

“Arise Little Jeanie”

My name is Irene Bryne and I was born on 31/7/ 1948. My mother had 14 children, 5 lived. I am eldest.

I went to St Mary’s Catholic School in Erskineville and a nun at this school hit me with her walking stick and my Dad took me to the Newtown Welfare and showed them the bruises. There was nothing much they could do and what did I do to deserve that whack.

My Dad said

“No one will hit my kids or if they need hitting I’ll hit them- no other c* will touch my kids.”**

Dad moved all of my sisters to the public school at Erskineville

Dad was cruel to my whole family. Dad bashed my mother. There was a lot of arguing when I was little.

My father would always bash Mum and the children. Our father hurt us bad, he threaten after one assault that if I told, he knock me down the stairs, the welfare would take all the kids and we won’t be together anymore.

My parents were running a sly grog shop. He was also a truck driver.

Mum said before she left Dad, she told us we were going to a place at Campsie for a holiday. I was 13 when Mum left. Dad had TB and was in the page chest hospital at Camperdown. He escaped from there and he was listed as dangerous, he was on TV.

He was captured and placed in North Ryde Psychiatric Hospital

Dad gets out of the hospital and moves in with old Frances and her son.

I started to shop lift at 13 my cousin ask me to steal Gossmar Sheer Net Hairspray at Coles in Newtown, she gave me a lunch order list with things to steal, for my cousin and her friends. I got 2 bob that money used to buy food at school for my brothers and sisters.

At 13 years old I would roam Newtown and Annandale. I didn’t go to school. Welfare would come and say why was I truanting?

When I was a child I always knew we were going to cop it, as Dad would screw his mouth and he would go white, pure white around his mouth. We would cop a kicking, thrown from wall to wall. Hit on the jaw, steel capped boots in the backside if they weren’t shiny enough. I also had to polish his Gladstone bag.

One time my father asked my brother, Robert for a certain spanner, Robert came back with the wrong one. His punishment was our father threw the spanner fair at his back; it left a full print on my brother’s back.

I got bashed a lot from my father as well as made fun of by the kids at both schools I went to. Because of the way we dressed, our shoes. Our family was the poorest of the area. I would also bash up the local kids. I wagged school a lot because of how we were treated.

I think I grew up Old

I don’t ever remember playing with things, toys.

I don’t remember being a kid.

We went to Esrkineville Primary School; they knew we were coming to school with bruises and assaults. I think my Dad scared them. I was scared of my Dad all the time, but I wasn't allowed to show it. And I wasn't allowed to cry. I was the exact double of Kate Lee my father would boast. (The gun mole in Sydney)

Mum would walk around with black eyes and bruises.

One day my siblings and I were hungry, my stepmother Frances and my Father were not feeding us, so Johnny and I and some aboriginal kids break into the Newtown Tech School tuck shop. I took food, I didn't vandalise the shop but did break the window and bend the bars.

Johnny and I went home with food. Police came to our house and took me to the Newtown Police Station and put me in the cells for a while, until Dad got there. He never came.

The police told me what I'd done and I had to write it in my own handwriting and sign it.

They measured my height 4ft 11 inches.

Dad turned up hours late, not to sign anything, but it was too late.

Police Officer Fife, Hargraves, Jack Bouter and Dunn assaulted me because I trod on one their toes and I swore and I got the phone book over my head." Your not at your Father's house now" I had been lead to believe that I could go home after I signed the papers.

I was then taken to Glebe Girls Shelter at 14 years old, the next day I went to court.

In front of Judge Mc Creedy. I was then sent to Bidura. They put in a uniform I took off- I just walked out. I asked a copper where to get a bus to Newtown. He asked what I was doing. I told him I was lost and he gave me sixpence to get to Newtown. I got to Newtown and visited an old neighbor when I seen the coppers at the side gate talking to my Father and Frances. I stayed at Newtown for a few days .I was fretting for the kids, my brothers and sisters.

I took off and went to my auntie's at Campsie. I went to friends at Padstow and just worked in a factory making banana chairs. I was 14 I got the taste for money again and went to Newtown; saw my siblings, but not my father.

Police picked me up again on Erskineville Road, a detective in a big black car, once again to NPS, charged with absconding lawful custody and exposed to moral danger.

Back to the Glebe Girls Shelter, where I was given a medical by Dr Fingers

I remember these other Drs Blow and Dr George.

I wondered what's going to happen to me. It felt like I was caged.

So in 1962 I was sent to Parramatta Girls Home, because of EMD and I couldn't be trusted.

My first day I was shitting myself, cos I was scared of the girls. They were worse than my father and some of the girls looked tough.

The thing that scared me the most was when I went to the Doctor at Bethel. This was a red haired doctor they called Dr Fingers. I thought I was going to be deloused like I was in GGS. I kept hearing other girls talking about the duck beak and I didn't know what they meant and I never asked them.

As I was waiting outside the room, the old sister looked in her notebook and called my name. I was already dressed in a hospital gown nude under it,

The nursing sister looked like a Nazi in a concentration camp. She had a hard, bad look on her face. She had an accent. I lay on the table, legs up, Dr at one end. The nurse put the duck beak in, suddenly my legs shook and my whole body shook. The Dr inserted his fingers first and moved them around and then he stuck a stick inside

and it really hurt. The nurse shone a torch at my pubic area and under my arms. I was too young. They also took a blood test. I got really hurt as I have bad veins.

Girls with syphilis had to use special cutlery. I can remember a fight on the second night at Bethel in PGH. Some girls were verbally fighting with the 2 officers' on duty. I didn't even know what syphilis was.

The first night I spent in Dormitory 7 on the verandah. Old Mrs Mac (Mac Kitrich). They had a bed problem this night. There were too many girls. So we got put on the verandah and told to get to bed, it was freezing and it was wintertime.

Girls were telling stories about the headless nun and the hairy man. On my first night I wanted to pee I got out of bed and couldn't find a toilet on the verandah because we were locked in and I did a pee in a drain, got back to bed and put the cover over my head and suddenly a bonk on my head and it was Mrs. Mac hitting me with a torch and she said I was being a lesbian, I didn't even know what she meant.

When she first hit me, I burst out crying because I thought it was the headless nun. It was the same morning only a little while later, she came to the verandah and hit me on the head again and yelled out to the 12 to 15 girls on the verandah

“Righto you pack of lesbians hit the deck”

I was terrified. The biggest girl over at the old home and the biggest mouth M. Smith Roberts (she's dead), she wanted me to shine her shoes. I replied, “Fuck you”. She followed me to the toilet and she was going to put my head in the toilet and a couple of the girls chipped her to back off, she's only a baby.

Margaret replied “I was only fucking around.” The bell went and we had to go to muster and that was the end of it.

As soon as I saw the walls from inside PGH I knew I was in for it. There was no escape.

For the next couple of days I became a watcher. I spent time separating the girls into categories. The top dogs, the flips, the tops offs. You soon learnt who to associate with and who to be with and who not to be with.

My number at Parramatta Girls Home was no 147.

I was taken to the storeroom for clothing, old Mrs Doble was lovely. She had to tell the officer's of the sewing room there were no bras for me; they gave me a singlet to wear.

I was picked on by some of the girls and officers' as I didn't wear a bra like the others.

I was humiliated. I felt like I was a freak or something was wrong with me.

I wanted to hurt myself to stop everything happening to me. I had nowhere to go and I was being made fun of because of my size. I was 4 foot 11 at 14 years old and I am still the same height today.

When I turned 15, Father, Step- mother and grandmother and baby sister Patricia came to visit me. They had a birthday cake. I was happy to see them. Dad was pissed. Nan was half shot; stepmother was just as bad.

Mr. Mayhew came into the room we were in and said “Righto, it's finished.” Percy Mayhew got Mrs. Pickett to take me to the holding room because I had to be searched. I was told to get a bucket. I was made to move furniture and clean the wet spot my sister Patricia had made during the visit.

Mr. Mayhew and Mr. Holler threatened that I wouldn't be able to get away from PGH.

I ended up with lots of points and got to privilege. My name was down to go to swimming at Parramatta Baths. The girls said not to let them know I had got my periods for the first time or else I wouldn't be allowed to go. Another girl stated she had a heavy period, so she got two pads. So she gave me one and she helped me to make a tampon out of a pad.

I got used to the bashing.

When my grandfather died I was in PGH and I wasn't allowed to go to his funeral. Another girl was allowed to go to her lover's funeral, but I felt really shitted off and took my spite and anger out on her.

Mr. Mayhew belted his keys into my right ear, blood came out of it. I was sent to isolation, I cried myself to sleep

The next morning blood was all over the mattress. I still have pain in that ear today. That night I was sent to segregation and a nurse cleaned out my ear. All this happened because I spoke nasty, when I was denied the chance of going to my grandfather's funeral.

I went to PGH three times.

Everyone was supposed to be civilized; yet I was put in to PGH for stealing food because I was hungry. I should have been looked after, instead I was locked up.

The only good thing about PGH was the feds.

I just went along with the bashings because I was getting fed I never ever cried in front of an officer.

Another time at PGH, Miss Augusta, boss cocky for bed drill. Which involved stripping the bed, lifting the mattress over and over, which was repeated many, many times, even for a couple of hours at time at PGH.

I remember a time June McCluskey she was from Maitland, we both copped it, and we had to clean the showers.

Every single shower, we had to strip and show our bodies that we didn't have needles or tattoos.

I used to drink things in order to get out, eg, Brasso, floor polisher, so I could escape. I got sick and vomited, but never escaped.

I used to try and put needles in my legs but I couldn't push the needle in all the way in.

Mrs Dilly Davidson took us for cooking classes, one time a knife went missing, She made about 8 girls strip off and we had to do star jumps. As we would put a knife inside of us,!

The knife was eventually found in a garden behind dorm 7. Sausage legs put it there.

When I got out of PGH the first time I was 15, I went home for a couple of weeks and then left to go selling myself and stealing. I was picked up again by the police, they took me to the shelter and next day at Albion Street, Judge Mc Creedy, I really played up and threw a chair at him, they had to restrain me by my arm behind my back. They took me to Glebe Girls Shelter again and I then tried to run, but the driver caught me and I was then bashed. I can't remember if it was the escorts or the officers at GGS.

I was put in a room by myself. I took my panty hose off and put it around my neck and tied it to the bed and pulled it. I don't remember what happened next or how many days passed. I woke up and realized I was somewhere else and I had a hospital gown on. I checked all the windows out to see if I could get out. The windows were always open but only to about 6 inches.

I was shit scared in the rat house. 2 men and women took me to another section. My father came to visit me once and he told me I was in Callan Park. I was the youngest person there. I have very few memories, but I am sending away for my file from this hospital.

I absconded from there in my gown. I went to Kings Cross. Betty and Robyn Hawkins. I went and lived with two prostitutes and their Hoons. They treated me terrific. I stayed with them for a while and then went back to my old haunts called Binkies at Central station, where my friends hung out. I thought I was invincible that the police and welfare wouldn't be able to catch me.

Det Robbo (Robinson from Central police), he was on the take from everyone, mainly Anna. He used to hand us girls over to the policewomen. Miss Ashmore, (she once let me off on some charges) so back to GGS, went through Dr Fingers again. I was charged with soliciting for prostitution, stealing, and begging arms.

I was also examined at PGH. Why was I?

After all I was going from one Home to another Home within a few days.

Once again I was in PGH and I copped it worse as I came to be known as an absconder. I didn't go to Hay because I think Percy Mayhew like bashing me around. I know he wanted to see us cry. Percy was a hitter, a puncher.

Guildford was a hair puller, I knew Guildford shoes they were the same as my Dad's. Greenaway was a peeve and used to twist girl's ears and lift us off the ground. I got locked up for smuggling an egg out of the dining room and was sent to iso.

After my second period of being in PGH I left to go home to my Dad and old Frances. I went back to the Cross- I worked as a pro off and on. I was scared I would get murdered. Kings Cross was more or less a meeting spot for Parramatta Girls and it was a family at the Cross and at PGH.

I would rather be a prostitute than be locked up at PGH.

I am a survivor.

What got me in trouble was trying to feed myself and my brothers and sisters and then I was locked up.

“Arise Little Jeanie”

These three words were said by Guildford when I was scrubbing the cover way, I knew it was him by his shoes. He pulled me up by my hair and lassoed me around by the hair saying “Arise little Jeanie”

At first I like Mr. Guildford because he didn't do anything wrong to me and he wore the same shoes and colour as my Dad and he was the same build. I thought because of his shoes, there would be one person to look after me.

Until the little Jeanie bit came up. From that day I hated his guts.

I always wondered did the officer's bash their own kids, like my father did with me. They reckon I was being put into PGH for my own good.

What good came out of it??

I learnt the tricks of the trade. I learnt and was educated on everything the prostitution, stealing and everything.

So in other words I kept them in their jobs!

These experiences have made me overprotective to my brothers and sisters and also my children and grandchildren.

It's made me headstrong. I feel different from women my own age.

I have to be careful, I have problems trusting people.

I needed help to write my story because I stress out too much and I needed another person who had been locked up to write it as they understand my story. I have been in detox twice and have finally given the drink three and half years ago. That's without AA or anything.

I want the committee to know I'm not bad.

I want us to be looked after in our old age. The community needs to be aware we were not bad people.

Last year I was on TV at the PGH reunion and my sister was mistaken for me. She has told me that people were talking about her, some people ignored her, they were her so-called friends.

So she went to the local paper at Wellington and they did a story, explaining it wasn't her, that it was I on the TV.

I feel I served enough time locked up and bashed up over food, just like the early convicts.

My time was served.

Irene Bryne. (Bumper, Mayhew nicknamed me)

I give my permission to put this submission on the internet.

My deceased husband, Thomas May went to Mt Penang and Tamworth Boys Home and Jail.

My brother went to Mittagong Boys Home and Mt Penang

My Sister went to Glebe Girls Shelter, got out and stayed out.

My sister, Maureen you have got her submission.