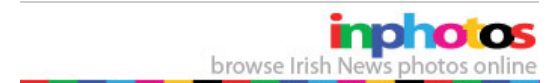


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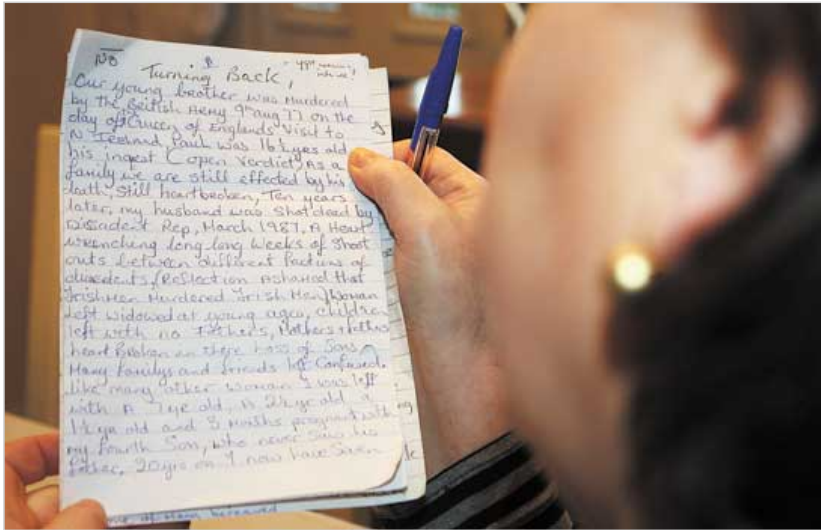


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Killers are in a time warp: ex-internee

By Staff Reporter

19/03/2009



COMPELLED TO SPEAK OUT: Annmarie McCarthy reads over her letter to The Irish News about the killings of two soldiers and a policeman PICTURES: Gerard Black

The youngest female republican internee, who lost her brother and husband in the Troubles, has sympathised with the families of the British soldiers and policeman killed by dissidents.

Annmarie McCarthy (nee McWilliams), who is originally from north Belfast, was only 16 when she was interned in Armagh jail in 1973.

Her teenage brother Paul was shot dead by the British army in August 1977 and a decade later her husband Anthony was murdered by dissidents. She also lost three cousins.

Describing herself as a "proud republican", the 53-year-old grandmother said she felt compelled to speak out for the first time about the "absolute horror" she felt at the deaths of the two young soldiers at Massereene barracks and the shooting of Constable Stephen Carroll in Craigavon.

She condemned the actions of the dissident republicans responsible, accusing them of living in a "time warp" and said she hoped people will "reject them".

"When I heard the news... a dark cloud descended. Immediately I had a flashback of my poor kid brother, my husband and cousins' funerals, everything came back," she said.

"I deeply regret what the families are going through as my own family like so many others went through the same pain.

“We all have to use our wisdom from past hurt and make sure there are no more fatalities or blood spilt.

“The peace process was working... for God’s sake help to make it work, forget the war, move on.”

The prominent republican said that while there had been no united Ireland over the past 10 years there had “at least been no blood shed”.

“I hope people reject them (the dissidents). If we don’t we are allowing them to pull us back 40 years. The good work of decent nationalists will have been in vain,” she said.

Mrs McCarthy said she buried her husband on St Patrick’s Day and was saddened by the outbreak of rioting and cancellation of a St Patrick’s Day parade in Lurgan.

“Today’s the day when people should be celebrating our patron saint with lots of parades and fun. Instead we are back to rioting.

“I thought that we would be living in peace after 10 years. I am not naive enough to think that peace would settle immediately and it may take another generation for that to happen.

“But the breaking of that peace is very dangerous.”

She praised the stance taken by Sinn Fein in its condemnation of the murders, describing Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams as “brave”.

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