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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

My name is Lorna Manning (nee Diprose) and I would like to give my story to the Inquiry Into Care of Children who have been in Institutions and Foster Care.

My story begins in 1932 when my mother at 20 years of age gave birth to her first child out of wedlock and had to place him into care. In 1933 she gave birth to another boy out of wedlock and he was also placed in care. I think it was in 1935 that she married my father and they had a daughter in 1936, then I was born in 1939.

War broke out and my father joined the Air Force and was stationed at Pearce Air Base and my mother, my sister and I lived in Davey Street, Boulder. Things were beginning to go wrong and by 1942 a complaint was received from the Air Base and the Police came to our home to check on the situation and decided to give my mother another chance to look after us properly. Sometime around this time the second boy who was born in 1933 came to live with us, his name was Ronald Arthur Anderson (Anderson being our mother's maiden name).

On the 22nd April 1945, we three children were taken from the Davey Street house to the Police Station. We apparently remained there until committal on the 12th May 1945 and then on the 14th May 1945 we were taken into a Receiving Home in Perth where we remained until 25th May 1945, when my sister and I were taken to our paternal grandparents in Tambellup W.A. (the boy Ronald was not taken because he was not my father's child). We lived with my grandparents at Tambellup and attended the Primary School there. Later that year my grandparents moved to a farm about 15 miles out of town and my sister went to live with our Aunt at Gnowangerup and I was taken to Perth to the Salvation Army Girls Home in Cottesloe and I was there, I think for 2 years. I found it very traumatic as I was a bed wetter and had to wash my own sheet in the mornings and got into quite a deal of trouble for the bed wetting. After I stopped wetting the bed, I would need to use the toilet during the night and this got me into trouble for being out of bed and I was made to stand in the cold hall until the Carers went to bed, then I was allowed to get into my bed - this occurred on a regular basis.

The absolute worst thing that I remember during this time was on one occasion when the boys from Nedlands Boys Home were at Cottesloe to do work, I heard my name called, it was Ronald my brother (whom I hadn't seen since my sister and I went to our grandparents). We ran into each others arms, but before we knew it we were being hauled apart and marched in different directions. I haven't seen my brother since that day. I have since discovered that he died in 1977.

I first started to try and find Ronald in the early 70's. I contacted the Salvation Army, told them my story and asked for information on Ronald. I was told that they had no records from the Nedlands Boys Home. They didn't even refer me to Child Welfare and also owing to my own family commitments and finances I was unable to continue searching.

Ronald and Alan (the other brother that I never knew and the first of my mother's four children) were both in homes or foster homes. Alan was adopted at 11 years of age – not only did he have to change his surname to that of his adoptive parents but also both his christian names, in fact I would imagine his whole identity. Ronald was adopted at the age of 18 years in 1951. I believe the people who adopted him had been fostering him for a number of years before the adoption. I was unable to obtain information on either Ronald or Alan until 1999/2000. I feel that if I had been given information I requested in the 70's I may have been able to make contact with Ronald and maybe Alan as well, but it is now far too late as they both passed away at quite young ages. Ronald aged 43 years in 1977 and Alan aged 54 years in 1986.

I find it quite difficult to remember everything that happened and to find the words to put in on paper. Another thing that does come to mind was that while I was at the Home I received a parcel from an Aunt, it was a beautiful hand-knitted red jumper which I never wore, as it was taken from me and I didn't know what happened to it until I saw it being used to wash the floor. For a little girl who was so pleased with her new jumper it was devastating.

I guess that out of my 64 years those couple of years were not many years of trauma, but not to have seen my mother again after we were taken away and not to have been able to find my brothers has been quite traumatic for me, especially when I got a little information so late in life only to be slapped down again when I found that both my brothers and my mother had all died – two in the 70's and one in the 80's.

Now also to find that I can't gain access to files relating to my brothers from Family and Childrens Services without permission from their children who I don't know. I feel that any information I get about myself is only half there because they were part of my life and I have only half the story and am left with a hole in my life – part of my identity is missing.

When I started the search I thought the ache in the corner of my heart would be erased only to find that it has got larger.


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