



Remembering: “Petals of Hope”

Artistic responses to the Omagh Bomb

Conversations with Carole Kane and Malachi O’Doherty

Trudy Sharkey

“We sort of just drifted in and out and we still had no coffin so there was an on going sort of wake.”



At about ten to six, Louise, Brian's daughter had come in the back door and she was saying, "daddy's missing".

We weren't even worried at that time. We knew he was missing but he was such a good person, we knew that he was doing something. There were no phones; you couldn't say I'm here, it's ok. So you know, really I was very placid about it all because I knew he was ok because he was doing something and couldn't phone anybody. So, we tried to calm Louise down a bit. Her brother Colin had been in the town and he and another girl, went out to offer their services at the hospital, to help. His girlfriend at the time was training to be a doctor, I think.

So my brother and I got into the car and drove out to the Arleston Road, to the back of the hospital. I think the soldiers were there at the time, or the police. We said that our brother was missing. We wanted to check the car parks to see where the car was, so they led us to the roundabout. I got out of the car and I don't even know if my brother was with me at the time or if he parked the car and I walked on.

Louise had said that her daddy would park the car at the back of a row of shops, so you couldn't just look down and see a parked car or something. I walked round by Dunnes Stores and I could see the back of the shops and I saw the cars sitting at the back of the shops and his car was still there. So that's when we started to panic. Then we said, well the car's there, so he's not away helping somebody. Then you go onto another scenario. You think, right the car's there so he couldn't get the car out, so he's in somebody else's car helping; he's away with somebody else and obviously he can't contact anybody so he's in somebody else's car, helping somebody. People had said at the time, there had been people put in buses you know, so I thought, well he's probably in one of the buses and he's helping, you know helping to maybe take people to Enniskillen.

I don't know if it was a bit of a blur. Colin, Brian's son had been out at the County Hospital, so he was able to clarify that he wasn't out at the County and that he hadn't been found. So then we thought, well he must have been taken to some of the other hospitals you know, so, I don't know, we sort of all started to gather.

We'd been to my sister-in-laws house and then we all went to the leisure centre and sort of walked about waiting.

I think at that stage, there was nine confirmed dead and then as the evening would go on, it would be ten and it would be eleven and you just thought, well it's going to stop soon, you know. We stayed there all night and I remember my other brother. We hadn't really been in contact with him and I'd said to my sister-in-law, maybe we should go up and tell Noel, cause the rest of us all seemed to be about, because we all live quite locally. So we went up, I think it was about 12 o'clock. It was still clear and bright and my sister and I drove up to my sister-in-law's house to tell her that we hadn't found Brian and she was sort of, "well do you think will he be alright? Do you think will he be ok?"

And we said, "well no Margaret, we can't..." "

So anyway, we got into the car and went back down to the leisure centre and we all walked about. My brother at that stage had come down into the leisure centre to join in with us and we stayed in the leisure centre and I think it was eight o'clock Mass that Sunday morning and we all went to Mass and then the rest of the day, we sort of just drifted in and out and we still had no coffin so there was an on going sort of wake.

I suppose by about Saturday night or maybe Sunday, we still thought but there was nothing happening.

It's very hard, when you're not in that situation. It's all right standing back now and we see so many detective films on the television and you think to yourself, you could get arrogant, and you could say, well we should have been told this, and we should have been told that, and it's not getting you anywhere. You were depending on people doing their jobs correctly and trusting that people would tell you the right information but it was getting very difficult.

The police were coming to the house on, I think, the Monday and they were trying to get finger prints. My sister-in-law, Brian's wife Bernadette, she's so clean, she'd nearly have been annoyed if they got finger prints because everything would be immaculate, you know. When you used to get photographs developed - I know now, we've all got digital cameras and we don't use prints much but when you would get photographs developed, you would get a wee photo album free with the photos and Brian had left in photos, probably of his crane and horrible things but they were his wee things. So he had put the photographs into the wee album. The police had been all around the house, with powder and they were in cars and they were trying to get finger prints and that, so they took away the wee photo album and they got finger prints and it was through that they confirmed it.

And again, as much as he was our brother, because it was Bernadette's family we didn't want to start butting in and start asking, what's happening? or what have they told you? We were waiting just to be told, you know. So I think by Tuesday then, they had confirmed that he was dead.



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