

## EDITORIAL

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## Champion

THE flaming controversy over Angela's Ashes has bored some Limerick people and "fired up" others. More importantly it has obscured Pulitzer author Frank McCourt's new role in Limerick life. Quietly but effectively he is becoming a significant champion of people in need on Shannonside.

Last year his patronage of Limerick Parents and Friends of the Mentally Handicapped was revealed. It is difficult to think of a more deserving cause than that led by the legendary Ger South. Now it is disclosed, almost incidentally, that McCourt has helped initiate a new scholarship at the University of Limerick "to help students from less well-off areas take third level education.

Cynics may well dismiss all this as a public relations stunt. The truth, however, is that McCourt has not blown his own trumpet on this or any other of his humanitarian activities. Indeed, his image problem generally among the local population, far from being caused by PR is the result of a lack of it.

The continuing controversy over the book and then the film has helped to boost sales of both. But not all publicity is good publicity. Certain aspects of the brouhaha have damaged McCourt in certain quarters—and avoidably so.

For example, a PR consultant, confronted by local people who rightly or wrongly felt hurt by the book would not have dismissed them with the jibe that help was available for them but would have listened seriously to them and addressed their concerns; would not have allowed a relative piddling dispute over copyright on an old photograph assume major proportions but would have settled it promptly and amicably; would not have glossed over any factual mistakes in the book but would have corrected them.

But, most pertinent of all, a PR consultant would first have advised McCourt to be seen to be involved in local charity work. Most people reading the book would admire him as a writer. Working for local charity would prove the sincerity of his social concern not just for the Frankie McCourts of the past but those of the present and the future, would persuade us to actually like the guy.

McCourt obviously felt he had nothing to prove. Nor does he. Ironically, the very fact that he has approached the subject in his own way—privately—and in his own time is testament of his genuine determination to make a difference.

His latest cause—third-level education for disadvantaged students—may not have made an enormous impact initially. Ultimately, however, it could help right a wrong from the era of Angela's Ashes which survives to this day: class discrimination.

## Sea alert

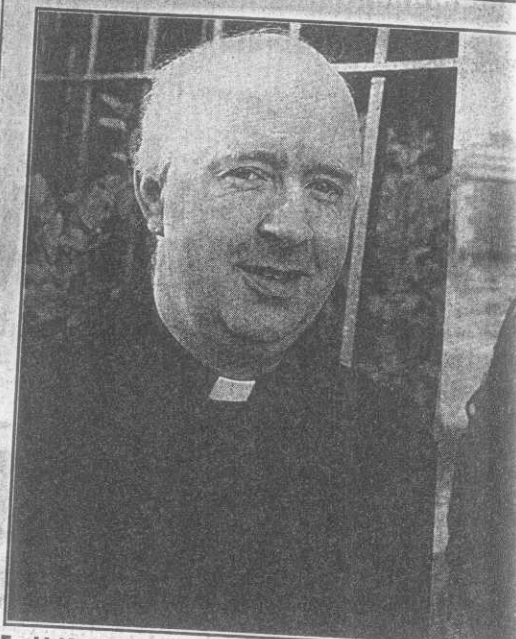
ONE hundred or so miles off the Mid-West lurks a 2.5-mile oil slick. Imagine the devastation were it to be swept ashore. Wildlife would be decimated, beaches destroyed—and with them much of this year's tourism revenue. Given the right—or rather the wrong—Atlantic conditions, the tide could spread the pollution all the way up the Shannon Estuary to Limerick city.

But whisht! Although this latest spillage, caused by a collision between two ships, was initially described by Marine Minister

## Is Limerick r

THE Mid-West might officially be still in the grip of midwinter but already there's a stretch in the evenings and in the mornings, too, of course. Our mega rainfall gauge, the Shannon, has returned to something like normal levels, although even at full flood a few weeks ago it was nothing like the foaming torrent of a few years ago when in Corbally it could actually be heard groaning deeply and eerily with the great weight of water and storm debris grinding against

## BRENDAN H



Fr JJ Keane tells the story of a wonder woman

## Teenagers'

LIMERICK Catholic teenagers turned-off by church-going are apt to be told it's not supposed to be entertaining. And it isn't. But it isn't supposed to be boring either.

Boring celebrants who suit themselves rather than their congregations or God should follow the example of Fr JJ Keane who offers the 5.45pm weekday mass at St Joseph's. He appreciates that the people in the pews are on their way home, tired and hungry after a hard day's work, so he doesn't prolong the sacrifice with self-indulgent singing and trimmings. But he doesn't rush it either.

He is reverential, he sticks to the essentials and his 20-minute

mass minutes great notably a story other true s whose husband the Pa against the girl and to commo  
SHE her exerts Obvious clever n was sin Rememb St Brigid