

FORTY YEARS AGO a group of volunteers set up a Saturday morning school in Manorhamilton for children with learning disabilities. Martin was one of our pupils and he christened Úna "Big Miss Bredin." Thinking of this I realised YES! that was a great name for Úna, "The Big Miss Bredin"—not only was she tall in stature and wore a magnificent plait but she was "big" in so many other ways too. Big was the only way to describe her personality—larger than life and full of enthusiasm, nobody who ever met Úna, even for five minutes, forgot her. She had friends everywhere and everybody whose life was touched by her, and there are many, will miss her.

Big describes the deep love she had for this little corner of North Leitrim—or her beloved Glenaniff, for her family home, for her family—her late mother, Dada, Matt, Maura, Deirdre and her dear departed Padraic and for the local people. Her most heartfelt wish was that she could spend her life, despite her medical complications, here, and this was only made possible by the generosity and caring of her many good neighbours and friends—too many to mention. Maura and Deirdre have asked me to thank them all and especially Grace and Frank McGuinness who quietly and unobtrusively looked after Úna's every need and took care of her home particularly when she wasn't there. Their kindness and thoughtfulness will never be forgotten by them.

I have never met a colleague who was more proud of being a teacher than Úna. From the day she qualified and returned to join her father in Glenaniff School until she retired, her enthusiasm for her work never waned. She took a great personal interest in every child in her care and in their families too. She followed their progress through life, always wanting only the best for them. Her "out of school" stories were always told with great affection, coloured nonetheless by her own unique dry sense of humour. She loved Irish, spoke it fluently and never missed an opportunity to converse "as

# Úna De Bréadún

## 1945 – 2010

*Marie Shields*

Gaeilge." The INTO was very important to her. She served as secretary of the local branch for many years and on her retirement continued in this role for the local Retired Teachers Association. She never lost her deep interest in all things educational and kept up to date with the many changes which have taken place.

The Bredins are talkers but I can say, without fear of contradiction, Úna wore the crown. Her depth of knowledge on all subjects—education, drama, medicine, politics, books, travel, history—local and national—you name it—she could talk knowledgeably on them all and defended her viewpoint passionately. It paid to be a good listener in Úna's company.

De Bréadún, as we affectionately called her, came into her own at night—she was the proverbial "night owl." She visited friends and drove the roads at all hours without fear, even at the height of the Troubles and while she had no great attachment to worldly goods she always considered a "good" car essential to her lifestyle. Until her recent illness she visited her close friend Olive every Friday night and in between the brown bread and apple tart she settled the affairs of the nation until the wee small hours. The late Mrs Gallagher, Olive's mother, once remarked, "Úna comes today and goes home tomorrow."

Drama was a big love in her life and she was an active member of the Cloonclare Players for years, happiest helping behind

the scenes. She travelled far and wide to drama festivals and anywhere a good play was being staged. This was the first year she missed the Kilty festival but despite her illness she knew exactly what group performed what play and what kind of a job they made of it. After an adjudication, Úna would seek out the adjudicator and never hesitated to challenge his/her critique. The wise ones let her have her say.

Úna was involved with many groups and organisation but particularly with the IKA, the Irish Kidney Association. She fought to get a dialysis centre for Sligo General Hospital, knowing from her own personal experience the hardship which dialysis patients had to endure travelling to Dublin for treatment. She visited patients who were on dialysis, giving them great hope and encouragement and she fund-raised year-in year-out.

For many years Úna had more than her share of medical problems which she bore with great courage and fortitude. She was an inspiration to us all. She had a deep faith and a great love of God which sustained her. Her positive outlook, her refusal to allow her physical condition curtail her lifestyle, that took real strength of character and determination. She never complained or asked "Why me, Lord?" She lived life to the full as she had always done and refused to talk about herself or her illnesses. Her emphasis was always on others and not on herself. She was a good friend to many and will be dearly missed, not only by Maura and Deirdre, her nephews and nieces and other family members but also by her dear friends, who were so much a part of her life.

Úna died suddenly in the loving care of Maura and Déirdre. By her life she has shown us how to overcome adversity and suffering. Let us not remember how she died but how she lived.

"Leaba imeasc na naomh go bhfaighidh tú, a Úna dhí.

*Rest in peace dear "Big Miss Bredin."*