

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

LZQ

Support person present: No

1. My name is LZQ and I am known as LZQ. My date of birth is 1953. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

General

2. I was born in Ontario, Canada and I still live there. I am now retired, but I was very fortunate in my working life. I had a career that covered a lot of different roles and I was able to do a lot of things that I enjoyed. I left school as a secretary, became a seamstress at a private boy's school, a puppet-maker and after that I made harness and hobbles for horses for several years. My last job was as a school bus driver, which I did for twenty-six years.
3. About twenty years ago, after I had developed an interest in genealogy, I asked my uncle, [REDACTED] about my family on my father's side. Everything about my other grandparents was known and there are family everywhere, but I knew nothing about my paternal grandmother, uncle [REDACTED] mother. All I knew was that she came from Scotland, her name was AKK and she was born on [REDACTED] 1901.
4. My grandmother AKK passed away on [REDACTED] 1966, when I was about thirteen years old. Both before and since, my family had been very quiet about my grandmother's background and there was not a lot of information shared.

5. My uncle told me that he thought that my grandmother's parents separated when she and her sisters were young and that the kids were possibly illegitimate. He also said that their father, [REDACTED] was an alcoholic, but that the family refused to discuss it.
6. My uncle also told me that he believed my grandmother and her two sisters were brought to Canada by the Masonic Order and that [REDACTED], the oldest of the three sisters, had looked after my grandmother and her twin sister [REDACTED] on the trip over. When they landed the sisters were put into an orphanage for a few days before they were all separated.
7. He said that my grandmother had several jobs before she went to work as a maid at the [REDACTED] in Spencerville, Ontario. She then, according to my uncle, stayed with the [REDACTED] until she got married.
8. After speaking to him, I carried out some research myself and recovered records from wherever I could.

Background of [REDACTED] AKK

9. I have provided copies of a number of the records that I recovered to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry. I learned from those records that my grandmother's father was [REDACTED] and her mother was [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. Sometimes [REDACTED] is noted in those records as being called [REDACTED]. I'm not sure which is correct.
10. I established that my grandmother was born in Edinburgh and that she was a British Home Child. Together with two of her sisters, she was sent from Quarriers Home in Scotland to Canada.
11. My grandmother had three sisters: an older sister called [REDACTED], who was born on [REDACTED] 1897; [REDACTED], who was born on [REDACTED] 1899; and a [REDACTED] sister called [REDACTED], whom everybody called [REDACTED]. I believe, from the records I have found, that the family had been living in [REDACTED], Edinburgh.

12. Amongst the records I recovered is an extract of [REDACTED] death certificate, which shows that he died of pneumonia on [REDACTED] 1909.
13. I have also provided the Inquiry with copies of a number of press cuttings in relation to [REDACTED], or [REDACTED], [REDACTED], which relate to her being prosecuted for child neglect. The first article describes her receiving a fine of £1 or seven days imprisonment. I discovered from my research that she had been in prison four times, the last time being in [REDACTED] 1909, when she received a four month custodial sentence.
14. It is my understanding that following [REDACTED] death, with their mother being in prison, my grandmother AKK [REDACTED] and her sisters were placed in Quarriers Home on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 1909 by the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (SPCC).

Quarriers, Bridge of Weir

15. AKK [REDACTED] and her twin sister [REDACTED] were eight years old when they went into Quarriers in 1909. I understand that in 1912, their older sister [REDACTED] died of diphtheria at the age of thirteen. I believe, from records I have since obtained, that [REDACTED] is buried in the cemetery at Quarriers.
16. I have no awareness of how the girls were treated while they were in Quarriers.
17. The records I have recovered from Quarriers are very limited, but they show that AKK [REDACTED], her twin sister [REDACTED] and older sister [REDACTED], were all migrated to Canada on [REDACTED] 1913.

Migration

18. I have no knowledge of who might have spoken to the girls about migrating abroad or about any consent that was sought in relation to their migration. I don't believe there was any contact with the family before the girls were sent across.

19. I have provided the Inquiry with a copy of a medical certificate that I obtained through research of the Public Archives of Canada. It lists the names of all the children being migrated and includes my grandmother and her sisters, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].
20. I have no knowledge what belongings, if anything, the children had when they were sent across. There is reference in the 'Narratives of Fact' publication that Quarriers sent me to the children getting a bible, but I have no further knowledge than that.

Arrival in Canada

21. I have seen the passenger list for the ship that my grandmother and her sisters travelled on, the RMS Grampian, and I am aware that the Inquiry has a copy.
22. The passenger list shows that the Grampian sailed on [REDACTED] 1913 from Glasgow and makes mention of the Quarriers' party, including naming my grandmother and her sisters.
23. The records show that the ship arrived in Quebec on [REDACTED] 1913, just almost [REDACTED] after [REDACTED] birthday, at which time she turned twelve years old. When the girls arrived they were all sent to Fairknowe Home in Brockville, Ontario.

Fairknowe Home, Brockville, Ontario

24. My understanding is that not long after the girls arrived at Fairknowe Home they were put out on placements to families in Ontario. I have no knowledge of what [REDACTED] or her sisters' experiences at Fairknowe might have been.

Placements

25. I am led to believe that my grandmother [REDACTED] had several placements, but the only one that I am aware of was at the [REDACTED] in Spencerville. Even yet, I'm not sure whether that was a placement, or if it was employment that she found herself.

26. I established from a census that AKK [REDACTED] was with the [REDACTED] family when she was eighteen, but I don't know very much about AKK [REDACTED] time with them. I was told by my uncle that she worked as a maid for them for several years and that they treated her well. When she got married at the age of twenty-two, they signed the documents for her.
27. When AKK [REDACTED] and her sisters were put on their placements they were separated and I'm not sure how much contact they had with each other. I learned from my second-cousin in the United States, [REDACTED], that [REDACTED] was sent to Brockville for her placement. [REDACTED] had learned that from her mother, [REDACTED] daughter.
28. Brockville nowadays is about half-an-hour's drive away from Spencerville, I don't know if it would have been walking distance back then.
29. I don't know how many placements [REDACTED], AKK [REDACTED] twin, had, but I do know that one was a bad placement and that she was mistreated. I learned that she had put all her belongings in a pillowcase and snuck out of the window in the wintertime while it was snowing and when she was sick. She walked away from wherever her placement was as far as she could and exhausted and ill sat down. A couple that happened to be passing by picked her up and took her to a hospital where she told her story.
30. Someone managed to trace [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] went to stay with her and never had another placement after that. I've no knowledge of what [REDACTED] went through on her placement, but as a consequence of the way she had been treated, [REDACTED] developed anxiety and a stutter and refused to speak about what had happened to her.
31. I know that my grandmother shared some details of what [REDACTED] experienced with her oldest daughter, [REDACTED], and my uncle [REDACTED]. Aunt [REDACTED] was very tight-lipped and when I went to her for information around 2009, she got really angry and upset. She didn't understand why I felt the need to air the family's business and dig skeletons out of the closet. She wouldn't tell me anything.

32. I talked to Aunt [REDACTED] again just before she died in 2011 and I explained what I was trying to do. I wanted to know who I was and who AKK [REDACTED] was. At that point Aunt [REDACTED] understood, but she was not well and never told me anything. I believe that Aunt [REDACTED] may have told her oldest daughter something, but she is very much like her mother and refuses to talk about it.

Life after care - AKK [REDACTED]

33. AKK [REDACTED] got married on [REDACTED] 1923 to [REDACTED] and they had eight children. I am descended from one of their sons, [REDACTED].
34. They lived on a farm and my grandmother also worked outside the home and drove a car. The last job she had that I'm aware of was working at a truck-stop, where she waitressed and baked the desserts. I don't know what other jobs she might have had.
35. My grandmother was a very quiet and unassuming lady. She was very hands-on with her grandchildren and her own children were very protective of her.
36. I didn't really have a lot of dealings with my grandfather, but I believe that he was not the nicest of men and my recollections of him are not very favourable. In my opinion he was abusive. I think my grandmother suffered a little bit at his hands.
37. She also looked after her two youngest daughters' children. The children had been born illegitimately and my grandmother took the babies in and raised them. One had [REDACTED] and passed away while my grandmother was still looking after her.
38. My father [REDACTED] was in the military so we didn't live close by and we travelled a little bit. I was able to visit my grandmother in the summer when he had vacation. We went to visit at least once a year, sometimes twice. I would spend time with my grandmother on those trips and I remember her as a very loving lady. I can still remember her brushing my hair.

39. My father was close to his mother, but he didn't have any information about her or her sisters' childhoods. It was my father who directed me to my uncle [REDACTED]. I think my grandmother had tried to protect her children from her past and my father didn't know anything.

Life after care - [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

40. My grandmother's sisters, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], married brothers and moved to the United States to live. I'm not sure when they moved, but from the census, they were certainly there in 1920.
41. Both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] went on to have children of their own, but all I know of their lives is what my second-cousin [REDACTED] told me. They did well and lived a long time. [REDACTED] had five children and passed away in 1989. [REDACTED] had three kids and passed away in 1993 when she was ninety-two. Her husband passed away in 1969.

Contact after care

42. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] continued to have contact with each other and maintained limited contact with my grandmother as well. [REDACTED], my second-cousin, told me that the border between Canada and the United States was different in those days and people could move back and forth, from one side to the other. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] came back to Canada several times to visit [REDACTED] AKK, but when they tightened up the border, [REDACTED] was given a difficult time and so they never came back again.
43. There was no contact between my grandmother and her sisters after that because her sisters believed that they were in the U.S. illegally and they wouldn't be able to get back if they went over to Canada again.

Contact with family in Scotland

44. During World War II, my uncle [REDACTED] served in the forces and before he came home, he went to Scotland to get some information for his mother. That leads me to believe

that my grandmother had shared some information with him for him to know where he was going.

45. While he was there, he met an aunt of my grandmother called [REDACTED] and her son [REDACTED]. He said that they would not tell him anything, even when under the influence of alcohol, other than that they were embarrassed.
46. There is reference in the records I received from Quarriers to an uncle [REDACTED]. The records state that he wrote from Musselburgh in [REDACTED] 1913, asking for the address of the children as their grandfather and granny were worrying about not hearing from them.
47. I have since learned from speaking to [REDACTED], my second-cousin, that [REDACTED] kept in contact with her mother [REDACTED] and actually paid for her mother's funeral. I don't know how that contact had been established, but it lasted until [REDACTED] passed away.
48. I'm not aware of any contact that my grandmother had with her family in Scotland.

Records

49. I have provided the Inquiry with a copy of a letter that Quarriers sent me in 2005 and with the records that were attached to that letter.
50. It was painful trying to get those records from Quarriers. I contacted them several times and have a number of letters in reply, all containing pretty much the same information. I believe I had to pay the last time in 2005 to get records, but I don't remember how much. The other times were free.
51. I also obtained papers from the National Archives of Canada, which was fairly straightforward once you know what you're looking for.

52. I also tried to get records from Fairknowe, which had been run by Quarriers, but that was a dead end. It no longer existed by that time and I was told that everything had either been lost or destroyed.
53. Through that research and other genealogical work, I have been able to find other family members, which has helped with information.

Nationality and access to state services

54. I know that my grandmother didn't have a passport, because that's why she didn't go back and forwards across the border with the U.S. when they tightened up the border controls. I don't know if she was a Canadian citizen or a Canadian national though.
55. Although my grandmother worked all her life and paid taxes, I don't know whether she was able to access any pension or social security benefits.
56. I know that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] both worked when they lived in the US, but I don't know whether they received pensions or other state benefits.

[REDACTED] Web Page

57. I set up a webpage called [REDACTED] and put up a picture of my grandmother [REDACTED] in a white dress on it. I obtained the photograph from [REDACTED], my second-cousin, but I didn't have any other information about the photo or how old my grandmother was when it was taken.


Apologies

58. I am aware that in 2010 the then Prime Minister of the UK, Gordon Brown, made an apology for the child migration policy. There has been an apology made in Canada too, but it's still not good enough.

59. There is now an official day to remember the British Home Child and they put a postage stamp out, which was supposed to fix everything. It didn't.

Final thoughts

60. When I found out what had happened to my grandmother and her sisters I was dumbfounded and heartbroken. I can't believe that they would take kids that small away and put them on a ship. Those kids had probably never seen a ship before. I made that ocean crossing with my parents, and I can't imagine what it must have been like for three young kids without their parents.
61. I discovered that there was a stigma attached to the British Home Children, which was probably the reason none of my family would talk. I contacted the Inquiry because my grandmother's childhood has been secret long enough. I wanted to restore some dignity to the family and I wanted to remove the stigma.
62. It is sad that this is such a big part of Canada's history. These children helped to build Canada, but most people I talk to had no idea it happened. It's a big secret, but it should be talked of in the history books. I guess people are ashamed.
63. 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...  LZQ

Dated... Aug. 28, 2019