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The original is at <http://www.therockalltimes.co.uk/2001/12/17/ronnie-flanagan.html>.

Sir Ronnie Flanagan was guilty of Omagh misjudgement

He always was forgetful, says Chief Constable's mum

by Kieren McCarthy

Sir Ronnie Flanagan is indeed guilty of mishandling intelligence in relation to the 1998 Omagh bomb, a startling interview with the Chief Constable's mother has revealed.

While the CC stands accused of mismanagement of information that ultimately led to the deaths of 29 people, Mrs Flanagan senior - his mother - has revealed in an exclusive interview with *The Rockall Times* that it was more likely he simply forgot.

"He always was a forgetful child," she told us. "I remember he would rush out to go to Finiston [primary school in Belfast] and be back ten minutes later because he'd forgot his lunch. He was always forgetting things like his gym kit on Wednesdays."



Flanagan: forgetful

As head of the Northern Ireland Police Service (formerly the RUC), Sir Ronnie holds one of the most powerful posts occupied by an unelected official in the UK, but if anything, since taking the post in 1996, he has become **more** forgetful, Mrs Flanagan told us.

"He popped round for a cup of tea last year and then there was some ambush of something and he had to rush off, but he left his hat behind. The boys told me later that he had trouble giving out orders because they couldn't see the insignia on the hat. Silly boy."

Despite being accused of "defective leadership, poor judgement and a lack of urgency" in the recent report by Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan over the Omagh bomb, it is more likely that he mislaid some paper, his mother told us.

Sir Ronnie has strenuously refuted the allegations, threatening to "publicly commit suicide" if they were true and accusing the authors of the report of deciding upon an "erroneous" conclusion before even starting the report and twisting subsequent information to fit that. But that just Ronnie's way, Mrs Flanagan said: "Oh, he's always been stubborn when it comes to admitting he's wrong. It was the same

when Amnesty International and the Bennett Report reported that he had been in charge of torture and illegal beatings in the Castlereagh interrogation centre back in the late 70s."

Mrs Flanagan also wishes he'd just owned up to the illegal shoot-to-kill policy of the specialist SAS-trained anti-terrorist Special Branch team he led in the 80s. "Oh, there was a lot of fuss about that. I remember Ronnie being all riled up. I told him just to tell them he did what he had to do, but he told me that they'd put him in jail if he told the truth."

And again in the 90s, Sir Ronnie's forgetfulness got him in trouble. "Those assurances he gave over the Drumcree marches a couple of years ago. He went round telling everyone he hadn't given them but when he came round that Sunday, I told him I remembered him telling me about them just a week earlier. Silly boy had forgotten. And of course it was too late to do anything then."

Nevertheless, despite his ups and downs, Mrs Flanagan remains enormously proud of her son and even has his picture in his full ceremonial police uniform on the wall of her lounge. "He's a good boy and he's done better than I could ever have hoped for. And he looks after his old mum - what more can a mother ask for?"



From *The Rockall Times* Monday 17th December 2001 <http://www.therockalltimes.co.uk/>.