

Witness Name: Bernadette Bradshaw

Statement No: 1

Exhibits: BB1 – BB3

Dated:

THE ROSEMARY NELSON INQUIRY

Witness Statement of Bernadette Bradshaw

I Bernadette Bradshaw will say as follows:

Background

1. I am a married mother of two and currently work in a solicitor's office in Belfast; I am currently on maternity leave. My maiden name was Rogers.
2. Originally, I had taken a job with a newspaper publisher, but it was not what I expected. I saw an advert for a job at Rosemary's offices and applied for it. I was hired as Rosemary's personal secretary, although in reality everyone who worked there was Rosemary's secretary.
3. I was originally hired to do the conveyancing work as I had experience in that area. Occasionally I was involved in some matrimonial or criminal work. When a high profile case came in, we all got involved and mucked in as required. We were generally left to get on with the work ourselves, but as it was a small office, we often got involved in the big cases.

4. Rosemary was a good boss, paid good wages and was very good to the staff - when there was a wedding she would often buy a present, for example. She was also good with her friends and family.
5. My work would involve typing up the proceedings, seeing clients, taking notes and occasionally attending the police station if people had to make statements to the police.
6. Rosemary had no particular way of working. There was however a great sense of team work, because we all stayed late when things got very busy and there were big cases on. We all got wrapped up in it. We all had our own things to do as well as the big cases, but we had to just get on with it. There was only one solicitor working there at the time of her death, which was Pat Vernon. Sharon Keeley also worked there previously. They all helped bear the burden of the workload.
7. Rosemary was the "front line" for the office and everyone wanted to see her. She would often handle the initial appointment with the client and then delegate the work to other people in the office. A good part of the work was passed on to other solicitors. Rosemary was seen as a fighter and was known for taking on difficult cases. She took cases on even if there wasn't a snowball's chance in hell of it succeeding. That was the character of the woman. The clients were well aware of the fact that even though she may initially have the first meeting with them, she would not necessarily handle the case herself beyond that meeting.
8. The work was primarily funded by Legal Aid, through the Green Form system. I occasionally filled in the forms, depending on whether I had initially seen the clients. Pat Vernon would finalise the paperwork.

Client Base/Profile

9. I used to attend the police station with a whole range of clients, not just the high profile individuals. The clients ranged from petty thieves to more serious matters; generally speaking the really high profile cases were handled by Rosemary. I may well have been involved in the complaints that Rosemary's clients made to the police, but I cannot remember for certain.

10. I know that there has been some suggestion that the police reacted in a particularly bad way to Rosemary: I do not think any ill treatment that I may have experienced was anything to do with me in particular. I think it was mainly to do with the type of work I was there to do: I think there was a high degree of police frustration that solicitors were trying to get petty thieves off when they were trying so hard to put them away.
11. When I first started, the clients used to come from all over the community; Rosemary was very well liked. As a result of the Garvaghy Road and Colin Duffy cases, there was a lot of media attention and gradually people from the other side of town did not want to come in. The practice obtained work from mainly Catholic clients towards the end, mainly because of the high profile of the practice.
12. I think the practice had reached the stage of handling high-profile criminal cases before I joined. Colin Duffy was already a client when I arrived: I think Rosemary took me on during his appeal. She was renowned for acting on behalf of Colin Duffy and developed a reputation on the back of that case and also the Garvaghy Road incident. She became more widely known as time went on. She also acted for Brendan McKenna and Shane Duffy.
13. I know that Rosemary met a lot of the residents' group in relation to the Garvaghy Road and that statements were taken from them: I remember that I did some of the Legal Aid forms and took statements from some of the people. Rosemary may have attended some of the meetings with the residents' committee outside office hours, but I would not have really known anything about that as this was outside my working day.
14. The meetings that took place with the Garvaghy Road residents and the "out of hours" meetings were done, I think, without request for payment. The claims work would, however, be done through Legal Aid.
15. I remember that we were very afraid of the profile the practice was developing: I can remember us pulling down the shutters and locking the doors when we were working late especially during the marching season, and in particular during July. There was always an atmosphere around that time of year, but the profile heightened that tension. I haven't

worked in Lurgan for a while, so I do not know whether it is still the same, although I do remember feeling frightened during that time.

Threats

16. I can see how it could look in terms of her representing certain high-profile clients. I know that she did not want the office to think that that was the direction in which she was going. It stayed that way mainly because of the number of high profile cases she had. Once you get one or two of those, more follow. There was a suggestion that she was linked to that kind of organisation, but I have nothing to say about that. I don't think she was into the Provisionals. I have nothing to say. I don't think that she had any sectarian motivation. I am sure Rosemary received a lot of hassle, but we would not necessarily have known much about it.
17. I'm not sure whether Rosemary was receiving direct threats or intimidation or whether any other staff were, although I am aware that Rosemary received a few threatening letters in the post and I opened one or two of them. She may also have received threats via telephone but I do not remember taking any of those calls. Rosemary was not the kind of person who would talk about any of the threats that she received; she would not want us worried.
18. She did mention her security to me at one point and possibly having people round to her house to enhance it, but I'm not sure whether she ever did anything about it.
19. I think the pressure was put on Rosemary by Loyalists. Rosemary would not have let us know that she was frightened, but I am sure that she was.
20. I have been shown two statements I made dated 24 March 1999 RNI 830.011-012 and 11 May 1999 (RNI 830.013).
21. There was one letter which I recall arrived in a blue envelope and was written on blue paper. I don't remember actually opening it or its contents, although I do remember the letter itself. I think the police came along and got fingerprints from it. I don't think Rosemary was in at the time. I am sure I showed it to some of the other girls and would

imagine that we waited until Rosemary came back before doing anything with it; I honestly cannot remember.

22. The letters that were received may well have been passed to the CAJ; it is unlikely that Rosemary would have given letters to the police – I do not think she trusted the police. I know that Rosemary dealt a lot with Jane Winter at the CAJ and as such she may well have copied her in on letters. A lot of the letters may also have been ripped up. I know that Rosemary received a call relating to her and her staff being called "IRA bastards". I do not recall taking the call or the phrase being mentioned to me so I think that Rosemary must have received the call directly.
23. That is another interesting thing. I would not have put the call through unless I recognised the caller or unless Rosemary wanted it, as she was extremely busy and I monitored her calls. All of the calls went through the main switchboard and I do not remember taking that call in particular. I occasionally monitored the switchboard if people were off sick, although it was generally down to the receptionist to do this.
24. I note that I made a statement regarding the letter of 24 May (RNI 830.014). I think that may have been the letter that was finger-printed; I do not remember whether it was addressed to Paul Nelson or not. The finger prints would have probably been taken from myself and Pat Vernon since we handled the letter at the office.
25. I do not recall any other threatening letters. The letter referring to Brid Rogers relates to an SDLP Councillor and former MEP; it does not relate to me in any way.
26. I think that possibly Angela McCarroll and Ita Brady (as she was then) may have taken some calls. I cannot remember anything else for certain. There may have been something before she died and I think Ita took a call on the day of her death. I remember she shouted down the phone and then slammed the receiver down. I think somebody had said something awful while we were waiting for news from the hospital. I cannot remember what it was.

The Day of the Murder

27. On the day of Rosemary's death, I remember there was a phone call to say that there had been an explosion or an accident of some sort. I think Annette may have driven us to the scene. There were loads of people down there and helicopters in the air. We did not know whether Rosemary was dead or alive. Nuala McCann was ahead of Rosemary in her car: she did not come over with us. I think Nuala was quite close to Rosemary and went for coffee at her house quite often.
28. We could see the car, but thank goodness we could not see Rosemary. Nuala was with her, talked to her and went to the hospital. I think she made her husband drive her there. She told us that Rosemary had lost her legs and what had happened but we could not really see what was going on.
29. I remember the police were stood around the Land Rovers; they were in full gear as if they were expecting some kind of commotion. They were stood around laughing. Whether the laughter was as a result of an innocent joke, I do not know, but I doubt it. I remember everyone noticing what they were doing and that various people made some comments to them about their attitude – there was a feeling of hatred because they had absolutely no decency, even though they knew she was dying.
30. I don't really recall there being much of an altercation with the police, although I think several people may have said things. There was a lot of talk about helicopters flying around the area the night before. It was also unusual that the police had arrived "ready for battle" at an accident scene.
31. The police didn't like the fact that they were trying to put Colin Duffy away but that she was doing so successfully in getting him released. There was a lot of talk flying around about who may have done it. I have blanked a lot of it all out and I cannot remember much.
32. We stood around feeling helpless and waited until she was taken to the hospital. We all went back to the office apart from Nuala: there was Pat, Annette, Ita, Mary and me. We pulled the shutters down and simply waited for news as to what was happening.

33. There were quite a few calls from people wanting to know what was going on and what had happened to Rosemary. There were some bad calls I think, but I cannot remember precisely. Ita (who was pregnant at the time) took one of the calls and was very upset by it. Later on that day, we heard that she had been confirmed dead.
34. Once we found out that Rosemary was dead, we all sat around in the waiting room crying. We did not really know what to do with ourselves, but eventually everyone went home. I don't think we went back to the office until after the funeral.
35. I went to the wake and the funeral. There were lots and lots of people there but I didn't stay very long because I felt in the way and I don't really like the number of people who turn up to those things. I think there were cameras at the funeral, but I do not know whether there were any police there.
36. Life went on after that; no one really knew what would happen in relation to the practice. We assumed it would close, but it stayed open for quite some time afterwards. I left around one year later. Paul Nelson told us that we were all effectively on notice and that whenever we found a job, we were welcome to take it. The office wasn't open for long after I left.
37. Nobody went into Rosemary's office for quite some time afterwards - it may still be as it was. It was horribly cold anyway and no one felt like going in once she had been killed. I remember going in once to check whether there was anything in relation to a particular matter on her desk and noticing that all the files had been taken out, but I do not know who did this.
38. Paul Nelson came in to help for a brief while. I know there were various attempts to sell the practice, but I do not think they went anywhere. I cannot recall any threats or calls after her death.
39. I don't really remember much about the police investigation following the murder, although I do remember there wasn't much of a concerted effort on their part. I don't think we were particularly involved with anything they did.

40. There may have been a candle-lit vigil for Rosemary some time after her death, although I did not go to it. The community was in shock for quite some time. It was a shock particularly because she was a mother, a woman and well known in Lurgan; it was also due to the brutal way in which she died.
41. People saw her as a fighter. I don't think she was fighting the police as such. I think she was trying to impress, wanted to win and had fire in her belly; she had a strong passion for the downtrodden generally rather than anyone or anybody in particular. It was all about the underdog.
42. I am worried even now that people may find out that I worked there and therefore do not really mention it when applying for jobs or at work generally.
43. I did not know Rosemary in any other capacity other than as boss and therefore don't really have anything else to add in relation to her character or social life.
44. I do not have anything else to add in relation to Rosemary or the work that she did. I do not remember anything in relation to Tom Cusack or the Garvaghy Road.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed: 

Bernadette Bradshaw

Dated: *04 January 2007*