

## LEITRIM'S GOT TALENT

*Ann O'Hagan*

IF I WAS to say to you that the lady in this picture is almost 96 years of age you would probably find that hard to believe. But if I went ahead to tell you that she is just after knitting this beautiful jumper for her great grand-daughter, then you too will realise what a wonderful lady she is and why I feel she deserves to receive recognition for her wonderful work, her determination and her positive outlook.

The lady's name is Alice O'Hagan and she lives, and has always lived, in Aghlacon, Glenboy, Manorhamilton, Co Leitrim. Alice, or Mama, as she is known affectionately, is a very positive thinker, and believe me she has had quite a few major set-backs in her life. Despite this she is the best person I've ever met in my life for accepting things that come her way that can not be changed. She may not realise it but that is a wonderful gift to have.

Mama started school at 4 and she had her knitting with her. God knows the knitting needles haven't been out of her hands very much since. She has knitted garments for so many people, as well as quite a few for herself and BOY could she model those

knitted garments! Her tall, elegant, slim figure worked wonders for any of her garments. Mama has won many prizes for her knitting and deservedly so. She can nearly do it with her eyes shut. Whenever someone comments on how well her knitting is doing her answer is 'arra, a lazy woman's job'. Well I'm sure you'd agree with me there's not too many lazy women would turn out the likes of this child's jumper in the photograph.

The little girl in the picture is Mama's four year old great grand-daughter, Amy and if you look closely at the alphabet on the jumper, the letters A, M and Y are done in yellow and are all in a straight line down the front of the jumper. This, I hasten to add was done without a pattern! Isn't that a truly magnificent achievement for a 95 year old. Well I think it is and she is an in-law, whom I love dearly and spend time with and have a laugh with every chance I can. Her stories are priceless and her memory of years and years ago is so vivid. One story she related to me concerned the good old Match-Making days. She told of the two men meeting up-one looking for a wife and the other was



the Match-Maker. The two would head off to an unsuspecting young lady's house. It was quite a common thing for the two men to look behind the byre before the'd go into the house, to see the amount of manure (or dung) that was to be seen there. This would indicate how many cows the family had and so give the two men an idea of the dowry which may be coming with the young lady. There was one instance she told of where there was a match made between a couple but they never met until the day of the wedding in the church. Can you imagine! I don't think the likes would happen today. Somehow Mama has certainly seen some changes in her time, most of them for the best. She has witnessed hard times but happy times.



Leaf art (above and below) prepared by Ann O'Hagan

One of five daughters, she was the one who worked with her father outdoors on the land and loved it. To this day Mama would tell you she was her father's 'shadow' and she thought the world of him. They used to get the work done but there was always a bit of fun. Micky Harte was a quiet man and in later years he got very deaf. Mama laughs as she recalls occasions when a neighbour man used to come to their house for milk. Milking was one of Mama's jobs but if she saw this neighbour doddling up the road, the cow got a speedy milking because Mama did not want to miss the conversation that her father and this neighbour man would have. Both men were very deaf and they managed to carry on a conversation—one of them talking about his wife and the other talking about the weather. It went something like this:

*'Good morning, Michael, not a bad one' and Michael would reply 'Arra, she shlept fairly well lash night'. Micky would continue 'A*

*few more days like this now and shure wee wont know ourselves' and Michael would reply 'maybe if she changed the tablets it might help'. Micky would say 'There's a nice wee stretch on the evenings' and Michael would reply 'if she'd quit the ravin' up through the house at night, it wouldn't be so bad'.*

Can you imagine the fun it was to listen to that and of course Mama wouldn't want to miss it. Mama's mother's name was Bridget and she was an awful worker and a great provider and believed in keeping children busy. If you sat down she'd be asking were you sick and if you weren't sick then she wouldn't

be long finding something for you to do. Mama would be more like her father and always has time to chat and have a laugh every chance she can. I watch Mama 95 and Amy 4 chatting and I think it is lovely for them and us, the fact that there is almost 92 years between them. They've both had the opportunity of getting to know each other and most important that they are both well enough to be able to communicate with each other. God knows it's hard to know which of them is enjoying it most. We are all great at talking good about people when they are gone to their rewards. Well my motto in life is 'do what you can for whoever you can while they are here'. With that in mind I decided to take time out and write a little article to give those of you who don't know her already a chance to discover a wee bit about Mama, my darling mother-in-law, whom I love dearly

*So God bless you Mama always for years and years to come And one more thing dear Mama Thank you for your son*

