

Witness Name: BRANDON LEE JERZY KENNETH PRESTON

Statement No: WITN3646001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: October 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BRANDON LEE JERZY KENNETH PRESTON

I, Brandon Lee Jerzy Kenneth Preston will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Brandon Lee Jerzy Kenneth Preston. I was born on GRO-C 1980 and I live at GRO-C, Cardiff, GRO-C.
GRO-C I am a part-time student and registered disabled. I have a daughter.
2. I am providing this statement on behalf of my late father, Ralph Alistair Preston, who was known as Alan. My father was born on the GRO-C 1942 and died on 28th October 1997.
3. My mother Anna Maria Preston of GRO-C has given her own statement to the Inquiry.
4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late father's medical records.

Section 2. How infected

5. My father had various health issues. I was very young when his leg had to be amputated and as a result he had a blood transfusion. I think I have blocked out a lot of memories from my childhood with regard to my father's illnesses. I do remember staying with friends in GRO-C whilst Mum was in London with Dad. He went into a London hospital to have his leg amputated.
6. My father subsequently became unwell and I understand from Mum that he was told in or about August 1995 that he had been infected with Hepatitis C (HCV) from a blood transfusion.
7. I do not know if I was told about my father's infection at the time my parents found out. As a parent I know that you try to protect your children so I think he may have waited to tell me. However, I do remember when I was told that he said there was no cure. My father mentioned that the infection was as a result of a blood transfusion when he lost his leg. I was only 16 years old when I was told.

Section 3. Other Infections

8. As far as I am aware my father was only infected with HCV.

Section 4. Consent

9. I do not know if my father was tested without his knowledge or consent.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

10. I lived with my Mum and Dad and I was a school boy when Dad became unwell with HCV. I have four older siblings but they are more than 10 years older than me.

11. I do not know whether it was to do with Dad's infection but from as young as I can remember GRO-D
My friends were not GRO-D and I can always remember thinking that I must have been a very naughty boy GRO-D

12. In my early teens I began to stand up for myself. Sometimes GRO-D
GRO-D

13. My older siblings have told me that Dad played football with them and was never ill. I can remember only one occasion when he played football with me in the garden for about 10 minutes and became ill and ended up in hospital for two weeks. He never played with me again. I can only assume that as a result of the infection he changed. When I now speak to friends of my father's they say that Dad doted on me.

14. Prior to my father being symptomatic with HCV, he ran an electrical business in Cardiff called 'Domestics of Cardiff' (Domestics) where he sold and repaired white goods such as washing machines, fridges and freezers. He taught me from the age of 12/13 about the business and was training me to eventually take over the family business. I would go out with him on repair jobs and I would get involved and ask him questions.

15. When I was 10 years old my father said 'when I was your age I could pick up a washing machine and put it in the back of a van'. I practised and practised until I could finally lift a washing machine and I remember that he was so proud of me. I remember that he would go over to the pub on a Saturday sometimes to watch the rugby. I would be left in the shop on my own and when I sold a washing machine, he would say "well done, well done". I'm

pretty sure that he had fixed it for someone to buy a washing machine whilst he was out.

16. I found out about my father's infected status just before sitting my GCSE exams. At the time my father was going backwards and forwards to hospital with various illnesses. I therefore helped to run Domestic's when I should have been revising. I failed my GCSEs because I did not study enough. Whilst I was taking my mocks I had lived in the library. I was going from school to the library and I would stay there until it closed; I was studying hard. I achieved B's in my mocks but in my actual GCSEs I only achieved D's and E's. The school said that because of what my father and the family were going through that I should not have turned up for my exams and then they could have used the grades I had achieved in my mocks.

17. After my GCSEs my father seemed to be getting a bit better and he came back to work. He was fighting. I got into the Sixth Form College that was linked to my school. However, after a short while, my head of year spoke to my father and told him I was having trouble with my studies. It turned out that I am dyslexic. My father said he would put me in for an apprenticeship with Domestic's. I went to a college in Cardiff once a week to learn electrical engineering and the rest of the time I would work in the shop. My father bought me loads of new tools. I worked in the shop as an apprentice from September 1996 until he died.

18. I thought I would take over my father's business. That was always his wish. I remember one Saturday afternoon Dad and I went to the pub and he was saying that when I was 21, he was going to change the name of the company to 'Domestic's of Cardiff and Son'. I would take over the company and he would retire. We had plans to go into designing and making washing machines. We used to sit down and come up with designs. Therefore, when it came to my GCSEs and when Dad was ill I thought I was better helping in the family business as that was my future and I did not want to let the family down.

19. My father had bouts of illnesses which all stemmed from the HCV. He had pneumonia once or twice, and he would be in hospital for a couple of days and then he would come back out again. If you said to me when I was 15 or 16 years old that my father was going to die when I was 17 I would not have believed you.
20. I watched my father deteriorate. He was 6 foot 2 inches with hands like shovels and then when he died he had become so weak and had lost a lot of weight. When he died he would have been barely strong enough to lift his arm up.
21. As he had become so weak, we were going to build a bedroom and a bathroom downstairs for him. He had got too weak to make it up the stairs. The builders were supposed to start working in the week he died.
22. My father and I had a row on the Sunday before he died. It was a silly little row and being a teenager I got angry with him. I was in the bath whilst he was washing at the sink and he splashed me with cold water. I responded by splashing him with bath water and he shouted at me GRO-D
GRO-D I then said something stupid which I don't wish to repeat now but something like I wished he wasn't here. That happened within the week he died.
23. The next day my mother had gone to work; my father was in bed. I tried to wake him up but he just couldn't wake up. I kept saying 'come on Dad, you've got to get up'. I telephoned my mother and said he wouldn't get up. My mother said 'tell him if he does not get up, he has to go to hospital'. I did not want him to go to hospital so I begged him to get up. I started crying. He was muffling 'I'm fine, I'm fine'. I rang Mum again and said that he wouldn't get out of bed. I was only 17 at the time. My mother called the doctor who said he did not have much time left. It was like a punishment for what I had said the day before and I said that I was sorry for what I had said. I told him that I would do whatever it takes to make him well. The doctor called an ambulance and he was taken to hospital.

24. I wanted to go and visit him but I kept coming up with excuses because I knew he was not well and I did not want to see him like that. I did not want to see him unwell. I thought he would be fine. I told myself that he just had a cold and that he would get up soon. He always got back up.
25. On the Friday I went to open up my father's shop as I was running it while my mother was looking after my father. My mother rung me and said my father was really bad and I needed to go to the hospital. I ran into the café next door crying and the ladies said that they would close the shop up for me and that they would tell our engineer. I then got a taxi from the shop to the hospital.
26. When I arrived at the hospital my father was lying in bed motionless. I needed to ring my half brother Steven but just as I was going to ring him the priest walked in. I asked why he was there and they said it was a precaution. I was saying my father was fine, that he was strong; he was going to be alright. I said he was going to be ok and that he did not need his last rites read.
27. I ran to the phones but couldn't get hold of Steven. My mother's friend came after me and said I needed to get back to my father quickly because they were going to turn off his machine. I screamed at them not to turn off the machines. A nurse took me aside and told me he had gone. Dad's eyes were still open. I was saying 'come on dad you're just sleeping, wake up, wake up'. His hands were really cold so I was trying to warm them up. I said I was sorry for what I had said and that I would do anything to make things better. I then closed his eyes for him. It was the hardest thing I ever had to do. I have never been the same since. A part of me died that day.
28. I never believed my father was ill enough to die. If I had not closed his eyes myself I probably wouldn't have believed it. He had asked me when he was very poorly to have a drink for him to remember him on his birthday and his anniversary. I go to the cemetery and I have a drink for him on both occasions. My mother has still not got over his death. I go to his grave and

there is still no tombstone there because my mother said she could not accept that he was gone.

29. During my father's illness and after my father passed away I was being tested to make sure he had not passed any infections to me. It was a worrying time. Everything was okay with my tests. I continued to be tested up to a year after his death.

30. Dad's wish had always been that I took over the family business. This never happened. After Dad died Mum could not cope and whilst I ran the business for a year or so she was very angry and did not cope with his death. She closed the business down and it never became "Domestics of Cardiff and Son". She lashed out and I was the target. Since Domestics closed, I probably could have got a job at another company, but I don't like touching washing machines anymore. It was mine and my father's thing. Even if my friends ask me to fix their machines I tell them to call on someone else. I won't even fix my own.

31. Everything went downhill for me when my father died. I have never been the same since. I never got over what I said to him in the argument. My medical records show my mental health deteriorated rapidly when my father died. I have a fear of death from when my grandmother died when I was 9 or 10 years old. I went on holiday with a friend and when I came back my father sat me down and said my grandmother had died. My fear was so bad even if I saw someone on TV die I would start crying and say 'I don't want to die, why do people have to die?' My father would sit me next to him and calm me down. It was basically a panic attack. No one since my father has been able to calm me down.

32. Even now I can't sleep at night without a TV show on in the background. If I go to bed to try to sleep and there is no sound I start thinking about death. Then I start crying and get upset. A doctor diagnosed me with a para-suicidal tendency which is someone who has a suicidal tendency but a fear to take the final step.

33. Currently my mental health is not good. I have a list of mental health issues, including weight issues, anxiety and PTSD. The doctors put me on different medication all the time.
34. Prior to my father's death my mum and I had a good relationship. After my father died my mother became an angry person and **GRO-D**
GRO- I can only assume that she was grieving for my father. The situation between my mother and I got so bad that both a psychiatrist and a counsellor said we should not live together because we bring up memories which make us angry. She is a trigger to remind me of Dad. We are okay as mother and son, but we can not live together. We have a much better relationship living apart.
35. My daughter was born in 2004; she has saved my life. I see her as much as I can at weekends and in the school holidays. Dad would have loved her; she has got his quirky personality.
36. When I was a child my father would never admit to being a sci-fi geek. He was always a tough man and a strong shoulder to lean on. He would say that he would watch "Star Trek, the Next Generation" with me. I knew secretly he wanted to watch it and we watched it together. We started watching Star Trek Voyager but he died before the series finished. We also used to have Saturday night take-aways. We would have different food from different countries. I try to do this with my daughter now as often as I can but I can't afford it.
37. My father died in Ward C, Heath Hospital which is now the University Hospital Wales. I can no longer physically go anywhere near the ward. A friend of mine died last year in Ward C. As far as I am concerned that is a place you go to die.

38. I remember telling a couple of friends about my father's infections and they stopped being friends with me because they were worried they would catch something.

39. I have not worked properly since my father died. I have been registered disabled and have suffered with my mental health for years now. My records go back to the time that Dad died. As far as I am concerned one person walked into the hospital and a different person walked out. I never knew what an anti-depressant was until Dad died. I was a different person prior to Dad's death. I used to go out with friends and have a whale of a time and then everything changed.

40. A couple of years ago I had a relationship with a woman; she was my rock. I believed then I was getting better. We got married but it only lasted a few hours. She shouted at my daughter for no reason at all and I could not cope with that. I was alone again.

41. Someone suggested that I start a course and I tried a taster course in law. I thought it wasn't bad so I carried it on. I was meant to finish the course in 2018 but my Nan died and it set me back. This year I am studying Equity, Trusts, Wills and Land Law but every time death is talked about it drives me nuts. I had deferred a year but my final exam is now 18th September 2019. I hate exams. Dad always calmed me down with exams. With my anxiety and dyslexia I have to do them at my Mum's house with an adjudicator in a room on my own.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

42. I have had counselling through my GP. They offer me a holiday every now and again when my mental health gets really bad to see if it will help me. It is basically a stay in a hospital. They have associated all my issues to my father's death.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

43. I do not know if my father received any financial assistance.

44. I have not received any financial assistance.

Section 8. Other Issues

45. I would like to see justice from the Inquiry. I want them to admit that they have ruined my life. Everything would have been different. Dad would be retired by now and I would be running Domestic of Cardiff and Son. I would be married with kids and be living in a nice house. The person that walked into the hospital the day Dad died had life but the person who walked out has no life. The only person I have is my daughter. She does not ask for anything. My Dad's dream was for the business to keep going and sometimes I end up down there across the road from the shop, crying.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

46. I do not wish to be anonymous. I understand this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry. I would be prepared to give oral evidence if someone was there with me.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed.. GRO-C

Brandon Lee Jerzy Kenneth Preston

Dated .. 18/11/19