

SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO CHILD MIGRATION

Submission No: 34

Organisation/Individual: MR CLIFF WALSH

Address:

REDACTED



Peake, Leonie (SEN)

From: cliff walsh [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, 12 November 2000 12:49 PM
To: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au



I arrived in
Australia-senate ...



ATT34425.txt

Please open this letter in microsoft word 97

thanks
Cliff Walsh

P.S. I dont care who you show this letter too - I have nothing to be
ashamed of - the *Christian Brothers do and maybe to some extent the*
government of the time

PPS - Please let me know if you wer able to read this document

COMING TO AUSTRALIA: WHAT A SURPRISE! WHAT A SHOCK! WHAT A BUMMER!

A SHORT STORY BY CLIFFORD R. WALSH – A true story.

I arrived in Australia, in August of 1954 as a pale, scared pommy kid. The trip from England went well enough – the people who cared for us – were not as strict as I had become used to – the people on the ship were friendly and we ate a lot of sweets (given to us by some of the passengers)

There were 10 of us who came from the same orphanage in Feltham (Middlesex) and after leaving 2 weeks of quarantine – we all went to Castledare – for approximately 2 weeks – we were split up and 5 of us went to Boys' Town Bindoon – Even the 60 mile trip to Bindoon was what should have been a warning sign of what was to come in the way we were to be treated – there was the driver of the truck (a Brother Door) and us five kids on the left of the vehicle – four sitting in crouched conditions and one crouched on the floor.

I don't think we were required to work the first day – and we were allowed to keep the shoes we came in for 3 days. But I was soon to learn the violent treatment I would be subjected to over the next few years. The brothers were building a fence some 3 miles away and each child who was designated to help build this fence were given some tool or tools to carry to the sight. Bearing in mind I had not been required to work prior to this date – apart from occasionally, assisting to sweep a floor. My self and one other child who came out from England on the same ship (REDACTED) were required to carry a crowbar this 3 miles.

We started to carry this damn crowbar and it soon got heavy and we had a rest, carried it some more. (REDACTED) seemed to tire quicker than I and on many occasions I would lift one end and drag the bar some distance before (REDACTED) was rested enough to help. It must have taken us about 2 hours or more to travel that 3 miles yet we did not shun or bludge in what we had to do. We did our best. On arrival at the fence sight, we were abused by a Brother Moor (who was known as "Killer Moor") and severely beaten and punched mercilessly for quite a number of minutes. Both (REDACTED) and I were crying – then this wanker sat us on his knee (one on each knee) and tried to console us (we were sobbing uncontrollably) – I remember that incident well as being very unjust. As we had done our best. Not being capable or strong enough to do better.

On another occasion we were put on the back of a truck and taken to a paddock in the middle of lots of ground-rock. The object of the exercise, was for us kids to position ourselves around the truck and throw rocks onto the back of the truck. These rocks would be used in cement to build the place up some more. The rocks began raining onto the back of the truck and one boy on the other side to where I was, threw a rock too far and it hit a child next to me, right in the head and he was bleeding profusely, the brother looked at the child and said: "It's only blood, get back to work". I remember thinking "what sort of place have I landed in?"

Soon our shoes were taken off us and it was very painful to get used to walking without shoes and I cannot remember how long it took for me to get used to walking without shoes, but I know I liked being back at the school where the floor was hard and smooth. Early Schooling (or the lack of it) was something else – in primary school Moor was in charge of us – and he was not a teacher's arsehole. He did not teach us very much at all and mostly we would just talk among ourselves while he did something else. The two weeks before the exams were due. He would put a sum on the board. We would have to come up with the right answer or go to the front of the class and get the strap. In this

incident, I was very lucky because Mathematics was so clean cut and easy to me, I never got a sum wrong. But many others were strapped repeatedly

The work we were required to do was varied but always hard. If we were pushing a wheelbarrow of wet cement up an incline and we spilt any of it, we were beaten. If we were carrying a number of tiles up an almost vertical ladder to a roof – and we slipped or dropped a tile, we were beaten. If we did anything wrong we got the strap and this made us very afraid of our teachers and the only respite we ever got from them was when we were allowed to play on a Sunday afternoon and basically do what we wanted and many of these hours were spent in the bush, playing, well away from the brothers and their harsh rules.

I remember on a number of occasions when a group of us were gathered in the courtyard and a question was put to us about something that was stolen or some other subject, a child would be pulled from the group and systematically beaten to try to beat a confession out of him. When he did not confess and it was obvious he did not do it, another child would be taken from the group and subjected to the same treatment, about 4 or 5 children would be beaten in this way and I never knew of any of these incidents to obtain the required result. Perhaps the culprit was not among those in the group. Brother Quiligan the principal was the one that would conduct this type of information seeking.

Another frightening experience was a dog named “devil” owned by brother Moor who would sic the dog onto a child to frighten him and the dog would be barking loudly and with teeth bared – would give the child a few moments of terror – on two occasions, I saw a child bitten above the knee, before the dog was called back. However, this poorly trained animal bite the face of a little girl, the child of some visitors to the orphanage and was put down. I can vividly remember the relief I felt at this mongrel being put down and now that the damn thing was dead and buried, I need not be concerned about it any more. No one who treats a dog in this way deserves to own a dog, or more importantly be in charge of children.

I was part of one job I did like, we were taken out to where some clearing had been done. The area was vast (at least 150 acres) and all over this area was heaped trees, it was our job to go around setting these heaps on fire. But the next day was different, the heaps and burnt down and unburned logs were scattered about. It was now our job to pick these pieces of unburned wood, together in the centre and get them burning again. Normally this could have been an enjoyable task. But because we were barefooted, we often trod on ground that seemed okay, but was just ash and wood was burning below it. Our feet were quite badly burnt that day. We also suffered from burning on the hands because – some of the wood we picked up was burning too.

On one occasion a truck carrying sheep turned over on the main road to bindoon and somehow the dead sheep were taken to the pig sty at boys town. It was our job to skin these carcasses and the skins were hung on a fence, the carcasses given to the pigs. This was an appalling job and really quite distasteful. The first day was not so bad, the second day was not so good as the carcasses were becoming a bit ripe. The 3rd day was horrible as the carcasses were starting to go green and if anyone accidentally opened up the gut while trying to remove the skin, the smell was so bad it cause us kids to hold our noses

and move away. Fortunately the brothers were soon to realize that this was too much to ask of us and the remaining carcasses were burnt. Skin and all.

It is well to mention: for the job of skinning these sheep, we were not volunteers. We just did as we were ordered.

We were required to shower on Wednesdays and Saturdays. At the end of the other days, before dinner, we washed ourselves in what can only be described as a communal trough with individual taps and to wash our feet was a large area in the middle (a section about 10 foot by 6foot). We would step into water about 6inches deep and clean our feet. When we were finished, we would then go in front of the brother and with our hands in the air do a turn around and he would then see we were clean and let us go.

One day I did this for Brother Moor, who said your back is dirty go wash it again. (I had a very faded birthmark in the small of my back, a patch of about 2 inches by 4inches) I went away, made a token effort at getting cleaner and went back. He said I was still dirty. The others had all left by this time and I said it's a birthmark. He said "I'll show you a birthmark". Then he bent me over the trough and took to my back with a floor scrubber. He was very violent in how he treated me and he kept rubbing at my back until it was bleeding. Then he let me go and on my way to dinner I was sobbing uncontrollably. I still managed to keep that birthmark for many years after that but it is now gone, faded by time, not that rag-dicks scrubbing. When I was caught out in doing something wrong, I would expect the strap or a beating, but not when the brother was wrong as Moor was on this occasion. He never apologized or admitted he was wrong, yet I'm sure he saw that birthmark many times after that, but never called me out for it being dirty.

The above is an account of some of my most horrible experiences at Boys Town Bindoon, We complained little, or I didn't because I knew no other life so I had no life to compare the harsh treatment to that of a child brought up with normal parents, or one brought up in an orphanage where the children were treated normally and fairly and where sexual abuse is unheard of. I was not that lucky.

Myself and an other child by the name of [REDACTED] were permitted to go to Brother Angus and take molasses on occasions, this molasses was normally fed to cattle, but it was sweet and we found it enjoyable. One day we went to angus's room and because we were not sure if we should be there, we hurried and spilt some, and Angus called us up to his room and balled us out. He let [REDA] go first and it was not long before he had his hand over my shoulder and down my pants and playing with my penis. (I was 10 or 11 at the time) I wanted to tell him that it was rude to do that but didn't know if I should. So he played with my dick and he pulled my pants down uncovering the cheeks of my arse, then he started thumping my arse with his hand (closed fist) It didn't hurt but I could not understand, then he stopped thumping my arse with his fist and let go of my dick and I pulled my pants up. I left that room confused but cannot remember if I told anyone: I think not. I was not until some years later after I left that horrible place, I was hit with the sudden realization that he was jerking himself off. I can remember thinking what a fucking deviate. But he did not sexually abuse me after that. I would like to point out that because I was so young I did not get an erection when the sleaze bag was playing with my penis and jerking himself off. Although it was not until I was old enough to realize that I knew what the wanker was doing.

Then there was a Brother Parka who got me polishing the parquetry floors. I worked hard, and he took me into his room and told me I was doing a really good job he hugged me and pulled me on top of him onto the bed.

He then put his hands into my pants and started to play with my penis and like a fool I said "Hail Mary" after "Hail Mary" to try to ward off getting an erection. But he was persistent and soon I got an erection – then he would jerk off with his hand under his habit.

This happened on many occasions and it got to the stage, I knew it was coming – but one day he took me into his room and made me kneel on the floor and he stuck his dick into my mouth and made me suck on it – and he came into my mouth and I nearly threw up. I told the priest most of what had happened, a Farther Gerard.

The Next thing I was made to front a Brother Quiligan who was quite furious and started to question me about Parka. He scared me and I thought I was in all sorts of trouble so I back – tracked and said "Farther Gerard " must have misunderstood what I had said to him.

Next thing you know, I was out of there to go to New Norcia to be study to be a priest. In New Norcia I was treated well and not abused and went to a real school for 12 months. I stayed there saying I wanted to be a priest, knowing that if I was not there I would be back at Bindoon. However when I was old enough to leave Bindoon – I left the monastery.

I off course was sent back to bindoon for a short time – and although the man in charge had changed little else had.

I was only one boy and these are some of the things that Happened to me in Bindoon. I know I was not a good looking child (being all knee-cap and ribs) so I shudder to think of the sexual abuse handed out to the better looking boys.

I know of a boy by the name of REDACTED He came to school one day without his glasses. He was told by brother Moor to go and find them – if he did not – he would be killed. The poor kid just walked some miles from the school, knowing full well he did not know where to find the glasses. And he just stayed away from the school – it was July and towards evening the boy was getting quite cold –but still too scared to return. Until it got dark and the cold became too much. As he was heading back to the school – he saw people out looking for him – but was able to avoid the lights – until he made it back to his warm bed and that was where he was found. Fast asleep.

Brother Moor had become quite scared by what he had said to the boy and that he had been gone for some time – for some reason he thought the boy had drowned in the swimming hole and spent most of the afternoon – duck diving for the body – From this incident he ended up with pheumonia and and was laid up in bed for weeks at deaths door –but he survived.

I left bindoon and went to work on a farm – then I joined the navy – I wrote back to the orphanage in England, where I was raised before coming to Australia – asking about my parents – I received a reply but it was a pack of lies – I finally found my mom when I was 50 years of age.

Even for the harsh conditions of the day – "Boy's Town Bindoon" was an absolute disgrace and some of the stories told by us kids to various grown ups – should have been

believed – or in the least, investigated. We were totally abused and were given a token amount of education. I consider myself to have some mental problems (confined to a complete hate of religion and authority) so on the outside I may even seem normal. But it should not have happened and the Christian brothers should have been brought to task about the whold matter – instead I paying lots of money to see they were not. This is some of the things that happened to me as a child – I even believe I got off light, compared to other kids.

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Clifford Walsh