

Transcript of interview with Patrick (Pat) Duffy

Interviewer: Mary Cunningham

Date: 16 November 2019

Location of Interview: Patrick Duffy's home

Length of Interview: 1 hour 6 minutes

The following items were copied and submitted by Pat Duffy for the archive:

PHOTOGRAPHS

- 1: Pat Duffy
- 2: Edward Duffy (father)
- 3: Maura, Josie, Pat and Anne Duffy
- 4: Pat seated in the car (aged 7) with neighbours at his aunt's and uncle's house
- 5 & 6: Pat in Killimor, Co. Galway on the day of his Confirmation.
- 7: Pat (aged 15-16) and his father
- 8: Note re. dates of enrolment in the Mercy Convent, Tuam.

MC: It's the 2nd of December, 2019. This is Mary Cunningham and I'm here with Pat Duffy in his home in Magheramore, Killimor, Co Galway. This interview with Pat is part of the Tuam Home oral history project, which is being overseen by the History Department in NUI Galway.

Thanks very much for giving me your time today Pat, and if we start your story with your childhood and any memories you have from that time.

PD: I was born on ■■■th of ■■■, 1952, to my mother Teresa and Edward (Ned) Duffy, here in Magheramore, Killimor. My mother died at the birth of me, that same day in 1952, ■■■th of ■■■. A few hours after, I was taken away to my uncle and my aunt, it's just two miles from here - Kylemore. I was there - she reared me until I was three months old. After three months I was taken to Tuam [Mother and Baby Home] because my aunt and my uncle had ten of their own in family, and they had my own sisters along with me. [Pat had three sisters]. They weren't able to cope with us all. Two sisters, my two cousins got the three girls, my sisters, into the convent in Ballinasloe. They kept me, I was there for three months and my father heard about it, he got upset over it. [Pat's father had heard that his three daughters had been placed in the convent in Ballinasloe]. **See photo #2 listed above**

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

He got the priest and the doctor to get me into Tuam [Mother and Baby Home]. First they wanted to put me into Ballinasloe, but Ballinasloe wouldn't take me as it was only for girls - a boarding school for girls. They sent me to Tuam instead, and that's when I started, I was reared in Tuam from when I was three months old until I was six years old, six and a half years old.

MC: So, you were sent to Tuam because your father or your relatives weren't in a position to look after you.

PD: My relatives wanted to look after me, but my father wasn't happy with it because of what they did with the three girls. The three girls were put into Ballinasloe without his permission. They came down here to the house and told my father that the three girls were put into the convent and they kept me. That's when he got vexed and he got the parish priest and the doctor, my G.P., to get me into the convent. That's how it started. They went to Tuam then and they signed me into the convent in Tuam.

MC: So he was upset that the family was being separated.

PD: Yes, he was upset over them being separated.

MC: Were they your mother's relatives?

PD: They were my father's relatives, my uncle was a brother of my father. And to be fair, they wanted to keep me the whole time because I was the pet. It didn't work out that way, that's why I was sent to Tuam.

MC: And your mother died --

PD: She died at the birth of me.

MC: In childbirth.

PD: Yes, in childbirth.

I went to Tuam then from when I was three months until I was six and a half years old. I was there then. But I always remember—I remember two years of Tuam, when I was there, when I was inside in the convent. I remember inside the dorm, sitting down—especially at nighttime when you'd be in bed and you'd go to the toilet. You'd be afraid to say anything. You'd go to the toilet in the bed; wet the bed the whole time. You were afraid to say anything and you'd sleep on the bed then for three or four days without any changing of the blanket or your sheet.

I remember another guy with me, I wouldn't know his name, but I always remember he was there. He was very nervous too, and he wet the bed. We'd try and take sheets from somewhere else, but we couldn't find them. That's the way it was, we had to sleep in that. I'd have to go around then with a nappy on me. I might have a nappy on for two days without being changed - all runny nose, going around on bare feet, no clothes, just a shirt, a pants alright and a t-shirt. I'd be always very cold, and I used have a runny nose.

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

Then, when you'd be eating your dinner—the dinner you'd get anyway was very small—there'd be a tin plate, and the tin plate would be left down, and I'd be sitting at a table, and the table would be this long, down near the door and down to there. (*spreads arms and points to indicate a very long table*). There'd be guys sitting one side and I'd be sitting up here at the end. You'd be eating your dinner then and the guys would be playing with you. The dinner might fall down on the floor and you'd have to pick it up. The nuns would run up, catch you by the ear, make you eat your dinner on the floor. Whatever was left on the floor you'd pick that up with your hands. Eat that then and God only knows how many germs was on the floor.

That's what happened. I was always getting sick and everything. There's a lot of things, you know, in my mind—when you'd be in bed and you'd be shaking yourself, trying to comfort yourself. I used to be there and used to be looking out. I was never let outside, only once for going down to school and I don't remember going down to school. I barely remember going down and I don't remember going out. I was so nervous going anywhere because of what happened at night, I'd be watching and crying—runny nose the whole time. There was so much—hungry, looking for someone to come and take me and no-one to take me. Crying away, fear the whole time, nerves the whole time.

Anyway, the time came then, in 1958 or 9 I think, when my time was up to come home or go to Letterfrack. Only for my half-sister, she's dead a good while now, she warned my father not to send me to Letterfrack. If I did go, I'd come home in a coffin. She warned him because she knew all about it because she lived over in Connemara herself.

MC: Used your father visit you in Tuam?

PD: He did, but I don't remember that part. I don't remember my father visiting me. I don't remember my aunt that looked after me. I don't remember my uncles. They visited me all right, they told me once. Someone told me, he said that I'd be dressed up in the best of clothes when they'd come. But, then you'd turn and you'd be back to square one again.

It was so hard to be dealing with the hunger, I was always hungry because I got nothing to eat. In the morning you might get a slice of bread or a cup of tea, or milk mostly. I never drank tea until I came here.

MC: A slice of bread—

PD: And a glass of milk, that was all we got. Then you'd get your dinner. That was it then, I never seen any food at nighttime. We never seen no Christmas, I never seen Christmas until I came back here to Killimor.

When I came back to Killimor, back to my aunt— In 1959 I came home. Before I came home—I always remember the first day I came out, out of the convent. I stood at the front door and the ambulance was waiting for me to bring me home. I didn't know what it was for at first, it was a white one anyway. A nurse and the ambulance driver tried to pull me and push me into the back of the ambulance, and I didn't want to go because I didn't know what was going on. I was in fear the whole time, roaring crying. They caught me on both sides of the arms and shoved me into a dark place and I said to myself, oh God what's wrong, why

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

am I stuck in here, all this kind of thing. I was crying anyway, I didn't know where they were bringing me, I didn't know where I was going until I arrived here at my own house.

They were all smiles to me before they took me out of the ambulance. I got out here. My father was out the front there, and my aunt, and my other aunt on my mother's side, and my neighbours, and there was all joy and happiness to see me coming. They heard the clop, the shoes—boots I had on me were very heavy and my legs were like that. (*Pat encircles his index finger to indicate how thin his legs were*). I was so hungry. They got a packet of biscuits—Marieta biscuits—they gave them to me, I ate the Marietas, but as soon as I ate the Marieta biscuits, I got it all back up again, vomited it all. Not used to rich food or rich things.

The next thing, they came in and they brought me over to my uncle's and aunt's. They brought me over to their own house two miles from here, where I was the first time. There was all this excitement and everything. I didn't know what was going on around me. I just went outside; I was never outside before in my life; looked around and I saw all these things—animals. I didn't know what they were, I just caught them by the neck and I broke their necks. I killed seven turkeys belonging to my aunt.

MC: Say—?

PD: I killed seven turkeys. They were for Christmas, had fattened them all up. (*laughter*)

MC: Sorry I shouldn't—

PD: I know it was so funny.

MC: What age were you that time?

PD: Six and a half, going on for seven. I didn't know what— My father said to my aunt 'You'd want to watch that young land and see what he's doing.' That's where I was outside killing them, I had them all killed, she could say nothing. She was only crying, overjoyed to see me around. **See photo #4 listed above**

I stayed with my aunt then until I was nine years old. I started going to school, I was never taught anything. They all felt sorry, I suppose, because of what happened to me in the years gone by—my mother. Anyone that would talk to me, anyone that knew my mother, they said she was a lovely woman—very sad, very sad, all that happened here. My father was very upset over it, because of his two wives. The first wife he married the first time—my mother was the second wife. He had three [children] in the first family and five in the second, we had a brother who died—two months old. He died of some—we found out later what he called it, it was something—I can't think of the name of it now, but he died at two months old. So, between all—

Before I came home from Tuam, I was in Galway in the regional hospital, very sick. I had a lump here on the neck. (*indicates the right side of his neck*)

MC: Was that when you were in Tuam that you went to hospital?

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

PD: I was transferred from Tuam to Galway Regional for this operation. My father got word that I was dead. He thought I was dead because he got a telegram from Galway saying that your son is after passing away. He was upset. Whoever he was telling, he said ‘I’m after burying two wives, I’m after burying my son, now I’m burying another one. What is wrong here?’ Anyway, he went over and it was the wrong Patrick Duffy.

MC: Oh my goodness!

PD: He was delighted and relieved that it wasn’t me, because he said he had seen enough of death. It was something in my neck. I got the files from the hospital saying something about what happened me. I came back home and I’m here ever since. I minded my father until—I was nine years old when I came back here to him and I minded him until he died in 1975. I was minding him here; no help, no home help, just doing it myself. It was hard like.

MC: Did he need a lot of care towards the end?

PD: He did. Before he went—we got him into Portiuncula in Ballinasloe and he was shifted from there onto—I told the doctor, my own G.P. that I wasn’t able to mind him anymore because I was getting sick, which I was, I was losing weight and everything. I said there was something wrong, I was run down a lot. The doctor sent him to Portiuncula and from there the nuns—again the nuns were involved because my sister, she was living in Ballinasloe. The reverend mother said—they were part of Loughrea, St Brendan’s, they owned the hospital.

MC: The Home?

PD: The County Home we used to call it that time. He was sent there then. He went in in 1973 and he died in 1975. I was minding him from when I was nine years of age until I was twenty years of age. He was an old man, like, you know.

MC: So he had bad health from when you came at nine years of age?

PD: Yeah. He was getting sick then the whole time—stomach problems. Even at three or four o’clock in the morning when I was here he’d call me. He’d be sitting in there in the armchair and he’d be complaining that he was going to die and it was all panic attacks. I used to get up in the morning, and go down the road at three o’clock in the morning to call the neighbours to come up and comfort him. They’d just mind him for a while. He was grand then when the morning came, seven o’clock in the morning or that, he was grand then. It was all panic attacks. That’s why I never got an education or anything.

MC: Did it disrupt you going to school, minding him?

PD: I was going to school until I was fifteen years of age, but got no education. They never taught me anything. They’d just give me a book and I’d come home to my father trying to do homework. He wasn’t able to see, his eyes were very bad, he was blind. I had to read it out for him. I got so—in the end I didn’t

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

care anymore because there was no one to help. Then I gave up the education, well there wasn't education for me anyway, they didn't bring me out and say, look it, you're slow or something. There was none of that at all, just leave you there and that's it. **See photos # 5 and #6 listed above**

After my father dying in '75, there was this nun home. She was a nun, she's dead since—she never wanted to join the nuns either, but she was forced into it because they had a big family. She was sent off out to America. When she came home then as a nun, years after, she taught me how to read and write.

MC: Was she a relative?

PD: No, just a neighbour across the road there. She came home to her mother, to mind her mother. That's how I got help; I told her I wasn't able to read or write. She said, 'I'll help you out.' That's how I started.

MC: What age were you at that stage?

PD: I was old enough, I was around fifteen or sixteen years of age. Oh no, I was twenty years of age. 1975 it was, I was twenty-four or twenty-five years of age.

MC: Was that the first time then you were able to read?

PD: The first time to read and write.

MC: That was amazing.

PD: After all the years. Only for her; I used to go up and she used to help me out, because she was home for her mother because her mother got a heart attack. While she was around she used to teach me because she was a teacher in America.

MC: That was a great chance for you.

PD: Oh, it was. I was self-educated then. I did want to go to Loughrea for teaching for learning difficulties, but I had no way to get going. That's what the problem was, I had no transport.

MC: Can I ask you about your other sisters, it was all sisters you had was it? The first family, were they grown up by the time—

PD: Oh, they were.

MC: They were all gone, were they, those girls?

PD: They were—one girl and two boys.

MC: Oh, there was two boys in that family.

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

PD: There was two boys and one girl in the first family and there was five of us in our second family. That was three girls and myself and another boy.

MC: The brother who died. The three girls, they were sent to Ballinasloe.

PD: Ballinasloe convent, yeah.

MC: What happened with them?

PD: They were there up until they were sixteen years of age. The three of them, well, the two of them, the other girl, the eldest one, stayed on. She stopped [stayed] working there in the convent and one of the nuns gave her a job. She wanted her to become a music teacher, so she stayed on and she used to do the work inside.

The other two got jobs with one of the nuns' sister or brother. If they had brothers or sisters away—all them girls would—My sisters went, one of them went to Monaghan first—one of the nuns had relations there who wanted someone to do housekeeping. One of my sisters went down there, but she came back again, she didn't like it.

MC: So, this was a house where there was a sister of a nun and she [the nun] organised for your sister to go and work there.

PD: To work in that house, yeah. The other sister then was sent by a nun who had friends or relations in Ballin (??) in Cork, and she went down to Cork. She got a job there looking after children and all this. She's still in Cork, she got married to a man in Cork. The other girl that was in Monaghan, she came back here to my father and myself that time. He said, 'You can stay as long as you like.' She said she'd go again, but she said she would go down to my other sister in Cork. She got a job there without any nuns there telling her what to do or anything. That's where they were. They got married then and all, their families are reared now and everything.

MC: So, they both settled in Cork.

PD: They both settled—Maura, my eldest sister, she's in Ballinasloe still, but she has a house, the convent is gone—the convent was sold to the County Library or something like that, the Galway County Council. She has her own house for years, just below Ballinasloe—the Pines—Creagh they call the place. She's doing well for herself, she never married.

MC: Were you saying that she wanted to become a music teacher.

PD: She did, she became a music teacher.

MC: And the nuns educated her for that?

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

PD: The nuns educated her. That was in the 70's now. That nun died; she was a nice nun alright. They weren't all bad, but some of them were—The nun they were with, Sr. John was her name, she was a bitch. She was a dangerous one, she's the one that had adopted all the children and sent them all out to America and everything.

MC: From the home in—

PD: From the convent.

MC: From the convent in Ballinasloe.

PD: My father used to go down at, I'd say, Easter, Spring, Easter anyway, and Christmas time. But in the summertime they used to come home here, the girls would come home for their summer, for a fortnight. We used to keep them here. They were grown up at this stage. They used to come up here, when they were grown, they had their two weeks holidays here with the family all together, my three sisters.

MC: When they were in the convent, they could come out?

PD: When they were in the convent, they came up here in the summertime for a fortnight. But they had hard times too, they said. They suffered a lot. They went to the redress board. They went through all that in 2002. They were looking to do my job to get me into it too. My third sister said that I should be in it too, but their solicitor for their job, to get everything done, said that there's no Tuam in it, there's no convent in Tuam. There was no such thing, it wasn't on the map, that's what happened, and that's why we didn't get anything. [The 2002 redress scheme did not include survivors of the Mother and Baby Homes]

MC: Why did your sister not like being in Monaghan?

PD: I think they were cruel to her. They were giving out to her and telling her what to do and all this. That's why she didn't like it, that's why she came back to Killimor for a while and then she moved down to Cork. My other sister must have told her that she'd get her a job. She got a job.

MC: And because your father was living, did that mean you weren't available for being fostered? You know how everybody else, or a lot of the boys were fostered at five, was it either the industrial school for you or come back home?

PD: The industrial school or come back home. You had two choices to make, to take me home or to send me on straight to which he didn't know anything about—about the Industrial School in Letterfrack. My half-sister—Mary Jane was her name—she warned him not to send me there.

MC: That's an older sister from the first family.

PD: She married over there. She married—he was pilot or something over there, he was a pilot for the RAF in England. He worked over there, and he lived in Connemara and she used to go over on holidays over there

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

to him from here. She used to work for a doctor here in Killimor. That's how she met her future husband. She knew all about Connemara then.

MC: And about the Letterfrack school.

PD: She knew there was something going on there that she didn't like. That's why she warned my father not to—that's why he brought me home. Then my aunt and uncle reared me until I was nine years of age. But I used always go over to them every weekend even though my father was here, and I still had to mind him, I used to go over on a Saturday and come home on a Sunday evening. It was a holiday.

My first time to get toys. When I came back from Tuam; I had never seen a toy in my life, and my aunt—it was Christmas time—when I came back it must have been only two months before Christmas time, it had to be because I had killed the turkeys and everything like. I remember she brought me to Killimor after Mass and she knocked on the door of the shop. A lady answered—she's dead now since—and she said, 'This poor young lad, he's after coming home from Tuam and he has no toys or anything'. 'Oh God', she says, 'no problem'. She bought us in anyway—it was closed Christmas time, Christmas morning—she got me my toys. She got me something, I didn't know what she was getting, it was put in a bag anyway. We came home and we had the dinner and she said, 'You have to go to bed early now because it's Christmas night', even though Christmas day was gone and St Stephen's day I would have my Christmas toys. I was all excited, I didn't understand getting this lovely thing, I was excited, over emotional. I felt a load on me on the bed when I woke up in the morning because I couldn't wait until six o'clock in the morning.

MC: Can you remember what you got?

PD: Oh, I do. I remember getting a hurl, a tin whistle and a lovely little horse with four wheels under it and I dragging that horse all day. It was the best day of my life, that St Stephen's day. The hurl—I never bothered with the hurl—and the tin whistle, trying to blow into it. But the horse was the favourite, it was my favourite toy and I still remember it as clear as day. And always after that then—

When I came home here and I had to stay home, I used to go over to my aunt and uncle on a Sunday and on Christmas morning. One time I used to put up Christmas stockings thinking Santy was coming, I believed in that. I had the socks up anyway; I came down at six o'clock in the morning, no toys no nothing in it; I was very disappointed. My father didn't believe in it. He didn't believe in those things at all because men never got those things in their lives. You're going back to the 1880s, 1886, they had no such thing as toys. Anyway, I was disappointed.

The neighbours across the road; she had two children, she had four, but the two youngest—we were going to the pictures in Killimor, the pictures to see films, they had Christmas films on. I was crying when she came over, the lady came over herself and she brought something over to my father. I said I got no toys, no nothing. She said, 'Hold it now, hold it now'. She went back to her own house and she came back with a box of biscuits, but it was no good. *(laughs)*

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

Years after that then, I was getting toys from my aunt's place, and after that again, a former teacher of mine, and she was very nice to me, she used to give a box of toys. She used to give them to another—this guy in Killimor, I know him well—and he'd come down on Christmas eve with a big box of stuff. This was going on in my father's time and I said, 'God, Santy is very good?' 'Now, isn't Santy very good to you?' he says to me. I couldn't wait until Christmas eve. Then after that, I was getting books—Noddy, the book, with ten shillings inside in it or maybe five shillings. Years after, like. People were very good to me alright, when I came back to Killimor. **See photo #1 listed above**

MC: You were saying there—when your aunt said, 'This boy here is from Tuam.' Would everybody have known then that it was from the Tuam Home she was talking about?

PD: I think so. Oh they did, a lot of them—well now looking at people today, they wouldn't know

MC: But back then?

PD: The oldest would alright. Then a lot would talk about your mother. It was tough enough on my mother. Even lately, I met a woman there lately, and she said she was only a young girl when she came down here to see my mother laid out. There's not many left to tell you those things.

MC: Did your mother die in the house?

PD: She died upstairs. The ambulance was sent for, but she was gone before—She was a very nervous woman too.

MC: What age was she when she—?

PD: Thirty-two. Thirty-two when she died. She was always, you know, I believe—Maura now is very like her, my eldest sister.

MC: Maura?

PD: Maura Duffy. She's very like her mother, the same way—.

My aunt, on my mother's side, she was very good to me too. Always gave me—she only died there two years ago—she'd write to me, she was always talking about my mother, she was always talking about me being in Tuam and how they used to visit me when they'd get a chance. There weren't that many who had transport at that time. They used to go over there; they'd get a bus or something or a taxi. Go to Galway and go to see me in Tuam then; go to Tuam from there.

MC: Who used to visit you?

PD: My aunt on my mother's side.

MC: On your mother's side. But you have no memory of those visits either?

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

PD: No. I have just a memory of being inside the convent and being hungry and all, but not of people coming. They'd only come and go, they wouldn't stay with you and that's why—

MC: Can you remember other boys in the convent, in the Home in Tuam?

PD: Oh I can, but I wouldn't know their names.

MC: Do you remember them leaving? You know how they were being fostered—

PD: No.

MC: You have no recollection of that?

PD: I used always hear screaming and roaring down in the other place. Down the other end. Screaming and roaring, you would think, it was like—well they were children, we were all children, you could hear them and I thought they were killing them or something. Because when I came home from Tuam I always had these nightmares and I used to see blood coming out—like stabbing. There was no such thing as television in them days, we had no television, and I used wake up with nightmares like someone was killing someone, the blood was spilling, and you could see blood pouring all over the place. That's what upset me a lot, you know. I did get very bad after that, a nervous breakdown and all this kind of thing over this Tuam thing.

MC: At what stage?

PD: It was when my aunt died because I was very close to her. I couldn't cope, I couldn't accept that she was dead because of this thing. I said, 'Why, where is she gone?' and I roared and bawled and I couldn't believe because she was gone. I started drinking then, trying to comfort me and I couldn't cope. Then I got panic attacks and it was in the church I got the panic attack. I thought I was going to drop off, I thought the whole world was falling. For five years I had it. I went to a psychiatrist and everything. I went to this place in Portumna to see a psychiatrist from Ballinasloe and she said [REDACTED] was her name—she said to this guy, he was doing the books, 'How many pints do you drink, Joe?' Joe says, 'One.' 'And how many pints do you drink, Pat?' 'Eight,' I said, 'eight.' 'Oh, that's a lot, that's a lot.' I said, 'Tis, but I can't help it.' 'Well, we'll get you back again and we'll put you on medication,' and all this. I went back to my G.P. and I told him how I went to a psychiatrist, and she put me on tablets, and they wanted to know how many pints I drink. He said, 'She'd want to come more often to Killimor and see how many pints they all drink.'

MC: What age were you at that stage?

PD: I was well over my twenties, early thirties.

MC: And it was really your aunt dying that triggered a lot—

PD: It triggered a lot, and then Tuam and everything. But I always have my memories of her, how she was so good to me and everything. When I'd go home from my aunt's place in the evening when she was there

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

alive, this lovely thing above, looking up at the sky, looking at the clouds and sometimes you'd see it was like a fall. There was always something, there was something beautiful about it up there between myself and that you know. That's always in my mind, and still to this day I look at it. I've no curtains here now and I look out at the moon and I always feel there's something beautiful about it.

But I'll go back to my nerves and things. Luckily, I got out of it. My nephew, he was very good to me and two of my sisters, we're very close. My nephew is married here now in Killimor. He came up from Cork himself. He didn't like Cork, and he came up here to Killimor, and he got a job up around and here and there as a chef. He met his future wife here, but before that the two of us would be here, and he used to come up to me in the summertime. He used to say, 'Fight it Pat, you have to fight it.'

MC: You what?

PD: Fight this thing.

MC: Fight the thing in your head.

PD: In your head and all this. It took a long time then. It took a long time to get over it. Then I went to a counsellor. I think the counsellor made a great job of me. After that then later, when my sisters got the redress, and when I heard all about Tuam, about all that happened— There wasn't much about Tuam, but I told my story about Tuam before this broke out at all. I told about Tuam, how I was in Tuam, how I was very emotionally—which I was. I told it to them and they'd help me out here, which they did. I think they gave me great confidence.

MC: Your sisters?

PD: No, the counselling.

MC: Sorry, yes the counsellor.

PD: The counsellor gave me great help to get through all and telling me not to be worried or panicked. It was great, that's where I started from there then. I went to counselling since Tuam [since recent findings were made public] and the counsellor gave me great help again.

MC: And you were saying meeting other people now in recent years—

PD: You meet all the survivors. I thought I was all alone in myself, I didn't think there would be anyone only myself. That's why I'd never opened my mouth then because I was afraid to say anything, but now it's all out there now. We have to thank Catherine Corless for getting this moving. We were left there; we were left to die I suppose. Now we can tell it. I've met a lot of people who have come to me and said fair play to me for talking up and speaking. I have done a lot of reports. Even the people in Killimor now, a lot of them have come to me and congratulated me for speaking out after so long.

MC: What age was your father when your mother passed away?

PD: My father was an old man. He was a good few years older than her. I think he was nearly sixty years old.

MC: So that's why he really wasn't able to raise the family.

PD: No. He really was very old. He was sixty something when he married my mother. He could have been my grandfather. She was a very young woman. She was born in 1920. She'd be ninety-five or six now if she was alive today. **See photo #7 listed above**

MC: Just to bring you back to the [Tuam] Home, if you're not upset or anything about discussing it. There aren't many who many who have memories of it like you have. You know you were talking about the area where you said you could hear people, how was it separated?

PD: It was boys and girls you know, and I believe it was a big place. It was a big area that time. You'd hear the screeching down the corridors. You go down along the dorms, down along the corridors. We had our own dorm. The boys were all in their own bedrooms. You'd have beds up this way.

MC: Can you remember or think of how many might have been in the room?

PD: I'd say there could have been a hundred in our bedroom. There was a lot in it, there was a row of beds down along. I always remember being in the middle of it, in the middle of the iron beds and all you had was only a sheet. A sheet and a pillow, that's all you had. Trying to keep your feet warm by pulling your two legs up and keeping yourself heated up. The cold, getting onto the cold floors made from what do you call it—

MC: Cement?

PD: Cement floors and then tiles in places. We weren't near the nuns or anything, all you could see was a nun here or a nun there. You'd be locked in the whole time, you'd be locked inside, you wouldn't be let out anywhere. Out the corridors alright, you might go down to the bathrooms, down to the toilets.

MC: So, if you did need the toilet you had to go down to another place. There was no pot under the bed or anything?

PD: There was pots. There was no pots down where I was, but in other places there could be, but not where I was because I used to go to the toilet in the bed. That's what happened, there was no pots there at all. If you wanted to go, you had to go off out. You wouldn't be allowed out at night. You had to stay inside. If you had to go to the toilet unless you'd get—you were afraid to say anything. We were all afraid, fear was there all the time, you couldn't open your mouth.

MC: I can imagine as a small child it would be frightening to go in the dark to another room.

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

PD: No. You would be afraid of the dark because the lights were gone, no lights, you were just there in the darkness. You could trip over anything. But I never got out of the bed, I remember staying in the bed because I was in fear. I didn't want to get out of the bed because I didn't know what to do. You could be sweating at night there out of fear. I remember sweating there and you'd curl yourself up and then you sit up in the bed and do this the whole day. (*Pat demonstrates rocking over and back*) I have a touch of that now sometimes if I get excited or anything, I start to do that.

MC: Rocking.

PD: That's what I do, and I still have it. A lot of people notice that with me. I can't help it.

In the Home, I remember once I was down the corridors and I looked up at the statues. I'd be looking at them and I didn't know what they were, I hadn't a clue and I thought that—no one would tell you anything—just looking at them.

MC: Have you any memory of anyone showing you kindness there?

PD: No. I never seen any kindness until I came out here. I couldn't believe anything when I came out here. I couldn't believe how good they were to me. I couldn't understand it. I was never outside the Home at all not 'till I came out that day in the ambulance. Maybe I did go down—I was in the school, but I don't remember that part.

MC: Well, you were but you have no memories of it. **See photo #8 listed above**

PD: Not of that part. I can't remember it. I can't remember inside the school at all.

MC: So, you were six when you were registered here for the school in May 1958, and then you left in May 1959. That's seven when you left and then two years with your aunt.

PD: I stayed with my aunt for two years, then I came back here to my father.

MC: Were there many cousins in the house?

PD: There were, but they were all gone at this stage. They were all older than me, they were older than my sisters. That's why they were able to put the girls into the convent then. It wasn't my aunt that put them in, it was her daughters that put them into the convent.

MC: Sorry. Can you explain that?

PD: My aunt's daughters, they were a lot older than we were. They were women and they were still there. They were working and they used to come home at night. But they couldn't face it, they couldn't cope. I think they couldn't cope with us all there. They had ten of their own and they had four of us.

MC: But they weren't all living in the house, were they?

PD: They were.

MC: All ten were living, when you were born, in the house. So, it would have been very crowded.

PD: It was crowded—a small house like.

MC: So, the older girls felt there wasn't space for this.

PD: There wasn't space and they said that the only hope was to put the girls into the convent, keep me. They wanted to keep me because I was the baby, but the girls had to be put into the convent. That's when the row took up then with my father. They came down to him then after when the damage was done. They came down to my father and said that the girls were gone into Ballinasloe convent because they weren't able to cope with them but they were keeping Pat. He got vexed. He got the four-pronged fork after them. A four-pronged fork.

MC: A four-pronged fork. Yes, I know what you're saying.

PD: It's called a four-pronged fork for doing hay or anything like that. He got upset over it, and he went after them over that. 'The cheek to put his daughters into the convent without his permission.' Even the sisters never talked to my cousins, some of them, the girls who put them in—they're dead now.

MC: Never spoke to them?

PD: Never spoke to them. They were always giving out about them.

MC: But your father, I suppose, deprived you of what would have been a loving house by the sound of what you are saying about your aunt. He deprived you of that.

PD: Even my sisters, when we used to go over to my aunt's place and my aunt on my mother's side—she had a donkey and cart; she lived here up the road—she used to bring us over to my aunt's and uncle's place, we'd all go in the ass and cart. Maura, my eldest sister said to me, 'Don't be calling her your mother, she's not your mother, she's your aunt.' I'd say, 'She is my mother.' I always thought she was my mother. She'd say, 'She's not.' I used to give out to her then. I'd get vexed and I couldn't bear to say that she's not my mother, because she was my mother to me anyways. Nana I called her then, because she had her grandchildren and they always called her Nana, so I started to call her Nana then, She'd tell me the story about me, about Tuam and everything, and every time she tell you she started crying. She'd tell me about how she used to come visit me in Tuam, she'd loved to have taken me out of Tuam. She knew I wasn't happy there, but she couldn't because she had no authority.

MC: That was the aunt—

PD: The aunt that took me in, my father's sister-in-law.

MC: Your father's sister. Your father's sister-in-law, she knew you weren't happy.

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

PD: She knew I wasn't happy, but she couldn't take me out because my father—he was the boss, she couldn't take me out of the convent. She didn't want to take me in the first place, she didn't want to let me go to Tuam.

MC: How did you get on with your father? I know you looked after him.

PD: I got on alright, but he could be a very contrary man. He had his own ideas and I had mine. I used to be giving out—I used to go off. I went off one day to do a job, we were vexed over something. I went off anyway in spite of him, I said I was going getting a job. I went in anyway. It was a job tending vegetables. It was called the working house one time, but it had been turned into a vegetable area for growing all kinds of vegetables like sprouts, cabbage and potatoes, you'd separate them all—

MC: Here locally?

PD: In Portumna.

MC: In the Workhouse, the old Workhouse, is it?

PD: Yes, the old Workhouse. I went in there to work. That's where I started with vegetables, but I only did one day, and I never got paid for it. But I did it for spite, because he was arguing with me or something. I didn't come back that evening. I walked the whole way back from Portumna.

We got on alright, but he was very strict, very particular in his ways. You couldn't do this, you couldn't do that. In the end, before he left here, he was in the bed, and when the ambulance came he wouldn't let the nurse dress him. He said, 'Let my son do it, he's the great man.' He praised me in the end, said that I was great man for looking after him for twenty years.

MC: Did ye have a farm here?

PD: We did. I had a farm here up 'till 1990, and I had to sell it then to do up the house because the house was in a really bad state—not this part now, this is a new extension but the old part was in a very bad state. It needed to be all re-plastered and dry lined, which I did. I had to sell it then [the farm]. I got no help from no one.

I'm getting a grant now to do the windows; the man rang me here. This is my first grant from the council, I never got a grant before in my life from the council. We went in and we told them—[redacted] was this name, I think he was in the university that time with us, you might have seen him. He got this thing going for me then. He went into Galway Co Council and he says, 'We're all Tuam babies. Did you not realise that'—he was attacking them in one way. I got the grant, I got €6000 but I told Anne Rabbitte, my local T.D. that it wasn't enough, and she went in and got two more for me and helped me out to get things done. I'm getting there bit by bit.

It's the Home the same time too, it's the ears now.

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

MC: Yeah, I was going to ask you, because I know you mentioned that the day in the university, about your hearing.

PD: That's from that time when all the infection came out through my ears when I came home. It was terribly painful. I went up to the G.P. in Killimor; I could see the tablets, that size now (*makes a circle with his thumb and index finger*) The medication to kill the infection I had. I went deaf the time after that because they were never looked after—the pulling of the ears—anything you did out of the way in Tuam, you were pulled by the ear, and the given a slap across the head. Ever since my ears are very tender. My aunt sent me—we went up to Dublin to get my ears pinned back. My ears were out one time (*gestures to indicate ear lobes sticking out*) I was born—

MC: You were born that way?

PD: I think I was born that way anyway, I'm not sure, but they were like that anyway. I went to my own G.P. and he didn't believe in that, he didn't believe in getting them pinned back. She got a second opinion from another doctor and he said it'd be better off to get them done. They were sore before I went up to Dublin, but they're still some now. Even the hearing aids hurt them sometimes. They're very tender. I don't let anyone touch them. I'm suffering from all the bruising I got and all the infection that came out.

MC: So that operation was done when you were fairly young after you came out.

PD: I was eleven years of age. I was up in Dublin in 1964.

MC: Is your hearing very poor without the hearing aids?

PD: It is. It got worse; it was getting bad even when I was growing up. I'd go, 'Hah,' I had that habit, 'Hah.' They'd say, 'Are you deaf, or what?' I couldn't hear what they'd be saying, and then it got worse, as years went on it got worse and worse. No one ever looked after them. I started getting hearing aids then. I'm very deaf at the moment. If I take them out now, I wouldn't hear what you're saying. They're a great help in one way.

MC: Oh yes, it's great to have that.

You have great memories of the place. I know they are kind of just images really, but the feeling of the hunger and the cold and all that is very vivid for you.

PD: And the toilets, not going to the toilet or anything, and going to the toilet in the bed.

MC: And it was always nuns who dealt with you or were there—?

PD: There was girl— she died six years ago—she used to tell my sisters, she knew my sisters. She came down to the convent, Margaret Guinane or Lane was her name. She was supposed to be minding me.

MC: She—?

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

PD: She was supposed to be minding me, looking after me in Tuam, the best she could. That's how she told them I was wearing a nappy for two or three days.

MC: She'd report back to your sisters?

PD: She told my sisters. She was the oldest—

MC: Had she been sent from your sister's convent to work in the Tuam Home?

PD: I think she did. I think she worked in the Magdalene Laundry first, and when she got older, she had nowhere to go she came back down to Ballinasloe. She went to Loughrea to the convent there. She left all of that then and went to work in a hotel, I think it was Flannery's hotel in Galway. She worked there and she was found dead in her bedroom.

MC: And she used to try to look after you.

PD: She used to. I suffered from bedsores and everything. Bedsores on my backside. Wearing nappies at night, the old nappies they had them times, cloth. We'd be wearing them and leave them on for two or three days. She couldn't believe it, she was afraid to touch me in case they'd give out, the nuns. You'd be looking for new nappies or something like that. I was going out naked sometimes. The girls told me that themselves. They'd be telling about me and how they suffered in the convent themselves.

MC: So, they had a similar experience.

PD: Oh, they had. They had to scrub floors and everything. When my father and them all would come to see them, they'd be dressed up, lovely dresses on them. Sister John, she'd be meeting them, would say, Mr. Duffy, that would be my father. He'd be delighted to see them, and they all dressed up. He didn't know much more about them—making them beautiful and all this. Then, the very minute he goes they're taking off all the clothes again- put them back into rags.

She'd go along the floor, 'Come on, come on, polish them floors.' That's what they used to do. We are all nervous, we were all nervous of them because of what happened. Today you can notice with the family, they're a bit nervous, like.

MC: What ages were your sisters when they were sent to Ballinasloe?

PD: Maura was the oldest. Maura was five years of age. Anne is seventy-two now, no Anne is seventy, so she was around three or four, and Jo was three, Josie was three. So, three, four and five. **See photo # 3 listed above**

MC: Very close together and your brother then who died, he was between Josie and yourself. Is that right?

PD: No, he was between Anne and Maura. Josie is sixteen months older than me.

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

MC: And you feel they all have had to deal with issues in relation to their experience. And the redress? You said they were successful with that.

PD: Maura would have got sixty thousand and Anne got seventy. It all depends on how cruel they—

MC: Seventeen or seventy?

PD: Seventy thousand and Josie got fifty thousand. It was based on—

MC: On evidence they could put forward?

PD: It's like what we're doing now. This commission of enquiry and all this. They hadn't that at all. They had psychiatrists and all those.

MC: Was that money from the state or from the convent?

PD: I think it was from the convent. The convent had to pay so much, and the state had to pay so much.

MC: That's the Mercy Order, is it?

PD: Yes, the Mercy Order gave it alright, but we got nothing. They're not budging, the Bon Secours, they're not doing anything at all.

MC: So, your sisters got that in 2002, you were saying.

PD: In 2002 or 2003, whenever that thing opened up about the—

MC: The Magdalenes?

PD: The Magdalene Laundries. That's how they got—and they were looking to see would I get it too, but I wasn't on the map.

MC: I suppose it was a separate institution so there would have needed to be a different examination of your place, of where you had been.

It was a terrible crime against children.

PD: Today now when I see anyone touching an animal, I go mad, or a child. I can't bear to see children, or an animal being touched—cruelty to them. I get upset over it, because I can see what happened to ourselves. Why should you let them get away with that? I look at the animals and I love looking at them, I see their little babies, and the children, I love little children, but I can't bear anyone being cruel to them. That's my feeling anyway, it's the way I feel because I seen so much and what happened to ourselves. Why should you touch an animal or a child? I said to myself. We're all God's children, that's what I say.

MC: That's a beautiful dog you have.

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

PD: She was an abandoned dog too.

MC: Jessie, is that what you call him?

PD: Yeah, Jessie.

MC: Jessie, she was abandoned. She has a beautiful face.

PD: Isn't she? She was hairy; I got her done this year. She was very furry.

MC: Lovely dog.

Ok Pat, have we covered everything? I think we have.

PD: Yeah.

MC: Thanks very much for giving me your time and telling your story.

PD: No problem. It's no harm to tell it because it's so long going on. People suffering all their lives, and not being recognised until now.

MC: And you really felt that growing up?

PD: I wasn't recognised. I felt I was nothing. What did I do wrong? That's the way I felt. I never did anything wrong, I always tried to do my best. I meet people today and I talk to everyone, speak to everyone, and if it's only the poorest of the poor I'd go and talk to them. That's the way I feel now. My faith is with God, no one else only God. I always felt that way anyway. As for the Church, I can't understand the Church at all. When I was growing up, as usual when I was going into the church and I seen all these beautiful gold things and all that. I says, that's not right, I said to myself, that couldn't be right. We're supposed to be simple people not making a bloody big fortune out for the church. I couldn't believe it. That turned me against it altogether. I don't believe in that kind of thing, I believe in the faith and I believe in God. I carry God always with me. I carry that there—the crucifix. I believe in that not the religious, not what they're making, 'tis all money. It would put you off completely. The religion puts me off completely, I go now and again, but I don't go that often.

MC: Have you any memories of mass or prayers or things like that in the Tuam Home.

PD: No. I never seen anything like that. Maybe there were, but I don't remember.

MC: Well, you were very young and generally—

PD: I can't think of all the things.

MC: Yeah, well for most people—your memories before five are very vague.

Tuam Home Oral History Project – Patrick Duffy transcript

PD: After that I can remember, I can go back a long way. I can go back years today, about people who died at such a time, or who got married, or who was president or anything. But, as a child, I can barely remember, but the two years I can remember when I was there. I remember sitting on the bed, rocking myself, and going to the toilet in the bed, eating the dinner, eating what you'd get. You won't get much—mashed potatoes.

MC: At school then, here in Killimor, you just felt nobody was making any effort to help you. Because your beginnings were so impoverished you were going to be behind in schooling anyway.

PD: Yeah, I was behind.

MC: How did your classmates relate to you?

PD: I got on great with them. They were fine with me because I was more a leader of them.

When I came out here seeing my uncles and listening to the history of my family here, talking about wars, the 1914 war, because my uncles. That uncle who looked after me with my aunt, he was in the 1914 war. I always loved the history of things. I go back on those things and listen to them and talk to them. The same with JFK and how he came to Ireland. It gives me a great lift, history.

But I was always the leader in the school there in Killimor. They used to love to see me coming, because I was always acting the clown, I suppose. I used to love the music, but I never learned music at all. I picked it up here when I was at home, and I used to keep singing, but that was the only thing. I was never taught anything.

MC: Were the teachers kind to you?

PD: Oh, they were, yeah. That's the problem; they were too kind to me. They didn't help me out, teach me anything, keep me over, maybe for an hour or two and give me something—

MC: They didn't give you any extra time.

PD: No. That's why I'm disadvantaged; I had no education at all. If I had an education, I'd been able to go off somewhere and have a good job, I could be something. But I had to mind my father until I was twenty and I was too old for it then. I thought I was too old to go off. Then my nerves started getting bad. Everything started to go downhill.

MC: I suppose you were lucky with the nun who arrived across the road and you also sought help yourself for your difficulties. That seems to have worked out for you, your counsellor was helpful.

PD: Yes, I've got more help now. And when this came out about Tuam, that opened the lid altogether, I can talk to people about it now that I could never talk to.

MC: Was it always in your head, or had you buried Tuam a little bit until the Catherine Corless—?

PD: I always had it in my head. I always knew there was something funny about Tuam.

MC: Did you think about it a lot? Did you brood on it from when you recovered from your difficulties in your twenties? Did you just leave it aside, and when it came to be published in the media did it all come up again?

PD: Yeah, it all came back up again.

MC: So that kind of resurrected it maybe, in some ways?

PD: It came up again, that's what happened. When all this came through again, opened the lid again— Because I remember in 1985, and he was a councillor here— Galway County Council— he was from Killimor and he grew vegetables here and bring them into Galway. He brought me over to Galway one day and into Galway county buildings, where he was working there as a councillor. We had tea and then he had to go back to Tuam. Now, he says, 'I'm going to bring you to where you were one time. But it's not there now, there's houses in it instead. It's an estate.' I said 'Right.' He showed me all around. We didn't go in. he just showed me the little road where you'd go into Tuam. It's just outside it. 'That's where the convent was,' he said, 'off in there. That's where you were now,' he says to me. 'Well, I have memories of that part of it,' says I. He said, 'Twas a hoor of a place'

MC: He said?

PD: He said, 'It was a hoor of a place.' I don't know how he knew that. That's what he called it.

MC: Ok. We'll leave it at that. Thanks very much.

PD: You're welcome.