

## A life of drama

| June 2nd, 2009

ACTRESS and drama teacher Una Way's life has been nothing short of success, excitement, passion, thrill and drama (as in the arts).

She has had many unbelievable experiences and I have been lucky enough to be part of some of them.

On the morning when I went to re-visit my former drama teacher/director and good friend Una she was looking healthier and more relaxed than when I was working with her during our Cardwell Drama Kids days.

She had such an enormous influence on my life, especially from the ages of eight to 12 \_ and even to this day. Her enthusiasm and passion for teaching her drama kids to believe in themselves and to never give up is something that has been a part of my life ever since.

Una described her childhood in England as an exciting and fantastic time \_ until she turned 11 years old. It was then that she had to make a choice: either she continued to go to Sadlers Wells Ballet School (at the time she was a dancer) or she could choose to go to boarding school as her parents wanted.

In the end, she chose to go to boarding school as she believed that her body shape was not fit for a ballet dancer. Instead she became interested in the arts and joined the theatre.

Una said that her most memorable moments during her time in the arts was when she played the role of Alison in *Look Back in Anger* and when she played Katherine in *The Heiress*.

In 1958 she left England and migrated to Canada where she lectured at Mount St Vincent University and Dalhousie Universities. She published a voice and speech textbook *Speak Up I Can't Hear You* and worked as a professional actor with the Neptune Theatre Company. **She directed 17 three-act plays on an amateur basis for the Halifax Theatre Arts Guild** and was also a writer/performer for CBC radio.

In 1983 Una moved to Australia and came to Townsville because her brother lived here, but after just three months began travelling again before settling in Sydney for a few years where she researched and completed a book called *Christmas Story* which was published in 1988. She worked for Woolworths head office as an archivist, historian and editor. She also worked as a voice and speech trainer with the Sydney TV and Film and Theatre School.

Una returned to the North in 1987 where she taught at the TAFE in Ingham and met her husband George Hill. They were married in 1990 and travelled around Australia before settling in Cardwell in 1995.

In May 2007 Una moved to Townsville because her husband George had to undergo surgery. However it hasn't kept her away from the theatre, at the moment Una is a volunteer for filming productions and concerts at the Tropic Sun Theatre and Music Centre.

However, I know her best from her days in Cardwell as a drama teacher.

Una began teaching drama in Cardwell in 1998 with the hope of achieving two goals \_ to develop confidence within her students and also to develop the students' communication skills.

She definitely achieved that and was extremely happy when I asked her about this during our interview.

During her time in Cardwell and Ingham between the years of 1987-2007, she worked hard to help the region's children achieve these goals.

She was the drama teacher for grades 1 to 7 at Cardwell State School from 1999 to 2001; held drama sessions at Ingham Endeavour from 1990 to 2002; filmed documentaries of *Bandjin - Sea Country* and *Forest Car Rally*; directed *Rome Sweet Rome* for Ingham Little Theatre Group and also a federation movie with 22 kids from Year 5 and 6 at Cardwell School.

She also acquired several RADF grants over the six years from 2001 to 2007 to write, direct and film the following adventures with the Cardwell Drama Kids: *The Terror of the North*, *Where's the Kids?*, *StarBright*, *Peg Leg*, *Stowaway*, *Dragon Dreaming* and *Treasure of Dead Horse Creek*. This also included three 15 minute courtroom drama performances staged live in the Cardwell Court House during the SeaFest.

For each of these movies she organised a major movie premiere and was always filled with feelings of pride and enormous satisfaction as she watched the kids (including myself) grow a little more with each performance. She said the main aim for her was to help the students develop clear speech, confidence and communication skills.

Una's most fulfilling major film with the Cardwell Drama Kids was *The Terror of the North*. According to Una it was the most enjoyable because she had less work to do and most importantly the kids grasped their characters role which made the film very good to watch.

She said that her husband George Hill, who was the cinematographer in all of the major films and courtroom dramas was a great editor and contributed 50 per cent towards the success of each production.

As Jared Bocca, one of the original Cardwell Drama Kids, said: "Without the camera, it would have been a normal drama class." How right he was!

Una said she missed the Cardwell Drama Kids and the many parents and helpers who assisted her. She is hoping to visit Cardwell soon.

I definitely miss Una and the movies that we made, but I believe what I can take from those experiences was to enjoy and savour each and every moment you have with those around you, especially when working with fun and interesting people, like Una Way.

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