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Why we trusted the



■ Harry and Carol Quinn with Snoopy the cat

CE library picture

On July 17, 2000, normal life came to a sudden and unexpected halt for Carol Quinn and her family.

That day the grandmother, together with her husband Harry, discovered the murdered bodies of her daughter Claire Austin and two young grandchildren, Keiren and Jade in their Northampton home.

All murders are horrific, but there was something particularly brutal about this case, for their killer was not some stranger, but Claire's husband Phillip.

As Carol and Harry, from Bugbrooke, together with the rest of the family, faced the most horrendous of circumstances, press interest in the case inevitably grew.

"I still have all the copies of the papers," said Carol.

"What was happening was all so unbelievable that I hoped reading it in black and white would make it sink in. I would read them over and over again, trying to make it real."

Understandably, the Quinns facing a lifetime of bereavement, initially declined to give interviews with the press, but after a search for her daughter's cat Snoopy ended successfully, Carol decided she wanted to say thank you to all those who had helped.

"It wasn't a decision any of us took lightly," she added. "But we didn't know

When tragic events hit the headlines it's important for a local paper to report the facts.

But is also important that the situation is handled sensitively and with respect.

Here Carol and Harry Quinn, recall their experiences following the devastating tragedy that changed their lives for ever...

many of those who had helped and we wanted to tell them all how much we appreciated what they had done.

"Finding Snoopy may seem like a small thing, but it was important to us and we decided that if giving an interview to the paper was the only way to say thank you, then that's what we had to do."

The article appeared in the *Chronicle & Echo* in the August of that year and it was to be the start of a close relationship between the family and the paper.

"I don't have a particularly good view of newspapers, particularly the tabloids," says Carol. "They don't seem to report the news any more and I just don't trust what they write, but did build up trust with the *Chron*."



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Chron...

"It was Paul Jeeves, who was then the chief reporter, who came out to see us.

"We were very vulnerable, nobody could really understand what we were going through, but he was sensitive about the situation, he listened to what we were saying and never put words into our mouth.

"We did have quite a lot of calls from reporters asking us to tell our story, one journalist from the *Daily Mail* turned up out of the blue at 8pm one night, we felt we had to invite her in.

"As I remember she did a pretty fair job, but there were times when we just didn't want to say anything, when we refused they would start asking how much money we wanted.

"It's unbelievable really. I don't know what makes someone think that paying us a few hundred pounds would make us change our minds. There were times when I got quite angry about it."

As the Quinns, together with other friends and family, were still struggling to come to terms with the events of summer 2000, they also had to prepare for Austin's trial in which they would hear graphic details of Claire, Keiren and Jade's last moments.

However, when the case ended with Austin being given three life sentences and the judge imposing a minimum tariff of 20 years, it was of little comfort to the Quinns whose own life sentence had already begun.

"Paul was there throughout the trial and we did appreciate the fact he followed it all the way through," said Carol.

"It was an incredibly difficult time and has been ever since, there is very little that anyone can do to make it easier, but at least we felt that the details had been reported correctly."

Since then the *Chronicle & Echo* has kept in touch with the Quinns, reporting their attempts to plant a tree in the memory of Claire, Keiren and Jade, the arrival of Carol and Harry's grandchild Josie, born on the first anniversary of Austin's sentencing and most recently their part in a national campaign organised by The Victims of Crime Trust calling for immediate changes to the criminal justice system.

While £30,000 is spent on every prisoner each year, just £18.66 is spent addressing the needs of victims and the Quinns, along with the parents of Sarah Payne, Damilola Taylor and James Bulger are spearheading a petition, encouraging members of the public to call a dedicated hotline to register their support for the campaign.

"Things must change and the needs of victims mustn't come second to the criminals," said Carol.

"If publicising what happened to Claire and the children can help other families in the future then it was worth it."

50,000 online readers

USE of the internet and email has come a long way since the *Chron's* website was launched six years ago.

www.NorthamptonToday, the online home of the *Chronicle & Echo* is now one of the most visited sites in the county and has more than kept pace with the astonishing growth of the internet.

This website gives an opportunity to communicate local information electronically to our existing readers and talk to a new generation in a more interactive way.

The *Chron's* dedicated website is packed with up-to-date local news and sport and can include complementary services such as providing links to relevant websites or archive stories.

The websites also contain full details about what's going on in your area ranging from film and theatre to trailers of the latest blockbusters.

On the sites are many features not found in the newspapers and include:

- My Home Town, a site aimed at expats.
- Lost Friends, a site aimed at reuniting lost friends.
- Business Directory online
- Motors Today, an incredibly useful tool if you are buying or selling a car
- Property Today featuring hundreds of homes for sale
- JobsToday where you can search for the perfect job.

Our website has also proved to be a highly successful tool for advertisers benefiting from the 50,000 people that visit NorthamptonToday every month.



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Tim Evans is the senior hearing aid audiologist at Hearing Health & Mobility who comments 'Hearing loss is extremely common in people of all ages, and can be mild through to profound. In almost any degree it can cause problems, from just an annoyance through to total isolation. Most hearing losses are easily correctable with today's technology, and a person's quality of life hugely improved. As a company we offer independent advice with no obligation and guarantee unrivalled service.' The cost of a Digital hearing aid varies and is dependent on the individual hearing loss, however as a general rule prices range from about £249.00 to around £1800.00 although we have heard reports that some company's do charge as much as £2500.00 - even though they advertise hearing aids for much less than this! No matter what the make or model, you shouldn't pay more than £1800.00 for a digital hearing aid.'



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