



Magdalene Institutions: Recording an Archival and Oral History

A project funded by the



Reference Code: MAGOHP/04/ANON
Oral History of: Mary
Pseudonym? Yes
Status: Survivor

Keywords: St Patrick's Mother and Baby Home; Philomena's Convent, Stillorgan; St Mary's Industrial School, Lakelands, Sandymount; Our Lady of Charity of Refuge Magdalene Laundry, Gloucester Street; Good Shepherd Magdalene Laundry, Limerick; Residential Institutions Redress Board; Family Group Home, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal; intergenerational institutionalisation; rebelling; illegitimacy; emigration.

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Interviewer: Dr Sinead Pembroke
Records/Papers included: To be confirmed

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Notes on Redaction and Transcription Process

Interviewee Initials: M
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:

- Interviewee's pseudonym is used throughout
- Interviewee's house name has been redacted and assigned a pseudonym
- Individuals named by the interviewee have been given pseudonyms
- Some locations have been redacted to protect the interviewee's privacy

List of Pseudonyms

Pseudonym	Status/Relationship to Interviewee
Mary	Interviewee
Sr Frances	Third Party Religious
Elizabeth	Interviewee's house name
Sr Angela	Third Party Religious
Mother Bernadette	Third Party Religious
Rachel	Third Party Magdalene
Mother Agnes	Third Party Religious

Basic Data from Interview

Name/Pseudonym	Mary
When Born	1945
Where Born	St. Patrick's Mother and Baby Home, Navan Road
Born outside marriage?	Yes
Raised by	St Philomena's, Stillorgan Lakeland's Convent, Sandymount
Education	Industrial school
Order	Sisters of Our Lady of Charity; Good Shepherd Sisters
Laundry	Gloucester Street, Dublin
From	c.1962
To	c.1964/5
Duration of stay	Gloucester St: 5 weeks Limerick: 2 ½ years
Age on entry	17 ½
Entered Via	Gloucester Street: via Lakeland nuns, when her mother said 'do what you like with her' Limerick: Transfer from Gloucester Street
House Name/No	Yes
Haircutting/punishment?	Yes (punishment)
Circumstances of Departure	Was sent to work in religious-run hospital.
Emigrated?	Yes

Long-lasting health effects?	Yes
Of Note	Survivor's mother was also in Lakelands; letters to relatives not posted; transferred to another laundry after escape attempt.

[Audio File 1 begins]

[Interview begins]

SP *So I would just like to thank you for taking part. So I just want to ask Mary, if you consent to participate...that I just want to confirm that you agree to participate in this interview voluntarily...*

M Yes.

SP *...and that you are familiar with the information...*

M Yes.

SP *...and consent forms.*

M Yeah I am.

SP *Thank you very much. So I just want to start with...could you tell me something about yourself?*

M I was born in 1945. My mother obviously had me out of wedlock. I was born in St Patrick's [Mother and Baby Home] on the Navan Road and there I stayed until I was four and then I was moved on to Stillorgan [St Philomena's Convent] and I stayed in Stillorgan for another...probably nine years. After Stillorgan I think I was twelve I was then sent onto Lakelands [St Mary's Industrial School] which was a place in Sandymount and I stayed there until I was sixteen. Then when I was sixteen...you had to leave, and I was sent over to England because my mother was living there and I had a job looking after children in Walthamstow for the first year of my life when I was sixteen. Then I returned to Dublin when I was seventeen with my mother and my mother kind of felt that I was getting a bit out of control and, not so much out of control, I was just kind of trying to spread my wings really. And my mum then found me a job in Stillorgan where I had been as a child for nine years and I got a job there looking after kids for probably about six, six months or so. Then I met a guy that my mum didn't like and she had said to the nuns, you know, 'do what you like with her'. She'd had enough; she was going back to the UK. So I then was going out with this guy who I think had been involved with the police in some way but I didn't know that. And immediately the nuns, they made out

that they were going to take me somewhere safe and they sat in the...I had stayed out the night and I came back the next day on the Monday morning and the nuns were sitting there waiting for me. When I came back they had promised that my case would be ready and I could go off to England again if I wanted, but that didn't happen. They had a policeman sitting in the parlour waiting for me and they took me off to a place, the most awful place called Gloucester Street [Sisters of Our Lady of Charity Magdalene Laundry] there on Sean McDermott Street absolutely [sic] hell hole. They took me there, I protested, I screamed, I shouted but it didn't make any difference. I wouldn't change my clothes, I wouldn't wear their clothes. So I ran away out of there. After I think about two or three maybe five weeks, I ran away from there with another lady and then I was brought back by the police and then the next day the nuns from Stillorgan came to collect me and they said, 'we're going to take you somewhere safe now' and I being a little bit...although I was a bit....I'd been to England for a year I was...you still had that kind of respect for the nuns because that was the Reverend Mother and the other one. They said, 'we're going to take you somewhere in the country for a rest and keep you safe from all this'. So of course I went in the taxi all the way from Dublin to Limerick and they delivered me there and I never, never saw them nuns again. And I was in Limerick now until I was t...for about nearly another two-and-a-half years. I fought the nuns, I tried to get out, couldn't get out, climbed the wall, couldn't get out. Eventually they let me go and then I went up...they found me a job up in Dublin working in a hospital. Didn't care what I did but...as long as I was out in the world away from the nuns, although there were nuns running that hospital as well, it was a private hospital called Mount Carmel.

SP *Hmm.*

M I was there I don't know...three or four months and I left there and then I got a job somewhere else and I...I would just...from one job to another. Probably meeting guys...the wrong type of men and all the rest of it. And then eventually, I was so happy to be away from the nuns I thought, 'I'm coming back to England' and I just got the hell out of Ireland and I've been in the UK ever since...

SP *Wow.*

M ...and I'm really pleased that I did.

SP *Thank you very much. I'll be asking during the interview sort of...more about the different parts of your life there, but thank you. So did you have much of a family life before being...I doubt you remember much because you were immediately put in at a very young age. Did you have much of a family life before that?*

M None.

SP *None. Okay.*

M Because I was in the...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...convent wasn't I.

SP *Yeah. And did you know...do you know who your father is?*

M I found out later on in life.

SP *Okay.*

M I found out about 20 years ago that he lived in... [location redacted]

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and he had married this other woman who...and went onto have five other children.

SP *Okay.*

M But I've met up with them and that...that's a really nice story.

SP *Yeah, thank you, I'll...I'll ask you more about it...*

M Yeah.

SP ...afterwards. Do you know if your mother was very religious?

M I wouldn't say she was overly religious...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...but there was always the fear of the Catholic Church.

SP *Yeah. And...yeah, can you...while you were growing up what had you heard about the Magdalene Laundries?*

M You would always hear...not so much in Stillorgan probably in Lakelands when I was older, 'oh you'll be put away' or 'we'll put you into the reformatory school'. From that, other than that I really didn't know much about the Magdalene Laundry.

SP *Yeah.*

M Only when really...I stayed out that night...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and I was put there in Gloucester Street. Terrible...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...nev...never that never leaves me.

SP *Yeah.*

M Actually...sometimes dream about it, and it's like a nightmare I...I wake up and I think, 'oh my God,' you know, 'I'm back there'.

SP *Yeah. And can you tell me just a little bit about the experience in your other institut...in the other places that you...that you were in?*

M *(Sighs)* Stillorgan was probably...it wasn't the worst of the bad lot, but for me personally speaking, I have okay memories of it. All I can tell you is that we weren't educated, we were always cleaning and doing stuff for the nuns and you didn't know what a mum and dad was and you were brought up into that environment; you never had it so you didn't miss it.

SP *Hmm.*

M It's only when you get older in your life that you realise how much you missed out.

SP *And can you tell me what they had...obviously you were very young and you grew up in...in these institutions. What did they tell you was the reason for being there?*

M They...they didn't really tell you, they would...th...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...you...you just knew you were there because your mum...my mum was living in England...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...and she would come over once a year to see me and they'd get you all ready and say, 'oh your mother is coming'. But there were some girls who never had any relatives...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and those who didn't have relatives, they were adopted out.

SP *Yeah.*

M That I'm sure of. I know some of them that were sent out.

SP *Yeah.*

M But they couldn't do that with me because my mum I think was paying a little bit of money...

SP *Okay.*

M ...not much but, she was paying. And I think the nuns liked her...

SP *Okay.*

M ...they kind of controlled her a bit.

SP *And how do you feel the nuns treated you?*

M Some of them were okay, one of them was really nice, I always speak well of her Sr Frances [pseudonym]. But there was a lot of cruelty. There was neglect, which is where we got our compensation for [at the Residential Institutions Redress Board] and it's all been...all of that has been recorded. There were beatings on some children definitely, but probably I blocked an awful lot now because after the redress...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...I just felt I got to move on now.

SP *Okay, thank you. Okay so we're going into the next section so this is about the ent...so we're onto the laundry so, the entry into the laundry. So we've sort of talked a bit about...about it already...how...sorry just to confirm, what year and how old were you when you were sent and maybe you could tell us the names of the laundries?*

M Right, how old was I?

SP *Yeah.*

M I was seventeen, no seventeen-and-a-half, just. I can only describe it as a hell hole. Laundry, washing machines, old ladies working all day, getting up at six in the morning, they wore like...I think a brown uniform and they worked, and they were doing do all the laundry for the...they had the contract with the laundries all over Dublin, terrible.

SP *Hmm.*

M I know I refused to do it and I was always, always in trouble and always doing something because I...I wouldn't do it for them. And eventually I think they would like to see the back of me, but I...I see them women now and I...I still can...if I smell steam, it brings me back, and carbolic soap and that kind of thing.

SP *Yeah.*

M Ter...terrible, awful and I...I feel for them women because there was nobody there for them.

SP *And, so can you just remind us again how you came...how you came to be sent to the laundry?*

M I would now s...I would actually say that – without trying to say I'm special in any way – but I think I was just so attractive and the nuns probably thought, 'oh my God she's going to get pregnant,' without...nobody telling you anything about the facts of life...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and, although I look back now on myself, because I see my own grandkids and I see how worldly-wise they were, whereas I wasn't, and you kind of trusted and believed people when really, you just met the wrong type of people.

SP *Yeah.*

M And I regret that.

SP *Yeah, yep so, so you had...yeah, you had spent a year in England and then?*

M A year in England and then back...

SP *Back.*

M ...and then I ended up in the laundries altogether [for] about two-and-a-half years.

SP *Yeah.*

M The worst experience of my life – I wouldn't wish it on a dog. But after I'd run out of the Gloucester Street one...

SP *Hmm, yeah.*

M ...I was then like I say...taken down to Limerick. Limerick has had a lasting effect on me; it was horrible.

SP *Hmm.*

M Awful. I was dumped there, I had no contact with anybody, nobody. Nobody...apparently nobody knew where I was. The nuns changed your name, they gave you your job, if you didn't do it then you had...I don't know...120, 30 people that were in there and you soon would become a target if you...if you were...kind of stepped out of line, which I did. I refused to work I refused to do the laundry so they put me in the lace department – they had a really nice lace department – and that I enjoyed because it was creative.

SP *Yeah.*

M And it...it was almost like you were lucky to be in that department and not in the laundry. But having said that, I'll never forget the women, some of them died while I was there and I would say they were buried in Limerick.

SP *Yeah.*

M I have no doubt about that. I've been since back to Limerick to have a look and now it's a big college isn't it?

SP *Yes. Yeah. Did you have any other siblings or relatives in the laundries...*

M No.

SP *...or other institutions?*

M No. No I didn't, no.

SP *Do you have other siblings?*

M I have brothers and sisters from my father's side...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...so they're half-brothers...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...but not my...I'm the only child from my mum.

SP *Okay. Can you remember how you felt when you were being sent to the laundry?*

M Dreadful. A...awful, or though as though, 'this is happening and I have no control over it'. You were taken, you were put; everything was stripped off, your clothes everything.

SP *Hmm.*

M It was almost like you were sent to prison for something that you never did. The only thing I was guilty of...I love life, I loved enjoying myself...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...they didn't want that. They were like the Taliban of today.

SP *And was that the last time that you saw your mother then, for the whole of the time you were in the laundry?*

M I ne...never saw my mum until I came back to England...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...and she was really shocked that I was out. So I gave her a nice surprise. I said 'hello!' And she lived like, in the centre of London. But, listen my mother, my poor mother was a victim of that system as well, she herself was in Lakelands and I only found that out years and years later. So, you know, they have done an awful lot of damage these...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...the Magdalenes...

SP *And wh...*

M ...the Catholic Church.

SP *And what was your mum in Lakelands for...? Like what was the reason?*

M My mum's...my mum's mother died having given birth to the last child and she was one of six, so the two girls were sent to Lakelands, the boys were sent to Letterkenny, [Family Group Home, Letterkenny] up there...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...Letterkenny, and they were all scattered around. It *absolutely ruined my family*...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...and I blame the church.

SP *Yeah. And so...so, yeah so is there anything else you'd like to add about that, about the entry part into the laundry?*

M It...it's something that's never left me...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...truly it has traumatised me I mean, thankfully now I think I'm over it now...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...but the...the damage the control that the Catholic Church had, and it was all in the name of making money. And they got these vulnerable women, who had nobody...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...maybe their families didn't want them anymore, but they took advantage and they used them as slaves, is what they did.

SP *Yeah, and you said you mentioned there that when you were...when first with Gloucester...Sean McDermott Street Laundry, that a policeman was involved?*

M Oh *yeah, yeah* he brought me back!

SP *Yeah.*

M He brought me and the other girl back.

SP *Hmm.*

M So, they...they worked very closely with...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...with the Magdalenes...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...and I've heard that in many, many stories, 'I was taken by the police'.

SP *Okay.*

M *Many, many stories.*

SP *So this was when you escaped and then they took you back?*

M That's when I escaped but the...the...reall...the blame was with the other girl that I left...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...because she went to her...an aunty I think.

SP *Okay.*

M And she'd been friendly with the nuns and...and had run down to the phone box...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...to say, 'the girls are here,' and the police just came in the car and picked us up. And we...we thought it was all a bit of fun...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...but I realise now that I should've just legged it. If only, if only...But that's...that's it, inside.

SP *Yeah. Thank you. And we're just going now, onto the next section. Are you okay to continue?*

M Yeah.

SP *So this is more about the laundry regime, so inside, the I...your conditions and everything. So can you remember your first day?*

M The first day when I went to Gloucester Street I refused to take off my clothes, I refused to do anything. I just sat and cried and wailed and screamed, nobody took any notice of me. But I remember the dormitories, they were *absolutely horrible*. They were like...like prison they weren't cells, it was a big dormitory with a hundred...loads and loads of beds and, people used to wash in cold water, carbolic soap, I remember that.

SP *Yeah. Can you describe your living and working conditions?*

M Well because I didn't work in the laundries and I worked in the lace department, I would say the working conditions were appalling.

SP *Hmm.*

M They were old, it...it was like Dickensian times. I mean I...I see it now and it's like a black picture of little old ladies in shawls and...n...being trapped, that...that's what I see.

SP *Hmm. Yeah. Actually one question, in terms of being trapped is, were the doors and windows to the laundry locked?*

M Definitely locked. There was no escape.

SP *Yeah.*

M You know there was no escape and I can tell you I know there was glass on the walls...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...because I remember having a look at them to see if I could hop over...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...you couldn't get over.

SP *Yeah. And this was for both the laundries?*

M Yeah, yeah. And also I remember the day...the day that I did run out and I *really, really, really* had to plan it because remember I wouldn't go into the uniform.

SP *Yeah.*

M So I knew that if I didn't go into the uniform that I wouldn't be recognised when I came out, and the other girl had the uniform on, so we...but it was her aunty who told the police that we were there. And I remember seeing, I said to her two...I think it was at two o'clock the door used to open, and I said to her, 'watch...watch the door at two o'clock, be ready,' and we were ready. And as I was running and running th...all these women knew what I was doing and they tried to push...push me back. So I got one of them and I pushed her, I did!

SP *Yeah.*

M And she fell over and I...we just kept legging, legging it. And Sean McDermott Street I think has got like cobble stones...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...remember...I always remember that. I remember running and thinking, 'oh I wish it wasn't cobble, I wish I could...'

SP *Yeah.*

M But I did go back and have a look and it is.

SP *Yeah.*

M It's an awful terrible, place. I feel...I feel for all those women that spent all their lives there.

SP *Yeah. And were you given information...like when you were put in, like...sent...like...like the length of time you would spend...your rights?*

M *Nothing* at all! You...said, 'if you be a good girl,' and more or less, 'you can get out soon'.

SP *Okay so it was just like, 'soon'.*

M It was...it was...yeah...yeah, but there...listen, there was...there were a couple of women that had been in the institutions before with me that I knew...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and I was very shocked to see them there. If you were in one institution, nine out of ten times that's where you'd end up if you didn't fit into society.

SP *Yeah. Okay. And can you describe...oh actually sorry, before that question...were you given a house name, a number or...you...*

M When I went to Limerick...

SP *...already spoke about the uniform...*

M ...when they stuck me down to Limerick which was really hard because I mean it's about two-and-a-half, three hours isn't it from Dublin?

SP *Hmm. Yeah.*

M They...they insisted that my name would be Elizabeth [pseudonym of interviewee's house name], would be...would be Elizabeth and that there was another...Sr Angela [pseudonym] and that...that would be...and I said, 'I'm not having...don't want another name, I'm not doing it'.

SP *Hmm.*

M Anyway it happened and then I accepted it, trying to be...not to be good but I thought, I won't be here for long, I'll leg it. But it wasn't so easy...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...because the walls were so high. Just terrible.

SP *Okay. Did you have to wear a uniform in Lim...did you...*

M Yeah, yeah.

SP *You wore a l...un...*

M Yeah.

SP *...a uniform there, yeah.*

M Yeah I did...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...I did because they knew what I was like...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...in the other place and...

SP *Can you tell me what the uniform was?*

M Don't know, I think it was like...I don't even know if it was like...I don't think it was [a] gym slip, I think it was always brown. Brown...I hate the colour brown...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...I very, very rarely even wear it now. But I think it was brown like, a blouse and a skirt, I c...really, really can't remember.

SP *Okay.*

M But I remember seeing the old ladies and always in this brown and...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...horrible.

SP *Okay. Can you describe for me your daily routine?*

M Now which one, about? Either place?

SP *Either place.*

M Right, the first place I think the women got up really early in the morning, washed in cold water, I remember that. I remember thinking, 'ugh!' It would be work, probably Mass as well, and eight o'clock you'd be...maybe you'd have your breakfast. We always call it slop in both places...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and then you'd do your laundry and you'd be praying, I remember they'd be praying and saying prayers there. Then there...probably three meals a day. I think...early they used to go to bed really early and they'd get up really early. And I remember when it was really, really cold, it would be freezing, and...but Limerick was a little bit different because you were kind of in the country and I was in the lace department so I think you'd get up at about eight, you'd have your breakfast and they broke them down into like, little groups...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...like, Mother Bernadette [pseudonym] a different group. So I belonged to that group and that...you had like a person I called an auxiliary who looked after you, who was kind of like, not so much [in] control but it was...instead of being with 120 girls you had a group of maybe 15 or 20...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and you did...you ate with that group...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and I remember you used to read stories, when you had your food they'd have somebody in the corner reading a story, I remember that.

SP *I take it everyone...was everyone in silence?*

M Everybody was...you *never, never* talked while you were eating. And the nun would be sitting in...on her throne, giving everybody dirty looks. Horrible woman Mother Bernadette...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...died...died and I think everybody was scared of her – wasn't.

SP *Yeah.*

M And one of the things that they used to do is they used to make...do public...apology, whereas if I was like cheeky like...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...I always was they used to make you kiss the floor, I never did...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...never, never did it, wouldn't do it. But they...they had people that would...would have to kiss the floor and say that they're very sorry or you'd be put on the penance table, which is a small table, and you sat in front of the nun and your food would be brought. That was...that was...that was wicked. I was always on that! *(Laughs)* Always.

SP *Yeah. Can you tell me actually how many...roughly, how many people...girls or women would be in...in a Magdalene Laundry?*

M I don't know, I think the first place, loads of women.

SP *Hmm. Yeah.*

M I...I couldn't tell you.

SP *Yeah.*

M ...I would say it could have been 100,150...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...I really don't know. Limerick was a bit more because they had the space...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...and I'd say in the Magdalenes, probably maybe 100.

SP *Yeah.*

M Maybe.

SP *Okay. So...what...so you...you said that you did lace work? That was...*

M I did the lace, yeah.

SP *...that was in Limerick?*

M In Limerick yeah, I loved that.

SP *And...yeah, yeah.*

M But that was another thing that...that the nuns...it was a secret.

SP *Yeah.*

M Nobody knew.

SP *And what did...so you had to...what did you have to make or...?*

M You made surpluses, handkerchiefs, but mainly for the American market...

SP *Okay.*

M ...and for Rome I think.

SP *Yeah.*

M It was *all* very, very cloak and dagger. There was only about eight or nine maybe ten people in there. There was a lady there called Rachel [pseudonym] and we were great friends and she was...she had polio as a child and she was one of the top lace makers.

SP *Hmm.*

M It was mainly people who couldn't really work...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...that were in there. I was in there because every single morning...every single Monday, I would call it 'going on the ran'¹ where I wouldn't eat anything, I wouldn't do anything for the nuns, and they got fed up with me and I think that they tried to give me a little bit of a better job just to keep me...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...to keep me there but (*whispered*) I sho...I should have legged it. Yeah.

SP *And were you paid or given pocket money?*

M Never, never.

SP *No, okay. And how many days or hours did you work per week?*

M Take...take that back...

SP *Yeah?*

M ...you said was I given pocket money?

SP *Yeah.*

M I think they used to give some sort of money but it was only...it was only like ten shillings...I...maybe a month...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...I can't really remember. But that had to buy your soap and your toothpaste...

SP *Okay, yeah.*

¹ See also MAGOHP75, interview with former paid hand Mary Collins, who recalls the same phrase being used in the Magdalene Laundry in Galway.

M ...so I rem...I just remember that.

SP *Yeah, and how many hours and days did you work per week?*

M I...I would say...probably the five days...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...I would say. I mean some of the laundries were working all the time...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...but never on a Sunday...

SP *Okay.*

M ...because they'd have things like a dance or something...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...going on or...but nothing very much.

SP *Yeah, yeah actually I was going to ask that, so if you worked, were the days like Saturday and Sunday were you doing other things or...?*

M I think they used to do...like in Limerick they let all of them go out...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...you were never allowed out...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...that was it. But they'd let you walk around the gardens, the nun's beautiful gardens. And that was a kind of rec...that was almost like a privilege. Or sometimes they'd have a bit of music and a bit of dancing. I remember that, but not much.

SP *Were people from outside invited in?*

M Very seldom. I'll tell you what they did do. They used to put on plays and I was always in the plays and they used to say to me you know, 'if you do this one right we'll let you go'. I always kept saying, 'I want to get out of here'.

SP *Hmm.*

M And they said, 'well if you do this play, after the play...' and they never, never kept their promise...never. They were really...they were...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and also when people wrote letters out to their relatives they never posted them. And people used to be sitting waiting for replies...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and then they'd...they'd say to themselves, 'well nobody wants me, I might as well stay here'. That was another form of what they did.

SP *Hmm. Did...did you experience that?*

M A little bit...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...a I...because I remember writing to my mother and I'd think, 'oh my mother hasn't even written back to me...'

SP *Yeah.*

M ...and hardly ever did. And I remember when Christmas came she did send me something and...but that...that was it. But I never really had the communication as far as my mother was concerned I was out of the way really.

SP *Okay.*

M And I think that's what happened with a lot of Irish people, it's almost like, maybe something happened with their father...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...I don't know, or with a local priest...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...or they had a baby with their local priest and then the baby was taken off them and they were so traumatised that they couldn't really face the world again and they ended up going back to the nuns and finding that the nuns were the only way that anybody had any time for them. So there was a lot of that mental...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...cruelty as well.

SP *Were you encouraged to do any other activities such as sports?*

M No.

SP *Okay. What other sort of recreational things would you do?*

M Do you know, I don't really remember.

SP *Hmm.*

M I remember we used to do confessions and the priest would come in – a Franciscan priest...

SP *Okay.*

M ...and hear like the confessions but...but other than that I don't really remember.

SP *Hmm.*

M I really blocked a lot of it.

SP *Yeah.*

M The worst things that I have in my memory is...is the women that were trapped but some of them wanted to be there because they had...because their relatives probably had abandoned them or weren't talking to them or, there was...there was a reason and...and the nuns really took advantage of that...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...I would say.

SP *Did you read or listen to the radio while you were there or...?*

M I think so, I think yeah you'd...yeah you'd hear the radio but not that much.

SP *Hmm. Yeah.*

M I remember they got...televisions came out...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and I remember it, they...they started letting people watch television and I remember Richard Kimble, the man with the one arm that it...that it was a series on every Thursday. And they used to say, 'oh, if you're good you can watch it,' and we'd all...oh we'd be dying to know what happened and did he kill...th...I remember...so they did bring the television out maybe late '59 or maybe mid-'60s I'd say.

SP *And how...how did religion play a part during your time in the laundry?*

M Oh Mass after Mass after Mass. Drove you nuts.

SP *Hmm. Were there...were there rit...religious rituals you had to take part in?*

M No but remember that they had Maynooth College...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...close by so they used to come and wen...practice. So you'd have one Mass after the other on a...probably Saturday, Sunday, feast days, forget it.

SP *Hmm.*

M Ju...it was just religion was rammed down your throat, yeah.

SP *Yeah. Did you ever feel that you wanted to...that you had a vocation?*

M Never. *(Laughs)* No.

SP *Do you feel that if you did that the nuns would want you to...to...to be a part of...?*

M I don't know, I don...no...I don...I don't think that ever was, because I think that they were older people and they were in control of you. That may have happened to some people when they were younger, being brought up in the convents...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...not in the Magdalenes because they were much older people...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...that were there as nuns and they would have done their training and...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...all the rest of it.

SP *Okay we're going onto the next section, are you alright to continue or...?*

M We'll...we'll just turn it off because...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...I think do y...it's half-past two.

[Audio File 1 ends at 37:33]

[Audio File 2 begins]

SP *Okay so we're back now, so just to ask you...so this is about the laundry again, the regime, more about the discipline and control. So were there any accidents in the laundry?*

M I'd say there was. There was...one of my friends burnt...got her arm completely burnt. Other than that I can't really remember but I think everything was so...worked so well, that everybody was doing their own little job and the...the clothes would go in...just...just awful.

SP *And what...you...did you have any accidents? I know you were based in the lace depart...the lace...*

M No.

SP *No. And what happened if you did or could not work?*

M I don't know really.

SP *Yeah.*

M I really, really don't know the answer to that. You'd probably...I don't know, I really don't know.

SP *Were you ever ill and did you receive treatment?*

M The only time I remember was...I remember I was much younger...is when I...I fell off I think I was on a bike somewhere and I remember...grazed my knee and I was taken out to the hospital for that and it was stitched or bandaged or whatever. But that...that's all really.

SP *Okay can you recall what happened to others who were ill?*

[Sound of cup being placed on saucer]

M Not really, I...all I can remember is that sometimes people would die, and they'd just say, 'oh somebody's passed away,' or 'say prayers for the soul'. But you'd never see them again, they...they were like probably buried in the convent...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...which I'm...I'm go...almost 100 per cent sure that they uplifted those bodies now, and they would have been just buried in the convent. Whereas the nuns had their own graveyard and the women just, nev...never...never saw a funeral...went to a funeral and y...but I know lots of people would have died and y...they wouldn't say too much to you so's you didn't ask many questions.²

SP *So you wouldn't have known the circumstances of their death?*

² See also MAGOHP/46 , interview with Pippa Flanagan who has similar memories of when women died in Limerick.

M You really didn't know but...all you knew is somebody had died and that was it...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...they didn't say, 'oh we'll contact the relatives' they wouldn't even bother, because a lot of them were under anonymous names weren't they?

[Background noise of cup being placed on saucer]

SP *Yeah. Can you tell me how yourself or other women who worked in the laundry were disciplined and punished?*

M Well one I told you was where they made you sit on the penance table, that was one. *(Pause)* *(Sighs)* Punished. I...I know personally myself, I know I was...the n...Mother Bernadette, she hit me I know one time and pulled my hair and she told me that I was...I was in Limerick because nobody wanted me and that st...that stuck with me forever.

SP *Yeah.*

M They would have had ways to punish but...really can't remember too...too much about that.

SP *When you ran away, how did they punish...did they punish you when you came back?*

M I didn't run away from Limerick.

SP *No, no.*

M I tried.

SP *Yeah.*

M But the first place...well their...their gratification would have been...ring the other nuns who brought me and get them to take me down to Limerick and then I was off their hands.

SP *Okay.*

M So...but I never did get to run away from Limerick...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...because I was so far away...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...but I now wish I had. I did try to climb to climb a wall...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...but I fell off and I hurt my knee as well but I didn't get...didn't really get anywhere. That was...I think the way they did that was where they had me in the lace department and they had me doing the shawls and it was their way of keeping you and say, 'oh,' – that's the carrot – 'oh when you're finished the shawl we'll make sure you go,' and then out of the blue one morning I got called up about six o'clock somebody came to my bed and said 'Elizabeth, *come on quick!* You're going!' And I'll never forget that moment ever. I hopped out of bed as quick as anything and they took me down to the dressing room, wherever it was, dumped their uniform and put on my own clothes, the same clothes that I came in in, two-and-a-half years before and I think they got me...they said, 'have you got anything to say for yourself?' is what they said. And I said, 'no,' I said...I said, 'I'm just glad to be getting out of here'.

SP *Hmm.*

M And then they...I think they got me a taxi to the station and then I got the train to Dublin. And then I was met by *another lot* of nuns in Dublin, Heuston [train station] I think, and they took me to my next job the private hospital, Mount Carmel.

SP *And I shall ask you a bit more about that afterwards, but c...can you...do you recall any forms of violence, verbal, beatings or other kinds of abuse or criticisms?*

M Yeah, you were always being told that you were...you were useless and that you'll never make anything of yourself and you're there because nobody wants you.

SP *Hmm.*

M *That's* kind of verbal abuse but other than the nun getting me and pulling me, I'm sure it did happen...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...but I can't really, really recall too much of that but overall I mean I think if you stepped out of line you *knew* that...what was going to happen.

SP *Hmm.*

M And you had little people like auxiliaries that were kind of controlling you as well. I think they used to do embroidery as well...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...if I can remember.

SP *And the auxiliaries actually were they a nun or was that...*

M No.

SP *...no that was someone...your...one of your peers?*

M They were...somebody who would be in charge of that group...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...and they would call them an auxiliary and that was almost next to being a nun.

SP *Okay.*

M You weren't quite...you weren't a nun, but it gave them power.

SP *And how did you feel was your relationship towards...?*

M The one that was in my group I quite liked her...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...she was alright. But there was other...they always had to get somebody who was understanding to keep the women, do you know?

SP *Yeah. What was your feeling about these verbal...how did you feel about these verbal abuses?*

M I...I absolutely *hated* every minute of it. All I wanted was an escape to get out...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and rebel against the nuns.

SP *Hmm. Were there any acts of humiliation?*

M Well I think the humiliation would be somebody kissing the floor...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...as an apology...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...or made to...to sit in the middle of the dining room when everybody was eating and you were sitting on the penance table. There was lots of humiliation. But a lot of the women, because they'd been there for so long, they knew not to step out of line so they just went along.

SP *Okay.*

M There'd be people like myself who was really rebellious and really always looking for...just...just to annoy the nuns really.

SP *Yeah. Can you tell me any...anything positive about the laundry?*

M *Absolutely nothing!* It's been a terrible crime against...against the Irish people, what they did. It...it's just...was terrible what they did and they just took advantage of vulnerable ladies who had no family and used them for their own gain.

SP *And can you tell me the worst thing about the institution?*

M Just being locked away...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...away from everybody you know.

SP *Hmm.*

M You've been to England and you're stuck in there. You don't *even know* if you're ever going to get out again. You don't know but you have to go through this thing, 'oh if you're good we'll let you go'.

SP *Yeah.*

M All of that, it...it was just awful.

SP *Could you actually...just to end this section, could you describe to me Limerick the...where the laundry, like the setting itself...how...from when you enter the gate?*

M I remember it really clearly because the...we drove in the taxi and you go up to...I think it had a really, really big avenue, lovely avenue and a big...up the steps like big building, and I remember the nuns getting out with me and literally saying, 'there you are, there she is,' and they just literally went back to Dublin and I was left and I *couldn't believe it*. I thought, 'oh my God, I am not going to be here for long,' and I saw this *massive* old building and the more you saw of it once you got inside and you realised that you were part of this awful regime – I'd seen a bit of it in Gloucester Street...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and here I was.

SP *Yeah.*

M But there was one girl that was there from my school days and we...we were great friends and I think we really kept each other going, but other than that I didn't know anybody. It was the worse experience of my life and I've been through *many*. The Magdalenes is the worst.

SP *Hmm.*

M My childhood I can cope with and that was harsh. The Magdalenes was really unjust, awful...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...what they did.

SP *And I...just...just to paint the picture to an audience of people, would there...there would have been a wall, was there a large wall surrounding?*

M Big wall, yeah, yeah, yeah a big wall, I think it's still there even today. *Massive* wall because you had the entrance into the avenue...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...and yeah, you...you were completely secluded...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...away from the world and nobody really, really batted an eye lid. I mean, we n...we never got out but they did start letting people out towards the end I think when they knew it was closing but...

SP *When did it close?*

M I don't know I think, I think in '95...Dublin was the last one wasn't it?

SP *Yeah.*

M Sean McDermott Street that was '95 that's when we did that program on the Pat Kenny. [RTÉ Kenny Live]

SP *Okay.*

M It's that one. Limerick I think was probably later...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...but they've still...even today they've still got a small laundry...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and they've got some of the ladies that worked in the laundry that live....and they...they have like bungalows...

SP *Okay.*

M ...so they still kind of...that's the remnants of that.

SP *Okay thank you, we're just going onto the...so I'm going to ask you about your interaction with other people. So can you tell me about the staff in the laundry?*

M The staff?

SP *Yeah the...the nuns and...*

M Well the nuns didn't really do anything.

SP *Hmm.*

M It was the women that did everything.

SP *Yeah.*

M They...they did...you know, they would just be given piles and piles of work and then at the end of the day it would all come out all laundered.

SP *Hmm.*

M But the nuns didn't do it, they would be walking around probably...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...making sure everybody was doing their hymns while they did it.

SP *Were there other people from outside working...*

M No.

SP *...there? No?*

M No.

SP *Okay.*

M It was very closed.

SP *Yeah.*

M Closed society.

SP *Did you make any friends?*

M I would say I did yeah, but once you got out you didn't want to see anybody...y...just in case you'd ever end up back...

SP *Yeah.*

M Yeah I did I think I made a lot of friends but...

SP *Would you say you were close to them while you were in the laundry?*

M The girls I worked with on the lace...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...probably because we had nobody else...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...but just as friends.

SP *What else...do you remember anything else about the other women who were in the laundry at the same time as you?*

M All I know is that I look back on it now and you realise that they were all people with probably some kind of history. You really didn't know who they were because they were...they were all given different names and different identities and maybe if...had a baby when they were young and they were...you know worried about that baby but the baby may be...may have been sent to a lovely home or sent to America, you don't know.

SP *Do you rec...oh actually I've...we've asked that...sorry about the women dying... Do you remember any friends or relatives visiting you?*

M No.

SP *Okay, so for the whole time there was never anyone?*

M No, no.

SP *Were there any other visitors to the Magdalene...to the laundry?*

M The only ones that used to come in were the Americans coming into buy the lace...

SP *Okay.*

M ...and I used to see them, the Americans. But as visitors, I don't know. They used to have the plays...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...I was telling you about.

SP *Yeah.*

M So you did have those, you had the producer, he was a local guy...

SP *Okay.*

M ...and he would come in and he would do the plays and he was very good. I think they did do a bit of singing and dancing, thinking about it.

SP *Okay, and can you remember whether there were any government officials...*

M Never.

SP *...factory inspectors or...?*

M *Never, never!*

SP *Or the Gardaí or...*

M *No!*

SP *...doctors visiting?*

M No. The only time the Gardaí were involved [was] if somebody ran away and they were bringing them back.

SP *Okay. What...so...so in terms of...we've asked about...but I'll ask again, what if any contact with the outside world did you have?*

M I had none really because I used to...I remember I used to write to my mum and she never answered. And I...I'd begin to think well nobody *does* want me...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...so maybe at least I've got a home here.

SP *Yeah.*

M And that's probably a little bit of...way of making you stay but then I realise now, 'no, this is not for me'. And I really, really...I really fought the nuns, I mean I was in there for two-and-a-half years. I thought I'd be there a week...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...but they managed to brainwash you in that time, so it can happen to anybody.

SP *By brainwash, how...what did they...?*

M Brainwash is like letting you know that nobody wants you and that's why you're there and at least they're offering you a home.

SP *Yeah.*

M That's...that's basically it.

SP *Okay. And was it possible to tell where the items of clothing which were being laundered or repaired came from?*

M Yeah, they came from the local hospital, they came from the colleges, not many private homes, I don't know about that, but it was mainly big institutions.

SP *Okay. Were you aware of regular contracts or regular clients?*

M Not...not then...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...but now I am.

SP *Okay.*

M Because they...I think some of the girls used to say that sometimes they'd get sheets in and there would be all blood and they knew then it came from the hospital.

SP *Yeah.*

M Our Lady's...some hospital or other...Our Lady's something.

SP *Yeah, okay and how were you treated by the sisters?*

M Appallingly!

SP *Yeah.*

M Just...just...with fear, threats...that you'd never get out if you didn't behave, all of that.

SP *Did the staff...did they show any affection towards you?*

M There wasn't really that many staff...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...really...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...because the auxiliaries...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...were the ones who were kind of like nuns but they weren't.

SP *Okay.*

M So that...you would call them the staff...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...but they were not in Limerick there wasn't.

SP *Yeah. Was there much affection in general between...?*

M No!

SP *What made a nun good or bad?*

M I suppose somebody who was a bit sympathetic who was...there was one nun that was really nice to me Mother Agnes [pseudonym] her name was, and she was really, really nice. She got me into typing...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...now I remember.

SP *Yeah.*

M She said to me you know, 'you should learn how to type,' and she was a lovely nun. Other than that not very many memories...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...no, just...th...the mere mention of them is too much.

SP *Yeah. And what made a nun bad?*

M Well I would say Mother Bernadette...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...when she would sit there on her throne and tell people that they're there because nobody wants them.

SP *Hmm.*

M You know, I mean it was just awful.

SP *Yeah.*

M And she was...she was in control and if she didn't like you...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...you *better run.*

SP *Yeah.*

M She didn't like me anyway.

SP *Do you remember how many nuns there were?*

M Don't know. I don't know it could have been 15?

SP *Okay, yeah.*

M Can't really remember but I would say about 15 maybe.

SP *And actually just...this is...we're coming to the end of this section, but I just wanted to ask were there any other institutions nearby, like an industrial school or...*

M Yeah because...

SP *...within the same complex?*

M ...yeah because...the Good Shepherd Convent, where they had the Magdalene...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...they had the institution for children...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...and they had a reformatory school.

SP *Okay.*

M So that was all interconnected...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...all of it.

SP *And were you ever mixed with the...?*

M Never. You never, never. The only time you saw them was in the church.

SP *Okay. Okay, thank you we're just going now onto...sort of your individual experience. So what fears and anxieties did you have?*

M You probably get them later on in life rather than...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...at the time because you're young...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and you can cope. I think I always had that feeling of being unwanted...

SP *Okay.*

M ...not needed.

SP *And what hopes and dreams did you have?*

M Just to be free and just to live my life freely really.

SP *Hmm. Can you tell me about any survival techniques that you developed...while you...during your time in the laundry?*

M I think for most of us...I think you just dreamed of maybe meeting a nice guy who would understand you and look after you...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...maybe.

SP *Hmm.*

M But that didn't happen.

SP *Did y...were there any forms of escapism that you...you used or...?*

M I think for me I just worked really hard and I...whatever I did I...I really did the best I could.

SP *Yeah. Do you remember trying to fit in...to fit in or rebel against the system?*

M I definitely did, yeah.

SP *Yeah, can you give me some examples; we already know that you escaped Sean...in the Dublin laundry.*

M Yeah.

SP *Can you give me some examples of how you...other examples of how you rebelled?*

M Well I wouldn't go and eat...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...I'd go on strike, I wouldn't do what the nuns wanted, *loads* of things I wouldn't do.

SP *Yeah.*

M And they knew that if I didn't do it then that would cause the other ones...disruption and they wouldn't want to do...if I got away with it. So, they wanted me then...out of the way. But it took a long, long time because like I say to you, with the plays and the shows it was just a way of keeping you there.

SP *Yeah. And how did you...did you try to fit in?*

M *(Pause)* Well I must have if I stayed there for...for that long but it was never my intention.

SP *Hmm.*

M My intention was to get the *hell* out.

SP *Yeah.*

M But you had no ways...you had no means of doing it.

SP *Yeah.*

M The quickest way you could get out is to see the laundry door open and go.

SP *Hmm.*

M But you never saw...you never got near that door.

SP *Okay. And so...did many people...so we know about your attempts to...to leave, did many others attempt to or succeed in leaving while you were in the laundry?*

M There would be the odd ones that would leave...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and they would have been in there for maybe eight or nine, ten years and they would have been on the promise that if they were good then they would be let go. So I would imagine...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...yeah, but there were a couple, because when I went to the job...after I left Limerick some of the girls was there working.

SP *Okay.*

M So you were really automatically transferred from one to the other.

SP *Okay. Actually I wanted to ask, when you were transferred from Dublin...*

M *Hmm.*

SP *...did you know where you were going?*

M They just said you were going to Limerick...

SP *Okay.*

M ...to the country.

SP *Okay. So what...so...so what was the...do you remember what the protocol was when these girls or...were discovered that they were trying to escape... or...?*

M S...sorry?

SP *Sor...do you know was there any like...do you know...do you remember any public punishments or anything like that, of girls trying to escape?*

M They really didn't really, really escape. I...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...you know...some of them did ...there was one that did, but she was lucky enough because she got a lift up but a lot...a lot of people didn't. You just had to wait until the nuns were ready.

SP *Yeah. So can you tell me one word or phrase that best describes your time there?*

M It was a hell hole!

SP *Yeah.*

M Absolutely terrible, they took your freedom, they just...they took your identity...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...they...just did all of those things.

SP *Hmm.*

M And then you were le...finally let go and you were out in the world and you...you have to readjust to everything.

SP *Actually in terms of your appearance, I'm not sure...did you have long hair when you...?*

M Hmm. Hmm.

SP *Did they make you do anything with your hair or...?*

M No, I mean some girls had...made sure they had their hair cut.

SP *Hmm.*

M I don't ...they didn't do that to me, no.

SP *Were you allowed to keep yourself looking well like...*

M Think so....

SP *..you know?*

M ...we didn't have make up or anything like that, but you know...

SP *Okay.*

M ...you had...whatever. But you didn't...you had a uniform...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...so you didn't dress up, did you?

SP *Yeah, okay thank you. If th...is there anything else to add to that? We're going onto you...the leaving part so, is there anything else you want to add?*

M No it's just as I explained to you the...the whole thing has been a really bad nightmare in my life...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...and it's difficult really talking about it.

SP *Yeah.*

M When I was leaving, the nun just said to me, 'have I anything to say for myself?' And I told her, 'no, I'm glad to be getting the hell out of here'. But that's not where it ended, you know, you had to go through life knowing you had all of that - you couldn't tell anybody about it because nobody really wanted to know. And so therefore you were left with the whole thing yourself.

SP *Yeah. So yeah we'll talk about you leaving now, so what word or phrase best describes the way you felt the day you were leaving?*

M Absolute...overjoyed...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...overjoyed and I left with the same clothes I came in two-and-a-half-years before. I couldn't wait to get the *hell out*.

SP *And where were...where were you released or...like what...what happened on the day you were leaving, what...were you...?*

M They just took me...a taxi to the train station and the nuns I...met me on the other end...

SP *Okay and you...*

M ...and took me to the job...

SP *...to...yeah...*

M ...living in job...

SP *Okay.*

M ...cleaning job again.

SP *Okay. And what were your first experiences of the outside world?*

M It was just great to be free again.

SP *Yeah.*

M You know, it was just great, just to be free. But it was...it was daunting...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...but great.

SP *Yeah. Did you find that the laundry had given you an education...*

M No.

SP *...in life?*

SP *No.*

M No. No thank you.

SP *How did your time in the institution affect your self-confidence?*

M I would say a lot. It d...it did knock you...yeah...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...I would say.

SP *Do you mind me asking if it had any long lasting health affects?*

M I would say yes.

SP *Can you describe...?*

M Well I was very ill about 12 years ago and touch wood I've been very lucky but...

SP *Yeah, okay.*

M ...you know and I think that was all in relation to what happened.

SP *Okay, okay. Did y...did it...did it affect your ability to learn?*

M I would say yes.

SP *Can you tell me how?*

M Well you just find it hard to learn things, you have to do things really...the hard way because you never really been shown properly.

SP *Yeah. Did...did it affect your...your attitudes towards the church and religion?*

M Definitely, yes.

SP *Can you tell me how?*

M Well, as...as I am now I do not believe in the teachings of the Catholic Church. I believe there is a God but I don't believe in all the stuff they tell you. And I think that they done an awful lot of damage to a lot of people.

SP *Yeah. Are there any other affects that it had on your life that this...this experience had on your life?*

M I would say yes definitely. Lots, you know the way y...the way you're a mother, because you haven't had the mothering thing yourself and you don't know how to give it although I...I know I

was a very good mother. But it was hard because I never had that emotional thing with my mum...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...because she couldn't give it to me, because she was part of the system.

SP *Yeah. And how have you coped with the effects of being in the laundry?*

M I think it's been hard, I think it's blighted my life but I'm not letting it, I'm finished with it now, I...it's just too painful. I've seen too much and I think you know, now I just, you know I want to really start living my own life.

SP *Yeah.*

M But it has...it has been very painful to see the damage it's done to other women.

SP *What...so I just wanted to ask...what do you attribute...sort of how do you think you survived the experience?*

M I really don't know.

SP *Okay.*

M *I really don't know.*

SP *Okay. If you hadn't been in a laundry, what do you think you'd be doing now?*

M Probably the same as what I'm doing now I think, you know. I...I did try and not let it...I did block it...

SP *Okay.*

M ...from my life and...you know, I have tried to get on with my life as best I can...

SP *Yeah.*

M So...

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

M Being a mother and grandmother.

SP *And...so I...I actually just wanted...just very quickly...just ask about...just that I...aspect...I just want to...actually, if you could just summarise what happened when you left Mount Carmel, you came to England?*

M Right. After Mount Carm...I left there because I didn't like doing what I was doing and I thought, the only way...to get out of Ireland, to get on with life is to get out of Ireland. So I came back to...to England. And that was 48, 49 years ago and I'm glad I did because I think England has been really kind to me, unlike Ireland. However, when I say that, I have since met up with all of my relatives who knew *nothing* about this and they've been a great joy in my life and that's what makes it for me.

SP *Okay.*

M And it's kind of leaving that past there.

SP *Yeah. And can you just tell me about your reunion with your dad?*

M I never did see him.

SP *Oh you never met your dad, okay...*

M I've met his...

SP *...his...*

M ...siblings...

SP *Ah okay.*

M ...his...my siblings. I just met up with my sisters and my brothers.

SP *Yeah. How did you make contact?*

M It's a long story.

SP *Okay.*

M It's a...it's a long story, we had to...we found them and...

SP *It was...was it very difficult to find them though?*

M Not overly...

SP *No, okay. Was it a...was it a happy reunion?*

M Yeah I would say...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...yes yeah just come back from...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...our family holiday with them, so.

SP *Oh excellent. And so, yeah we've kind of talked about... I just want to ask about how you...with other people, what is your...after being in a laundry, do you feel that it affected how you trust other people or...?*

M Yeah, definitely but like I said to you it's a ma...it's a long, long time ago now...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...and I've kind of blocked it off a bit.

SP *Okay, okay. And did it affect your...sort of how...how you like, your relationships with people of the opposite sex?*

M Definitely.

SP *Can you just say how very quickly?*

M Well it did because you found it really hard to trust anybody...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...because you were such a giving...you were a very giving person and trusting everybody and then, you know, you found that you had been taken in so...

SP *Yeah. And how do you feel towards the Irish State or Irish society?*

M I think they let us down really, really badly.

SP *Yeah.*

M *Really bad.*

SP *Yeah.*

M And I hope it never, never happens again...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...in Ireland.

SP *Yeah.*

M I think it was awful.

SP *And what's your relationship with your mother like, after you left...after you left the laundry?*

M It was hard for her because she didn't understand it; she was in the system so she didn't understand. Our relationship was okay, it wasn't lovey-lovey [sic] but...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...I respected that she was my mum.

SP *Yeah okay, and j...we're very near the end, five more minutes, but did you ever get to tell the truth about what happened to you?*

M To who?

SP *T...to anyone.*

M I don't re...I...I tell some people, but I have, yeah definitely I have.

SP *Did it take you a while to...*

M Yeah.

SP *...to open up?*

M Yeah because you would be ashamed of it.

SP *Yeah okay. And were you in any survivor groups?*

M I was in the...yeah the London one but I'm not now.

SP *Yeah. And did you...did you apply to the State for your records?*

M Yes.

SP *And could you describe that experience?*

M Well I didn't do it personally, but I know it took a long time...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...but it was done.

SP *Okay and are you able to talk with your children...*

M Yeah...

SP *...about...?*

M ...they understand yeah.

SP *Yeah, okay. Did your husband know?*

M No, no, he knew but he didn't understand it...

SP *Okay, but you...*

M ...which is partly...some of the reason why we've split up as well.

SP *Okay and d...so did you make an application to the Laff...Laffoy, Ryan...? [Residential Institutions Redress Board]*

M Yeah.

SP *Yeah. How did you feel about that?*

[Background noise of cup being placed on saucer]

M I think it was all badly done, all of it.

SP *Yeah.*

M But, you know with the amount of redress I got...

SP *Hmm.*

M ...it's...it doesn't...didn't really solve...but it...it did put it to bed in a way and let it go.

SP *Okay. And in terms of redress for women in the Magdalene Laundries what would you like to see?*

M I really would like justice for the Magdalene women. I would like to see them pay out and give compensation because I think it's well deserved for what they did to them women.

SP *Who do you feel is responsible for what happened to you?*

M The church and the State!

SP *Okay. And just very, very lastly, did you ever want to come back to Ireland?*

M Only to see my relatives, but I would never want to go and live in Ireland now.

SP *Can you tell me why?*

M Because of all the bad memories that I've had growing up, it's been really, really hard.

SP *Yeah.*

M You d...you felt you didn't belong anywhere...

SP *Yeah.*

M ...that's...that's the bottom line. You just didn't have anybody in your corner.

SP *Yeah. Is there anything else you'd like to add?*

M Not really, I mean I look back on it all now and I just...I just think if the JFM [Justice for Magdalenes advocacy group] can get justice for the Magdalenes I would be so happy and it's not just about money, it's about justice and I know that's what they stand for.

SP *Okay, thank you, thanks very much, yeah.*

[Interview ends]

[Audio File 2 ends 37:33]