

SHOWBAND SUPERSTAR 'NEVER GREW UP'

EXCLUSIVE
BY **EDDIE ROWLEY**
SHOWBIZ JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR



THE daughters of Brendan Bowyer today share their personal memories of the Irish showband legend and tell the *Sunday World*: "He was a wonderful father."

Still grieving the loss of the much-loved iconic entertainer, who died in Las Vegas on May 28 at the age of 81, Aisling and Clodagh reveal that The Hucklebuck singer was the same gentle giant on and off the stage.

"There was no difference to the person you saw on stage," Clodagh tells me from her home in Los Angeles.

"My dad was just a teddy bear, a wonderful storyteller and always incredibly happy. He was serene and calm and loving. He had a wonderful sense of humour.

"It's fun to see old clips of him playing practical jokes. He never took himself too seriously. It was part of his humility, but it was genuine. He had so much dignity and he was deeply spiritual."

Aisling says: "We all put Dad on a pedestal. Our mother would say, 'If you do that one more time I'll be telling your father.' And we'd be, 'OK, OK, don't tell Daddy.' Our punishment would be for him to learn that we misbehaved. She would use that and hang it over us as kids, but it was never said.

"If we needed to get a spanking or something, I think my dad would be in tears if he ever had to do anything like that," she laughs.

They remember that there was always fun and laughter and some serious competition during their childhood and teenage years when their father was around.

"Dad was really competitive, he was a child that never grew up, really," Aisling says. "We'd be racing him down the drive, or down the road, or to the tennis courts. If we were in two cars leaving a movie, Dad would be racing mum home. Like I said, he didn't really grow up, he was very child-like."

ROGUE

Outside of music, Brendan's big passion in life was sport. "My dad was super athletic, and he had a great capacity for understanding sport inside and out," Aisling says.

"What he loved to do during the day was watch sport, participate in sport and talk to us about sport, which he avidly followed on TV."

His children all played tennis to the highest standard — Andre Agassi's father was one of their coaches — with his eldest child and only son, Brendan Jr, going on to win the Fitzwilliam Irish Open. He now runs the tennis club at a country club in Salt Lake City, Utah.

"Brendan was four before I came along," Aisling says. "I think Dad loved having a boy at that stage. Any pictures you'd see of him at that time he'd have Brendan on his shoulders. I think it was a lot of fun for Dad, especially for the sports side of it."

"Later on, Dad built a miniature golf course out back at our home in Las Vegas for the two of them, and they'd have a competition between the pair of them called The Bally-something Open. They were super competitive."

There were exciting childhood days when Brendan was the Grand Marshal of the St Patrick's Day Parade in Las Vegas.

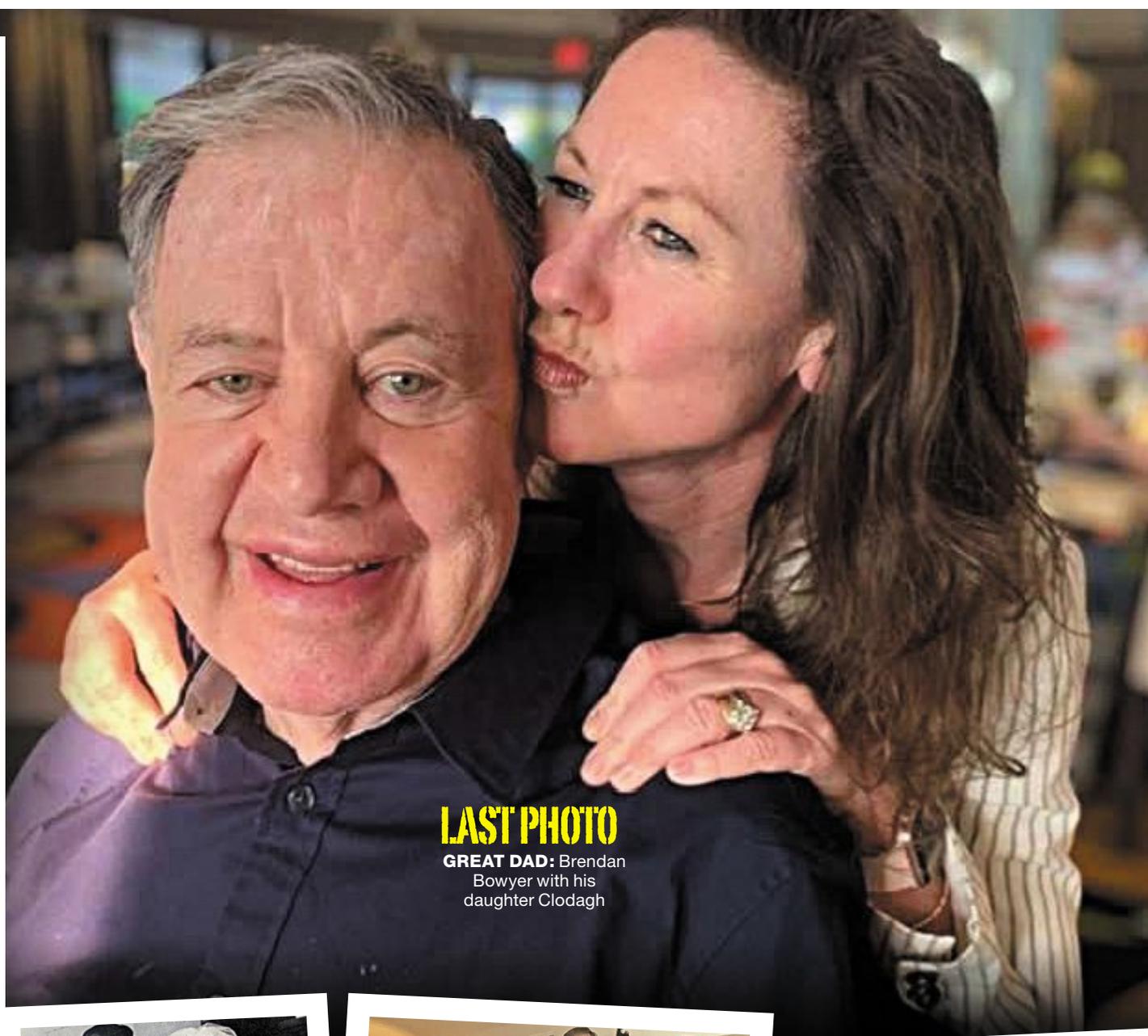
"We always got off school for it and put on our Paddy's Day outfits and we'd get to go on the floats with him and throw out candy, and then there'd be a big performance by Dad at the very end," Aisling reveals.

She tells how Brendan would never leave home for a show without saying goodbye to the children.

"When I was a child, Dad and I had a little ritual when he'd be going off to do his shows," Aisling says. "I'd walk him to the door and then I'd be flicking the light on and off and he'd have to beep the whole way down the drive. That went on even when I was in college, and it's something that's been super special to me."

Brendan was devoted to his wife, Stella, and loved his family life, which he managed to maintain despite a demanding showbiz career that saw him working in both Las Vegas and Ireland for many years.

"In Ireland, we lived in Galway at Dalton Drive, just down off Salthill," Aisling reveals. "We were in Galway because my mum's family were from Galway. It was important that when my dad was on the road she was surrounded



LAST PHOTO

GREAT DAD: Brendan Bowyer with his daughter Clodagh



HAPPY MEMORIES: Brendan with Stella, with his family and with Clodagh, Aisling and Brendan



by family." Clodagh says: "We were all born in Galway, but my dad had been going to Las Vegas to perform since the late '60s with The Royal Showband.

"For a time we were spending six months of the year in Ireland and six months of the year in Vegas. It was a big ordeal to get us back and forth and pack up the house, so in 1982 my mum said she couldn't keep on doing it."

"Then Dad was going on his own while we stayed in Vegas. At one point he was in Ireland for two years and coming back and forth to us. We had some great nannies over the years and they were all Irish, they were an extension of the household."

Clodagh says her parents never lost sight of the most important thing in their lives, their love for each other. "Their love never faded," she says. "When they were apart for six months of the year they definitely worked at how to reconnect. They put the work in and their relationship was rich and deep. Dad was our mum's soul mate in life."

Aisling is the only one of the three children

who followed their father into music, although Clodagh also took to the stage and is a successful actress.

"I got my first job performing on stage with Dad and I learned from him," Aisling says. "When we travelled up and down Ireland I got to know his love for the country, the way he'd talk to me about a bend in the road, or we'd be passing a graveyard where someone was buried that he knew."

"One time we were outside Gort on a sharp bend and he said he'd once lost control of a car there and landed in a family's front room... and they kept him in for a sing-song."

"I cherish those conversations I had in the car with Dad after a gig when he'd be animated. I don't think many adult children get that opportunity with their parents."

Now that she has two children of her own, Clodagh says she appreciates the time Brendan devoted to his family despite his busy showbiz life.

"Dad was always there for us," she adds.

BONO was a fan of Brendan Bowyer, and U2 went to see the Waterford-born singer perform in Las Vegas, daughter Aisling reveals. "I remember Bono talking about Dad on RTE television and saying how one of the highlights of an early U2 American tour was meeting Brendan Bowyer," she tells me. "U2 shot the video for I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For in downtown Las Vegas and then afterwards went into Dad's show. "I was a huge U2 fan growing up and still am, and my dad got me backstage to meet them many times. My dad wanted me to be able to meet Bono, knowing how much I loved him and wanted to really meet him. When U2 were performing at The Coliseum in Los Angeles one year it was Dad's night off and he took Clodagh and me on a plane from Vegas to see them. We pulled an all night-er that night seeing U2 in LA. It's still one of the highlights of my life."

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