

ANTHONY O'BRIEN THE SINGER

**"A HUNDRED FIFTY YEARS AGO HE DIED."
MY FATHER CRIED THE WAY HE ALWAYS DID
TO MOURN O'BRIEN'S DEATH. "TOO YOUNG, TOO YOUNG.
HE TOOK THE TREASURE WITH HIM WHEN HE WENT
AND LEFT US ALL THE POORER FOR ITS LOSS ..."**

**MY FATHER SAID O'BRIEN WAS THE LAST
WHO KNEW, AND WHO COULD SING, THE ANCIENT SONGS
THAT HAD BROUGHT FORTH FROM DISTANT MISTS OF TIME
THEMES THAT WERE OLD WHEN PATRICK HEARD THEM SUNG
BY BARDS WHO CAME TO BID HIM WELCOME HERE:**

**THE SONGS OF GODS AND WARRIORS AND KINGS
OF WOMEN, MONSTERS, BATTLES, BIRTH AND DEATH
THE SONGS TO SOOTHE, OR TEASE, OR BRING TO TEARS
THE FORTUNATE WHO UNDERSTOOD THE TONGUE
(AND FEARED THE SECRET MAGIC OF THE WORDS)**

THE THING O'BRIEN LOVED BEST IN THE WORLD?

**- TO SPEND THE WARM BRIGHT EVENINGS OF JULY
ADRIFT UPON THE SHANNON WITH HIS FRIENDS
TO SHARE A TUNE AND DRINK EACH OTHER'S HEALTH
NOT CARING WHERE THEIR LITTLE BOAT MIGHT STRAY**

**BUT THEN, MY FATHER SAID, AS DUSK CAME DOWN
A FRIEND WOULD ASK O'BRIEN FOR A SONG
AND HE WOULD THINK A MOMENT, THEN BEGIN
ONE OF THE LAYS THAT OSSIAN GAVE THE WORLD
(A SONG REMEMBERED THEN BY NONE BUT HIM)**

**THE LOVE AND POWER IN O'BRIEN'S VOICE
WOULD CARRY FAR BEYOND THE LITTLE BOAT
AND MAKE THE SHANNON RING, MY FATHER SAID:
THE FOLKS FOR MILES AROUND WOULD STOP THEIR WORK**

**AND COME AS IF ENCHANTED TO THE SHORE
TO HEAR HIM SING.**

- JAN.1993