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NORMAN TELFER

STORY OF LENNOX CASTLE

My name is Norman Telfer and I am 72 years of age.

This is my story about the time I spent in Lennox Castle Hospital. I went to Lennox Castle in 1954 after the Queen's Coronation aged 14 years. Lennox Castle was tough and not a very pleasant experience at all. It was like a military boot camp where the normal was "Yes Sir, No Sir". Prior to sitting down to our meal we had to line up in a corridor and answer to our name and number. If you didn't do this you had to run round the building in your bare feet and we were hit on the head with a baseball bat. We also had to clean corridors with a scrubber and powder for punishment and we did this only wearing a short nightshirt. The corridor had to be scrubbed until it was shining. If the corridor wasn't clean enough they would kick the bucket over and you had to start again.

In our living space there was 24 of us in a dormitory with only a locker space between our beds. Beds had to be made to perfection or they would tip them up and make you start again. You had to tie your belongings in a bundle and lock them away so they knew you wouldn't escape. You weren't allowed to wear your own belongings, it was red socks and brown trousers and shirt.

At meal times we went to dining hall which was lines of tables and chairs and all sat in rows. You lined up for meals and what was on offer was what you ate. If you didn't eat it you never got out else you had to starve. Meals weren't nice to eat at all but we knew we had to eat them. In this section it was all males and male staff.

Started off with school at 9am. School was across yard, we had to line up at the door. Classroom was just tables in lines. School wasn't too bad as they tried to help you. At 12am it was lunch so it was to the dining hall for this. And back at class for 1pm till 4 pm. At 4pm we went back to the ward and had dinner. After this we went to the tv room till 7pm. On returning to the ward we had to take our worn clothes to the granny in the laundry room for buttons and things to be sewn and stitched. Before bedtime we got gym military style running round the hall. "yes sir no sir". On a Saturday if we had behaved we got to go to the pictures in Kirkintilloch. This was life in juvenile end.

On turning 16 I got moved to adult ward. This is where fun began. In morning I got up at 7am and went to work in a garden in the grounds of Lennox Castle, finishing at 5pm. As years went on I got a job in a piggery in Kirkintilloch. But before going for the bus we got woken at 6.30am and got made to polish the floors at the sides of our beds until they were shining and could see your face in it. 7.30 am we went for breakfast in dining room and got 8am bus to work. Returning from work at 6pm there were male staff members at the ward door with a bar soap, scrubber and powder telling me and my mate John to get corridors and windows cleaned. We used to always say it's not our turn sir, we have been working all day and tired. He said it is and used to give us 2 in 6 equal to 5 shillings each and he also used to help. This is when they used to come and go with us.

As years went on we managed to become informal, which meant if you done 3 months and 3 days you were a free man. But before this they used to send an ambulance K.S.M.G 7.6.5.4.3.2.1 out to catch you on the moor. And it always seemed to catch you. They used to return you to the ward, put you in a white shirt on a mattress on the floor, with a glass water and a slice of bread each day as punishment. You were in there for 6 weeks. After 6 weeks you went downstairs to the red unit for 6

weeks. After this we went to barsquad and we had to do gardening. After this we were allowed to go back to daily jobs in the community.

The woman were up the hill in there own section. Woman that had babies were brought to Lennox Castle because they had kids, or didn't behave as a punishment.

There also had a workshop in hospital where you could go but you had to start at the bottom and work your way up to the top.

I was always wanting to get out of Lennox Castle and get back to where I came from. On escaping from Lennox Castle age 32 I never got caught. I was out for 2 month and couldn't cope so returned back. And I had to go back into white nightshirt and start again from the bottom.

In juvenile section I used to go and speak to the guys in adult unit that were caught running away. I met this guy who told me a story that 4 staff member used to go into a room and beat 21 guy up. But if you could beat them up you would be a free man. So one day I watched and the guy I spoke to managed to knock staff out and he was freed.

As time went on military routines started to fade and it became a hospital for mental health patients. And people who was already in there had to live with them. When working outside in the gardens we had to pay hospital for our keep.

If you were married you and your wife were separated. Also you weren't allowed to speak to your wife as the woman were in different section. But as time went on things changed and this wasn't the case.

My feelings are strong about Lennox Castle as it was like a boot camp. And a wicked place to stay. As punishment was tough. I wouldn't wish this on anyone to stay here. But as time went on it got easier.

People that were in Lennox Castle at the end now live in the community. But when they came into the hospital the staff made us look after them.

I left Lennox Castle before my 60th birthday and moved into finiston where there were people from Lennox Castle and staff there who looked after us. This was run by the health board. When this shut down we moved out and into a home of our own. I moved to Sanquhar into my own place. I receive support but hate my staff doing paperwork and everything legal as it reminds me of Lennox Castle and reminds me of this.

Norman Telfer