

## II HEROIC EFFORTS

### **Responding to the Emergency**

In the midst of sorrow and confusion, some people are able to raise the human spirit and perform deeds of bravery and kindness. This happened when Air India 182 exploded off the coast of Ireland. A number of individuals quickly dedicated themselves to the treacherous challenge of finding survivors in the wreckage; and when that proved unsuccessful, they accepted the grim task of helping with the effort to recover the victims and their belongings. Others on shore opened their homes to the families in need. Such was their generosity that the families were first surprised, then overwhelmed, by the Irish kindness and many remain as friends with frequent contact.



## Seanie Murphy

**Seanie Murphy** lives on Valentia Island (also spelled Valencia) off the southwest coast of Ireland. He has worked since 1982 for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, a non-government agency that seeks to preserve life at sea throughout the British Isles. Virtually everyone on his island is involved in some capacity with the lifeboat operation:



30

*...this was an Arun class lifeboat. It's 52 feet in length. It's a 17-foot beam. It's a 5.5-foot draught. It's got two 500-horsepower Caterpillar engines and...she has a top speed of 18 knots... And she burns 50 gallons an hour.<sup>110</sup>*

A pager system is now used, but in 1985 when an emergency arose the crew was called into action by rockets fired from the Arun. After earning his skipper's ticket in England, **Seanie Murphy** was invited to become captain of his lifeboat in 1981. His crew included a full-time engineer and volunteers from different parts of Ireland.

He had gone to mass on the Sunday morning of June 23<sup>rd</sup> and met a man who told him that a marine radio station had advised that a plane had gone off the radar screen in Shannon. After the church service, **Seanie Murphy** learned that this was a disaster. He mobilized his crew and set sail, knowing that they were venturing *110 miles* out into the ocean, more than double their usual range. He knew that going twice as far into the waters than was the norm would severely strain the fuel supply.

When **Seanie Murphy** testified at the Commission, he wanted to remember the people who accompanied him on that mission. Most were volunteers with no training for events like the Air India bombing.<sup>111</sup> These men were:

<sup>110</sup> Testimony of Seanie Murphy, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, pp. 269-270.

<sup>111</sup> Testimony of Seanie Murphy, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 270.

**Joseph Houlihan**, engineer, age 47;  
**Richard Connelly**, fisherman, age 32;  
**James Murphy**, fisherman, age 40;  
**Eamonn Murphy**, car mechanic, age 25;  
**Shane O'Neill**, fisherman, age 24;  
**Nealie Lyne**, property manager, age 30; and  
**Seamus Murphy**, student, age 17

The trip to the scene of the crash took almost seven hours. When **Seanie Murphy** realized that he had no charts to cover the disaster area, he took another chart and *I turned it upside down as a blank sheet of paper and I extended the lines of latitude and longitude onto it and I used this as a dead reckoning system to plot the course out to where we were going.*<sup>112</sup>

Although they were accustomed to recovering people in distress or the dead from accidents at sea, they were ill-prepared for what they encountered:

*We had recovered bodies from the sea before. That's our line of work, but never to the scale of this. We never expected this.*<sup>113</sup>

Once in the area of the crash, they spotted debris and suitcases. As they moved closer to the main search area, bodies were seen. In about two hours, they recovered four bodies and then, about to leave and return to shore, one crewman spotted the body of a young child. The crew recovered it and barely spoke about that recovery during the long trip home. **Seanie Murphy** paused to collect himself while testifying as he recalled how he then thought of his own three-month-old daughter. He told the Commission of a strange pervasive silence, even among the crew and the citizens at the pier who had volunteered their help. In total, the journey had taken over 20 hours.

To this day, **Seanie Murphy** and his crew rarely discuss that recovery effort. He has met some of the families and has had to overcome a personal fear of flying stemming from the Air India crash. He told the

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<sup>112</sup> Testimony of Seanie Murphy, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, pp. 271-272.

<sup>113</sup> Testimony of Seanie Murphy, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 274.

Commission of the sad memories that return whenever he meets family members:

*...when I meet them ... it all comes back again...I see the suffering they're going through. But I just hope they get some peace somewhere along the way.*<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>Testimony of Seanie Murphy, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 284.



**Mark Stagg**

**Mark Stagg** was a 26-year-old third officer on the *Laurentian Forest*, a 23,000-tonne vessel making its way from Canada to London via Dublin carrying a cargo of newsprint. He was one of 26 British officers and crew aboard the ship. An urgent message came from Valentia radio at 8:44 a.m. on June 23, 1985 that an aircraft had disappeared from the radar. His first thought was that he and his crew could be *heroes to the rescue*.<sup>115</sup> By 9:44 a.m., the broadcast signal was upgraded to an SOS, with details of an Air India jumbo jet going down with more than 320 passengers.



31

**Mark Stagg** told the Commission that his captain, **Roddy McDougall**, bravely ignoring fuel concerns, diverted the ship towards the crash area. Otherwise they would have been 37 miles away and travelling in the opposite direction.

Even though the catastrophic nature of the accident was evident from the wreckage strewn across the crash site, for some time the crew remained hopeful of finding survivors. Perhaps it was their inherent unwillingness to admit that their efforts might be in vain.

Although there was no indication of survivors as they came to the crash area, **Mark Stagg** remained cautiously hopeful. When he saw bodies floating in *a sea covered with a sheen of aircraft fuel*<sup>116</sup>, he began to grasp the enormity of the disaster. His earlier sense of adventure had disappeared:

*I felt shock and dismay. This was out of the mental script that I'd written for myself. This was no longer a game. There was no play involved. I felt sick. I was scared, but we had a job to do and we will save some people and some of this will be okay.*<sup>117</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Testimony of Mark Stagg, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 331.

<sup>116</sup> Testimony of Mark Stagg, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 333.

<sup>117</sup> Testimony of Mark Stagg, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 334.

A lifeboat was dispatched and with the aid of helicopters bodies were recovered. **Mark Stagg**, as previously noted, recalled for the Commission that he felt the boy in him had died that day when handed the corpse of a perfect and beautiful baby.

**Mark Stagg** said that his merchant vessel and crew were not equipped or prepared to deal with a plane crash. They had a useless stretcher and no body bags. Consequently, it was necessary to improvise using the semi-transparent nylon liners of inflatable dunnage bags. He felt that this makeshift option violated the privacy and dignity of the victims, but under the circumstances it was the best that could be done.

**Mark Stagg** lost his inner peace as a result of the recovery mission. The horror continues to revisit him in dreams and daytime flashbacks. In addition, he told the Commission that the colleagues with whom he served also continue to suffer from problems related to the crash. He will always carry with him the regret that not one person was saved:

*I recall spending parts of the day keeping a tight rein on my feelings to the point of complete detachment and dispersed with periods of extreme grief, extreme anger, and almost hysterical laughter... I refused to discuss the event with anyone and as a result, suffered nightmares, flashbacks and periods of deep depression.<sup>118</sup>*

Some time after the recovery mission, **Mark Stagg** heard of post-traumatic stress syndrome and at his own expense sought medical help and counselling. In June 2001, when the RCMP contacted him about the British Columbia trials, his nightmares and flashbacks returned:

*For brief instances of time I am transported back to that scene. It is real. I smell the smell. I see the things. I hear, I taste and feel all the stimuli. I am not there but I am there.<sup>119</sup>*

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<sup>118</sup> Testimony of Mark Stagg, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 343.

<sup>119</sup> Testimony of Mark Stagg, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 345.

**Mark Stagg** gained the strength to attend the 2005 memorial service at Ahakista in Ireland. At the airport, he met his former shipmate **Daniel Brown** for the first time since the crash. They did not discuss their feelings and have since become friends. He also met Dr. Padmini Turlapati, who thanked him for recovering the body of her son **Sanjay**. As **Mark Stagg** stated, his heart broke. He is humbled by the actions of the family members who in the face of such loss still reach out to him with gratitude:

*It was over for them before it began for us, but it is my everlasting regret that we saved no one, and yet she thanks me.<sup>120</sup>*

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<sup>120</sup> Testimony of Mark Stagg, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 347.



## Daniel Brown

When **Daniel Brown** appeared before the Commission, he had been in the British Merchant Navy for 28 years. On June 23, 1985, he was a young man from Scotland making his second voyage on the *Laurentian Forest*. He was on watch duty when called up to the bridge, where he steered the ship beside his captain, who was immersed in reports about the increasing severity of the crash.



32

The *Laurentian Forest* was the only merchant ship in the area that launched a lifeboat. **Daniel Brown**, a member of that crew, was asked to look for bodies. Of seven bodies recovered under adverse conditions, he helped with six. Many of the bodies were badly damaged and oil from the wreckage in the water made them difficult to grasp. **Daniel Brown** did whatever he could to recover bodies and load them aboard the lifeboat. Suddenly, he heard the second mate shouting. He realized they were in trouble as they were coming perilously close to the *Laurentian Forest*:

*...as we came under the stern, I had to go over and lie on top of the bodies to keep my head below the gunwale. The boat continued to come under the stern and the first time it hit, it was quite light really, but as we kept coming under the stern, we had more and more increasing impact and I thought the boat was going to break up.<sup>121</sup>*

The weight of the bodies on board the lifeboat greatly hampered its manoeuvrability and it came close to being crushed under the ship's stern. Only the ingenuity of the ship's captain saved them. **Captain Roddy McDougall** somehow managed to align his large ship with the lifeboat.

<sup>121</sup> Testimony of Daniel Brown, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 299.

The next major problem was how to upload the bodies onto the ship. That too did not happen without compounding difficulties. Some crew were becoming ill and others were crying at the carnage. At one point, **Mark Stagg** shouted frantically. **Daniel Brown** then saw a body trapped in the propeller, and he wanted to get it free but he was forced to let it go. The challenges continued to mount. Even when the recovered bodies were finally transferred to the *Laurentian Forest*, they still had to be moved several times for various reasons.

After their return to Dublin, where they gave a statement to the local police, at the captain's suggestion they went for a drink. At the pub, while watching the arrival of the victims' families on the television news, **Daniel Brown** suddenly felt the impact and his emotions overtook him:

*I just went back to the ship and I went in my cabin and just cried.*<sup>122</sup>

*I went home on leave. I was having trouble sleeping. I was home for five weeks. Now, I've left that company. I'd already decided to leave it before this event, and I joined another ship. I was having a lot of trouble sleeping, sleep nightmares and flashbacks. I became aggressive and cynical, angry.*<sup>123</sup>

One of **Daniel Brown's** shipmates never returned to sea and another never flew again. None of them were nor could they have been prepared for the horror and magnitude of the tragedy. **Daniel Brown** told the Commission that he suffered from post-traumatic stress syndrome for more than 10 years. His first treatment was sleeping pills. He was advised to seek counselling following the British Columbia trials. He developed better mechanisms for coping and has had an easier time dealing with the events of June 1985. He told the Commission of his feelings regarding the gratitude by the families of the victims, many of whom he has befriended:

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<sup>122</sup> Testimony of Daniel Brown, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 309.

<sup>123</sup> Testimony of Daniel Brown, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 310.

*The thing that strikes me most is the attitude of the people that lost more than anything else in this event. They're the ones that showed more gratitude. They thanked us for our efforts. They were thinking about us, as we were thinking of them. We all became friends with many of them.*<sup>124</sup>

**Daniel Brown** told the Commission that his strong physical conditioning likely enabled him to delay the emotional impact for two days, but the enormity of what happened had a profound impact on him, as it did on his colleague **Mark Stagg**. Both of them continue to feel remorse at not having found even a single survivor:

*I wish we could have got more. I wish we could have brought them all home, but I think the ocean beat us.*<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Testimony of Daniel Brown, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 314.

<sup>125</sup> Testimony of Daniel Brown, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 314.



## Captain Roddy McDougall

**Roddy McDougall** was master of the *Laurentian Forest*. **Captain McDougall** died before the Commission's hearings began. He was acknowledged by his crew to be a skilled seaman and a strong leader. Decisions he made on June 23, 1985, contributed directly to his crew's ability to retrieve some bodies. **Daniel Brown** credits him with taking the lifeboat next to the *Laurentian Forest* out of danger:



33

*...and although the second mate was making all the right manoeuvres, there was no steerage. Captain MacDougall was aware of this and ...he put the ship alongside the lifeboat which was quite a feat of seamanship.<sup>126</sup>*

His former officer and good friend **Mark Stagg** recalled for the Commission that **Roddy McDougall** was in failing health when evidence was being gathered for the British Columbia criminal trials, and he was unable to appear:

*I talked to Roddy McDougall. He cannot give evidence. He has had a stroke and he is not a well man. We talk a lot and exchange e-mails. I arrange that in 2005 we will go to Ireland and maybe lay our ghosts.<sup>127</sup>*

**Roddy McDougall** wrote a letter to his corporate headquarters on July 1, 1985 to chronicle the events of June 23<sup>rd</sup>. It was published in the company's in-house journal<sup>128</sup> and introduced as evidence before the Commission.<sup>129</sup>

**Roddy McDougall** noted that every member of his crew volunteered in the effort to recover the bodies. They all dismissed a report that sharks had been sighted in the area and commenced their dives without hesitation. He called it "a long, sad Sunday" and paid tribute to his men:

<sup>126</sup> Testimony of Daniel Brown, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 300.

<sup>127</sup> Testimony of Mark Stagg, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 344.

<sup>128</sup> Harrisons (Clyde) Ltd., Glasgow, letter no. 22-85.

<sup>129</sup> Exhibit P-18, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 354.

*The Air India disaster only brings out the emotional feeling we all have at what we see. I do, however, have the satisfaction of knowing what an excellent crew I have.*<sup>130</sup>

The Commission was given a letter written by the late **Roddy McDougall** to **Mark Stagg**. In it, he reassured **Mark Stagg** that he was not alone in his strong emotional reaction and shared some of his private horrors:

*That day comes back every time I get settled on a plane. Also when I have restless nights and dreams of ships, the bodies in the water always get into the dreams and in particular, one Indian in blue denim shirt and trousers staring up at me... I will never forget him and some of the other awful sights of that day.*<sup>131</sup>

The in-house journal's editor wrote a postscript to **Roddy McDougall's** letter:

*The operation carried out by the crew of Laurentian Forest on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June required courage, endurance and skill. These qualities were found in great abundance. Everyone worked together unselfishly. Because of sea and weather conditions, none of the other merchant ships in the area launched a boat. The great sadness is that there were no survivors. But no praise can be too high for the men who continue to search and to pick up bodies despite physical and emotional strain for twelve hours. It was an heroic effort.*<sup>132</sup>

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130 Capt. McDougall's letter, Exhibit P-18, reproduced in vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 358.

131 Excerpt from a letter from Roddy McDougall to Mark Stagg, Exhibit P-19, reproduced in vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 359.

132 Exhibit P-18, signed "IVRH", reproduced in vol. 3, September 27, 2006, pp. 358-359.

## Mark Tait

**Sergeant Mark Tait** was a skilled diver in the Royal Air Force. He was on board a Sea King helicopter sent to retrieve bodies on June 23, 1985. Like other would-be rescuers, his original guarded hope was to save lives. That hope vanished upon encountering the grim scene at the crash site. His first retrieval was a doll. He was upset with himself that people might be drowning while he recovered a toy.



34

While his initial objective was to locate survivors, it became clear that the job was to recover victims. What **Mark Tait** found under the water has troubled him since 1985:

*It was pretty bad and there was a lot of body tissue, fat, and I saw various body parts. I also swallowed a fair amount of sea water that had lumps in it. I must presume this was human flesh tissue or whatever. I don't know and I don't want to.<sup>133</sup>*

**Mark Tait** had to grab damaged and lifeless bodies from the water. He retains the image of an older lady wearing a sari whose body was literally split in two and too damaged to retrieve from the water. He cannot forget what he considers a personal failure:

*Although I wanted to recover her body for her relatives...this was impossible, so I reluctantly watched her float away...quite a haunting image and a decision that still unsettles me.<sup>134</sup>*

**Mark Tait** told the Commission that he carries guilt about not returning that day to the crash scene after the helicopter returned to shore. He knew at that time that he would not be able to cope. Returning to the site the following day, no additional bodies were found. Later, when approached to give evidence, the memories overcame him and he had to seek treatment for clinical depression.

<sup>133</sup> Submission of Mark Tait, Exhibit P-17, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 322.

<sup>134</sup> Submission of Mark Tait, Exhibit P-17, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 323.

Initially, he was off work for nine months. Eventually, he was able to recover and become functional with the help of a psychiatrist in the RAF. **Mark Tait** retired from the RAF in 2004 and now works in the rail industry. In some way, he too was a victim of the terrorists.

He made a decision to attend the British Columbia trials and said that he does not regret doing so:

*The relatives were bound to be emotional, perhaps critical or hostile to our actions. I think going was the best decision we could have made. It was truly humbling, however uplifting, to meet the relatives. They were so kind and appreciative, not just of our actions but to our feelings as well. It was difficult to make small talk.<sup>135</sup>*

**Mark Tait** remembers one encounter that he found to be personally invaluable. He spoke with an elderly lady who told him that the body of her daughter, a promising doctor, was not found:

*I said how sorry and guilty I felt that more bodies had not been recovered and she said that she preferred to remember her daughter as she was rather than have the pain of seeing her broken.<sup>136</sup>*

**Mark Tait** recalls that he felt relieved and is grateful to that woman who does not know how much she helped him.

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<sup>135</sup> Submission of Mark Tait, Exhibit P-17, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 326.

<sup>136</sup> Submission of Mark Tait, Exhibit P-17, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 326.

## Thomas Hayes

**Thomas Hayes** is a superintendent in the national police force of Ireland – *An Garda Siochana*. In Gaelic that means “guardians of the peace.” He commands one of four districts in Cork City. He told the Commission of the force’s mission “to achieve the highest attainable standards of personal protection, community commitment and state security”<sup>137</sup>, which includes acting:

*...on behalf of the coroner in relation to deceased persons and we take a lead role in any major incident, with particular emphasis on investigating any criminal matter involved in such incident, public safety and recovery and identification of victims.*<sup>138</sup>



35

On June 23, 1985, **Thomas Hayes** was an entry level officer with the national police force and was attached to the station in which the Cork Regional Hospital was located. That hospital has subsequently become the University Hospital.

**Thomas Hayes** told the Commission of the extensive search and rescue force mobilized when the Marine Rescue Coordination Centre at Shannon received notification of the missing aircraft at 8:13 a.m. local time. The search force included ships from the Irish Navy, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, the Royal Navy, the Royal Air Force, the United States Air Force and commercial vessels in the area. At 10:02 a.m., the *Laurentian Forest* was the first ship to arrive at the scene. The Irish naval vessel *L.E. Aisling* arrived at 11:45 that morning and played a coordinating role for the 18 ships participating in the search.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>137</sup> Testimony of Thomas Hayes, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 361.

<sup>138</sup> Testimony of Thomas Hayes, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, pp. 361-362.

<sup>139</sup> Testimony of Thomas Hayes, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 365.

Once the national police received notification of the disaster, the Major Emergency Plan for Cork City was activated. As **Thomas Hayes** recalled, the magnitude of the disaster was beyond anything they had experienced previously:

*While this plan had been engaged, we did not at that particular point have a full sense of ... the full extent of the tragedy that we were facing. This was the first time that we in the Garda Siochana had to deal with a disaster of this scope.*<sup>140</sup>

**Thomas Hayes** was dispatched to the regional hospital to await the arrival of casualties, still unaware if there were any survivors. He correctly suspected the worst. He was assigned to work with a doctor and nurse in receiving bodies and recording their identifying characteristics. He described the overall process and the roles of the police officers, the meticulous measures taken to confirm identities and, once a match had been confirmed, the process of releasing the bodies to bereaved family members. He told the Commission that members of his force were compassionate, making *every effort to support the families in this difficult ordeal*.<sup>141</sup>

Between June 24<sup>th</sup> and June 27<sup>th</sup>, post-mortems were conducted with a team of seven pathologists and *each pathologist had a team consisting of a Garda ballistics expert, a Garda fingerprint expert and a Garda photographer*.<sup>142</sup> The process of identifying the bodies did not end until August 7, 1985. He also appeared as a witness at a coroner's inquest on September 17, 1985.

**Thomas Hayes** told the Commission that he recalled someone from the Canadian High Commission in London being on the scene from the first day, and that that person dealt with the Garda and the coroner. The High Commission official processed and facilitated the transfer of information during the investigation. He also acknowledged excellent cooperation from the RCMP, particularly in obtaining fingerprint records in Canada and in following up inquiries that came from the investigation team in Cork.

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<sup>140</sup> Testimony of Thomas Hayes, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 366.

<sup>141</sup> Testimony of Thomas Hayes, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 374.

<sup>142</sup> Testimony of Thomas Hayes, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 375.

**Thomas Hayes** reflected on the efforts of the Garda and many other agencies to work in harmony throughout the emergency:

*What I remember about the time is the enormity of the task and the way everyone worked together to achieve a common purpose. The obvious goodwill and positive relationships formed between all agencies involved, and in particular with the families, left a very positive image. We were dedicated to identifying each of the individuals recovered and return them to their families. We succeeded in identifying all 131 bodies. We knew how important it would be to families to have their loved ones returned to them so that they could grieve properly and ensure that the families were given the opportunity to observe any religious customs.<sup>143</sup>*

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<sup>143</sup> Testimony of Thomas Hayes, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 380.



## **Gratitude for the Acts of Kindness in Cork, Ireland**

Juxtaposed against the feelings of abandonment by the Canadian and the Indian governments were overwhelming expressions of gratitude for the generosity, outpouring of concern, selfless behaviour and love from the citizens of Cork, Ireland. Person after person told the Commission about the kindness of the Irish people. Virtually every family representative who came before the Commission had praise for the local agencies, priests, nuns, social workers, hospital staff, taxi drivers, hotel staff and general citizenry. The understanding, generosity and compassion of the people of Cork continues to be a source of strength and inspiration to the people whose families perished in the Air India bombing. For many, those human bonds forged in the midst of tragedy and loss remain strong. The friendships that emerged have endured and family members who return for memorial services continue to be treated with warmth, respect and a sense of belonging.

Other people, including the Indian High Commissioner and his wife, were cited by family members for their humanity in the immediate aftermath of the bombing.

## The Kindness of the Irish

Throughout the first phase of the Inquiry, witness after witness commented on the kindness and generosity of the people of Cork, Ireland, and its surrounding communities.

Lata Pada told the Commission:

*The Irish...are indeed the world's most beautiful people, most compassionate, most caring. They took this tragedy upon themselves as if they had suffered and they had and they demonstrated such an incredible sense of kinship, such an incredible sense of humanity and compassion.*<sup>144</sup>

Not only did the frontline emergency responders devote themselves to the tasks of dealing with the horror, but ordinary citizens rose to the occasion. Zerina Pai told the Commission that:

*The people of Cork were fantastic. There were priests, nuns, social services workers to help us at the hospital.*<sup>145</sup>

Lorna Kelly told the Commission that:

*The Irish people made us feel that it was their tragedy as well as ours. The staff at the Imperial Hotel and at the hospital, as well as the taxi drivers, nuns, and all those that we came across treated us like family.*<sup>146</sup>

The deep commitment of the ordinary Irish folk was described by Ramachandra Gopalan in his written statement to the Commission:

*One gentleman, by name Mr. David Twomey, who was at that time president of one of the beer-making companies in Ireland...told my mother, "Don't worry. Consider me your son in Ireland" and voluntarily did all the help. He drove us wherever we needed to go.*<sup>147</sup>

<sup>144</sup> Testimony of Lata Pada, vol. 1, September 25, 2006, p. 65.

<sup>145</sup> Submission of Zerina Pai, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, pp. 181-182.

<sup>146</sup> Submission of Lorna Kelly, vol. 4, September 28, 2006, p. 432.

<sup>147</sup> Submission and Testimony of Ramachandra Gopalan, vol. 8, October 10, 2006, p. 826.

Susheel Gupta recalled being caught in the rain in Ireland:

*Neither my father nor I had a raincoat. As we were walking, a group of three Irish people walked up to us, greeted us. We were crying. They hugged us and then took off their own raincoats, handed one to my father as another one of the three individuals put his jacket upon me, buttoned it up, pulled the hood over my head and told me to keep the jacket...I still have the raincoat to this day.<sup>148</sup>*

As Ratheish Yelevarthy said:

*Motherly understanding and affection were showered on us by the people of Cork...Many Irish families volunteered to put us up in their homes.<sup>149</sup>*

Kalwant Mamak also marvelled at the kindness shown to family members of the victims:

*...the Irish were the most wonderful people in the world...their hospitality was out of this world.<sup>150</sup>*

Mandip Grewal was a child when his father became a victim. Now married, he attended the memorial in 2005:

*My wife and I visited Ireland last year for the 20th anniversary and we felt an overwhelming sense of warmth, comfort, belonging and respect that we will never forget. The way in which we were treated and acknowledged compels us to return and visit to Ireland again and again.<sup>151</sup>*

Satrajpal Rai also remarked at the ongoing concern of the Irish:

*To this day, the people that I met there...offered as much assistance as possible in any which way that we wanted...<sup>152</sup>*

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<sup>148</sup> Testimony of Susheel Gupta, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 215.

<sup>149</sup> Submission of Ratheish Yelevarthy, vol. 11, October 13, 2006, p. 1051.

<sup>150</sup> Testimony of Kalwant Mamak, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 144.

<sup>151</sup> Submission of Mandip Grewal, Exhibit P-68, vol. 8.

<sup>152</sup> Testimony of Satrajpal Rai, vol. 1, September 25, 2006, p. 102.

The identification of victims' bodies was one of the most difficult tasks for the surviving family members who had traveled to Cork. As Dr. Padmini Turlapati told the Commission:

*All through this, the Irish nurses and nuns were supportive. The local Irish opened their hearts and homes to all of us and brought us flowers, rice, and candles.*<sup>153</sup>

Mansi Kinworthy added:

*My father told me that the Irish people were very, very helpful... The people are particularly warm and welcoming. In fact, our family still remains close friends with the Irish nurse who was assigned to us in 1985.*<sup>154</sup>

Those brave individuals who undertook the recovery mission have high praise for the Irish people. **Mark Stagg** told the Commission:

*The Irish folk I've met truly know the meaning of kindness.*<sup>155</sup>

In the midst of otherwise tragic circumstances, Eric Beauchesne found some solace in the kindness of the Irish:

*The Irish people there were amazing. They took us into their homes literally and they made us feel very welcome and they felt so intimately tied to this tragedy, like it was their tragedy, in a way that I had never seen from any Canadians. It was very touching and it was extremely comforting to me.*<sup>156</sup>

In a video submission, Gaurav Gupta told the Commission of the outpouring of love and genuine care of the Irish people:

*The Irish people are so loving, caring and giving. I do not think any other country could have handled it as well as they did...They attend even though they do not know someone on the flight, but still pay their respects to those souls unknown to them. It is just unbelievable...They are truly part of the tragedy.*<sup>157</sup>

<sup>153</sup> Testimony of Dr. Padmini Turlapati, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 194.

<sup>154</sup> Statement of Mansi Kinworthy, vol. 4, September 28, 2006, pp. 439-441.

<sup>155</sup> Testimony of Mark Stagg, vol. 3, September 27, 2006, p. 347.

<sup>156</sup> Testimony of Eric Beauchesne, vol. 6, October 4, 2006, p. 641.

<sup>157</sup> Video submission of Gaurav Gupta, Exhibit P-71.

As a lasting testimony of the compassion and support of the Irish community, the first permanent memorial was established at Ahakista on Dunmanus Bay, Ireland.<sup>158</sup>

*I will fail in my duty if I don't mention about the Irish communities' thoughtful action of putting up an Air India memorial, the very same place which is the landfall the plane is supposed to have made had it travelled.*<sup>159</sup>

The personal and spiritual bond between the Irish and the victims' families continues every year as they assemble on June 23<sup>rd</sup> to commemorate this tragic event.

As Shipra Rana told the Commission:

*Hats off, really, to the Irish. Such a bond that I think most of us families had built with them. We got so much love from them. It was as though it had just happened in their house, that they were the ones who had lost somebody.*<sup>160</sup>

It is difficult to find a silver lining in the midst of such a massive loss of life. Nonetheless, the response of the citizens of Cork, Ireland, and its surrounding communities and the helpfulness of the Irish authorities demonstrated for many the meaning of humanity.



36

<sup>158</sup> The Ahakista memorial is described in section IV-B "Memorial Sites".

<sup>159</sup> Submission and Testimony of Ramachandra Gopalan, vol. 8, October 10, 2006, p. 827.

<sup>160</sup> Testimony of Shipra Rana, vol. 7, October 5, 2006, p. 684.

