

A Tribute to Brigid Willmore

Brigid Willmore, the first editorial assistant and then full editor of *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, was a dynamic, progressive and dedicated worker - a better choice of person to establish and build up the Journal would have been hard to find. Tragically, within months of resigning her part-time post with the Journal to allow a full-time appointment, Brigid died in a car crash with her mother and niece. Her loss will be felt deeply by many organisations to whom she contributed her energy and insights in numerous valuable ways, and by her many friends. -We join with her family in mourning her untimely death.

In whatever Brigid undertook she always set herself exceptionally high standards of achievement, expected high standards of those around her. She appeared a tireless worker, and only after her death did any of us realise with quite how many organisations she had been involved with. These included the School of Social Work, the National Association of Social Workers, and the Association of African Science Editors, and others, as well as assisting those organisations and individuals identified below. She was a woman of many talents and interests including editing, organisational development and administration, finance, AIDS, women's issues, training, social work and other concerns of social development.

Brigid's advice and encouragement to WASN have been vital for us, and we are deeply grateful and indebted to her for this support. It continues even after her death: we often ask ourselves what Brigid would have done in this or that situation. Her excellent skills and wisdom in organisation and management were invaluable in helping us to sort ourselves out, to know what was possible for us to do and what our limitations were.

Dr S Ray for the Women and AIDS Support Network.

Brigid was elected to the ZACH Management Committee for the maximum period of four consecutive years. She showed totally selfless commitment to the needs of mission hospitals and clinics.

Mr Nyenya, Zimbabwe Association of Church-related Hospitals.

Brigid was always keen to improve both her and others' knowledge of scholarly editing in order to develop high

standards in the publication of scholarly research. Those of us working in that area already miss her enthusiasm for and dedication to these objectives.

Mr Stringer, University of Zimbabwe Publications.

An activist, a writer a social worker, a friend... these are but a few words that can best describe WAG's relationship with Brigid. We miss her expertise and interest, her help and advice.

Ms G Siwela for the Women's Action Group.

Brigid was one of those rare individuals who had a clear sense of justice and the commitment and courage to pursue it. She was not afraid to speak her mind, or to expose inadequacies, and she frequently did both. This earned her a mixture of respect and apprehension among the individuals and organisations with whom she worked: Brigid did not suffer hypocrisy, laziness or sheer incompetence lightly. Where she saw these she tackled them head on. Her saving grace, even among those under attack, was that she applied the same rigorous standards to herself. She also moved beyond the criticisms, and sustained friendship and trust, by helping build individual and organisational skills so that the end results were constructive.

With humour and persistence, Brigid would insist on quality and clarity. She would sometimes mock me for expressing things too emotionally or loosely, and always encouraged me to put more thought into what I wrote. I counted Brigid as one of my most valued advisors.

Mr G Salole, Save the Children, USA.

Brigid was a very skilled facilitator in meetings in which she made most valuable and fearless contributions; I say fearless, as she was not to be intimidated by the participants, even those holding high positions. Her most recent contribution to IMBISA was helping facilitate the study of Inculturation by all the Catholic bishops of Southern Africa.

Fr Ted Rogers for IMBISA.

Brigid became a pillar of our organisation. "Pillar" is the appropriate word. We leaned on her skills, her

strength, her generosity with herself. Her conscience, consistently tuned, bluntly expressed (often to our annoyance), became our moral guidepost. Her vision and drive anchored and supported all our efforts.

Federation of African Media Women, Zimbabwe.

Brigid will be remembered for her sensitivity to other people's needs and was known for her reflections. After a controversial encounter, she would always come into the office or telephone to check how the other half survived the encounter, and to try to empathise with the colleagues At ACT she was affectionately called "Auntie Brigid" by the staff.

Mrs E Matenga for the AIDS Counselling Trust.

Sometimes it was pure torture to work with Brigid in planning a workshop because she would not settle for any short cuts. Sometimes these workshops were very sensitive or the participants were very difficult, ie they felt they knew it all. However, because of Brigid's skills the participants always expressed great satisfaction at the end of the workshop, and the facilitators heaved a sigh of relief.

Mr C Wakatama for the Catholic Development Commission.

Sadly the very demanding standards Brigid set herself exacted their toll. During the last few years of her life she gave so much of herself to projects, organisations and individuals that she had too little space for her own personal needs and her own affairs. In 1991 she became increasingly burnt out, to the extent of making a resolution towards the end of the year to withdraw from certain commitments. This she found very difficult to do, as she was aware of being needed by many groups and was reluctant to let anyone down. She also had a healthy curiosity and interest in many organisations and issues, and actively wanted to be part of them. Yet she had begun to disengage and reorientate herself, for instance withdrawing from an organisation she had helped to found, the AIDS Counselling Trust, the complex organisational and financial affairs of which demanded ever increasing inputs. Yet she made it clear that she would still be available for consultation when needed.

Brigid was one of the few people whom one could phone at almost any hour - at least until midnight - in the certainty that she would be awake. Typically she sat at her desk with her computer and telephone and, in her own idiosyncratic style, the television on. Somehow she concentrated on her work, and was highly productive, and watched movies at the same time.

One of the many lessons Brigid's friends and colleagues may learn from her life and death is the need to balance hard work and dedication with space for self-renewal. Life may be far shorter than any of us expect. As a close friend of Brigid's I feel very sad that she did not achieve this realisation earlier, and manage to have more enjoyment from life in recent years. She was a vibrant person, able to live life to the full, and yet her typical response over the last year or two to the question "How are you?" was "I'm drowning". She was fiercely resistant to direct offers of help, but talked a number of times about the intense stress she was under, and the need to let go of certain areas of work. She wondered, as do many of us, where the years were going.

Although Brigid has gone, as Frances Chinemana, one of her closest friends, observed in her farewell address at Brigid's funeral:

What a legacy this full and busy life has left us. Brigid's example will live on, in the written word, in her books and reports. It will live on in the mark she made on so many organisations. It will live on in the hearts of her family and friends, who learnt so much from her, and were so privileged to have their lives touched by hers.

We were by no means ready to see her go, and she ... was by no means ready to give up the cause she committed herself to. But she is at peace now, and she can rest after all that hard work and endless giving of herself. Let us learn from her proud example what real open heartedness means, the true worth of determination and tenacity We shall never forget her.

The final words are from Mashambanzou:

*We mourn for Brigid, the genius, wisdom and wit that died;
The learning and the laughter that are lost by her going;
Her incisive brain that disentangled the mess of our
Constitution and Trust documents;
Brigid was like a candle that shone from the darkness, and in*

her light we knew what goodness was.

Sr Noreen and Sr Margaret for Mashambanzou Trust.

Helen Jackson, Director of Research, School of Social Work.