

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

LYE

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is LYE, however I am known as LYE. My date of birth is 1935. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. I am married and I live with my wife. We have been married for 45 years. We have a son called LYX and he lives with his partner. They have two children.

Life before going into care

3. I was born in Glasgow, Scotland. My mother was called and I later learned that my father was called. He died before I was born. My grandmother looked after me for the first three years of my life until I got too much for her and she gave me away to the Fairbridge Society. I have no memory of my mother or of my grandmother. Until my son did some investigating into my life, I thought I was the only one in the family. I thought that for many years, for most of my life.
4. I didn't see my grandmother or my mother again after I was placed in care. When I was in care, I was always alone, I found it difficult to make friends. I felt like the Lone Ranger. I later found out that my family were looking for me and I feel like every time they looked for me, I was moved.

Life before migration

5. Before I was sent to Canada, I was in other places that I don't remember much about. I can't remember being in a children's home called Middlemore in Birmingham, England. There is something in my mind about it but I'm not sure.

Mr and Mrs [REDACTED]

6. I remember staying with a Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] I called them Uncle [REDACTED] and Aunt [REDACTED]. I don't think I stayed with Uncle [REDACTED] and Aunt [REDACTED] for very long. I think I was there for about two or three months. They were good people. When I was staying with them, I remember I was in hospital with a broken arm but I don't remember much about it. I remember being told not to climb a ladder. Of course, I climbed the ladder and one of the rungs broke, it was about seventeen rungs up. I fell and broke my arm. I had to stay in hospital and I remember the doctor who treated me was German.
7. I remember I was in hospital again for bad haemorrhoids. Nowadays they can give you something for them but back then they didn't have anything so they had to operate. I spent the better part of a year in hospital.

Fairbridge Bennington, Hertfordshire

8. After I stayed with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] I was moved to Bennington. I think I stayed there for about three or four years. Every night was the same routine. We had to fold our clothes up, put a belt round them and put them under our bed. London was only 130 miles away and was being bombed during that time. We did that with our clothes so we could get dressed quickly if we were bombed. We wore shorts or whatever. We didn't wear a uniform.
9. I'm not sure how many kids were there but there were quite a few boys and girls. I felt alone there and I couldn't seem to make friends.

Chores/school

10. I can't remember doing any chores in Bennington. We did go to school and I remember walking about a mile and a half to get there. I hated my teacher. If you made a mistake, he didn't try and help you correct it, he would smack you with a ruler. I was left handed and you were not allowed to use your left hand so I would get a smack with the ruler for using my left hand.

Staff

11. Most of the staff in Bennington were pretty good. There was the odd one who if they caught you whispering to the other kids would make you speak up and you were told not to whisper. To me, that was telling me to shut up.

Mealtimes/food

12. I remember that the meals were good at Bennington. I hate barley and I remember they used to make a barley soup and if you didn't eat it, you wore it. I thought the barley soup had rocks in it so I said I didn't want to eat it. I was told to eat it or I would go without. Even today, I won't eat barley. You didn't get anything else to eat so you went hungry.

Sleeping arrangements

13. We slept in dormitories and I remember sleeping in a different area to the girls. The only time we got together with the girls was at meal times and at school.
14. What I do remember about Bennington is getting out of the bed and hiding because we could hear bombs going off in London. Before we went to bed, we would sit outside and when we looked up, the sky was all lit up over London. I remember once, the Germans flew rockets over and one of them landed in the fish pond. People from the air force in London came and we were not allowed near it. It was a V2 rocket, it was huge. I remember the noise the rockets used to make. I don't remember hearing any

air raid sirens going off. You would have thought they would have had some sort of early warning system. We didn't have gas masks.

15. I remember one night, they wanted all the boys and girls to go to bed at 6.30pm. It was the summertime and it was beautiful outside. We all ran away and headed towards London. We were found a couple of days later in a farmer's field in a haystack and they brought us all back. They fed us and gave us a bath. We were then put to bed. They were good about that.

Bathing routine

16. I don't remember much about bathing in Bennington. I think we had to bathe once or twice a week, I can't be sure.

Leisure/trips

17. For leisure, we would get to play outside. I remember there was a lawn at the front of the house. We would find a piece of cardboard and slide down the banks of the lawn. You would sit at the top and someone would give you a shove. I don't remember playing any ball games.
18. I remember being taken on a trip on a bus. I don't know where we went. All I remember is sitting on the bus. It was noisy and the kids were all talking. I know that the trip was during the war.

Religious instruction

19. I can't remember if we had to go to church, I don't think we did. There was a church in Bennington which we walked past on our way to school.

Birthdays/Christmas

20. At Christmas the American and Canadian forces would throw a party in the hall. I remember one time we were called to the hall. We didn't know why we were being called to there. We were all sitting down in the hall and a screen and curtains were set up on the stage. All the servicemen then came out with Santa Claus and we were all given a chocolate bar. We thought we were millionaires getting a chocolate bar as chocolate was really hard to get. I think we all went nuts. We were all screaming and yelling as we had never seen Santa before.
21. I don't remember a party being organised for my birthday.

Visitors

22. I didn't get any visitors, I don't think anyone got any visitors. Unless some big shot came, they would be taken into the office and then shown around. That drove me nuts. Why bring someone in to see the kids and then not let them see them?

Discipline

23. In Bennington, they disciplined us by making us scrub the floors. It became a joke after a while as the floors didn't look dirty to me. I can't remember if they disciplined us in any other way.

Migration

Selection/information

24. I was never asked if I wanted to go to Canada. The person who was supposed to go got sick. If you had the flu or were sick in any way you were not allowed to be sent to Canada. I don't know his name but I was sent instead of him. That's about all I can remember about being sent away. I don't remember anyone ever speaking to me about it. I found out later on that I wasn't even supposed to go to Canada, I was

supposed to go to Australia. I saw something the other day in my records, there was a woman who wanted me to be sent to Canada and the Fairbridge Society wanted to send me to Australia. I don't know who she was. I can't remember her name.

25. We had to have a medical check-up and I still have the mark on my arm from all the injections I received prior to going to Canada. I think one was for measles and another was for chicken pox. I think I was given about three or four injections. We had to go out to see a doctor for the injections. I don't know where we were taken. All the kids who were being sent overseas had to be given these injections.
26. I didn't have any contact with my family before I went to Canada.

Journey on HMS Bayano

27. I don't exactly remember the day I left for Canada. I don't remember packing my clothes but I imagine we did that. I don't remember what we wore.
28. I remember parts of the journey. I remember sitting on the dock and we were all given a penny to throw in the water. The ship was lowered down as it was about to sail and I remember throwing the pennies but the level of the dock was above us.
29. A lot of the party were sea-sick and I remember that lasted for about three days. The staff would come and look after us. Once we got out on the Atlantic, it was pretty smooth sailing after that. Once we felt better we went up on deck and we were able to eat again. I don't remember any other kid from Scotland on my trip over. I don't know why, but the kids just seemed to want to stick by themselves. I don't remember making any friends on the boat.
30. We sailed on the HMS Bayano and we were supposed to sail to Halifax but the girls, who were on a separate ship, the SS Oria, had sailed to Montreal. We then had to spend another day and a half sailing to Montreal to meet up with the party of girls. We were taken off the boat and the next day we went on a bus tour. The first thing I

remember seeing on the tour was a beautiful garden which had the British flag made out of flowers. It looked huge to me.

Journey to Vancouver Island

31. We boarded a train that night and we headed to Vancouver. It took us about four days to a week to reach Vancouver. The only thing I remember about that journey was getting a piece of cinder in my eye and the people accompanying us couldn't do anything about it until we arrived in Vancouver. A doctor was there when we arrived and took the cinder out of my eye.
32. On the night of our arrival, we came over to Vancouver Island. I don't have a clue who the staff were who accompanied us. I know that the staff came to Vancouver with us but I don't remember them coming over to the Island with us. We got the ferry over from Vancouver to Nanaimo. I think we walked onto the ferry and there was a bus waiting for us in Nanaimo. We were put on the bus straight up to Fairbridge Farm, which was just outside a town called Duncan. I don't remember if a photograph was taken of us when we arrived. I understand that there is a photo of us when we arrived, which I have seen, however I am not able to identify myself from the photo. My son, **LYX** has been able to point me out in the photo.

Fairbridge Farm, Vancouver Island

33. Fairbridge Farm was not far outside of the town of Duncan. The boys and girls lived in separate cottages. There were about 125 boys and girls altogether on the farm. I never met any other kids from Scotland when I was there, but there must have been some there.
34. Fairbridge was spread out because it was a farm. It had its own dairy farm and orchards. There were staff who milked the cows but I don't know what happened to the milk. They grew fruits and this was picked by their own staff too. I think the farm covered about eleven hundred acres. The farm staff did not stay on the farm, I think

they stayed in Duncan. We all stayed in cottages which were named after a letter of the alphabet. My cottage was next to the hospital. There was an area for the boys' cottages. The girls' cottages started across from the dining area and ended up at the chapel. There were a couple of teachers who had their own cottages and who stayed down in that area.

35. Major Plows was the Principal of Fairbridge when I was there. I think there was a Mr Garnett who was the Principal before him. I can't remember anybody else.

First day

36. On my first day on Fairbridge Farm, I think we arrived about early evening. We were fed and I remember there were laundry tubs for bathing. I remember we were then taken down to our cottage and introduced to our cottage mothers and then sent to bed. My cottage mother was called Mrs QDG I lived with her for the whole time I stayed at Fairbridge.

Mornings and bedtime

37. In the morning, we got up, went to the bathroom and we brushed our teeth. We combed our hair and got washed.
38. We had our breakfast in the cottage. Most of the time I think it was a kid that cooked the breakfast. I think we made cereal. I don't remember Mrs QDG helping to make breakfast. I think most of the time, the kids helped themselves at breakfast.
39. We would make our bed and then walk to school. The first period at school was math, which I hated. Then we had a break about 10 o'clock for recess. We then were taught whatever the teacher decided to do later that day. It could be science or spelling. I loved spelling. I remember once being entered into a spelling bee against a school in Duncan. I lost by one point as I was asked to spell "further" but I had heard "farther" so got it wrong. I was a little upset about that as I didn't think of asking which word it was.

Bedwetting

40. There were a few kids who had a problem with bedwetting. I don't think the cottage mother was too impressed by it. If you wet the bed, it was your own problem and you were expected to wash your own sheets. I think one of the kids complained about having to wash their sheets before school but it didn't go anywhere. I was one of the lucky ones who didn't have that problem. To wash the sheets, they had to use a wash board.

Mealtimes

41. I can't remember what we did at lunchtime. I do remember that if you didn't eat the food in the cottages you went hungry. There wasn't too much to eat anyway.

Washing/bathing

42. I don't remember any particular routine for bathing. I only remember there being a bath in the cottage, I don't remember a shower. I think we were allowed to bathe once or twice a week. We had a bath on our own, we did not share a bath.

Clothing

43. We wore regular clothes. I know we wore shorts and I remember wearing shoes. We did not wear a uniform.

Leisure time

44. In the summertime, we would walk about a mile and a half to go swimming in the river. When we first arrived we had to learn how to swim. The river wasn't very wide. We had to be able to swim across the river and back again without stopping. There was

always a senior child swimming beside you to make sure you wouldn't drown. Only once you could swim back and forth without stopping were you allowed to go swimming without supervision. Within two days, we had all learned how to swim.

45. On one side of the sluice on the river, someone had removed a tree stump and there was a hole about 25 feet deep. I fell down it and luckily for me, one of the staff had seen me and managed to pull me out. I was about ten or eleven at the time. I got out and swam across the river and back again to show that I was not afraid. The next day, the hole had been filled in again but I stayed away from that area. I used to swim over where the diving board was.
46. We were allowed to go into Duncan to spend our money. You could see a movie. That was another time that you were allowed to mix with the girls. We would look after the girls as they would have to walk through an Indian Reserve going to and from Duncan. We didn't let them walk by themselves. We were given a penny a month and we would have to save for about half a year to save enough to go to the movies. Even when you went, you were only really interested in the popcorn and the coke because it was cheap. It was only 15 cents.

Schooling

47. The school was about a quarter of a mile away from my cottage. If you were late for school, you were sent to the Principal's office.
48. The kids from Duncan used to attend our school and they picked on me because I was short. I was barely over 4 feet tall. Most of the boys who came over with me to Canada were six or seven inches taller than me. There was one boy who gave me a lousy time at school. He was about 5 feet 5 inches tall. One day I decided I had had enough. I smacked him just outside the Principal's office and the Principal walked out and saw me smacking him. The Principal asked what we were fighting about and I told him to go and ask "skinny." The other boy was called in but they wouldn't believe me when I told him that I smacked him for picking on me and that he had started it. I was told to

go home for the day. When I got home, I was bored so I went out the back and piled some wood. The boy from Duncan never bothered me again after that.

49. The punishments we received at school were to either stand in a corner or we were sent to the Principal's office. He would then send you home for the day and if you missed anything in class you had to catch up the next day. It annoyed me because you would spend a day doing nothing then have to do double the work the next day.
50. I was left handed. I would receive a slap on the wrist if I tried to write with my left hand and be told to write with my right hand. It's really hard to switch writing hands, I feel it has ruined my writing skills.
51. The teachers were great. Mrs Gray was my Grade 6 or 7 teacher. I also remember a Miss Hanson teaching me. There was also an auxiliary teacher to look after us when we were sick. I can't remember her name. She was nice.
52. We would play sports in school. There was a boys' and a girls' team. We played baseball and cricket. The girls were taught by Miss Hanson and we were taught by a man from Duncan. The girls would play baseball and made us boys look like we couldn't play.

Healthcare

53. There was a nurse at the hospital but if we were suffering from something serious, then we were taken to the hospital in Duncan. I remember one time when I was at school and I was sitting at my desk and I was doubled up in pain. The teacher asked me if I was okay but I couldn't talk as I was in pain. The nurse was called from Fairbridge. Mr Brown, the farm school driver, then took me to Queen's Hospital in Duncan. The doctor examined me and it was discovered that my appendix had ruptured. I was in hospital for about a week. After that I had tonsillitis and I spent more time in hospital than in school at that time. My tonsils were taken out and I remember being given what they called ice cream but it tasted like soured milk. They used ether

to put me to sleep for the operation. I can't stand the smell of ether to this day due to my time in hospital.

Religious Instruction

54. We didn't have a choice but to go to church. It was a given that you went to church. If anyone was Catholic, they were taken to church in Duncan. There was a Catholic Church there. The rest of us went to our own chapel in Fairbridge.
55. I was in the choir and I found that very interesting. I used to get to sing solo at Easter and at Christmas. One Easter, I was supposed to sing but my voice broke. The minister thought I was playing games and he kicked me. I turned around and said good-bye and left. I didn't sing in the choir after that. I think I was about twelve or thirteen at the time. I had loved the choir and I had loved to sing.

Chores

56. My chores at Fairbridge Farm were to pile wood and make our beds. I don't remember doing much else in the way of chores. There were animals on the farm but I didn't do anything with the animals. The kids did not go to the farming area.

Christmas and birthdays

57. I don't remember any of my birthdays being celebrated. The only thing I remember about Christmas is they allowed us up to 25 cents to buy a Christmas present. It wasn't enough to buy anything so we didn't buy anything.
58. There is only one time that I received anything as a present. It was in my first year after I was sent to Canada. Someone must have told my grandmother where I was and she sent me a wrist watch as a Christmas present. I took the watch off for some

reason. Normally the kids were good for not taking other kids' things but I forgot about it and when I went back to get it, it was gone. I was really upset at the time.

Family contact

59. Before I came to Fairbridge, I knew I had a grandmother but I didn't know about any other family members. She sent me a parcel when I was in Fairbridge, but it didn't have a letter with it, it just said "from Granny". If she did send a letter, I don't know where it went. I understand that my grandmother wrote me letters but I don't know what happened to them as I didn't get them. I would have definitely written to her. It annoys me that I didn't get the letters.

Discipline

60. We would be disciplined by being asked to pile wood. You would make a tee-pee style shape with the wood. At that age, I could've piled wood all day. I don't recall the discipline ever bothering us. We would be disciplined for things like forgetting to make up our bed. Sometimes you didn't know what you had done but I would just get on with it and go out and pile the wood. Everyone had to break and pile wood and you got used to it.

Leisure time

61. Depending on the time of year, if we had any spare time, we would go down to the river and swim. We could only go down once all our chores were done. We would see the girls but we did not flirt with the girls, that was not allowed. Most of the time, the staff were laid back. I just didn't seem to fit in with the boys or the girls. I did talk with the girls when we were swimming. We were never told not to talk to the Duncan girls.
62. I just didn't feel like I had any friends there, I always felt like an outsider. There were people I would talk to but to me it felt like they would back off.

Mrs QDG - Cottage "O" Housemother

63. Mrs QDG was not my idea of a housemother. I don't think she should have been there. She had her own little quirks. I remember a time when I was washing the dishes and a kid threw something at me. Mrs QDG saw him and she didn't say anything to him. I asked her why she was letting that kid throw things at me. She just walked away back into her office and ignored me. She couldn't have cared less. If someone else had asked her, they would've got an answer. I'm sure a few of the other kids felt the same way about her. You wouldn't have dared to say something. She would favour one person over someone else.
64. I would always make my bed. It had to be tight and smooth, and either Mrs QDG or some other kid would mess it up. I told her there was no need to do that. I'm sure she did it to the other kids as well.
65. One night, we decided that we had had enough of Mrs QDG. We built a lean-to den in the bush area. The staff didn't know where we were. Some kids brought us food they had sneaked out of the cottage. She would ask the other kids if they knew where we were. Mrs QDG had a dog we called her "snort" dog. You could always hear him coming as he was always snorting. She came looking for us with the dog. She asked us what we had been eating and we were hauled back to the cottage.
66. When we went back to the house, the police were at the house and one of the kids said to the police that if Mrs QDG wasn't so mean then we wouldn't have run away. They said we should be notifying someone. The kid said that we would be ignored. Mrs QDG stopped us going into the bush after this.
67. I don't think you could open your mouth to tell anyone how you felt as they wouldn't have believed you or they would have ignored you. I don't think that was fair. I shouldn't let it get to me after all these years, but it does.

68. There were about fourteen or fifteen kids in the cottage and two or three of the kids were picked on. It wasn't funny. I was picked on by some of the boys in the cottage who thought they were tough. I didn't retaliate as I would've ended up in the corner. That was another of Mrs QDG [REDACTED] punishments. We would either have to pile wood, do housework, do the dishes or stand in a corner.
69. You didn't dare swear, even if that is what you wanted to do, or you would have ended up with being made to pile extra wood or do some housework. I never complained about Mrs QDG [REDACTED] at the time, I should've said something but I didn't. We would've been ignored anyway. I don't know what her problem was. She seemed to have it in for different kids. I had the same housemother until I left and I was there for about three or four years. I was thirteen, nearly fourteen when I left.
70. I don't think Mrs QDG [REDACTED] ever went on holiday as I don't remember getting any replacements. The girls seemed to get on great with their housemothers.

Visitors/inspectors

71. I don't remember seeing any inspectors or anyone official looking. No-one came to speak to me. The Inquiry are the first people I have considered speaking to about Fairbridge.
72. I feel like that I was moved on all the time so relatives couldn't contact me. I was told at the time that relatives were not allowed to contact me when we came over to Canada. I can't remember who told me. I was told they were not allowed to write us letters. I understand that before I left, my granny found out where I was and I was moved again. I don't know how my Granny found out where I was. To me, it didn't make sense. I had a family, and I was being bounced from pillar to post. I just don't understand why that happened.

Life after Fairbridge Farm, Vancouver Island

73. The Canadian Pacific Railway bought the farm at Fairbridge. My understanding is that they bought all the property, everything. Fairbridge were trying to place the kids in foster homes and they asked me where I would like to go and what would I like to do. I can't remember who asked me. I said I would settle for a farm or a ranch. After about a month, I was told that a Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] were looking to adopt a kid. They had two sons of their own and they lived on a ranch in Princeton. I had no idea where that was and was told it was on the mainland. I only knew Duncan and Fairbridge so I had no idea where I was going.
74. I was told I was leaving and that a welfare guy would meet me on the other side on the mainland and drive me to Princeton. I was introduced to the family. At first I felt homesick as I was used to being surrounded by other kids. I told myself I just had to get on with it.

Life with the [REDACTED] family, Princeton

75. When I went to live with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] my life just seemed to settle down and it was perfect. I just got on with the work I was allocated and I got to it straight away. They were very nice people and there was always food on the table. The only stipulation was that I had to stay there until I was eighteen.
76. My jobs were to bring in the wood, then bring the cows in. I would clean the udders and put the machines on them to milk them. I had to clean the bottles. In the morning, we would deliver the milk from the night before. We would put the milk in the creek to keep it cold overnight.
77. I slept in the bunkhouse and the [REDACTED] family slept in the main house with their own kids. There was another cabin where the other staff slept. We ate in the house with the family, but I wasn't a big eater. There was a man I called 'DGQ [REDACTED]', he was Italian. He caught me squirting the cat with milk straight from the cow's teat. He swore at me in Italian and threw an axe at me. I understood what he had said and I told him that I knew that he had sworn at me in Italian. When he threw the axe at me, I had closed

the top half of the door. I was lucky as the axe would have got me in the middle of my eyes.

78. I called Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] "mum" and "dad". They never asked me to call them that. I sometimes called them by their first names, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They are both deceased now.
79. When I went to live with the [REDACTED] family, I gave up on school. The last grade I was in at Fairbridge Farm was grade seven. I felt that I was working, so why bother going to school. Anything I learned, I learned on my own.
80. We were too busy to celebrate Christmas or our birthdays. We had to milk the cows twice a day. We had about 52 cattle on the farm. It would take 2 to 3 hours per time. I also piled wood for them. It would be delivered out the back and I would chop it and bring it round. Dad [REDACTED] and Uncle [REDACTED] used to go hunting and they would take some wood with them for their camp fires.
81. I didn't get any days off. I would maybe get three hours off on Saturday and I didn't take any holidays. I would get up at about 6 or 6.30 in the morning for the first milking of the day. Then I had to separate the milk from the cream and then we would deliver the milk to the store in Copper Mountain. We would bring the empty bottles back and wash them. Then we would go get the cows back in from the meadow for their second milking. I would finish at about 7 or 8 at night.
82. I really enjoyed being at the farm and living with the [REDACTED]. When I turned eighteen, I left. I had learned so many things at the [REDACTED] farm, I could've got a job on any farm. I knew how to mow and I knew how to work all the equipment.
83. No-one contacted me from Fairbridge the whole time I stayed with the [REDACTED]. I didn't hear a peep from anyone.

Life after care

84. I left the [REDACTED] when I was about eighteen. I moved to the coast and I looked for work. I can't remember what my first job was.
85. I then moved back to Vancouver Island and lived in Lake Cowichan. I worked in a mill in Honeymoon Bay north of Cowichan, which is now gone. I then worked in another mill. I then drove a taxi in Duncan and then went back to the mainland and got a job driving a truck.
86. I came back to Duncan with a friend who was visiting his parents and eventually got a job working for the national defence. I was there for twenty-three and a half years driving a truck. I met my first wife and we had two daughters together. She already had two children from a previous relationship. We got divorced after five years.
87. I then met my current wife, [REDACTED] and we have been married for 45 years. She was never able to understand why I acted the way I did or why I had an attitude.

Family contact after care

88. I have only recently found out that I have family. It was only because my son did a lot of research about my childhood that I found out about my family. I had always thought that I didn't have any family. My son started his research about a year ago and he contacted the Fairbridge Society and received all my records.
89. When I was about eighteen in 1954, I visited a couple in Detroit. I was living in Duncan in a hotel at the time and I was sent bus tickets to travel to Detroit by this couple. I didn't know what was going on. I got on a bus in Vancouver and went into the United States in Washington State and all the way across to Michigan and nothing was ever said to me about crossing the border. A woman met me at the bus depot. She called me [REDACTED]. I didn't know the name and I didn't know why she had called me that. She took me with her husband back to their apartment. I remember the man's name was [REDACTED] and I remember everything about [REDACTED] car. I called her [REDACTED], but her name was actually [REDACTED]. I stayed with them for about four days but neither of them

told me why they had sent for me. I went back across the border to Canada and I was to meet them the next day back in the States. Unfortunately, I wasn't allowed back into the States. I didn't have a phone number for her so I couldn't call her to tell her what was going on. I decided to run off West and I never saw this woman and her husband again. I later found out that they came looking for me but no one knew where I was. They came over to Canada but they couldn't find me. Years later I found out that [REDACTED] was my sister.

90. When my son did the research about my family, [REDACTED] contacted him and I spoke to her on FaceTime. She called me [REDACTED] when my face came on the screen. She told me that they had been looking for years after I didn't come back over the border. She said that she had wanted to take me in and look after me after I had left care. No one knew where I was. I had no idea that I had family. I didn't know she was my sister. I asked her why she didn't tell me she was my sister. She said she wanted my real mother, who was still alive in 1954, to tell me about my family. She felt it was not her place to tell me.
91. I also found out through my son's research that I have two sisters who live in Australia called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I have spoken to them on FaceTime too. I have two brothers called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], but I haven't spoken to them. When I found out about my brothers and sisters, it really threw me off balance. All my life I thought I was on my own. When my son started to find out things about my family and was telling me, I just couldn't believe it.
92. Growing up, I didn't have a clue who my mother was. It was like a kick in the head when I found out about all my family. For years I thought it was only me. I was upset for over a week. You think someone would have tried to track me down.

Records

93. I got a pack of papers from Fairbridge in about 1985, but I don't remember about requesting them. Someone wrote something in the Fairbridge Gazette about trying to

get back to England and I wondered what was going on. I decided to write to Fairbridge to ask for information.

94. The papers I received from Fairbridge in 1985 are different from the ones received by my son. I can't remember if I read the documents at the time.
95. In my records, it mentions that I was sent to a child guidance clinic when I was at Fairbridge in relation to my behaviour. I have no recollection of any of that.

Obtaining Canadian citizenship

96. I was in Canada for about 42 years and I got this paperwork from England that said we had to become Canadian citizens. It may have had something to do with my pension, but I can't remember. When we were kids, we were told that we would automatically become Canadian citizens. I don't know who told us this. Why did it take over 40 years to be told we had to apply to be a Canadian citizenship? I had to apply to become a Canadian citizen and I had to go before a judge. I was asked questions, like who the Canadian Prime Minister was and how many provinces were in Canada. I then left and the next person went in and was asked questions.
97. We were all called back in and we were sworn in as Canadian citizens and given citizenship papers. I think this was in about 1992. I didn't have to pay for that. There were probably loads of Fairbridge kids who ended up in the same position. We were told we were naturalised Canadians, why did they tell us that when it wasn't true? Then 42 years later you were told that you have to become a Canadian citizen.

Fairbridge society

98. I went to one reunion of the Fairbridge Society and I thought they were a bunch of snobs. I can't remember when I attended this reunion. I was practically ignored. If you didn't have a million bucks in the bank, they didn't want to know you. I decided not to

go back. Some were lawyers and judges and arrived in their fancy cars. I rolled up in my "old tin can" and they didn't like it.

99. The Fairbridge Society have put up a board near the chapel that has all the kids' names on it who stayed in Fairbridge Farm. My name is there along with all the other kids' names I arrived with and the year we arrived. There used to be a plaque on the gate post with our names on it but it is no longer there.

British Government apology

100. I wasn't aware that the British Government gave an apology to child migrants in 2010 until my son showed me the clip of the British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. My view is that if anyone should be giving an apology, it should be the Canadian Government. We don't watch the BBC so it is not like we would have been able to see it.
101. The British Government have recently sent me £20,000 as redress.

Impact

102. I'm sure my time in care has had an effect on me. I can be very moody. Sometimes I'm in a really good mood and there are times when I just don't want to talk to anyone. If I don't want to speak to someone I would just walk away. Sometimes something will set me off and I just want to be by myself. Once I get over that, I'm fine. For someone who didn't have a great education, I think I did well for myself. I made my mind up that I was going to accomplish something and I did it all myself. I encouraged my son to learn mechanics and I taught him.
103. I think I did a good job of living to as old as I am. If I had had a good education and a good family then who knows where I would have ended up. I didn't go to high school.

I have worked all my life and I taught myself how to drive vehicles and how to fix them. I am proud of what I have done with my life. There have been a few screw ups. But once I made up my mind I was going to do something, I learned how to do it myself. It was all trial and error. I have been able to show my son all about fixing cars and I am proud of that.

Lessons to be learned

104. I think that if anyone is going to send children to other countries, then the government should step in and make sure that they are not beaten and picked on. It's not the kids fault they were born.
105. The families should be fully checked out and those families and other relatives should abide by those rules. They need to check out what kind of family they are. To me, it can ruin a child's life. If it wasn't for my own willpower, to fight things off then I might not even be here. I decided to put my foot down and get on with life.
106. Family information and records should be kept and looked at. I just don't want what happened to me to happen to anyone else.

Other information

107. 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.. LYE

Dated...07-11-2019.....