

THE SCHOOL YEAR BEGAN AT THE END OF JANUARY AND FINISHED IN MID-DECEMBER, SO THAT THE CHILDREN SPENT THE FULL TIME BETWEEN IN THE INSTITUTION WITH STRONG RELIGIOUS ROUTINE AND LESSONS.

MY TIME AT CROYDON ENDED WITH AN OUTBREAK OF SCARLET FEVER - SEVERAL CHILDREN WERE ADMITTED TO HOSPITAL. I REMEMBER BEING TAKEN TO LIDCOMBE STATE HOSPITAL (AS IT WAS THEN). I WAS REMOVED AFTER NIGHTFALL, ACCOMPANIED BY TWO NUNS, BY AMBULANCE. BY THE TIME I RECOVERED FROM SCARLET FEVER I WAS TOO OLD TO RETURN TO CROYDON AND WE WERE SENT TO LANE COVE.

ST. JOSEPH'S, LANE COVE. THIS INSTITUTION WAS NOTABLE FOR THE HIGH BRICK WALL AT THE FRONT. THERE WAS A GATE IN THIS WALL, BUT IT WAS ALWAYS CLOSED AND GIRLS WERE FORBIDDEN TO BE ANYWHERE NEARBY.

THE SAME PATTERN OF SCHOOL YEAR OPERATED AS AT CROYDON. THERE WERE TWO OUTINGS I REMEMBER THOUGH. ON THE FIRST OCCASION, THE GIRLS WERE DRESSED IN THE SPECIAL DRESSES MADE BY ONE OF THE NUNS. WE WERE MARCHED IN FILE TO A

LOCAL FARM PRODUCE STORE WHERE WE WERE INDIVIDUALLY WEIGHED ON A PRODUCE SCALE. WE WERE TOLD IT WAS NECESSARY BEFORE FOOD RATION BOOKS COULD BE ISSUED. (THIS WAS DURING WWII).

WE HAD BEEN HOPING FOR A ZOO VISIT OR SOMETHING SIMILAR, BUT AT LEAST AN OUTING WAS A RELIEF FROM ROUTINE WITHIN THE WALLS. WHEN THE EXERCISE WAS OVER, WE RETURNED TO ST. JOSEPH'S AND CHANGED BACK INTO THE DRAB, PATCHED EVERYDAY DRESSES (ALSO MADE BY ONE OF THE NUNS), AND THE DAY RETURNED TO NORMAL.

THE SECOND 'OUTING' WAS MERELY TO LINE THE FOOTPATH OUTSIDE THE FRONT GATE WHILE THE FUNERAL CARS FOR A DEAD NUN PASSED BY. THAT DONE, WE WERE TAKEN BACK INSIDE, CHANGED THE DRESSES AND IT WAS BACK TO NORMAL ROUTINE.

ONLY ON VISITING DAY WAS THE GATE LEFT OPEN FOR A TIME. ON THE LAST SUNDAY AFTERNOON ^{FROM 2 PM - 4 PM} OF EACH MONTH, GIRLS WERE PERMITTED TO RECEIVE VISITORS (USUALLY ONE PARENT ONLY). SOME GIRLS NEVER SAW VISITORS, BUT THOSE WHO DID WERE ALLOWED TO SIT WITH THEM ON THE FRONT LAWN

INSIDE THE WALL, AT 4 P.M. A NUN WOULD COME FROM THE MAIN BUILDING RINGING A LARGE HAND-BELL - THIS WAS THE SIGNAL FOR THE VISITORS TO LEAVE. WHEN ALL HAD LEFT, THE GATE WOULD BE FIRMLY SHUT AGAIN.

THERE ARE FOUR MEMORIES OF LIFE AT LANE COVE ON WHICH I WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT.

HEALTH. THERE WAS NO RESIDENT NURSE OR NURSING NUN AT ST. JOSEPH'S. NO DOCTOR OR DENTIST VISITED DURING THE FOUR YEARS I SPENT THERE. ONLY ONCE I RECALL A GIRL BEING TAKEN TO SEE A DOCTOR BECAUSE OF HER BED-WETTING. TWO NUNS ACCOMPANIED HER, AND APART FROM THE MEDICAL COMPLAINT, THE EXCITEMENT FOR THE OTHER GIRLS WAS THAT IT HAD BEEN AN 'OUTING'. ("DID YOU GO IN THE TRAM?" "WHAT DID YOU SEE?").

THE FREQUENT TYPES OF ILLNESSES WERE COUGHS, COLDS AND CHILBLAINS, AND IN MY CASE, COLD SORES AROUND THE LIPS AND NOSE. I REMEMBER THE MORNING WHEN THE DUTY NUN WAKING THE GIRLS NOTICED THAT MY COLD SORES HAD MERGED TOGETHER DURING THE NIGHT AND I COULDN'T

OPEN MY MOUTH. SHE TOLD ME TO STAY IN BED⁽⁵⁾ UNTIL I HEARD THE SANCTUS BELL FROM THE CHAPEL. DAILY MASS AT 7 A.M. WAS ROUTINE FOR EVERYONE). I WAS THEN TO GET UP AND BATHE THE SORES BEFORE GOING DOWN TO BREAKFAST.

FOOD. MEALS WERE SERVED IN THE LARGE REFECTORY AT LONG TABLES AND IN SILENCE. ANY GIRL WHO DIDN'T FINISH A MEAL HAD TO STAY BEHIND, STANDING AT THE TABLE UNTIL SHE ATE WHAT WAS LEFT. THE FOOD WAS POORLY PREPARED AND UNAPPETISING, WHEN WARM, BUT WORSE WHEN COLD.

BREAD WAS ALWAYS STALE AND NEVER TOASTED, NOT EVEN AT BREAKFAST. BUTTER WAS MADE BY THE NUNS AND WAS SO STRONG-SMELLING THAT THE GIRLS CALLED IT "SOOR BUTTER" TO DISTINGUISH IT FROM "BOUGHT BUTTER".

THE NUNS TOOK THEIR MEALS IN THEIR OWN DINING-ROOM. A FEW GIRLS WORKED IN THE SCULLERY PREPARING THOSE MEALS. A GIRL WOULD SOMETIMES PASS OUT TOAST CRUSTS WITH "BOUGHT BUTTER" TO HER FRIENDS, THIS HAD TO BE DONE SECRETLY SINCE IT WAS FORBIDDEN. ANY GIRL WHO HAD A FRIEND WORKING IN THE SCULLERY CONSIDERED HERSELF LUCKY BECAUSE OF SUCH TREATS.

SLEEPING. GIRLS SLEPT IN DORMITORIES. THE YOUNGEST SLEPT IN ST. JOSEPH'S WHICH WAS DIRECTLY OVER THE CHAPEL SO SHOES HAD TO BE REMOVED BEFORE ENTERING. AT NIGHT THE DOOR WAS LOCKED; AN ORDER GIRL SLEPT SLIGHTLY APART AT ONE END. AT THE OTHER END WAS AN ENAMEL BUCKET WITH A LID, CALLED 'THE PAIL' WHICH GIRLS HAD TO FIND IN THE DARK AND USE AS A TOILET. ANY GIRL WHO WET HER BED WOULD FIND HER MATTRESS ON THE FLOOR NEAR THE PAIL THE NEXT EVENING.

DAILY ROUTINE EACH GIRL HAD TASKS TO ^{PERFORM} ~~PREPARE~~ EVERY MORNING BEFORE SCHOOL. THE ROUTINE MONDAY-FRIDAY WAS ALWAYS THE SAME. WOKEN AT 6 AM, A COLD WASH OF HANDS AND FACE (NO BRUSHING OF TEETH), THEN MASS AT 7 AM. AFTER THAT, BREAKFAST, THEN THE ALLOTTED WORK FOR THE DAY, FOLLOWED BY SCHOOL-WORK. A BREAK FOR LUNCH THEN IT WAS BACK TO THE CLASS-ROOM. THERE WERE NO SCHOOL 'TEAMS' AS IN OTHER SCHOOLS - CLASSES WERE HELD EXCEPT ON SUNDAYS AND HOLIDAYS.

AN EARLY EVENING MEAL WAS FOLLOWED BY HOMEROW (AND/OR REFECTORY DUTY FOR SOME) UNTIL BED-TIME. THE YOUNGEST GIRLS WERE LOCKED IN BY 5 PM.

SATURDAYS WERE SPENT DOING HOUSEHOLD TASKS WHICH TOOK LONGER OR NEEDED ORGANISING, E.G. SCRUBBING FLOORS OR WASHING DOWN WALLS. SATURDAY AFTERNOONS WERE SPENT MENDING - GIRLS DARNED THEIR OWN SOCKS. SUNDAYS AND HOLY DAYS WERE DAYS OF REST - NO WORK, NO CLASSES - BUT NO KNITTING OR NEEDLEWORK.

FINAL COMMENTS. EVEN THOUGH MANY YEARS HAVE

- PASSED, I FEEL THAT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OWES AN APOLOGY TO THE CHILDREN IN ITS INSTITUTIONS.

THE CHURCH APPOINTED WOMEN WHO WERE POOR ROLE MODELS FOR THE CHILDREN IN THEIR CARE. IN THE MAIN, THEY WERE NOT QUALIFIED TO LOOK AFTER DISTURBED AND UNHAPPY CHILDREN, IN THAT THEY NEGLECTED THE HEALTH OF THOSE CHILDREN WITH POOR DIET AND LACK OF NURSING AND MEDICAL CARE.

- THE NUNS ALSO NEGLECTED THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE CHILDREN'S WELFARE. FOR EXAMPLE, AT LANE COLE NO ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO MAINTAIN CONTACT BETWEEN SIBLINGS WHO HAD BEEN PARTED. I REMEMBER ONE GIRL WHO ALWAYS CARRIED AN ADVERTISEMENT FROM 'THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY'. IT REFERRED ^{TO} THE ANNUAL ST. VINCENT'S BOYS HOME FETE WHICH WAS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. THE GIRL WOULD SHOW THE CUTTING TO OTHER GIRLS,

POINTING TO ONE OF THE BOYS SHOWN "THAT'S ^{LO} MY BROTHER."

- THE LACK OF PERSONAL SPACE AND PRIVACY WAS A FEATURE OF LIFE AT LANE COVE. EVEN A GIRL'S IDENTITY WAS REMOVED BY GIVING HER A NUMBER. HER LETTERS WERE CENSORED BY THE NUNS - SENT OR RECEIVED. WHEN A GIRL RECEIVED A LETTER OR WAS NEEDED SOMEWHERE, A CERTAIN WINDOW WOULD OPEN AND HER NUMBER WOULD BE TRACED IN THE AIR. HER LETTER WOULD BE DROPPED TO HER, OR SHE WOULD BE TOLD WHERE TO REPORT.

- THE INSTITUTIONS WERE LITTLE MORE THAN CHILDREN'S PRISONS AND THEY LEFT LONG-TERM EFFECTS ON THOSE THERE THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN. THESE EFFECTS INCLUDED A SENSE OF ABANDONMENT AND DESPAIR, SHALLOWNESS OF AFFECTION AND A RELUCTANCE TO TRUST OTHERS.

I DO NOT RECALL ONE OCCASION AT LANE COVE WHERE A NUN COMFORTED A DISTRESSED GIRL. NO-ONE WAS ALLOWED TO CRY, EVEN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE LONG YEAR, OR AFTER THE VISITORS HAD LEFT. THERE WAS NEVER A "GOOD MORNING, GIRLS" OR "GOOD NIGHT - SLEEP WELL". ONCE GIRLS WERE IN BED, THE NUN SWITCHED OFF THE LIGHT AND WALKED AWAY. NO NUN

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HEARD THE SOUND OF A CHILD SOBBING
HERSELF TO SLEEP IN THE DARK.

THAT WAS LIFE AT ST. JOSEPH'S.

Renee Granam

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