

Witness Name: Martha Charalambous

Statement No.: WITN3979001

Exhibits: Nil

Dated: 14/12/2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MARTHA CHARALAMBOUS

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 30 December 2019.

I, Martha Charalambous, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Martha Charalambous. My date of birth is GRO-C 1962 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am the sister of Peter Lloyd who was infected with Hepatitis C. My sister Sarah (Sally) Martin (W3689) has already given a statement. I intend to speak about my brother who died on 30 June 2008. In particular, the nature of his illness, how the illness affected him, the treatment received and the impact it had on him and our lives together.
2. My partner Michael is present today for my statement, for support. His date of birth is GRO-C 1965.

Section 2. How Affected

3. There were 7 of us in the family. Peter was the second eldest. I am the second youngest. He was 10 years older than me. He joined the Royal Air Force when he was 18, and so I was only 7. I only have sketchy and vague memories of him. I don't remember much about him living at home when I was young. My memories of him are of him coming home from service, and the front door would open and my mum would be so happy to see him.
4. We had a phone line, but he would be away for months or even a year and he would often just turn up at the door unannounced. He had worked in Gan and Northern Ireland. My mum would scream when he would come through the door.
5. He was a Chief Technician. His next post would have been as a Flight Lieutenant, but he could never get that as he was epileptic and wasn't allowed to fly. He had to retire due to health issues and he really hated 'civvy' street.
6. Peter met his ex-wife Sheila in the air force and they married very young. They had 2 children. They lived in Northern England or somewhere abroad so we wouldn't see him much. We kept in touch via letters and mum would talk to him on the phone a lot. They were very close.
7. On one occasion, he came home and my mum got too excited and accidentally broke her finger. She always jokingly blamed him for her broken toe and finger. She essentially broke her finger as she was so happy to see him. When she ran to hug him, he tried to protect himself and put his arm across his face. But her finger got caught on his watch. There was another time where she ran downstairs as she was so excited to see him and stubbed her toe on the way. She broke it that day and always blamed him.

8. In the armed forces, he became epileptic. He travelled a lot and was given smallpox vaccinations. The injections were supposed to be about 6 months apart. But he was posted somewhere abroad and he got the vaccinations too close together. Soon after that he developed epilepsy. He always thought the injections were the reason...I remember hearing him talk about it. He had medication for that which affected his career. I don't know the name but he suffered from grand mal seizures.
9. On 13 July 1985, he was involved in a car accident. He was living up North I think. I remember the day so well I was watching the 'Live Aid' Concert. While we were watching it, we got a phone call and Mum went white. His father-in-law called to say that Sheila and Peter were in an accident. They were in Queen Elizabeth II Hospital Welwyn Garden City. I would have been 23 years old at the time but I can't remember how I got there. I went there with my sisters. I don't think my mum came with us as we didn't think it was that serious at that time.
10. They had been out the night before the accident. I remember him saying he was tired. With epilepsy he couldn't drink too much or get too tired. But obviously they didn't take much notice, the day he was driving. Sheila wanted to change her nightie and needed to return it. They were driving to the shops but he had a seizure whilst driving. He must have pressed the accelerator hard and drove straight into a tree. Thankfully they had a BMW car. I remember the Police said they were lucky that he had a good car, as the Police said the impact was serious and it was amazing that they got out alive.
11. When we went to see him, we didn't know it was him. His head was so big and swollen. He could hardly talk. I said something stupid like "how are you feeling?" He was always the joker and said, "marvellous".

12. He had a broken femur, broken arm, and broke the majority of his facial bones. He had surgery and he had plates put in his arm and leg. He was in a bad way. [GRO-C] They were in hospital for a long time, maybe a few months.

13. He had another complication where a blood clot escaped from his leg and travelled to his lungs. He was in intensive care. I don't know how many blood transfusions he had at this time. But this is how he got Hepatitis C. I'm not sure if it was from the crash due to blood loss or from the mass surgeries.

14. It was touch and go at times. There was a medical machine he used but it meant he couldn't talk. One day, Sally (my sister) was there and she could see the panic in his face. Sally was a nurse and asked him, "what are you trying to tell me? Write it down for me". Peter then wrote down 'O2'. Thank God she was there. The nurses came along and sorted the oxygen machine out after being told.

15. We had a family room at the hospital. I slept there a few nights. There was a lot of travelling up and down the country. I was there one time alone. I didn't want something to happen when I was alone. Every time I heard footsteps near the door I worried that they were telling me he was going to die. I didn't know how I was going to tell all my sisters. This was all going through my mind.

16. He was in hospital maybe for months. We almost lived in the hospital. We would drive there or get the train. After work I would go get the train. My mum wasn't good at travelling. My mum would get very upset, she was a bit in denial and didn't want to see him in pain so wouldn't always want to visit.

17. When Peter [GRO-C] came out of hospital, [GRO-C]
[GRO-C] Peter went to Sally's and she looked after him.

18. Sally would put a black sack on him to keep him decent whilst showering him. I remember her looking after him so well.
19. Sheila and Peter divorced after that. When they moved to Cyprus things went wrong. Peter had moved there for work.
20. After Sheila, Peter met Wendy in Akrotiri in Cyprus in the air force base. His partner Wendy Campbell (W1848) has given a statement. Wendy and Peter were partners for 22 years. I don't know exactly how they got together. She was very supportive during his marriage break up during that time.
21. I can't remember when they decided to come back to this country. I met Wendy when my children were small and she had small children herself.
22. With regards to the blood transfusions and Hepatitis, someone contacted my mum and said they tried to contact Peter Lloyd. She received a letter, and it said that he may have been infected with contaminated blood. It was about 1995, but I cannot really remember.
23. After that he went to get checked and they found he had Hepatitis C. Then he was medically discharged from the airforce, I don't know if it was epilepsy or Hepatitis C.
24. After being diagnosed, Wendy and Peter came back to the UK. He loved cars, and set up a business called 'Prestige Motors' (or something like that). At one time, he was exporting cars from Cyprus back and forth. This was based in Yorkshire, in GRO-C He had that going for quite a while. But then he got ill and he just kept going in and out of hospital. He was on medication, but I don't know the names.

25. In 2006 one day, my other brother Sam said that "there is no easy way of saying this, but he has cancer". I thought on top of everything this is too much. It started in his bowel and travelled to his liver. He had chemotherapy for this. But that was the start of the end.
26. When he started to go downhill, it was such a long distance from his house to ours that we tried to see him as much as possible.
27. In June 2008, I went to visit him and he seemed fine. This was a few days before he died. But he did have to keep going back into hospital to get fluid draining, so he was pretty bloated when I saw him.
28. On the last day of my stay, he seemed ok-ish. We left their home in the North as we had to go to work the following day. Just before I left, an ambulance came to pick him up to bring him to the hospital which was normal. I was with him in the bedroom and he said, "can you promise me a few things? Just promise me Wendy will be in the family". I said "of course" but to stop talking like that. He walked into the ambulance and looked alright and I waved and said "see you soon".
29. Later that day, I had driven home which was a 5 hour journey. I was only in the door, 30 minutes when I received a call saying he wasn't well. I drove back up North. It was not a nice journey. I arrived at 1am and was tired. My son was with me thankfully.
30. From that morning seeing him walking to the ambulance, to then being unconscious just didn't seem possible. It was crazy to see him deteriorate that fast.
31. I couldn't talk to him as he was out of it. I think he could hear us though. We all were round the bed, he could hear but couldn't speak. We just sat with him all night. He passed at 9am that morning.
32. Peter died 30 June 2008.

33. I really looked up to him, I thought he was a real hero. We were all really proud of him.

34. He didn't have any other blood transfusions. He did have some tattoos.

Section 3. Other Infections

35. Peter got Cancer. He had Bowel Cancer and Liver Cancer.

Section 4. Consent

36. I don't believe they ever asked our permission to have a blood transfusion. But his blood transfusion was life saving.

Section 5. Impact

37. Wendy would take care of Peter when he was ill. I remember Wendy would have a tray of all different sections, there was just so much medication. He used to say that he felt dopey from the medication. After he got diagnosed with Cancer, he said it was like "when I was sliding down the bannister of life, I got another splinter in my ass". He would always be making jokes.

38. He was a bit naughty and drank whiskey even though he was told not to. He didn't talk about his suffering much as he didn't want to feel sorry for himself. He just wanted to be treated normally. He didn't want to be sick. Even when we organised a surprise birthday for his 50th in Yorkshire. He was up dancing and enjoying himself.

39. In 2005, he would get embarrassed as he was a little incontinent. He would say 'give me a big bunch of tissues as I want to cover myself. I'm just a bloody embleptic, incontinent man'. We used to make a joke about it, but I think it hurt him.
40. I don't remember any big stigma problems. We only mixed together as a family. I never really saw him with friends.
41. Before Peter died, just a few months before my brother-in-law got killed. He was stationery in the roundabout and a lorry over tipped on him. Peter drove from Yorkshire to Cardiff to be with Mary. Peter looked pretty ill and was literally dying. I will never forget that. That sticks in my mind. It was such a hard time.
42. We have an Annual Family B.B.Q. in memory of Peter. It is great. The first year on the anniversary of his death, we wanted to see Wendy. We all went up to see her, with the family. She said "oh I'll have a B.B.Q.." The next year came around and we said "oh shall we just have another BBQ?" Now it's an annual event and it has become so special to us. I hosted it 2 years ago. It was fantastic because my daughter and her boyfriend proposed to her at the B.B.Q..
43. There was a singer at the memorial singing the song we always sing in honour of Peter. It's the song, 'he ain't heavy, he is my brother' by the Hollies. He loved 'UB40' and we always play those kinds of songs. It's fantastic and we now have the engagement date too and now it is a celebration and brings everyone together.
44. At Peter's funeral, the air force band played the 'last post' and it was so wonderful, it brought us to our knees. We didn't expect it.

45. About 14-15 years ago, just something I remember, when I was going through divorce, I wasn't good at understanding the Solicitors and I remember Peter travelling down and saying 'I will help you'. He sat and listened to the Solicitors office and we went up for lunch. I didn't get to know him until he came back from Cyprus and I kind of got to know him. I don't think we ever had been alone until that day. It is a fond memory of mine.

46. I have 3 children from my marriage. I was divorced and had been with Michael for 11 years. I work in the motor industry and I am married to my partner Michael.

47. I forgot a lot about these memories, they just seem to be coming up now. It's stuff I haven't thought about for years.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

48. I don't know much about his treatments or medicines that he took. Wendy and Sally would know all about that.

49. I do remember that Wendy used to have a hard time as Peter would get very angry. But that wasn't his normal self. She didn't know if it was the medication or what he was going through.

50. I don't know if he went to the dentist and had to inform them. He thought the medication bugged up his teeth but he would sometimes joke and say, 'I have lovely teeth'.

51. I don't think he ever got offered counselling.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

52. Peter was medically discharged from the armed services, but wanted Wendy to have his pension. They were supposed to get married before he died. He was really worried about her and wanted to get things sorted. But he couldn't make the wedding as he was too ill.

53. He did receive money, that's what my brother Sam has said. But I don't know how much or from where. Sam is going to give his own statement to the inquiry.

Section 8. Other Issues

54. Losing him has had such a huge effect on all of us. I felt like I was getting to know him, and he was taken away. We only saw him in little spurts. I felt robbed of this. We all did. I really really really felt for my brother Sam, he was his only brother and he loved him to bits and it still affects him. I have a picture of Peter in my living room and I love to talk to him.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 14/12/2020