



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



Reference Code:	MAGOHP/13/ANON
Oral History of:	Bernadette and Francis Murphy
Pseudonyms?	Yes
Status:	Survivor and relative
Keywords:	Good Shepherd Magdalene Laundry, New Ross, Co. Wexford; Good Shepherd Magdalene Laundry, Sundays Well; survivor support groups; emigration; Residential Institutions Redress Board; friendships between survivors; linen, embroidery and sewing industry in laundry; institutionalised survivors; lack of contact with family in laundry; Child of Mary; dowries for religious sisters; lack of socialisation; post traumatic stress disorder.
Date of Interview:	23 rd February 2013
Also present at interview:	Molly McCarthy (friend)
Transcript:	170 pages
Number/Format of Audio Files:	One .wma file
Interviewer:	Dr Sinéad Pembroke
Records/Papers included:	Yes (not yet available)
Access Conditions:	Anonymised interviews are freely available to the public. Immediate release of transcript; audio file destroyed on request; interviewee's identity will be revealed after 30 years.
Conditions Governing Reproduction:	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 Bernadette and Francis Murphy". *Magdalene Institutions: Recording an Oral and Archival History*. Government of Ireland Collaborative Research Project, Irish Research Council, pp.1- 170.

Note Regarding Interviewee

This woman's testimony was also gathered in 2011 by Maeve O'Rourke of Justice for Magdalenes (now JFM Research). It was one of the testimonies presented to the United Nations Committee Against Torture (UNCAT), leading to UNCAT's recommendation in June 2011 for a prompt, thorough inquiry into the Magdalene Laundries. The Inter-Departmental Committee to investigate State involvement in the laundries was established that same month, and the official State apology followed two weeks after the publication of the IDC Report.

Notes on Redaction and Transcription Process

Interviewee Initials: BM (Bernadette Murphy)
FM (Francis Murphy)
MMcC (Molly McCarthy)

Interviewer Initials: SP

Key

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

(*pause*) = Long pause

blabla = spoken with great emphasis

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

[blabla] = background information that might be helpful

Notes on Redaction Process

- Named individuals have been assigned pseudonyms
- The names of some locations have been assigned pseudonyms
- Some minor details changed or removed to protect interviewee's confidentiality

List of Pseudonyms

Pseudonym	Status/Relationship to Interviewee
Bernadette Murphy	Survivor/Interviewee
Francis Murphy	Interviewee/survivor's husband
Molly McCarthy	Friend of interviewee present at interview
Mother/Sister Ignatius	Third Party Religious
Father Fitzpatrick	Third Party Cleric
Theresa	Interviewee's house name
St Aisling's	Hospital where interviewee was sent to work after laundry
Arthur	Interviewee's son
Grainne	Interviewee's daughter
Fidelma	Institutionalised survivor
Ballyronan	Town where survivor went after laundry
Margaret	Molly McCarthy's house name
Mother Breda/Regina	Third Party Religious

Justin	Cousin of Molly McCarthy's
Mother Freda	Third Party Religious
Veronica	Auxiliary Magdalene
Mairead	Auxiliary Magdalene
Barbara	Sister of interviewee's friend
Adam	Workmate of Frank's
Alberto	Neighbour of Frank and Bernadette's
Corinna	Interviewee's daughter
Peter	Workmate of Frank's
Declan Finnerty	Frank's brother-in-law
Sister Imelda	Third Party Religious
Barborough	Interviewee's current home

Basic Data from Interview

Name/Pseudonym	Bernadette Murphy
When Born	1943
Born outside marriage?	Yes
Raised by	Grandmother
Education	Primary, unsure if she finished
Order	Good Shepherds
Laundry	New Ross, Co. Wexford
From	1958
To	1964
Duration of stay	Almost six years
Age on entry	Fourteen years, ten months
Entered Via	Priest
House Name/No	Yes, both
Haircutting/punishment?	Said there were no physical beatings, but there was psychological abuse
Circumstances of Departure	Sent to work in a hospital
Emigrated?	Yes
Physical ailments?	Did not say, but spoke of ongoing psychological impact
Of Note	Asked to leave, but was refused because she would go to England and 'lose her faith'; recalls others being brought to the laundry by the same priest.

[Background noise of paper rustling intermittently throughout interview]

[End of conversation before interview/consent process]

SP *Okay so...*

BM *Me dates...me dates...*

SP *Yeah.*

BM *...she has me down...the 4th of April, yeah.*

SP *So just to say thank you very much for participating in this. So just before we start I just wanted to ask that you confirm to agree to participate?*

BM *I did.*

SP *And that you are familiar with the information and consent forms that are provided?*

BM *Uh huh.*

[Interview begins]

SP *Thank you very much Bernadette Murphy [interviewee's chosen pseudonym]. Could you tell me something about yourself?*

BM *About the convent...or about me?*

SP *Anything at all.*

BM *I'm a housewife, three children and six grandchildren. It's a busy life 'cause I have to do a lot for my husband and...then (pause) don't know.*

SP *That's perfect, yeah, it was just a conversation starter!*

BM Yeah (*Laughs*).

SP *Can you tell me about your life prior to being sent to the Magdalene Laundry?*

BM I was brought up in the care of my grandmother and...when I was twelve, she passed away. But I used always hear her saying...praying that she'd see me growing up; communion, confirmation...she got that far, I wish she had got the other half but...wasn't to be, so... (*Cries*)

MMcC [Inaudible whispers]

SP *Do you want me to pause?*

MMcC (*Whispered*) Yeah.

[Recording paused 01:44]

BM ...to look after me.

SP *Yeah.*

BM But she was an unmarried mother so I don't think they agreed with that somehow and I think they couldn't wait to get me away. I didn't know of it...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...because it was just this Good Friday that the priest came up and said to my mother 'I've been to the Good Shepherds. I'm taking Bernadette this afternoon. I'll be back at three o'clock'. And I...I think the priests were so like gods there, I...she didn't *question* it, she didn't question it. So I went anyway, three o'clock came and I went to the convent and Mother Ignatius [pseudonym] opened the door, but the...Father Fitzpatrick [pseudonym]...and so he was

rushing back to the...Good Friday...to arrange the Mass. So we were brought along this big, long corridor and then we met this auxiliary...we call them auxiliaries¹ don't we, love?

MMcC Yes, yes.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah. So I met this auxiliary and she s...she said to Sister Ignatius, 'I'll take her upstairs'. So you went upstairs, took your clothes off, got into this big, long dress (*laughs*) given your name...change...and they said, 'your name now is going to be Theresa [pseudonym]...

[Sound of mobile phone text message alert in background]

BM ...and your number...

MMcC Excuse me.

BM ...is going to be 59.' So anyway we...

[Background noise from phone]

MMcC [Whispering in background, inaudible phone conversation]

BM ...that was it and they showed me where I was going to sleep; it was in a dormitory of 12 and then we went down to have some...something to eat. It wasn't great because the food wasn't great. So we had that to eat and then...they didn't give me anything to do for a whole week because they were undecided [sic] whether I should go to the school side, the school side was over there but it was all in the same complex.

SP *Okay.*

¹ See pgs 54-56

BM And a week later nothing happened and they decided that I should...I start work. So I started work in the laundry, the...where the public laundry that they use...used come from Kilkenny, Carlow, Enniscorthy, all...all those areas. And as it came in we had to check it; they were all in their own bags and they all had their own number on it so we had to check it, and...and put it out in bins and then it would go to the laundry. But then as we'd have that one done and then we had to go to another room to gather all their property; they all had little shelves with numbers and we had to gather it all up. And it...then you would be packing it as it was all ironed then you...and that was Sister Ignatius, she'd be counting it out and I'd be packing it. And that was...that was from eight o'clock in the morning...six o'clock in the evening. We had prayers actually during all our free time and on a Bank Holiday, because they'd be a day behind with the laundry, we would have to stay back, go back at...from six 'til ten to work there and that would be like...that could be Easter...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...you know, all these Bank Holidays, all these holy days...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...we had to catch up, so that was quite horrendous. And, then you would get...when you were finished you might get a little drop of milk and up to bed...and then the morning you got up at six, washed in cold water, went to Mass. The Mass...I think Mass was seven, and then you went straight into breakfast, which would consist of bread with a piece of dripping, and then out to work in the packing room until six and ten if it was a Bank Holiday. So...letters...if you got a letter it was read and then you didn't...it...it took it away. If you wrote a letter, that had to be checked. Then, in the evening, recreation time, we would go in a circle out around the...the yard for fresh air for about half-an-hour and then we'd come in and we would knit Aran sweaters. If we were waiting for Aran sweaters you would do rosary beads. If you didn't have rosary beads you'd do embroidery...no talking, no talking. So, you...you couldn't even talk to your friend really.²

SP *Hmm.*

² See also MAGOHP/73/ANON, Kathleen R, who speaks of similar practices in Sunday's Well, which was run by the same order

BM If...if there was a...a one that was misbehaving as regards talking she'd either get sent to the back until we all went upstairs and she probably got told off. But I have to say I never saw any beatings there, but then I wouldn't say anything anyway because I would be frightened to get into trouble. But if you did speak or, you know if you spoke out at all obviously you could get...sit on the stairs or down the veranda or something like that.

SP *Hmm.*

BM It was harsh, it was *hard*, it was...you never thought you were going to get out to be honest. You didn't...nobody told you anything, you didn't know where your family had gone...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...and we thought we were...I thought I was there forever. And I was lucky, and I still have the mark; I got a splinter in my hand from when we had to wax the floors and my hand came up. So I *had* to go to hospital because it was poison and I...I stayed there for two weeks and I used to kind of go over to all the little ones...or the...not little, the patients...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...and talk to them, maybe get them something. And the Sister in the office said to me, 'what are you doing up there? Why don't you ask to get out?' And it was that...if that I would have never asked.

SP *Right.*

BM But...anyway I went back and I asked and, 'oh no, if we let you out you'll...you'll go to England, you'll lose your faith' and all that sort of...and she said, 'no'. So, I've g...I gave up asking. So there was this day and I was...this auxiliary called me and brought me back down that big, long hall and the nun in charge said 'Yeah, you're going out'. I said, 'where?' 'You're going to B&B 'cause in the morning we'll be busy with church'. So this auxiliary...that was all was said...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...'and you're going to Galway, there...we'll put you on the train in the morning, you're going to work in Galway'. So I was in this B&B and I'm not joking you, was I terrified. You know you felt, God if a relative was around I would have ran out to them that night because I never slept all night.

SP *Yeah.*

BM So the auxiliary came down and she put me on...on...she came with me to Waterford, put me on the train and I would meet nuns in Limerick. And I thought, *my God* I haven't...I hadn't a clue where I was going but I was, to be honest, in a way I was glad to see somebody because I felt so alone and...never been out, never been on a train, it was harsh. So they came and took me to a hospital in St Aisling's [pseudonym of hospital], and I did...I did like it because I...I...I was in the nurses' home and I was the only one working and it was lovely there, really good. But then I met Frankie [pseudonym] and (*laughs*) he said he was going to England and I s...I wrote to my sister and said – I'd found my sister then³ – and I said, you know, 'my boyfriend's going to England'. So she said 'well why don't you come over?' So here I goes. Molly's [pseudonym] sister wrote my...my...for...my leaving thing to say I wanted to...that I was going. Well, did I cause trouble? The nuns were...they didn't know what to do. 'No, you can't go to England, you can't go to England and we don't want you to go to England'. And I was put before Reverend Mother, they tried the Reverend Mother, that didn't work – your fault! (*Laughs*) They tried the Reverend Mother, no luck. So then they tried Father Fitzpatrick, but my sister had written to Father Fitzpatrick in the meantime and said that she wanted me over. So he gave the go ahead, otherwise I wouldn't have been there.

SP *Okay.*

BM So I came over to live with my sister. Francis went to London but we kept in touch. I didn't settle down though...I didn't find it that easy at all, not really, but my brother-in-law said, 'well do you want a job?' I said, 'yeah I do'. So he said 'come on, we're off to Tesco's'. And this man was [from] Northern Ireland and he said, 'if she wants a job, she'll come back Monday morning'. That was as easy as that! So I...I did that for...what was it, about two and a half

³ See pgs 23-24

years. And then, I was expecting my...I m...yeah we got married in 9...’68 and I...I kept working and got pregnant and I gave up after, when...to maternity leave and I stayed home rearing my three kids and when Arthur [pseudonym] the eldest, was twelve, myself and a friend decided we’d look for an evening job. So I went down the hospital, the local one and, yeah, I got an evening job. It wasn’t the psychiatric unit, but...it was over in that...no it’s not...it was only a three hour, so I enjoyed that.

SP *Hmm.*

BM I stayed doing that for 10 years. Then in 1990, I...this...where I was working they were saying ‘well why...why don’t you come and be an auxiliary in...on the ward?’ And I thought ‘I couldn’t do that’. So I was saying, ‘oh no, no I’m not going’. So anyway, a few of the nurses just wouldn’t let me pass the stairs...‘You go and you get an application form and you...’cause you have a great rapport with the patients’, when I used to talk to them...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...and I had me interview, got the job and in total I was 27 years with the NHS; I got my award...‘long service’ award there.

SP *Very good.*

BM It wasn’t easy but because I think most of us that were in those situations...we always gave, yeah...we always gave...we always cared about people and the people that I would notice are the ones that wouldn’t talk up for themselves because that was me and I *never* wanted anyone to be treated badly. So I...obviously exams...we used to have to go to courses and that, and I used to n...I used to feel ill because I didn’t think I could do them and I found them really stressful because not having any education and loving a job you had to keep up but an auxiliary didn’t have to do lo[ads]...but the fact of being in the crowd it just...I didn’t like it. I was fine with staff on the ward and the patients, but when it came to a reflection of me I couldn’t cope with it. So – I left out the most important – June, when I be...when I became forty, this day I got up, and I was shaking, I was aching all over, I didn’t know what was happening to me. My husband, you know, we were going to doctors; we were going here, there and I...I lost...I w...it

was the thinnest I've ever been, the weight just *fell* off me, and...so I had a break down and, it was all that. (*Crying*)

MMcC Oh come here... [Comforting BM]

BM We didn't know what was wrong and so I was tried on all different tablets and eventually I started improving, I went back to work, but it was hard (*crying*). (*Pause*) But I was quite lucky because I had a nice GP and he...I used to see him regular. I was lucky I...I didn't have to go into a psychiatric unit.

SP *Yeah.*

BM And I...but I s...I still take tablets...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...because...I'm better now that I've retired 'cause I don't have to be around too...too many people (*crying*). But...I...I tried to come off the tablets but my...

[Recording paused 0:18:36]

BM (*Crying*) But I c...I can't...I can't do without that tablet because when I tried you ge...I just get agitated and shake...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...so I need them to get by.

SP *Yeah.*

BM A...and it's got to be the convent...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...because you felt unworthy (*cries*)...you felt you didn't belong in there (*continues crying*)...

MMcC [Inaudible whispering, comforting BM]

BM But I've got three wonderful kids; they really are and they find all this...they just get so angry, so angry and they said to me the other day, 'as far as we're concerned you're the best Mum in the world'. That has given me courage but...

SP *And you should be really proud of that.*

BM Yeah.

SP *Do you see it as a big achievement in your life?*

BM Oh yeah, they were the best thing that happened to me; the best, you know. There...if there's anything wrong with us, any of us they're there like. We're so lucky...

MMcC Yeah.

BM ...that's the one thing we're so lucky; we've a family.

SP *Yeah.*

BM And that's where I get...that's what gives you the strength to go on.

SP *Yeah. And your husband as well.*

BM Ah bless him here, yeah...

FM Hmm.

BM ...he's had to...he's had to put up with...you know it's not easy, but he did (*crying*) yeah.

MMcC (*Whispered*) But you put up with him as well!

SP *(Laughs)*

FM I'm not crying I've just got watery eyes.

SP *That's alright.*

FM I suffer from that.

BM Yeah.

SP *Okay.*

BM Yeah.

FM And a watery nose, you might see me block my nose...

BM Now so, he...

SP *Oh, that's okay.*

BM ...being fair to him, it's very hard for him to understand...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...and you know, it's...it's not easy and, like, it won't ever go away...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...but you have to kind of get closure and try and move on but it's...it's...it's not anything that goes...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...away, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

BM And to be honest, I hope to God nobody ever goes through what we did. I would hate it and I hope everyone [other participants in the Oral History Project] will support that, whether they're giving their names or what.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Because I would hate to think somebody growing up a teenager today would be getting that.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Because it...no, they don't *deserve* that...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...you know but...but we're here to tell the tale and then...is there anything else you want me to...say?

SP *Would you be okay with me asking you questions?*

BM *Yeah.*

SP *Are you okay with that?*

BM *Yeah. Yeah.*

SP *And you think I'm...I'm...I really don't want to put you under anymore...*

BM No, no, no you're fine, you're fine. *Yeah. Yeah.*

SP *Thank you so much so far for everything that you've shared with us, because I know how difficult it is, so thank you. What I...yeah, I...I just want to confirm sort of in terms of entry into the laundry, so you were actually, as I saw from your documents, put in by...*

BM By a priest, yeah.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

BM I was fourteen and a half it says there, but it was fourteen, ten months.

SP *Yeah. Yeah. So it wasn't voluntary?*

BM No. No. But they tried to say that, you know.

SP *Hmm. Yeah.*

BM They do.

SP *Yeah.*

BM They...they say that it's...but it's not voluntary.

SP *Yeah.*

BM You know?

SP *And as you had said you...you...you had grown up with your...your grandmother...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...and...and then suddenly...had you actually gone to school before this actually?*

MMcC There was...

BM Yeah I went to...

SP *You...*

BM ...school yeah...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...but I think...yeah I went to school, and I think I...I can't remember to be honest whether I...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...finished school or not.

SP *Okay.*

BM That's something that I...I can't...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...I've...I've tried to think but I...I could have been off school I'm not...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...you know...

FM At fourteen...you could finish school at fourteen years of age.

MMcC At th...in them days, yes.

SP *Okay.*

MMcC Yes.

SP *Oh. Okay.*

FM Yeah.

BM Yeah. Probably finished then...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...yeah.

SP *And obvious...all...there was no more educ...your education wasn't...*

BM No.

SP *...continued...*

BM No.

SP *...when you...*

MMcC No.

BM No.

SP *Yeah.*

BM That was it.

SP *Yeah.*

BM That was it. Just work, work, work.

SP *Yeah. And what was the reason that they gave for...for...for putting you into the laundry?*

BM They s...'cause my mother used to work kind of like...the work in those days was picking potatoes and all that sort of thing...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...and it was...I think it was that but to be honest I think it was because she was unmarried...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...and she'd only come home so, I...I do think that...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...fact...yeah, it was that.

SP *Because...*

BM I was never told r...outright but that's how all that...

SP *...up until then you had been...*

BM *Yeah.*

SP *...protected by...*

BM *Yes.*

SP *...your grandmother...*

BM *Yeah. Very protected.*

SP *...and then suddenly...*

BM *Yeah.*

SP *...once your grandmother was dead...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...passed...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...away...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...yeah. Okay.*

BM I...and they...the priest...he didn't live very far from where we were...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...and they did play to...I mean it was the pl...place, the gods. They were gods so you daren't question or ask...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...and yeah, a few of them came in. He brought a few others in as well, there was about three or four brought in by the priest.

SP *At the same time?*

BM Yeah.

SP *Wow.*

BM Yeah.

SP *Okay.*

BM So...

SP *And sorry, you...you grew up...where was it that you grew up...or just roughly?*

BM It was...

FM Where...

BM ...it was...it was...

SP *...or just roughly, you know?*

MMcC County Kilkenny.

SP *Okay.*

BM Yeah.

SP *And the laundry that you were put in...what was the name of the laundry?*

BM The Good Shepherd Convent in New Ross.

SP *New Ross. Okay. No the reason why I'm asking is...*

BM Yes.

SP *...'cause I found that generally you weren't put into a laundry that was in your area that was where you lived.*

BM Hmm.

SP *So, that's why I was...*

BM Hmm.

SP *... just confirming.*

BM Yeah.

MMcC Yeah.

SP *So, how many years did you spend there?*

BM Five years...seven...when did I go out? When did I leave? April? No, November I left so...seven...time [inaudible] yeah. About a year.

FM Nearly six years.

BM Nearly six years.

SP *Wow! Six years.*

BM Yeah.

SP *And as you said you were never told...*

BM No.

SP *...that you...when you were leaving or if you were leaving.*

BM No and oh God I left out the best...best bit didn't I, when...when I wasn't...I didn't have a period or anything when I went in there and...

FM They were given such a bad diet, body couldn't...couldn't function properly.

SP *Yeah.*

BM I didn't have, and they...they gave you these...oh my God, these towels! Oh good God they were as [inaudible] (*Laughs*) They were hard!

MMcC They were white calico...

BM *Ooh. Oh!*

MMcC ...white calico material...

SP *Jesus.*

MMcC ...very bad.

BM Yes, and I used to faint with bad pain...

SP Ah.

BM ...for ages but there was no, you know you...you got a drink of water, you wouldn't get a tablet, you wouldn't get anything. You just had to carry on, you know. There was...all they were interested in is work and just saying...and *keeping* us there to be honest.

SP *Hmm. Yeah. And actually I'm curious when you got your period, did you even know what...*

BM No.

SP *...did you know what that was?*

BM No I ran to an auxiliary and said, 'I...there's something on my bed'.

SP *Yeah.*

BM And then she said, 'oh, come with me' and she just told me, 'change,' – she didn't go into anything either – she just said you know, 'change every so often' and...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...and that was it.

SP *Never an explanation...*

BM No...

SP *...why you were...*

BM ...I do remember that day so *well*. I really do. It's one of the things that stuck in my memory.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

SP *And you say that you suffered with your periods. Were you made to work through?*

BM *Oh yeah, you...you would really have to be unable to stand up...*

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...if...isn't it Molly?

MMcC Yes.

BM Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

BM You...you...there's no such thing, the only...if you had real...like if you got appendix [appendicitis] that...that would be a different thing...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...but no not for triv...they would call that trivial, you know, so...

SP *Jesus.*

BM Hmm.

SP *And I know what it's like so...*

BM *Yes (laughs).*

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yes.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

SP *Not trivial at all*

BM No.

SP *So yeah, so...so were you given any information on your rights?*

BM No!

SP *No. You were...*

BM No.

SP *...given on your first day...*

BM You...you were given your name...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...it was changed from Bernadette...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...to Theresa [pseudonym of interviewee's house name].

SP *Okay.*

BM And your number was 59.

SP *Right.*

BM So that number...

SP *Stuck with it.*

BM ...comes up in my mind all the time...yeah...no there wasn't...you...no...the...it was just work.
I can't understand why they said the nuns are poor, they can't be!

SP *Hmm.*

BM They just can't.

SP *Yeah.*

BM You know?

SP *And tell me did you have any other siblings or relatives in laundries or in fact in industrial schools or...?*

BM No, my...my sister was lucky; she had my grandmother...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...to the end...she does say that...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...she was very lucky, and my brother.

SP *Oh so they stayed...oh 'cause they were older than you, sorry.*

BM Yeah, they had left...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...home...

SP *Yeah.*

BM But she...she was so grateful...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...that she was there because she was a fantastic woman.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Fantastic, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

BM And, yeah, they were lucky...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...because I think if they had been there I bet they would have been gone too.

SP *Yeah.*

BM My s...my sister had gone to England and my brother had went [sic] to the army, but my sister didn't know where I was.

SP *Oh gosh.*

BM Didn't know where I was until a...f...a lady that she went to school with...they're friends over here...she asked them to try and see where I was.

SP *Right. Okay.*

BM That was the...how I...I got hold of her in the end.

SP *Okay.*

BM But...

SP *And what about your mother? Did she...?*

BM My mother went to England...

SP *Okay. Okay.*

BM ...I didn't...

SP *So you lost...*

BM ...see my mother 'til I came over here...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...in '67, yeah.

FM Yeah, '67 we came over here.

BM The two of us went to see her together.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

SP *Okay so...*

BM My sister didn't want to because she blamed her...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...but I was curious to be honest...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...and, to be fair to her, she turned out fantastic.

SP *That's good.*

BM My children adored her, *absolutely*...and they rubbished...'so what's it got to do whether nanny was single or not?'

SP *Yeah.*

BM They adored her and to be honest they probably gave her more love than I did because I couldn't talk to her like...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...an...like any other mother would.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Because she wasn't the[re]...I...I didn't know her as such but she was loved by them.

SP *Hmm. So even when you were growing up with your grandmother you didn't...?*

BM No.

SP *Yeah. Okay.*

BM Because she used to work in Dublin and...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...maybe once or twice come down but...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...she got on with her life...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...and then she came over here...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...and I tracked her down when I came here.

SP *But you kept contact with her 'cause...*

BM In Ireland?

SP *No, no I mean...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...no, when you came here, after...*

BM It was slow to begin with...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...because it was something...trying to get used to but Francis used to come home and...and we'd visit her and she used to come up...after a few years, she'd be here Christmas, Easter, as much as we could and when she was very ill...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...we all tried to look after her. So, yeah it wasn't her fault...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...but after being so long in the convent you di...there was...'why me?' type of thing.

SP *Yeah.*

BM So it took me a long...but she would never talk about it, *never*.

SP *I was going to ask that did you ever...?*

BM *Never! No!*

SP No.

BM No.

SP *Okay.*

BM That was the...she never spoke...whether she felt guilty or what I don't know but I never...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...pushed her for it either...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...you know. But in the end I was so glad that the children...they used to look after her...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...yeah they...and then she saw her first grandchild...child before she died.

SP *That's lovely.*

BM Yeah. So we often say I think even Molly and I say, they must have had a horrible life too...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...you know?

SP *Did she actually, incidentally...was she in a laundry...or she never...?*

BM No.

SP *Okay.*

BM Never.

SP *Yeah, she must...was it because she was protected by her mother?*

BM Yes.

SP *Yeah 'cause I was...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...wondering...*

BM Yes.

SP *...if she was...*

BM No.

SP *...an unmarried...*

BM Hmm.

SP *...mother.*

BM They usually get put away...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...but probably because of her mother...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...she...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...obviously she looked after her...

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

BM ...yeah, but...yeah.

SP *And, sort of...yeah I...I guess it's pretty obvious but maybe you could write...tell me in some words how you felt the day you were being sent to the laundry?*

BM I...I can remember it as well. It was pouring with rain and this...my mother had this big open fire and I don't know why she...she wasn't saying a lot about it, whether it was...but I only had a couple of hours...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...but it was like you were only going to the shop.

SP *Okay.*

BM After that, when I got there I thought, 'my God! What have I done...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...to do...to be in here?' All I did was grow up.

SP *Yeah.*

BM And, yeah I felt quite alone...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...and it took a while to settle down. But then I was working with just another girl and myself in the packing room, and I didn't know what she was in for; nobody knew what anybody was in for...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...you...you don...but we...we had that working relationship, so I settled down for a while but like everyone after a while, you...well no, I wasn't going to ask to go. Only when that Sister in the hospital said to me, 'go back up there and...'

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah, it w...you were...of those places you just existed. It was every day the same; work, walk around the ground for a half-hour, have a bit of bread and dripping...

SP *Hmm.*

BM We were I...

MMcC (*Whispered*) Talk about the prayers.

BM Oh the prayers...prayers! Molly, that's all we ever did. Pray in the morning, pray in the...evening, praying before you go to bed.

FM You don't get that on that do you?

SP *No.*

BM Oh yeah it was...but the thing what I never did and I think Molly will understand that; you never talked about it. You were so ashamed to say 'I was in a convent'.

SP *Yeah.*

BM You...you carried it here all your life and it wasn't easy when we got the group [survivor support group] with Phyllis,⁴ but it was very hard...but we started...she's become part of our lives Phyllis, she's...she's a fantastic woman, she really is.

SP *Hmm.*

BM She's dedicated. And we started to loosen up a bit with the group, we...we did. But also the group was very emotional...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...because there's people who have worse stories than me.

SP *Hmm. How many years ago did you join?*

MMcC *(Whispered)* Seven.

BM Seven.

SP *Seven. Wow, okay.*

BM Yeah, seven years and it's the best seven years really...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...because we'd be still carrying it, doing nothing about it.

SP *Yeah. Yeah. What made you join..?*

BM Well I met Sally [Sally Mulready, co-founder of survivor support group]...

SP *Okay.*

⁴ See MAGOHP/27, Phyllis Morgan

BM ...because when Molly was in the Redress [Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB)] she was encouraging me to say, you know, 'you were only fourteen, you should have been in the School...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...you should try for the Redress'. And, I did, so I was up at this solicitor this day and Sally happened to be there and...well no, the solicitor did say, you know, 'there's somebody from the Irish Centre that knows a bit; do...do you want her here, or it's up to you?' I said, 'no leave her here'. And I had Gráinne [pseudonym] with me and she was lovely, but she said it was hard for her, very hard. So she said to me, 'you know there's a group here.' She said, 'you don't have to if you don't want to, but we have a group' and she gave me Phyllis's number. And I contacted Molly straight away because we never travelled anywhere so we were a bit apprehensive. And Molly said 'yeah we'll go' and we've never looked back. And she...she copes and she listens to so many people in a day...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...and that...that's the best thing that happened to us and we'll always be grateful to her...

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

BM ...always, because she's brought it to light. Something that was hidden for nearly 90 years.

SP *Yeah. Yeah, definitely.*

BM Yeah. And, yeah, and the other night I think...when we met...when we went to that...

MMcC The senator came...

BM ...the Dáil...

MMcC ...oh the Dáil, yes.

BM ...there was three...four of us and all we did was held hands when they...when he [Taoiseach Enda Kenny] was talking 'cause it was so emotional and you were thinking 'yeah, that really happened'. And to get an apology, and for all the people that condemned us, disowned us or whatever, we got an apology and we felt better.

SP *Yeah.*

BM We...well, we said it to him, he came over and shook our hands and I said to him, 'thanks, we can hold our heads up now.' And let's *hope* Ireland understands...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...because, we can't be...maybe they didn't know, maybe they didn't understand but then that was society then. Like he said, 'you...you were disowned.' You...you didn't talk to anybody but I was...and I didn't know whether I would tell my kids or not, but I did as they got older...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...and that's the best thing I ever done.

SP *Hmm. Actually curious, did you tell your husband...*

BM Hmm.

SP *...immediately?*

BM Yeah.

SP *Okay.*

BM Yeah.

FM Yeah.

BM Yeah

SP *Yeah. So it was never a secret?*

BM No.

FM No, no.

BM It wasn't, it was just because he's done so much for me.

SP *Yeah.*

BM I owe it to him. Only for him *(crying)* not to get it out there...

SP *Yeah.*

BM *(Pause) (Sighs)*

MMcC *(Whispered)* You've done well in life.

SP *You've done really, really well.*

MMcC *(Whispered)* You've done so well.

SP *Yeah. Are you okay to continue?*

BM Yeah.

SP *Yeah. I...I'm...I can't say...enough how grateful I am for you to share this because...*

BM We...we do, we want...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...the next generation...

MMcC (*Whispered*) Will I make tea?

BM Yeah.

MMcC Would you like tea or coffee?

BM Do you want tea Francis?

MMcC I'll make it.

FM I'll make it, I'll make it, tea or coffee?

SP *Tea please.*

FM No sugar, you don't have sugar no? Alright, I'll make some.

[Inaudible background whispering]

SP *Could you tell me... so we talked about your daily routine, could you just tell me... just summarise the kind of work that you did?*

BM It was public laundry, filthy dirty. Sometimes you'd have to...it was like all packing room though, that was the hardest job in the convent; that...that real...that laundry...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...because you were... and...yeah, like it came in, the men brought it in, the men, the van men ...they had men there...you see this is what they were saying the State weren't involved getting money. Of course they were involved!

SP *Yeah.*

BM So yeah, it was all like...checking public laundry that came in, getting it through to the...the laundry itself, then another stage, get it up and pr...the...the ironing room that's where all the ...pressing down there, the big mangle. They had a...that was another l...group of girls...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...getting all that done and then the men would come for different areas of the laundry to collect. But when they came in the door we had to walk out.

SP *I was gonna ask that.*

BM We weren't allowed, no. Oh, *no way.*

SP *Yeah.*

BM You'd get into trouble if...if you did. And you know there was times all of us thought, God if we got on well with them do you think (*laughs*) we might be able to go and hide in the van?

SP *Yeah.*

BM It's...but it was hard...it...it was hard because l...me, I was only coming up [to] fifteen and I had to work as hard as those mature people.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

BM And th...you were exhausted and to think that you didn't have a sleep-in in the morning, you just, you know...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...it was...it was horrendous.

SP *And you said you did some other things before...*

BM Yeah.

SP ...*what were they? Sorry some other...you said you did Aran...Aran sweaters...*

BM They were...they were our recreation.

SP *That was your recreation. Oh sorry...*

BM That was our recreation.

SP ...*I was counting that as work.*

BM No. No, oh no that was the extra that was in the evening they...they...the...the...yeah... I can...

SP *Yeah.*

BM I can now do Aran sweaters but I've gone too lazy now.

[Sound of whispering in background]

BM Yeah, the Aran sweaters.

SP *So they were recreation?*

BM Everyone was working...the altar linen now, that's a...a k...a kettle of fish, that's Molly's side.

SP *Hmm.*

BM Yeah and then the rosary beads you had this thing...Molly said joking to me the other day, 'will you make me rosary beads?' I said, 'Not, in a million years!'

SP *(Laughs)*

BM And then the embroidery and I tell you there were some girls in there that... (*whispering*) the work they turned out...fantastic! *The dresses, my...everything!* And they telling us they...they haven't got any money?

SP *Because they would have been sold out to...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...they were sold...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...to the public.*

BM Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

[Inaudible conversation and noise of kettle boiling in background]

BM Yeah. And you know there's still some of the girls in Waterford. There's about five that I...they used to sit beside me. Now there was one deaf girl...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...and she used to be in my queue for Mass and that and then there was...then there was Fidelma [pseudonym] and I still go to see her and we...Molly and I went to see her a couple of years back and I send...he always sends me a Mass card; she always sends a card on Patrick's Day. I never talk to her about it and I wouldn't even know why she was in there.

SP *Okay.*

BM But they have accepted and they stay there and they're...they've gotten lovely little...little like little bungalows, beautiful! But they're *still* under the nuns...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...you know?

SP *Hmm. Yeah. And that's a side that society doesn't know about, is that there's still...*

BM Hmm.

SP *...women living like...*

BM Yes. Yeah.

SP *...there...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...and residing in...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...the convent.*

BM And they...when they die, oh they go back to the State.

SP *Okay.*

BM They go back to the State...it's a shame that they're...you're not allowed in to...you see they can't I suppose, if you...if anyone went to see them in Waterford, they'd probably be frightened to talk up because they rely on the nuns.

SP *Yes. Yeah, they were...*

BM They were quite...

SP ...quite...very vulnerable.

BM Yeah, very...

SP Yeah.

BM ...but...

SP And what...who were you doing the laundry for? What were the contracts?

MMcC [Inaudible]

BM We were doing them for hotels...

SP Yeah.

MMcC *(Whispered)* Railway.

BM ...railway...

MMcC *(Whispered)* Hospitals.

BM ...yeah, hospitals...

MMcC *(Whispered)* And the private ones.

BM Yeah and people that were fortunate enough to be able to send their l...

SP Yeah.

BM ...their...into the laundry.

SP *Yeah.*

BM But the hotels were *massive*, absolu...! There was...that clubhouse, what was it called, in Kilkenny, that was *massive*! And like Molly said hospitals, yeah.

SP *Did you ever do it for any of the schools or...as...as in not schools, industrial schools or like...?*

BM I think...

MMcC [Inaudible]

SP Yeah, you can...

MMcC My...my...my...our washing from the school side, such as those sanitary towels and all that...

SP *Hmm.*

MMcC ...that all went over to big...the big girls'...

SP Yes.

MMcC ...side as I called it as a child.

SP *Okay.*

MMcC So the laundry *did* do the children's...

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC ...main washing.

SP *Yeah. Yeah....no I was...*

MMcC Yes, we...you did.

SP *Did you ever feel tempted or did you ever send a little note in...in the washing?*

BM No.

SP *No.*

MMcC [Inaudible]

BM No, because...I did...

SP *You never made contact?*

BM ...I didn't know where...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...any of mine really were.

SP *Yeah.*

BM You know, that was it. They were...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...gone, I...I didn't know and the thing used to make us so sad was Christmas and people that had family used to get their gifts and not...and there was nothing, there was a few of us that had *nothing*, you know? It was...Sister Ignatius used to...said...she used to always leave something on my bed just for something to open.

SP *Okay. Hmm.*

BM And yeah, she was great.

SP *Yeah.*

BM She was great, you know, but...no.

SP *And actually I was gonna ask, what made Christmas different for you than any other day?*

BM Eh...

MMcC *(Whispered)* We had a boiled egg Christmas morning.

BM Yeah we used have to...they'd wake us up...on Christmas Eve, they'd wake us up about 11...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...for to go to midnight Mass. Didn't we have to go back again in the morning?

MMcC *(Whispered)* Yes.

BM Yes.

MMcC *(Whispered)* We did.

BM And then we had another Mass, and what would make it better, we had a special dress for Christmas.

SP *Okay.*

BM I remember mine was blue with a lovely white top and yeah, an egg and an orange. Molly, we got an orange, don't forget the orange!

SP *Oh, you got an orange? (Laughs)*

BM We got an orange...and they...they used...there was a few Christmas cakes hanging around. But then, you know even with us working in the laundry, we s...we had to be on a rota, and you had to serve the teas, serve the lunch...

[Sound of cups being stirred in background]

SP *Okay.*

BM ...serve the supper; there was no...and sometimes on a Sunday they'd make us go in and make the sausage rolls. Never...no...no...no days off there.

SP *And what was...so you've described your food it was bread and dripping.*

BM Hmm.

SP *What else did you...did you eat...what was...?*

BM The memory of it! I don't...can't remember having a...a full meal. I can't...

MMcC Well (*clears throat*) the meat...the meat was the cheapest of meat and it was always stewed you know, for long hours you know, in order to get any...any...I suppose...p...a protein or something like it but it was full of fat lumps and gristle.

SP (*Sighs*)

MMcC I used to give mine to the cat. And the smell of cabbage used to make me ill. Friday you always had fish; ling fish or mackerel.

[Sound of cups being stirred in background]

BM Hmm.

MMcC I loved my mackerel but the ling fish...

BM Oh Frankie! [Speaking to husband who has come in with tea]

MMcC The food was very poor.

BM Our figure is gone out the door! Thank you, careful. [Speaking to husband]

MMcC The food was very poor but you had to because you were hungry.

[Irrelevant background conversation relating to refreshments removed]

[Interview resumes 49:09]

SP *I had it paused there.*

BM Yeah. It...I'm grateful for what we've got but they need...we need justice. We really do.

SP *Yeah.*

BM They've come a little...they've come a way because to be honest, we never thought we would see what we saw...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...on Tuesday... [Referring to State apology]

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...never. Because...S...S...Sally's been...

FM Is your tea alright?

BM ...we're having toast, love... Sally has been banging her head for years...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...but I have to be fair, I think Maeve [Maeve O'Rourke from Justice for Magdalenes] gave the last shove.

SP *Hmm. Yeah.*

BM I do.

SP *Yeah.*

BM You know? And we will...we will have her down and we will, you know...

MMcC Celebrate.

BM Yes.

SP *Yeah, definitely. And so I...I...I was...just want to clarify, were you paid or given any pocket money?*

BM *Ha! Pocket money? I didn't even know what a penny looked like! (Laughs) No way, never! Nothing!*

SP *Okay.*

BM No.

SP *And what was your uniform like, or was it a uniform? Sorry I'm assuming....*

BM It was kind of a ...it was just a...

MMcC Green dr...green...green...

BM ...a dr...a dress stripy dress...

MMcC Oh...

BM ...stripy...Well it would be big and baggy anyway.

MMcC It looked like an old nurse's uniform...

BM Yeah.

MMcC ...as it were. I remember that...

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC ...like a...a navy stripe and then a white or a black and a white stripe in it. It looked like...

FM Real fashion!

MMcC ...the old nurses...

SP *(Laughs)*

MMcC ...cotton.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

SP *And was that what...did you have to...to wear the same thing for the full...the whole time you were there...*

MMcC Yeah.

SP *Yeah...*

BM We wore the same...we...

SP ...*the same outfit?*

BM We'd get it washed, that's our numb...yeah...yeah...it w...the same.

SP *And then you had that Christmas dress?*

BM That...yeah, for...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...for occasions, yeah there used to...people come didn't they now, they had [inaudible]...

MMcC I never had a nice dress at Christmas. I had the same old thing all the time!

BM Oh did you, well I was lucky then!

MMcC Hmm, very lucky girl! (*Laughs*)

BM That's why I love blue.

FM You were lucky...you were, it was nice and warm...

[Laughter in background, unidentifiable from whom]

FM ...never got cold!

MMcC Mine was red.

SP *And...actually...I was also gonna ask, yeah the clothes that you came in with, what did they do with them?*

BM [Inaudible]

SP ...or any of your possessions?

BM I...I never got...

MMcC No.

BM ...no.

MMcC Never saw them back.

BM Never saw them back.

MMcC They were probably given...

BM We didn't even have...

MMcC ...to the children's side or something like that...

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC ...we shouldn't have managed.

BM ...we didn't even a handbag when we were going out. This green coat, I can still see it.

MMcC Hmm.

BM I can see it and this stripy dress...I was...oh it was really like a prison, *oh Jesus!* Oh it was terrible!

SP *Yeah.*

BM And there were glasses we had for reading...oh!

MMcC National Health glasses.

BM Oh my God...

SP *Oh yeah...oh so you had glasses then...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...and the...*

BM Hmm.

SP *...they w...they were...*

BM Oh I...I couldn't wait to get out to get rid of them!

SP *(Laughs)*

MMcC [Inaudible]

BM I went to Ballyronan [pseudonym].

FM How did they...did they get your eyes tested?

BM Yeah, yeah.

MMcC You went out with an auxiliary to get them done.

BM Well I had glasses when I came in so I had to...

MMcC Bernadette wore...

SP *Okay.*

MMcC ...glasses all her life...

BM Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC ...really.

BM Yeah.

SP *And actually there's something else that I was gonna to ask, did...did they give you tooth brush?*

BM You got...you didn't get...

MMcC A tooth...

BM ...you got this white stuff.

MMcC Gibbs toothpaste...

BM Yeah.

MMcC ...in a tin...

SP *Okay.*

MMcC ...it was a paste.

FM [Inaudible]

BM And carbolic soap...

SP *Oh, I've heard that word a lot!*

BM ...and cold water...

FM [Inaudible]

MMcC Dreadful carbolic soap for our hair as well.

SP *Hmm.*

MMcC My hair used to be very shiny with that soap you know I must say, very, very shiny!

SP *That was what you were given to wash your hair?*

MMcC Yes, yes.

FM Very posh stuff I'll tell you!

SP *(Laughs) And actually yeah, incidentally how...how often were you allowed to wash... like have a shower or...*

BM You had to have it after someone else.

SP *Okay.*

BM There'd be a few [who] used the water.

MMcC How often? Probably once a fortnight if you were lucky.

SP *Once a fortnight. Okay. Jesus.*

FM Was there a bath or a shower?

BM Bath.

MMcC A bath and...and...and the auxiliary...

BM Yeah but you wouldn't be the only one to use it.

MMcC The auxiliary would be standing outside there...

BM Yeah.

MMcC ...'come on now Margaret [pseudonym], you've had enough time, out you get!'

BM Hmm. Yeah.

SP *And so you talk about the auxiliaries...*

MMcC Hmm.

SP *...who were the aux...so we've got the n...the m...the....nuns...*

BM The nuns. Yeah.

MMcC Yeah.

SP *...so do you want to tell me about how the...?*

BM The... [inaudible]

MMcC Well the auxiliaries were people that vowed to stay there for the rest of their life...

SP *Okay.*

MMcC ...and they used...they...they were dressed differently to us...

BM Oh yeah, posh.

MMcC ... poor workers. They had...n...pale navy dress...

BM Yeah. And a...

MMcC ...with a waspy belt...

BM ...and they had a veil.

MMcC ...like a nurse would wear, and a short veil.

BM Hmm.

MMcC And...and they thought they were the bee's knees...

FM Hmm, would they?

BM Yeah.

SP *Okay.*

MMcC ...although they were the same as ourselves...

BM Yeah.

MMcC ...you know.

FM Hmm.

BM Yeah. Yeah.

FM You...they were the clones.

SP *Yeah, yeah, yeah.*

BM Yeah.

SP *So they had been in just...*

BM Hmm.

SP *...like yourselves?*

FM Yeah.

BM Yeah.

MMcC Yes.

FM Weapons, weapons.

SP *Okay.*

FM Implements.

MMcC And they were a little bit higher than us...

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC ...you know? Because of helping the nuns out...when the nuns weren't around they were in charge.

SP *Right...*

MMcC Okay.

SP *...yeah so they were in charge of ye?*

MMcC Yes, yes.

SP *Yeah. Okay...no that's interesting yeah...*

MMcC Yeah.

BM Hmm.

SP *...because actually yeah I was gonna ask did you see much of the nuns?*

MMcC Who...we saw the ones that were in charge of our side...

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC ...of the convent...

BM Yeah.

MMcC ...you see, and...what was I going to say there...just went straight out of my head...

BM We had...on our side we had two nuns: Mother Breda [pseudonym] she was the head...

FM Those were...

BM ...Regina... [Pseudonym for religious name of Mother Breda]

FM ...in charge of you?

BM ...yeah.

MMcC Yes. Okay.

FM Did you...

BM And...

FM ...see much of the nuns?

BM ...Mother Ignatius, just two...

MMcC Only the...

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC ...ones that...

BM ...or...

MMcC ...were appointed to our side...

BM ...other nuns...

MMcC ...of the convent.

BM ...would come over if they were called away...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...or something like that, you...they would come.

SP *Okay.*

BM *Yeah.*

SP *Actually how many of...how many were there in the...like...of ye women in the laundry?*

MMcC *Oh...*

SP *I know you probably don't have an exact figure...*

MMcC No, no.

SP ...but...

MMcC There...there was two big dormitories.

BM Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

BM I'm sure there was definitely 30 if not more.

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC Oh God there was about 60 in my place. [Good Shepherd Magdalene Laundry, Sundays Well]

SP *Yeah. Okay.*

BM Were there?

MMcC Yes, yes quite a lot.

MM We had only one...two...Oh yeah there might be about 40, 50, 45 or something yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Hmm.

SP *And you all had to sleep in a...in a dormitory...?*

MM Yeah...and you had to...you had your nightdress and you had to dress like...

MMcC Yeah.

BM ...take it...

MMcC Underneath the nightie...

BM ...take it off like that and oh my...

MMcC ...you weren't allowed to...

BM ...yeah.

MMcC ...expose your body...

BM No.

MMcC ...in any way.

SP *But yet...*

BM No.

SP *...you didn't have any privacy did you?*

MMcC No.

BM No. Oh no. No.

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC We had to dress under these great big night dresses and undress under them also.

SP *Okay, wow. And where were the nuns...did you ever see where they were...where they were kept...where the...*

BM You know, the...the main nun was...this dormitory I was in, she had a room at the back...

MMcC It was called a cell.

BM ...and...a cell, and she used to have a little window with a curtain on it...

MMcC Yes.

BM ...and if she heard any noise she'd be out looking at the...

MMcC Yeah.

SP *Yeah, I was going to ask were you kind of surveyed...*

BM Oh yes.

SP *...at night as well?*

BM Yeah. Yeah.

SP *Yeah. And actually could you describe to me the building, I'm always curious to hear your...*

MMcC I'd a photo... photograph...I had a photograph of the building...

BM The building, it was a nice build...it was a massive building.

MMcC It was like this now, the children's side...

BM And the...

MMcC ...the convent side, the nuns' bit...

BM And the penitents.

SP *Hmm.*

MMcC ...and then the...the Magdalenes' side and that's how it was divided up.

BM Hmm.

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC And the children never were able to see into the Magdalene side, even when you were up in the open gallery singing the...the...the Masses, we used to try and look over the...the...the railings to see the girls...

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC ...over the big side, you know. But we were never able to see...the...the...the railings were too high for us little ones. So we were, very, very well separated.

SP *Okay.*

MMcC And there was no contact at all [between] the children or the Magdalenes. And if the Magdalenes were seen talking to the children at all, they would...

BM They'd get punished.

MMcC ...be in for it.

SP *Jeez.*

MMcC Yes. Yes indeed.

BM You'd get punished. Yeah.

SP *Were your...the windows and doors locked?*

BM Oh there was bars on them...

SP *Right.*

MMcC Yeah. Yes.

BM There was bars on them.

MMcC They were.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

SP *Okay.*

MMcC *(Whispered)* A prisoner.

BM *(Whispered)* A prisoner.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah...sorry

[Irrelevant conversation about refreshments removed]

SP *And, so were you ever ill when you were there? Did you ever have to see a doctor or...or anything?*

BM Only with my hand.

SP *Yes. Yeah.*

BM And that was a holiday, oh that was *fantastic!* Abs...but nobody came down to see you.

SP *Okay.*

BM Not a soul. They...they just phoned up to say...we...they were discharging me. God when I went back I hated it. That was the only time.

SP *Yeah.*

BM I...there was no doctors as such...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...and if there were you'd have to be really, really ill.

MMcC You had to be supervised by the nun as well or the doctor would...

BM Yeah the nun would have to be there.

MMcC ...oh yes.

SP *Right, yeah.*

MMcC Yes.

BM So...

MMcC Always.

SP *And did anyone...were there any accidents while you were there?*

BM None that springs to mind.

SP *Okay.*

BM No.

SP *That was just a...*

BM Hmm.

SP *...question I had there. How... did you ever...did you ever want to run away or did you ever try to run away?*

BM No, because I wouldn't know where to go.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

BM Basically and...then they'd...they'd bring you back and send you to another convent...

SP *Okay.*

BM So there wouldn't be any... But no, I...I wouldn't know where to go.

SP *Yeah. And like how did you...how...how would I put it? How did you survive when you were there? How did you, you know, keep going?*

BM It was pretty hard. There was...

MMcC You didn't have a choice really, you just...

BM There was anything you'd give for a lie-in. Jesus there was no such thing as a lie-in, nothing!

FM That's the only life you knew...

BM Yeah.

FM ...really, wasn't it?

BM Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah, you...you lived with it because...like...

FM An existence.

BM ...with so many years there, it became...it just became...

FM Part of your life.

BM ...a way of life.

SP *Yeah. Would you say that you conformed? Would you say that you were a part of the...*

FM Accept...accept it.

SP *...did you accept it?*

MMcC Yeah.

BM Yeah.

MMcC You had to.

BM You had to.

MMcC You didn't have a choice.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Because otherwise...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...you just...no...yeah, you just accepted it and...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...and thought this is it.

MMcC Anybody that was really big trouble they were shifted.

BM Shifted.

MMcC We never knew where they went to...

BM No.

SP *I see.*

MMcC ...you know...

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC ...and they were moved on.

BM Yeah.

MMcC You n...you daren't question it either.

SP *Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And tell me how did you...because I'm always curious about your hair? Like did they...did they keep your hair short or was it long or...?*

MMcC Up to our ears really.

BM No mine...up to here, yeah. Short.

SP *Okay. And like did they deliberately cut...like because obviously hair grows, did they cut your hair short is...is that...?*

BM God I can't remember who did the hair.

MMcC Mainly the auxiliaries did...

BM Yeah...

MMcC ...that.

BM ...the auxiliaries.

MMcC You know, the auxiliaries did that really...

BM Yeah.

MMcC ...you know, and there was no...no style to it...

BM Hmm *(Laughs)*

MMcC ...just like a pudding bowl hair...

BM And it was... *(Laughs)*

MMcC ...cut...

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC ...exactly.

BM *(Laughs)* ...oh my God!

FM Fashionable.

MMcC It was very fashionable.

BM It was very fashionable! Oh, it's a good job we can laugh!

SP *Were you ever sort of humili...you said that you never received any...any physical beatings as such.*

BM No. No.

SP *Were you ever psychologically...like were you humiliated or...you said that you felt worthless when you were there. Did anyone specifically make you feel...?*

BM Well, they would because they would say, 'look, you know, your mother is unmarried, you know, what do you expect, you'll go out and...' Yeah, they...verbally they...they would.

FM Who, the nuns?

BM Yes.

MMcC Yes. Yes.

FM You're joking?

BM *Yeah*, I'm not joking! You were downtrodden to be honest, I...I think...

MMcC You were nobody.

BM ...you were nobody and I think...

FM They demeaned you?

BM ...we were so...

MMcC Yes. Yes.

BM ...yeah, they did!

FM [Inaudible]

BM There was a...you were nothing, you...you were just nothing. You belonged to nobody, as far as they were concerned. You were a...a sinner...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...because of your...your background.

MMcC You were just another person there working hard for *nothing*.

SP *Yeah.*

BM *Yeah.*

SP *Yeah.*

BM That's...that's...

SP *Actually something that I found came out is that they also... the idea of washing was supposed to be...*

MMcC ...washing away the sins yeah.

SP *...washing away the sins.*

BM *Yeah.*

SP *And it was this idea that once you washed away your sins you would...*

BM Yeah and...

FM Cleansed.

BM ...and...I had to wait a fair amount of years, then they make you a Child of Mary, then you're cleansed.

SP *Yeah, because...*

BM Em...

SP *...I was going to ask what was...?*

BM ...like the dirt was all gone; you became a Child of Mary.

MMcC *(Whispered)* It took me a long time.

BM On the 8th...it was *(laughs)* it took...on the 8th...

SP *How did they decide when you became a Child of Mary? Like was there a science to it? Was there...?*

BM Hmm.

MMcC You stopped getting into trouble that's how I managed it. It took me five years to become a Child of Mary.

SP *Right. Okay.*

MMcC And my...my cousin to this day always thought I was a...a nun because I sent my aunty a...

BM All the sins were washed away.

MMcC ...photograph of myself with this blue gown on me...

BM Hmm.

MMcC ...and this veil...

BM Hmm.

MMcC ...and I spoke to him and I...and I...I said to him, Justin, [pseudonym] I said, because my aunt is dead now and he said, [identifying details removed] 'sure Molly I always thought you were a nun with that photograph you sent Mum'. You know, and that was the Child of Mary and I worked so hard to get that; *five years* it took me...

BM Hmm.

MMcC ...to become one of them.

SP *Jesus.*

MMcC I was so...so good I was in that place!

BM Yeah, but your sins weren't ready Molly; it was as simple as that!

MMcC *(Laughs)*

SP *But you were never told...oh...like I...I...I heard that then it would lead to your release or was it...was that...was supposed to I think or...do you know? Or...or not that it was supposed to lead to your release but that eventually you...you were removed of sins and...*

BM Well it was supposed to...it was supposed to make you a better person, that you could go on to become a nun after that *(laughs)*.

SP *Right, okay. (Laughs)*

[Group laughter]

BM *Oh my God!*

SP *Did you ever want to be a nun?*

BM No way!

MMcC I did, when I was in school. I thought they never worked you see so I thought I'd love to be a nun...

[Group laughter]

MMcC ...they don't do no work...

[Group laughter]

MMcC ...and I changed my mind when I got a little bit older, you know.

[Group laughter]

SP *I was...the reason why I ask is because I wondered if you did what...like...if you had approached someone to ask...*

BM Hmm.

SP *...what their...like a nun, what their reaction would have been. Would they have wanted...*

BM No.

SP *...you to...?*

BM They wouldn't have us...

MMcC Really...

BM No.

MMcC ...we didn't have enough...

BM You c...

MMcC ...money!

BM ...you c....

MMcC You needed a dowry to go in to be...

BM ...you couldn't be...

MMcC ...a nun, you see.

BM ...you couldn't be a nun.

FM Impetuous.

BM No you couldn't be a nun...

FM [Inaudible]

BM ...couldn't be a nun, you were unmarried...you were...

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC Exactly.

BM ...you were unclean.

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC You were a criminal in their eyes, you see, even though we did *nothing*...

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

MMcC ...wrong...

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC ...to go in there.

SP *Yeah.*

BM *Yeah.*

SP *No that's a really important...*

BM *Yeah.*

SP *...point I think.*

BM *Yeah.*

MMcC *Yes.*

[Irrelevant background conversation relating to refreshments removed]

SP *Yeah...I guess...Oh yeah just to ask about sort of...in terms of interacting with other people...so did...did everything have to be done in silence or were you allowed to talk?*

BM *I think we had an hour, didn't we? We had an hour...*

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...that we could talk...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...and that was great.

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC And during the work hours you only spoke of work, that's it.

SP *Okay.*

BM Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

SP *Oh right, I see.*

BM And you'd be praying...they'd be...in the packing room they used to go down...not in the packing room, in the...in the ironing room you'd go down and they'd be praying.

MMcC Yeah.

BM Yeah.

MMcC Exactly.

SP *And while you were there did you ever see any other, government officials, factory inspectors?*

BM Some...I...I...somebody...we didn't see him but sometimes they used to ask for the dormitories to be all tidied and that so, I b...I'm sure there were.

SP *Yeah. But you never yourself...*

BM No.

SP *Okay. Yeah, that's interesting 'cause you were fourteen...*

BM Hmm.

SP *...surely someone should have been come to inspect you 'cause...*

BM No way.

SP *...when...*

BM Hmm.

SP *...until you're sixteen...*

BM Hmm.

SP *...but...how were you treated by the...by the nuns?*

BM Well I would say Sister Ignatius, fantastic. She used...she was...I think she gave me a lot of reason to carry on to be honest. She was a gentle...she *hated* when the girls used to get upset. She did not like it...

MMcC She didn't like the system.

BM ...yeah, at all. She didn't...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...she didn't. And...again it wasn't all of them...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...but...it's the stigma. I think because we came...from their minds...came from nothing, I think they felt they could treat us as they wanted...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...because...

MMcC They treated us like that because we had no one to approach and tell our story to.

BM Hmm.

MMcC So they felt...

BM *Yeah.*

MMcC ...'right, they have nobody....

FM [Inaudible]

MMcC ...we can do what we like'.

BM *Yeah. Yeah.*

MMcC Exactly.

BM *Yeah. Yeah.*

FM This is...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...this is something I cannot understand of religious order[s] who [are] just supposed to be kind, you know, God fearing...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...and the teachings of the church would be obeyed by them...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...and they were...behind it all they were abusive.

MMcC Exactly. They were.

SP *Yeah.*

FM That is...

MMcC And they got away with it.

FM *Yeah.*

BM They got away with it.

FM Their *whole being*, they've gone against the grain.

MMcC And I'm sure the nuns that are still remaining that ran them laundries are *regretting* now that they're still *alive* while...

BM Yes.

MMcC ...all of this has come out, you see.

SP *Yes. Yeah.*

MMcC You know, the lucky ones are the ones that are passed over.

BM Well I mean...

FM Because it...

BM ...I had a letter, in fact I'm sure I have it.

FM Because it turns its...

BM I had...

FM ...head completely on the teaching...

MMcC You did so. Yes.

FM ...the religious teachings. This I found very hard to conceive.

SP *Yeah, yeah that's a very valid point.*

FM Because I never had really any involvement with them.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah. This is...

FM And I'll tell you a little story.

SP *Yeah, yeah, we'll...*

BM This is from Mother Ignatius in one of those letters: 'I'll never forget my dear children of the past...

[Coughing, unclear by whom]

BM 'now it was [inaudible] I have just received your news...' *(Pause)*

SP *So you kept in correspondence with...?*

BM Yeah. She was saying it's a har...it was a har...yeah...'as Good Friday dawns each year I think especially of you as the lovely, innocent little girl. It was no easy matter to come...

MMcC One, two...

BM ...one...

MMcC ...matter to...

BM ...no easy matter to c...

MMcC ...come to us.

BM ...to us in those hard...

FM Good gosh.

BM ...and harsh days'.

SP *Wow.*

BM She just says, 'the Lord looked after you'.

MMcC Hmm.

SP *That's a very...*

BM And that's...

SP *...interesting...*

BM *...that's...*

SP *...insight...*

BM *...yeah.*

SP *...from some...a nun.*

BM *And that's a nun.*

MMcC *Yeah.*

SP *Yeah.*

BM *Yeah. Yeah...*

SP *Yeah.*

BM *...so she didn't like it...*

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

BM *...you know?*

SP *And is it...what were their living quar...did you ever see their food or anything?*

BM *No, I never...*

[Short portion of interview removed to protect interviewee's confidentiality]

SP *So did you...when you were there did you...actually I'm gonna...actually before I get to that, what made a Sister good or bad or a nun good or bad?*

BM Good listener.

SP *Okay.*

BM Hmm. And caring and a nice approach and that nun [Sister Ignatius] had that.

SP *Yeah, very good.*

BM Yeah.

SP *And actually did...did having that...I don't want to mention a name...*

BM Hmm. No. No.

SP *...it will be deleted anyhow...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...but...did...was it good...did it help you?*

BM It helped me.

SP *Yeah. Okay.*

BM That's the only thing I had to hang onto.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

BM Yeah. And when she came back, one of the girls told me, and I'd gone, she said, 'Why did Theresa go when I was away?' Yeah I...I think it would have been...because she would have *explained*, she was that type of a nun. She came from a well...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...bred, beautiful family...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...and there wasn't an ounce of badness in her.

SP *Okay.*

BM No.

SP *Yeah.*

BM That's only one of them.

SP *Yeah. Yeah. And actually what were...what was your experience with the others like?*

BM Well, I...we wouldn't come in contact with them a great deal.

SP *Hmm.*

BM Only if they were sitting in the dining room when we were having our meals if...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...if the two main nuns were busy. There was one, and she came from Cork, and...she...m...'cause I had very bad eyes she used to always tell me about this Padre Pio and she used to give me relics and that.

MMcC Is that Mother Freda? [Pseudonym]

BM *Yeah.*

MMcC *Hmm.*

BM And she was a beautiful nun.

SP *Okay.*

BM Yeah. Yeah.

SP *And what was your relationship like with the auxiliaries?*

BM Didn't have one.

SP *Yeah.*

BM They talked to you when they had to.

SP *Okay. So they...*

BM I can never remember sitting down and them give...having a chat with us, never.

SP *Yeah. And when...say you were in the dining...in the dining hall, were they separate...how...how did the...actually how did you...how were you...*

MMcC Hmm.

SP *...seated in the dining area like?*

BM Oh well, all the tables were going right down that way and down the other side. And then the nun's chair, like the 'Queen Bee' was there...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...and they sat...it was called a throne actually wasn't it?

MMcC We had...we had two auxiliaries to each group...

BM Hmm.

MMcC ...of girls, right and those...those two tables would be sort of stuck together. I had Veronica and Mairéad [pseudonyms] in part of my group you see. So the auxiliaries, as I said, were up here and we were like their children. So in the refectory they sat at one table with part of the group and the other one sat at the other table so two auxiliaries were head of the groups. It was always a group...

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC ...and that extended to the recreation in the evening time as well.

SP *Okay.*

MMcC So...

SP *Wow. Okay.*

MMcC Yeah. That's how it was.

SP *This is a real hierarchical kind of...*

MMcC Hmm. Yes.

BM Yes.

MMcC Yes.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

MMcC Pecking order.

SP *Yeah. (Laughs) And tell me did you have any...fears and...or anxieties when you were in...inside?*

BM Yeah I was frightened in case I get into trouble and get put on the stairs or something.

SP *Yeah.*

BM I...I never, I would be frightened because if you were in tr...they'd keep you back when...when you...everyone was gone to bed and...yeah, I'm not saying it was nuns that were naughty but...if the girls were naughty, you would hear shouting at the nuns and vice versa, but I never saw anything but you would...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...hear them shouting.

SP *Okay and what about hopes and dreams?*

BM My...my hopes and dreams, I don't think I thought about one because I didn't think I would be going anywhere.

SP *Yeah. Yeah. Can you tell me, did you develop any survival techniques?*

BM *(Pause)* Yeah, just to...whatever I was doing to do it as best as I could...

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

BM ...basically.

SP *And...did...actually no, sorry, we...we've actually covered that because I was going to ask did you try to leave...*

BM Hmm.

SP *...and you did ask to leave...*

BM Hmm.

SP *...and you were told no.*

BM Yeah, yeah.

SP *Okay.*

BM Because big England was dangerous.

SP *Yeah. And how many years did...how many years before you left did that happen?*

BM Oh that was when...I suppose I never said anything for a number of years.

SP *Yeah.*

BM It probably was the last...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...four or five...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...of them years.

SP *Okay, and can you tell me one word or phrase that best describes your time there?*

BM Horrendous.

SP *Okay. And so we've kind of covered your...the leaving part, but can you describe to me what the...what...what it was...the day you were leaving...what that was like. What... like, how...how did it happen?*

BM I was...I was in the packing room and the auxiliary came in and said, 'can I see you?' And we went to this...along this big corridor and down near the...the main entrance and she said, 'there's a dress there, put that on, there's a coat there, put that on'. And then the nun came and said, 'you're going to B&B...

SP *Okay.*

BM ...and the auxiliary will come back for you in the morning to take you to Waterford. You're on your way to Galway'. Now that was a nun's regime as well, Galway [in the hospital], but at least you had a little bit more freedom. But yeah getting back...yeah so all that night in that B&B...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...I couldn't believe that they were supposed to be protecting us and they put me somewhere, and it wasn't a hotel, it was a B&B. And there was people passing the rooms and...and everything and I really f...oh I did, I felt I didn't know...I didn't know what to do to be honest.

SP *Yeah.*

BM The anxiety was horrendous.

SP *Yeah.*

BM It was.

SP *And you never got...did you get to say goodbye to anyone?*

BM Oh no.

SP *You were just brought out...*

BM Brought out.

SP *...and that's it.*

BM Gone!

SP *Okay. Jesus.*

BM Yeah, it was...there was...that, yeah...that...that does stick with me a lot.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Were you given changes of clothing or anything like that – a case to take with you?

BM No, there was no case. There was this little... no, honest to God I'm sure I was like a gypsy. I was.

FM Just in what you stood up in?

BM Yeah...yeah.

SP *And then of course you went to work in the...in Galway.*

BM Yeah that...but a few years later when I went back to Galway, I met that nun that met me at the train and she said...and my husband was there...I don't know if he'll remember...she said, 'we went to...we had to go down and canvass for people because had...we could not get domestics!'

FM Could not get?

BM Domestics. I'm sure...

MMcC Like those places were like recruitment centres...

BM Yeah.

SP *Right.*

MMcC ...for cheap labour...

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

MMcC ...for the hotels...

BM For...yeah.

MMcC ...hospitals...

BM Yeah.

MMcC ...private people had money...

BM Yeah.

MMcC ...for the likes of us to get low-paid work...

FM Yeah.

MMcC ...and long hours as well.

BM Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

BM And...and they'd be able to keep an eye on you as well.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

BM Yeah. And that the...my very first Christmas out, that was horrendous because all I did was went to bed, you know, the b...

SP *Where were you living, sorry?*

BM We, yeah...we had...yes that's another thing, we lived I'd say about twenty minutes walk from the hospital.

SP *Yeah.*

BM And it was this, my God, it was this *big, dark* road with all trees, no lights and you were there with just girls and then we had...well then we had like a...an auxiliary there.

SP *Okay, so it was like a home...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...away from home?*

BM Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

BM But it was scary because when you have...if you've been in a convent and never have to...they...they didn't think any of these things out...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...at all.

SP *So you weren't prepared...*

BM No! *Never.*

SP *...outside...*

BM *Never.*

SP *...how to live in...*

BM No.

SP *Okay.*

BM I was probably lucky Francis came along because I suppose he, well he gave me the idea that life, you know, he helped me...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...and if it hadn't been him, if I had met a horrible old bloke, God knows what would have happened. Because we didn't...we had no knowledge.

SP *Yeah.*

BM There was *nothing* explained to us, *nothing!*

SP *And how did you meet your husband?*

BM M...Molly's sister came to Galway and worked with me and she...we were going down, she had a boyfriend, so we were going down to confessions this night seemingly and we got ch...chatting to the boys and instead of going to confession, well we went and (*laughs*) some...

FM We went and sinned...we met the queer fellah!

BM ...so...orange juice and that...

SP (*Laughs*)

BM ...and, yeah we...and Barbara and meself, we used to go out together and she had her boyfriend then and I had mine and we had lovely photographs taken and we were really proud of them and when the nuns in St Aisling's saw them, because we were sitting cross legged on the motorbike, oh they were *disgusted!*

SP *Yeah.*

BM Oh my God! They were, and yeah that's how I...I met him and yeah...

SP *No, I...*

BM ...he's put up...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...with me ever since.

SP *Yeah. No I was curious 'cause I...I also wondered...you know, you would have been segregated...*

BM *Yeah.*

SP *...from boys...*

BM *Yeah.*

SP *...like, how...?*

BM Yeah. Well in...in the hospital it wasn't too bad...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...because most of the girls had boyfriends and...and that. But you had to...you had to get permission to go out.

SP *Okay.*

BM It was like a permit then, you know. She said at what time you had to be in.

SP *Yeah. And were you paid when you were...you...so you...*

BM The hospital.

SP *...'cause you said you were...yeah, in the hospital because you were saving up...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...then...*

BM Yeah.

SP *..oh...yeah, yeah.*

BM We were paid.

SP *Yeah.*

BM The first pay packet was fantastic and I don't know how much. It wasn't brilliant, I get better money now but...

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

SP *It was the first time...*

BM It was the first...

SP *...that you were paid for your work.*

BM ...paid. Yeah.

SP *Yeah and...and how did...like 'cause I know, like, you wouldn't have been...used to dealing with money. How did you know how to...I mean did you find that okay, like...sort...you know..?*

BM Not for a while, no...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...not for a while but...but I...I...friends and that and we...we kind of learned together, really.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

SP *Okay, yeah. So you had, yeah, someone...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...to...*

BM Some...yeah, oh yeah we could talk there.

SP *Yeah. (Laughs)*

BM *(Laughs)*

SP *And so we're...we're going into the last part and we've already kind of covered the after effects so I'm just...see anything that I haven't...is there anything...so we talked about that you had a breakdown...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...is there anything else that happened?*

BM I s...you can get bad health from being...being low, obviously it carries and awful lot of...yeah, you...anxiety carries a *massive* baggage.

SP *Yeah.*

BM It does and, yeah, I'll always be anxious. That's...

SP *Yeah.*

BM *...never going to go away.*

SP *Yeah.*

BM I've obviously...I've learned to deal with it...

SP *Hmm.*

BM *...but I think...and being in a psychiatric unit helped because I...I was trying to help somebody else, not me. That gave me a great sense of...*

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...belonging and everything, and I was helping somebody, which really needed it. And yeah, I think the anxiety wa...it comes out in occasions, but I was...when I was a child, a very happy-go-lucky...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...but, you know, when you've been downtrodden and nothing nice any day I think it takes a long time to make you happy again, it's...

FM They...they broke people's resolve...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...and destroyed people's self-thought and belief in themselves. That's how I interpret it.

BM Yeah, what would the...my psychiatrist...what did he say, that we had to have...like Molly...he calls it...

FM No confidence.

BM ...he calls it...

FM *Hmm.*

BM ...what's it called...stress...

SP *Oh, post-traumatic stress?*

BM *Yeah.*

SP *Yeah.*

BM *Yeah.*

FM Disorder.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

BM That's what he's got in here...

SP *Yeah.*

BM and he said as well, he said, you know, 'she done...she's reasonably intelligent but had she been given...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...the opportunity she would have been...it would have been fine'.

SP *Yeah and that's something that I focus on as well because...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...we talk about physical...*

BM Hmm.

SP *...psychological...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...or even...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...sexual abuse but we never...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...talk about the educational...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...abuse...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...and how that loss...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...of opportunity...*

BM The...that was...yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

SP *So that's been...*

BM That's been...

SP *...that was said by the...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...psychologist.*

BM Yeah.

SP *Yeah. And was this...*

BM No that was the psych...

SP *...sorry, psych...psych...*

BM ...yeah.

SP *...psychiatrist, sorry.*

BM Yeah. That was in The Priory...

SP *Okay. Yeah.*

BM ...in London.

SP *Yeah. Yeah. And actually why did you see the psychiatrist, for...what was...?*

MM You had...because we were going through the Redress [RIRB]...

SP *Oh yes, of course.*

BM ...we had...you had to.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Oh, he was a lovely man.

SP *Yeah. You had to have a report...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...wasn't it, yeah.*

BM Yeah. So I managed to get hold of mine...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...because I might need that yet...

SP Yes.

BM ...you know.

SP *That's very good to have, yeah.*

BM Yeah.

SP *And, in...I just wondered as well, did you have...do you have nightmares or...or anything. Does..?*

BM Well sometimes...F...I used to shout in my sleep.

FM You do shout. The odd, very odd occasion...

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah, I do sh...yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...but it's only brief...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...you know and...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...it disappears.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Very brief.

SP *And even...okay in terms of now what you like...your fashion like...*

BM Hmm.

SP *...I'm curious do you like...do you like to present yourself or do you always...?*

BM I...do you know, when you dress up I think it gives you a little bit more confidence.

SP *Yeah.*

BM It gives you...well I'm as good as the next one.

SP *Yeah.*

BM It does.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah. But when I'm going around the house I'm as good...I'm not very good! *(Laughs)*

MMcC You're okay Bernadette, stop.

SP *But you still look lovely.*

MMcC Yeah, exactly.

SP *No I'm...I...cause...cause...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...that's what I've noticed...*

BM Hmm.

SP *...is...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...and yourself as well here that's why, I notice a lot of things.*

BM Yeah.

SP *And keeping your appearance seems to be very important, and I just wondered if that was linked to...*

BM It was plus I got two daughters that will say, 'you're not *buying that mum, that doesn't look right!* And I have to take them with me because if they criticise, you know you do...you do...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...you listen to them.

SP Yeah. Yeah.

BM You do.

SP *Oh, yeah.*

BM But it's good to have them anyway.

SP *Yeah. Yeah. And is...are there any other ways that the in...that the laundry has affected you that I haven't asked or that...that you can think of?*

BM *(Pause)* Hmm. I think it...it...

FM Well I can put my hand on that.

MMcC The lack of conversation would be...

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC ...good, Bernadette.

FM The breakdowns as I said previously...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...people weren't prepared; women weren't prepared coming out of there.

MMcC No.

FM They weren't domesticated other than laundry.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Like, you couldn't cook properly when you...

BM No.

FM ...got out of there, right?

BM No, I couldn't do anything could I?

FM Right?

BM I could iron and wash.

FM Immaculately clean...

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

FM ...yeah...sort of thing, but as for...

BM Are you cold?

MMcC Social...socialising.

BM Yeah.

FM ...you know, making decisions...

MMcC Hmm.

FM ...and being...

MMcC Bernadette, no, no. I'm not cold.

FM ...instructed and that, in confidence making decisions seems a hard thing.

MMcC And socialising...

FM Yeah...

BM ...was...

FM ...socialising, big...

MMcC ...a big no, no for us.

FM ...breaking down...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...you know, and then needing encouragement.

SP *Yeah.*

FM And then sort of...

MM And to argue with somebody.

FM Yeah.

BM I couldn't...I can't...I can't stand arguing.

SP *That's interesting, yes.*

BM My...my husband has...he...

MMcC I can argue.

FM I can...I can...

BM ...my husband is...

FM I can tell...

BM ...and if he starts arguing...

FM I can...

BM ...if he starts argue...you know, and he's right if there's something isn't right and that, but no I walk away. I can't handle it.

FM I just won't let people...

SP *Okay.*

BM He can't...

FM ...I won't be stepped on.

BM I c...even with this one... [Molly]

FM [Inaudible]

MMcC *(Laughs)*

SP *Yeah.*

BM Even with this...this...oh when I'm with her, I'm gone!

SP *You like the easy life now?*

BM I can['t]...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...it..it affects me.

MMcC But then she agrees afterwards, well you were right to do so!

SP *(Laughs)*

FM Yeah.

BM But...

MMcC ...but not strong enough to do it herself.

SP *Yeah.*

BM No.

SP *Yeah.*

BM No.

FM And that's a person's make up isn't it.

MMcC Everybody isn't the same.

SP *Yeah. No, that...*

FM But I think her resolve is so broken...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...by the incarceration.

MMcC Yeah.

FM ...and any...b...but it was like the Gestapo in charge, you didn't...you didn't...

MMcC They knock your confidence at...

FM Yeah.

MMcC ...every...

FM Broken.

MMcC ...point in your life.

FM Broken.

SP *Yeah.*

BM I found it hard...

FM Some people come out of that, but she's come out reasonably well out of it, you know what I mean.

SP Yes. Yes.

BM ...I found it hard...

FM No thanks Molly.

BM ...with groups and speaking up.

SP *Okay.*

FM Yeah.

BM I found that really and...and I'd say to Molly 'no I don't want to go'.

MMcC Oh go, I'll make her go!

BM I...and yeah I foun[d]...mixing isn't my...I'm...socialising now is...I'm not that...

MMcC You're more of a one-to-one person....

BM I am.

MMcC ...aren't you?

BM I'm a one-to-one...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...person.

MMcC She is.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah....don...yeah.

SP *And what about trust? Do you feel that you can trust people?*

BM Oh, I...I...I think in lots of ways I'm a very private person, but...

FM I'll say on that count, selective on who you can trust.

BM Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

SP *And you're private as well.*

BM Yeah.

FM Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC Yes, exactly.

FM You've got to know a person...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...before she...

MMcC Yeah.

FM ...can trust them...

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

FM ... in depth.

SP *Yeah. Because I find trust to be also...*

FM That's right.

SP *...an issue...*

FM Yes.

SP *...with...*

FM Yes.

SP ...post... *post-laundry*.

BM Yeah.

MMcC Yes.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah. Yeah.

SP *And...do you think that who you are today is different to the person you were when you were in the laundry?*

BM Yeah. I...yeah, I think I am different because I'm a mother and...

MMcC A wife.

BM ...I would...and a wife!

[Group laughter]

BM ...and they're my priority and I always want to listen to them and I...if I sensed anything I'd have to be there for them. I've learned...yeah, what I went through I suppose has made me more of...more...giving my moral support, being...love them, show them love.

FM Not knowing love...

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC Yeah.

FM ...and having been in that situation...

MMcC It's hard to give love if you've never had it.

FM ...you seem...

BM Very hard.

FM ...to hand out more.

BM Yeah.

SP Yes.

FM Yeah, that's...

BM Yeah.

SP *That's very true.*

BM But, yeah...

SP *Actually I was gonna...yes, that's a very good point actually 'cause you had...your mother was absent.*

BM Yeah. Yeah, that was no...I never spoke to her...

FM And not knowing it.

BM ...yeah.

SP *Yeah. I just wondered, yeah, your experience then as a mother, like, not knowing, kind of not having a mother...*

BM Hmm.

SP *...really very present...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...how...how do you think that affected...how did you know how to be a mother?*

BM I didn't.

SP *Yeah.*

BM I had to learn the hard way.

SP *Yeah.*

BM And learn obviously as I went along.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

BM But, yeah, but...they're brilliant.

SP *Yeah. What are the most memorable events in your life?*

BM *(Pause)* None of them in the convent anyway.

SP *Yeah.*

BM M...memoral [sic]...I suppose, getting married, finding our first home...

SP *Hmmm.*

BM ...and having our children.

SP *Lovely.*

BM That's...yeah, that's it.

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

BM My family.

SP *I get that...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...sense a lot.*

BM Yes, yes.

SP *And actually there's a question here, are you in touch with anyone from the laundry?*

BM W...we are, I'm in touch with one of the girls. She's in...

FM *(Whispered)* Waterford.

BM ...she's in Waterford...

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...and it's actually...she...she tracked me down; she got our address from somebody and every Christmas there's a Mass card from her, every Patrick's Day there's a card from her and I send a little gift for Christmas.

FM A Mass for us, she prays for a Mass for us [inaudible].

BM And I say, yeah...she always says, 'oh I remember the day you came in, you were so innocent,' she says that to me time and time again.

FM She's older.

BM But she's a lovely...yeah she's in her eighties...

SP *Oh wow.*

BM ...but...and when we're over, because she can...she has her own...they have their own little place...

SP *Because he's still...*

BM She's there.

SP *...institutionalised?*

BM Yes.

MMcC Yes.

SP *Yeah.*

BM She is, but yeah and it's nice to be able to because she hasn't got anybody belonging to her.

SP *Hmm.*

BM So I made that a point that I would keep somebody, because I know what it is not to...to be alone.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

BM You know? That's...

SP *And...actually I'm going to ask you 'cause we talked about it there but after the apology how did you feel?*

BM We were elated! We couldn't believe. No, I just could not believe because...

FM Comprehension [inaudible].

BM ...we were looking for this day and to be honest we never thought it would come.

SP *Yeah.*

BM And the things he said were nice things.

SP *Hmm.*

BM Yeah, to some I suppose, you know, they're a bit soft but to us it was somebody understanding us, that we felt that he understood us.

SP *Yeah.*

BM And now all we hope is we're going to...it's going to be a happy ending.

SP *Yeah. And actually, yeah 'cause before the apology, was there a lot of shame and stigma attached to your...*

BM Yes. Yes, definitely. Yes.

SP *Did this impact your ability kind of to tell people?*

BM Yeah. Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

BM It did, and the only way we felt good about ourselves was when we went to the group because it was the group that...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...only understood us because we're all, maybe slightly different, but we're all hurt and we're all suffering in the same way.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

BM You know?

SP *Yeah. And do you feel now that the apology is there that you're able...that that shame is kind of gone or...?*

BM I don't think...yeah it was good, it made us feel good but I don't think the people that looked down on us will change their views.

SP *Yeah. And who...who...who are these people?*

BM I would say...

MMcC The people of Ireland.

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...the people of Ireland, yeah. The people that whispered about us and...

MMcC Yes.

BM ...you know if...if you...

MMcC They never changed their views.

BM ...if you went out the convent door, you would...for the very occasion like, you'd be getting on a coach – we had a trip once a year – and you would see them all thinking that...

MMcC [Inaudible]

BM ...we had commit[ted] murder.

SP *Okay.*

BM And we've had to live with that.

MMcC And still do.

BM And I think we...that will never go.

MMcC *Never.*

SP *Yeah.*

BM The apology from him was great...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...but it's not enough for Ireland.

MMcC It was to the nation really.

BM *Yeah.*

MMcC You know?

SP *Hmm.*

BM The indivi...the people to...that felt bad about us, it won't change them.

MMcC *Never. Never.*

SP *Yeah.*

BM No way.

SP *Yeah.*

BM It's too deep.

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC That's right; it's gone on too for too many years.

FM But I think that was the older generation.

BM Yeah it is the older generation.

FM I think the stigma of what they went through has lest [sic]...left a lasting effect.

MMcC Yes.

BM Oh yeah. That's...

FM It's something that can't be banished.

BM No.

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC Never.

BM Won't be banished

MMcC Never will.

FM I...

BM No.

FM ...think that being...be all of it, you know?

BM Yeah.

SP *It's a very good point, yeah.*

FM Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

SP *And...*

FM It...it doesn't go away, it's something...

SP *...yeah.*

FM ...you can't wipe away.

MMcC No.

SP *Yeah.*

FM You know, it's like it...like a stain, a terrible stain...

BM You've grown up it haven't you.

SP *Yeah.*

BM You've grown up with it.

SP *And actually say you were talking to someone at that time, this is just after you left...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...what would you have...how would you have explained where you were all of those six years?*

BM I'm sure I had to fib.

SP *You had to tell a story...*

BM Yeah, yeah.

SP *...like, made something up?*

BM I...I used to say, 'oh my gra...I was brought up by my grandmother but she died and my father left home'. There wasn't truth in it at all, but you...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...could not 'cause otherwise...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...you might as well leave...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...to be honest.

SP *Yeah.*

BM If you were being honest, it doesn't do you any good.

SP *Yeah.*

BM And I can understand very well what these people are going through, that haven't told their partners.

SP *Yeah.*

FM It must be an awful thing to swallow.

BM They're living with it daily.

SP *Yeah.*

BM So I hope that they'll get some peace, just for the end of their days. That they can...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...you know... it's...it's horrible, it's *horrible*.

SP *And actually just one...I just have a few last questions here.*

BM Hmm.

SP *This is actually to do with because you...you emigrated so I'm curious about that aspect. So, how soon was it, it was seven months aft...how...how soon was it after you left the laundry?*

BM Oh, I left in '60...

MMcC '67 didn't you?

BM I went in, in '65, yeah...

FM '55.

BM I left...where...

MMcC '58 you went in, '58.

BM ... '58 and came out '64.

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC That's right.

BM And then I went to St Aisling's and I stayed there...I came out in March '67.

MMcC When did you come over here then?

FM Easter Tuesday, the two of us come together.

BM Yeah, yeah.

MMcC How many years after...

BM Two.

MMcC ...the Magdalene? Two years?

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC Yeah.

SP *Very good. Okay, sorry, two years, I don't know...*

BM No, no, no. You're fine.

SP *...where I got seven months...*

BM Yeah.

BM ...from, sorry.

MMcC From me, that was me.

SP *That was you, sorry (laughs). So can you tell me why you left?*

BM It's his fault.

SP *(Laughs) His fault!*

FM Yeah, 'cause we...

BM Francis was...you...your work wasn't good or you were on...

FM I served an apprenticeship when I left school. And I got me qualification, I thought to myself 'well Ireland doesn't have a lot to offer me, what can I do?' The grass is always better...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...greener.

SP *Yeah.*

FM And we had intentions of getting married and thought there was a better...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...opportunity here...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...and we decided to come here. A neighbour of mine from home, he was very...he had quite a big family. I was one of three like my own...like our own present one; I was the youngest of three and I thought to myself, this...I don't belong here anymore. My parents were old, I was the only one at home and I thought, maybe wrong of me, but my brother lives close by, my sister lived in Kilkenny, married, both married with children and I thought well, let's see England because this chap, this mate of mine next door...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...to me at home, you can imagine out in the country separated, houses miles apart sort of thing, we decided we'd go over to his brother, which was established in London and he'd find a job for us. We had come over and there was no job...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...but I finished up, both of us getting a job at the London Underground, London Transport. We were both signals engineers' mates and we worked about an hour a day. And it wasn't really work...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...like the chap – that was me – I was a mate to, a chap come...he was from Surrey, he come from Surrey...

[Irrelevant background conversation removed]

FM ...and I was a lot of the times...

MMcC (*Whispered*) I'll just go upstairs.

FM ...doing his work with his supervision...

BM Molly you can put in that chair, I just left it out so [inaudible] can push that [inaudible].

FM ...[inaudible] so keep an eye open and then be on the underground travelling around, free travel, and...

BM So it was your fault.

FM ...no. Adam [pseudonym] was just...he was a special lad.

SP *Yeah.*

FM That was...London, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

FM But then I decided which...I was to come down to the next...it was just down here about two hundred yards from here...her sister lives, yeah.

SP *Because you were living with your sister wasn't it?*

FM Yeah and I got a job with Vauxhall motors in the stores...are you recording me now?

SP *I am yeah, yeah yeah. Sure we can just integrate it all it's grand.*

FM Yeah, and I...didn't we save like mad? I done everything I could to try and make money. I done carpentry and made windows, door frames, book cases.

SP *Wow.*

FM I...I used to tackle ev...everything when I was well, before I had this accident. And then I eventually started to work on cars, doing servicing, repairs, engine rebuilds whatever, and as I say, through first hand learning through people at Vauxhall my place of work. But, I gained various aspects of knowledge. Then we got a...a deposit for a house, for...which was in Barborough [pseudonym] itself...old house built in 1990, I remember it well. The place was falling apart. Myself and a neighbour, an Italian chap...eventually...I asked the police to keep an eye on it when we had our first holiday...that was *five years* after we got married!

BM And no money 'til then.

SP *Yeah, you hadn't been away?*

FM Kiddie come along after...

BM A year.

[Unidentified background noise]

FM ...just over a year, one year...

BM Hmm.

FM ...and got married in March, the following February...

BM We did not get married in March.

FM Oh...January, January sorry.

SP *Hey!*

FM January.

SP *Cardinal rule, a husband should always remember!*

BM *(Laughs)*

FM Yeah, yeah, yeah. Hard times, but we...as I say, born in February, Arthur the eldest boy was born and then as I say we knuckled down. We were in a flat, a rented flat and...I hadn't graduated to the point of doing carpentry at that point but when we got our first hom...house, we saved like mad to get the deposit together. I used to do all the overtime, a God send...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...in Vauxhall; weekends, evenings, but eventually then we got the house...

BM You alright?

MMcC (*Whispered*) Yeah.

FM ...got a chap, a neighbour, a friend of mine, Italian bloke Alberto [pseudonym] – he's now dead Lord have mercy on him – he gave me a hand and we made all new windows for the house, door frames, door. We done the lot. I f...I fitted all the kitchen, made the cabinets, not the wall cabinets, I made all the floor cabinets, and built-in wardrobes in this lovely house, but we didn't have a garage.

SP *Okay.*

FM We rented a garage and it was really getting on my nerves because it was falling apart and I used to...I had welding equipment in there...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...but with gas you've to...it makes it very vulnerable...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...and dangerous, it was a wooden structure. I was always on the go...

MMcC Alright?

BM Hmm. What's that mark?

FM ...in my spare time...

MMcC (*Whispered*) I don't know, it's a dry spot I get every time...

FM ...that type of person...

MMcC ...[inaudible] I put some lipstick over it.

FM ...but the kids...second one come along, little Corinna [pseudonym] and...but there's three years between [the] first and second and three years between the second and the third. So, we then...we stayed there in that first house for 14 years wasn't it?

BM Hmm.

FM And we bought this place in '83...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...and we had...we had two lots of windows in this place put in by a contractor and we've had this built there, how long is it built there, five years?

BM Yeah, yeah.

FM This...

BM Yeah, five years.

FM And I pulled up...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...actually, we built...that woman there [Bernadette] was cutting plaster off the other house, we forgot to...hand is skint [sic] from the bolts from the hammer...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...carrying it down in buckets down the stairs to a bin out the back, got rid of it in the wheelie bin, in the dustbins! But of course we had a car then in that place but then we progressed to here and I then left Vauxhall in '87...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...and I went in partnership, to go in partnership with a chap by the name of Peter [pseudonym]. That was the intention. I used to do part-time with him, plumbing and heating and he wanted me...kept damning us...damning me to go with him, friends....

[Inaudible whispering in background]

FM ...and the two families were very close, very...used to have dinners together, like that and everything and he decided he wanted me in and I decided to go with him, so I was...relented eventually that I was...I left Vauxhall and...

[Rustling in background]

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...went with him. So I was...the idea was that I would spend a year with him, see how it went and then if it worked out I would buy into it; it was only about...

SP *Hmm.*

FM 3,000 quid to buy in...in equal partnership. That's including the van...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...and all the equipment because it's just tools really. You don't carry...very, very little...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...equipment; pipe work and that kind of stuff.

SP *Yeah.*

FM That...at that time that was reasonable to buy but today it costs a fortune, copper and there's a lot of hep...

SP *Hmm.*

FMused today, which is plastic...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...piping and plumbing.

SP *Tell me, did you like living here in England, like..?*

FM Initially...

SP *Yeah.*

FM Initially...

BM No.

FM ...my...I...we were contemplating going back; it had come into our mind...my mind anyway...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...almost because the kids growing up. My brother-in-law was head of [name of company removed] and, Declan Finnerty [pseudonym] his name was, from Kilkenny, on the installation of power stations.

SP *Hmm.*

FM His headquarters was [location removed].

SP *Okay.*

FM But he was a top man over there. He had to answer to [location removed], you know, and he wanted me to go over to Clare...

SP *Okay.*

FM ...to run stores there for...for them...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...And...

BM No I didn't like it.

FM ...we eventually decided against that; it wouldn't be a good thing.

SP *Okay.*

BM I didn't like it.

FM And...

SP *You didn't...you didn't like living in...?*

BM I...

FM No it was going back...Ireland, from once you leave it...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...it changes.

SP *Yeah.*

FM It's very...even that five year had elapsed, it was a different country.

BM No, but I wanted to go back at the beginning.

FM Ah?

BM I took a long time to settle.

FM Yeah, here?

BM Yeah.

FM Yeah of course you did.

SP *Hmm.*

FM Yeah. Well I didn't, initially, if...be honest, if we had the money...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...yeah, we didn't...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...right? To go back, we'd have gone.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Yeah.

FM But in...in...in hindsight now, I think it a good thing because we...Ireland is a broken country. This country is going down the hill; the credit rating has...have you seen it?

SP Yes.

BM That's not going on my tape! (*Laughs*)

FM It's gone, but...anyway...I decided...or we both decided, we do...don't...we do things together...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...and the family involved as well...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...but we, I then...after about 10 months the Mag...with Margaret Thatcher, boom and burst [sic] came to play...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...this in 1997 I think...'87.

SP Eight...yeah.

FM Yeah. And I was about nine mon...nine...ten months into this...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...year trial period. And we were getting no work in the plumbing and heating.

SP *Okay.*

FM Just two of us doing a couple, maybe three...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...services a week...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...and he was still paying me.

SP *Yeah.*

FM And he was losing money you know he was...it wasn't paying our...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...wages, and we kept on we stayed because, 'it'll get better, it'll get better'.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Then he started to borrow money...

SP *Oh.*

FM ...you know, to keep going.

SP *Yeah.*

FM And his home, he had family as well, you know...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...suffering all because of this, had to, I...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...didn't go into details with him...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...but I knew.

SP *But there was never any resentment towards...you...did you feel any resentment towards Ireland for what...what happened to you?*

FM Ireland in our view, it was those who incarcerated the people in my view...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...were the ones to blame and to do this in a hidden way from the general public, 'cause I...I don't think the general public knew what was going on.

BM *Hmm.*

FM *Yeah?*

SP *Yeah.*

FM And it's a shame that all of Ireland is tainted with...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...the stain of what has happened...

BM *Hmm. No, I...*

FM ...yeah?

BM ..when I went back...

FM But the people we went to back to in Ireland...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...they were different people.

SP *Okay.*

FM You didn't feel part of there anymore.

BM Did I feel at home when I went to Ireland?

FM Aye?

BM No, because I felt a stigma. I felt, you know, don't any...don't anybody ask me too much.

SP *Yeah.*

BM No, I...I found it hard. I think at least over here you didn't have to live with it as...as badly as over there.

SP *Yeah.*

BM You know?

SP *Yeah.*

BM It was...

FM I think the closeness of the Irish people, like everybody knows your business.

BM Hmm. Yeah I found that hard.

FM Here...here, we don't know our next door neighbour.

SP *Yeah.*

FM We know *of* them.

SP *So it's anonymity?*

FM We know of them, but we don't need to know their details...

BM No we don't.

FM ...whether it be gory or otherwise.

BM So...it could be...over here was very lonely.

SP *Hmm.*

BM And I think...

FM You've got to learn to live with that.

BM ...you *can* be very lonely, whereas the opposite when you go home if you're visiting family. You see people in and out but I don't think it's like that today.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

BM You know?

SP *Yeah.*

FM It's...it's hard after living here, it's hard to...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...go back to that.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Because you...you gain an independence being here.

SP *Yeah.*

FM You learn how to cope and...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...to live as they live.

SP *And tell me actually, when you were growing up...*

FM *Yeah.*

SP *...did you hear of the Magdalene Laundries?*

FM No, I knew nothing of it.

SP *Yeah. So...*

FM That's why I say...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...the general public didn't know of it.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

FM I only knew when I was growing up of the priest...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...the convent in a place called Ballinasloe with the nuns...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...because I was too busy, when I had left school and taken up this apprenticeship...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...at my...doing my work, yeah?

SP *Yeah.*

FM Which was six days a week...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...yeah? In a slaughterhouse, I was doing all...all the slaughtering and I used to do the shop as well.

SP *Okay.*

FM Yeah? I done that for five years because at the time it was like a...a penance of course, you know, same as everything else when you were that age.

BM So you never...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...so you never heard about us?

FM No! I didn't know a thing of it!

BM Now, Molly.

FM You didn't...you didn't at...in those years...

MMcC Everybody knew!

FM ...you didn't have a newspaper...

BM Well...

FM ...'cause I lived out in the country...

BM ...let's be fair...

FM ...every day...

BM ...unless there's a...

FM ...I didn't know of it.

BM ...unless there's a Good Shepherd Convent...

MMcC But then there was the Mercy's up in Galway, wasn't there?

BM Mercy's were...yeah.

SP *Hmm. Yeah.*

FM I only got to know of this from Bernadette.

BM Yeah well that was a different one, it was a school wasn't it?

FM That was a school.

MMcC Yeah but they had the laundries as well the Mercy nuns.

BM Yeah.

FM Even in my years of growing up, there was...the older generation they had a...a fear instilled in...in them...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...by...

BM Priests.

FM ...the priests, and anybody of the religious order, that's how I interpret it.

SP *Yeah.*

FM That see...that seemed to be, that priest had a certain power...

MMcC [Inaudible] Redress Board [RIRB]...

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC ...waiting on my money here

FM ...that he could cast a spell on you, you know...

MMcC ...that's what started you all off.

FM ...a curse.

SP *Yeah.*

FM This was what the older generation thought...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...and they lived that to the fore.

SP *Did you fear the church?*

FM No, not that...this country has taught me, but while I was growing up I did.

SP *Yes. Yeah. Yeah.*

FM Because of my teaching.

SP *Yeah.*

FM *Yeah.*

SP *Were you taught...*

FM Today...

SP *...by the Christian Brothers?*

FM ...today...No.

SP No.

BM National.

SP *Oh you were in a National School?*

FM Yeah a National School.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

FM But I gained an awful lot of independence here and...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...self...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...belief...

SP *Actually...*

FM ...through being here.

SP *...speaking of which I had forgotten to ask that question but maybe you can both answer for me, how do you view religion now? How...how does that play a part in your life?*

FM Religion, in my view, there's nothing wrong with it.

SP *Hmm. Yeah.*

FM We're practising Catholics.

BM But we don't go all the time. *(Laughs)*

FM Bernadette more...Bernadette more so than me, because I find it hard, I mean...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...this is difficult for me sitting for a long while; I've got to get moving...

BM You've to be able to m...

FM ...because I have balance problem...

SP *Yeah.*

BM I've...

FM ...and the nerves are all damaged in my...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...back and hands...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...and feet. But I find that the church has a lot to offer but it's forgotten because of the bad things that's happened within...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...religion.

BM I...

FM ...so called religion.

SP *Yeah.*

BM I didn't make my children, when they were small yeah they went to church but now I leave them live whatever way they want.

SP *Yeah.*

FM They went to church and received the sacraments of the church.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Yeah. They had...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...Holy Communion, Confirmation...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...and then when they become of age they do as they wanted...

SP *Yeah.*

FM [Inaudible]

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...and we don't impress upon them what they should...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...teach their children; that's down to them.

SP *Yeah.*

FM We.....we...we don't...[inaudible].

BM I wouldn't say we're fantastic Catholics...

FM We're not...

BM ...we're lukewarm.

FM ...we're not fanatical...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...but as with all of Irish I have noticed, they've gone away from the church.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Most of them have.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Most of them, they've rejected it.

SP *Yeah.*

FM That's how I see it. I might be wrong but the older generation are the only ones going...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...to church in Ireland now.

SP *Definitely, yeah. That's kind of what I'm seeing as well.*

BM *Yeah.*

FM And that really in a lot of the cases applies here.

SP *Hmm. Yeah.*

FM And in a certain way the church seems, if anything, a little bit stronger here than it is in Ireland.

BM Oh, they're not.

MMcC It is.

BM Do you reckon?

FM Well...yeah.

MMcC Yes. Yes.

FM Yes.

SP *Do you feel, 'cause I know that the church teaches you not to question basically teachings or...you know you're just told this and that's it. Do you question now or how...how do you deal with that now? Or do you have...is...is your f...is your faith personal?*

BM Yeah.

FM Our faith is very personal.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Hmm.

FM It's...it's down to the individual.

SP *Yeah.*

FM I'm not...never ever say...but...ah no I'm saying it really...I think the individual concerned...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...should apply just to themselves [sic].

BM It's an individual thing isn't it at the end of the day, you've got to answer to the man above.

SP *Yeah.*

FM *Yeah.*

BM *You're an individual.*

SP *Yeah.*

FM *That is our teachings.*

SP *Yeah. Yeah. Actually I meant to ask, do you question...do you question now 'cause I know that you spent six years not questioning, not...do you...do you...what...do you think that you question more now or are you still...?*

BM *Ehh...*

MMcC *What, about the ch...chur...church itself or the State?*

SP *Or just in general sorry, I...I...I just...*

MMcC *In general, okay.*

SP *...I just remembered...*

MMcC *Yes.*

SP *...this question...*

BM *Yeah.*

SP *...and...*

BM *Yes.*

SP *I forgot to ask it...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...earlier but...*

BM Yeah. Oh God yeah...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...I wouldn't take it as lightly now as...

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...no.

FM This type of thing wouldn't happen now.

SP *Yeah.*

BM It could!

FM I th...no, no, no, no. The people of Ireland are very educated now and the fault...that's why people aren't going to church...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...because of the wrong-doings of the church against the teaching...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...of the church.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Yeah?

SP *Yeah. And I'm just going to ask actually in terms of as Bernadette's husband, how...how have you...can you tell me your experience of being married to s...and the kind of effects it had on Bernadette?*

FM I felt very sorry for Bernadette at times about what she's had to take in life...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...and I've seen her weaknesses yeah, and I've tried to compensate for that as best as I can. She was totally...not totally, she's been a good mother, a good wife, she wasn't really prepared...this is the one thing I've got against the convent; they didn't prepare people in any way, right. They kept people as just clones, like obey. Yeah?

MMcC They told us everything was dirty.

FM Yeah. You were... you were...

MMcC Not to leave a man near you.

BM Yeah. Marriage. Yeah

SP *Right.*

FM You were...you were...you were kept in like a cell...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...you didn't question, you did...you acknowledged everything they directed you to do. But, in domestication or anything like that other than cleaning, yeah...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...they weren't prepared for the outside world...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...when they left that place...

BM No.

FM ...yeah?

BM We were gullible.

FM They were just there as a...as a tool, an implement...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...to provide a service for them...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...that being...

MMcC *Yeah.*

FM ...in their case laundry.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Whatever side of it, it was.

MMcC Hard work.

FM Whether it was packing...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...yeah, filling up tubs, or as Bernadette done, sewing.

SP *Yeah.*

FM But, no it's...it's had a h...she's...it's...hard effect on her.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Yeah?

SP *Yeah.*

FM It broke her...her will in a lot of ways. But she's come out of it very well...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...and I think the family life has helped her a lot on that.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Yeah. But if she had met...hoping *I'm* alright...if she had met the wrong person, how would it have been?

BM Hmm. That's true.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Yeah.

BM Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

BM That's true.

FM You know, like...like you hear so many smashed up marriages, abuse and all aspects...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...anyways.

SP *Yeah.*

FM I'm not saying *I'm* perfect. But Bernadette you know very well that I am!

BM *(Laughs)*

FM No but...it's hard. I find it very difficult to realise that a religious order got away with and done what they did for so long. A hundred y...nearly a hundred years.

SP *Yeah.*

FM And it's only because they were shielded by the church and by the politicians who knew what...well what was going on.

SP *Yeah.*

BM But I think if it was...

FM And they deserve today to be criticised in total.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Everything that is coming their way today, for those who are still living, deserve it.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Yeah? Whether it be members of the church or the political side of things.

SP *Yeah.*

FM It hurts me deeply to...to...I'll be honest when I...when I heard Enda Kenny I had tears running down...down my cheeks in there and I'm not a soft person by any means.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Yeah? Well I hope I'm not. But...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...I can stand on my own feet, but I find that those people who couldn't were abused...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...very badly abused.

SP *Yeah.*

FM And I think the powers that be or those who abused them should be made answerable...

[Inaudible background whispering]

FM ...there should be an apology from the church.

SP *Yeah.*

FM That should happen.

SP *Yeah.*

FM They're being very quiet up to now, I think...tentative. There was a lady on Irish radio yesterday...

BM They haven't come out much though, have they?

SP *No.*

BM They haven't, have they?

MMcC What's that?

BM The nuns have said nothing.

FM ...yeah, yesterday...

SP *They've said nothing, yeah.*

FM ...there was a...

BM Not a thing!

FM ...a Sister Imelda [pseudonym], who I think...had moved away, on this...on Duffy...Joe Duffy [RTÉ Liveline radio show] is it?

SP *Hmm. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Joe Duffy.*

FM Or Collins was it? One or the other.

SP *There is a Joe Duffy anyhow, yeah.*

.

FM Yeah. She was on there it was...on the old telly, on Sky [Irish radio station which is available on Sky television].

SP *Yeah.*

FM And she was a very eloquent speaker, wonderful and warm. She gave a wonderful account of her life, the church, and admitted there was wrongs that took place...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...but she wouldn't condemn what took place.

SP *Okay.*

BM No, no.

FM She wouldn't condemn the nuns that were doing it.

SP *Okay.*

FM And I feel strong about that.

SP *Yeah.*

FM I feel they shouldn't...should be taken out and pointed out.

BM No, don't say anything on that tape.

FM Got the same...they...no! I feel strongly about this. They seem to have got away with the terrible things they had done without any remorse.

BM Well the...most of them have passed away.

MMcC Hmm.

FM Gestapos!

BM They're not here anymore!

FM Took prisoners of war.

BM They're not here anymore!

MMcC They can't answer.

BM No, they're not here.

MMcC They're gone.

FM But I don't think there'll be ever closure on what has taken place.

MMcC No.

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC I've said that on the television.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

BM But...

FM I'm sorry about that.

SP *Hmm.*

BM ...the good bit that came because if it hadn't...that the State were involved...

MMcC Hmm.

FM Oh yeah, that...he...

BM ...we wouldn't have a leg to stand on, would we?

MMcC Well, we proved them wrong.

BM Yeah.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Yeah, they were proved wrong. And I think that's where Maeve [Maeve O'Rourke, Justice for Magdalenes] stepped in...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...with the European civil rights thing. [Submission to United Nations Committee Against Torture]

SP *Hmm.*

FM Yeah.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

FM She's brought it in the open and...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...they've had to answer for that.

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC She done her homework.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Yeah. She knew.

BM Very intelligent girl, she is.

MMcC And we, Bernadette and I, we gave her a long interview.

FM They have...they have done an awful lot.

SP *Yeah.*

FM In fairness.

BM Well Molly more than me.

MMcC No, not really.

FM Molly has come out and she's been public about it.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

FM Bernadette's confidence wasn't strong enough to go there because of that and because of the stigma.

MMcC Yeah. I don't blame her. You know?

FM Yeah. Yeah.

MMcC I have no one to fear you see.

FM Yeah.

MMcC And that's why I was a little braver than...

SP *Yeah.*

FM *Yeah.*

BM *Yeah.*

MMcC *...some other people.*

BM *You don't have to answer to anyone, Molly.*

MMcC *No, I don't.*

FM *Yeah.*

BM *No.*

MMcC *No. No.*

FM *See I've got family...*

BM *That's it Sinéad, you've had a hard morning.*

FM *...extended family.*

SP *You've done...but you...you've come out now...*

BM *Yeah.*

FM *Yeah.*

SP *...and you...you're...you're counted now.*

BM *Yeah.*

FM Yeah.

SP *So that's...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...something to be...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...very...*

BM Yeah.

SP *...you're very...you're being...you're being very brave so....*

FM Yeah.

SP *...also to be counted now.*

FM Yeah, of course. Yeah, I do...

SP *Actually tell me, could you just tell me what it was like when Bernadette told you...the first time she told you about being in the laundry...what...how you felt...what was...what was it like?*

FM I did...didn't realise that it was as bad as it is today...

SP *Okay.*

FM *...as it has, coming out...*

SP *Yeah.*

FM *...you know, it was [inaudible] to be...you never really...*

MMcC It was a shock to your system when she told you. She obviously didn't say, 'I will marry you,' till she told you about herself. What did you think then, that...that she was locked up in the convent...what did you think then that very moment?

FM I didn't think anything bad of her.

MMcC No that's good!

FM No.

MMcC There you are *Bernadette*.

FM It wasn't her fault she was locked up.

MMcC No, exactly.

SP *Hmm.*

FM Yeah. Yeah

MMcC Yeah, but Bernadette probably never, Bernadette...

FM It was a sign of the times.

MMcC Did Bernadette know how you felt at that very moment when...?

FM Of course she d...I hope she did. Yeah.

MMcC Well, did you tell her how you felt?

FM Yeah.

MMcC Oh good, there you are Bernadette.

FM Yeah.

MMcC It wasn't all bad.

FM But the point being that...it didn't make any difference to me.

MMcC Good.

FM If it had I would have walked away from it.

MC Because all men aren't the same that way, you know.

FM Yeah.

BM No. No.

FM But the point being that Ireland seems to have adapted a lot.

BM I...

FM Ireland is a totally changed country now to when I grew up.

SP *Yeah.*

BM ...but I think...

H It's a very cosmopolitan...

SP *It is, yeah.*

BM ...I th...

FM ...well educated...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...we didn't have that background.

SP *Yeah.*

MMcC Go on Bernadette, say what you were going to say.

BM I...

FM We were [inaudible] the university of life...

BM I...

MMcC Go on.

BM I...

MMcC Carry on.

FM ...I certainly did here.

BM I think a lot of people that were in the convent...they...it leaves you very weak. If you haven't got that...yeah, some...if...if they're married into a bad marriage, I think you're just downtrodden, you just take what goes along because you're so vulnerable.

FM Because of the past.

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

BM *Yeah.*

SP *Yeah. I would agree, yeah.*

BM And there's a lot of them.

SP *Yeah.*

FM There are a lot of poor people, which look ages beyond their years...

SP *Yeah. Yeah.*

FM ...you know? Because of the downtroddenness of the past.

SP *Yeah.*

BM Frankie we're going to fill that tape...

FM I'm sorry.

[Short section of interview removed to protect interviewee's confidentiality]

SP *Are you...do you have any last words you want to say before..?*

FM I think B...I think the...both Bernadette and Molly have worked wonders now they have come out of...

BM We have fought it...

FM ...that past.

BM ...we fought it together because we were the only two...

FM And I see...I see...

BM ...we're the enemies because we went to Maeve!

FM I see a different person when she came home the other night...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...to what she was when she went out.

SP *Yeah. Wow.*

FM It was like a load coming off her...an awakening.

SP *Yeah. And of course you'd know...*

FM ...and I think the apology has...

SP *Hmm.*

FM ...done that I think, to a certain degree.

SP *Yeah. And you'd know 'cause you live with Bernadette...*

FM Of course yeah.

SP *...all the time so you know exactly, do you know, how she...*

FM I can read her better...

SP *Yeah.*

FM ...than the...the...the next person, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

FM Yeah.

SP *Yeah. Well thank you very much for sharing that with me.*

FM You're very welcome, very welcome.

SP *And I'm just going to stop the tape.*

[Interview ends]