

Survivor of Miami Showband Attack Shares Story in New Book

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A surviving member of The Miami Showband has released a memoir decades after the brutal 1975 ambush that left three bandmates dead. In the book, he recounts the night of the massacre, his struggle with survivor's guilt, and his continued search for truth and accountability.

Des Lee, one of two surviving members of the popular Irish group The Miami Showband, has spoken out in detail about the horrific events of July 31, 1975, in a newly published memoir titled *My Saxophone Saved My Life: The Miami Showband Massacre and My Quest for Answers*. The massacre took place near Newry, when the band was returning to Dublin after a performance in Northern Ireland. A fake military checkpoint had been set up by members of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), a loyalist paramilitary group, along with individuals alleged to have had links to the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR), a former British Army unit.

Three bandmates, Fran O'Toole (29), Tony Geraghty (23), and Brian McCoy (23), were murdered during the ambush. Des Lee and fellow survivor Stephen Travers escaped with their lives, but not without deep psychological scars. In interviews, Lee has described how the trauma stayed with him for decades, particularly the burden of survivor's guilt. "It took me five years to write it. Every time I picked it up, it made me cry," he told *The Irish Mirror*, explaining the emotional difficulty of reliving the event.

Lee does not shy away from naming who he believes was responsible. He alleges that Captain Robert Nairac of the British Army played a central role in organizing the attack, including supplying weapons, disguises, and explosives. Though the British government has denied his presence, Lee maintains there is evidence supporting Nairac's involvement.

The book is not just about the massacre. It also explores Lee's life as a Catholic growing up in 1950s Belfast, describing the systemic discrimination faced in housing, education, and employment. Still, Lee said his memoir is not meant to be bleak. He promised readers a balance of humor, reflection, and heartfelt storytelling. Lee made it clear that his motive is to preserve the memory of his fallen bandmates, not to sensationalize the tragedy. "They were purely musicians," he said. "They were my brothers. I want to keep their names alive." The book provides insight not only into a tragic chapter of Irish history but also into one man's resilience and determination to seek justice and honor those who were lost.