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Wednesday, 20th August 2008

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I still ask: Why them, not me?

Ten years on: The awful legacy of an atrocity

Published Date:

15 August 2008

By [Donna Pryce](#)

Omagh survivor Ronan McGrory is riddled with guilt he couldn't save his two pals who died in the atrocity.

Ten years on he is still haunted by the blast and asks 'why them, not me?'

Ronan, from Buncrana, stood side by side friends Sean McLaughlin (12) and Oran Doherty (8) when the bomb went off on August 15, 1998. They sadly died and he survived.

For the first time in a decade Ronan has revealed it feels like the explosion happened just yesterday and told why he still feels guilty his childhood friends were killed in the blast.

Despite being just 14-years-old when the attack happened, Ronan said he has always felt he should've have protected his friends better and saved them from dying, because he was the oldest in the group. He said: "I feel guilty, I should have protected the younger boys because I was the eldest.

"I want to say sorry to the families of the boys, I know it wasn't my fault but I feel so responsible.

"A day doesn't pass that I don't think of them and feel this guilt."

Ronan said the three-some were on a day trip to Omagh, with a bunch of Spanish students staying in Buncrana, on the day of the blast.

They were playing in the town when police officers told them to go down the street while they were clearing the court house out.

The trio was just inches away from the car bomb that claimed Sean and Oran's lives and left Ronan for dead.

Waking up screaming and shouting, after the blast, Ronan's cries were heard by an officer who took him to hospital.

Ronan said: "We were just going down to the bottom of the street and we were standing behind the car.

"It (bomb) went off and I was badly injured.

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"I had internal bleeding, my spleen was ruptured and I had scarring on my face and body.

"When it went off I was knocked to the ground and was unconscious.

"Then I woke up, I was told later that had I not woken up then I would have been dead within half an hour.

"I woke up shouting for help and some police man lifted me and put me in the back of his car and took me to hospital.

"I remember thinking it was night time and I had been laying on the ground for so long, but that was just because there was so much smoke.

"At the hospital they asked me who I was and I remembered everything, my name, address and parents phone number.

"Sean and Oran were just standing next to me."

Heartbreaking

Lucky-to-be-alive Ronan said he heard the heartbreaking news his pals didn't survive the attack, alone while watching a news broadcast.

He said he was watching the TV in the hospital when he heard his friends, Sean, Oran, James Barker along with Spanish teacher Rocio Abad Ramos and Fernando Baselga were killed in the blast.

Feelings of severe sadness and helplessness that he felt - when he watched that broadcast - have stayed with him until this day.

Ronan said he cannot believe it happened ten years ago, because for him it is still as vivid as if it was just yesterday â€“ a memory he said that will haunt him for the rest of his life.

He added: "I think about it all the time, sometimes its all I think about but I try not to let it affect me or get the better of me."

But plucky Ronan said he is determined the bombing won't destroy his life and is keen to live it to its fullest.

A successful shop keeper, of Munchies on Buncrana's Main Road, Ronan said he enjoys a game of football and is an avid Liverpool fan.

Ronan hasn't been back to Omagh since that day and isn't planning on attending the official memorial being held today. Instead he'll be spending it in Buncrana and attending the special mass in Knockalla tonight.

The full article contains 681 words and appears in n/a newspaper.

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