

29<sup>th</sup> July 2004

Dear Sir or Madam,

I've delayed putting pen to paper simply because I've not wanted to relive my early childhood & it's only now I've decided it's something I must do.

I spent the first 14 years of my life at St Joseph's Orphanage, Newcastle. To this day I still do not know if I was taken or given over by my Mother, during those 14 years I was never visited by either Parent nor have I ever laid eyes on either. I'm now 71 years old & was institutionalised between the years 1933 - 1947.

Looking back in retrospect I do believe only those who have been through this can truly understand how children were treated by those destined to look after them, children put away in so called homes or places for one reason or another without a care for the emotional concerns most of all or well as the constant abuse put about every day.

I often asked about my Parents only to be told I had no-one, if so then where did I come from I found this so hard to come to terms with, often I cried with loneliness & always hoped my Mother would come one day, I just wanted to talk to her & tell her to take me away from here.

I began to meet the bed & it was the beginning of abuse that <sup>was</sup> part of my life until I left in 1947.

There were two dormitories for boys, one for the younger, one for the older, even so both groups of boys would interact during the day, some of the older boys would talk to me & some I made friends with & I played for the day I would graduate to the big boys dormitory, I was so happy when that day came but by God what was to follow I hadn't considered in any way

On being called to make up on that first morning in this dormitory for the first time in my life I felt fear, as I listened to the resident Nurse calling as she walked up & down repeating "make up, everyone out of bed, no talking, you will make your beds & make beds those who on inspection these beds are not made correctly, those who have met the best know where to line up, my bed was along the side & instinctively I looked under the bed to see if there was a puddle or tell tale signs, I just knew I had met but I thought if there was nothing showing I could hide the rest, mattresses at that time were very porous.

The bed under my bed had seeped into the side, she stopped looked at me & said the other children will show you where to go, those of us who met didn't have to get dressed we formed a line dropped our pants & in turn waited to be flogged, all the children were crying as there was no mercy shown as the straps came down hard & repeatedly.

Afterwards we would go to Church & then to breakfast where we would wave our hands, our wet shirts paraded before all the kids after which we were allowed to join them.

I know the kids felt of us as they would pass along some food from whatever they had, we then went to School, at least School offered some relief but I couldn't learn fear was always on my mind & the constant humiliation of being a bed wetter set us apart from the other children.

I would go for days without having a drink of water thinking this would help & would offer drinks from a puddle on the ground after rain, I would stay awake at night as long as I could with fear of the constant abuse & having no one to turn to.

I remember only too well the fear I carried when one day the workmen began digging trenches outside our dormitory. I felt sure they were being dug to put away the bed wetters. I would hide. I didn't want to die who would know, who would tell my Mother whenever she was, no-one told us what the

trenches were low, for weeks the digging went on & then one day one of the kids told me the trenches were low for us to step into in case of a Japanese attack. I was just out of myself with relief, I was so happy I wasn't going to die.

I do not recall any visit from Government Ministers or anyone to check on our welfare, it was as though the Nuns had complete autonomy, they were a law unto themselves & ruled with fear & cruelty.

I recall as well the day I left St Joseph's while standing outside the Church waiting to be transported to Reclabampton to meet up with the person I was placed to work with for the next 4 years. This cruel deceiver, Mrs. Anne me standing there came over & said, 'Dunno I didn't know you were leaving today otherwise I would have said I was sorry for the way you were treated.' I simply said to her 'I have been placed to work somewhere on a term' & said good-bye, & that was that.

Sincerely

J J Quinn

