

TRIBUTE: DERMOT IS BLOWN AWAY BY

‘She was in labour and I was with her. She was talking away one minute and then, in a flash, she took a turn and was gone in seconds...’



BOND: Rita with Big Tom and children

THE son of Ireland's 'King of Country' Big Tom today speaks for the first time about the devastating deaths of his parents and his partner in the space of 11 months last year.

Musician and farmer Dermot McBride's partner Rita Bogdanova (40), died suddenly while giving birth to the couple's third child last November.

Dermot, who lives in his native Oram, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan, was just coming to terms with the loss of his beloved mother Rose that January and his famous father Tom in April, when the tragedy happened.

In an exclusive interview with the *Sunday World* as the McBride family yesterday marked Big Tom's anniversary with an afternoon Mass and an evening dance, Dermot talks about coping with life in the aftermath of Rita's sudden passing.

DIFFICULT

"It's been difficult with our boy and two wee girls to look after," he says. "Our son, Ciaran, is going on 15, then there's Amelia, who is seven, and the baby, Adelina."

Recalling his relationship with his beautiful partner, Rita, who was just 40 years old and a native of Latvia, Dermot revealed that they met in his local town of Castleblayney.

"She was out on the town on her birthday when we first met," he says.

The couple struck up a relationship and, although they never wed, they went on to live happily together for 17 years.

SON OF COUNTRY LEGEND BIG TOM OPENS UP ON LOSS OF PARTNER AND PARENTS

EXCLUSIVE
BY **EDDIE ROWLEY**



"We just never got around to getting married," Dermot says. "We were getting on alright and we just carried on."

Rita had been a huge support to Dermot after his mother and father died. At the time of Big Tom's passing, she was then pregnant with the couple's third child.

On November 2 last, Rita went into labour at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Drogheda, with Dermot by her side.

All was going well, but then within seconds, he says, Rita lost her life.

"She was starting her labour and I was with her. She was talking away one minute... and then she was just gone. In a flash, she took this turn and was gone in seconds. I am still waiting for the final results of what the cause was."

Their baby daughter survived and is now being reared by Dermot, who is stoical as he now copes with life as a single parent.

"The wee girl is sleeping all through the night now, which is great," he says. "I put her down at 9.30-10.30pm and she won't wake up until 6.30-7am."

Dermot's sisters, Aisling and Siobhan, who live close to his home, with one just next door, are a huge support to him, he says.

As regards his work, he adds: "I do a bit of farming and it's only starting to get busy now.

I've given up the music for the moment."

Dermot plays in a group called The Outlaws, but he was also a member of his father Big Tom's band for many years.

"I played bass in his band from around 2002 to 2010," he tells me.

"It was unbelievable. It was a great life playing with the top band in the country. I didn't have to do what a lot of boys did, starting in the pubs."

It was then that Dermot finally grasped the devotion that was heaped on his father by fans at home and abroad.

FANATICS

"When I was going to school I didn't understand it at all," he remembers. "It was only when I was around 16 and went to dances that I saw what was going on."

"Then in the band you'd see the same people coming to every dance he played. They were fanatics. It was great for bringing people together."

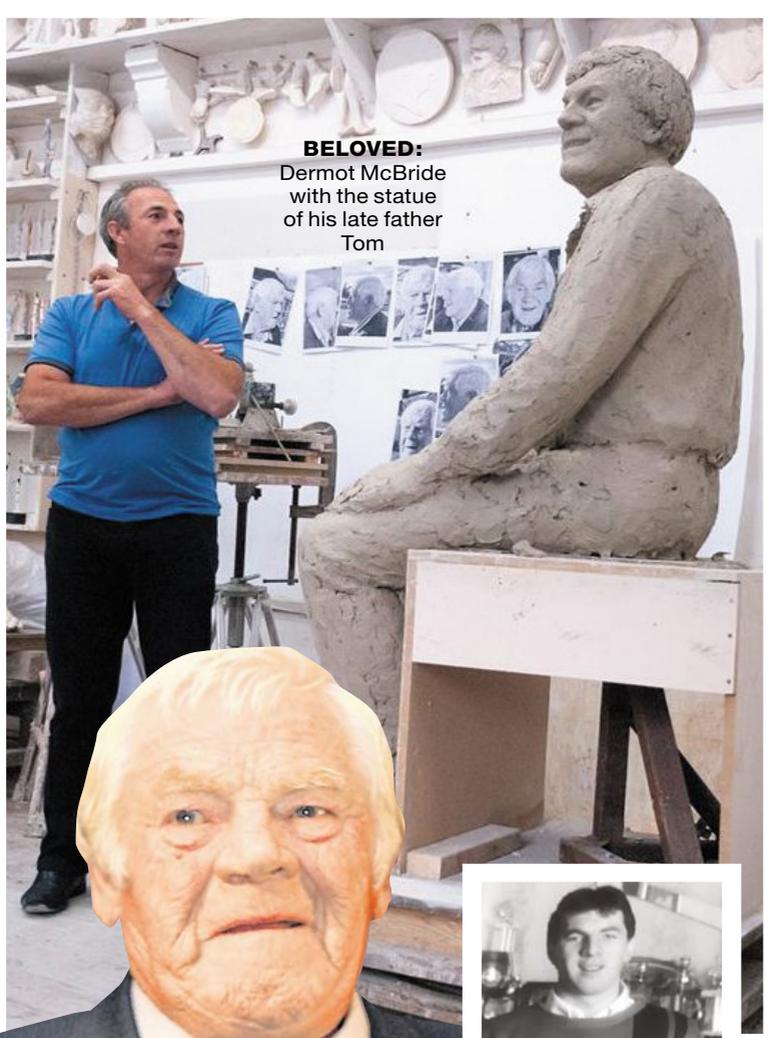
"It was the end of an era when my father died, but he had a great life, unbelievable."

Dermot says that his mother and father were totally devoted, and when Rose became ill they didn't tell Tom the seriousness of her condition until close to the end.

"We kept it from him until the very last," he says. "He

OUTPOURING OF LOVE FOR STAR

WORLD NEWS



BELOVED:
Dermot McBride with the statue of his late father Tom



CLOSE:
Big Tom on stage and (inset) with Dermot

“It was the end of an era when my father died, but he had a great life”



ICONIC:
Big Tom with his beloved wife Rose

FOUR HELD AT AIRPORT

FOUR men have been arrested at Luton Airport in the UK suspected of membership of a proscribed organisation contrary to the Terrorism Act, police said. The men, all Sri Lankan nationals, are currently being held in custody at a police station in Bedfordshire, according to Scotland Yard. They arrived on an international flight on Wednesday evening.

Say 'Shhh' to that doubting voice
with the best long-term value on the market.

Silence that voice today
Call 1850 30 50 90
or visit electricireland.ie
Estimated annual bill €1,736

For definition of 'best long-term value', see electricireland.ie. Estimated annual bill €1,736 (average consumption, urban 24hr, discounted unit rate, standing charge, PSO levy and carbon tax). Residential, Dual Fuel, Direct Debit and online billing. Terms and conditions apply, see electricireland.ie/eab. Rates at 1st of April 2019, subject to change.

Smarter Living **electric Ireland**

was having his own problems. He was pretty sick at the time when my mother passed. The doctor was checking on him as much as my mother. "Then he rallied and was doing good. He just loved to sing, and there was one night afterwards, when a few of us were in the house, he sang a couple of songs. "Instead of sitting and chatting he'd rather sing a song. He was



MISSED:
Mum Rita passed away

more comfortable with that." *Big Tom's family were astonished by the massive outpouring of love for their father when he died on April 17 last year, Dermot says.* "The funeral and the unveiling of his statue was unbelievable with the crowds that came out, and the cards and letters are still coming in."