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

Statement of Witness 66

Reference Code:	CLANN/WIT66
Status:	Person who came into possession of information regarding the sending of babies to the United States of America
Institution(s)/Agencies:	N/A
Date:	13th November 2017
Transcript:	2 pages
Records/Papers included:	No
Access Conditions:	Anonymised statements are freely available to the public.
Conditions Governing Reproduction:	Statements can be reproduced, however the citation below must be used at all times.

To cite this statement:

O'Rourke, M., McGettrick, C., Baker, R. and Hill, R. (2018) "Statement of Witness 66." *Clann: Ireland's Unmarried Mothers and their Children: Gathering the Data.* Dublin: Justice for Magdalenes Research, Adoption Rights Alliance, Hogan Lovells.

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 a bundle of documents marked [redacted]1". References to page numbers in this statement are to pages in [redacted]1.

3. I make this statement as an individual who came into possession of information regarding the sending of babies to the United States of America (the "**USA**") for the purposes of adoption.

Pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thérèse of Lisieux

4. In the late 1980s, my late wife and sister-in-law, [redacted] and [redacted] travelled to Lisieux in France as part of a pilgrimage to visit the shrine of St. Thérèse of Lisieux.

5. It was on this pilgrimage, and in particular on the plane journey back home, that my wife and sister-in-law met and became friendly with Fr. [redacted], a priest leading [redacted] was connected with.

6. [redacted] informed my wife that he sometimes passed through [redacted] the area of Ireland that my wife and I are from. My wife told [redacted] that he was welcome to stay at our home in the future when passing through.

Information about sending babies to the USA

7. Sometime after the pilgrimage, [redacted] contacted us to say that he would be travelling through [redacted] and he asked whether he was able to stay at our home, which we said that he was. He brought a nun with him, who had also been on the pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, although I do not remember her name. I recall that she never wore a traditional nun's habit and was always dressed in ordinary clothes.

8. [redacted] visited our home at least twice during the 1990s, and brought the nun along with him. In December 1990 [redacted] blessed our home which he signed off as [redacted] A copy of the blessing is attached to this statement at page 1.

9. During his visits, [redacted] told us about how he was involved in sending babies to the USA for adoption and that he would fly over to the USA with the babies. He did not say where the babies were taken from, just that they were taken to the USA where they were adopted. My wife and I did not ask any further questions and we were never given more detailed information from [redacted].

10. The only other information that [redacted] gave us is that he would collect ladies clothing whilst he was in the USA, and bring these back to Ireland. I think now that the clothes were probably for distribution to women in homes, although he never said this and at the time we did not speculate. [redacted] asked my wife whether she wanted any clothes brought back to Ireland for her, but she declined.

11. [redacted] and the nun also stayed at our mobile home in [redacted] on one occasion and my wife stayed with them, but I did not. When my wife returned from the trip she told me about how [redacted] had asked the nun to put on a swimsuit so that my wife could see her in it. The nun refused, winked at my wife and said, [redacted] has already seen it on me, haven't you [redacted]. My wife agreed although she had not.

Parcel delivered to our house

12. During one of his visits, [redacted] explained that he had previously been in hospital with severe [redacted] and that he had on-going troubles with his [redacted] following an operation that he had undergone. He informed us that, as a result of these problems, it was necessary for him to purchase special underwear, which could only be obtained in England. [redacted] said that the supplier was unwilling to post the underwear to the Republic of Ireland and he asked whether he could arrange for the parcel to be sent to our house, in Northern Ireland. When the parcel arrived we did not open it and we posted it on to the address that [redacted] had provided us with.

13. Sometime afterwards, we received a catalogue to our house which came addressed to the nun who used to accompany [redacted] on visits. The address was printed on cellophane wrapping and it was possible to see the catalogue through the wrapping, which contained a number of references to "kinky" across it. We disposed of the catalogue and, after this incident, we did not correspond with [redacted] again.

Other information

14. Whilst my wife got along well with [redacted], I think partly because she had recently been diagnosed with cancer and so was open to discussion with him, others, such as my sister-in-law, were a little wearier and standoffish. Our local priest, [redacted], also seemed somewhat hesitant of Fr. [redacted]; on one occasion [redacted] expressed a desire to say mass at our local church, [redacted], and whilst this was eventually given approval [redacted] was initially reserved, asked numerous questions and appeared to give permission reluctantly.

I believe that the contents of this statement are true.

Signed: [redacted].....

[redacted]

Date: .....13/11/17.....