired from all the work that I had done in the morning.

CMcG *Was th...and...was this in the Good Shepherds?*

PF No, in Loughrea.

CMcG *Oh I'm sorry, in Loughrea, okay, okay.*

PF Loughrea, I just to sleep in that school, and the nuns never said like, 'you're sleeping,' or nothing. But I had to...I had to sleep somewhere.

CMcG *And do you feel that had an impact on your education?*

PF Oh aye, I had no education at all. Whatever I know now, I learnt meself, picked it up as I went along.

CMcG *Uh huh. Uh huh.*

PF There was no such thing as going to classes, nothing, it was just work, work, work.

CMcG *A...and what about your routine in the laundry?*

PF The routine in the laundry...one day, or maybe two days in the week you'd be in...just in the sorting room where the clothes came in and you had to pull them all out and mark them with a needle and thread and then somebody would come with a big –whatever it was called – a big bin, and all the...we had to throw all the clothes in. And when that was done then, we...someone else would take over for another crowd to come in while we went into the laundry itself to do the washing in the big machines. And they had big...oh it was (*sighs*)...I'll tell you.

CMcG *And what were the working conditions like? Was it...*

PF Very bad. Very, very bad. Terrible altogether. No air, there was no air in the laundry, that's why I was sick all the time, because...with the steam and everything.

CMcG *Uh huh.*

PF I just couldn't...I c...I could not hack it for a while but I got...I got used to it then after a while, I was just, it was just like, this is what me life is, this is what I have to do, this is what I...I thought I...you know this was...‘til the day I die, this is what I have to do.

CMcG *Uh huh.*

PF I was so...

CMcG *And what year...*

PF ...frightened.

CMcG *...what year were you in the Good Shepherd?*

PF It was '66...

CMcG *Yeah.*

PF ...I think. Yeah, maybe about that. I've all me paperwork there.

CMcG *Oh no that's okay, it's just to get an idea of when...the timeframe...*

PF Yeah, yeah. Well I would have been...you see, I was born in 1950, I was in Loughrea from eighteen months, then at sixteen I went out to work for two weeks, then I asked them to take me back. So, you could count that then from when I went into the laundry.

[Sound of vehicle outside]

CMcG *Yeah. And were you paid at all?*

PF Oh no, no, no, never got that. Even when we were sent out to work, never a penny, no clothes. You...you went out with the clothes you had on your back.

CMcG *And this is in...when you went out from Loughrea do you mean?*

PF Yeah.

CMcG *And what about in the Good Shepherd, were you given any kind of pay or pocket money or anything?*

PF Oh God no, no we never got anything like that. I never, never...and...and...I was in there for two-and-a-half years, and then the...the nun got me a job in [name of town removed] in Co. Mayo to work for the Fitzpatricks [pseudonym] and they had seven sons, so I worked with them. And I found out that there was a few friends of mine that was in the orphanage, that they were living in Dublin, so I got hold of their phone number and I gave them a ring and then I...I had it all planned in my head what I was for doing, I stole £20 [phone ringing in background] on...out of the man's wallet, got the bus up to Dublin and I don't know what happened after that, because everything was just a blank. I had to get away because it was just the same aul' work I was doing, seven boys, cleaning, cooking and that.

CMcG *Okay. Before we move off the laundry, just...I mean, can you remember what...were there any punishments there, did people get punished for any reason?*



PF It's that far gone now, I can't remember now.

CMcG *Were you ever punished?*

PF Well, I don't know, no, no the only punishment I got was in...in the orphanage in Loughrea. If I got on with me work in Limerick, you were left alone. If you refused to do what was asked of you, *then* you would get punished.

CMcG *And what...can you remember what would happen?*

PF Well I don't know because they were took up to the office.

CMcG *Okay.*

PF Took to the office. We wouldn't see what was going on. And that's why we were scared. We must do whatever we are told to do, no matter what.

CMcG *And you knew that something bad would happen?*

PF Yeah.

CMcG *A...and...but you talked about the bath in disinfectant, that was in Limerick was it?*

PF That was in Limerick, because I...wash me sins away.

CMcG *Right, right.*

PF And I had no idea what...what was that about, because I w...I wasn't allowed to speak, I'd no...no...what would you say, they never gave me a chance to speak for mesel', to ask questions...

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF ...you were just a nobody.

CMcG *And did you ever complain at all or anything like that?*

PF No, I...I didn't, I was too scared, because I knew if...if I did complain, what would happen to me.

CMcG *A...and did you think that you...how...what did you think about how long you were going to be there, or did you know how long you were going...*

PF No, I never knew, they never said. They just says, 'you're going to a nice home,' and when I went into the laundry...you see the nuns in Loughrea had threatened us when we were...well...bad, that that's where we would go, if we didn't behave oursel's [ourselves], so we...

CMcG *You were threatened with Limerick?*

PF Yeah, for the...they used to call it 'the...the laundries', 'the bad laundries'.

[Alarm clock ringing in background]

CMcG *Okay.*

PF Uh huh, oh excuse me that's my clock.

CMcG *No problem.*

PF Oh...aye...

*(Leaves the room to switch off alarm clock)*

PF No you see, we were threatened with...with the Magdalene Laundry, but it wasn't called that at the time, it was just a 'home' where you never get out of...

CMcG *Okay.*

PF ...that's what I was told.

CMcG *You didn't know what it was called or anything?*

PF I didn't know anything, what it was called or nothing. But that's what...

CMcG *Okay. A...and is it...was there anything positive about it, about the laundry?*

PF Like...what...what do you mean?

CMcG *For you, was there anything positive about being there at all...did...was there anything you liked about being there?*

PF Oh I didn't like anything at all, I just got on with it and kept me head down for fear I would be punished.

CMcG *And what...what was the worst thing for you?*

PF I think the worst thing there was...we were so isolated and (*pause*) nobody to tell, you know, talk to or (*pause*)...aye.

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF And you know, not...you know, the nuns never really...we were just a bit of dirt to them, that's what we were, we were just slaves...

CMcG *Yeah.*

PF ...that's what we were. There was nothing positive about it, not one thing. And I can't say there was, yeah.

CMcG *No, that's...it's...that's...okay. And...were there any other staff at the laundry other than the women like, that...that you were working...in the same boat as you?*

PF Oh there was...there was a way lot of w...women there, very much so, there must have been over 30 in the laundry...

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF ...and we were all divided between the laundry, the sorting room and the packing. We...we got days in and there were so many people there, I can't even remember, and all we had to do was wash, iron, clean, line up for food, and that was it.

CMcG *And were friends and...or relatives allowed to visit you?*

PF Oh I had no...I never knew anybody. I had no relations, but the other women did have ones coming in.

CMcG *Okay, okay.*

PF *Hmm.*

CMcG *And can you tell me anything about what happened when somebody died, do you remember anything?*

PF Well...th...now, to be quite truthful, we...we...we knew everybody, and every morning when we'd...because we all had a table that we all sat on, it was a big, big dining table, and you'd wonder where that person went to, you'd be looking and you'd be wondering, and you can't ask what happened. They would just tell you that they just...their relations came for them, but they didn't, and I know for a fact, and I'm saying it, that they were buried, just....in an aul' dug up...an aul'...whatever you call that, and they were just thrown in there.

CMcG *A...a...and were the nuns trying to say that the...*

PF That their relations had took...came that night and took them away.

CMcG *After they had died?*

PF Yeah...they had died. But we didn't know they'd died, but we had found out that that was happening. There was a lot of elderly women, some of them in their seventies, and them poor women, they couldn't hardly move, they were in so much pain. *Terrible* altogether. I used to feel so sorry for them and I would help out as much as I could. Then as I say, when you went into the dining room, you were missing another person and you'd know then what was happening. Because when we could, we'd all try and get together and you know, say, 'I wonder what really did happen? That woman wasn't well last night,' or 'she hadn't been well all week and where is she now?'<sup>2</sup>

CMcG *Right.*

PF Yeah.

CMcG *A...and...and what were they like, the older women?*

PF Oh the poor souls, ach they w...they were very...they were very nice people you know, the elderly, and they could not even hardly walk, they were all humped up from all that work they had done.

CMcG *Had they been there a long time?*

PF They had been there since they were children. You see, there was an orphanage just the other...across, that Adele [pseudonym], [survivor friend of Pippa's] she was telling me. She said she'd a daughter, and she was in that orphanage in Limerick, but she never got to see her, she didn't know who she was.

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF And half of the women that were there had children, and that's where their ch...their babies went to, to that orphanage just...and you'd see them all then when you're get...going to Mass

---

<sup>2</sup> See also MAGOHP/04 – interview with Mary, who has similar memories of when women died in Limerick.

in the morning, they're all there (*indicates one side*) and we're here (*indicates other side*). They didn't...you couldn't identify...

CMcG *At different par...you were sitting at different parts of the church?*

PF Yeah, we were just...you know, the chapel where the priest would go up, the wee...the orphanage was there (*indicates one side*) and then the Magdalene Laundry people were there (*indicates other side*).

CMcG *Different sections.*

PF And they couldn't identify what child was theirs because they never got to see them.

CMcG *Right, right. And...how were you treated in general by the nuns?*

PF Well, I...I'll tell you, very bad. I was...I don't know now but they used to always say I was the ringleader of everything because I cheeked back one day. And we used to have to...a...a Friday, line up in a bathroom, well, it was a bathroom and there were only three baths, and two people, you used to have to strip naked in the...in the bathroom and two would get into the bath. And then while the nun is standing there she's shaving your hair off and you've no hair at all, or if you wouldn't allow it to be done they'd give you a run of shaking and a batter. So anyway, to get back to this one, I answered back, because I said to the girl, 'will you move over a wee bit? Because,' I says, 'I've no room'. So she heard me saying that and she came over and she told the girl, 'get you out of the bath,' she says, and she got me by the hair of the head, wherever...I had a bit there, and she held me down and under the water...til I...I couldn't get a breath. I th...I thought she was trying to kill me.

CMcG *Was this in Loughrea?*

PF Loughrea.

CMcG *God.*

PF I thought that she was trying to kill me. And because I was still living...under the water wasn't good enough, she dragged me by the hair of the head down the big...it was [a] stone wall (*takes a sip of water*) and...and I was all black and blue. And I says, 'I'm sorry, I...I...I didn't mean it, I was just asking, just for someone to move over, to give me room'. Just because I said that, I answered back, I got punished.

CMcG *Okay.*

PF That was the kind of punishment that they would give us.

CMcG *A...and...*

PF Limerick now, I...I...I hadn't as much bother in Limerick as I had in Loughrea.

CMcG *A...and you...you were saying about being afraid in Limerick, did you give ch...as much cheek in Limerick as you would have in...*

PF Oh no, no, no.

CMcG *And why was that?*

PF Because you...we had elderly people there and they would keep us right.

CMcG *Okay.*

PF They would tell us, 'shh, don't say nothing,' you know, they would keep us right.

CMcG *A...and was that in a kind of a...a threatening way or in a friendly way?*

PF Well more or less just, 'keep quiet,' and that was it. I don't know whether it was friendly or not.

CMcG *Okay, okay.*

PF So, I...I kept that in me head, so...

CMcG *So they kept you in line?*

PF Yeah.

CMcG *Okay.*

PF Uh huh.

CMcG *Okay.*

PF They took over and that was it.

CMcG *A...and, would...so, would...would you consider then that the regime in Limerick was kind of nearly enforced by the women or would...that...that...by the elderly women, that they were kind of telling you what...what...what needed to happen, what...what way you had to behave?*

PF Oh yes, yes, yeah.

CMcG *Rather than the nuns?*

PF Rather than the nuns, the nuns wouldn't say anything. But there was this...a woman, a head woman on each table that kept the young ones...

CMcG *Right.*

PF ...that kept them, you know, 'don't do this, you have to do that or you'll be punished'. We didn't know what the punishment was.

CMcG *Right.*

PF I didn't get into any bother, I just kept my head down, done the work and got to me bed.

CMcG *And you were afraid enough...*



PF I was so frightened, I didn't know what else could happen to me.

CMcG *Right, right.*

PF Very, very frightened.

CMcG *Right. And, what kind of...like, you...you've talked about the...the sensation of being alone in there, I mean, is there anything else you'd like to say about how...your fears of...around the time that you were in the laundry? It's no problem if you've nothing else to say about it, but...*

PF Well me fears all the time was, 'what's going to happen to me now?' 'I would love to get out of here,' 'try life,' you know, 'what it's like'. Because there used to be girls that came in and they...they already had boyfriends and all that and they were telling us, you know, quietly, what it w...what, you know...about boys and that and I...I couldn't wait to get out because I thought it was going to be so nice to have a boyfriend, you know, we used to talk like that and I thought, 'I...I'll go and I'll get married some day and I'll...it'll all be happy ever after,' but no it wasn't.

CMcG *Hmm. Hmm. Yeah.*

PF I thought the punishment was...I done all me punishment in these places, but I still was punishing mesel' ...outside life too, with all the burning and...and taking overdoses and...

CMcG *A...and has it helped you to be able to...*

PF No, well I...

CMcG *....to identify what...that that's what you're doing...*

PF Yes...

CMcG *...has that helped you to stop it?*

PF ...that helps, you see when I think all about that there and think back I say to mesel', I'm going to do that now, this will release the tension that's inside me, pay back, you know. I was punishing myself, I wasn't punishing anyone else, it was just meself.

CMcG *But, I suppose when I was asking did it help, what I mean is, did...like, for you to be able to recognise that you...you're punishing yourself by harming yourself, does...does that help you in any way to kind of maybe not do it...does it...or...*

PF Well, for a time now, because this time I was very frightened because of the damage I had done. Because the doctors in...in the [name and location of hospital removed] says, it nearly went...I nearly went right into the nerve.

[Sound of tractor passing outside]

CMcG *Of your wrist?*

PF On the wrist there (*indicates large scar on wrist*).

CMcG *Yes, I can see it. Hmm.*

PF Aye. And I went right into it, the wrist, and he says, 'you'll be lucky if we can get that sorted'. But they were very good, they got me up and I had to get a bit [of skin] off the thigh and do the arm like that (*indicates skin graft*). But they were very good to me.

CMcG *A...and...*

PF They didn't ask me why I was doing it or anything. But, again, when I came out anyway, I turned to drink.

CMcG *Out of the laundry?*

PF Yeah. I turned to drink and I thought, you know, 'I'll be able to get through if I have this,' and I kept drinking 'til I became an alcoholic...

CMcG *Okay.*

PF ...and I couldn't cope. I thought I'd landed in the g...in the gutter.

CMcG *Was this say when you got to Dublin after you...so you went to Mayo you said?*

PF Af...when I went to Mayo, I got the address of the girls that was in Loughrea with me, they were living in a flat in Dublin...

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF ...and I...they met me off the train and took me to the flat and they got me a job in Jacobs factory and I worked there, right? Then after that then, I wasn't happy there, I couldn't settle down, I went to a travel agent. In them days they paid your fare to England. There was a job going for a bar maid and it was living in and you got your food, so I went for that job and they paid.

CMcG *Okay.*

PF So, I was working in a pub and that's when... *(takes a sip of water)*

CMcG *That's when it started.*

PF Aye. Because I...I couldn't mix in with people, I thought everybody was...you know, was watching me.

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF I ju...you know, I had that in me head.

CMcG *And would that sense come from the time in the laundry?*

PF Yeah. It all came from that.

CMcG *Okay.*

PF And the only way I could really talk to anybody was to have a couple of drinks.

CMcG *Yeah.*

[Sound of tractor passing outside]

PF Yeah. So I went to...I managed anyway to get off it.

CMcG *Good for you.*

PF In between that time while I was in England, I had met a man, but I didn't know...I...well I knew him, I didn't mean to put it that way.

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF I didn't know he had a family and a wife back here in Northern Ireland. And I got pregnant with him and he took me over here, that how I came to c...to be living in Northern Ireland. And the result of that was my daughter Roisín [pseudonym].

CMcG *Uh huh.*

PF He left me and I got another run of battering from his wife, but probably I deserved it, I didn't know he had...you know...a family like that. And I had to hide Roisín because she was only six weeks old, because I thought they were going to, you know, do something with her. And I got...I just took all the battering and the beating and I never said nothing, I didn't hit back or nothing because I was frightened. Because that [voice] in my head kept saying, 'keep quiet,' because that's all I ever heard, 'say nothing, just do as you're told'. And me daughter now, she's thirty-nine and she's a lovely girl. And I got married then (*pause*) and when I told me husband...I didn't tell him at the very start about me...about me upbringing. I kind of lied to him, which wasn't right, but I told him a ween of [a lot of] lies anyway, and we got married, and after a while then something had cropped up about me...me birth certificate, you know, you need all them things – I hadn't even got that, I didn't know what to do about it. And I...I wrote

down to Loughrea to ask them would they send me up me birth certificate. Now, in between that, he was fishing [about] why I was being so quiet about why I hadn't got that birth certificate. So, going past that stage anyway. So he used to always throw it up, I told him then after a while what had happened to me and where I was and he just...he just went crazy, he thought I was bad for being in that Magdalene Laundry, / had done something wrong to be in there, they could not understand when I sat them down and told them the truth, they wouldn't believe it, they could not believe that anything like that could ever happen. And I got...I got vicious with him one day when he started and the nun – the nun says I – the doctors up there have it on record. I was for knifing him, because I...I didn't want that to be thrown at me all the time, but I wouldn't have done it, I was just protecting meself, you know, I was so frightened. So, I just left him and I got this house here and I try and...I live on me own now and when the doors are all closed at night time, I can still hear that big brown door slamming (*pause*) and that never leaves me.

CMcG *You've...you've obviously, despite...that, you've obviously come through and managed to stand on your own two feet...*

PF Yes.

CMcG *...can you tell me how you've managed to do that, how you've...*

PF That's what me psychiatrist Dr Young [pseudonym] had said, 'you know Pippa,' she says to me, 'you are a very strong woman for what you have come through in life,' she says, 'there's not many people...', you know. But I...I had another daughter from me husband and she's called Alice [pseudonym] and then I had a son Thomas [pseudonym] and he died two days later and I thought I was being punished again, thought I was being punished again. So it was St. Thomas's Day so I thought I'd call him Thomas, I christened him Thomas and I went off it completely, I went back on the drink again and I couldn't stop. Wake up in the morning, I had to have the bottle beside me. I says, 'what's...what is going on? What is going on?' I just, all...all me life, I seem to have been punished, you know, for things I never had done?

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF Yeah.

CMcG *But you came through that again?*

PF I h...I had to come through that again and...

CMcG *Wow...*

PF And now...I've a wee grandson now, that's him there (*points to picture*).

CMcG *He's beautiful.*

PF Wee Stephen. [Pseudonym]

CMcG *He's beautiful.*

PF Yeah.

CMcG *Is that from your first daughter?*

PF That's no, no...the second girl, Alice. My first daughter, she doesn't want to get married, she's happy just working, she works with handicapped children and people and...very good with them. And then you know, what annoyed me so much in life when I was seeing a...a psychiatrist...they...when I had said where I was been [sic] and everything, they were more or less worried that I was doing something to *my* children because of my upbringing, you know? And that was so hurtful to hear that coming from a doctor. 'And what way did you bring them up?' And they...you know, they just had no trust in me just because of that Magdalene Laundry, about the abuse that I had got, that I would be doing that to my two daughters. And them two girls never asked for anything, they got what they wanted, I put them through college, I worked all...every night and day, to get them through college and get them a good education and they've turned out two beautiful girls.

CMcG *A...and was that important to you, to get them...*

PF Oh yes.

CMcG *...to get them educated?*

PF Yeah. I wanted my children not to have the kind of life I had, I wanted them to be something because I was never anything, you know. There was nobody to...what would you say...to coax me on or to hold me hand or say...you know, never got a cuddle or...we were never used to that, never.

CMcG *So, it sounds like, rather than what the psychiatrists were...were thinking, that it's the exact opposite, that you did everything you could...*

PF Uh huh.

CMcG *...for history to not repeat itself?*

PF Yeah. Uh huh. More or less. And that was really hurtful for me, you know, when the girls...you know, they think the world of me now you know, lovely girls now.

CMcG *Before I forget to ask you, Pippa, whereabouts were you born, did you find out...*

PF Oh yes...

CMcG *...where you were born?*

PF ...yes, that's right. I was born in [name of town and county removed].

CMcG *I know it.*

PF [Name of town removed] the Geoghegans [pseudonym] I...that's who I am, I'm a Geoghegan, and all me relations are there and they're always trying to now...they're going to have a big reunion, get us all together, because they're all over, even in [name of town in same region removed] but I don't fit in.

CMcG *Right.*

PF I don't. I said no, I says, 'no, none...none of yez wanted me when I was a child, nobody was there for me when I was getting these batterings, youse weren't there for me when I was getting all these punishments and everything, so why would I want you now?' You know.

CMcG *So you don't feel able?*

PF No, because nobody was there for me. Whatever I done now, I done it all for mesel'.

CMcG *Hmm. A...and do you consider yourself as an independent person?*

PF Well I do, I really...I really think you know, to mesel' you know, I can keep me house and look after me garden when I'm not sore or anything, you know. And I live on me own, I...I don't need anybody to be paying me anything or...you know, I'm on me State pension and keep me little house clean and tidy and do what I can. That's...that's the best way. I don't go out now, don't touch drink, no nothing.

CMcG *Good for you.*

PF I don't socialise either because I don't fit in. All over the head of all that.

CMcG *And is th...is that why you want so much to make contact with other survivors then...*

PF Yes...

CMcG *...you feel you fit in with them?*

PF ...that...that would be, because I feel comfortable in their company, because, what they went through, I went through and we have everything in common. The outside world to me, don't know anything and you're feared [afraid] to talk about it, you're even frightened to say where you were, or where you're from, you know, for fear...because you see, *up here* [Northern Ireland] *is a very bad place you know, and I have to be very careful.*

CMcG *And what do you mean by that?*



PF Well (*pause*) ah, you know, you'd get threatened now and again you know.

CMcG *Really?*

PF To do with your religion and that.

CMcG *Okay.*

PF Yeah.

CMcG *Okay.*

PF And then you know, I have the neighbours and that and I never bother with them, I just go in and out, do me little bit of shopping and then I stay in all day, read papers and that.

CMcG *A...and...with...with, sort of...the whole religious situation up here, you think that...that the fact that you were in a laundry, would it make it worse?*

PF No, the fact is...because...when I married, my husband was a...what do you call...a Protestant...

CMcG *Right.*

PF ...and I was a Catholic.

CMcG *Right.*

PF You know. So they didn't...didn't socialise with us like that, you know, all over the head of religion, but I never bothered, I just took what they...what they would throw at me...

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF ...and never say anything, I never retaliated or anything...

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF ...because that's what they want you to do.

CMcG *Right.*

PF Yeah.

CMcG *Hmm. Hmm. (Pause) And, I mean...we've kind of touched on it in different ways, but I mean how...how have you coped with having been in a laundry?*

PF Well there's times now...it was very hard to get used to the outside world, it took me a brave...long time. I was alright at the beginning when I had these girls in the flat and then I said, when I went to England I had to get...you know, over there because I knew I'd a...I'd a roof over me head and I would get fed, and that was the only reason why I went there, because I couldn't...I wouldn't have been fit to [have] coped with feeding mesel' or like, cooking and paying rent and all this. I went for a job, that had a roof over me head and a bit of food and that was the reason why...

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF ...and I...I felt like, you know, I thought this was great.

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF You know it's...it's very hard to explain, it was just marvellous you know, a lot had lifted from you.

CMcG *By being free from b...from not being in the laundry anymore?*

PF Yeah, you know, to go into this atmosphere and, you know, there was other w...girls there and then we made friends, but I never once said where I was from or nothing, I just said, 'Ireland', I never brought up me childhood, I was too frightened.

CMcG *Something I meant to ask you actually, about the...when...the day you left the laundry, like, did you get warning that you were leaving or...*

PF No, no.

CMcG *...how did you know you were leaving?*

PF No, you'd get no warning, they just would call you into the office that you went into that day, you were met and just told [inaudible], yeah, the people were waiting on me outside in the car, the ones I was going to work for.

CMcG *On the same day that you were leaving?*

PF On the same day. And I went out with the clothes I had on me back, no money, not even a toothbrush, just straight to [name of town removed] in Co. Mayo to work.

CMcG *But did you get a chance to say goodbye to your...*

PF No.

CMcG *...friends or anything?*

PF No, we...we...not even in the orphanage, we always had to go out the back and never say goodbye. And that's why, this is the part that I am missing, is to meet up and...you know...to get to know the girls again...because we never said goodbye.

CMcG *Okay. Yeah.*

PF Never said goodbye. I was very, very sad; very sad. You know.

CMcG *Yeah, yeah. How do you think that the experience in the laundry...how do...how do you think it has affected you as a person, who you are?*

PF Well, who I am now...well (*pause*) I think I'm stronger, [sound of car driving past] I try to be stronger, I try and...you know...it's very hard to answer that question.

CMcG *That's okay.*

PF It's...you know (*pause*) no, I c...I can't really explain what...what it is, no, nothing will come there.

CMcG *That's okay.*

PF Yeah.

CMcG *That's okay. In...in your life, what are...what are the more memorable ev...events [either] good or bad?*

PF Bad. In the orphanage and all this laundry work, we were took advantage of, slave labour while the nuns were gathering in all the money and as I say nowadays, 'living in a house made of gold,' I say. Oh yes, and...only about fo...that's how...that's why I done that [self-harming], it's only coming back to me. My daughter says to me one day, 'Mammy, will you come...would you like to go down to Loughrea...s...I'd like to see where you were reared...or...yeah...reared'. I says, 'well,' I says, 'alright'. So she drove me down and we went up in...up the big avenue and Roisín was taking photographs, all the aul' buildings and everything, and I was saying to Roisín...and one of the nuns came out and she pulled the camera out of my daughter's hand and she says, 'I know you,' she says to me, she says, 'you're Geoghegan, you're the bad one, and you still are bad,' she says, 'is there no getting rid of you?' I went down the avenue and Roisín, she says, 'don't talk to my Mammy like that!' she says to her, she says, 'you have *no right*, you've no remorse,' she says, 'you'd think you would say you were sorry, but no remorse'. 'You're *still* causing trouble' [Pippa is hearing the words of the nun]. I came back up here and I felt *really*...I really...you know, 'am I bad?' I says, 'why are they telling me that?' And then I started just to... (*Drifts off pointing to wrist where she self-harmed*) Yeah... I don't know why I done it, why...why was I punishing mesel' over what they had done to me? Because this was the only way I...I could get some *release* and some...I was only happy when I seen blood...

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF ...because I couldn't get at the people that done all these things to me...I would have liked to have done, but I can't. I hurt mesel'.

CMcG *And did you go to the Redress Board [Residential Institutions Redress Board] for...about your time in Loughrea?*

PF I did, I went there, yeah.

CMcG *And what was that like?*

PF Ah...it was alright...it was the solicitors, I may as well not have bothered because there was...they got most of the money...they...because there was two solicitors and then another boy from Dublin and then whatever money I had got then wasn't up to much because by the time they were paid...but the Redress Board had paid them, but they sent me a bill, the solicitors, and I still have that bill, what I had to pay them.

CMcG *A...a...and would it have been like...like a...a certain...like can you give me an idea, would it have been about half of what you got paid or more or less or...*

PF Well I only had about 80...80,000 and I was entitled to 150, but then out of my 80,000, by the time the money came up here with the sterling and that, that was all I had was the 80. Well it was good. And then the letters were coming in from the solicitors to say that the Redress Board hadn't paid this, or hadn't paid that and they were working overtime, so I had to pay the bill. And I have bills all there.

CMcG *My God.*

PF *Hmm.*

CMcG *And...*

PF And they wouldn't give me me paperwork back, you know, the papers that they sent for...for months...I was in Loughrea and Limerick, until the bill was paid.

CMcG *So they withheld your paperwork...*

PF They withheld everything until the bill was paid. And now that solicitor, he's being investigated...

CMcG *My God.*

PF ...he was on the front page of the paper not so long ago about doing people in the money [sic]. *(Takes a sip of water)*

CMcG *God. And tell me, w...when you went to the Redress Board, were you allowed to talk about your time in the laundry there at all?*

PF I told them about the laundry but they says that didn't involve that side, they were only dealing with the Loughrea.

CMcG *A...and do you...are you aware that like...you were entitled to talk about it because you went from Loughrea?*

PF Aye, yeah, yeah.

CMcG *That...that...in the...what was supposed to happen is you were supposed to be paid for your time in the laundry.*

PF Uh huh, aye.

CMcG *But that didn't happen, so I'm just wondering are you...did you know that...*

PF No, I didn't know that.

CMcG *...that you...because you were transferred from an industrial school, you should have been...it should have been taken into account.*

PF No they didn't take that into account, it was only the Loughrea, well I was told anyway, but I never met a...any of the panel of the Redress Board.

CMcG *Okay.*

PF Never met them. But it was the solicitors that was doing the dealing.

CMcG *Right, right. And, of all your accomplishments in life, what are you most proud of?*

PF My two daughters.

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF Yes, my two daughters, very proud of them, at the end of the day, that's...that's my living now, with them...that's... *(Smiling)*

CMcG *I think that's the first time you've smiled since we started this!*

PF Yeah, yes, yes, it's me two daughters, thank God for them...

CMcG *Yeah.*

PF Because I thought I'd never see that kind of life, you know, but what I really wanted out of life was to be educated and be a nurse, always said that, since I was that height. Sure look at me fingers and everything *(indicates fingers visibly affected by arthritis)*.

CMcG *I see your f...have you arthritis in your fingers too?*

PF Aye, me fingers as well.

CMcG *I can see they're bent, yeah.*

PF Aye.

CMcG *Yeah, gosh.*

PF Aye, very bad at times, but when I get all inflamed they swell up, just like the legs (*shows legs visibly affected by arthritis*).

CMcG *Uh huh. And...do...do you believe that's from your time in the laundry?*

PF Oh yes, definitely like, because I have the letter from me doctor, because they took the x-rays and everything and it says it was due to the hard work and due to bad feet and the way I was reared. Because all me knees too, they're all badly swelled as well...up. Aye.

CMcG *And...you...you talked before about not...not being able to...to fit in with people, you know, so y...you believe that...that your past has had an effect on that...*

PF Oh it has indeed.

CMcG *Has it aff...it's affected your ability to form relationships...*

PF Uh huh...

CMcG *...with other people?*

PF ...aye it has, I can never make a proper conversation with anyone because I'm always kind of frightened they're going to ask...because it's always in me head about me childhood, why I'm living up here with my accent, why I've no relations coming to visit me, whereas you know, your mother, your sisters or brothers...I don't know...nobody around me...

CMcG *A...and...*

PF ...and that frightens me.



CMcG *And you prefer to keep that part of your life...*

PF Yeah.

CMcG *...private and...and not tell anybody about it?*

PF Well...aye, I will because I...I don't like...'cause this is a small town, if you said anything at all it would be [spread around] like that [quickly] ...and I don't want to be the centre of that. But there was many a time I did feel, when I heard what was going on there...wh...about the nuns saying that they'd no money and they'd...you know...no this and they'd no buildings to put up for sale, I thought to mesel', 'no,' I says, 'I feel like going up to that chapel and stand at that pulpit and just say...' and I'm saying it now, 'they were just a bunch of hypocrites'.

CMcG *A...and...is...so I mean...your...you would dispute that they made no money?*

PF Yeah.

CMcG *And, you...you believe they made a profit?*

PF They...ah...they did, they definitely did. Ah, now the...the food they used to have, we used to have to cook everything for them while we would be eating out of slop buckets.

[Sound of tractor passing outside]

CMcG *Wa...wa...so there was a difference between....*

PF Oh yeah, yeah, oh God no, we never even seen a cake or a bun...biscuit...sweet, nothing. We were lucky even...and all we got as a Christmas present when we come down in [the] morning there was a...a wee bag on your chair, and all it was was an apron...

CMcG *And this was in Limerick...*

PF ...and [inaudible] Santy, never seen anything like that.

CMcG *Was this Limerick or Loughrea?*

PF Loughrea.

CMcG *And what about Limerick, was there anything special...*

PF No, there was never anything like that either. I was kind of used to all that so I wasn't expecting...you know, anything to change. See I was reared up...that's why I'm bringing in Loughrea into Limerick...

CMcG *Yeah.*

PF ...because I never had anything or seen anything or got anything.

CMcG *A...and is...is it your opinion that they made a prof...profit in Limerick?*

PF It...it...my opinion is they did.

CMcG *In Limerick?*

PF In the Good Shepherds, yeah.

CMcG *And in Limerick, was there a difference between what you ate and what the nuns ate?*

PF Oh yes, we never seen what the nuns ate, we would just get...anything that was put on the plate, we didn't know at times what we were eating.

CMcG *What was the food like?*

PF It wasn't good, it wasn't good at all. I came out like a...look at me now, I'm fat now, but when I came out of them places the...the people used to say, 'you can see your...you know...all your bones and everyth...' I was so skinny. Because I...you know...work, work, work and not a bite to eat.

CMcG *Were you hungry?*

PF Hungry all the time. Then when you went to school you...the other p...all...we used to go to the school that the townspeople went to and we'd blend in with them and they would be saying what they're getting for their birthday, what Santa was bringing and all that. And we didn't even...do you know, I didn't even know what age I was because me birthday was never celebrated. I only found out what age I was when I went up to Dublin, and that was nineteen years of age, and me date...that...me birthday.

CMcG *And how did you know...how did you find out then that you...what age you were?*

PF Because I wrote down to Loughrea...

CMcG *Right.*

PF ...to find out, because the girls was...were having a twenty-first birthday party for another girl – and this is the God's honest truth – and it was...a big celebration on and one of them says to me, 'Pippa when is your birthday?' I says, 'God,' I says, 'I don't know,' I says, 'what...what is that?' 'That's your age,' I says, 'I...I don't know, how would I find that out?'

CMcG *So you never had a birthday party?*

PF No, never.

CMcG *Never...*

PF Not even when I was growing up, not even a card, nothing.

CMcG *...it was...like, the fact that you had turned another year was never marked at all?*

PF Never, never. Never even said, 'your...happy birthday,' or anything. And even when we made our First Holy Communion and our confirmation, we had to blend in with the townsgirls you know...and boys, but when they were taking the photographs, we all had to be put aside, we hadn't to be in it, in these photos, we hadn't to be in them (*pause*).

CMcG *God.*

PF It's unbelievable you know, you know, but as I say, at the end of the day, people will learn by our experience and that's what we want. We want to be believed at the end of the day, because we were never believed.

CMcG *Do you feel like you're being believed...*

PF Now, when I see you sitting there and...and Judge Quirke...Judge...he was a *lovely* man, and he was so understanding, you know, you know then, people are starting to take notice and believe you. When you see you driving...especially when you drove the whole way from Co. Cavan, that means that you are a believer in us and I'm very grateful...

CMcG *Of course we believe you.*

PF Yeah.

CMcG *Course we do. (Pause) So I mean, you talked about your education having suffered, do you think that it has affected your ability to learn, in general, to learn new things?*

PF Well as I say now...just read papers and books and try and pick up about what's going on, like, at the end of the day I've educated meself, nobody else did, I done it meself.

CMcG *Uh huh. Uh huh. And...bear with me now (pause) how...how has it affected your...your feelings towards Ireland, how...your time in the laundry?*

PF Well, I've nothing against Ireland, because the...the outside world didn't know what was going on inside. So I believe anyway, they didn't know what was happening, how bad the nuns were, and they still won't believe it. They can't...they can't see anything bad with them, or the priests. They think, you know, we're liars, we should have been grateful to be reared with them.

CMcG *You think...you...that's...*

PF That's the attitude.

CMcG *You think that's what's the attitude right now still?*

PF Yeah.

CMcG *And is that something that...sort of...is that...are you getting that impression from...on TV or...or at a local level here where you're living or...*

PF On the...on the television when they're talking.

CMcG *Right.*

PF You know, that they never...outside world never heard anything like that happening. And...and then the Magdalene Laundry, they couldn't believe it, they can't...they said, 'no that couldn't have happened, how come we d...never heard anything?' Because the shouts of us at times when we were getting battered. But then, the walls were that high (*indicates above head height*).

CMcG *That was in Loughrea when you were getting beaten...*

PF Loughrea too. And then the bars down the windows, yeah.

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF Yeah.

CMcG *But you were saying, were...you wer...you weren't beaten in Limerick?*

PF Ah no I never got any beating there. No, but it was just the...the work...

CMcG *Hmm. Hmm.*

PF ...the work was just very very...I'd have rather the beating than the work.

CMcG *Really?*

PF Yeah. The work was killing, half killed us. We used to hardly be fit to walk. We were just like slaves.

CMcG *How long was your day?*

PF Oh what time in the morning [inaudible] we never even had a clock or nothing, we didn't know, because there was never a clock anywhere. Even in the laundry there wasn't a clock, you had a nun just looking at her...no, they used to have the watch there, that's right and take it out of their pocket and look and would just say, 'time for dinner,' or something like that. We never knew the time, how long we worked – it was all day – to me anyway.

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF Because when you were finished you had your tea and then bed, then up again in the morning to the exact same.

CMcG *Hmm. Hmm.*

PF No going out, going to pictures, no nothing. We had no treats, nothing.

CMcG *And, so when y...you talked about the...the...the Redress Board so, you didn't talk...you were saying you didn't talk to anybody in the Redress Board?*

PF No, I never got speaking to nobody.

CMcG *And so have you ever kind of...done something like this now before, like in terms of talking about what happened to you, speaking out or...*

PF No, no, no. I had to...well you see as I said, this is a very close knit community here in [name of town removed].

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF The solicitor says to me, 'you write down what you think'. But I didn't write down exactly what had happened because I knew that would have been in the office and anybody could have come in and read it.

CMcG *So the solicitor...*

PF So I d...

CMcG *...is a local guy here...[inaudible]*

PF Yeah, just a local guy here.

CMcG *And you didn't want your private details to be visible in...*

PF Yeah.

CMcG *So, when...so what he was using to go to the Redress Board was not necessarily the full truth then?*

PF No, no. Because I was...

CMcG *You held back?*

PF I held back, I couldn't talk out like the way I could now, I wasn't...I wasn't talking direct to somebody that knew. But this...man, he didn't know anything, like he just treated...treated me like as if I was a nobody. And the woman, she was a solicitor, she worked and...and she says, 'the only way you do it Pippa if you don't want to talk about it, is write it down'. I only wrote down what *they* wanted to hear, I didn't write down exact things that did happen, because I was too frightened. Because anybody could have walked into the office [and] pick that up. So I never spoke like this to nobody. Or maybe, I might have said to like...to me psychiatrist you know...

CMcG *Hmm.*

PF ...talk to her, she wanted to get to the bottom of why I was behaving the way I was, you know.

CMcG *Uh huh.*

PF But touch wood now, thank God I...I came over it.

CMcG *You have, you have.*

PF Uh huh.

CMcG *And have you applied for all of your records, say from...both from Loughrea and from the Good Shepherds?*

PF I...I've got all from Loughrea and got some from Limerick. What did I get from Limerick?  
(Pause) I got...just the day I was...I was entered into it and the date I w...left, and that was all.

CMcG *That's it.*

PF And I said to me daughters one day, I had the papers all around there on the floor, sorting out and, I says to them, I says, 'that's my life there...in paper,' I says that and she looked at me – Roisín – she just went, 'I don't know how you done it Ma,' she just couldn't believe it, the way I described what me childhood was like.

CMcG *Yeah.*

PF Because that...that's what it was, all in paper, you were either a number or you weren't called by your own name. And at times I...I didn't even think wh...what me real name was, I was that confused.

CMcG *And what was your...what was your name in Limerick?*



PF I was called Theresa [pseudonym of house name].

CMcG *In Limerick?*

PF Uh huh. Theresa. That was all...we had no other names or nothing, not even your surname or the other name that you have.

CMcG *Right. Right. A...and...how do you...how do you feel about the church after all this?*

PF Well, I'm a heathen, I can't go to anywhere, I never go anywhere. Only when the girls got confirmed and when they went to make their Holy Communion, I would have went then, after that, no. I just call mesel' a heathen, I've no faith. When I was brought up, they turned me against it. And they were supposed to be held...you know, responsible for us, they were supposed to be doing this and doing that and they never done nothing. Just slave, slave, slave.

CMcG *So it's had a direct effect on your outlook in terms of spirituality and religion?*

PF Oh yes, oh yes, very bad.

CMcG *Yeah. And...and who do you...who do you see as being responsible for what happened to you?*

PF The nuns. Yeah. I...I told Judge Quirke that, I says, 'it's them that should have said, they were sorry, not Enda Kenny,' because what would that man know? What is *he* apologising for? It wasn't up to him, it was up to the religious order at the end of the day, it was them that done the damage. That's my outlook of it.

CMcG *I...I think...I think the idea of Enda Kenny apologising was because the State let it happen.*

PF Hmm.

CMcG *So how...how would you feel about that thought?*

PF No, no, I still don't think so.

CMcG *Okay.*

PF No. I even...he was very uncomfortable when he was doing it, he didn't really want to have to say...because it was really nothing to do with him. .

CMcG *And...*

PF That's the way I look at it.

CMcG *...but how did...how do you feel now about the apology, does that...the...the...I suppose in terms of the recognition part of it, that...do y...do you feel any kind of recognition because the apology has come or...*

PF No.

CMcG *No.*

PF The...the...I'd only find that if it came from the nuns themself's.

CMcG *So you feel very strongly about that?*

PF Yeah. I do. Yes. Because it was them that done all the damage to us.

[Sound of car passing outside]

CMcG *Okay. And, I suppose is there...I think we're pretty much nearly at the...at the end of...*

PF Uh huh.

CMcG *...of...of the different questions I have, is there anything else you'd like to...to add Pippa...*

PF No, no not at the minute.

CMcG *...is there anything else we haven't covered?*

PF I think I...I've said all I can but probably when you're away, something else will crop up, 'cause there's always things coming into me head, never leaves, but I'm happy enough with...

CMcG *Well you can come back to us with anything you'd like to add...*

PF Yes, yeah...

CMcG *...that's no problem...*

PF ...yeah.

CMcG *...you can write it down and we can put it in.*

PF Aye, yeah.

CMcG *But thank you so much...*

PF And thank you for calling.

CMcG *...for...for being part of this.*

PF Yes.

CMcG *...just get everything... (turning off recording devices)*

[Interview ends]