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Commemoration of SAMANTHA MCFARLAND read by MR.

1	6 February 2025		1	charity shop in town as well. Both girls, Samantha and	
2	(10.00 am)		2	Lorraine, were evacuated from the Oxfam shop in	
3	LORD TURNBULL: Mr. Greaney, good morning.		3	response to the so-called bomb warning. It's believed	
4	MR. GREANEY: Good morning. Sir, the evidence of commemoration		4	Samantha did not want to go too far because she had the	
5	today will begin with the Pen Portrait evidence relating	10:03	5	keys to the shop.	10:07
6	to Samantha McFarland who was 17 at the date of her		6	Samantha's funeral took place on 19 August 1998,	
7	killing, and the order in which we will deal with that		7	four days after the Omagh bombing. It took place at	
8	evidence, sir, is, first of all, we'll show on the screen		8	the Church of the Holy Trinity, Lislimnaghan, four	
9	in a moment a photograph of Samantha. Then I will read a		9	miles outside Omagh, where she was described as popular	
10	witness statement, and then we will see the photograph of	10:03	10	and diligent and a person who passed with flying	10:07
11	Samantha on the screen again.		11	colours the test of life, despite being denied the	
12	But before we do any of that, can I explain to you		12	opportunity to pass the milestones like her A Levels	
13	who is here today, both in person and attending remotely.		13	and her driving test, as many teenagers her age would	
14	So, first of all, Gerald, a cousin of Samantha, is		14	aspire to do.	
15	present within the hearing room. Sir, he is the	10:04	15	She was said to be friends with and have the love	10:07
16	gentleman on the front row sitting to the left of Mr.		16	of people of all religions and all ages. She was a	
17	McBurney. Samantha's father, also called Gerald, is		17	very private person, but also a very sociable person	
18	viewing the proceedings by the live link, and Samantha's		18	who touched the lives of so many others.	
19	brother, Richard, is also viewing the proceedings by		19	So many people attended Samantha's funeral that	
20	link.	10:04	20	mourners had to stand outside."	10:08
21	Sir, having said that, I am going to ask that we		21	Sir, we will show the photograph of Samantha about	
22	show the photograph of Samantha on the screen, please.		22	whom we have just learned something on the screen	
23	(Photograph displayed)		23	again, please.	
24	This is a witness statement of Tim Suter, Solicitor		24	(Photograph displayed)	
25	to the Inquiry and he states as follows:	10:05	25	Sir, that concludes the evidence of commemoration in	10:08

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relation to Samantha.

2 GREANEY 2 LORD TURNBULL: I would like to say a word or two, having heard 3 "I am making this statement on behalf of the Omagh 3 the statement in commemoration of the life of Samantha 4 Bombing Inquiry to commemorate the life of Samantha 4 McFarland. 5 McFarland. This is the last day of the second week of these 5 6 Samantha was 17 at the time of her death. She was commemorative hearings. On each day so far, amongst the 6 7 7 other awful loss which we have listened to, we have heard from Hospital Road, Omagh, County Tyrone, where she 8 lived, and she was the youngest of three children. of the senseless killing of children and young people who 8 9 Samantha was a former pupil at Omagh High School and 9 were about to embark upon the adventure of adult life. 10 was studying for her A Levels at Strabane College. 10 And so it is again today that we learn of the death of 11 Samantha was due to be the bridesmaid at the wedding of 11 Samantha McFarland, another 17-year-old girl, and we 12 her elder brother in September 1998. 12 heard of all of the joy and kindness that she brought 13 She was described as having a lovely personality 13 into the lives of others through her thoughtfulness and 14 and as a wonderful young girl who had a kind heart and 14 popularity. 15 a genuine kindness that people were drawn to. 15 Samantha's death came about because she was working 10:09 16 Samantha could instil confidence in others and she got 16 as a volunteer in an Oxfam shop in the vicinity of the 17 on with people. She was learning to drive, she loved 17 explosion. One, really, has to wonder whether there 18 music and books and had a pet pony that she looked 18 could be any greater contrast between the generous and 19 after. Samantha enjoyed geography and she had a 19 socially minded attitude of a teenager who chose to spend 20 curiosity about other parts of the world. 20 the precious spare time of her young years trying to help 10:10 21 On 15 August 1998, Samantha was working in the 21 those with less advantages than herself and, on the other 22 charity shop Oxfam, alongside her best friend, Lorraine 22 hand, the morality of those who would walk away from a 23 Wilson. She was working as a voluntary Shop Assistant. 23 car loaded with explosives in the middle of the main 24 Samantha worked in the shop one day a week over the 24 street on a sunny Saturday afternoon in the sure 25 summer, and she also volunteered at the Bernardo's 25 knowledge that devastation would ensue shortly

1	thereafter.		1	into the remarkable person Sean was. While finding the	
2	The loss to Samantha's family will have weighed		2	right words to describe his character and the impact he	
3	heavily with them over all of these years, but the		3	had on our lives has been challenging, we deeply	
4	Inquiry is grateful to have learned of her life and of		4	appreciate this opportunity to do so. This process has	
5	its real value.	10:11	5	indeed been a difficult journey for our family, yet we	10:41
6	Unlike those responsible for the bombing, Samantha		6	have also found it to be of immense importance.	
7	truly did pass the test of life with flying colours.		7	We sincerely hope that the statements we have	
8	Thank you.		8	prepared will be of assistance to the Inquiry.	
9	MR. GREANEY: Thank you very much. Could we now take a break		9	We say the family will be following the proceedings	
10	for 15 minutes, please?	10:11	10	online with great interest and support, but also to	10:41
11	(10.11 am)		11	ensure our own wellbeing."	
12	(A short break)		12	So, sir, those are the introductory remarks and I'll	
13	(10.32 am)		13	now invite Mr. Southey to read, first of all, the witness	
14	MR. GREANEY: Sir, thank you. We're now going to hear evidence		14	statement of Sean's daughter, Noeleen.	
15	of commemoration relating to Sean McGrath.	10:38	15	Statement of NOELEEN McGRATH read by MR. HUGH SOUTHEY	10:41
16	Sean died on 5 September 1998 at the age of 61 as a		16	"I, Noeleen McGrath, will say as follows:	
17	result of injuries he sustained in the Omagh bombing.		17	To paraphrase Dickens: He was the best of men and	
18	The order in which we will deal with that evidence		18	not the worst of men.	
19	is this:		19	My dad was considerate, gentle, kind to a fault and	
20	First, we will begin by seeing a photograph of Sean.	10:38	20	completely supportive of everything I ever did. He	10:42
21	Then I will read out some introductory remarks at the		21	encouraged my life-long love of reading and he was	
22	invitation of the family. Then the witness statement of		22	exceptionally proud when I went to university, drama	
23	Noeleen McGrath will be read out by Mr. Southey, and		23	school and subsequently I returned to university to	
24	Noeleen is the daughter of Sean. After that, the witness		24	retrain as a teacher. Slow to anger, the only real thing	
25	statement of Conor McGrath will be read again by Mr.	10:39	25	that made him cross was injustice in any form. One	10:42

1	Southey; he is the son of Sean. Then we will see a video	1	example being when I was in the Lower Sixth, I questioned
2	recording that features Sean's granddaughter, Conor's	2	the teachings being purported by a visiting retreat
3	daughter, Sarah. Then a PowerPoint presentation that	3	priest. Hauled up in front of the headmistress, a nun,
4	contains Sean's son Gavin's statement being read by	4	my dad was summoned to hear how his daughter dared to
5	Gavin's wife, Emma, will be played. And finally, sir, we	10:39 5	question doctrine. He was a devout catholic but assured 10:42
6	will look again at the photograph of Sean.	6	the headmistress that questioning was the only way anyone
7	So, as I said I would, once the photograph has been	7	can learn and he was proud to support my inquiring mind.
8	shown, I will read the introductory remarks. So may we	8	If my dad had a super power, he would have been the
9	have the photograph on the screen, please?	9	protector. He protected my mother from difficult
10	(Photograph Di spl ayed)	10:40	situations, my siblings and I from anything that was not $_{\rm 10:43}$
11	Thank you very much. Sir, the remarks I am asked to	11	happy and joyful, and would have been horrified to know
12	read are these:	12	we spent three weeks in a horrible limbo at the hospital
13	Commemoration of SEAN McGRATH read by MR. PAUL GREANEY	13	wondering if he would pull through. Despite his horrific
14	"The McGrath family wish to express their thanks to	14	injuries, he couldn't protect us from that hideous time.
15	the Inquiry for allowing the opportunity to provide some	10:40 15	When my dad died, although it was a sort of relief, $_{10:43}$
16	sense of the great person Sean was, however difficult	16	the light definitely went out for a long time. However,
17	this has been to put into words.	17	remembering the best of him has rekindled the light.
18	The family have found this process very difficult,	18	Yes, I miss him, but getting on with life would have been
19	but they have equally found it very important. They hope	19	what he expected, encouraged and insisted upon. I thank
20	that the statements that they have prepared will assist	10:40 20	Sean for being the best dad I could have had. I am lucky $_{\rm 10:44}$
21	the Inquiry, and they will be following the proceedings	21	to have been his daughter."
22	online.	22	MR. GREANEY: Thank you, Mr. Southey, and I'll next invite you
23	The McGrath family would like to extend our	23	to read the witness statement of Sean's son, Conor.
24	heartfelt thanks to the Inquiry for providing us with the	24	Statement of CONOR McGRATH read by MR. HUGH SOUTHEY.
25	opportunity to share our memories and offer a glimpse	10:41 25	MR. SOUTHEY: "I, Conor McGrath, will say as follows: 10:44

My father Sean suffered serious injuries in the bomb on the same street he was born, and fought for almost three agonising weeks in the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. We lost him on 5 September 1998, aged 61.

Sean was born in Omagh on 21 November 1936, son to

Jack and Kathleen, and was one of five siblings, Rosalie,
Noel, Anne and Danny. The family lived above their
grocery business in Market Street which served as an
early introduction to sales and retail. The old cinema
was just up the street where he enjoyed going to see the
old westerns, and he was also a fan of John wayne with
his favourite movie being The Quiet Man set in our own
wild west.

Sean attended the Christian Brothers school in Omagh, but losing his father as a teenager meant Sean was working in the shop at an early stage, being the eldest male and needing to help support the family.

He married his sweetheart, Nuala Mathers, a legal secretary and a talented calligrapher with Orr & Rountree in the town in September 1961. Apparently, his proposal was: "How would you like to be buried with our ones?"

Romantic? He was to become a proud father of four children: Noeleen, Conor, Gavin and Caragh.

Thanks to Sean, we had a caravan in Rossnowlagh for

years, and spent many happy carefree summers there

Sean went on to open four other retail units in
Omagh and supplied local hotels and both went well with
supermarkets with fresh bread. As the business scaled
up, we moved the manufacturing side to a large industrial
unit off the Dramore Road and employed over 30 people at
one stage. Sean managed to get on local television to
promote the business a few times, always looking for
opportunities. One of his triumphs in the early eighties
was making a deal with Harrods in London to supply a
selection of traditional Irish breads as he noticed they
had breads from all over the world but nothing from
Treland.

when I passed my driving test, dad lost no time getting me to help out after school with running errands in the van. After taking a couple of years out of college, I worked full-time in the business and was still living at home so my father and I were very close in those years before I went back to university in Belfast.

Sean cared about his staff, often going out of his
way to help with minor domestic issues and giving some a
lot more chances than normal. Some would say too soft,
but no one had a bad word to say about him. He was a
member of the Lions Club in Omagh and donated to local
charities, a big believer in keeping businesses in the
town. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul would benefit

growing up, a place still very special to us all.

With a very positive outlook and being very sociable, he was a natural salesman and soon went to work for larger companies like Smedley's and Proctor & Gamble in their catering supplies business as a well respected sales rep which took him away from his own family as he covered a lot of Ireland in the 1970s. He stayed in many of the best known hotels and made a lot of contacts.

I remember one year he did a deal with a hotel in Westport to be their agent for the north. He took some ads in the Bel fast Telegraph and managed his bookings quota very quickly. I think the bonus was a family holiday to the hotel, which was an adventure at that time. He loved making deals. Our garage growing up was full of goods and samples for the different random ventures, as an agent for pork scratchings to bike trailers and land yachts. But his days visiting bakeries as a salesman had sparked his ambition to start his own business in the town.

He started small with a shop unit on Sedan Avenue beside the old show grounds at Crusty Fare, a home bakery with an open plan so that customers could see the whole workings and smell the hot bread and pastries. This was later sectioned off because the staff didn't enjoy the

from any surplus baked goods at the end of each week.

By the mid-1990s, Sean was approaching 60 and wanted out of the bakery business, and after agreeing to a management buyout, the business never survived. After that, he did consultancy work with a few contacts and never made it to retirement.

Our first daughter, Sarah, was born in April 1996, and was the first granddaughter in the family. We couldn't believe how it affected our parents. Sean, in particular, seemed to get a new lease of life. We lived in Belfast at the time but soon realised we would need more space and moved to the outskirts of Bangor when Sarah was just three months old. We tried to get to Omagh a few times a month to keep all the grandparents happy and Sean would also find any excuse to try and see as much as he could of Sarah. He would even call at the child minders while we were at work, even though he might be in Lisbon for a meeting, then taking the trip out to Bangor for just 15 minutes with his granddaughter.

The day before the bomb we had been discussing how our weekends were hectic when going to Omagh with Sarah and the only reason we stayed that weekend was because our neighbour's boy was having a birthday party and Sarah was invited. It was also a decent day weather wise and ideal for a party in the garden. After the party, we

10:49

went into Bangor for some shopping. That was when I heard the first report of a bomb in Omagh. It was also the first day of the new football season so I had the radio tuned to the sports station.

The reports seemed ominously different as there were so many casualties. Mobile phones were in their infancy then, so we rushed home to phone the parents worried that my wife Anne's mother was probably in the town on a Saturday afternoon. We could not get through to any number. All communications to Omagh seemed to be blocked. We started to worry now. We had no information apart from the news feed.

It was now about 4:30 p.m. when my cousin managed to call us and she heard that Sean had been taken to the

County Hospital in Omagh and that my mother was on her
way there. We had no idea what injuries Sean had
suffered at that stage. My mother, Nuala, did manage to
find him among what can only be described as carnage in
the hospital that day. She said he had lost a lot of
blood and they were moving him by helicopter to Belfast.

So, instead of going to Omagh we were advised to go to
the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, so we left Sarah
with our child minder and headed to Belfast, not knowing
what to expect.

There was another agonising wait. My mother, aunt

know their grandfather. I know Sean had been planning to go to London that week; he had been to the bank for English notes, which he had given to my mother back in the hospital in Omagh.

Our lives seemed to be in limbo at that stage; couldn't go to work, no routine, days spent in ICU, the media trying to get stories, along with wakes and funerals to attend in Omagh.

10-54

I also had to collect Dad's car from the car park behind Market Street. It had his shopping in it, which is when I realised that he had gone back across the street to see if his barber, Leo Doran was open. We know he was closed that day for his daughter, Lisa's, wedding, a Godsend for them.

We met Hillary Clinton and Cherie Blair at the Royal, as the President and PM were busy visiting Omagh, all promises on the resources that would be given to bringing the guilty to justice. The hospital staff were fantastic, as were many people who offered help with accommodation, food and transport. The police kept us informed on unreported news, and there were dedicated officers that we could call on at any stage.

Meanwhile, Sean had been induced into a comma in order to keep him stable. During the second week I had to return to work, and we were all exhausted still not

and cousins all had made it to Belfast, but apparently
Sean was taken off the helicopter a couple of times as
others were in more need. We'll never know if this delay
would have made any difference. The helicopter later
took Sean to the army hospital at Musgrave, and then by

ambulance to the Royal.

was there and the first doctor who talked to us said he was stable and had chest and leg injuries and shrapnel wounds but he was confident he would survive, which was a 10:53 huge relief at that stage. We saw Sean briefly as he was being moved through Accident & Emergency to the main part of the hospital, a hand squeeze being the only real

It must have been around 8:00 p.m before we knew he

Unfortunately, this was just the start of a traumatic three weeks of hope being constantly shattered as various tests and scans threw up new complications. We spent day and night there, taking it in shifts, and my brother, Gavin, and his wife, Emma, were expecting their first child that same week, so Gavin had an awful experience on what should have been a joyful week. He arrived from London on the Sunday, then had to fly back on Tuesday, as his first daughter, Polly, was born on 18 August. Sean never got to meet her or her sister Hattie, or our second daughter Emma. They would never get to

knowing if he would ever regain consciousness.

On the following Friday evening, I persuaded my mother to come home with us for a break from the ICU bedside vigil. We had barely gone to bed when the hospital called us to tell us that we should get back as soon as possible. By the time we reached the hospital Sean had passed away, Saturday 5 September 1998.

The aftermath was as surreal as it was devastating. It was all over the news. There was a minute's silence held in the Dail. I think I was on autopilot with funeral arrangements. We had a police bike escort from Belfast to Omagh, we were on the front page of the Irish news behind a horse drawn hearse, a huge funeral in Killyclogher.

My younger sister moved back home to be with mum. We were all suffering from PTSD for a long time. My mother spent years fighting with the Government over basic compensation. A barrister told her not to expect justice. He was a realist. She became more cynical over the years on who was telling the truth. As for myself, there isn't a week goes by that I don't think about Sean and what he has missed out on, especially not getting to know our daughters. At least he had two years as a grandad to Sarah but never knew Holly, Emma or Hattie, which I found devastating as he'd have been so proud.

1	It still hurts to talk about Sean's death/murder,		1	horrific injuries sustained in the bomb blast less than	
2	which is why I avoid the issue. Every anniversary just		2	three weeks later. Polly's first trip from our home in	
3	picks at the scar, maybe not as raw now but still not		3	England to my hometown in Omagh was to go to her	
4	healed, and I doubt it ever will.		4	grandpa's funeral; she was 19 days old. I missed Polly's	
5	This process has been difficult to confront but	10:57	5	birth as I had flown to Belfast on 17 August to be at my	11:03
6	necessary to tell you about the father I knew, always		6	horrifically injured father's bedside. Holly was born in	
7	positive, faithful, hard-working, warm-hearted and very		7	London less than 4 hours later.	
8	much missed by all who knew him well.		8	The impact of the loss of my father on my mother,	
9	In memory of Sean and all the other innocent		9	siblings and our own families has been profound and, in	
10	victims, we respectfully ask the truth to be made public	10:58	10	truth, too emotional to examine. I feel that unless they	11:03
11	after all the early promises, subsequent delays and long		11	have absolutely had to, our family have metaphorically	
12	fight for justice. We are tired of the constant		12	looked the other way in respect of how my father has	
13	deflection. Omagh deserves answers."		13	died, as talking about that horrendous day and the	
14	MR. GREANEY: Thank you, Mr. Southey.		14	aftermath is simply too enormous to discuss. If we don't	
15	Sir, we have just learned from Conor that the birth	10:58	15	open the wounds, we can't feel the pain. It's not what	11:03
16	of his daughter Sarah gave Sean what he described as a		16	is recommended by experts, but it's literally the only	
17	new lease of life. We're next going to watch a video		17	way we can all deal with it.	
18	that features Sarah.		18	My father was a wonderful man and deserved to live	
19	(Vi deo pl ayed)		19	his life to the full and for it to end naturally, just as	
20	Sir, next we will watch a presentation which	10:59	20	all humans should have the right to expect. I love my	11:04
21	includes a statement of Sean's son, Gavin, being read by		21	dad and I miss him everyday."	
22	Gavin's wife, Emma.		22	These are Gavin's thoughts and feelings regarding	
23	(Presentation Played)		23	the death of Sean McGrath.	
24	Statement of GAVIN MCGRATH read by EMMA McGRATH.		24	MR. GREANEY: Finally, we will look again at the photograph of	
25	MS. McGRATH: "This is Gavin McGrath's statement regarding his	11:01	25	Sean that was shown at the beginning of his	11:04

1 commemoration.

father, Sean McGrath. My name is Emma and I am Gavin's

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2	wife.		2	(Photograph Di spl ayed)	
3	"My father, Sean McGrath, was a businessman, not a		3	Sir, that concludes the Pen Portrait evident	
4	baker, as constantly stated in every Omagh bomb report.		4	relating to Sean McGrath.	
5	He had owned a bakery business with multiple outlets. He	11:01	5	LORD TURNBULL: Thank you.	11:05
6	loved his work, so even after he closed the bakery		6	I am grateful to the McGrath family for the remarks	
7	business he continued working in various other business		7	as read by Mr. Greaney in his introduction. In	
8	schemes. He always had his eyes open for a deal no		8	commemoration of the life of Sean McGrath, the Inquiry	
9	matter how small.		9	has benefitted from the statements generously prepared by	
10	He had a great way with people and could talk to	11:01	10	his sons, Conor and Gavin, and by his daughter Noeleen.	11:05
11	anyone. His greatest knack was keeping everyone happy,		11	From those statements we learn that Sean was a highly	
12	great at staying in contact with friends, clients and,		12	successful and charismatic businessman who turned his	
13	most importantly, his family. He was very proud of his		13	hand to many different ventures throughout his life.	
14	family and we all loved him and tried to make him proud		14	Along with his success in business, it was plain from	
15	of us.	11:02	15	what we heard that Sean was a great supporter of his	11:05
16	Growing up, my friends always thought he was great		16	local community and always had time for his family, of	
17	fun. He could play the fool for laughs. My father was		17	whom he was rightfully proud.	
18	kind and would always try to help where he could, and he		18	In keeping with what we heard of Sean, we learned	
19	was very proud of his work helping local communities.		19	that he became devoted to the one grandchild he was able	
20	Dad was a genuinely lovely man. You couldn't not	11:02	20	to know, and it is obvious that he would have had so much	11:06
21	like him and especially his love of life.		21	to contribute to those who were born later and whom he	
22	My father treasured his family, he loved his wife,		22	was denied the chance to know.	
23	children and grandchildren. He never met my two		23	Sean McGrath's death clearly had a terrible effect	
24	daughters. The first, Polly, was born on August 18,		24	on his wife and children, made all the worse perhaps by	
25	1998. Tragically, my father died as a result of his	11:02	25	the fact that he was initially expected to survive the	11:06

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1	bombing, and, instead, endured three weeks of	
2	deteriorating conditions before his death.	
3	In her statement, Sean's daughter, Noeleen,	
4	mentioned that remembering the best of her father has	
5	rekindled a light. It is clear that there was very much	11:06
6	in that best to remember, and I am grateful to the whole	
7	of the McGrath family for their kindness in providing the	
8	Inquiry with an insight into the life of a much loved and	
9	missed husband, father and grandfather.	
10	MR. GREANEY: Sir, may we take a break for 20 minutes, please?	11:07
11	(11.07 am)	
12	(A short break)	
13	(11.40 am)	
14	LORD TURNBULL: Mr. Greaney.	
15	MR. GREANEY: Thank you, sir. Finally, today we will hear Pen	11:40
16	Portrait evidence relating to Elizabeth Rush, and	
17	Elizabeth Rush was known as you know, sir, as Libbi, and	
18	her children would prefer us to refer to her in that way,	
19	namely as Libbi, during the course of this commemoration	
20	of her life.	11:40
21	The order in which we will receive that evidence of	
22	commemoration is this:	
23	First of all, Siobhan Rush, Libbi's daughter, will	
24	read a statement. That statement has been prepared by	
25	her, Siobhan, together with her two brothers, Anthony	11:41

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universities and further education colleges, we would cease to function without the resilience, dedication and cooperation with one another.

We exist in a secret war where politicians control the narrative, politicians who expect our votes and obscure our vision. How can we be a community, and T mean all the community, make decisions to protect ourselves, our families, our children, our community, when we don't know who our enemy is? How can we say anything when they say nothing? Divisions are made by boundaries we cannot or are afraid to cross. By these boundaries we are compelled to cling to a broken system that has not served us well. We, as human beings, are capable of so much more when we have an open heart, when we are loving, caring and treat each other with kindness 11:45 and respect

It was on 15 August 1998, despite the suffering and pain, despite all of this in the moments and hours after the explosion, we found there were no boundaries. Our need to comfort, assist, love and caress each other was how we all survived that day.

At the hospital I was approached by a news reporter, he asked if he could interview me. I declined. I was smoking a cigarette. He then asked if he could have a cigarette? I said, "Of course." He slumped down beside 11:46

Rush and Andrew Rush. Then we will play a presentation	
which the family describe as the wedding reel. Following	
that, we will play a montage of photographs of Siobhan,	
Anthony and Andrew's father, Laurence, and can I	
indicate, sir, you'll be able to see a hat in front of	11:41
Siobhan on the table, and that hat is Laurence's hat.	
And finally, once we have viewed that montage of	
photographs, Andrew, who is the son of Laurence, and who	
is to Siobhan's left, will read a poem written by his	
father, Laurence.	11:42
And so, sir, I am going to ask Siobhan, Libbi's	

daughter, to read that joint statement, once she is ready to do so. Commemoration of ELIZABETH (LIBBI) RUSH read by SIOBHAN

RUSH MS. SIOBHAN RUSH: "After 26 years we stand together. Siobhan, Anthony and Andrew Rush welcome this platform to clarify our position in this process. It is, however, fair to say that with years of silence, apathy and belligerent

ignorance, we believe there has been a deliberate

strategy to evade responsibility by the State. We are a community that is divided, yet divisions do not exist in the real world. In the workplace where we work side by side, our hospitality workers, our nurses,

administration staff, our charitable organisations, our

me on the ground outside the business centre and we sat in silence. I knew, and he knew, there were no words spoken but there was so much said in that moment.

It was not until later in the evening when we were directed to the Omagh leisure centre, politicians posturing, deflecting and defending their positions, those moments of love and unity at the hospital instantly evaporated and we became divided yet again.

The continuous nature of this trauma over many years has had an adverse effect on our family. These strategies have frozen our grieving process. Many in our society and in our own community feel we should move on and forget the past. They, however, will never really understand until they consider things from the point of view of a victim or a survivor. You cannot judge until 11:47 you climb inside our skin and walk around in it.

We have personally and privately mourned the loss of our mother. However, what has been more difficult is to grieve and come to terms with the indignity of her untimely and violent death. Our grief can only be explained or understood by those who witnessed and survived the dark forces of humanity who were in our midst on 15 August 1998.

In 1998, politicians from Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and Britain negotiated the terms of a peace

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agreement in response to the will of the people in the
north and south of Ireland. The majority on both sides
of the division voted for peace and reconciliation. We
looked forward to this new chapter in our nation and in
our own personal family life. This, a transitional
period in all our lives, was filled with hope and
anticipation. Yet, we were cautious. In particular, we
were aware of the bomb attack in Banbridge and we were
concerned that there was still a threat of violence.
Despite this, the security gates were opened outside our
mother's shop in Market Street. Our concerns were
validated on 15 August 1998.

were confirmed.

On this day our mother was working. Her grandson,
Malachy, was staying with her over the summer holidays
and, thankfully, remained at our parent's home that day.

I, Siobhan, was due to come down from Belfast and
travelled with my partner, now husband, on the bus from
Belfast to Derry via Omagh. When the bus arrived at the
traffic lights near the centre of Omagh at approximately
3:20 p.m., it was a scene of complete carnage. The bus
turned, taking an alternative route to the bus depot. En
route, it was apparent that evil was in the air. Women
and children in fancy dress - a parade was scheduled at
3:00 p.m. - were crying and distressed. I ran from the
depot concerned about my mother. A policeman with blood

developed an interest in craftwork and needlework and spent her time making cushions and soft furnishings which she sold at the premises. She had also taken up flower arranging with her friends. Throughout the years that my mother ran the shop as a coffee shop, she made numerous good friends and became well known throughout the Omagh community as a good listener, with people often calling into the coffee shop to talk over their troubles with her and seek advice. She was widely known throughout the area for her discretion and gentle nature. This was a simple, quiet and peaceful normal family life of a woman, a mother and her family that was destroyed.

In the aftermath of the Omagh bombing our family reflected on previous events leading up to the attack. Why was our town targeted? How did both risk and protective factors fail to protect our mother, community and our livelihood? Why was our mother taken away from us in this brutal attack? With this in mind, our father decided to seek answers regardless of the consequences.

Sadly, in the oncoming months and years we were met with a wall of silence. We understand that this culture of silence is a method of coping, but also the external role of silence is a form of paramilitary and State control of our communities. Yet, our father, Laurence Rush, was unable to stay silent because he knew that

on his shirt recognised me and directed me to the hospital. The hospital was in chaos with blood everywhere, children crying, and bodies burnt lying in the corner. Confusion and fear filled the air like the Apocalypse. As each moment passed, I feared my mother may not have survived but continued to look for her alive or dead. Both my brothers were in America watching the news updates. I just wanted to tell them it was okay, but they continued to watch the news updates. It was not until Sunday morning that I. and my family's worst fears

Our mother was born in Killyclogher in County
Tyrone. She resided in Omagh for most of her life. She
married in 1960 at 19 years of age and had a shop on
Market Street, the scene of the bombing, for 27 years.
The premises used to be a coffee shop for most of the
time, however, over the years preceding the bomb the
coffee shop was closed and the premises converted to a
gift shop selling Pine furniture and gift wear. Our
mother ran the premises herself for most of the time.
Her usual opening hours on a Saturday would be from 9:30
a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Most of our family would routinely
visit the shop on a Saturday, and to include

In the years leading up to the bombing, our mother

silence was a lie. He demanded accountability and transparency. His confrontational approach was met with disapproval and ridicule. Politicians, the security forces and the community avoided conversations, not acknowledging the effect on the victims' families. Even 11:58 friends and extended family avoided the subject.
Undeterred by the negative responses, Laurence relentlessly confronted all. Why? The answer is simple: he loved Libbi, his wife, the mother of his children and his soulmate.

asked her for a dance, and she accepted. She were both

14 years old. Libbi was Laurence's first and only love.

Libbi, his beautiful wife, and our mother, was the glue
that held us together. Private and humble, Libbi was,
and still is, the moral compass we set our own lives by.

We trusted her judgment implicitly. She had empathy,
respect and compassion for others. Many believed Libbi
would have made a great counsellor. She was respectful
to others, wise, compassionate and thoughtful. More than
anything else, Libbi loved her family with every bone-in
her body. Her love and support carried her on, her own
family and Laurence's family, through many dark and
challenging times despite her own needs and capabilities.

Libbi did not recognise her potential as a talented

12-01

and creative individual. Our mother did not have her opportunity to shine.

We believe the Omagh bomb was a crime against

humanity. We believe there were policies in place to ignore or de-escalate any tensions that could prompt changes in the current narrative. We believe our father's quest for the truth exposed the atrocity as a premeditated war tactic. Experiencing 30 years of war and conflict, retaliation and a cycle of violence, we believe until we address the root causes and social injustices, we will never see resolution. Peace will never prevail. Our children will continue to be enemies divided by the inaccuracies in their history. We continue to witness war and conflict strategies to this day on an international level.

These strategies continue to victimise and stigmatise victims and their families. We believe no matter the cause of war, or the forces involved, the results are consistently the same. Armed conflicts only mean devastating loss of civilian life, violation of human rights and international humanitarian law. Conflict exacerbates our vulnerability and suffering. Sadly, our world is more divided than ever. Therefore, we remind ourselves to think of, and genuinely empathise, with others.

doubt investigate within its terms of reference, which again we welcome. as our father would have, we are sure.

Moreover, in the context of all this, and despite our father's unique, original analysis of the bombing, the Inquiry should know the British military background of our family, which, to some extent, explains the determination of our father to seek truth and accountability.

Attached to this statement is a letter dated 6 June
1994 to a family member from the Ministry of Defence
which outlines the military history of our grandfather in
the British Army.

Warrant Officer and appointed Quartermaster,
Sergeant Bernard Rush, M.M. was discharged on 17 August
1963 after serving 35 years as a British soldier. He and 12.00
his young family relocated to Parkhall, Antrim in the
hope of new beginnings and employment in British
[inaudible].

Bernard Rush and his family's hopes were ruined when
Loyalist groups mercilessly intimidated and targeted
their home in Parkhall Road. Despite the protestations
of his family, Bernard re-enlisted into the Ulster
Defence Regiment and was posted to First Battalion on 4
March 1970, and subsequently promoted to Staff Sergeant
on 1 August 1970. However, on 31 December 1970, our

we earnestly hope this Inquiry will not restrict or limit its view. We ask all participants to see the world from the victims' perspective before passing judgments. Understand from the fact that controlling the narrative has been used throughout history to defend awful acts.

We know our father's courage was not the absence of fear but the triumph over it. The truth and justice he courageously sought was a way of setting himself free from the unwelcome trauma inflicted upon him because of the Omagh bombing, exacerbated by allegations of State involvement and cover-up, allegations that he alone, without fear, brought to the attention of the public and brought to the attention of the courts via his legal action against the police and the British Government.

Our father's quest for justice, truth and accountability is well known and a matter of public record which the Inquiry will be aware of; there is no need to set all that out here.

He took an original, controversial and unique path in respect of his analysis of the events of 15 August 1998 long before others. He, with his legal team, faced much criticism from many until the realisation dawned that our father's unique and exceptional analysis of the atrocity was a shocking reality, still to this day hard for many to contemplate and which this inquiry will no

grandfather, at his own request, reverted to Private. We

understand a paramilitary group abducted our grandfather, we understand the previous evening his life was threatened and the safety of his young family was compromised. His response to this incident was to 12:10 surrender his rank. We believe our grandfather was unable to overcome the trauma he suffered in World War II and in his own country. His mental and physical health deteriorated and we believe this was in response to this trauma. He sold his military medal. Our grandfather was 12:11 a man of great integrity. His medal was an honour of his service beyond the call of duty. He believed he won this medal because he fought for our freedom, when we now believe he sacrificed so much for us with so little in return. We now understand that the Steeple Road Barracks, Antrim, seeming belonging to the Royal Irish Regiment, was nonetheless used by units from different commands and by covert units of the British Army, including Signals Regiments and the Special Air Service.

It seems to us that the life and determination of our grandfather to protect his family was reflected and carried on by our father in his own way in all his efforts to find out what happened to our mother.

We would like to thank the Inquiry for giving us the opportunity to express our feelings as best we can at

1	this time. We know that the Inquiry does not have an	1	To mature forests their branches will spread entwined and
2	easy task, and we are experienced enough to know from the	2	abreast,
3	legal travails that our father endured that any legal	3	And the soft rustle of the leaves will whisper an image
4	process and any system of justice is always imperfect.	4	of love, peace and hope,
5	We are sure there will be legal problems and issues 12:13	5	And this will be their magnificent inheritance to us and 12:30
6	on the way, conflicts and frustration. We witnessed our	6	we will rejoice."
7	father in this position over many years, so it will not	7	Thank you.
8	come as any surprise or shock to us. This is especially	8	MR. GREANEY: Thank you. Sir, that concludes the evidence of
9	so as a result of the sensitive subject matter we are all	9	commemoration relating to Libbi Rush.
10	dealing with. 12:13	10	LORD TURNBULL: I am very grateful to have had the benefit of a $_{12:30}$
11	The terms of reference for the Inquiry, we feel, are	11	thoughtful, passionate and informative statement from the
12	sufficiently wide enough to have even satisfied our	12	daughter and sons of Libbi and Laurence Rush. From that
13	father. In his memory, and of course in the memory of	13	statement I learned something of the life of their
14	our mother, Libbi, we implore all those involved in this	14	mother, Libbi. I learned that through the business she
15	Public Inquiry to cooperate and assist the Inquiry fully. 12:14	15	operated in Market Street for very many years, she had 12:31
16	Finally, perhaps what is not so well known in	16	become well known throughout Omagh.
17	relation to our father was his love of poetry and his own	17	Libbi Rush was plainly a source of great support and
18	compositions. This reflected another side of his	18	guidance to her own family, but I also learned that her
19	personality and one that was private and away from public	19	wise and gentle nature had caused her to be much liked
20	gaze. When gathering all his personal materials, notes 12:14	20	and respected throughout the wider community of Omagh. 12:31
21	and records for our solicitor, we came upon a large	21	The statement prepared by the Rush family gave me an
22	number of writings by our father. We attach two poems	22	insight into the lives of their parents. It revealed a
23	written by him expressing the strength of his love for	23	picture of life-long love and attachment between their
24	our mother, which we share, and another one which is	24	mother and father. Although they met when they were only

included in our Pen Portraits also attached to form part 12:15

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1	of our statement. The poems speak for themselves.	1	their teens, it is obvious that their devotion to each
2	Thank you."	2	other remained as strong throughout all of their years
3	MR. GREANEY: Siobhan, thank you very much. Sir, next we will	3	together.
4	play the wedding reel presentation please.	4	It is equally obvious that both parents provided a
5	(Presentation Played) 12:15	5	nurturing and loving home and background within which 12:32
6	MR. GREANEY: Sir, next, we will see the collection of	6	their children could grow and develop. Their mother was
7	photographs of Libbi's husband, Laurence.	7	described as the moral compass which her children set
8	(Photographs displayed)	8	their lives by. That moral compass, as added to by their
9	Finally, sir, I am going to invite the son of Libbi	9	father's influence, no doubt goes to explain the deeply
10	and Laurence, Andrew Rush, to read a poem written by his 12:28	10	held sense of the importance of justice and
11	father.	11	accountability described in the statement by Siobhan,
12	Poem read by ANDREW RUSH	12	Anthony and Andrew. Their mother was aged 57 when her
13	MR. ANDREW RUSH: Thank you. This was a poem that was authored	13	life was cut short by the Omagh bombing. In the
14	by my dad in December of 1999. It's called 'Petals of	14	aftermath of her killing, Laurence Rush became a
15	Hope' . 12:29	15	campaigner for truth and justice and, from a very early 12:33
16	"Dead flower and broken dreams come closer,	16	stage, sought to cast light on the circumstances
17	Our grief has now turned into a gentle sadness	17	surrounding the bombing by seeking information and
18	And these flowers will again bud and bloom in God's sun,	18	answers concerning previous attacks and trying to learn
19	and their faces will be seen.	19	what was known and what was or what was not done.
20	Smell with the fragrance of her loved ones, 12:29	20	Laurence Rush was amongst the first to raise some of $_{\rm 12:33}$
21	Sway in a gentle breeze, kiss your lips and never say	21	the questions which this Inquiry will seek to determine,
22	good-bye.	22	and he was not deterred from speaking them loudly and
23	The night darkness will illuminate when 31 new stars are	23	publicly. He was the first to raise legal proceedings
24	born,	24	arising out of the bombing against the police and the
25	The paper will not decay but slowly crack, 12:30	25	British Government. Those efforts may have taken their 12:34

14 years old and were married before they were out of 12:32

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1	toll on Laurence Rush and he is no longer here to	
2	participate directly in this Inquiry. However, his sons	
3	and daughters are and, as Core Participants, I look	
4	forward to the assistance that they will no doubt provide	
5	to the Inquiry, just as their father would have done.	12:34
6	I mentioned a moment or two ago that the family's	
7	statement revealed a picture of lifelong love between	
8	Libbi and Laurence. I do not need to rely only on that	
9	statement to see the truth of that picture. I have had	
.0	the benefit of reading some of the poems which Laurence	12:35
1	wrote after his wife's death, including the one read by	
.2	Laurence's son, Andrew.	
.3	It seemed to me, in particular, that the poem	
4	entitled "The Privilege" conveys with sensitivity and	
.5	meaning the strength of their bond together and the chasm	12:35
.6	of loss which took its place.	
.7	So I am very graceful to the Rush family for their	
.8	generosity in sharing their father's private compositions	
.9	with me, and for the care which they have taken in	
0.0	preparing their statement for the Inquiry.	12:35
1	Thank you very much.	
22	MR. GREANEY: Sir, the evidence that we have just heard in	
23	relation to Libbi Rush is the concluding evidence for	
4	this second week of the commemorative and personal	
25	statement hearings, and those hearings will resume on	12:36

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1	Monday next at 10:00 a.m.
2	LORD TURNBULL: Thank you.
3	(The Inquiry adjourned until Monday, 10 February
4	2025 at 10:00 a.m.)
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