

Transcript of interview with P.J. Haverty

**Interviewer:** Mary Cunningham

**Date:** 16 September 2019

**Location:** The Correlea Court Hotel, Tuam, Co Galway

**Length of Interview:** 1 hour 23 minutes.

The following items were copied and submitted by P.J. for the archive:

#### **DOCUMENTS**

**1: Correspondence from Galway Co. Council to the Hansberrys relating to their application to foster a child.**

**2: Letter from Archbishop Neary to Catherine Corless. 3 October 2016.**

**3: Letter from Éamon Ó Cuív to P.J. Haverty**

**4: Copy of Dáil question and reply from Minister of Justice.**

**5: Attendance record for Tuam Convent of Mercy Primary School**

**6, 7, 8: Phelan, Ken: ‘Nobody’s Child- Tuam survivor speaks but the nuns remain silent’ *The Village Magazine*, undated**

**9, 10, 11: Letters from Eileen Haverty Frewing to P.J Haverty and the Hansberrys**

**12: High Court Certificate**

**13: Death Certificate of Eileen Frewing (née Haverty)**

**14: Notes on the history of Tyrnascragh**

**15: 1901 Census in respect of the Haverty Family**

#### **PHOTOGRAPHS**

**1: P.J. on the day of his First Holy Communion.**

**2: P.J. (aged about 11) with the dog, Prince, in front of the Hansberry house**

**3: P.J. on the tractor with Prince**

**4: P.J.'s mother Eileen Haverty**

**5: Eileen and P.J. (1976)**

**6: Eileen and Arthur Frewing on their wedding day**

**7: Teresa and Micky Hansberry (foster parents) with P.J.'s son John**

**8: Great grand-uncle of the Hansberrys pictured in the American Army Uniform**

**9: Eileen's grandparents Mary-Ann & Pat Kelly (seated). Her mother Molly standing 2<sup>nd</sup> left**

**M.C.** This is the 16th of September 2019 and this is Mary Cunningham. I'm interviewing P.J. Haverty as part of the Tuam Oral History Project run by NUI Galway. We are in The Corralea Court Hotel in Tuam, Co Galway. *(Walter Francis, a fellow Tuam Home survivor and close friend of P.J.'s was present)*

OK. So P.J., thanks for coming to the interview.

**P.J.H.** Not at all. Thanks to yourself as well.

**M.C.** Maybe we'll make a start. I think you have some information on the circumstances of your birth and your mother's story. So maybe if we start there.

**P.J.H.** When my mother got pregnant ... and there was a woman in the parish. And she would have been the one to go down to the priest if she got any news and tell the priest if there was anything going on and all that. So, she found out that my mother was pregnant, so she went down to the priest and she told the priest that Eileen Haverty, that would be my mother, was pregnant. So straight away then the priest came to the house. And of course, her parents were nervous and afraid to see a priest coming in and the whole lot. So, he took control of everything altogether. Having sex and a baby out of wedlock back in them times, like that was a mortal sin, like. He said that she wasn't to go into the church, that she was barred from the church because she was a sinner. And they told her parents as well that she was to be kept indoors because it would be a bad influence on all the kids all around to see her pregnant. It wasn't good. And they told her that there was a place in Tuam ... that, when she was due to have the baby that she was to be taken to Tuam and the nuns would look after her down there. Of course, that was an awful embarrassment to her mother and father and – of course neighbours around and the chatting going around and all that. The gossip back in them days. So anyway, eventually she was brought to Tuam by her father, and he signed her in there. So, I was born on the 29th of the 11th '51 and she remained there for 12 months. Now, in

the 12 months she was there, she had work to do and not paid for or anything like that. And she would look after all different babies and the whole lot.

And when it came to feeding me, because the nuns that time would be more into breastfeeding as well for the first couple of months for the baby you know. So that's all she would do, and she would have to move away again. You only had a certain length of time because they didn't want any bonding or anything like that with the child and the mother you know. And she had to go off then and do other work, like you know maybe feed other babies. And then that time you see you had an awful lot of sick babies in it. That time you would have cloth nappies and they all had to be washed. Clothes had to be washed. And then as well when they were potty training the children that time. They had all these pots, and they would be put sitting on it and sometimes the child might stand up and maybe urinate on the floor or something like that. And the nun would come along and the likes of my mother, and other mothers, would have to clean up that, wash it and all that. Not alone then, would have to go down on their knees and scrub it so they would. And the nuns were just standing over them all the time, and they had to do all the work, even at nighttime. They had to do the work with the babies at nighttime whether they'd be crying or asleep, you know.

And that went on for about twelve months, and then they told her she'd have to leave. They opened the door and told her to leave and she said, 'I want to bring my baby with me'. And they said, 'No. You're not having him. He's going to be fostered out'. They closed the door behind her. And she wasn't going to leave Tuam. So, she went down and she got a cleaning job in the hospital, believe it or not, ran by [the Bon Secours] nuns. So, every week for five and a half years she would make that trip from the centre of the town out to the Dublin Road. It would take a good ten minutes, I suppose. And she would knock on the door and she would plead with the nuns: 'Please hand out my baby to me. I want him'. And they said, 'No. Go away. He's going to be fostered'. But she wouldn't give up. She kept it going, kept it going 'til eventually when she did come again and they said, 'He's gone; he's fostered out now. And if you ever find out where he is, you keep away or you will be in trouble'. So, she kept working in Tuam until such time as she did find out where I was.

One evening I was bringing in cows, I worked on a farm then when I was taken out. And I was bringing in cows for milking one evening, and this car came from behind up a hill. There was a hill, and it was a red car. What was unusual about it was the number plates. I didn't know that time it was an English car. And there were two ladies in it, and the lady in the passenger seat rolled the window down and she said 'Could you tell me where Hansberrys were?'. They were the foster parents now that I was reared with. I told her, 'There's a roadway down here to the left', I said. 'And these are cows I'm bringing in for milking'. Strange thing like you know, she kept smiling, kept staring at me, you know, and I got very uneasy and worried. And I used to look down the road,

and turn the corner of my eye again, and she was still staring and smiling, and I thought this is strange. And the only thing I was worried about then was did I let the cows out in front of them, and they wanted to go down to my foster parents to give out. So, as we turned down the road to the left, the car just went straight on – but the look again, and the smile on her face. So, when I got to meet her then, oh, twenty-odd years after that, she told me that was her, but she couldn't say who she was.

So, she went to the parish priest and explained her story to the parish priest and wanted the parish priest to go out to my foster parents to hand over her son to her. She was going to take me to England. 'No, I won't' he said, 'you'll leave him where he is'. So, she told me she cried all the way to Dublin. Going to another country she knew nothing about. Relying on this woman. And the only thing about this woman was, she got talking to her in the hospital, and she had ... Her husband was a doctor, and they had kids, and she thought she was an ideal woman since she was dealing with kids, knew how to rear them, how to look after them, how to mind them. She persuaded her to go to England with her and that's the reason she went off to England then.

**See Photo #4 listed above**

**M.C.** What age were you when she saw you on the road?

**P.J.H.** I'd be about maybe nine, in or around nine.

**M.C.** So not that long gone to the family.

**P.J.H.** Yeah. But she couldn't open her mouth. She couldn't say a word.

So anyways ... going back then ... like everything else, like Walter there [*Walter is another survivor and close friend of P.J.'s*], memories are very short about the home. But the most thing I can remember is the mattress all wet and stuff and then marching down to school in twos. And marching back again in the evening and locked up again. And I think of kids outside: they were poor, miserable as well and everything like, but they had the freedom to run around, play with the neighbours' kids and all that. You see when we went to school, we had to go ten minutes late in the morning, leave ten minutes early in the evening again, so we wouldn't be going in with the other kids or talking to them. And you were cordoned off on your own in the playground. You weren't allowed to play with these other kids. And the other kids were even threatened, coming in late in the morning, that they would be actually put sitting with us. Imagine! Like they would have got slaps from the teacher with the sticks on the hand and all that, but the worst thing was to have to sit with

us. Now we were never taught anything, we were just like dummies sitting there. So, you were marched back in the evening again.

Sometime ... the odd time then, and it's only not so long ago, I worked in Eircom and one of the lads in Tuam rang me and said he had been talking to an elderly man, and he used to see us marching down and marching back. But what he used to laugh at, we used to look into a mirror of a car that would be parked, and he knew we hadn't a clue it was a mirror. He knew it, the way we were acting, he knew that we had never seen a mirror.

And marched in there and locked up again. And people say, 'Well you weren't treated badly'. 'Well,', I said, 'Yeah, we weren't treated good neither, because if we were, we'd remember it. 'Can you imagine' I said 'being locked up in a room, and all you could do was look at a window and a high wall all around it. You see nothing else', I said, 'you seen nothing'.

And even when my foster parents now, they were working in England, they got married in England. So, they had to come home, because his foster father was bad, to take over the farm. They couldn't have a family. My foster mother was quite comical, she said 'It wasn't for the want of trying'. So, they just seen, I think it was the *Tuam Herald*, they just seen adoption and fostering from Tuam. So, they applied.

So, they had to come in then and they had to pick out a child. So of course, my foster father being a farmer, he wanted a strong young lad. So, my foster mother said we were sitting in a ring on the floor, they would walk around and I just happened to look up and just gave a smile or something like that to her. She said, 'I'm taking him'. And that's the way it was. So, she got ... I have the papers there from the Council. **See item #1 listed above**

So, with that, they came in. I remember she catching my hand, isn't it amazing? And walking out the door with her. I could have walked with anyone. It didn't matter. We were brainless. We had nothing.

**M.C.** You just did what you were told.

**P.J.H.** We weren't focused, we weren't taught anything, we didn't know a thing. We could have walked with anyone out the door. That's the way we were.

But that's what she told me. We were all in a circle on the floor. And going down to [unclear] I can remember holding on the hands being marched off down. And when I look back, I think, Lord Jesus tonight we must have looked like convicts or sinners or something. To be treated like that in the eyes of people. It was ... every time I come to Tuam I see it. And every time I come to Tuam even, my mother, trying to picture her walking down the footpath when I come into Tuam here. To think

that this is going to be the day, and then go back again with tears in her eyes back to her workplace again. But she kept going.

And the other thing that annoyed me to think that the priest had such power to stop my mother going into church for having sex outside of marriage, but nothing about the father. And in a lot of these cases a lot of them were wealthy fathers that got all these women into trouble. They were wealthy, because my father was a big farmer when I found out about him. And they were all pretty well to do, so they were. And I was told as well that some of the big well off peoples' daughter might have got pregnant, and they would have come in the back gate at nighttime, and have their baby there, and sneak back out again and no one knew anything.

**M.C.** They didn't have to ... They could pay.

**P.J.H.** They could pay for it. Now if my mother had a £100 she could have bought me. She could have paid for me and she could have taken me out with her. There was no money in them days. They got their £100. And that's what annoys me about nuns. People talk about nuns and the church and the thing, but the brainwashing that was done to people. The fear they put into people was shocking. It was deplorable what they did. And the poorer you were the worse you were treated by the church. And they didn't want you to be educated because if you got educated in them days you were dangerous. So, it was always the well off people that had the money, and everything, that could go to third level college and all that. And it hurts. And it hurts today when I...

**M.C.** And were your mother's parents, your grandparents, were they supportive of her?

**P.J.H.** No. The father would have been, but her mother, no. She was disgusted, really and truly disgusted so she was. And you wouldn't mind but my mother was 27 when she got pregnant, 27 years of age when she got pregnant.

She went to England. But the amazing thing about my mother, and I can never get over it, is her dedication to the church. When we did find her. Our lady! She prayed and prayed and prayed to Our Lady that I would be looked after. I couldn't believe it.

When we found out then ... how we managed then was ... My foster mother, she wasn't afraid of the priest or anything. Being in England, and a bus conductor in Manchester, she was forward, and she was a great character, great at everything you know. I loved her because she looked after me so well. Even as Walter said now, we worked hard on the farm and everything, but the farm to me was beautiful. That you had all the animals, you had everything, and you were mad to go out, you were mad to go working. I went to the school then, but I was never taught much in school. I was too shy. Too afraid, and I was never taught that much in school. They were wonderful but I always felt sad about my foster father because that time ... The old saying that time 'I wouldn't rear another man's

bastard' you know. And the fact that my mother wouldn't sign the adoption paper, that I would have had the same name. Things would have been beautiful. And I always felt that about him. He had a kind of a ... He wouldn't be more free as my foster mother would be. But that kind of a guilt. **See photo #7 listed above.**

And when they were dividing out land back in them days, you know with the ... the Land Commission. They were dividing out land, but you had to have a son. But my foster father couldn't get land even as he was putting down that I was his son, that he was rearing me as his son. But it was no good.

**M.C.** Because you weren't legally adopted.

**P.J.H.** I wasn't legal. I felt sorry later on in life, you know, watching him and watching everybody else getting a farm that he couldn't get any land. And then he started renting land and that, you know, and it was very hurtful in one sense. As I said when I left the Home then, I ...

**M.C.** Tell me about when you left, you were saying about the experience of being in the car and seeing animals.

**P.J.H.** When I walked out with my foster mother then. I sat into a car outside and as you know ... I

[REDACTED] They were in a rented house, and he was teaching in the school not too far away, but eventually the school closed down and he moved up to Ballindereen then. But he had a car that time. I always call it the Churchill car because it was the same type car as Churchill's with the big headlamps in the front wing. So, we sat in the car anyway, and as the car was driving along, I was looking out the window. And I thought, God the trees are moving. That's the way I seen it. First time sitting in a car and the trees were ... God I thought that's strange, all the trees are moving. So, when I got to the foster home then, I got out of the car. And the next thing, this thing came running, making this noise, and four legs on him and the tongue hanging out of his mouth. I jumped back into the car again. I was afraid, I closed the door and sat looking out the window at it. So, my foster father and mother [REDACTED] was his name, and they were all laughing. They thought it was funny. And there was my foster father and mother rubbing the dog's head and everything and they were trying to coax me out of the car again. So eventually they got me out and caught my hand and be rubbing the dog and I'd be pulling back the hand. So eventually we became great old friends after that, the dog. **See Photos #1, 2, 3 listed above**

But when I went into the house then, God I found it awful small. Frightening! Rooms were small, everything was small. The open fire which I had never seen. Turf burning in it and that. And then

the bedroom was so small and everything like that. But when I was in the foster home, I had an awful habit of rocking my head back and over. And it was fright and noise. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

So, when I was at home then, I used to go to bed early in the evenings, and then you would wake up and next thing the bed was wet. And you kind of suffered it out 'till morning. And then the foster mother would come in, and the bed was wet, and she'd have to throw the mattress out in the garden. And then after a while then, I would wake up in the middle of the night, and I'd rock myself to sleep. And she'd hear the noise. There were squeaky beds that time you know. And she'd come in and say, 'What's wrong?' I wouldn't say anything at all. 'You're fine' and that, and she'd go out then again. Then I was wondering how will I stop this bed from squeaking. So I used to get clothes and pack them down behind the headboard, and then rock off then and go off to sleep. Like that then, I kept wetting the bed. I got cute later on, I started turning the mattress. I'd turn the mattress over. And the only way I stopped, and they had a pot under the bed because there were no bathrooms or toilets in those days. How I stopped was, they fostered another young lad as well.

And he was actually out in a foster home and he was treated so badly. He was going to the Tech in Mountbellew and the teacher was very suspicious. This lad is not being treated right. He smells, he's dirty, and everything. So, he got on to the Social Welfare then. And there was a Miss McCormack, I think she lived in Salthill. She had a Morris Minor. She used to come out checking, checking you to see that things were OK and she just mentioned him to them and they said they would take him in. So, the two of us had to sleep together, and with that I was afraid to go to sleep because I was afraid I'd wet the bed. So eventually then, when I felt I wanted to go to the toilet then, I got up and the pot was under the bed. So, after that then it kind of phased out.

**M.C.** What age were you when you were fostered now again?

**P.J.H.** I'd be about six and a half coming up on seven years of age.

**M.C.** So you would only have done about a year in school, we'll say, in Tuam.

**P.J.H.** I have the records there of whenever I went to Tuam. **See item #5 listed above**



**M.C.** Whenever you went to Junior infants, or Senior Infants maybe.

**P.J.H.** It was sad, it was tough. Things were OK when you were small, as I said before there ... I suppose the sad thing I saw there one day when we were out making hay, getting hay ready for the winter to feed the cattle and that. My foster father had a sister living in the house as well and she was kind of a biggish woman as well ... and we came in one evening and she was missing. So, we went around everywhere looking and this spot ... There was a tank of water along side of the house with a pipe coming down from the roof. That was the water you used for washing. So, they seen the ladder. She went in to get a bucket of water, lost her balance, and she was drowned and she was floating on top. I stood up on the little trough and I could see her floating on the top. And one of the neighbours grabbed me and said 'Don't let that young lad see that. That could affect him'. And do you know, years later, it did. Because I had so much of it when I came a teenager, the verbal abuse from people around. It was deplorable. And I got fed up, depressed and the whole lot of it. I just went up looking at the sheep, to count the sheep, on the bicycle. There was a main river running along by the land and there was a bridge. I went down, and there was a couple of steps, and I sat on them looking into the water and thinking 'Here goes'. Looking at her. I thought she looked peaceful and thought 'Here goes, I've had enough of this'.

**M.C.** What age were you when the incident happened?

**P.J.H.** I'd say I could have been up on 17.

**M.C.** When the incident happened?

**P.J.H.** With the sheep like?

**M.C.** No when you saw ...

**P.J.H.** Oh I'd only have been about nine or ten at the time.

**M.C.** Very young. So, talk to me now about the verbal abuse and how you were treated.

**P.J.H.** When I got older then when I started going out. When I had finished school, I went to the Tech in Mountbellew, spent three years there. Then I went into the local garage in a small little town there in Menlough. And the next thing you were getting a few bob and that. As you got older then, you'd go to the local dancehall in the hall there. But sure, I'd go there, and I had no confidence or courage or nothing at all. And you'd just stand up and you'd be watching everything, and you'd see these men pushing. So, after a while I got a bit of courage, and I said I'd follow them across the hall knowing well I wasn't going to ask any woman anyways or any girl. So eventually I did, one night I did, and she did dance with me. God I thought this was beautiful. So, I just had the one dance. I six foot six then, I thought this is great, I thought this is the start. So, when I went again

the next night, I seen her and two other girls with her. I went back and they walked off laughing. So, I knew then straight away that they'd found out that I was... So, I lost courage then. And what I'd do then I'd run home, about two miles. I'd run off home all together. And what I'd do then, is I'd stay in the shed because the lights would be on, because my foster parents would be up and I didn't want to be telling them this and that. So, I'd wait until they went to bed and I'd sneak in then and go to bed.

So, as you got older and older, then you started drinking. Drink, I started drinking and drink was brilliant. It gave you this great courage and everything, like you know. And I remember being in a pub one night and we were playing pool. I seen these three lads coming in. I knew one of them very well. So, there was a competition on and then I was shouted, 'You're next on the table'. I went down and I could hear your man saying, 'Put your arse up against the wall. This queer is coming'. I hit such a lash on the balls that I put them all over the table, all over the floor. The barman came out, threw me out the door. So, I told him what your man was saying. 'Out he said, I'll have none of this', he said. Eventually, I did have a friend who told him what happened. So, he pleaded with me to come back but I said no, I couldn't go back again. So eventually, I went down one Monday then when there was no one there. He apologised and said he was so sorry. He didn't realise it or nothing you know.

But, as I said, I went into Higgins's garage in Woodquay, the main Ford dealers. I spent twelve years and then I got into Eircom. They had a garage out in Ballybane. So, there was another guy from my own parish and he was married, but he was pretty well off. The uncle had left him a farm and a substantial amount of money plus money from America. He used to come in late in the morning and the foreman was giving out. I said, 'Why don't you tell him to come in early like us all?' So the foreman went and told him and he said that I said it. We went into the canteen then, he was sitting across from me. He said, 'Do you know what you are', he said. 'You're a bastard'. He said, 'You're dirt from the street. You don't even know who you are. You don't even know your mother and father' he said. 'And only for you were taken in here ...' And he said, 'By the way you're a queer as well', he said. 'Only for the foster parents took you in', he said, 'you'd be eating and begging off the street, you're only dirt'. I went to catch the cup of tea to throw it into his face and one of the lads grabbed my hand and he said, 'P.J., you'll lose your job if you do that'. I went across the table to catch him by the throat, I just lost it, completely lost it. So, two lads brought me out onto the floor and the foreman came out then. He said, 'What's going on?' 'That effing so-and-so in there', I said, 'what he called me. He said, 'We can't have this in here', he said, 'you'll have to go in and have the tea on your own'. I said 'Why should I have to go in. He's the one that caused it'.

‘Oh’ he said, ‘I wouldn’t raise another man’s bastard’.

So, it was deplorable, saddening. But with my foster mother, she was so fantastic. She used to pray to Padre Pio at nighttime. We had to go down on our knees then to say the rosary and all this and she used to pray to Padre Pio that I would meet my mother.

**M.C.** Can I just ask you ... the other person that was fostered, it was a boy as well. Did you have a good relationship with him?

**P.J.H.** We did. He’s still in London now. He’s a chef. He went on to be a chef.

**M.C.** Around the same age as you, was he?

**P.J.H.** He’d be three years older than me. They adopted a girl as well.

**M.C.** Oh! Fostered or adopted?

**P.J.H.** Adopted. She’s in the home place. She’s married but no family at all. So, the farm was left to me then. My foster mother made sure that I’d get it. Because if anything had happened to them, she would have got the place because she was Hansberry you see. She’d be the daughter so I wouldn’t get anything. So that’s one thing my foster mother made sure that they made their will on time and that the farm would be left to me. Even with that itself, it cost me about £10,000 because I wasn’t the son, so I had to pay the ...

**M.C.** The duty...

**P.J.H.** The duty on the farm and that. So, as I said my foster mother was ... Oh she’d stand up to the priest and everything. She was never afraid of him or nothing. And people used to be giving out. ‘Isn’t she cheeky the way she’s speaking to the priest like that. Isn’t she awful?’ But that was her. She was in Manchester and it was a different system out there like. You went to church and everything but ... But she used to pray to Padre Pio and everything. The next thing the Health Nurse came on and she used to be at the Health Nurse. She said, ‘P.J. is entitled to meet his mother. Do you know anything. Please let us know’. And she said, ‘I cannot tell you anything because if I do’, she said, ‘I’m going to lose my job’. So I was up into my teens at this stage and she came out

then just to check to see... My foster mother was at her again and eventually she wrote the address on a piece of paper and left it on the table and just walked out.

We worked from there then. I got an old banger of a car then. We went up around where my mother was but no one would tell you anything. You'd meet people. 'Oh, I don't know, I never heard of her, I don't know'. We went to all the graveyards to see could we see a headstone of Havertys and that. Nothing, we totally... We couldn't understand what was wrong at all.

So, then I damaged my knee and I was in hospital for six months with my knee, playing football. And then I came back out then again. Next thing I was in a night-club in Mountbellew and this girl came to talking to me and the whole lot. I had two friends with me there as well. So, with that, we started dating each other. But the amazing thing, I must have gone with her nearly for a year and we never kissed. And then I found ... I got her with another man. The only thing, she was trying to find out who I was. That was all she was interested in. She didn't want me as a boyfriend or nothing. She was going with this other guy and she was going with me, but using me to find out my background, who I was and all this sort of stuff. Being inquisitive, I suppose, more than anything else. And it used to annoy me because she would come up to the foster home as well and they were happy that I had this girl. And all along she was only just using me.

So, with that anyways, we kept going, enquiring, asking. Nothing happening. So out of the blue, I went up this Sunday, and there was this man coming on a bike. An elderly man. I just rolled the window down and I said, 'Could you tell me where there's Havertys here?' 'Well' he said 'there's no Havertys here, but there was Havertys in it'. And he said, 'One of the daughters got in trouble. She got pregnant, she left, and she never came back. We never seen her, and she was a lovely woman'. That's what he said. 'But her sister' he said, 'is married down near Eyrecourt to a contrary man', he said. 'And I'm not going down with you neither', he said, [REDACTED] he said.

**M.C.** What age were you then? I'm just trying to get a timeline on this.

**P.J.H.** I'd say well in to my 20s at this stage. I says I'll go down and chance it. I knocked on the door. This woman opened the door and, all of sudden, she made this jump. You could see the expression on her face. Straight away I thought she'd recognised me just with a look or something. The next thing this guy comes out with the wellingtons on him and the braces and ... 'What do you want?' 'Oh, sorry', I said, 'I came to the wrong house' 'What the eff brought you here in the first place so', he said. I knew then. I got kind of afraid and I thought, 'jeez, I'm not coming back here again'.

So, with that, a good few weeks after that, I got a letter from my mother in London. My aunt had wrote a letter to my mother and she said, 'I think P.J. was at the door today. There was something about him', she said, 'I think he's looking for you'. But my mother had married in the meantime, and he was a gentleman and it was he that got my mother, she wouldn't be a great writer, to write and she wrote to the foster parents.

So, with that then, we decided how we'd manage. My foster mother had two sisters in Manchester. Of course, she would have known Manchester working there. I never flippin' drove outside Galway. And then I had an Escort and they had a Fiesta – a yellow Fiesta. My foster father wanted the Escort to pull a trailer, to put a hitch on it. I took the Fiesta off him and it was a bloody yellow one.

**M.C:** You weren't going to lose it in a hurry anyway.

**P.J.H.** So with that anyways, we decided we'd go to England. We took off. Into Liverpool. Drove up, my first time on a motorway. Jesus!

**M.C.** Did your foster mother go with you?

**P.J.H.** She did. We stopped with her sister in Manchester. We decided then we'd go off to London next day, because my foster mother's sister's husband had a cousin in London that we could stay with. Thanks be to God, I didn't know much about driving or anything like that. If I knew what was ahead of me, I probably wouldn't have drove at all to London. So, we took off the next day to London. We drove off down the motorway. Gee, I don't know... God must have been with us anyways. I pulled in for petrol on the way down, and whatever way I came out of the petrol station, I was hitting back for Liverpool and Manchester and the whole lot again. We had to try to come off it to get back on again. So eventually, we got as far as London, and we hadn't a clue which road to take going into London because there were fly-offs this way and that way. So we rang the one from a phonebox and she came out. She got a taxi out; she brought us in to London. We stopped with her for the night then, and we decided then we'd go to Brixton because that was where my mother was. And she said, 'I know how to get to Brixton'. We drove around London, Elephant and Castle, this bridge, that bridge and the whole lot of it. And the worst thing about that was, that was back in 1975 when the bombing was going on. And an Irish car, driving around London, lost. And when you'd come to a set of traffic lights, and I should have turned right, and I used to cross in front of your man. Take off quicker than him, cross in front of him. And of course the English that time, blowing the horns. 'You thick Irish man like, the way you're driving'. So we decided to go into the police station - my foster mother and her sister. They went into the police station. Jeez, you'd think they were up in bloody Athenry looking for the way into Galway or Loughrea or somewhere. The

policemen were kind of laughing at them and everything, and telling them to go this way and that way. They couldn't find their way out of the police station, it was a big one, they were going out the wrong door. So, the police man said, 'I wish ye all the best getting out of London', he said, 'not to mind trying to get to Brixton'.

We got to Brixton at about two o'clock that night. So, my mother and the husband were standing out on the footpath, and the poor woman, she was as nervous as could be. Oh stop, she was so nervous. We got out anyway, shook hands to him and then I hugged her, gave her a kiss on the cheek and everything. So, we went in. The sad thing about it, they had a bed made up for me. They thought I'd come on my own. You see with my foster mother, the sister and the other cousin, there was too many of us in it. She could only tell me what I told you there about how my story started with the priest and the whole lot. **See photos #5, 6 listed above**

So, with that then, they wrote about two letters back to my foster mother and then everything stopped. We couldn't believe it. No communication no nothing whatsoever. We were wondering what had happened. Then my foster mother said, 'Well, probably she's happy now. She knows you are content. She knows you're looked after and everything'. **See items #9, 10, 11 listed above**

So in a way then, isn't it funny? She was my real birth mother but in the end of the day, isn't it funny to say, my foster mother was my mother. Isn't it an amazing thing? I was more closer to my foster mother. I seen her as my mother. Isn't it an awful thing to say? Even though your real mother was there, you hugged her and everything ... but the bond, there was nothing ... isn't it sad to say?... That kind of hit me later on in life as well.

So, with that, we couldn't understand it, so we got on with life. And as I say, let down by women and all this sort of thing. So eventually, I did meet a woman and she accepted me for who I was. Sad thing to say, even the friends that I had and everything. There was this man in the village. He was a bachelor, and he wasn't in great health. He was thin and they used to call him gander legs and everything. It was so rotten you know. He came in and told me that they were betting on how long my wedding would last. Putting bets on in the pub. Weren't they rotten so and soes? because she being English you see.

**M.C.** You were marrying someone from England?

**P.J.H.** From England. From Manchester. 'She's not going to stay out in the country farming or nothing'. So that kind of annoyed me so much as well.

**M.C.** Did you always feel just when you were in primary school, and when you were in the Tech in Mountbellew, that you were dealt with a little differently by people the same age as you?

**P.J.H.** I was. You see they didn't know me or nothing like that. Even in National School and people around. It was only when I came to my teens and when I started going out, that's when things started. That's when the insults ...

**M.C.** So it was all right when you were in school.

**P.J.H.** It was OK. I have to say we've a beautiful teacher in Menlough, he's still alive, Bernie McHale. He was fantastic to me because I was so nervous. I always had this kind of thing on me. And you hate to tell people who you were or where you came from. You're trying to wonder 'What am I going to say here?. Will I say I'm from another parish or such a parish?' Because as I got older people would ask you and I'd say, 'Menlough' 'Oh I've a sister down in Menlough. And who are you down in Menlough?' 'Well, I'm not actually Menlough now, I'm more nearer to Monivea' You'd be kind of ... 'And sure I've someone there'. And I'd say 'Oh I'm Haverty, I'm living down ...' and you walk off and leave it like that.

Because I remember being at a fair in Menlough back in the 60s. In a small town, you'd bring the sheep in in September to sell them off. This man would buy the sheep off my foster father. He would have known him down through the years. Of course, you would have to go into a pub for the drink, of course, and bit of luck for the sheep kind of thing. And he'd say, 'Who is that young man you have there?' 'Oh' he says 'that's my man'. 'Sure ye didn't have family? ... Oh, he's one of them is he?' And imagine at that age, everything you take in.

Because I remember another instance now even when ... We'll say the foster home I went into now was the Hansberrys and they were all born there. He had brothers and sisters and they were all scattered in America and different places. There would be one brother who was living, I'd say, about four miles away and he was married. The wife was always rough, I never liked her. She never had any time for me when she'd come up visiting. She'd cycle up to the house and I remember her sitting down. At that time, they had a range put in when the baths were put in and that. I was there in the kitchen. She came straight out with it. She said, 'What did ye want getting that thing for? Isn't there enough of us for this place here?' She said, 'Why don't ye send him out to America, out to Willie?' That would be her husband's brother and my foster father's brother. 'He's out in Philadelphia. He's in charge of golf courses. Send him out'. My foster mother said 'He's going nowhere, he's staying here'. That's what she said. Because you see they wanted to keep the name going. The Hansberry name going where they were all born. That was very important back in them days as well. 'So, no. He's staying where he is. He's not moving one inch' she said. She was fantastic, she was fantastic. There's no question about it, she was brilliant.

It was just 20s, late teens when you started going to pubs, going out, meeting girls, wouldn't have you, this and that, rejected. Everything hurt so much, and you'd get people throwing abuse at you. And it went to the stage then that you felt ... people would be talking, and somebody might turn their head and look in your direction, and you'd think they were talking about you. And they mightn't be talking about you. But that's the way you took it, once they laughed and looked in your direction. And I got so depressed and so fed up and everything, I thought 'Here goes, I'll jump in the river'. Like I'd seen in the tank and everything. And I thought Arrah, hump it'. And as I sat there, and I was thinking about ... And I suppose, the most thing that stopped me was Purgatory. Would you believe it or not? The religion probably would have saved my life, to a certain extent, because I thought "Oh God, if I drown myself now and do away with myself, I'll go to Purgatory. I'll be left there.' You know in all this, it's amazing what goes through your head when you're sitting there anticipating what to... And I was a while, a good while there and then after a while, I just came out and cycled home. It was just the thoughts...

But it was rough, there's no question, no two ways about it. It was not easy. It was just the verbal abuse that you got was awful. This being a queer. This being a bastard. 'You don't know who your father is. You don't know who your mother is'. Oh, it was so hurtful like, you know. And no support, no help. And you just went to the National School and you just sat there. You were taught nothing. It was only when I went to the Tech in Mountbellew that this Bernie McHale took it on board. And a gentleman, a lovely man and he's alive to this day, and I've the height of respect for him. He's beyond belief. The encouragement ... It was he that started me off in the mechanical. Because they bought an old second hand tractor and I was driving that. That got me into driving and being a mechanic and all. Lovely man. I suppose getting married was a great thing as well. And having a family then. It was beautiful then. Everything started changing then like, you know.

But when I think back of the church, the nuns, everything. It really sickens me to the core. And I know an awful lot of nuns suffered. They were taken out of big families. Same with the priest and they were shoved in there and everything. But the biggest problem in the world today in this country is greed, power and money. They're the ruinations. That was with them nuns down there. It was down to money. Where did they get the money to build these hospitals? They sold that hospital down there for three point something million back in 2004. They have a hospital above in Galway now. They're on the Board of Directors there. They get money for every patient that comes in. When you look up about nuns, they're supposed to be poor. They're supposed to help the poor, the vulnerable and the weak and all that. Why did they not help my mother? Why did they not say, 'it's our duty. We're doing God's work here now. Let's unite my mother with her baby. She wants him. She loves him. Let's help her.' But they didn't. They just banged the door every time in front of her.



**M.C.** And you have no memory of any kindness shown to you in the home? I know your memory is sketchy of the home anyway.

**P.J.H.** It's very sketchy. Even when they demolished the [Tuam] Home, they found a room with all the toys in it. That people used to hand in and they were never dished out. I was seven years of age when they were putting up the Christmas tree in the foster home, and I was like a two-year-old. I was so excited. And they were explaining to me about this Santy, and you had to put milk and the carrot on the fireplace. I was putting up the lights. Watching the postman coming. Race to the door for the cards to open the letters. Everything! That's when my life started. When I came out to the foster home. There was ten years when I was locked up in a prison, concentration camp, refugee... What's going on in Iran at the moment, all these people locked into these tight little rooms with just a window and nothing else. And your mind is not...

**M.C.** Is not stimulated in any way.

**P.J.H.** My mind didn't start working until I came to the foster home really and truly. But the only fact that I got out, and going down to school, and I suppose, seeing people has [unclear] in my mind. Walking out with my foster mother and sitting in a car and seeing the trees that I thought were moving.

**M.C.** And did you ever hear from your mother, your birth mother again?

**P.J.H.** What happened then, was ... My foster mother started getting bad, she had a bad heart. I was heart-broken because there was nothing they could do for her. So, she was in and out of hospital, and the whole lot of it, when out of the blue, we got a letter from my mother. She apologised and said she was sorry for not writing sooner, that she didn't think she had the right to interfere in our life. She wanted to know could she become part of the family. What happened was, her husband died about two or maybe a year and a half after we being there. They were sitting out in the sun. It was rough part of Brixton they would have been in, there was a family in on top and everything. 'So' she said, her husband' – they were sitting out in the sun and he said, 'I want to go in for a drink'. So, she dozed off to sleep. When she woke up he wasn't there. When she walked in, he was dead on the kitchen floor. He died of a massive heart attack. She lost all courage, and everything, and she didn't think she had the right.

Because one time I used to ring her from a phone box and the phone would lift and it would go back down again. And I thought, 'Maybe I dialled the wrong number', and I'd go again, and it was lifted up again, and it was left. And I'd say, 'Hello'. Nothing.

I'd say it could be around 2000 this letter came. And then my foster mother being so bad, I was taken up with her because we were so close. And she died around 2005 and I was totally heart

broken. Then, my foster father died about a year and half later with a broken heart because the two of them got on so well. They'd go off out for the night with their relations. And go to Manchester, Scotland, Wales and all these places. He passed away. So, we decided then, here goes. We'll go back to our mother and see what we can do. My wife said then, 'Do you know it's her birthday. We'll send her a birthday card and a bunch of flowers'. We got a letter then stating that she was going out the door and this young lad was outside the door with a bunch of flowers and she told him he was at the wrong door. It must have been the next door neighbours he should have gone to. So, she looked at the card and seen my name on it. 'Do you know where them flowers are now', she said. 'They're below on Our Lady's altar'. Straight away she went down to the church, walked into the church, and the priest was there and said 'They're beautiful flowers'. 'Can I put them on the altar,' she said. 'Oh', he said, 'you can put them wherever you want', he said. That's where she put them. **See item #10 listed above.**

So, we decided we'd go over then but we wouldn't tell her in case that she was nervous, and she wouldn't open the door to us. By chance then we took off. Myself and the wife. Thanks to Ryanair, flights were reasonable and all that. We got the Underground. Landed in Luton, the train in, Underground, out to Brixton, walked down. I said to the wife, 'We'll walk on the left hand side now, because if we walk on the right she might be seeing us looking out'. Number 17, I'll never forget the number. As we walked down, next thing we could see this woman, a small woman out, and she was kind of picking at a small little tree there. So, we crossed over the road to her and she said, 'Oh, beautiful morning', and I said, 'Yeah, lovely morning' 'You're probably looking for the new neighbours that moved in next door'. Who comes along in the meantime but the postman, a character. 'What are ye saying now to my ... this is my girlfriend', cracking a joke kind of thing. We kind of walked away a piece. The wife said, 'What are you going to do?' 'I don't know', I said. 'If I tell her', I said, 'she could die of a heart attack. She's very old. I don't know'. 'Whatever you do', she said, 'I'll stand by you'. So the postman went then and I went back to her. I said, 'It might be you I'm looking for. Would you know who I am?' She said, 'I knew you crossing the road' she said. 'Why do you think I'm leaning against the wall. The power has gone from my two legs'.

**M.C.** How long since the meeting before?

**P.J.H.** Oh that would have been '75. When did we go back? 2008 was it?

**M.C.** So you're talking 25 years? Or more...

**P.J.H.** You're talking nearly 30 years.

**M.C.** 30 years, yes.

**P.J.H.** My wife came over to her then, and she got talking to her and the whole lot. Eventually she came around from the shock. So, then she went in. I left in the letters and came out, and we went down to a little restaurant down near the church. She was sitting across from me and I was going to ask her about Tuam. But she was staring into my eyes so much, and the smile that I had seen in the car, I couldn't do it. I said no. Whatever I know about Tuam now I going to leave it because she'd think I only came back for that. Just to see her face. As I say a photograph ... a camera wouldn't take it. The look on her face. The smile on her face. Like I had just dropped down out of the sky to her. And I said, 'I'm going to leave it now. I'm not going to ask about Tuam. I'll leave it as it is'.

So, my wife was talking to her then, and she was explaining about the husband and how he died and the whole lot. And how the woman that brought her over was good to her. And she minded the kids for her and cleaned the house and cooked. They had an elderly person living in the house as well, so she was very occupied and very occupied with the church as well.

Then I told her, 'What we'll do now', I said. 'In Spring, the following year, we'll bring back the three grandchildren and you can meet up with the grandchildren'. So, she thought that was nice and everything. We left it be.

Myself and the wife flew over beforehand, they were to come back and we were to let them know. We went down to the house, knocked on the door, and no answer. We looked at the church and there was six o'clock Mass. It was a lovely evening, so we stayed outside watching the kids on roller skates. So then, after a while my wife said, 'your mother is on the far side walking down the footpath towards the church'. We crossed over the road to her. I said, 'How are you mother, how are you keeping?' 'Get away from me, I don't know who you are'. I said, 'I'm P.J., I'm your son. Your grandsons are going to come over to meet you' 'I've got no grandsons, I've no son. Get out of my way. Get out of my way and leave me alone'. We stepped aside and we let her off into the church. We stayed outside. There was a park, so we hit off a bit. We seen her come back out and head off down towards the house. We decided we'd go in and tell the priest that we were a distant relation in case anything happened her. We felt she was maybe losing the mind and that. It was a stand-in priest that was in it, so we gave him the number to contact us.

Shortly after that we got a phone call that she had passed away. Before she died then, there was a problem, because then she was Frewing and her records showed that she had no family. So she told the nurse that night. She said 'If I should die tonight, or anything, will you contact my son in Ireland? The nurse said, 'you have no son down here'. 'I have', she said, 'he was born in Tuam'. And she was able to name off, my wife is Eileen as well, and she was able to name the three sons. They were kind of suspicious, so they got on to the social worker and they said, 'No'. They got on

to the church. The priest was actually from Cork, he was gone on holidays when we were there, Fr. Healy. 'No', he said, 'she would have told me if she had a son'. 'Hold on' he said, 'there was a couple here, there's a phone number down in the sacristy, I'll run down and get it'. So that's how we were able to...

We went back then. I had to go back to prove who I was. I have the thing there. Courts and things.

**See item #12 listed above**

Flying back and over and the whole lot of it. It took well over a month before she was even buried. So the priest was talking to me and he said, 'Why on earth did she not tell me?' 'Well', I said, 'I'll tell you the reason Father why she didn't tell you, because she thought you would close the door in her face, like they did beyond in Ireland. That's why she kept it to herself'. And she never even told her friends in the church. They were shocked the day we were at the funeral. Gobsmacked! 'Why did she not tell us?' 'Because she was afraid to tell ye. She was afraid she wouldn't be allowed into the house of God because she was a sinner. That's the why', I said. 'She believed she was a sinner'.

So anyway, there was such a crowd at the Mass as well. But the sad thing about it was, the undertaker did things very bad as well. She was dead over a month, and he brought us into the room, and she was laid out in the coffin there. We went in. Oh my God, I wish he had left the lid closed. He should have left the lid closed. And that was an awful shock, pure shock. Then we went to the funeral, Mass and everything. We were putting the coffin in the hearse when, who comes up to me but this young girl about 17 or 18 with a baby in her hand. She said, 'I want to shake your hand, I heard about you'. She said 'Your mother was a lady; your mother was wonderful. My mother was very very sick. She was in and out of hospital often. Your mother used to come in and get us ready for school and cook, get the lunches and everything. She was wonderful and I had to come down and shake your hands', she said. I thought that was beautiful. And as well, looking at her, she could keep her baby. How times have changed. She was able to hold on to her baby, and to think that my mother couldn't do that. That's what I thought. Sadness there like you know.

I look back on life and I say, 'Why shouldn't I have done more?' And people say, 'Stop that. You did what you did. You got to meet her. You got to go to her funeral. Leave it'. A lot of people didn't get that chance. We all could look back and we all could change things if we want to. It's just the way it happened.

So then, I decided then I'd go looking for my father. I went up to my aunt, years later, and she had passed away. I didn't know at all. He was living on his own. Oh, a contrary so-and-so, foul language, the lot. I kept going to him. I said, 'You wouldn't know anything about my father?' 'How the hell would I know anything about your father. Couldn't it be anyone?' He said like that to me.

Oh, he's a bugger. It was no good. So, there was a cousin of mine in the nursing home in Ballinasloe. He was after coming out from the hospital, and I found out about him. So, I went in to see him. There was a woman already in there, a neighbour. She was curious to see who in the name of God I am that was coming to see this man. She waited outside and I told her.

So, she used to tell me when people would die up there, so I went up there to the funeral. A neighbour of hers died and her brother was there in a wheelchair and he said 'Oh I cried for your mother. She was beautiful. I always remember her going to school in Tynascragh'. That's the thing there on Tynascragh. **See item #14 listed above.**

In the pony and trap and the potholes and everything. They used to bring hay. The two of them used to go to school. There was a small farmer who used to give them a small bit of a field. They'd put the pony into it. They'd go out at dinner time to give hay to the pony. When they'd come out from school again, they'd hitch the pony up and hit off home again. Wonderful, I said. 'Would you know anything about my father?' 'Yeah', he said, 'he died about a year ago' 'What' I said. And that rotten so-and-so down there. If he had told me, I would have met him. If he had told me who he was. The father. I would have met him. Wasn't it a curse?

So, this woman rang me there, and she told me she was talking to this man and he was actually in Ballinasloe hospital in the bed alongside of my father. He said 'Well it's very strange. That man turned around in the bed to me and told me that he was a very sorry man. That he had a son born in Tuam and never met him'. I decided to go further then. And I found that they were in the parish of Portumna. I went to the local priest in Menlough, so he gave me a number of the priest in Portumna. I rang him and I told him my story. 'Oh' he said, 'this is very delicate, this is very...' Because he had two daughters and three sons. 'Leave it with me'. About a week later, didn't I get a phone call from him. 'I told them, and they're shocked, but two of them are willing to meet you'. I met two of them. It was in Haydens in Ballinasloe. It's closed since now.

As soon as one of them walked in the door you'd think we were twins. The spitting image, no question about it. They decided then that they would do a DNA. So that was grand. I went to my doctor then, who said that there was a place in Cork that send out the kits. The next thing he arrived to the house and who was in the car. His wife actually came from Menlough, about three miles from me. So close. So like a stupid eejit then, I got the kits out from Cork and I told him when he called to the house. Of course, he had drink taken. He was smarter than what I was. 'You can trust me', he said, 'I'm honest'. I gave him the kit. He posted it back down to me and I sent the two of them to Cork. But they came back as zero. No connection at all.

**M.C.** This is the brother?.

**P.J.H.** My stepbrother. Nothing at all. Wasn't he a rotten so-and-so?

**M.C.** Because he didn't do the test. Did he?

**P.J.H.** Well he didn't want to be involved with them. They didn't want to know that the father was such a ... that he got my mother pregnant or anything like that.

They wouldn't have anything to do with me. But I'm still working on it now because there is another girl who knows one of my steps ... and she is going to try and edge in ... and see if there is a possibility that she might meet me. A possibility that she might. But as I say, I'm happy with what I have. I'm happy with what I found. I was a lucky man to meet a good woman who married me. I have three sons and I have a grandchild due in December. So, all in all: there was a hard part in my life, and there was a good side that turned out well for me. But I suppose really and truly I have to thank my foster mother.

**M.C.** She sounds like she was a wonderful woman.

**P.J.H.** She was wonderful. I think going to England, working in England, working on the buses and everything. She was a character. She wasn't afraid of the priest. She didn't give a hoot about them. Because people were afraid of the priest. Even when I used to go to Mass, I used to go across the fields and into the church. At that time, you were always kind of early. I would go into a seat and I'd go all the way into the wall, and the next thing I would see people about to come into the seat. They would look in and would go up a couple of seats up. And it was always the poorer people that would kneel with you. They wouldn't take a bit of notice of you. Isn't it amazing? All those little things that you would... But I was delighted to be able to go, and I have a headstone up now with the name of my mother for my kids if they ever want to ... ever. The history is there. The photograph of my mother is there and the whole lot.

**M.C.** She's buried in London?

**P.J.H.** She's buried with her husband in Brixton. But her dedication and her devotion to the church was unreal. And Our Lady. I don't know what she'd have done without Our Lady. And people don't believe, but she did. I was asked then, do I go to church, and I said, 'I do, believe it or not'. A lot of them were probably shocked.' 'Well' I said, 'the reason being, probably, I was brought up as a Catholic I suppose, and it was drilled into you. Plus the fact', I said, 'my foster mother prayed so much to Padre Pio that I would meet my mother'. Then I said, 'When I met my mother and she was praying to Our Lady that I would be looked after', I said, 'it all worked together. They might be something there'. So, I said, 'that's the reason I go to church, and not alone that, you'll always think of them when you're in the church'. Every Sunday you go in you always think of your mother and the whole lot. But there's a lot of cases where I would love to have the courage to stand up and say

to the priest, ‘Hold on a minute now. I’ve a problem with your sermon. You know I’d love to have the courage to quiz him.’

Because I seen in the paper there – ‘Hoax of a Holocaust’, and it was John Waters, and he was meeting in the Menlo Park Hotel and I said to Walter, ‘Come on we’ll go into the meeting in the Menlo Park Hotel’. So we went in and the room was full and it was all elderly people and all that. And that McWilliams was with him, he writes books or something.

**M.C.** David McWilliams?

**P.J.H.** David yeah. The Iona Institute or whatever they call it. [David Quinn, Director of The Iona Institute was the second speaker at the meeting held on 21 November 2018]. Waters stood up, and it was all about abortion and all that, and he said, ‘Anyone that turns their back on God are evil’. I was sitting there, and I thought to myself, ‘That means my mother is evil so’. She got pregnant outside of marriage and the whole lot. So, they put the microphone around then, and I was trying to work up the courage to stand up. Eventually, I stood up and I said, ‘I’m P.J.Haverty, and I was born out of wedlock, and I was reared in the Mother and Baby Home in Tuam. You’re after saying there that anyone who turns their back on God is evil. So’, I said, ‘does that mean my mother is evil? She never turned her back on God. She went to Mass every single Sunday. She’s the woman who went to Our Lady’s altar and prayed for me’, I said, ‘that I would be looked after. And by God I was’. ‘The door was locked in her face below in Tuam’, I said, ‘by the nuns who were supposed to be followers of Christ’. The next thing he stood up. ‘That gentleman who spoke down there about his mother and being born in the home in Tuam’. He said, ‘My dear man, you have nothing to worry about, your mother is in heaven’. And I got a round of applause. It just shows you.

But what he was saying about the holocaust was ... there was saying that there was about a thousand babies buried and kind of murdered in Tuam. And the media were ... each media had it so different right across the world. And that was what he was getting at, it was the media for printing such things. That they had no proof at the time. That’s what he was after.

So I suppose that’s was my...

**M.C.** That’s your story.

**P.J.H.** My life story. It was rough at times.

**M.C.** I can well believe that. I suppose it was the social attitudes really that hurt the most.

**P.J.H.** Yeah. Then I took to drink, and I was getting drunk and I was making an ass out of myself at dancing. An idiot. And then everybody, ‘Ah that lad, arrah why would he be ...’ And I was very lucky I wasn’t killed with the car another night, I was so drunk. Down at the golf links in

Mountbellew. The golf links used to have a little wall; I just damaged the wing. I could have been killed. I was just lucky. Just drinking and drinking, you know ... it was tough

**M.C.** Very hard.

**P.J.H.** Very very tough. And even the dance in Menlough, you'd run home and if there was a car coming, you'd go in over a gate. You didn't want the car... Then you'd run off home and you'd sit in the shed until they were gone to bed. You didn't want to go in and say...

**M.C.** That you couldn't stay at the dance.

**P.J.H.** That you couldn't stay at the dance. But thanks be to God, everything really worked out at the finish. It's the good wife I have. No question about it. I have my three sons now and we're so close together. I'd do anything for them. I suppose, that's one gift I got out of life. That I would look after my own sons and do anything for them, and I would. We're all very close together now. Even if they say sometimes, 'Oh, here we go, he's old fashioned, he's this and that'. Because I'd be saying, 'Back in my time, look at what ye have ...'

**M.C.** The usual relationship between generations.

**J.P.H.** But we get on very well.

**M.C.** That's great.

**P.J.H.** I'd do anything for them. Go anywhere for them.

**M.C.** And you have the excitement now of another generation coming.

**P.J.H.** And I was just thinking, it's a pity that my foster parents and my mother aren't alive to see this.

**M.C.** She'd love that.

**P.J.H.** It would be lovely. It would be just lovely. But I have to just have to pray to God that I came out to the right home. And the fact that they were in England, they weren't as brainwashed by the system here.

**M.C.** They weren't as affected by the general system, I suppose.

**P.J.H.** I look back and I read up about some of the nuns in America, the way they were treated. God it was awful. It was shocking. And I suppose it was the same here. The way the lower down nuns were treated, and the priest was the same way. Because I don't tarnish them all with the same brush. There is good nuns. There is good priests out there, no two ways about it. You just have these at the top. Just like everything, the government, sports, all along the line. Out in the world, Iran and all these places. It's crazy when you look at it. And I feel so sorry for the kids when you look at them.



And the way the women again – women, women, women second class all the time. That's what vexes me. You know that they are not treated the same as the men. The same thing going into churches. The men are all on one side, the women on the other side. Men are first for Holy Communion, then the women up. And I couldn't serve Mass either. I wasn't allowed to serve Mass because I was born out of wedlock. So that was another thing as well. Then, you would see your friends serving and you can't serve Mass neither.

**M.C.** And just in terms of... I suppose your foster mother looked after getting your certificates. You know we have heard from other survivors how they had trouble establishing their birth certs or anything like that. But your foster mother ... and then you told me, of course, about the person, that's right, who gave the information when your foster mother looked for it.

**P.J.H.** The nurse. Miss McCormack. And fair dues to her because she didn't have to give it. And if she didn't, I wouldn't have known ... I wouldn't have met ...

**M.C.** No, it's just the fact of the difficulty people have had just establishing their identity.

**P.J.H.** Then I went looking for my grandparents side of things and all that. I was getting information then that my grandmother wanted to be buried in Fahy cemetery or in Meelick cemetery because of her parents being buried there as well. And they simply didn't want her buried there. They wanted her buried in Fahy cemetery, the other half of the parish. With all the heavin' and hivin' and hovin' this man Mulhearne, who would have been a neighbour of my mother's heard about the wrangling. They had bought plots. So, she said, 'We'll give them one of the plots'. So, she's actually buried alongside her neighbours up in Meelick and not her own.

So, then I went looking for my grandfather then. My grandfather is buried back in Fahy cemetery. I went up there one day, and a guy came out of the house and got talking with me. I told him the story. 'Oh come in here', he said, 'your grandfather, as far as I know is buried there'. It was a high piece of ground, no headstone, no nothing. 'If you come up again in three weeks' time', he said, 'I'll have the whole lot for you'. I went up in three weeks' time and I went into him. 'Oh, I cannot tell you anything. The books got burned' Well I thought, 'Gee, there must have been magic fires years ago'.

So actually, this man that phoned me, his name is Madden, said 'I'm connected to you' he said. 'Because your great great grandmother was Madden and we're Maddens. And there's a connection there', he says. 'And it was actually my cousin', he said, 'that went to the priest and told about your mother', he said. That's a fact. I told him about the grandparents. 'Oh', he said, 'a lot of things were burned in them days, because there was a lot of top people implicated in a lot of things. And that's why a lot of things were burned'.

**M.C.** So you got no further information?

**P.J.H.** I got no further information. Just that the plot is there and I don't know if he is there or not. His daughter is buried. But she's buried in a different part of the cemetery altogether with the husband. So ... I have more than a lot of people have, which is a good thing.

**M.C.** Yes. Right. Well, I think you have covered a lot of your story. Are you happy with all you have said there?

**P.J.H.** I am very happy.

**M.C.** So, thanks a lot for that.

**P.J.H.** Not at all. Thanks yourself and thanks to the college as well. It's great to be able to get our ... And I hope it will be able to do some good for somebody in the future. Thanks a million.

**M. C.** OK. Thanks P.J.

*Following the end of the interview P.J. had an additional piece which he wanted to place on record.*

**M.C.** OK P.J., you wanted to add another bit there about how you have been trying to make contact with the government, the Department of Justice specifically, to seek an apology for what happened you in your childhood, and for your mother. So maybe tell us what happened at this incident in Dublin.

**P.J.H.** About twenty of us got together, some people came back from England. We decided to go to Dáil Éireann and hand a letter in to the politicians. We were looking for an apology. We marched down to the GPO then and we had a banner in front of us like – SURVIVORS. We were amazed at the amount of students that came up to us, even foreign students, and tourists wanting to know... We explained to them and they took photographs and everything of us. So, we marched then to the Lord Mayor's. I think it was a woman that was in at the time, and he apologised that she was out on meetings. He took the letter off us and said 'Do ye need any photocopies?' We decided it would be nice, just in case. So he photocopied.

We decided then, to go to the Minister of Justice, Frances Fitzgerald, and hand a letter in there. When we arrived there, we had to go to the steps, and the door automatically closed and locked. We just knocked on the window, the reception was inside there and the secretary. We knocked on the window and just showed her the letter. That we just wanted to hand it in. She didn't stir. The next thing, the guards arrived in the squad car and he said, 'What's going on here?' So, we explained to him that all we're doing is handing a letter in, and she won't come and take the letter off us. So, he took the letter off us, and he rang the doorbell then, but she wouldn't move. This other guy came out then, and the guard just read the rights to him you know. 'What are ye wasting our time for?

Don't ye know by these people out here that they're not going to cause trouble?' Because we were elderly ... He took the letter then, and the guard came out apologising and shaking hands to us. 'I'm very sorry' he said, 'it must look awful bad to see the squad car coming, and two of us getting out of the car as if ye were causing trouble'. He apologised on his behalf to us.

I was very annoyed, and I went to the local politician here in Galway, Eamonn Ó Cuív, and he brought it up in the Dáil. She said she had already apologised and that for the safety of her workers, the guard on standby had to take action. But there was no guard there, no guard whatsoever. Her secretary could have seen that we were peaceful people and all she had to do was take the letter and we'd have walked off. That annoyed me and it annoyed a lot of people.

## PAUSE

**P.J.H:** That was the 16th of December 2015.

**M.C:** You wrote to Éamon Ó Cuív about how you were treated. Oh, you met with Éamon Ó Cuív and it was brought up ...

**P.J.H:** It was brought up in the Dáil then. He asked the Minister for a reply as to why these people were treated the way they were treated.

**M.C:** And that was the reply you got. **See items #3,4 listed above**

**P.J.H:** That was what we were looking for. An apology from the government.

Now another thing that annoyed us as well was the fact that Leo came down here. They had a meeting, a get together in the Salthill Hotel.

**M.C:** Leo Varadkar you mean.

**P.J.H:** Leo Varadkar, the Taoiseach. He came down to Tuam without telling anybody. I think it was ... I forget what politician met with him. He came in on a flying visit. That annoyed us so much. That we couldn't be notified. That we could have met him on the grounds. So, with that, then, again we made more complaints and, at the finish up, I rang Catherine Corless. She said that she got no formal invitation from the Taoiseach but, if she did, would I be willing to go to Dublin. I said I would. But she went and no survivors went. That's what annoyed us as well. Why didn't Catherine Corless put her foot down and say 'I'm bringing a survivor with me'. She didn't. She should have brought one of us up there when she was meeting him. Because we were invited by him to come along. And we seen a statement in the news or something like, that the Taoiseach met

with Catherine Corless and some of the survivors. That's a total lie. He didn't. It's a total lie. I was very annoyed.

And the same with the President. We wrote a letter to the President, but his diary is full up. And he's the head of us all. He comes looking for our votes and he has no problem with that. I cannot see why he can't meet with some of us. I can't understand it. He was able to come out and speak about the army's pay. Why can he not meet with us? We're human beings. We're Irish. It's not our fault the way we came into the world. We didn't ask to come into the world this way. We didn't ask to be locked up for seven years of our life. Taken away from our mothers.

I remember speaking to a woman in a swimming pool in Athenry. She originally came from Dublin. She'd seen me on television and we got talking. She said, 'I was wild when I was very young. My mother put me into the laundries for the summer holidays for the nuns to teach me manners, to quieten me down', she said. 'So, I went in anyway and I spent the summer there', she said. 'But I was shocked to find a woman in there with her four fingers missing. I asked her why. And she said 'I cut them with a knife and I had to get them amputated' Why? Because I was standing in front of this big drum watching the clothes going around being washed and washed. When they were finished, I had to open the door and I had to tease them all apart. I had to put them through a wringer. I was at that every day and I thought there was only one way out. Cut my fingers' That's it. That's the life they went through in that place.

**M.C:** That's a really terrible story.

**P.J.H:** That's what happened and she was really shocked.

I spoke to ... The time I put my elbow out a few years ago, I had to go into Merlin Park. So, they put it back into place again, I had to get a cast on it. I spoke to a woman that lived in Bohermore. Some of them broke out of the laundry in Galway, and one of them came banging on the door. 'Let me in', she said. And they brought her in. The guards came around later saying that they were dangerous, that if they find them they were to notify them. But they kept her. Eventually she went to England, got married, and wrote over a beautiful letter to her.

'When we were very young', she said, 'my father was a handyman and he brought us into the laundry'. That would have been in Bohermore there. 'There was four of us in the pony and cart', she said. 'They came out with soup and everything to us. We went home later on. Then, and he had to finish off the following day. He went in the following day, and my God, what he seen was shocking. He said he had seen cots with two babies in each and an iron bath. There was two babies. One was a big baby and the other one was a small baby. When the big baby was finished he grabbed the bottle off the small baby and drank his milk. So, the nuns came along in the meantime

and gathered up all the empty bottles and threw them into the bath for washing. A big cast iron bath. Not realising that the baby ... He heard this woman roaring and he got frightened. He took off with the pony and never went back’.

Then I was talking to a plumber. He was in there in the 60s, I think. He was an apprentice and he had to go in and do repair works, plumbing, in there. He said, ‘There was an old woman, all day long cutting up paper with a scissors’. All day long sitting there. And he found out later on that the paper was for bedding for the pigs because the pig was having *banbhs*. They were putting the newspapers under the *banbhs* and that’s what she was doing cutting the papers up. He said, ‘It was shocking’. He’d never forget it, he said. I was telling her my story then, they were just so interested like to hear...

It was shocking. This country and what the church and what everything did ... They’re trying to avoid everything... We had Noel Browne back in the 1950’s, a great man. He tried to bring in mother and child care. De Valera and don’t mind if he didn’t, but the Bishop of Tuam, or the Bishop of Dublin made sure that it wouldn’t go through, because he was afraid that the women would go on the pill. Shocking! Deplorable! This country has a nasty dirty history when it comes to looking after its own people. And you had this church then, everybody, goodness me, afraid of the priest. Christ Almighty! It was absolutely deplorable. And to think at my age, innocent, did nothing wrong. Just that I came in to life the wrong way that the church didn’t like. And I wasn’t allowed to serve Mass. Punished me for that.

Then I met another woman again. I go to the pool in Athenry on account of my knee. I have to exercise it, I got a replacement. And she spoke to one of the lads on the chair. There’d be four of us sitting around talking. She turned around and said, ‘God’, she said, ‘your face is very familiar’. So your man says, ‘Oh, the man is a celebrity, he’s on television. He’s in the papers and everything’. ‘Oh God’, she said, ‘ye make me sick. The way ye’re running down the religion and running down the church. Ye gays and lesbians and the whole lot of ye’, she said. I said, ‘By the way are you a married woman?’ She was an elderly woman. She said, ‘Yes, I was’. ‘And you had a family?’ ‘Yes’. ‘And they’re all in good health?’ ‘Yes’, she said. ‘And grand children?’ ‘Yes’ she said. ‘God, you’re a very lucky woman’, I said, ‘you’re a religious woman?’ She said, ‘Yes, I am’. ‘The next time you go into the church now’, I said, ‘and you go down on your knees, and you take out your rosary beads, you might have chat with the man above. Just ask him what went wrong. Ask him why were people and babies born to be gays and lesbians when they didn’t want to be. Why is there handicapped kids. Why were we brought into the world and treated the way we were treated. And you a Catholic woman and you should have some respect for the likes of people and all, and sick people ... and all that’. She was looking at me and I went into the swimming pool. She was looking

after me and she went into the changing room. I got back out again. The three boys shook my hand and said, 'That was brilliant'. That stopped her in her tracks. That'll put her thinking. Life was so wonderful for her.

I even got a phone call from another woman who told me to stop my nonsense, that I'm running down the church. 'Didn't you have a good life?' So I said to her, 'I know who you are'. 'You're married, you have two sons and a daughter, they're very nice. You must remember', I said, 'my mother didn't have any of that'. I said to her, 'The church stopped her. She didn't have what you have'. 'Oh God, I wasn't thinking that way' she said.

**M. C:** OK. Right. Thanks very much P.J. That was a great conversation.

**P.J.H:** Thanks a million yourself. I hope that there will be something there that would help.