

**STRICT EMBARGO until 9.00am on Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021**

## **A story of true love, loss and the kindness of strangers – international singer-songwriter Don Mescall to release heartbreaking ‘The Last Song (Song for Jim)’**

International singer-songwriter **Don Mescall** is set to release a heartbreaking song **‘The Last Song (Song for Jim)’** – encapsulating a story of true love, loss and kindness of strangers – with all funds raised from **downloads** and **donations** funding The Alzheimer Society of Ireland’s dementia-specific supports and services across the country.

The re-recorded song will be available for **downloading** and **streaming** on **Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> November** with a **new music video** featuring people living with dementia and family carers from across Ireland. People can make a donation today on [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)

**Media can view an Unlisted YouTube link for the new music video [here](#)**

It was a strange journey of synchronicity that brought together a retired County Cork builder, **Jim Colbert**, his loving wife, **Caroline**, with international singer-songwriter Don Mescall but come together they did, bound by a diagnosis of dementia, a true love story and the kindness of strangers.

Life couldn’t have been better for retired builder Jim and his wife Caroline until, like 30 couples throughout Ireland every day, in late 2017, **Jim received a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease**. Jim initially attended The ASI’s **Bessboro Day Care Centre** in Cork and within three years of diagnosis, he started a new part of this adventure under the care of the dementia-specific team at **Oaklodge Nursing Home** where he happily resides still, Caroline visiting him every day she is allowed to do.

Often putting music to these beautiful soundtracks of their life, their special song became **‘The Last Song’**, an emotionally charged piece of music written by **Don Mescall** and **Mike Reid** taken from Don’s **‘Lighthouse Keeper’** album (2018). Caroline played it often to Jim, making a movie of them together to put over Don’s gentle words and melody as they continued to make the most of this new life.

Having once again listened to **‘The Last Song’** one dark March evening, Caroline decided to reach out and contact Don just to say **thank you** for creating such a wonderful song. Not expecting a reply, she was dumbstruck when Don replied directly and she feels what happened next was divine intervention culminating in the launch of this poignant song to raise awareness and much-needed funds.



**Singer / Songwriter Don Mescall said:** *“I remember being really moved after reading a message from Caroline sent to me on Instagram; it was one of those moments when the words travelled straight from one heart to another. As we started to correspond I learnt a little more about her and Jim's extraordinary journey and how ‘The Last Song’ had become a catalyst of sorts and brought us all together. I later invited Caroline to come to Quivvy Church where I now live in Cavan, and after listening and gaining an understanding of their beautiful love story, I offered to re-record the song and make it available for release to help raise awareness of The Alzheimer Society of Ireland and their amazing work, and of course Caroline and Jim's touching story and the stories of the many other people living with dementia in Ireland. It truly is a joy to help and I'm truly humbled by the response to the song.”*

**Citing early intervention from The ASI as one of the many blessings they have received on this road, Caroline Colbert said:** *“Call The Alzheimer Society of Ireland as early as you can, I delayed as I foolishly thought this was a disease for old people. From my initial contact with our Dementia Adviser Vanessa Bradbury, my shoulders relaxed when for the very first time I was able to say my husband has dementia whilst sitting with Vanessa at The ASI's Bessboro day care centre in Cork. From that day to this, the team at Bessboro has been a constant support, facilitating me to attend training courses and learn a new language of communication which has really helped both Jim and me. We also have a wonderful local GP and geriatrician who have been great friends to us both.”*

**Thanking Don for his generosity in releasing his beautiful song and honouring Jim in this way, Caroline ended by saying:** *“My gorgeous fun adventurous husband Jim left me in December 2019. I wish I had known the day he would leave because I would have made sure we had one last wonderful conversation. However, I have grown to love this new Jim that I share my days with. He looks so like the man I married six short years ago. I tell him every day how much he is loved and cherished and I like to think he hears me. I know Jim is still there and for that, I am very thankful. We may not have been each other's first love but being the last is a privilege.”*

### **More About Caroline and Jim's Story**

This loving couple, who had expected that some of their best years were still to come, was devastated by this news of Jim's diagnosis in 2017, but were pragmatic as Caroline said: *“Even though dementia was an uninvited guest into our home, and initially something we fought against hoping interventions and treatments would ‘cure’ it, once we accepted the diagnosis it gave us the freedom to talk and plan around this new life of ours.”*

Showing strength, they didn't realise they had, and with much help and support of The ASI, they planned how they would deal with the years ahead and the many changes that were to come - with Jim playing a very active part in planning how he wanted this unwanted adventure to pan out. Jim always liked a plan.

One of the many things Caroline did was to make a daily video of them together, something she looks at often to remind her how far they have travelled as they faced this diagnosis head-on and worked to adapt their world to accommodate it. Caroline's devotion to Jim is such that during lockdown she trained to care for Jim so she could continue to visit him. With the co-operation of the team at Oaklodge, they devised a first of its kind ECP (Essential Care Partner) programme which Caroline and one other family member undertook.

**ENDS**

**For further information contact:**

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**To set up an interview with Don and Caroline contact:**

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**NOTES TO THE EDITOR**

**About The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI):**

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland is the leading dementia specific service provider in Ireland. The Alzheimer Society of Ireland works across the country in the heart of local communities providing dementia specific services and supports and advocating for the rights and needs of all people living with dementia and their carers. Our vision is an Ireland where people on the journey of dementia are valued and supported. A national non-profit organisation, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland advocates, empowers and champions the rights of people living with dementia and their communities to quality support and services. The Alzheimer Society of Ireland also operates the Alzheimer National Helpline offering information and support to anyone affected by dementia on 1800 341 341.

### **Alzheimer National Helpline:**

For more information on our supports and services during this challenging time, please contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland National Helpline where you can now also book in a 1:1 session with a Dementia Nurse or Dementia Adviser. The Helpline is open six days a week Monday to Friday 10am–5pm and Saturday 10am–4pm on 1800 341 341. Email at [helpline@alzheimer.ie](mailto:helpline@alzheimer.ie) or via Live Chat at [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)

### **About Don Mescall**

Born in the small hurling Parish of Ahane, Co Limerick, southern Ireland, Don Mescall is the second youngest in a family of 11 siblings. Mescall left Ireland in the early nineties, to move to London. His first cut as a songwriter with Road to Glory by Eleanor Shanley. Other songs of Don's soon found their way to artists including Frances Black, who went on to record nine more of Don's songs. His songs have over 16million hits on YouTube and have been recorded by Geri Halliwell, Ronan Keating, Sir Cliff Richard, Nathan Carter, Sharon Corr, Aslan and Boyzone. <http://www.donmescall.com/biography.html>

### **ABOUT DEMENTIA**

- There are 64,000 people with dementia in Ireland and the number of people with the condition will more than double in the next 25 years to over 150,000 by 2045.\*
- There are 11,000 new cases of dementia in Ireland each year. That's at least 30 people every day and anyone can get dementia - even people in their 30s/40s/50s.\*\*
- Dementia is an umbrella term used to describe a range of conditions which cause changes and damage to the brain.
- Dementia is progressive. There is currently no cure. Dementia is not simply a health issue but a social issue that requires a community response.
- The majority of people with dementia (63%) live at home in the community. Over 180,000 people in Ireland are currently or have been carers for a family member or partner with dementia with many more providing support and care in other ways.
- 1 in 10 people diagnosed with dementia in Ireland are under 65.
- The overall cost of dementia care in Ireland is just over €1.69 billion per annum; 48% of this is attributable to family care; 43% is accounted for by residential care; formal health and social care services contribute only 9% to the total cost.

*Figures referenced to Cahill, S. & Pierce, M. (2013) The Prevalence of Dementia in Ireland*

*\*Figure referenced from Alzheimer Europe (2020) Dementia in Europe Yearbook 2019 'Estimating the prevalence of dementia in Europe'*

*\*\*Figure referenced from Pierce, T., O'Shea, E. and Carney P. (2018) Estimates of the prevalence, incidence and severity of dementia in Ireland.*