

Author had 'unfinished emotional business' with Limerick

■ Frank McCourt sought reconciliation with city

By ANNE SHERIDAN

FRANK McCourt, Limerick's most famous author, used to receive a birthday card every year from Bill Clinton, the former US President, who shared the same birthday - August 19.

But the birthday present McCourt had always been searching for was a reconciliation with his childhood home - Limerick.

"I've had such a turbulent relationship with the city. The city doesn't know it," he told this newspaper last year.

"It's what I had to write about when I finally

started writing after teaching for 30 years. I had to get it out of my system, but you never do. People say it's a catharsis, but it's not. Look at me - I'm back here again."

McCourt passed away on Sunday aged 78, and that peace with Limerick seemed to elude him until the day he died.

Younger brother Malachy told the Limerick Leader last week that even on his death-bed Frank had been speaking of his "unfinished emotional business with Limerick."

Speaking in Limerick last year, he also revealed that there was another book yet to be written about the city, and how

his life has changed since the publication of Angela's Ashes in 1996.

At the mature age of 66, McCourt had suddenly been launched into the literary stratosphere, and claimed a Pulitzer Prize a year later, as well as the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Los Angeles Times Book Award, and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Limerick.

The book had also spent 117 weeks on The New York Times best-seller list.

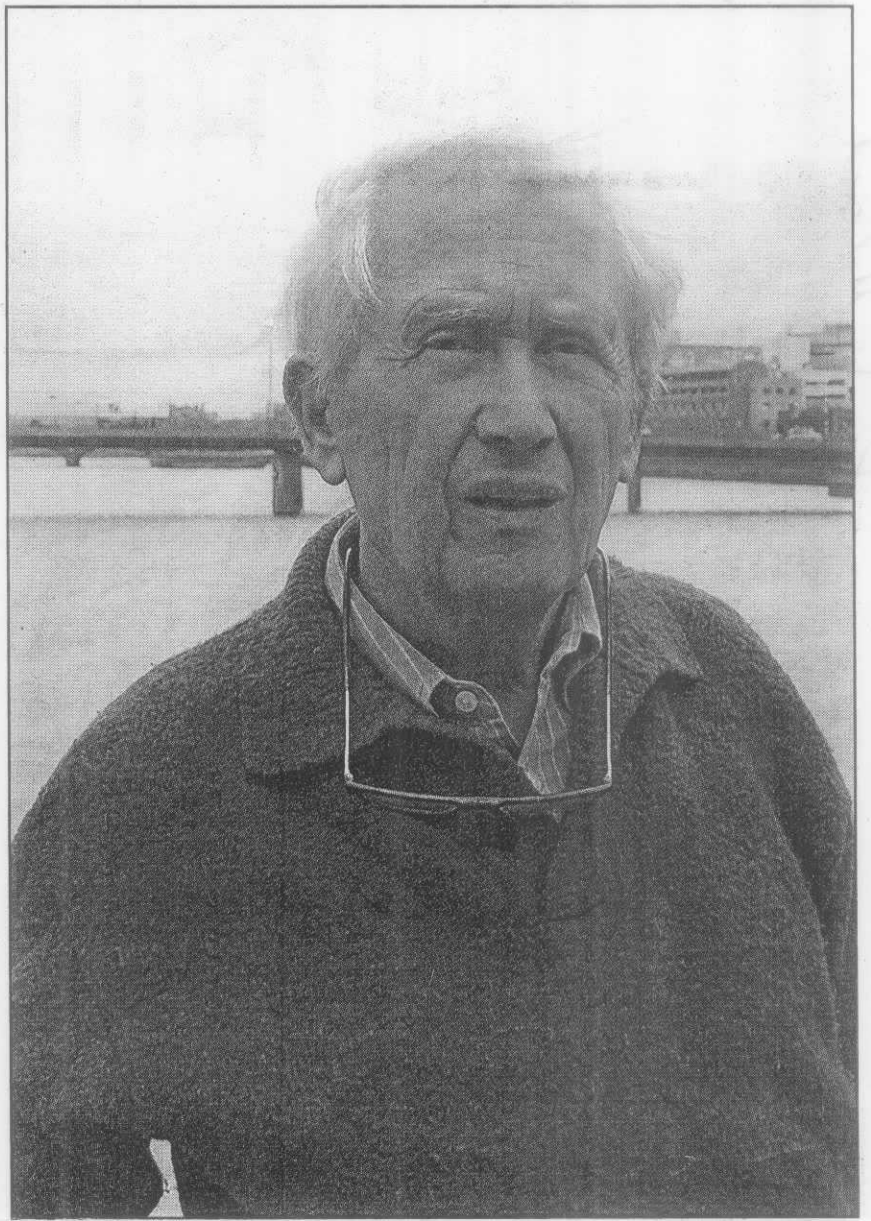
Millions of people across the globe have been affected by the controversial book, but its unexpected success also added another layer of

complexes to McCourt's relationship with Limerick.

It has sold in excess of six million copies and has been translated into 32 languages, but sales figures for Tis and Teacher Man are also likely to be in the six figures.

After the publication of his first children's book, Angela and the Baby Jesus, in November 2007, he began working on a novel about New York and was also said to be rewriting his play, the Irish and How They Got That Way.

After those two projects, he said he hoped to write a book about his life after the publication of Angela's Ashes.



The late Frank McCourt, pictured on a visit to Limerick in 2007

"Some day I'll have to write the real book and then watch out," he laughed.

Also in the pipeline is the film of Teacher Man, the screenplay of which has been written by the Oscar winning Ronald Bass of Rain Man fame.

Johnny Depp, Matthew Broderick and Cillian Murphy have all been

mentioned to star as McCourt in the film, depicting his years as a popular teacher at Stuyvestant High School, where he taught the actress Lucy Liu.

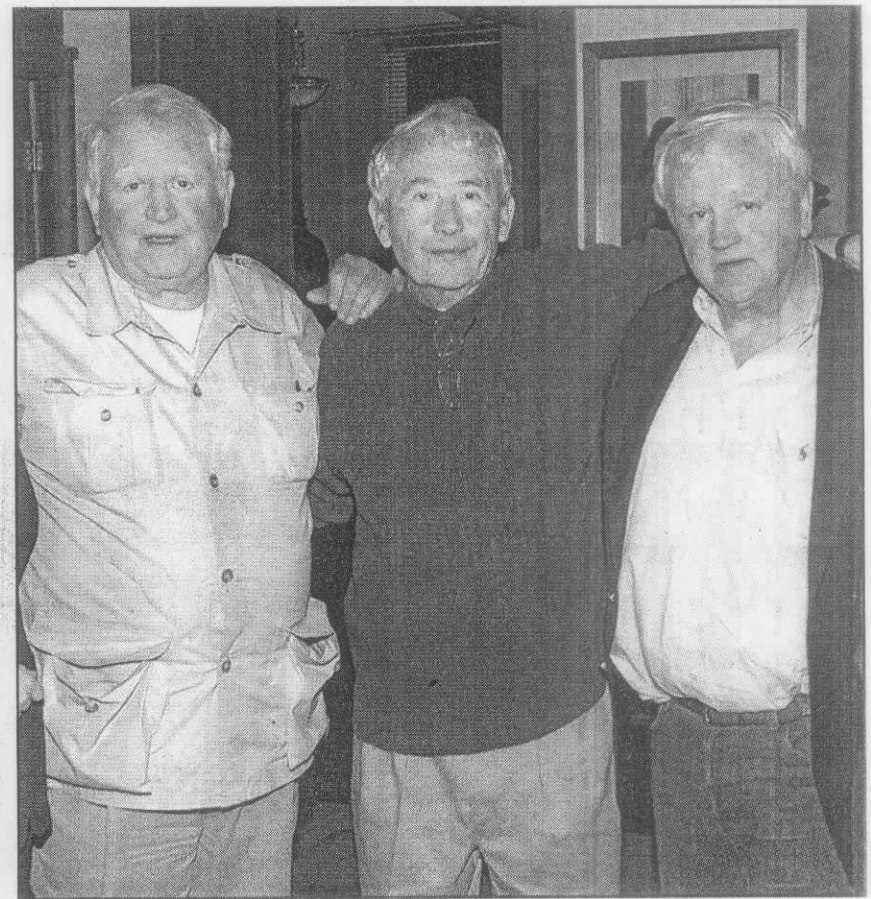
It has been said that the school has been made so popular by the book that it is now "harder to get into than securing a place in Harvard." He

retired from the school in 1987 and within nine years his account of a miserable Catholic childhood in Limerick was known worldwide. Frank McCourt is survived by his wife Ellen and daughter Maggie.

Frank McCourt, born August 19, 1930; died July 19, 2009.



Author Frank McCourt is interviewed in the White House Bar in 1996



Frank McCourt with his brothers, Malachy and Alphie