

The Victims: My blue-eyed angel was murdered - Daily Features - Features - Belfast Telegraph

deafening noise. Then, the flames came ...

They kept rising higher and higher. People were on fire. They were rolling around on the floor trying to put the flames out.

Nobody knew what was happening. The lights had gone out and we couldn't see. People were getting up out of their seats, squealing and panicking. But, Ernie and I were glued to the spot. We didn't know what to make of it - or what to do.

Someone pushed us forward and kept pushing us out through the kitchen. It was full of broken crockery. Everything was smashed and ruined. A man grabbed a pair of curtains to wrap around his wife because she was on fire.

Then, we were outside, but Elizabeth and Ian were nowhere to be found. I thought they were coming behind me - they weren't sitting that far away from us so they should have made it outside shortly after us. I kept saying, 'Elizabeth, Elizabeth ... I want Elizabeth. Where is she? I can't find her ...'

We searched everywhere that night in a blind panic. There were few telephones in those days, so we searched all the hospitals in Belfast and different police stations.

We were at Dundonald police station around 5.30am when we found out the remains of Elizabeth and Ian had been discovered. They were lying incinerated inside.

Elizabeth was identified by dental records and her jewellery - a watch, her wedding ring, a sovereign ring and a charm bracelet. Her engagement ring was never found.

lan was identified by his dental records, and by a pin that had been placed in his toe as the result of surgery.

Elizabeth was such a lovely kind person. She was a pretty wee girl with golden brown hair, wee chubby cheeks and of course, her bright, blue eyes.

Her wedding day was a dream come true. She met her husband lan at work - they were both employed by NIE. They were married on June 5, 1976, in St Bartholemew's Church of Ireland, Belfast.

Her three cousins were bridesmaids and they wore lavender dresses. They are all grown-up now with their own families.

Her father made a wonderful speech. He said he didn't need to make any notes beforehand about what he was going to say because everything he had to say was straight from the heart.

Elizabeth didn't deserve to meet her death like that - no one did. Just the charred remains of those 12 people who died that night were given back to their families, and so many others received horrific burns as well as mental trauma.

Ernie and myself weren't injured, but that night still haunts me and I had some very dark days afterwards. Why did we get out unharmed while Elizabeth and Ian perished?

A friend, Lily McDowell, had been sitting opposite Elizabeth at another table with her back to her. Lily received burns all over her body - only her face was spared. I went to visit her six months after the bomb; it took me a long time to pluck up the courage. She spent a full year in the Ulster Hospital with a fan at her feet, one at her head and two on either side of her body. She had to undergo various skin graft operations.

She told me that Elizabeth's beautiful dress had been on fire. She had tried to put it out, but she couldn't.

It's the little things that I didn't think about then that I wonder about now. Our car was left behind in the car park, so someone brought it back to our house for us.

Ernie's house keys were in his coat which had been left behind in the panic, so someone had to break into our house for us.

There was no reason for La Mon to be attacked that night. People were simply out enjoying themselves. Was that such a crime?

It later emerged that the IRA had issued a warning a few minutes before the bomb exploded. When the police contacted La Mon to notify them, they were told that it was too late. The bomb had already exploded and the emergency services were required immediately.

When our daughter's charred remains were released by the Northern Ireland Office, neither Ernie nor I had anything to do with the organising of the funeral; we weren't fit for it.

I remember Betty, a Catholic girl I worked with at the Housing Executive, bursting into uncontrollable tears as she handed me a single red rose. She knew that my wee girl meant the world to me.

Elizabeth was very musical - a gift she'd inherited from her dad.

She'd attended Methodist College in Belfast, where she sang in their Madrigal group and played the violin in their school orchestra. When she left school she kept up her singing, visiting churches and halls with a group called Renaissance.

The Wednesday before she died she asked me to go over a piece of music with her as she was due to perform it at St John's Church of Ireland on the Malone Road on the Saturday night. It was a vesper called Drop, Drop Slow Tears, which told the story of Jesus' suffering before he was placed on the cross. I played the music for her on the piano and she sang it so beautifully. I remember thinking at the time about what Jesus must have went through when he died for us.

I've been asked on numerous occasions how I feel about the people that did this. My answer is that I am a Christian. I do not hate anyone and I do not hate the people that did this, but I would find it hard to show love to them. If the Lord can forgive them, then so must I, but in order to receive forgiveness they must ask for it.

There have been evil men on both sides of the conflict here. They might get away with it in this world, but they won't in the next.

Elizabeth and I spoke to each other every day.

No words can describe the emptiness I feel at her loss.

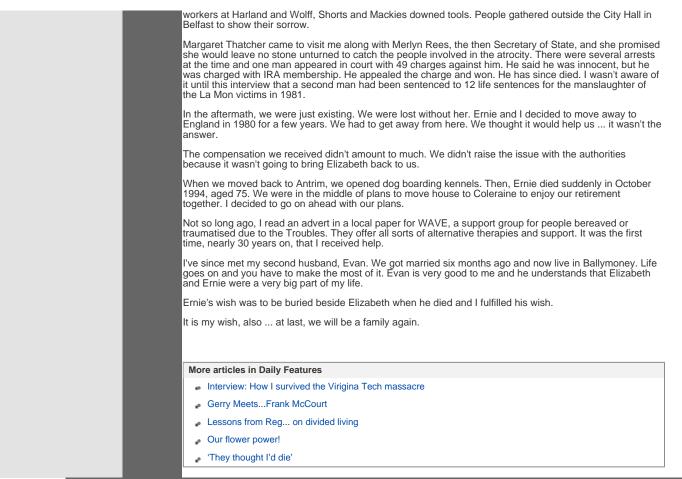
The following Saturday, all over the province people came to a standstill. Airports shut for a while and



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