

Time to Think

Open University Journeys in British and Irish prisons during the years of conflict, 1972-2000

Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: **Christina McCavana**

Interviewed by: **Jenny Meegan**

Date of interview: **04/04/2012**

Important

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it.

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Clip title: A friend of a victim

Duration: 00:03:31

Clip start point in full interview: 00:01:07

Clip end point in full interview: 00:08:21

Interview identifier: 051_T

Description: Christine McCavana talks about the day she was working on reception in the Belfast Office of The Open University when a former prisoner came into reception to be interviewed for the Oral History Project, and how she felt when realising from his name that this person was responsible for shooting a friend of hers.

Transcript:

Well I have been aware of a history project going on in the office and I was aware that people would be coming in who had been involved in the past in paramilitary activities, so I was a bit sort of taken aback at first when someone did come in, and he only introduced himself as his Christian name and he was involved in paramilitaries in the past, and, paramilitary activities—

But you didn't know that at this particular point, it was just another former student coming in?

Yes and then when he did, when I was aware of his full name, putting two and two together, I was aware that he was the perpetrator of a shooting, upon my friend, my friend and colleague on a previous job who I had known quite closely and I was a bit taken aback by this. But obviously I had to carry on as usual in my duties and the result of this was, it just brought back memories of my friend, good memories of him and also sad memories for what has happened since within his family because it had a major impact upon it, you know.

So, what it brought to mind mostly, was he wanted to educate himself, and even in those days being a mature student I don't think was necessarily so common now. It wasn't even through the OU he was going to do it, he was going to go to Queen's [University, Belfast] and I just thought he lost his opportunity and that was my thinking at the time. It is all very well to say these people who perpetrate these crimes, who never had education, and now have the opportunity to do so, they shouldn't be denied it, my initial response was, my friend was denied it. But I have come to terms with it, I mean, it is a long, long time ago but you don't realise how much things can be under the surface still in your mind even after such a long time, so, I think that is my main feeling on it.

Thank you, and when you told me about this, when we talked about it, you thought that the interview would be a way of acknowledging your friend, am I right there or—?

Yes, I think so. Since it happened I was going to approach you but I didn't want to be seen to be approaching this in a hostile sense, because that wasn't my motive and I am glad you approached me and this eventually came to the surface about my experience.

And, would you like to not be, to make sure that you weren't on the front desk in future if this—?

No, I feel I can cope with it alright, I mean, I think possibly if I had been a family member or directly yes, a different situation but Belfast and Northern Ireland is such a small place, you do come across people you wouldn't expect to come across and this is one of the situations where this has arisen. No I feel perfectly capable, that is fine by me, I, have to treat him as civilly as any other student or visitor coming in.