

## **Obituary- Mary Raftery Class of 1975 by Adrian Raftery, 1971**

Mary Raftery (1957-2012) was a 1975 St. Conleth's graduate who was one of three members of the first class of girls to join the school for Honours Maths and Physics in Fifth and Sixth Year, taught mainly by Michael Manning. She was a journalist whose television documentaries exposed decades of abuse of needy children in state-sponsored, church-run industrial schools in Ireland, prompting an apology by the Taoiseach and a government investigation. She died in Dublin on 10 January 2012, aged 54.

Mary Frances Thérèse Raftery was born in Dublin on Dec. 21, 1957. Her father, Adrian, was in the Irish diplomatic service, and she spent much of her childhood abroad. After graduating from St. Conleth's, she entered UCD to study engineering, but was then elected to the full-time position of Education Officer of the UCD Students Union for a year. After that she was derailed by an interest in journalism and never finished her degree.

Mary uncovered the child abuse as a producer for RTE and brought it to national attention in "States of Fear," a three-part documentary series broadcast in April and May 1999. In examining the state child-care system in Ireland, the series brought to light a Dickensian network of reformatories and residential schools for poor, neglected and abandoned children known as industrial schools.

"What television can do, if you get it right, is it can concentrate and focus a story at a particular time, and make people face it and make people furious," Mary said in a television interview in 2010. "So it was a question of constructing a series of programs that wouldn't allow people to go back into denial again, in other words that the body of evidence would be so overwhelming that it could not be denied anymore." Mary and a co-author, Eoin O'Sullivan, followed the series with a book-length adaptation of the material, *Suffer the Little Children: The Inside Story of Ireland's Industrial Schools*.

After "States of Fear," Mary Raftery further jolted Irish society with investigative programs like "Cardinal Secrets," about the sexual abuse of children in the Dublin Archdiocese, and "Behind the Walls," about Ireland's psychiatric hospitals and the large number of people committed there by their families. "Bringing the truth out is always a positive thing, even though it may be a painful truth," Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of the Dublin Archdiocese said in a tribute to Mary after she died. "I believe that through her exposition of sins of the past and of the moment, that the church is a better place for children and a place which has learned many lessons." "She demanded attention to the stories she told," Colm O'Gorman, executive director of Amnesty International in Ireland and the founder of One in Four, an organization that supports victims of sexual abuse, said in an interview on RTE after Ms. Raftery's death. "And they changed Ireland. They changed our society."

Both of Mary's brothers, Adrian (1971) and Iain (1979 - check), attended St. Conleth's. Mary was also survived by her mother, Ita; her husband, David Waddell; a son, Ben; and her sister, Iseult.