

Focus 2

Rosemary Nelson

'THE WORST THREAT IS THAT I'M GOING TO

W^a Woman of Courage

THE OVER WHIELDING feeling is a great turning point where once there was energy, passion, commitment and laughter she was only 40. How could someone like her be wiped out without being?

I still can't believe I can't pick up the phone and speak to her. She was always encouraging. "Go for it, Anne" was invariably her advice.

Her children are still so young. Her husband has been denied so much love and companionship. There is so much she could also have achieved in her professional life.

"We must have lunch together," she would eagerly say "whenever we spoke, but neither of us ever laid the time and now we never will."

In January a Garvey Road delegation went to Downing Street to meet Tony Blair. I tagged along to report on the event. We had a great stroll along the Thames together - she was country made in the big city. We will all now remember that walk for the rest of our lives.

The last fax she sent me arrived three days before she was killed. It was an excerpt from the UN report on examination of defence solicitors which had criticised concerns about the very real threat to her life.

She was delighted last Friday to hear that fellow solicitor, Barry McGarry was taking a detailed review against a few copy rulings not to discuss the British/Irish Agents March report about the murder of Pat Finucane.

Now her name is linked to Finucane's forever - two young, able, hard-working and intelligent lawyers who were too courageous and stubborn, who knew too much, and cried too hard.

One tends to think of solicitors as rather stuffy after a few minutes and Rosemary you felt like you'd known her for ever and could talk to her about anything, even girls stuff. There's a certain sickness at the heart of Finucane - and it killed her because that's the only way it can deal with happy feelings looking for equality. They didn't do it to and the IRA exercise - it was personal.

She was using the law to expose inequality and they had to silence her. Her death forever teaches those who are struggling for justice in the North. It's a message to those who are not able to strip them will themselves be murdered.

The abuse and stress she suffered were certain, sinister and often vicious. "I would frighten you," wouldn't it? "I would sometimes whisper almost plaintively that a



Rosemary Nelson... There were never enough hours in her day, but she was always beautifully groomed and dressed, although God knows where she got the energy

child leaving reassurance that she wasn't being punished. Loyalists in Portadown were chanting Catholics with the slogan: 'No legs Nelson'. A brother-in-law's dog was known then as the 'British Army dog' on the Garvey Road. The Lurgans were leaving. They made it even the dream to back off for a few days. In an interview published in this paper in 1987, she told of how her release passed on RUC threats against her. "They say I'm a terrorist and that makes them a terrorist too. Sometimes they say I'm a cunt. They also say if I'm a good girl and say it's was down that my clients are aware with me. "It was just the odd occasion," she honestly says that if people (legally) scheduled (parliamentary) looked charges 100% of them are told that sort of dangerous, justifying rubbish. "The worst threat is that I'm going to be killed. They told me they had to go to the when we got out. And that Rosemary she's going to die too." Then there's the usual threat: "I'm a 'fucking Fenian' -". "When I speak to RUC officers on the phone, the hostility, the sheer hatred, comes down the line. They are polite to my back, especially so. But, behind my back, they say what they like. The fear is like an ache, nagging away at the back of your mind. "What the RUC don't realise is that, although I can't escape the person being interrogated, if I don't have any effect on me, it just makes me more determined to do my job honestly. "Credity pruned (quitter) claiming she was in sexual relations with her clients would occasionally be mused on or walked and considered by hand in Lurgan areas of Portadown and Lurgan, home of Billy Wright's 'The Pack'. "One, needless, "The man without a future" (referring to Garvey Road spokesman, Brendan Mac Clellan, an old school friend of Rosemary's) accused her lackluster of being a "bomber", thereby giving her work address and phone number. "I'm from Lurgan in fact, when she felt the tension rising, she would discuss her personal security. I

Anne Cadwallader writes about the life and courageous fight for justice and truth waged by her good friend, Rosemary Nelson

always tried to gently bully me into stepping up precautions, without wanting to. "I never let her down. On the very small and size of fact she was wrong, she didn't let it scare her off. Her courage got others courage, like the Harriet Park's after Robert Harriet Park's. "No matter what, Rosemary will spring to pursue the RUC through the courts for their alleged failure to try and save Robert Harriet Park's. The law for her was a weapon more than a job as a way of carrying a living. "She was with the Garvey Road people heart and soul. I remember her remembering with a RUC man the night down (over) 1987. She was never less than wouldn't take me to the airport. "In 1986, when Colin Duffy a Lurgan (Nationalist)

was secretary of the last 20 years came from the Lurgan/Portadown area - Billy "King Rat" Wright, Robert "The Jackal" Jackson and others who have been then murdered over a 100 Nationalist. Rosemary's courage lay in that she was aware she was remaining in this position, yet it didn't frighten her into surrendering her determination to do whatever she could to clean it up. "In the context of Northern Ireland, her belief in 'equality' under the law was a dogma to the unprecedented determination that clients (Nationalist) second-class jobs. Rosemary would say: "Don't worry - we'll sort that out later." After years working on her case, said Carmel she has yet to receive a bill. "Whatever her situation, your case - no matter how trivial - was her priority. She would leave no stone unturned in your quest for justice. "She was not a politician. She served both Protestants and Catholics alike. Her idealism expressed itself in practical ways. It meant every legal avenue open to her to vindicate her clients' human rights. "Straight away she phoned the solicitors-in-charge at Lurgan DUC station and asked to be told under what law he was being detained and when would she be able to visit him? Despite her fury she was coolly polite. Within seconds, our interview terminated, she was in

from behind her desk, her coat was on, and - something flying - she was down the stairs to settle the dust, to Lurgan. "She was above all a practitioner of the law. She believed this unshakably paving her clients through the rule of law was enough on its own to justify the risks she took. "One client, Carmel Robinson, said if people were worried about legal fees, Rosemary would say: "Don't worry - we'll sort that out later." After years working on her case, said Carmel she has yet to receive a bill. "Whatever her situation, your case - no matter how trivial - was her priority. She would leave no stone unturned in your quest for justice. "She was not a politician. She served both Protestants and Catholics alike. Her idealism expressed itself in practical ways. It meant every legal avenue open to her to vindicate her clients' human rights. "She never let her ability to be shocked by events around her in a sense of cynicism and "victim fatigue" when people often abuse their solicitors and ignore rampant abuses of human rights, she retained an ability to be outraged. "We would have rambled

for hours. It's so hard to

