

BRENDAN HALLIGAN

The love that a local writer couldn't put into words

WRITING talent runs in the McCourt family. There's Frank, of course, and Malachy. Now here's Alphie.

The latest of the brothers reared in the Lanes of Limerick to come to literary prominence has just had an article published in the prestigious Washington Post for Mothers Day, which occurs much later there than here. It is a beautiful article.

Alphie, who lives in New York with his vivacious wife, Lynn, writes of his unspoken love for his mother, Angela of the Ashes. But if he couldn't put it into words then, he sure can now.

He writes: "When I was five we moved to Rosbrien, on the outskirts of Limerick, to the house of my mother's cousin Gerald Griffin. It was a mean house. When Mam was in the house it was bearable but she was gone for long periods during the day, working, maybe, or trying to cadge something in the way of food.

"When she was gone, it was cold and damp, wet and bleak. My older brother Mike and I played outside in the cold and the wet, or inside, in the damp.

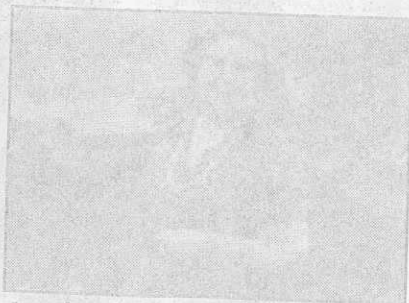
"Play we did, engage we did but we were always hungry. We would wait for Mam to come home to light fire and lamp if we had coal and oil and to cook if she had found food.

"Whatever Mam brought she brought herself. To me she brought the world."

Then the scene switches nearly 3000 miles and 30 years to New York in 1981. Alphie went to visit Angela in hospital. She had emphysema.



Alphie's brother, Frank (11)



Angela of the Ashes: she meant the world to Alphie (11)

"I had no conversation with doctors or nurses but I knew that she was very sick. It was time to tell her what she had brought to me when I was a child, even when there was nothing, or almost nothing, to bring.

"Words would not come, I tried to speak, tried to tell her, choked, tried again. Mam didn't need me crying at her bedside.

"She said she craved something 'tarty'. I bought her some lemon drops, kissed her and said goodbye. I never did tell her."

Four days later she died.

FEAR TUATHÉ



TOM BROWNE

AS conflicting arguments ensue on the merits of windfarms it appears that in the general interests of safety the energy power from the elements is edging closer to acceptance over what are loosely described as the dirty industries.

Many environmentalists, however, are wary that some of these windfarms could intrude on areas of scenic splendour and of course, there are other factors as well, such as the effects the turbines could have on wildlife.

Of course, the noise component and other disturbances are serious matters for consideration. It has been argued that windfarms are unsightly on a scenic landscape, but considering the ugly impact of pylons carrying the electric cables across the countryside, the windfarm turbines are much less intrusive and could even be considered graceful.

Costs appear to be another very serious aspect, but as the power of money has always shown, financial investors will not be shy to plunge providing the returns are rich.

Coal and oil powered industries while essential in the past it must be admitted that they have contributed in a significant way to the present state of the damaged environment. Perhaps the most dangerous of all sources of power is nuclear energy. Judging from the everlasting effects on human life and indeed on the environment in general of such disasters as Chernobyl, arguments in favour of this type of power would best be forgotten in the interests of future safety.

County Clare, with its exposure to the wild Atlantic is one of the areas under focus as a future site for