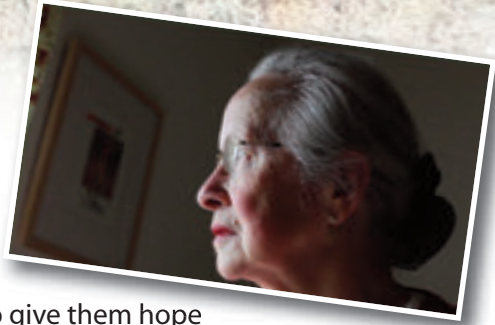


## A LONELY MARCH

Mary Healy

We were the Armagh Peace People and we had set up the group to bring people together, to give them hope through nonviolence. We had a great response to that.



I didn't think at that time of the whole political thing you know. I was aware that Catholics and Protestants worked together within the groups I was involved in and I was also aware that some people may not have liked my involvement.

As a result of my name being in the press I got a lot of phone calls and they were phone calls I couldn't cope with. The language was horrible-saying what they'd do with me if I went ahead with these meetings. It came to a stage when my husband couldn't cope with those phone calls and I said I would be the only one to answer the phone. So I would just lift the phone, listen to it and set it down again. I never thought very much about who they were other than that they opposed the sense of us trying to do something in a non-violent way. I presumed that they were from my own denomination. Then one day I got a letter and it was a life threatening letter. It was from a paramilitary group- they didn't specify who nor did they give names or anything but their last sentence was something like, "you or a member of your family will be shot if you go ahead with the proposed march." (The Armagh Peace Group was planning a march to raise awareness).



I remember after getting the life-threatening letter, going up the stairs and feeling that I'm alone in this now and praying about it and saying- "my god, I give you my family, my home, my house, myself," and I suppose there was a release; a relief in that. So after that I didn't lose any sleep- there was a peace in that and that's where I got my strength from.

There was one clergyman whom I had contact with and he said- "you know you don't talk about this letter; you don't spread fear; you have to hold on to this and go forward, without anybody around you knowing what may or may not happen."

The proposed march started in the centre of Armagh on Market St and moved down round the town with people joining us at different parts. There were huge numbers in the end. No opposition showed up on that day that I can remember. We made speeches and sang songs which I suppose gave people a short time of happiness if nothing else. They weren't afraid to be on their streets and that was important at that time. I always think of the woman who said to me that we were all going to be killed and I felt no we're not and that we must give people hope.

