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Form MG11(T)

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WITNESS STATEMENT

(CJ Act 1967, s.9; MC Act 1980, ss.5A(3) (a) and 5B; MC Rules 1981, r.70)

Statement of: LAVENDER, ALAN WILLIAM

Age if under 18: OVER 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18') Occupation: RETIRED

This statement (consisting of 3 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Signed: Date: 19/05/2004

I am Alan William LAVENDER and I reside at an address known to Hampshire Police. I am making this statement about the care that my mother received at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital and her subsequent death.

My mother was Elsie Hester LAVENDER nee BRYANT

Elsie had a younger brother Thomas William Henry BRYANT who unfortunately died around 1993 or 1994. My mother married George William Albert LAVENDER on 23rd December 1934 (23/12/1934) and I was there only son. My father died in 1989 and my mother continued to live alone at the family home,

I took early retirement in 1990 and moved to Warsash in order to be closer to her.

My mother was diagnosed as suffering with Diabetes in 1942 and was insulin dependant right from the start. Mum was more than capable of managing her insulin and diabetes. Other than diabetes mum had slight rheumatism and was partially blind in her later years due again to the Diabetes. Other than this she was healthy and a very strong and independent woman and remained so right up to the day she was admitted to hospital in February 1996. She coped with her housework and washing and was a very family orientated person. She did have a home help and a nurse would attend from her surgery twice a day to assist mum with her insulin regime. My mother belonged to the Forton Road Surgery since she was first married and in the later years Dr. Jane BARTON became her GP. Mum had been taken into hospital on a couple of occasions after she had become 'Hypo', they would stabilise her diabetes and send her home

In early February 1996 I received a telephone call from Frances DOMINI who was my mothers

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home help and informed that she had fallen and been taken to the Royal Navy Hospital at Haslar. Mum was in Haslar Hospital for several days before we were told that she had suffered a brain stem stroke, which apparently is a very painful type of stroke. However she was sat up in bed almost from the start. She was obviously in pain, not only from the stroke but the fall as well; she had not fractured any bones but had cut her head open. I was shocked to find that she had had a stroke as up to then I assumed it was an incident due to her diabetes.

Mum remained in Haslar Hospital for two or three weeks and underwent physiotherapy. Her progress was excellent, so much so that the Occupational Therapist spoke to me about preparing her home ready for her to return to it. Mum was now talking to others coherently and understanding what was being said to her. She had also learned to walk with the assistance of a frame. The care that my mother had received at Haslar Hospital was excellent in my opinion. On my last visit to Haslar Hospital the physiotherapist was trying to arrange an adjustable walking stick that mum could take with her when she was discharged. He returned shortly and said that she would not need it as she was going to go to the Gosport War memorial Hospital for rehabilitation.

Mum was very coherent at that time and was always checking that we had fed her cat. The cat was a problem for us as she had had it for many years and it would not let anyone go near it except for mum. We had wanted to sell mums house and move her into a warden controlled flat as we felt it would be better for mum to have constant assistance at hand. Dr. BARTON agreed with this. The nurses would probably still have had to visit twice a day because of her insulin injections. Mum would not move because of the cat and the cat could not be re-homed anyway because of its bad temperament. Mum also referred to the warden assisted flats at Clarence Square as Barracks and was adamant that she would not move into them

My mother was admitted to Daedelus Ward at the Gosport War Memorial and was immediately placed in a room on her own. Just after she arrived a nurse came in and conducted a test, which I believe was for Alzheimer's. It involved answering a lot of questions like what was her mother's maiden name and having to remember a word that she was told at the start of the test and repeat it when asked at the end. Mum passed this test with ease.

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Staff at the Royal Navy Hospital at Haslar had told me that mum was just going to the Gosport War Memorial Hospital for rehabilitation and my wife and I visited daily as well as feeding her cat. Within two or three days of being at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital I had an appointment to see Dr. BARTON. I asked when she would be able to go home and said that we needed to know as we would have to get rid of the cat if we were going to get her a warden controlled flat.

Dr. BARTON replied, "you can get rid of the cat." I was stunned with the way she said this.

Dr. BARTON then said, "you do know that your mother has come here to die!"

I did not know that this was the case; I believed that my mother had gone to this hospital for rehabilitation. I could not believe the cold and callous way that Dr. BARTON had broke this news to me, it was as if her death had been predetermined. I was that shocked I did not ask any more questions even though I had a number that required answers. On reflection I should have seen this coming as I had asked the same question of a sister on Daedelus ward and was told that I had better speak to Dr. BARTON. I cannot remember this sister's name but she was a sister at Northcott House previously and my mother knew and trusted her.

Soon after my meeting with Dr. BARTON I noticed that mum had been placed on a syringe driver. Mum had actually said to me on one occasion, "I don't like that thing" and pointed at the driver. I assumed that the syringe driver was for pain relief but did not know what drug was being administered by it.

My mother's health deteriorated quite quickly. On one occasion we visited she appeared unconscious and smelt awful. It really was difficult to be near her because of the smell. I looked at the medical notes and saw that there was an entry stating 'leaking faeces'. Mum was always very proud of her appearance and spotless she would have hated to be in this state.

About two to three days after this visit, on 6th March 1996 (06/03/1996) I received a telephone call from the Gosport War Memorial stating that she had died. The death certificate had been

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certified by J.A. BARTON BM and gave the cause of death as Cerebralvascular accident and Diabetes Mellitus. We buried my mother at Anns Hill Cemetery (plot 150).

I am concerned about the rapid deterioration of my mother when she initially went to the Gosport War Memorial hospital for rehabilitation. I am also concerned about the callous way that we were treated by Dr Jane BARTON and cannot help wondering if mum's death was partly down to her refusal to go into a nursing home, which was placing a financial burden on Dr. BARTON's surgery as she had to supply a nurse twice a day.

I am a realistic person and accept that my mother was an elderly lady and at that time was one of the longest standing insulin dependant people. However she appeared to be making a full recovery from the stroke, was alert, lucid and other than a little pain in her shoulder was not complaining of pain. Mum did not make an issue of the pain in her shoulder but it was obvious that she was at least a little tender as she did not like people touching it and would ask them to be careful if they got near to it. It was not until her final day that I realised that she was being administered Diamorphine through the syringe driver. I was not informed of this by any staff despite visiting nearly every day with my wife.

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