

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GFI

Support person present: No

1. My name is GFI. My date of birth is 1952. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. My mum's name is . Her maiden name was . My dad's name is . I have an elder brother called who was eighteen months older than me and a younger brother called . Both of my brothers have now passed away.
3. I was brought up in the Forres area. My parents owned Hotel in Forres and I went to Forres Primary School. My parents sold that hotel when I was around eight or nine years of age and we moved to Bridge of Allan. My father became company secretary of Hotels. My younger brother and I both went to Morrison's Academy. My elder brother went to Keil Academy because he didn't pass his 11-plus exam. I don't know of any reason my parent's chose to send us to Morrison's Academy and I don't recall their being an additional entrance exam, other than having to pass the 11-plus.
4. Our first year at Morrison's Academy was as day pupils. My brother and I would get the bus every day from Bridge of Allan to Crieff and back. My father had been appointed to run the Hotel in Aviemore, with my mother, so we knew that after a year we would make the transition from Morrison's day pupils into Dalmhor

House as boarders. I don't recall having any issues at the school when we attended as day pupils.

Morrison's Academy, Crieff

5. As a youngster, I remember thinking that Morrison's Academy was huge. I've been back to the school since leaving as was asked to give a talk by the Morrisonian Club on a career in the hospitality industry. When I went back to the school as an adult, I remember thinking how small it was compared to how I remembered it from years ago.
6. On the first floor, just outside the assembly hall, was the prefects room. You never wanted to go there. There was a library and then downstairs was the main classrooms and the notice board of all the different rugby teams and who was playing that weekend. There was also the Headmaster's office and the main entrance into the school. There was an outbuilding that was used for science and the officers and cadets training building was down at the bottom of the playing fields.
7. Dalmhor Boarding House was a five or ten minute walk from the school and we would walk down passed the church and come into the school through one of the back gates. From memory there were several boarding houses. Dalmhor was the one I was in for the duration of my schooling at Morrison's. You worked your way up through the different dormitories within your own house. Your boarding house was your life and everything revolved around it.
8. When you walked into Dalmhor House, through the back door, that's where your sports lockers were. On the ground floor there was the main hall that had a radio player and space where you could sit and read. There was also the prefects' room, the House Master's house and the dining room. On the first floor, was the matron's room, the dormitories, the head boy's room and the head prefect's room. On the second floor, there was another four dormitory rooms. As you got older, the number of people in your dormitory got smaller and smaller. I think there were 5 of us in my dormitory in my last years at the school compared to around eight to ten in my early years.

9. I don't remember many of the teachers at the school by name. I do remember that the French teacher was Mr McLean because he was initially the House Master when we boarded at Dalmhor House. He then left to go to one of the big Edinburgh Schools. The House Master was then CFR [REDACTED] who was also the [REDACTED] Those were the teachers that clearly you were very involved with.

Routine at Morrison's Academy

First memories

10. My first real memory of Morrison's Academy was going to Crieff with my mum and dad to buy the uniform. I remember having to wear shorts, red socks and a stupid little hat. You wore your shorts until you were thirteen or fourteen and then you went into a pair of long trousers. I would have been around ten at this time.

Mornings and bedtime

11. I remember most of the daily routine within Dalmhor House. In the morning, the bell went off and you got up. You had a shower and got yourself dressed. Your clothes would be set out the night before. You then barracked your bed and went downstairs for breakfast. The beds were controlled whilst you were at breakfast to check that all the corners were folded correctly. After breakfast you would go back upstairs to tidy the last of the things in your room. At around 8:00 am you would normally go back downstairs to finish off any homework you had and then at 8:21 am we walked to school.
12. When you came in from school you would take off your shoes, put on your house shoes and put your outdoor shoes in your locker. All the shoes were numbered. The numbers were on little metal nails that were put in the bottom of your shoes. The number on my shoes was [REDACTED] and I'll always remember that number. Dinner was normally around 5:00 pm. and then you would do your homework until about 8:30 p.m. Then it was lights out about 9:00 pm. for the younger boys and 10:00 pm. for the older

boys. The prefects would check to make sure that your lights were out and you weren't really allowed to talk after lights out.

13. On Sunday mornings you went to church and if you were a younger boy, you were taken on a formal walk on a Sunday afternoon by the prefects. They would take you up the hills behind what is now Crieff Hydro and you would walk around up there. We played rugby on Wednesday mornings and Saturday afternoons. The sports activities were mandatory and if you were good at rugby or cricket, you were definitely treated better. It was as important as academia. You weren't allowed to be sick. I remember I dislocated my shoulder and broke my arm playing rugby and I was sent to bed with an aspirin. The next morning, when I woke up and my arm was the size of a Glasgow bus, the House Master took me to get an x-ray. If you got hurt you just had to suck it up, but truthfully, I have no memory of that being badness. That's just what it was like and you were meant to take it on the chin.

Mealtimes/Food

14. As a youngster I didn't particularly like every meal that I got, but I ate it. You ate every meal because you weren't allowed to leave the table until you had finished eating. To this day I cannot even look at tapioca and I grew a love of baked beans and lorne sausages that exists to this day. Other than sitting at the table until you had finished your meal, there was no other punishment that I remember. In your last two or three years at the school, you were allowed to make toast and a cup of tea at night. That was a privilege for the older students.

Washing/bathing

15. There were bathrooms in our house and we washed daily. There was a bath, but it was a communal bath, and there would be two or three of you in it at a time. I remember daily showers and that the water wasn't very warm. The smell of that green shampoo, Vosene, immediately takes me back straight back to being there. We were pretty dirty at times, if we had come back in from the rugby sports field. I wonder now who cleaned the bathrooms after us because they must have been filthy. Perhaps we did it as I don't remember there ever being clearers about.

Leisure time/trips

16. When we weren't in school there was a playing field by the boarding house where we could go out to play. In the summer we were allowed to take a bike to school and you could sign your bike out and go to Loch Turret Reservoir. It was a good couple of hours bike ride away. Two or three of us would sign ourselves out and go away for five hours up in the hills. You just had to say where you were going and sign yourself back in. Nobody ever went missing, but you just wouldn't do it nowadays.
17. We would also go to rugby matches at Murrayfield when there used to be the school boys benches at the front. We used to smuggle a pair of long trousers when we were about fourteen and, instead of going to the rugby match, we would go to the Odeon cinema. We would have to listen to the rugby match because the House Masters would ask us, on the bus on the way back, what we thought were the best moments of the match. We were sometimes allowed to go to the Crieff cinema on a Saturday afternoon for the matinee. Those are all nice memories.

Healthcare

18. There was a matron in the boarding house and I can only remember her being nice. I remember that we would try to find wonderful ways to give ourselves a high temperature so we wouldn't have to go to school and we could visit the sick bay. We thought ourselves very clever, but she must have known what was going on. There was also a school doctor.

Religious instruction

19. Religion was part of the school curriculum and we attended church on a Sunday. Morrison's was very much a Protestant school, but I remember there were two Roman Catholic boys in the school and they didn't need to come to the first part of assembly where we had prayers in the morning. The biggest trick that we had at school was when we were given sixpence for the collection. When they thought we were putting it in the collection, we would try to take another sixpence out and make a shilling. Everyone had their bibles and we had prayers before meals. We found the religious

education funny more than anything else, but it definitely played a part in school life. That may be why I now don't have a religious bone in my body.

Chores

20. We did have chores to do in our house. You would have your week of cleaning the sports kit or keeping the main dormitory swept. From memory, that was all fairly allocated. However, when I was there, there was still fagging so we would have to wash various items of clothing for the head boys. That all seems rather archaic now. I also remember having to clean our outdoor shoes daily and if these weren't cleaned properly, you would be beaten by the prefects.

Birthdays and Christmas

21. I have no memory of celebrating my birthday at school and I would have been at school for my birthdays. We would always go home for Christmas and I remember Christmas as a working day. My parents were in the hotel business so it was a really busy period for them. From about the age of fourteen I would be working in the hotel when I went home at Christmas.

Family contact

22. School was everything. We only saw our parents during one half term visit, between September and Christmas, when got out for a day over the weekend. There were also visits allowed where your parents could come and see you and take you out for the day. We would see our parents once every few months and we wouldn't see or hear from them out with those times. On a Sunday evening we would write letters to our parents, but you weren't allowed to seal the letter. I don't know whether the House Master or the prefects read your letters. When I did get to visit home, my mother would show me where I'd made spelling mistakes in my letters.

Schooling/discipline

23. I quite liked the school side of things. I liked some teachers and I didn't like other teachers, but I thought they were all fair. I have memories of being disciplined at school, but I never felt it was unfair or unjust like it was within the boarding house. We were strapped if we were being really disruptive to the class. I could count on one hand the number of times it happened to me. I do remember being strapped by the economics master, but I'm certain that I deserved it. It wasn't as though it was gratuitous. It was just funny because he was a tiny wee man and if he wanted to strap you he had to stand on a desk so he could get to you. I really don't know if discipline was recorded in any way by the school.
24. At the end of every term you got a school report and a house report. We were expected to have a good academic report, but as importantly, we were expected to behave appropriately. Our house reports were important to our parents. I don't remember ever having a particularly bad report. I certainly wouldn't have been perceived as being difficult in the boarding house.
25. I look back on bits of my schooling now and I remember hating the officer training core. You had to wear woolly shirt and they were horrible because they made your skin itch. I also remember thinking it was loopy seeing some of the fourteen year old boys, who looked like huge grown men, walking around in their school shorts. These are humorous memories as opposed to anything else.

Abuse at Morrison's Academy

26. I have vivid memories of the way we were treated by the prefects, not by the teachers or the House Master, but by the prefects in the house where we lived. Without any doubt there are times when, to this day, I'd consider the way they behaved to be cruel and gratuitous. How people could treat youngsters that way I just don't know. A seventeen or eighteen year old guy is essentially a man and when they are beating boys that are thirteen or fourteen it's just not right. The prefects were in charge of discipline around the house. From memory, there were four or five prefects in each house. There was

the occasional nice prefect. I actually remember a guy called [REDACTED] telling some of the other prefects to stop what they were doing and leave the boys alone.

27. You would regularly be beaten by the prefects if they decided your shoes hadn't been cleaned properly. When you came downstairs for breakfast, into the main hall, if your shoes were on the table that meant you hadn't cleaned your shoes properly. You would go and turn the shoes over to check the number on the bottom, hoping that you didn't see your number on the shoes. If it was your number, you knew you were going to be beaten after breakfast. You would be beaten on your bottom with an officers' cane, a cricket stump or a normal cane. The sorest thing was the officers' cane as it had two metal tips on the end of it. If you were beaten with that, it would break the skin and you would have blood on your pants. It was very cruel. I spent a lot of time trying to protect my little brother. If I found my little brothers shoes out in the hall, I would take them away and clean them again and put them back. I was able to protect him a little bit.
28. I have a distinct memory of being outside the prefects' room inside the boarding house. I was quite small and I was surrounded by four or five prefects. One would hit you and then another would hit you. They would play a game of who could hit the hardest. They would ask you which of them hit you the hardest. You can't win that game. If you said 'he hit the hardest', then another one would hit you even harder. It was a game to them and boys would be called into the prefects' room so they could play this game. This happened on a pretty regular basis and I remember it happening mainly on Sundays.
29. I remember two boys, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], who I'm sure would today be referred to as effeminate. They were in my dormitory. They were always getting picked on by the prefects. [REDACTED] had really bad acne. He had cream in a blue jar that he would put on his face after lights out. The prefects would come into the dormitory, make us all stand by our beds, and have [REDACTED] wash this stuff off his face. I wish I'd been stronger at the time to have turned around and told them that what they were doing wasn't fair or right. It was a form of ridicule. God forbid you woke up with an erection as you were made to drop your pants in front of everyone. Nobody touched you or anything like that, but they would make you feel embarrassed.

30. You didn't speak about what went on at Morrison's. It sounds disjointed, but it made you very self-protective. The easiest way to survive getting beaten was just to look after yourself. I had strong relationships with boys at school and maintained some of these relationship initially after I left school, but the easiest way to look after yourself was to keep yourself to yourself. To this day, I've never understood why the House Masters didn't do more about what went on. They must have known that some of the boys they put in charge were behaving inappropriately.
31. When I was thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, those were just not nice years. Then it started to slowly change for the better. I don't know if that was to do with the change of House Master to Archie McLean as he might have had a different way of dealing with discipline. I definitely remember it being a lot less vicious. My brother became head of house prefect when I left school. That would have been just five years later, but the whole culture had started to improve by this point.
32. I have no memory of ever reporting the behaviour of the prefects. I only told my mother and I remembering being told by her to man up. If my mother had thought it was something wrong, the teachers would have known about it. My mother would have considered it to be a normal growing up process. To put it into context, my grandfather was a Sergeant in the Scots Greys and was out in India in the Indian cavalry. He was a disciplinarian in every sense of the word. I think my mother got that from him and she definitely believed that what was happening to us was in our best interests.

Life after Morrison's Academy/Impact

33. After leaving Morrison's Academy, I wanted to be a vet, but I wasn't clever enough to pass my exams to go to university. I desperately wanted to be out of my parents control so I joined British Transport Hotels, three days after leaving school, as a management trainee in the [REDACTED] Hotel in Glasgow. I was then sent to work in the kitchens of the [REDACTED] Hotel in Edinburgh. I did a five year training course with them. I have what I believe to be a pretty good work ethic and a strong belief in total honesty. At twenty-seven I went to South America to work in Guyana.

34. I ended up running different hotel companies across the world. I think I've visited something like ninety-three percent of the world for work. I was very lucky as I ended up on the main board of ████████ Hotels which was, ████████ the largest hotel company in the world. They then bought over ████████ Hotels in ████████ and I was sent over to run that company. I think one of the things I learnt at school was to be non-confrontational. I think that might have helped me professionally and personally as I spend a lot of time listening to people's viewpoints.
35. My wife, my family and I have changed countries something like fourteen times. I would never go anywhere I couldn't take my children with me and the chances of me ever sending my children to a boarding school were nil. My children will tell you that I put them through far too many schools. Maybe they're right, but one of the biggest consequences of what happened to me, was that I was always going to keep my children with me. Whether that was the right thing to do, I honestly don't know. I have a son of forty, a daughter of thirty-eight and a daughter of thirty-four. My youngest daughter is doing her masters at Cambridge. I talk to them every day. I have a lovely relationship with my son and my daughters and I will happily talk to each other about absolutely anything. I adore that.
36. I've been happily married to a lovely wife for forty-two years, but I couldn't talk to my wife about school. I have no intention of ever talking to her about it and whether that's right or wrong, I don't know. I have never requested any of my records from my time at school. My schooling is like a part of my life that has gone into a bad corner in my memory and it's been there for forty years. The consequence of having attended a boarding school is that you want to hold those close to you, very close to you, but there are bits of you that just won't allow anybody in.
37. I don't believe I'm religious in any way, but I strongly believe in right and wrong. I also believe there is a spiritual part of life, that is important. I don't think I have a cruel bone in my body and I like to respect people. I think that is something I took from my schooling. I just wish they had respected us a bit more as youngsters. As a result of what I went through, I would cross the street to go and help anyone that needed it.

Reasons for speaking to the Inquiry

38. When I first started considering whether I wanted to talk to The Inquiry, I had to wrestle with my conscience, because I know that my mum and dad spent every penny they had on us, including sending us to school. They thought that was the best start in life that they could give us. You wonder how true you've been to your own mum and dad and whether I'm being very unfair to her by complaining about the choices they made. I did complain to her at the time. I have a memory of having quite a badly bruised bottom from being hit with an officer's cane. I asked my mum if I could show her the bruise and I remember being told by her just to get on with it. It makes you feel very unfaithful to your own mum because I'm certain there wasn't badness there. I'm certain that my mum and dad were convinced that what they were doing was best for us.
39. I had two big reasons for wanting to talk to The Inquiry. One was to try to make sure that people don't go through what I went through. The second is because of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who was also picked on. I am unsure as to the correct spelling of their names. I desperately wish I had been stronger in looking after and protecting them at the time.

Lessons to be Learned

40. I wish there had been someone that we could have talked to as youngsters. Someone that we could have confided in and someone who would have listened to us. It was just wrong the way that we were treated and it would have been nice if there was a safety net that could have stopped that from happening. I would hope that what happened to me, can't happen in schools today. There needs to be an independent way in which to check on the welfare of children. I would love to think that no child is subjected to the fear that we were subjected to as all children should have the chance to grow up without fear.

41. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed.....GFI.....

Dated.....06 April 2022.....