ORIGINAL

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 586

Witness

Mrs. Sean O'Donovan (nee Kathleen Boland),
315 Clontarf Road,
Clontarf,
Dublin.

Identity.

Sister of
the late Harry Boland.

Subject.

(a) Historical background of her family;

(b) National activities of her brothers, 1913-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1836

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT OF MRS. SEÁN O'DONOVAN
(KATHLEEN BOLAND)
315 Clontarf Road, Clontarf, Dublin.

My three brothers, Gerald, Harry and Edmund, were, as long as I remember, associated with people connected with the national movement. They were all members of the I.R.B. Of course, neither I nor my mother knew that until long afterwards, in fact, not until the two elder ones were in prison after the Rising.

My father's father and his brothers, who lived in Manchester, took part in the affair of the prison van which rescued the prisoners in Hyde Road district. The family must have emigrated to Lancashire the time of the famine, and my father and his brothers probably were born in Roscommon and brought to Manchester as very small children. My mother was born in Manchester also of Irish parents. Her people - her father was Philip Woods - came from Carlingford. An ancestor of hers - Woods also - who was a blacksmith by trade was dragged at the back of a cart and whipped through the streets of the town for making pikes for the rebels. That must have been the period of the 1798 rising.

My father was only a small boy at the time of the episode of the prison van but he was used as a scout on that occasion. My mother remembered hearing all about it very well, and often talked of it. Colonel Kelly, who came from America to assist the Fenians, was a relation of my father's people on his mother's side - she came from Galway - and a relative in Galway, called Mullins, told the whole story to my brother, Gerald.

My father was a great friend of Parnell, and there was a meeting held somewhere in Dublin - probably one of -

the last before Parnell's death - at which he was present. A row started and he got a blow of a chair on the back of the head, which brought about an abcess on the brain, from which he died, after a lingering illness, at the age of about thirty-seven. I hardly remember my father. My mother often told us that, when he was dying, Fr. Ivers of Phibsboro Church - it was not at that time, I think, a Vincentian Church - was sent for. The priest said, "I believe, Mr. Boland, you are a great Fenian?" "Not a great Fenian", said my father, "but a Fenian all the time." "Of course, in that case, I can't give you Absolution", said the priest. My father replied, "I won't die with a lie in my mouth, so I must go to God as I am!". My mother sent for Fr. Headley, a Dominican, who gave my father Absolution and the usual blessings.

My father knew O'Donovan Rossa, and he was on the reception committee that honoured him on the occasion he came to Dublin about the position of City Marshall he applied for here. Rossa did not obtain the position which was given to John Clancy's son. It was a case of jobbery, and my father, who was a great admirer of Rossa, was very disappointed. Rossa afterwards sent him a copy of his book with an inscription on the fly-leaf, "To my dear friend, James Boland, who reminds me of men of my own time". Then followed the date and the signature, Jer. O'Donovan Rossa. My brother, Gerald, still has that book. It had been lent to Miss Babe Nally, a sister of P.W. Nally. She was engaged to my uncle, Jack Boland. It was Harry recovered it from the library of Tom Nally, a cousin of P.W. Nally. Tom was a chemist in the Mater Hospital and also a friend of my father.

P.W. Nally, the Fenian who died in Mountjoy Prison, was also a great friend of my father. My uncle Jack was practically engaged to his sister, but his early death

from typhoid, on his way back from America where he had been sent to investigate the Fenian split in connection with the Dr. Cronin case, frustrated his marriage.

It was through the Nally's, I think, that my father became friendly with John McBride who was then a medical student. McBride visited him regularly in his last illness and relieved my mother in her duties of attending on him. When he met my brother afterwards in Jacob's in 1916, he was very interested to hear that he was James Boland's son.

My mother never wearied of talking of these things. She often told us of how she had to flee to America with my father after the Phoenix Park affair, as he was supposed to be associated closely with the Invincibles who were involved in it. My eldest sister was born in America where they spent a couple of years. When they came back, it was to Manchester, not to Ireland. It was there my brother, Gerald, was born. I should mention that, when my father first came to Ireland as a very young man, it was to execute a paving contract for the Dublin Corporation, and he was sent by a Manchester firm called Worthington.

When the family eventually came back to settle down in Dublin, my father became a member of the Nationalist Club in Rutland Square and became an enthusiastic supporter of Parnell. During all the time after his return to Dublin, there was a detective constantly outside our house who followed him everywhere he went. My mother used to tell us that he often brought him through the whole city to give him a run for his money.

After my father's death, my mother naturally had a great struggle and, only for many kind friends, including Pat O'Brien, the Member of Parliament for Kilkenny, who got my brothers into schools and, through public subscriptions,

acquired a tobacconist's business for her in 28 Wexford Street, she would have been obliged to put us all into institutions. She managed to bring us up healthy children and in the national tradition.

Gerald, who was then the eldest of the family, dragged my youngest brother and myself to the Gaelic League in Upper O'Connell Street but I am afraid we were so naughty that the teacher, Miss O'Brien, had to put us out. This did not deter Gerald; he continued to bring us to various meetings of this sort. He founded a hurling club in our kitchen, of which Michael Corrigan and others were members. Old Mr. Corrigan was very good to my mother and helped her in every way he could by sending her customers and in other ways.

Gerald was constantly keeping us in the right tradition. He used to attend the Bodenstown demonstrations and would come home and recite the speeches for us and tell us all about Irish history. He had a marvellous influence on the rest of the family.

My three brothers joined the Volunteers at the very inception at the Rotunda. They were always out drilling, and Gerald saved his money to get a gun - he never had a uniform, neither had Harry. I did not join Cumann na mBan before the Rising.

In July, 1914, when the guns were brought in at Howth, my brothers were in Dungarvan but I was at home in Marino Crescent, Clontarf. When the Volunteers were coming back, I knew some of them who were returning by the laneway at the back of our house, and I told them they could throw their guns into our garden and I would mind them for them. They came back for them a short time afterwards.

A short time before Easter Week, 1916, I think, Willie

Cullen, who was then in Thompson's, the carriers, brought several boxes of guns in a van to our house. They were all taken away by degrees except one gun, which was overlooked.

Gerald, who was then married and employed at Crooksling, came frequently to the house in Holy Week and stayed there a good deal, evidently expecting something to happen. On Easter Sunday evening, as far as I remember, he went home to his wife, who had not yet gone to live at Crooksling. On Easter Monday he cycled into town, with his gun, and, as he could not join his own unit, he went into Jacob's. On the way in, he met a Volunteer friend of his cycling in the opposite direction. Gerry said, "Are you not coming in?". He said, "No, I am running away from my friends and my enemies". I thought that very funny.

It must have been on Easter Sunday that Harry, who had been attending a Convention of the G.A.A. in Croke Park - he was, as my father had been, Chairman of the County Dublin Committee - came in home and said to my mother, "I have to go out. The other boys are going". She asked, "Who are they?" He replied, "Jack Shouldice, Frank Shouldice and many others". She replied, "Go, in the Name of God!. Your father would haunt you if you did not do the right thing." He said, "The only thing I am worrying about is how will you manage". She answered, "I managed after your father's death, when you were all babies, and I can manage again. I am in a better position now than I was then".

On Monday afternoon I went down to Gilbey's in Fairview, where Harry was, to see if I could help in any way. Mr. Frank Henderson, who was there, opened the door to me and I asked him if there was anything I could do. I had brought some food with me in case they had not enough. There was also at Gilbey's a man named Flynn, living at

Ballybough, who had a bag of ammunition in his house which he had not had time to collect. I went to fetch it and I brought it to him at Gilbey's which was an outpost for the 2nd Battalion. Also, I knew somehow that Ena Shouldice, who was living in digs at Addison Road but was away on holidays, had some ammunition stored in her trunk. I went and broke open the trunk. I collected the ammunition - about ten packets of .303 rifle ammunition - and also brought it along to Gilbey's. I fancy the reason for occupying this post was that there was a camp of British soldiers at the Bull Wall and, also, the Volunteers were probably expecting a movement of soldiers from Belfast by the Great Northern line which was near at hand.

I visited Gilbey's again on Tuesday to see if I could do anything but Harry told me to go home and stay there, and do anything I could from there.

When the Volunteers were going in to town, after giving up occupation of Gilbey's on Tuesday, Harry, who had taken prisoner a soldier called Henry, who had been an instructor at the British camp at the Bull Wall, brought him with him in a cab to the G.P.O. where he was held a prisoner until the evacuation of the building. After the Rising when Harry was being picked out by the detectives, this soldier was brought along to spot any of the Volunteers he could recognise. He picked out Harry, saying, "He who laughs last, laughs best". Harry replied, "Yes, chum, I am laughing. I am not whinging as you were when I took you prisoner".

During the week, probably on Thursday, we had a visit from Paddy Sheehan who, on account of his military aspirations, was known by the nickname Von Kluck. He was accompanied by one of the Devoy's. He told my mother that he had left Harry in Mansfield's in Abbey Street and that he was in great form, and that he himself had been sent to get

ready to go to Kerry to meet a contingent of Irish-Americans, who were landing on the coast of Kerry, and bring them to Dublin to take part in the fighting. My mother showed her amazement and said, "Surely, Paddy, if these Irish-Americans are coming, the people of Kerry will be able to show them the way and bring them along!" My mother's attitude surprised me, as she was a mild sort of woman who, I thought, would never suspect anyone of inventing a tall story, but it turned out that she was right and there was no truth in the statement.

My brother, Edmund, who had gone out with Harry, was fighting in the Imperial Hotel and, when they had to leave, he went to Cathedral Street where he remained fighting for hours with the others. During the surrender and the subsequent round-up, one of the priests of the Pro-Cathedral came out and told the Volunteers that, if they wanted to leave their guns in the vaults of the church and get away, they could do so. They disposed of their guns and, when the British officers came and cross-questioned them, Edmund, who had a week's beard on him and was black from the grime and smoke of the burning Imperial Hotel and smelled of gunpowder, said he had been at Fairyhouse races and had not been able to get home. They did not arrest him. He went and had a feed and clean-up at a friend's house. He then came home. That was how he escaped arrest.

He told me afterwards that, while he was fighting in the Imperial Hotel, he saw the British soldiers firing on Fr. Headley who was crossing the street probably to give the Sacraments to some dying Volunteer. Fr. Headley asked Edmund was it on him (the priest) they were firing. Edmund said he thought it was, but the old priest did his duty just the same.

A girl named Mary Byrne, who used to work for us, was

recognised by Harry as he was going in to Richmond Barracks and he asked her to bring word to my mother. She walked all the way to Clontarf with the message. I went to try and see him. I met Fr. Augustine and Fr. Albert outside the gate. They told me they would get any messages they could for me. I did not succeed in seeing him that day but, when after a few days we found that he was transferred to Mountjoy, my mother and I saw him there before he was sent to Dartmoor. During the course of conversation, my mother who, in her simplicity, thought that she might be able to get Harry out of his difficulty, said, "Wasn't it an extraordinary thing to arrest you, and you only coming from the races!". But Harry bluntly replied, "Ah, no, mother. I was not coming from the races. I went out to strike a blow against the bloody British empire". I can still remember the expression on my mother's face when she realised the hopelessness of her effort to save him. Harry was astounded when he heard that Edmund had escaped alive from the burning hotel.

Harry was sentenced to death by Field General Court Martial. The sentence was commuted to five years' penal servitude. The first period was spent in Dartmoor where the prisoners were badly treated and where he spent most of his time in the punishment cells, as he was so lighthearted he could not obey the rigid rules of silence, etc. My brother Edmund and a friend named Doran went to see him at Dartmoor but they had only about a quarter of an hour with him and were not able to bring home much information. However, my mother was satisfied to know he was alive and in fairly good spirits. I still have practically all the letters he wrote from gaol.

Harry told us afterwards about de Valera's reception of Eoin McNeill when he arrived at Dartmoor after his

courtmartial. When some of the Volunteer prisoners were about to express their disapproval of McNeill's conduct at the Easter weekend, de Valera intervened and gave him a military salute, with the idea of showing a united front before the enemy.

From Dartmoor he was sent to Lewes. On the way, they had to change at some station. While they were waiting there, chained to each other, one of them started to whistle a jig and they danced on the platform, to the amazement of the onlookers.

When the prisoners were being moved from Lewes, where they were not detained very long, Harry was taken in chains by himself, with four warders, in a cab, after a violent struggle during the course of which his boots were removed, as he was using them with great effect against his gaolers. Before he left Lewes prison, he took an oppo#tunity to write a letter on both sides of a piece of lavatory paper with a fountain pen, however he procured that. He fought vigorously against the attempt to search him, and the warders never succeeded in capturing the piece of paper which he had hidden somewhere on his person. During the journey in the cab, he suddenly stood up and put his hands out and flung something through the window. One of the warders, named Stone, asked what was that. Harry replied, "That is England's death warrant - and yours also!". They did not stop to see what it was. By some strange chance, the flimsy piece of paper was picked up by a woman in the Lewes street and sent by her to my mother. Harry had started the letter by writing, "I hope some kind angel will pick this letter up and send it to my mother, Mrs. Boland, 15 The Crescent, Clontarf, and earn the prayers of her son". I'll bring in Harry's letter and the covering note, so that the Bureau may make a photostatic sopy of it.

The envelope, in which the piece of paper was duly forwarded, also contained the following note, written in pencil but giving no name, "My daughter found this paper in the streets of Lewes and, as I too have two sons doing their bit, I forward this letter, as the writer desires, to his mother".

We never discovered who was the kind person that sent on Harry's letter, which contained a detailed account of the ill treatment of the prisoners.

I brought the letter immediately to the National Aid office in Exchequer Street, where I met Michael Collins and Micheál Staines. It was as a consequence of this that the meeting was called in Beresford Place on the 10th June, 1919, to protest against the treatment of the prisoners. The letter was read to the meeting and the crowd made a strong demonstration. Inspector Mills was killed by a stone that was hurled at him, and Count Plunkett and Cathal Brugha were arrested. I was not present at the meeting.

Somebody sent us word, I think on the 16th June, that the condemned prisoners were being released and would arrive by special boat at the North Wall on the following morning. We stayed up all night and, in the early morning, the crowd of us who had collected in the house walked to the North Wall. There we were told that they would arrive at Kingstown. We went over to Westland Row then and joined the huge crowd that was waiting there. I'll never forget the reception the prisoners got when they arrived. It was very different to the way they were treated when they were sent away after the fight.

Harry brought a crowd of about twenty of his pals to our house that night where we celebrated the release - Jack Shouldice, Tom Hunter, Tom Ashe (this was the first time I

saw him, and his sister Nora was with him), Gerald Crofts, Phil McMahon and others that I now forget.

In the morning they had been to breakfast at Fleming's Hotel, Gardiner's Row, and, after that, to the Mansion House where they were photographed with the Lord Mayor, Larry O'Neill. I still have a copy of that photograph.

After this, things were rather quiet as far as I was concerned. I was present at the big Sinn Convention in October, 1917, but I don't know much about it except that it kept Harry rather busy.

The next thing I remember was the time of the conscription. With other Cumann na mBan girls, I used to go in the evenings to Count Plunkett's house in Fitzwilliam Street to assemble emergency rations for the Volunteers who were preparing to resist conscription. I remember well the sort of dog biscuits we were putting into the packets, and we all agreed that we hoped we would never have to eat them. I always attended the Central Branch of Cumann na mBan and did the usual routine, drilling, first-aid and the use of arms, how to clean them, etc. Dr. Ellis and another doctor taught us first-aid, and Paddy Houlihan and Seamus Kavanagh were the drill instructors.

Shortly after, came the German Plot. Although many were arrested and brought to England, Harry escaped and must have gone on the run. I can't think of very much about it except that they must have raided our house but did not find Harry or Gerry. I find it hard to distinguish between the different times our house was raided. I remember one raid, and I think it must have been at a fairly early period. We had three other Volunteers with Harry in bed in the house at the time, including, I think, Jack Shouldice. The

police were in charge of Inspector Love and Sergeant Smith, who was afterwards shot. My mother had previously arranged that, if a raid took place, any Volunteers that happened to be in the house should escape by the skylight in the roof; so she kept a small step-ladder and a table up there. On this occasion, when the knock came to the door, I shouted through the window that there were only women in the house and the raiders would have to give us time to get dressed. In the meantime, the four Volunteers, including Harry, got out in their pyjamas through the skylight and ran along the valley of the roofs of the houses of the Crescent, and got down through the skylight of the last house. The people of that house, called McGrath, who had no sympathy with our way of thinking and actually had members in the British army and navy, kept them there, and the daughter came up to our house later for the clothes of the Volunteers, who hurriedly dressed in McGrath's and went away. When the raiders came in, I first brought them down to the kitchen premises, coal-house, etc., so as to give time to the lads to escape and to my mother to clear away the signs of occupation. She had, however, not removed pieces of the ceiling from the floor. The police leaders looked at the skylight and said, "That is a very good place!". I replied, "Would you like to go up?". Love merely shook his head. He was probably afraid to try the skylight for fear he would be shot.

Sergeant Smith was very zealous in the service of the British. He actually went to Mr. Jennings, a Baptist, who owned our house and many others in the Crescent and who was a decent man according to his lights, asked him did he know that he had a bunch of rebels in Mrs. Boland's house and told him that he should be careful lest his property be burnt. Mr. Jennings replied, "Mrs. Boland is a decent woman; she pays her rent regularly; and I knew her husband. Outside that, I want to know nothing about them". Mr. Jennings

told my mother immediately about this. We thought it very good of him, though, of course, he may have had ulterior motives.

I remember an interesting incident that took place in 1919, shortly after the Soloheadbeg affair. Joe O'Reilly came to our shop in 64 Middle Abbey Street. I should have mentioned that Harry opened a tailoring and outfitting business about October of 1917, and it became an important centre for despatches from all places, especially from Cork, Kerry and Tipperary. Joe said Mick Collins wanted to see me. I went to his office in Mary Street, just near Liffey Street. He said there were some very important men from Tipperary, mentioning the name of Seán Treacy, coming up to Dublin and he was going to send some of them out to me. He also asked me whether I knew any other safe houses where the people were not talkative and where these men could stay under assumed names. Incidentally, the name Seán Treacy had taken was Ryan. I sent Joe O'Reilly to Miss Eva O'Doherty, a quiet girl that I knew in Cumann na mBan, to get some safe houses, and she recommended to him Malone's house in Grantham Street and the Delaney's in Heytesbury Street.

That evening, Seamus Robinson and Seán Treacy arrived at our house. I'll never forget my feelings when I saw the condition they were in. The soles were gone from their boots, and they were footsore, weary, wet through and hungry. We gave them a hot meal in the kitchen. They stayed with us a couple of nights and then moved on somewhere else. Seán Treacy, Seamus Robinson and their two companions came often to stay with us afterwards, bringing with them various Volunteers.

Harry was very active in all the elections. He took part in Count Plunkett's campaign in Roscommon, he was in Clare with de Valera and he worked for Pat McCartan in South

Armagh, where there was a nasty opposition from the Parliamentary Party which did not hesitate to use violent methods.

In the general election in November, 1918, Harry was nominated to contest a seat in Roscommon and was elected. He was at the opening of the Dáil in the Mansion House in January, 1919.

Shortly afterwards Mick Collins and Harry went over to Manchester, where they stayed with my aunt, to prepare plans for the rescue of de Valera from Lincoln Gaol. For this purpose, they obtained a fur-lined coat from Seamus Barrett, an old Fenian in Manchester, a friend of my father's, who had a secondhand clothing shop there. The coat was for de Valera.

Before they went to England, they had asked my brother Gerry to make keys to the pattern of one that was sent out on a Christmas card from Lincoln Gaol. Gerry procured three blocks and cut out one, which he gave to Harry, which when afterwards put into the lock turned out to be too fine in the flange. The other two blocks were sent to the prison in a Christmas cake, made by Mrs. Seán McGarry, and a file was also enclosed. Out of one of the blocks, de Loughrey, the Mayor of Kilkenny, who was a locksmith and was also a prisoner in Lincoln, made the actual key which fitted the lock and enabled de Valera to escape. When at the appointed time Harry used his key in the lock and tried to turn it, it broke, and you can imagine the lurid language used by Mick and Harry when this last minute catastrophe happened. De Valera, who was waiting inside the gate, pushed in the key made by de Loughrey and, uttering a prayer, turned it in the lock and was free. At some stage of the escape, it had been necessary for him to use a rope ladder, which, as far as I remember, was provided by Frank Kelly and one of the Fitzgerald's.

Paddy O'Donoghue and, I think, Liam McMahon, who was in business in Manchester, were concerned in the escape.

De Valera must have given the key to Harry, perhaps to mind it, because, when he came home, he handed the key to my mother, saying, "Take great care of this; when we get the Republic, it will be gilded and placed in the Museum". Both my mother and myself, after Harry's death, considered this a sacred duty and kept the key safely until some time in the 'thirties Gerald told us we should give it up. We refused to do so, as Harry had warned us to mind it until it was placed in the Museum. Eventually, de Valera asked me to give it to him as it had been promised to de Loughrey by Mick Collins after the escape. I naturally gave it over then but that did not end the matter. On 5th November, 1938, Mrs. Henry Mangan, a sister of de Loughrey, published a letter in the "Irish Independent", stating that Harry had tantalised Mick Collins by refusing to give up the key. I published a reply on the 18th November, 1938, explaining the circumstances in which the key had come into our possession and that we were unaware of any promise made to Alderman de Loughrey. I believe the key is now in the Museum.

Some time about the middle of May, 1919, Harry went over to Manchester and stayed with my aunt, to make preparations to go to America. With the aid of Neil Kerr and another, whose name I can't remember, he succeeded in getting a job as a stoker on a boat. I have the identity card they provided him with and shall look it up to have it photostated.

When he arrived safely in America on the 8th June, he was met by Jim McGee and Jim Gleeson, who saw him safely through the Customs. He was carrying, in one of his specially made seaman's boots, the text of Ireland's Claim to Independence. Both the boot and the text were

afterwards given to the National Museum by Joe McGarrity and are still there.

Harry was sent to America primarily to start a publicity campaign, I imagine, for the Dáil Loan and to blaze the trail for de Valera. He interviewed reporters on his arrival.

I have a lot of newspaper cuttings about Harry's activities in America and, when I have time, I shall go through them to see if any of them would be of interest to the Bureau.

I have really only a very vague idea of Harry's work in America. At the time, Seán Nunan was there and would be able to give a complete statement about the whole situation there. All I know is that at an early stage Harry fell foul of John Devoy, who was by no means co-operative even from the very first. He found Devoy very set in his ideas and inclined to resent Harry's interference with Clan na Gael, which was his (Devoy's) particular child. He also found Cohalan a difficult person to deal with, and Harry thought that he was responsible for most of the trouble that was put in the way of his and de Valera's mission in America.

Cohalan made no secret of his contempt for Harry, but Harry, who was very quick on the uptake, did not let him get away with anything. He told us that at one important reception - probably the first official one - at which many prominent lawyers and public personalities were present, Cohalan, who was Chairman of the reception, was introducing the speakers, giving to each his title and the name of the University at which he had graduated. When Harry's turn came, Cohalan asked him publicly at what university he had graduated. Harry, who realised that the question was

intended to humiliate him, promptly replied, "Q.90, Dartmoor Prison, for Ireland!". The applause was tremendous and Cohalan never forgave Harry.

I think Mr. de Valera and, as already stated, Seán Nunan would be the best persons to give an account of Harry's activities in America. His letters home, though frequent, were naturally cautious, as he was always afraid of their falling into the wrong hands.

Harry came home from America after about a year. We saw very little of him, as he was very busy seeing people. I know he was reporting about the split in the Clan na Gael and the reorganisation of the Friends of Irish Freedom in America. Again, I would not care to make any statement about this, because I don't know enough about it.

While Harry was away, he left a manager in charge of the business in 64 Middle Abbey Street. He, unfortunately, proved an incapable and unreliable person, and, though the business was quite solvent at the time of Harry's departure, it got into debt in a short time. A little committee, of which Seán T. O'Kelly was a member, was set up to look into and disentangle the affairs of the business. I was working at it, and the shop was used as a call office by the Volunteers who gave us quantities of guns, ammunition, gelignite, etc., to store there. The gelignite was taken from some shop and we had difficulty in finding a place to store it.

During the Black and Tan period, Abbey Street was surrounded, and Mrs. Ennis, the charwoman, and myself carried the gelignite to my aunt's place in Parnell Square. She had a workroom there at the top of a house. We made several journeys carrying the heavy parcels, between Abbey Street and Parnell Square.

It was to our place in Abbey Street that the three or four American officers came, who brought the Thompson machine gun to show to Michael Collins. This was much later, and not long before the Truce. I had to get in touch with Joe O'Reilly to get Diarmuid O'Hegarty, Gearóid O'Sullivan, Liam Mellows and other members of the Volunteer Executive to meet these officers in our shop one Saturday afternoon after closing hours, when everything was quiet. We had no back entrance but arrangements were made to get them over the wall to the back of Kenny's Advertising Agency, if a raid threatened. It turned out not to be necessary.

Mick Collins continuously gave me to bring to my mother sums of money - notes of £100 each - to mind for him. He used this money for his various purposes, and sent for me to get it from her whenever he wanted it. He probably used it to pay people who brought arms or performed for him any other of the services he required. He kept renewing the advance to my mother, who safely minded the money for him.

Another man who was a regular visitor to our shop was Jim Brennan, who was an engineer on a big ship and who used to bring letters for Mick from Jim Gleeson and Jim McGee. These men were engaged in sending arms, etc., from America.

A Mr. Harty, who originally came from Dundalk, was bringing his furniture from America to Cork, as he intended to settle in Ireland. His piano and settee were stuffed full of arms, and the furniture was claimed by Mick's friends in Cork who distributed the arms among the Volunteers I got the despatch in the shop about this from Harry, either through Jim Brennan or perhaps Liam Pedlar, telling me to inform Mick Collins who would make all the necessary arrangements. My procedure in such matters was to pass

these despatches to Joe O'Reilly who would hand them to Mick Collins. Joe called once and sometimes twice a day. On one of these occasions I noticed that Joe, who had called as usual for the despatches, had been followed, and I informed him of this and said that I would see the despatches were brought safely to Mick's office by a trusty friend of my own, a girl who was not in Cumann na mBan and was not known to anybody. When Joe left the shop, the man followed him sure enough, but Joe took care to lead him astray and finally dodged him.

At one time - I can't exactly state when but I think it was before the Black and Tans became active - a quantity of gelignite was stolen by the Volunteers, I imagine, from the North Wall and was brought to our shop by Hubert Kearns and Frank Harding in a donkey cart. It was on a Saturday afternoon when all the business houses in Abbey Street were closed and I feared it would attract the attention of the police. As I have already said, we had no back entrance, and the stuff had to be brought in through the front door and packed into the basement where we covered it with materials such as linings, etc.

We always had a store of rifles. At the back of the shop, Batt. O'Connor had built a recess behind the wooden partition of the fitting-room, disguising it so cleverly that it would never be noticed. It held about fifty rifles which were being brought backward and forward, I think by the Active Service Unit. Paddy Daly, Pat McCrea, Joe Leonard, --- Hyland and Hubert Kearns were the persons chiefly concerned in that. Hyland was a taxi driver. Batt O'Connor had made a similar recess in the basement for the storage of revolvers.

It was I who handed out the guns to these messengers when they came. We had a manager whom we did not trust, but

I managed to terrorise him into silence and, as he was a great coward, he never gave anything away although he hated to see the Volunteers coming into the shop.

Paddy Daly - he was a daredevil - also brought a bundle of the little American machine guns out to our place in Marino Crescent and stored them in the henhouse at the end of the garden. This was at a much later date. He lived in Cecil Avenue, or somewhere near Malahide Road, and he was able to come in by the back gate, of which he had a key, and he could come and go without anyone knowing it. He had a motorbike and sidecar which he used for this purpose.

In the basement in Abbey Street we also had always a big store of home-made bombs which I think were made in Parnell Street in Archie Heron's shop. They were Mills bombs. They had the shape of electric light bulbs and the boys used to call them the eggs.

In the morning of the ambush in North King Street, in which Kevin Barry was arrested, a young man, called Keating, who at the time was an assistant in Switzer's, rushed into the shop in Abbey Street in a great state of excitement. He took out a revolver and asked me to keep it. I knew by the look of the revelver that it had been recently used. I stowed it away with the others and later somebody called for it. Keating was afterwards a representative for the 'Thor' washing machines, and I think he is dead now.

In October, 1920, when the funeral of the British soldiers who were killed at "Fernside" was passing, I think towards the North Wall, Seán Treacy, who had the loan of Harry's bicycle, came to the shop with it after watching the procession. I asked him did he not want it any more. He said the bicycle would give him away as well as us, as the saddle had the words, "H. Boland, 64 Middle Abbey Street",

scratched on it with a pin. Seán left our shop to go over to the Republican Outfitters in Talbot Street. He had been complaining that he was badly handicapped without his glasses which he had lost in the fight in "Fernside".

When he left our shop, to which as far as I could see he had not been followed, he must have been spotted by a G-man, probably after entering O'Connell Street. I read somewhere that a policeman from his own part of the country recognised him. Not having his glasses, he would not have seen the policeman. It was unfortunate, as it happened, that he had not kept the bicycle because, as he emerged from the Republican Outfitters, the lorryload of Black and Tans had arrived, having, no doubt, been phoned for by the policeman. He might have succeeded in escaping on the bicycle, if he had it with him.

The Saturday night before Bloody Sunday, someone - I think it was Joe O'Reilly - asked me to call to Lower Mount Street to Seán Hyde, who was in digs there, to tell him "not to forget the trunks". Seán was at home and I gave him the message. Of course, I did not know what it meant but, after the events of the following day, I fully realised the meaning of it when I learned that Seán was very much "on the run".

While Kevin Barry was in gaol awaiting execution, Mick Collins sent word to ask me about Gannon, a friendly warder in Mountjoy who knew the Shouldices well. I got in touch with Gannon at his own house - one of the prison cottages - and told him that Mick would send letters to me to be transmitted through him (Gannon) into the gaol. Seemingly, all arrangements were made for the rescue of Kevin from the gaol. It must have been the night before the execution, about 10.30, that Gannon came up to our house in Marino Crescent in a terrible state. He asked me, in the name of God, what had happened, that the escape had not been effected.

Gannon evidently thought the plan had been discovered by the British and that his part in it was found out, with probable serious consequences to himself. I was not able to enlighten him, but I afterwards made inquiries and was told that Kevin's mother had objected to the rescue plan being carried out, as she feared it might entail loss of life and also she fully expected a reprieve would be granted on account of Kevin's youth.

When Ernie O'Malley was in Kilmainham Gaol - he had been arrested under an assumed name about the time of Bloody Sunday - Fr. Albert of Church Street came to me in the shop with some British soldiers' uniforms and boots, and asked me to get somebody to take them into the gaol. I forget now who I got to do the job, but I imagine it was the Volunteers who wanted these uniforms to get into the gaol.

It must have been some time before the Truce that Mick Collins asked me to go to Mountjoy Gaol with flowers for Mrs. Llewelyn Davies, who was imprisoned there, though I don't know for what. I took a bouquet three times for him. He brought them himself to me, on a bicycle. It struck me as funny for Mick Collins to be bringing flowers and I used to joke him about it. Flowers and Mick Collins did not seem to go together. I fancy there must have been some good reason behind it and that it was not merely gallantry. I must say that, although Mick made no personal appeal to me as a man, he was a Trojan worker and kept everyone up to the mark. He had that quality that everything he would do, he would do well. He was very disappointed that Harry and Gerry did not go with him at the Treaty. He said to Gerry, "You'll get a good job in the army". Gerry said, "I don't want your job, Mick". With regard to Harry, he came to my mother to get her to persuade Harry to take his own side. "Could you persuade Harry, Mrs. Boland, to come with us? He'll have two jobs." My mother replied, "Ah, Mick! We never had much money but we

had patriotism, and Harry couldn't sell it. It was born with him".

It was round about St. Stephen's Day, 1921, that Harry came home from America finally. He had been home in the early summer of 1920 to report about the split in the Clan na Gael. I think he was also home during the Truce time, while I was in the West investigating the cases for the White Cross with Nancy Kirwan. I was in Balla, Westport, Ballinarobe, Ballaghaderreen. We started our tour in Athlone and were six weeks away. When I came back, Harry had gone, so I did not see him at all.

On his last return, I met him at Kingsbridge Station. He was carrying something that looked like a bird-cage. I asked him what it was and he said it was a cup that had been given him by his friends in America for the work he had done for the Republic.

It was at this time that Harry brought home the jewels that he had received, on behalf of the Irish Republic, from the representative of the revolutionary government of Russia in New York - a man called Martens. This man had apparently been empowered by his government to borrow money on the security of the jewels and our representatives in America agreed to lend twenty thousand dollars on them. That is all I know about the transaction in America. I presume our people at that period had a sort of fellow feeling with the poor downtrodden Russians who, like themselves, were struggling to throw off the yoke of slavery, and that is the reason they were willing to give them a little financial help.

When Harry was dying in St. Vincent's Hospital on August 1st, 1922, as the result of wounds inflicted on him by the Free State soldiers in the Grand Hotel, Skerries, a priest, Fr. Thornton, came on an outside car to our house in

Clontarf to inform us of what had happened. He brought Harry's wallet with him and gave it to my mother. I accompanied him back to the hospital. When I entered the ward where Harry was, he motioned to me with his hand. I went over to his bed and was shocked at the sight of him; and I knew by the look of him that he was dying. However, I said, "You'll get over this, Harry!". He said, "Ah, no, Kit! I don't think so". I asked him then who fired the shot. "I'll never tell you, Kit", he said. "The only thing I'll say is that it was a friend of my own that was in prison with me that fired the shot. I'll never tell the name and don't try to find out. I forgive him and I want no reprisals. I want to be buried in the grave with Cathal Brugha". He always had a great regard for Cathal Brugha. He asked to see Gerald, and I went up to Moungjoy to get parole for Gerald to see his brother who was dying. As I was leaving the hospital, an officer, who was evidently in charge of the military guard on Harry, warned me that there must be no attempt at escape, as, if there was, they had orders to shoot him dead. I was indignant, knowing that he was dying.

From Mountjoy, I was sent to Portobello to the Adjutant General who would not see me. He sent the Assistant Adjutant General, Kevin O'Higgins. I told him what I wanted. He asked me had I read the paper this morning, that in worse cases than ours parole had been refused and it could not possibly be done. His attitude was hostile and very hard. I asked was that the last word. He said "Yes". I had to come back and tell Harry that Gerald would not be allowed to see him. Then he told me that I was to hold the jewels until de Valera got back into power. If ever the Republic was declared by de Valera, I could hand them over to him.

I should have mentioned that, a day or two after Harry's return from America, he went to meet Mick Collins in

the Gresham Hotel with the intention of handing over the jewels. This was, of course, during the recess of the Treaty debates. Evidently, there was a row between Mick and Harry, I believe because Harry refused to take the side of the Treaty and this was the end of their friendship. In the course of the row, Mick took the jewels out of his pocket and threw them at Harry, saying, "Take these back, they are bloodstained". Harry, who had already obtained Mick's receipt for them, put them back in his pocket and walked out.

When he came home to us, he was in a blazing temper and he showed visible signs of having had a serious struggle with Mick who had been a bit rowdy with him and had, no doubt, been celebrating over the festive season.

We kept the jewels in the house. During the various raids by the Free State soldiers during the civil war, my mother carried them around on her person and afterwards we made various hiding places for them, one being a little recess with a sliding door in the hot-press, which my husband made. Another place we kept them for a long time was in a box in a hole we made in the back of the chinmey recess by pulling out a brick behind the range which we hardly used at all. In that way, we held them secure and in 1938, when de Valera had passed the constitution and had recovered the ports, we considered that Harry's wishes were fulfilled as far as we could foresee as regards our life-time. My husband interviewed de Valera, who of course was fully aware that we were holding them - my mother and myself had spoken to him several times about them - and asked him to take possession of them. He agreed then, and Seán and myself brought them in and got an official receipt, signed by de Valera, Seán McEntee, Minister for Finance, and Maurice Moynihan, Secretary to the Government. I was very glad afterwards that I held that receipt because, during the 1948 election, a sinister

campaign was started with the undoubted purpose of blackening our family's reputation. The suggestion was that we had done away with the jewels for our own benefit. The first we knew was a report in the paper of an election speech that, of course, got much publicity, inquiring where the jewels were. It was God had inspired my husband to hand them over when he did, as I probably would have forgotten all about them or I might even not have bothered to get a receipt for them.

After Harry's death, I was sent to America with Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington on behalf of the Prisoners' Dependants' Fund. I was specially sent at Mrs. McWhorter's suggestion because Harry had been so popular over there. I visited twenty-eight different States in the fourteen months. We took in also Montreal, Quebec and Toronto, and collected an awful lot of money. I have forgotten the figure. Everywhere we got a great reception. There were various other people from Ireland over in America at the same time - Mrs. Muriel McSwiney and Linda Kearns, who had gone on their own initiative, Austin Stack, Kathleen Barry, Sceilg and Fr. O'Flanagan. When I returned, I was asked to go back again but I wouldn't. I got married then.

SIGNED: Kathleen Boland O'Donovan

DATE: 27th September 1951

WITNESS: S. mac Giolla Easpaig