



# STORIES FROM THE HEART



Relatives for Justice (RFJ) was founded in April 1991 when a number of bereaved families affected by the conflict came together to support one another. Instrumental in the formation of the organization were key figures that had, on a voluntary basis, been active for the previous 2 decades such as Monsignor Raymond Murray, Clara Reilly, Peter Madden, the law practice partner of the late Pat Finucane, and the late human rights lawyer Rosemary Nelson both subsequently murdered.

Relatives for Justice is a world recognised NGO working with and providing support to relatives of people bereaved, and injured, by the conflict across the North of Ireland including border regions in the 26 counties. RFJ identifies and attempts to address the needs of those who have suffered loss and injury; this is achieved through one to one contacts, self-help, group support, outreach and befriending, counselling support and therapy work, welfare and legal advocacy.

As relatives and survivors we all need to have our experiences heard and valued. In terms of conflict resolution this will also allow those most marginalised to realise the pivotal role and vital contribution that they bring to the creation of a new society based upon equality, respect and above all where human rights are secured. This work highlights and attempts to address outstanding human rights abuses. Our primary objective in this area of work is to assist in the bringing about of a more human rights-based culture in order to safeguard and protect human rights for all.

The Peace III SEUPB Transitional Legacies Project supports individuals and families to express their experience of their conflict related bereavement or injury in a supportive and safe environment. This project records those experiences and develop models of best practice in delivery of victim centred transitional justice mechanisms.

This particular project was carried out over a three month period with five women, all from the Short Strand area who have been directly bereaved during the conflict in Ireland. Short Strand is a small nationalist enclave in predominantly Loyalist East Belfast. A working class area with proud traditions and roots, it has suffered immensely from the conflict.

The purpose of this project was to address experiences where female victims have not had a voice and have felt silenced. It aimed to develop an understanding of women's experiences of the conflict and the lived effects of trauma.

The outcome of the project is this book, 'Stories from the Heart' that elegantly highlights the specific experiences of women. Whilst every experience of trauma is unique and personal these five women provide a snapshot to the suffering of an entire community. Sharing this with us allows us a greater understanding of their own experience and that of their wider community. An experience which must be acknowledged and accounted for.



In photograph from left to right Pauline O'Neill, Agnes McGinley, Sue Thomspson, Carol McWilliams, Marcella Fitzsimons

## Introduction

*Relatives for Justice are privileged to publish and share the narratives of five women from the Short Strand area of Belfast in this book. The generosity, courage and honesty of the five participants shines through in every word, phrase and image evoked and that they chose to share these stories is truly humbling.*

These five tell human stories of loss and trauma. But it would be a grave mistake to read these narrowly as narratives of experience. The issues raised are fundamental to the discourse and negotiations on Dealing With the Past.

Some of the themes in all of the shared narratives include the need for forensic truths about the killings of these women's loved ones and the legal processes that surrounded them. There are recurrent calls for different forms of acknowledgment. There is evidence of how systemic flawed investigations have contributed to trauma. There is significant learning contained within the narratives on the impact of trauma in its immediacy and in the years that follow. Connected to this are references to support needs, some met and many absent. Without doubt there is a sense of family, community and place and how justice is something perceived as both individual and collective.

Again and again the protection of the next generation from having to live through these same horrors is articulated. A clear message telling us all – Never Again.

These are not hidden themes that we must somehow search for – they are clearly articulated within the narratives of horrific experience and

they are themes that must give us all pause for thought and deserve our attention. They are themes articulated by many coming through the doors of Relatives for Justice.

These strong women, shaped by their experience and capable of so much demonstrate how women have much to offer our processes of conflict resolution.

These narratives demonstrate the danger of portraying and treating these women solely as victims. We would not only undermine their efforts and rob them of the opportunity to progress, but would also exclude a vast and untapped resource in terms of peacemaking and post-conflict recovery and transformation.

These women identify how women are largely active in the informal spheres, at community and civil society levels, beneath the radar of the international community and the traditional peace and security framework. And equally identify how much we all gain by including those spheres in our conflict resolution processes.

Lived lives must influence policy. This book is a contribution to that understanding.

In Relatives for Justice we are committed to the issues raised by this group of women, to their journey of recovery and contribution.

We do not use the word privilege lightly. Our thanks is immense.

**Andrée Murphy** - Deputy Director

**Mary Kate Quinn** - Transitional Legacies Project Worker



## Pauline's Story

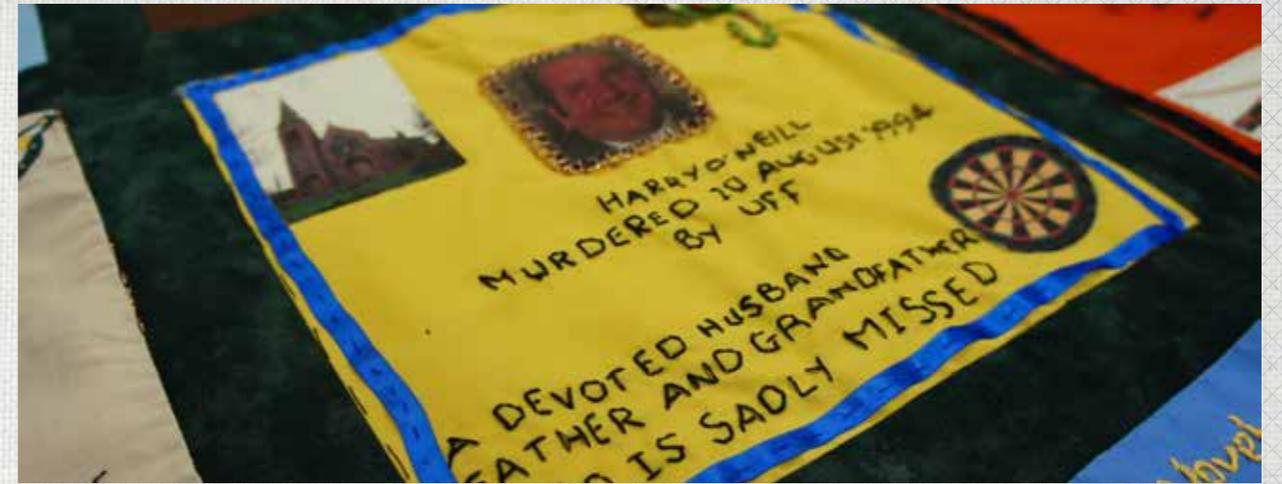
*It was 1st August 1994 when I left home to pick my mum and dad from Glengall Street Bus Station. They had come back from Belgium after a touring holiday (mum was afraid of flying).*

My daddy had asked me in a roundabout way if I could pick them up. I didn't know if I was going to be able to, as then I was a mother of a young family that I couldn't leave on their own. I just said if I was there I would get them.

I had managed to go over but when I got there their coach had got in early and they had got a taxi home. I had already been in their house and made them a bite to eat for their supper.

There were no mobile phones in those days so I headed to the phone box and rang the home number and my daddy answered and asked where I was. Of course I told him I was waiting for them to get off the coach and we laughed about it. I told him it was too late for me to call and I would see him the next day and he could fill me in all about their holiday.

On my way back I was stopped at a police checkpoint at the top of the Short Strand. I was kept for a very long time with other drivers being asked to drive around me. I was very nervous and a bit apprehensive. Luckily one of my neighbours was driving past and pulled in to see if I was ok. A policeman came over to my car and started asking me a lot of difficult questions about people who lived in my community and I told him I knew nothing about them. He then asked me about my daddy. I was taken aback by his question and asked why he was asking me about my daddy. He told me that my daddy worked for Stewarts on



the Castlereagh Road and that he should watch himself working there because it was a dodgy place he was working in. After about an hour I was allowed to go.

The next day I went up to see them and to hear all about their holiday. They had a fantastic time but daddy said that to avoid all of the stops travelling by coach, and God spare them, the following year mum was going to fly with him. What a time they were looking forward to.

Daddy had another week off work and didn't start back until 8th August. He was working split shifts that week. This meant he started at 8am came home at 1pm, back at 3pm and then hopefully finished between 6.30 and 7pm. On Tuesday 9th August I brought him up to work at 3pm, little did I know this was the last conversation I would ever had with him. The last words I said to him were 'I love you daddy, take care and I'll see you later', his last words to me were, 'I love you too, drive safe'.

The next day at 6.25pm on 10th August 1994 my daddy was murdered by the UFF. He had just turned 60 on 6th July.

Their excuse? He was a Nationalist.

It started as any other day. The summer was here and the weather was glorious. I did my usual things around the house and that evening I was going shopping with my old Aunt Mary. I took her shopping every week. We left the Short Strand around 5.30pm and went to Curley's in West Belfast.

My sister Carol picked daddy up from work. We were always very conscious of him working in a Protestant area but because he was both dropped off and picked up we thought we were doing everything right by him. How wrong we were.

Carol went up to pick him up as usual, not knowing anything was wrong. There was an RUC checkpoint set up at the top of Mountpottinger Road and when she passed they all looked strangely at her. They let her drive up to pick my daddy up, knowing he was dead.

I didn't know anything about what was going on. I didn't even hear my name being called over the tannoy in Curley's. It is probably just as well as I wouldn't have been able to drive home.

On the way back home, at around 7 o'clock there were a lot of jeeps around the Short Strand and we remarked on them in the car thinking there were a lot of raids going to take place. I remember driving up Mountpottinger Road where I met my chum's husband (I had bought a few things for her while I was out). I told him I would be round to her after I dropped my aunt off. He looked at me and asked me had I been home yet, I told him no. He said your mum's been looking you everywhere. I asked him who was dead, I just had an awful feeling. He didn't answer me and just told me to go to my mum's.

Apparently I drove up the wrong side of the road. There were a lot of people about and they were all looking at me strangely. I got to my mum's, I will never forget the look on my younger sister Liz's face. We couldn't speak. I don't know if I walked into the house or fell in.

Mummy had daddy's sandwiches and his tea sitting waiting on him (he had dinner at lunchtime when he was on a split shift). She was so calm. I don't remember asking was it true but I knew it was. After a while I went down to my own house to see if my kids were alright and found my second son (my 10 year old) rocking back and forth in floods of tears because his granda had been shot dead. Not only had I lost my daddy, I now realised my kids had also lost their granda. How were we going to cope without him?

Back at mum's the house got so busy. People were coming and going with food, cards, flowers and everything and anything we needed. What a community I live in. I am so proud to have been brought up and reared in the Short Strand. There will never be another community like it for looking out for each other and anyone who is ever in need. They are always behind you.

Everything was so surreal. Mum said my

brother Philip was up the Castlereagh Road at daddy's work and asked me would I go and get him because she was afraid something might happen him too. Father O'Hagan asked to be allowed to see my daddy to give him the last rites and to bless him but was told no because they were trying to gather forensics (what a joke). Apparently the security cameras were not working! After a while he was eventually allowed in and I told him to tell my daddy I loved him. When he came out he was as white as a sheet and I asked him was he ok. Stupid question you might think but even though I knew he was dead I wanted to know if he was comfortable. He came back to me with no coat on him, he rested my daddy's head on it.

*Daddy was a Eucharistic Minister in St Matthew's Church a job he loved to do and took great pride in He was a very well respected member of the community and much loved by all who knew him. He was a loving husband, devoted father of five and an adoring grandfather to all of our children. How he doted on his grandchildren and now he was dead. Murdered for his faith, simply, because he was a Catholic.*

Back home in mummy's it was as if it wasn't happening to us, it was so surreal. It was as if it was happening to someone else and not us. They next few days passed very quickly with hundreds upon hundreds of people coming to pay their respects. My daddy had worked in Richardson's Fertilisers for over 30 years and had a lot of close friends from both sides of the community. The amount of Protestant people who came to show us support and offer their sympathy was amazing. It all passed in a blur and then it was

time to say goodbye to him forever. The hardest thing I have ever had to do in my life.

What was life going to be like without him?

Life without my daddy was going to be so hard. He did everything for me and my kids. What was I going to do? He was always there when I needed him. My rock.

His funeral took place on Saturday 13th August. The Church was packed with everyone coming to pay their respects. A loyalist march was taking place and they tried to start trouble with the mourners. The sound of their drums and whistles and expletives being shouted was deafening but I said to my brother Philip, 'Daddy can't hear them, so neither can we'. Father O'Brien closed the doors and the Bishop finished saying Mass.

My mum was so calm and looking back on it now I realise it was for our benefit; she was so strong for us. The next few weeks and months were so hard as I had to sort all the legal issues for my mum. Looking back, it was a lot of pressure trying to get it all right, but it had to be done. Meanwhile I had three young children aged 12, almost 10 and a 5 year old, a husband, a home, a job and between the five of us, our mum to keep an eye on.

Times were tough. I couldn't talk about my daddy without breaking down. Trying to keep my family protected was a very hard thing to do. Every time someone mentioned his name I would break down in floods of tears and wonder how I was going to cope with everyday life. I couldn't speak about him to the kids without breaking down, it was the worst time of my life. It was so tough and I look back on it now and think how did I ever come through it all.





I started volunteering with a children's cancer charity to help with the ache in my heart. I am still working for the same charity almost 19 years later. I had to find something to fill the void in my life. If this hadn't happened I probably wouldn't have thought of trying to help others.

A few years passed and then my mum took ill. Doctors put it down to post-traumatic stress. Going back and forth with her for appointments to hospital were tough on her but she managed to come through it. My brother emigrated to America and she missed him so much, but true to her word, she eventually got on a plane and went over to visit him. We both managed to fly over for his wedding. It was just a pity daddy wasn't alive to go with her, he would have loved it.

Nothing was ever the same for mum, her life as she knew it didn't exist for her anymore, she didn't have daddy to share it with, they were joined at the hip.

In the middle of my mum's illness, my marriage broke down after a long time. My mum helped me through it, she was my rock then, she had inner strength and she passed it to me. What a woman! But nothing was enough for her anymore, after

surviving almost 11 years without my daddy my mum passed away on 18th February 2005. She never got over his murder, she couldn't live without him. I still believe she died from a broken heart. I also believe to this day if my daddy hadn't been murdered they both would have lived to a very old age. How I miss them every day of my life, no one will ever know.

Just before my mum died I had a new man in my life – John. My life had changed for me in so many ways after such a traumatic time and things are just never the same. It was years before I realised they were never coming back. If something was bothering me I would say I'll go and see my daddy and he'll know what to do, then reality kicks in and you know you can't.

At the moment my daddy's case is with the Police Ombudsman. We as a family know there was collusion with my daddy's murder and only time will tell if we get truth and justice about what happened. To think his murderer rode on a bicycle after he murdered my daddy. That he was able to cycle off after committing such a heinous crime beggar's belief.



*I try to protect my children now as much as I can. They are all grown up now but it doesn't stop me from worrying. I have three grandchildren now and my daddy and mummy would be so proud and dote on the great-grandchildren that they never got to see.*

Unfortunately for the future I wish I could say that peace will prevail, but how wrong would I be? I live on the interface near Newtownards Road. In June 2011 my home came under attack with bricks, bottles, golf balls and more sinister petrol bombs. It was one of the scariest times of my life. To think after everything we have come through that now because of our religion my family were now under threat of being killed or being burnt to death. I was off work for two months, not sleeping, eating or living. We were just existing. After a few weeks, things settled down a bit but I was still getting objects thrown over my fence on a nightly basis and expletives were being shouted through my windows – none of this was reported by the media. Will things ever change?



Now in 2013, they have kicked off again. Petrol bombs were thrown at my home again only last week. Over 18 years since ceasefires were called on both sides and we still have to deal with bitter sectarianism and hatred. When will it all stop and let everyone get on with their lives in peace? We all have to live. I can only hope the peace process succeeds and that my kids and grand-children will have a better life and future than I had. It's been tough on me and my family but I want a better future for them. They have had to grow up without the guidance of my daddy (a wise man), their loving granda who adored them, and also their granny who they thought the world of.

I hope I am still alive to see peace all over Ireland and we can put the Troubles behind us once and for all.

The only way this is never going to happen again is to keep both sides talking, and yes, future generations should know about my experience and how it has impacted on me and the lives of my family.

*We all love and miss you every day Daddy,*

**Pauline xx**

# Agnes' Story

## My Beautiful Brother Joey

13th July 1954 – 28th May 1972

*Joseph Fitzsimmons or Joey as we, his family of brothers and sisters called him was born on 13th July 1954. I always remember my mother saying how she could hear the Orange parades passing the Short Strand where she was living in Saul Street at the lower part of the Newtownards Road (well nothing much has changed since then) 59 years later.*

Joey was the sixth born then into our family. By 1977 our family had grown to 18 children! Joey loved life and was always singing. He attended St. Matthews Primary School continuing on to St. Augustine's Secondary School on the Ravenhill Road where he excelled in Technical Drawing.

On leaving school he worked in various places, a photographic firm, McGratten's Fruit and a few other jobs passed his way. By this time, things were starting to get unsettled in Belfast.

My older brother had an accordion, which Joey loved and with the help of a neighbour, Joey took it upon himself to learn how to play his favourite songs; The Broad Black Brimmer and The Boys of the Old Brigade. Republican songs would be heard around the house. He sang in a local club, the Ra Club in Seaforde Street and sang with Eamon and Kathleen Largey.

Joey got involved at an early age with the local IRA unit. He was a very committed Republican. In September 1971 Joey was arrested for rioting

while defending women who were out with bin lids and sentenced to six months imprisonment in Crumlin Road Gaol.

My mother and father were devastated, as things in Belfast were getting worse. But he was not on his own! Lots of young boys, men and women were being physically abused on the streets of Ireland by the RUC and British Army. It was a very sad Christmas for us as a family without our brother with us to celebrate. He knew he was loved and missed.

1972 was a very sad year. In February 1972 Joey was released from jail – his time served. On that morning he attended the funerals of four of his comrades who had died in an explosion. So tragic, so young, so sad to die. Little did we know a few weeks later we would do the same.

At 3am on 28th May 1972 I was wakened by an aunt of mine. I was dazed by all she was saying and doing. She told me there had been an explosion in Anderson Street (a few streets away from where we lived) and there were people dead and some injured. She told me that Joey was thought to be among the dead. It was terrible! I hadn't heard the explosion, although it had rocked the area.

When I got downstairs the house was packed with family and friends. Everyone was in shock. My poor father and mother were in a terrible state. My mother was saying 'let me go round, I'll find him'! It was heart rending. On that Sunday Joey was to be godfather to my brother's son. I think my mother thought he would turn up, but of course, he never did. His beautiful young life was cut short on that dreadful night.

The next few days were very bad but we had two

local priests - Father McHugh and Father Carlin who were both towers of strength to our family, as were our friends.

Eight people died that night and the Short Strand was like a ghost town. Eight sad homes to visit and pay your respects to. Looking back, it was like a nightmare. The wake was awful. We had to keep the coffin closed and we couldn't see his face but we will remember the lovely smiling face of our wonderful brother as long as we live.

And then the quiet.

The hustle and bustle of the last few days was over. We were a family lost. A son and a brother.

I was getting married five weeks later on 8th July. I wanted to cancel our wedding but our priests and family encouraged us to go ahead. We did, with very heavy and sore hearts.

Joey was sorely missed. Our family would never be the same. No goodnight Joey as he would joke about the Waltons. Goodnight Mum, Goodnight Dad... he thought this was great craic!

In the early 1970's people didn't get counselling or asked if they needed help. They had to provide for their families. My mother had to look after her family. My Dad who was a docker had to provide for his family and return to work.

I know that until the day they died, Joey was always in their hearts and thoughts. Their beautiful seventeen year old son and my brother, who had everything to live for, with a lot of talent for music.

*Joey, you are always loved and missed by your loving brothers and sisters.*

RIP





## Carol's Story

*I will never forget the date, the day, the hour and the minute – Wednesday 10th August 1994 at 6.30pm.*

This is a brief insight to the man I am so proud to call 'my daddy'.

His name is Harry O'Neill and he was married to my mum, Nancy. He had just celebrated his 60th birthday and he had 5 children. 4 girls and a boy - and I am the eldest.

He was a family man, devoted to his wife, children and grandchildren. My daddy was a very hard working man. He always provided for his family. My daddy worked as a security officer for a large supermarket warehouse (Stewarts) after taking early retirement from his employment from Richardson's Fertilisers where he was a fitter's helper for over 30 years.

He lived for his family and for his faith.

He was a humble and kind person who attended Mass every Sunday in his beloved chapel, St. Matthew's; where he was christened, made his First Communion, was confirmed, married and where he carried out his Eucharistic duties as a Minister a position he took tremendous pride in. This would also become the chapel he would ultimately be buried from.

Wednesday 10th August 1994 began just like any other summer day. I went through my usual routine of getting the children up to be minded whilst I went to work. Little did I know the tragic turn of events and heartache that I was going to endure that warm summer evening.

I finished work as usual at 5 o'clock and made my way home. I got the dinner made while the children were out playing enjoying the warm weather.

I was just tidying up the kitchen while I waited on the usual phone call from my daddy. He would usually ring me around 6.30pm – 6.45pm.



As I waited on his phone call telling me he was ready to be picked up, I jumped into the shower.

I was just coming to the end of my shower when I heard the phone ring. By the time I got to the phone it had rang off. I waited for around ten minutes or so for him to ring back, but he didn't ring back.

I found this odd so I went and got the car keys to go up and collect him. On my way out my daughter and a few of her friends came skipping down the street and I told her to come with me. She was hesitant and did not want to come as she wanted to play with her friends. I was a bit sharp with her and told her to get in the car with her friends. I can't explain it but I sensed something was not right but I couldn't put my finger on it. For some reason, I felt very anxious.

As we drove out of our street onto Mountpottinger Road, travelling along the top of the road, a foot patrol of soldiers and a community policeman were randomly stopping

cars travelling the opposite way. We were travelling onto Castlereagh Street which connects onto Mountpottinger Road. On getting closer to the patrol I noticed a soldier observing my car and trying to get the attention of the policeman. I observed this through my mirror.

I drove along Castlereagh Street onto the Castlereagh Road where my daddy worked. I can't put into words how I felt but there was a very nervous feeling gripping the pit of my stomach. As quickly as the thoughts came in, I tried to ignore them.

The news came on the radio in the car and stated that there had been a shooting. I didn't allow myself to think about it. As I anxiously reached my daddy's workplace I knew something was wrong. I usually sat in the car and waited on my daddy but something told me to get out of the car. I left the kids in the car and told them not to move until I came back. I then went to the door of Stewarts and as I approached the door, I rang

the buzzer and a man asked me what my business was. I explained that I was there to collect my daddy, Harry O'Neill. The man got a bit agitated and asked me to hold on. While I paced nervously someone came out of the door. I knew by the look on his face that something was seriously wrong. I pushed past him not knowing where I was going and ended up at the reception area, but there was no one at reception. Obviously the person I had spoken to had gone to inform someone that I was there to collect my daddy.

I then spotted a girl who worked in one of the offices and I asked her if there something wrong. She told me that one of their security men had been shot. I couldn't believe it but I just knew. But still I was hopeful that it wasn't my daddy. But deep down I knew, I just knew it was him. I didn't say anything and started walking towards where the girl had come from. My legs were like jelly and after that, all I remember was people all around me and one lady asking my name. I told her and she just said, 'Carol, there has been a shooting and it's your dad'. At that very moment I thought my heart was going to break. My world and my body were just crumbling around me. I started screaming 'not my daddy', 'this couldn't be happening to me', 'this is unreal'.

*The police were asking questions but I was just in another world. I felt sick to the stomach and just kept crying, 'How am I going to break this news to my mummy'.*

Everything was going round in my head. A few weeks before my daddy was murdered I noticed people hanging around whilst I was waiting for him in the dark and I got very nervous, although I didn't tell my daddy for fear he would not let me pick him up again. He always worried about his family. I always had a bad feeling about where my daddy worked but I never thought my bad feeling

would become my worst nightmare.

The security hut in the warehouse was situated along a side street that faced onto an estate and for some reason my daddy would not let me drive down this street. He went crazy at me one afternoon when I took him back to work after his break and I drove down the side street towards the security hut instead of where I would usually pick him up. I will never forget him telling me that under no circumstances was I ever to drive down that street again. Low and behold it was while he was on the phone in this security hut that someone on a bicycle cycled up to the hut and shot him dead.

Meanwhile as I was in a very distressed state I couldn't remember phone numbers or anything else for matter. The kids were still in the car and I was in panic mode. The police were asking me all sorts of questions that I just couldn't answer. By this stage they had sent a policewoman to sit in the car with the kids. The kids did not have a clue what was going on. I eventually got hold of my nephew and asked him to get my partner to go to my house where I rang him and explained what had happened, and he and my brother came up to me.

I eventually got to my mum's house where she was sitting at the kitchen table waiting for my daddy to come home from work. I had to break the devastating news about her beloved husband to her. I just remember her crying and crying and saying, 'I knew this would happen, I just knew it!'

I then had to go to my granny's (my daddy's mother) and tell her that her son had been shot dead. That was so hard. I will never forget the heart-breaking look on her face.

My daddy was the backbone of our family, he was always there for us. He never judged you. He was our shoulder to cry on when times got rough and he tried to solve all our problems no matter how

big they were. If anything went wrong or any jobs needed doing, he always sorted them out. He always used to say to me 'what are you going to do wee girl when I'm no longer around'? I always answered; 'you'll always be around'. How wrong was I?

My loving daddy, how could someone take his life? He never harmed anyone. Simply someone, somewhere, decided to murder him and deprive us of a loving kind father and my mum of a good husband, no longer around to share in our lives, birthdays, Christmases, and family occasions. And for what?

Strange things happened after his death. Things I can't document really for legal purposes but life was never the same after that. I remember looking around me one day and wondered why people were going about their normal lives while mine was falling apart. I was so hurt and angry. I soon realised that life goes on no matter how you are feeling inside. You learn to deal with your grief because you can't change what has happened. In other words, you will never forget, you just learn how to live with it.

*The numbness, the emptiness I felt was so unreal. I had never before experienced such soul wrenching feelings. The scholar, the wise man, my beautiful daddy was no longer around for advice on life or help with day to day problems.*





Life carried on and I occupied my time with looking after my family and working, but then there was my mum.

Mum tried to carry on as normal for her family but we could see that she just couldn't cope without daddy. She missed him so much. He was her husband, her soul mate, and most of all her best friend. People were kind and meant well but until it actually happens to you, you will never understand the heartache. My mother took sick a few days after daddy was murdered and she never got over the way he was brutally taken from us, a part of my mum died the day my daddy was murdered, her heart was broken.

We were left to look after mum. She had her good and bad days.

Christmas and family occasions were the hardest to cope with. He was always the life and soul of the party, he loved being the perfect host and most of all he loved to sing. The absence of daddy on these special occasions was so noticeable, as no one could ever take his place.

As the years have gone on even to this day I still

have my moments when I look at his picture and talk to him. I ask him for inspiration and advice hoping to get the answers. I listen to the music on the radio and every so often, a song that he would sing will come on and I smile just thinking about how he loved to sing, he had a lovely singing voice.

*I speak about him often to my kids. I will always keep his memory alive because that is all the people who murdered him have left me with...but oh my...what beautiful memories I have. They might have took my daddy from me but they can never take my wonderful memories and so long as I live his memory will never die because I know he lives on in me and my children.*

There are days when I have a good cry about him and it helps me

I believe in seeking truth and justice for my daddy. I want to find out what really happened to him and the reason for his murder. What did it

achieve? My daddy believed in truth and justice and fairness to one and all and he deserves to get truth and justice.

Justice and truth are very important to allow everything to be transparent so that our children and theirs can live in a better world where everyone is equal and the prejudices of religion and colour can be a thing of the past.

I long for the day when the people responsible for my daddy's murder can be held accountable and ask them why they murdered a family man just because he was of a different religion.

*My dad was a very articulate man with great knowledge and wisdom. He believed in children getting educated and getting good jobs. That was very important to him as he saw this as the best way forward. My daddy didn't believe in violence. I believe that our pain and loss should never be forgotten over the years and that my daddy's death was not in vain.*

Now that we are in peacetime I would never wish to go back to the old days. I would never wish the suffering that we endured to be inflicted on any other family. I want to see a better life for my children and their children.

Although I will never forget or forgive the person that stole my daddy before his time I don't want to live with hatred in my heart. I would like people to live in peace with each other, without fear just because that person attends a different church.

*I love you daddy,  
Your proud and loving daughter,*

**Carol xo**



## Sue's Story

12th December 1983.

*Two weeks before Christmas, on the Sunday night my husband and I went to a local club. About 11.30pm I didn't feel well as I was six and a half months pregnant, so we left to go home. Around 2am our door was loudly knocked. Anthony went and opened the door and my two brothers were there. I stood on the landing and heard my brother Michael say that our youngest brother Tony had been shot dead.*

The next thing I remember is my mother-in-law and Anthony in our bedroom asking me to get dressed. I told them that I overheard what was said. When we got to my parents' home another brother and family friends were there. My parents were still at the hospital. When they came home I kept looking at the door thinking Tony was going to walk in at any minute.

My daddy came in and my mummy came in after him, he was standing at the hearth and she was crying. I kept thinking to myself, 'nobody dies just before Christmas' I remember my daddy saying to me, 'Our child's dead. What are we going to do?' I just looked at him. I didn't know what to say.

The phone was ringing, the neighbours were coming in and my daddy's brother and mummy's sisters, everybody was coming in and out of the house. I can remember my aunt saying to me, 'take her up to bed', about my mummy. I said no way, I just couldn't be in the same room as her. She was inconsolable and I just didn't know what to do, I was in shock myself and was six and a half months



pregnant at the time. It actually frightened me that I just didn't know what to do. Everybody was telling me to watch myself and sit down, but it didn't register with me why they were saying it at the time. I was in a state of shock.

My daddy sent me round to the shop the next morning to get bread and bacon. Then when I came back he asked me to make everyone a fry. There were about twenty people in the house. I looked at the frying pan and thought, I don't know what to do with it. My aunt and neighbours were there and were able to take over, they made the fry for everyone and I just sat there. I knew that I should have been making tea and soup but I just couldn't. I couldn't do anything.

Tony went to the chapel the night before he was buried and my mummy didn't want him to go. She always thought it was so cold anybody going to the chapel. My daddy thought the opposite, he thought it was nice, he said that's when you make your peace. She just wanted him home. She was very upset, I thought she would never forgive my daddy for taking him away from her. She wasn't ready to let him go.

The funeral was awful. When they were putting him into the hearse, my mummy threw herself on top of him. I can remember the funeral as if it was yesterday.

Then again, there are things you forget too. On his 25th anniversary we had a mass for him and we went for lunch. We sat for hours just talking about him. It was great to do that because we all had different memories of Tony. That was the first time we had talked together about him since he died. My brother Michael was saying things that I had actually forgotten about. Bishop Daly and Brian Faulkner both said his funeral mass and the Minister for Templemore Avenue came over and he spoke too. I couldn't believe that I had forgotten that. I remember the chapel being bunged and people everywhere. I always remember my daddy saying that there should be absolutely no retaliation because we didn't want anybody else to go through what we were going through.

A while after Tony was killed I can remember us getting to the door of the house and nobody had a key. I always remember that there were two policemen walking down the street and mummy



policeman bust the door, they were in already.

We were only in about half an hour when my cousin came in. I was hanging my coat up and I can still hear his voice in my head. He said, 'there's a thirty two year old policeman been arrested for Tony's murder'. I couldn't speak. I sat down and he was telling everybody what had happened and then my aunt Betty was asking what had been said. I couldn't speak at all, I couldn't say to her what was being said. I can remember somebody coming into the working kitchen and I can remember them saying, 'Well you may pray that God forgives him'. I wanted to beat her, I was thinking that I couldn't forgive him, why should I pray that God forgives him?

*Tony died at about 1.30 on a Monday morning, he was buried on the Thursday. We were told that the policeman was arrested at 5pm or 6pm on the Monday. They reported it on the 11am news on the Thursday morning because that's the time that Tony's mass was being held.*

I got all the inquest papers about 6 months ago and actually it was all totally different. The policeman actually went back into work after Tony was killed. He was questioned a couple of times over the following days and the senior policeman said in his statement that he knew that he had done it but it was just a matter of getting him to admit it and getting the evidence, but he knew he had done it.

They told us that he was charged within a couple of hours and the top policeman at Mountpottinger Road sent for my daddy and apologised to him. My daddy asked him how he could have someone like that in the force. He said that there's always one rotten apple in the barrel. We were told by

the police that he wasn't an ordinary policeman, he was like a marksman. He wasn't just one that goes out and patrols the streets. But in the statements nothing like that was said so I don't know if that's true or not.

We were told at the time that he was shot in the neck. When he was in the coffin, my mummy stripped him because she wanted to see where he was shot. There wasn't a wound on him because the bullet went into the muscle and the muscle closed and then it went through him. He died from internal bleeding.

When I read the autopsy report, he was shot in the back. The bullet went into his lung and through his right side into his organs; that's why he didn't lose any blood. I was in a state of disbelief that what we were told at the time and what actually happened was so different. I didn't tell my brothers, I didn't think they would want to know.

Everything changed after Tony died. My parents moved house, just across the road but mummy actually should have moved out of the street altogether. She used to get up in the morning and stand and look at the house. A couple of years later she was clearing out and found two shirts belonging to Tony. She didn't know where they came from because at the time he died, she had gotten rid of everything belonging to him. She knew she had to.

You just never knew when she was going to get upset. One minute she was ok and the next she wasn't. Eighteen months after Tony died she went into Purdysburn psychiatric hospital. It was my cousin who told me that she was going into hospital, she didn't want to tell me. When I asked her about it, she didn't want to talk.

I had post-natal depression after my son Tony was born. I felt as if I was had been pushed to the side. I feel now that if somebody had told me and

explained to me at the time it might have helped. I felt as though nobody cared about how I was. I lost my brother and became a mother for the first time all within nine weeks. Brothers don't talk and I have no sisters, so I had no one to talk to and with mummy being the way she was, I really felt I had nobody.

However my kids kept me going. I had a dream one night about ten years ago. You know if you see one of those police programmes and you see the shooting during their training and they have the cardboard things they shoot at. That was my dream. I was walking down a street and there were all cardboard buildings. There was a light and I kept walking towards it. The next thing, our Tony came out and stood in front of me. My daddy came out too. I went to give Tony a hug and he just stood like a statue looking at me. I went to my daddy and he was just shaking his hand, shooing me away. In the dream I felt as if I wanted to be with them but within an instant I thought of my three kids. As soon as I said, 'my', I woke up. I realised that my three kids needed me to be with them, more than I needed to be with my daddy and Tony. Every time I felt down, I remembered how much they needed me.

*I honestly think that now the kids are older and they have their own kids, you have more time on your hands to think. I feel now, as if I'm going backwards and I'm definitely more emotional. When they were growing up everything revolved around them. It's with me all the time and I'm emotional a lot of the time now.*

In the Short Strand, everybody knows everybody else's story and that definitely helps. I would also pray to Tony and ask him to help me when I'm feeling down.

What I really want to know is how much time the policeman did. There was no recommended sentence given and about twelve years later, my mummy said to me that he was out. I couldn't bring myself to ask her how she knew. In the report they said it was not in the public interest to know how long he served but I feel that I am the public and it's in my interest.

It's always going to be part of my life. I don't talk about it to my children because I always felt that I wanted to protect them from it. I didn't want my children to go out and do something my brothers didn't do. The reason my brothers didn't do anything is because there was no point in them ending up in jail to make my mother suffer even more. No matter what you done, Tony wasn't coming back.

I think that you are always going to get the bad ones on both sides that are going to stir up trouble. I just hope that will fizzle out. The Twelfth of July every year makes things worse though. The protests and riots going on recently just brings you right back. One night a crowd gathered outside my door and I had butterflies in my stomach. That is the first time that I felt that in about twenty years. When I was growing up the police and soldiers never frightened me, it was the loyalists that would have. You were used to coming from school and the soldiers would have pointed their guns at you. You just got used to it. A soldier hit a gun right into my face one time and it didn't frighten me at all, I just hit it with my hand right out of the way.

You grew up with it, got used to it and were never afraid of it. When all this started up recently, I've been thinking, I don't know if I could go through all this again. If there had been a riot at my door, I really don't know what I would have done.



## Marcella's Story

*I would like to begin my story with the Romper Room murder of my cousin James McCartan who died on 4th October 1972, aged 21.<sup>1</sup>*

This killing was to be the first of many in my family.

I was only 6 years old at the time.

As I was growing up, more trouble was to hit my family. Two years later, my uncle Noel McCartan was murdered on 15th March 1974. He was heading home after a night out with his sister Lily. He was shot dead in front of her.

The following week, my Aunt Lily's husband Johnny Hamilton was also murdered. She was left a widow with only one child James, who was later murdered on 19th June 1989.

My Granny McCartan died in April 1974 of a

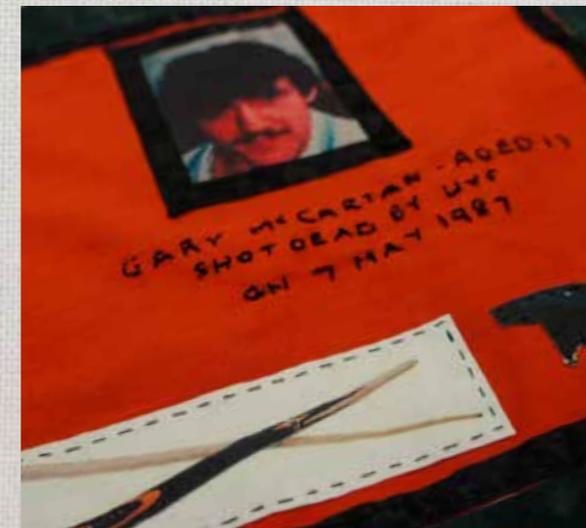
broken heart which left a large family behind, devastated.

On 7th May 1987, my young cousin Gary McCartan, at the age of 17 years, was gunned down in his hallway by a loyalist death squad.

In the aftermath of it all, my whole family were badly affected, it was a very sad time for us all. Even now, after all these years, I find it very difficult to talk to my family and children about what happened. I still get very emotional, feel very angry and sad.

### **They were all victims of the troubles.**

<sup>1</sup>The "Romper Room" Killings were killings, which occurred after brutal torture by a UDA gang located in East Belfast the victims included four Catholic men and one loyalist woman. The leader of this gang was Albert Ginger Baker, a member of the British army's undercover Military Reconnaissance Force. Established by British policy, at the time the UDA was not a proscribed organization. It remained legal until 1992 by which time it had killed over 240 people.



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**An tAontas Eorpach**  
Ciste Forbraloachta  
Réigiúnai na hEorpa  
Ag infheistiú i do dhán

