CLANN: IRELAND'S UNMARRIED MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN: GATHERING THE DATA

Statement of Witness 38

Reference Code:	CLANN/WIT38
Status:	Adopted person
Institution(s)/Agencies:	St Patrick's Infant Hospital, Blackrock, Dublin; St Patrick's Guild; Associated Catholic Charities, New Jersey
Date:	16th June 2017
Transcript:	4 pages
Records/Papers included:	Yes
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WITNESS STATEMENT OF [redacted]

I, [redacted], of [redacted] WILL SAY:

1. I make this statement for the purpose of providing evidence to the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation established by the Irish Government pursuant to Section 3 of the Commissions of Investigations Act 2004.

2. Attached to this statement is an exhibit marked "[redacted]1" which contains various copy documents. References to page numbers in this statement are to pages in [redacted]1.

3. I make this statement as an adopted person.

Circumstances of my birth and early life

4. I was born on [redacted] 1957 at the Jubilee Maternity Hospital in Belfast.

5. I understand that my birth mother became pregnant when she was not married. Her family were from a small village in the Republic of Ireland and, when her parents realised she was pregnant, they arranged, with the assistance of the parish priest, for her to go to Belfast to have the baby with the intention that she was then to return to her life as if nothing had happened and forget about me.

6. On [redacted] 1957 I was baptised at the Holy Rosary Catholic Church on Ormeau Road in Belfast as [redacted] (see my original baptism certificate on page page 1). I understand that I was transferred to St Patrick's Infant Hospital, Blackrock the following day, [redacted] 1957.

7. I have been provided with a copy of my medical history that was prepared around one month before my adoption (see page 2). This indicates that I had chicken pox and measles as an infant. It also shows that I had vaccinations for smallpox, diphtheria and pertussis. I still have a scar from one of the vaccinations on my arm. No other illnesses were identified on my medical history. I have also been provided with a copy of the US medical examination report of visa applicants (see page 3). This also records that I had *"no defect, disease, or disability"* at the time of my adoption.

8. I was sent to America for adoption in [redacted] 1959. My adoptive parents changed my name to [redacted].

9. I did not know much about the circumstances of my adoption, but St. Patrick's Guild sent me a copy of a timeline of my adoption (see pages 4-5). This makes reference to various steps in the adoption process. St. Patrick's Guild also sent me copies of the documents referred to in the timeline. I understand that my adoptive parents had to be vetted to ensure they were fit to be parents and had the necessary financial resources to raise me.

10. I do not recall anyone making follow up visits to check on my progress, but I see from the timeline that my adoptive parents provided some updates on my progress to St. Patrick's Guild in the years after my adoption.

11. I think that the document exhibited at page 6 was also sent to me by St. Patrick's Guild. I do not recall the source of this document but I note that it refers to me as [redacted] This note refers to an agency in New Jersey called Associated Catholic Charities which St. Patrick's Guild appears to have liaised with for my adoption.

12. I had a good relationship with my adoptive parents but sadly my adoptive father died in [redacted] and my adoptive mother died in [redacted]. They did not have any other children, either biological or adopted.

13. I do not recall exactly when I was told that I was adopted but it was at some point during my childhood.

14. In the late 1980s, I changed my name to [redacted]. However, as I explain below, I subsequently learnt that my mother had used an assumed name during her pregnancy and [redacted] was not in fact her family name. I am now 59 years old.

15. To protect my birth mother's privacy, I do not refer to her by name in this statement.

Information and finding out about my birth parents

16. I first visited Ireland in 1985 to try and find out details about my adoption. At that time, the only information I had was the information on my baptism certificate (see page 1) so I went to the church on Ormeau Road. I was not able to found out any information about my adoption on that trip.

17. It was shortly after this visit to Ireland that I decided to change my name to [redacted]

18. Around 2003, I started to make enquiries to organisations in Ireland, for example the Adoption Board. The Adoption Board informed me that they had no record of my adoption but directed me to some other organisations I could contact.

19. In January 2004, St. Patricks Guild confirmed that they had a record of my adoption. My contact with St. Patrick's Guild throughout was with the Director, Sister [redacted]

20. Sister [redacted] told me they did not have much information about my birthmother on file and, further, they had reason to believe that she had used an assumed name while pregnant. My name was added to the waiting list of people trying to trace information.

21. In August 2004, Sister [redacted] informed me that she had confirmed the identity of my birth mother, who was still alive and living in [redacted]. My birth mother had married about [redacted] years after I was born and had [redacted] children with her husband.

22. Sister [redacted] told me that my birth mother had been very surprised to be contacted after so many years but had agreed to receive a letter from me sent via St. Patrick's Guild.

23. Over the course of the next ten years, my birth mother and I corresponded by letter. We would send letters to St. Patrick's Guild and St. Patrick's Guild would forward them on. This process of exchanging letters was very slow, but it was all my birth mother was ready for at the time.

24. My birth mother told me that she could remember very little from her pregnancy. She told me that she had not been allowed to hold me after I was born and after a few weeks, during which she worked in the laundry room, she was deemed fit enough to be sent home. She was told to forget what had happened and get on with her life, which is what she did. That is why she was so surprised when St. Patrick's Guild contacted her to say I was looking for her.

25. She was not willing to tell her husband about me, but indicated that if her husband passed away she would consider telling her children.

26. In 2014, Sister [redacted] informed me that St. Patrick's Guild would no longer be providing information and tracing services. She told me that the records were all going to be transferred and she hoped to be able to provide me contact details for the agency to which the records were sent. I do not recall receiving any further emails from Sister [redacted] after this email.

27. In that same email, Sister [redacted] informed me that my birth mother did not want any continued contact with me.

28. I understand that my contact details would have been removed from my correspondence before it was sent to my birth mother so I do not know that she would be able to contact me now even if she wanted to.

Access to information

29. It is clear from the story set out above that it took a long time for me to track down information about my adoption. Whilst St. Patrick's Guild did provide me with information about my adoption and put me in touch with my birth mother, I had the impression that they were dragging out the process.

30. During this period, I also tried to find out information myself through public sources. In 2010, I connected with "search angels" via groups on facebook. "Search angels" are individuals who volunteer their time to assist in tracing information. I have never met any of these people in person, but they have helped me find out more information about my birth mother and her family. For example, her address and the dates of birth of her other children.

31. I recently paid for a DNA test to find out more about my genetic heritage. The results of the DNA tests are shared on a family history website. The website identified a user who was likely to be a first cousin of mine. She was also notified of the possible connection and contacted me via the website. It appears that she is actually my half-sister on my birth mother's side of the family. I am hopeful that I will obtain further information about my family history through this contact.

32. I remain curious about my birth mother, but I do not want to cause any problems for her and so would not approach her directly.

33. Nevertheless, I believe is important for me to share my story as those in the wrong should be held accountable for their actions. It is wrong that women had their children taken away from them against their will and were forced to work in the laundries without compensation. Pregnancy outside of wedlock was treated as if it was a crime, but it was not. Forcing women to work against their will was like slavery and should have been a crime but these places had the support of the Catholic Church.

I believe that the contents of this statement are true.

Signed [redacted]

Date 16 June 2017

All redactions have been carried out by the Clann Project

EXHIBIT [redacted]1

TO

[redacted] WITNESS STATEMENT DATED 16 JUNE 2017

Holy Rosary Catholic Church, Ormeau Road, Belfast

No. [redacted]

Baptism Certificate

Holy Rosary Catholic Church,
ORMEAU ROAD, BELFAST

Registered Date of Birth [redacted] 1957.

Registered Date of Baptism [redacted] 1957.

Name of Child:	Name of Father:	Names of Sponsors:
[redacted]		[redacted]
By whom Ceremony was performed	Name of Mother:	
Rev. [redacted]	[redacted]	

P. QUINN & CO., LTD., BELFAST.

I, the undersigned, certify that the foregoing has been faithfully copied from the Baptismal Register of the above Church, on this [redacted] day of [redacted] 1957.

[redacted]

ST. PATRICK'S INFANT DIETETIC HOSPITAL.

(Under the care of the Irish Sisters of Charity.)

TELEPHONE [redacted]

TEMPLE HILL,
BLACKROCK,
Co. DUBLIN.

MEDICAL HISTORY.

NAME OF CHILD: [redacted] DATE OF BIRTH: [redacted]57.

Wasserman and Kahn Tests: [redacted] 1957. Result: Negative.

Smallpox vaccination: [redacted] 1958. Polio do:

B.C.G. do.: Tetanus do:

Diphtheria-Pertussis-Prophylactic Injections: (1st.) [redacted] 1958.

(2nd.) [redacted] 1958. (3rd.) [redacted] 1958.

Height: 30" Weight: 1st. 13lbs.

ILLNESSES:	OTHER ILLNESSES:
Measles: [redacted] 1959.	
Whooping Cough:	
Chicken-pox: [redacted] 1958.	

Psychological Progress: Normal.

Personality: BRIGHT AND CHEERFUL.

I certify that I have examined the above-named child, and find that he is mentally and physically normal for his age.

SIGNED: [redacted] PHYSICIAN. DATE: [redacted] 1959.

D

Form FS-398
(Rev. May 1953)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

MEDICAL EXAMINATION OF VISA APPLICANTS

PLACE: The Dublin Clinic

DATE: [redacted] 1959.

At the request of the American Consul at CITY: Dublin COUNTRY: Ireland

I certify that on the above date I examined NAME: [redacted] Co. Dublin. AGE: 1 yr. 9 mths. SEX: M.

I examined specifically for evidence of any of the following conditions:

CLASS A:

TUBERCULOSIS (in any form)

LEPROSY (Hansen's Disease)

DANGEROUS CONTAGIOUS DISEASES:

Actinomycosis
Amebiasis
Blastomycosis
Chancroid
Favus
Filariasis
Gonorrhea
Granuloma Inguinale
Keratoconjunctivitis infections
Leishmaniasis
Lymphogranuloma Venereum
Mycetoma
Paragonimiasis
Ringworm of scalp
Schistosomiasis
Syphilis, infectious stage
Trachoma
Trypanosomiasis
Yaws

MENTAL CONDITIONS:

Feeble-mindedness (mental deficiency)
Insanity
Previous occurrence of one or more attacks of insanity
Psychopathic personality
Epilepsy (Idiopathic)
Mental defect
Narcotic drug addiction
Chronic alcoholism
(See proviso, sec. 34.7, USPHS Regs.)

CLASS B:

Physical Defect, Disease, or Disability Serious in Degree or Permanent in Nature Amounting to a Substantial Departure from Normal Physical Well-Being.

CLASS C:

Minor Conditions.

(Check number (1) below or complete number (2))

My examination, including the X-ray and other reports below, revealed:

(1) No defect, disease, or disability ☒

(2) Defect, disease, or disability, or previous occurrence of one or more attacks of insanity, as follows (give class—A, B, or C—diagnosis, and pertinent details):*

Chest X-ray report _____

_____

_____ *from Dr.* _____

Blood serological report _____ *from Dr.* _____

Urinalysis report _____

from Dr. _____

SIGNATURE OF MEDICAL EXAMINER [redacted] TITLE MB ChB M.B., ChB.

**Continue on reverse side if necessary.*

23 Jan 57 8519 500 M

1.	January 18, 1958	Letter of request from [redacted] and [redacted] (*date stamped 21 January '58 indicates when the letter was received.*)
2.	" 22, 1958	(*See note at the top left hand corner of this copy. This request was acknowledged and a list of the requirements necessary was sent to the* [redacted]
3.	May 6, 1958	A letter to the [redacted] about documents and papers received.
4.	March 3, 1959	A letter to the [redacted] informing them that their application had been approved.
5. a)	" 6, 1959	The letter of March 3rd was followed by a letter/notice giving the [redacted] some information about the infant who was to be placed with them.
b)		A statement about the expenses incurred was included.
6. a)	March 11, 1959	Letter from [redacted] Check for £30 to cover expenses, details re travel arrangements and other papers forwarded.
b)		Copy of affidavit giving an undertaking to look after, educate and adopt [redacted]
7.	March 14, 1959	Letter from [redacted]
8.	March 18, 1959	Letter to [redacted] and [redacted] Process underway re [redacted]
9.	April 2, 1959	Letter to [redacted] and [redacted] to inform them of the travel arrangements. [redacted] to travel with Pan American Airways on [redacted] and to arrive in New York on Sunday morning [redacted] 1959.
10.	Undated Letter	From [redacted] "*Our little boy has arrived in fine shape ...*".
11. a)	April 15, 1959	Letter to [redacted] Associated Catholic Charities, informing her of the placement of [redacted] with [redacted]
b)	April 15, 1959	(*Received April 20, 1959*) letter from [redacted] re transfer of custody papers for [redacted]

12. a) May 1, 1959 — Letter from [redacted] *"to tell how thrilled we are with* [redacted]

b) [redacted] also sent a short note.

13. Undated Letter — (*Received June 26, 1959*) from [redacted] expressing their happiness with "*our little boy*".

(*Note: Mention is made of some photos/snaps and these were received and acknowledged. Unfortunately, none of these photographs were kept with the records.*)

14. June 27, 1959 — Letter to [redacted] and [redacted] acknowledging the news about and photos of [redacted]

15. Undated Letter — (*Received on July 31,* 1959) from [redacted] Check for $10 re legal fees. News of "*our boy*".

16. a) August 10, 1959 — Letter to [redacted] acknowledging check for Legal Expenses and the extra dollars for a treat for the children.

b) Copies of relevant receipts.

17. December 30, 1959 — Letter from [redacted] " ... *Gift for your little charges ...*" News of [redacted] Mention of a possible application for "*a little brother or sister*".

(*Note: Letter acknowledged January 5, 1960. List of requirements for a second child forwarded.*)

18. Undated Letter — From [redacted] [redacted] gives news of [redacted] (*this is new name given to* [redacted] *when the legal adoption was finalised in* [redacted] *1960*). He goes on to explain that because his wife has not been well and he was experiencing financial difficulties the couple have not been able to pursue their application for other children.

19. January 3, 1961 — Letter from [redacted] says that the family have moved twice in the past six months. Both parents are very happy with their lively son.

20. a) January 3, 1962 — Letter received from [redacted] enclosing a copy of [redacted] adoption papers (*dated* [redacted] *1960*) and asking about a baptismal certificate.

b) [redacted] *1960: Copy of Judgment of Adoption*)

21. January 17, 1962 — Letter to [redacted] enclosing adoptive baptismal certificate.

22. February 14, 1963 — Letter from [redacted] requesting a copy of the adoptive baptismal certificate.

23. February 22, 1963 — Letter to [redacted] enclosing copies of [redacted] adoptive baptismal certificate.

(Original Name: [redacted])

Born	:	[redacted] 1957	Jubilee Maternity Hospital, Belfast.
Baptised	:	[redacted] 1957	Holy Rosary Church, Belfast.

There is no information on the record here regarding pregnancy or delivery.

[redacted] was transferred from Belfast to St. Patrick's Infant Hospital, Temple Hill for temporary nursery care on [redacted] 1957. His weight on admission to hospital was given as 8 lbs. 2 ozs. He had not received any injections or vaccinations before leaving Belfast.

[redacted] developed chicken-pox in January 1958 and was transferred to Cherry Orchard Fever Hospital on January 27, 1958. He was re-admitted to Temple Hill on February 11, 1958. [redacted] was vaccinated (smallpox) on April 17, 1958 and was given the Diptheria-Pertussis Prophylactic 1st – March 13, 1958; 2nd – June 19, 1958 and 3rd – August 22, 1958. He had measles in February 1959.

On April 11, 1959 [redacted] travelled from Ireland to the U.S. to his adoptive parents [redacted] and reached there on April 12, 1959.

A [redacted] the Adoption Supervisor at Associated Catholic Charities was notified of this placement. A copy of [redacted] birth and baptismal certificates along with copies of the Birthmother's Surrender Form and the Surrender by St. Patrick's Guild were sent to [redacted] The Associated Catholic Charities, 31 Mulberry Street, Newark, New Jersey was the agency with which St. Patrick's Guild liaised in preparing for this adoption placement.

[redacted] had first written of their desire to adopt a child from Ireland in January 1958.

The legal adoption process was completed in [redacted] 1960 and the [redacted] requested an amended copy of the baptismal certificate that would give the adoptive name which had been chosen by them: [redacted] The baptismal certificate was obtained and forwarded to the [redacted]

The birthmother was said to be 25 years old at the time of the birth. She used the name [redacted] in Belfast and gave the name [redacted] to her son. There is also another name for her given on the record.

The birthmother was single, Irish and a Roman Catholic. She had been employed as a [redacted] It was stated that this was her first pregnancy. There is no other family background or medical history information given and there is no description of the birthmother.

The birthmother's parents were aware of the pregnancy and supported her financially. An arrangement was made for her to go to Belfast during her pregnancy and confinement. All communications were to be made via a third party. Following the transfer of the baby to St. Patrick's, Temple Hill [redacted] signed the papers placing [redacted] in the care of St. Patrick's Guild and consenting to an adoption placement being arranged.

There is no record that there was any further contact with or from the birthmother.
The information given in regard of the birthfather is that he was said to be 30 years old and employed as a [redacted] He was described as being "small and dark" – (this probably refers to low height and dark hair colouring). He was single, Irish and probably a Roman Catholic

A name is given, but no address. There are no other details regarding family background or medical history. There is no record that there was any direct contact with the birthfather or that the name given was verified in any way.

There is no record that there was any contact with or from the birthfather at any time.