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## Family suffered 'jibes' from greater republican family

### 10th ANNIVERSARY - THE OMAGH BOMBING

BY Seamus McKinney

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Carol Radford tells Seamus McKinney of her 'need' for justice for her younger brother Alan

Carol Radford has major concerns about the official Omagh bomb anniversary commemoration next week. Her younger brother Alan was just 16 when he was caught up in the bombing.

He had gone into Omagh town centre to help his mum with the shopping when the bomb went off.

His body was not formally identified until the following day.

Ms Radford wants to commemorate her brother's death but feels that Omagh council should not have been given the task of organising the official

ceremony because it is controlled by Sinn Fein.

She believes that the Provisional IRA must share some responsibility for the bombing because it brought in weapons which ended up in the hands of the Real IRA.

Ms Radford is also angry that Sinn Fein did not tell its supporters to give evidence to police in the days after the murders.

She said she had suffered at the hands of the greater republican family.

In the 10 years since her brother's murder Ms Radford and her family had to endure jibes and offensive comments.

Ms Radford said she had to move from the family home while her sister felt she had to change jobs because she was working in close proximity to some people who supported the Real IRA.

"We were ostracised for speaking out," she said.

"I have no problem with the Irish tricolour but it was used to mark territory. I lived in a mixed area but because I spoke out my house was

surrounded by tricolours and my mum even had one put on her roof.

"On another occasion I came home and found IRA scored on the side of my house."

In some ways Alan was different from most victims of the Troubles as he and his family were Mormon.

Ms Radford recalls another brother Paul describing the nightmare when he went looking for Alan.

"A girl told him Alan was ok but she was talking about Paul's friend who was also Alan," she said.

"Paul found mum and told her Alan was ok and that he was asked to stay on at the hospital to help.

"[Paul] and his friend were carrying arms and legs off the buses which were bringing people from the bomb site.

"There was one man who died in the bomb who had a car tyre embedded in his chest and his leg was hanging

off.”

The family later discovered that Alan was missing and Paul went to Omagh leisure centre where an information centre had been established.

By the following day Alan had not turned up and almost all the victims had been identified. The family started to think that Alan might still be lying under the rubble of the bomb site.

“Paul went to a policeman and said ‘look, is there anyone who fits Alan’s description’. He went off and came back and said there was,” Ms Radford said.

Paul and another sister Elaine went to Lineally barracks to identify the body in a make-shift mortuary.

“Paul says before even they pulled back the sheet he knew it was Alan because Alan had thick wavy hair.

“The two of them said they’ll never forget the look in Alan’s eyes. The shock in his eyes.

“He had really bad shrapnel wounds to his face. He would have been blinded in one eye if he had survived.”

Ms Radford says that even 10 years on she still gets a “lump in my throat” when she thinks about the details of her brother’s murder.

She also cannot hide her anger about how she and the other Omagh families have been treated by politicians.

“I know now that it does not matter how many people [the Real IRA] murdered because I know now the British and Irish governments do not give a damn about the life of my brother or any of the other people murdered,” she said Ms Radford is a driven woman. She thinks about her brother every day and “needs” justice for him.

She has become cynical. While at one time she accepted the word of authority, Ms Radford says she now believes that the British and Irish governments adopted a pragmatic approach to Northern Ireland.

“They couldn’t beat terrorism so they decided to appease it,” she said.


Ms Radford believes there was intelligence that a bomb was to be placed in Omagh and information about the bombing is being withheld.

She said only a public inquiry with complete cooperation from both governments would uncover the full truth.

“There are people who sat in a room and for four and a half years fed us bull\*\*\*\*. That is unforgivable when they knew nothing was going to happen,” Ms Radford said.

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