

Tributes pour in for Frank McCourt

Barry Duggan

THE family of late author Frank McCourt have been asked to consider scattering some of his ashes on the River Shannon.

A plethora of tributes flooded in from both sides of the Atlantic yesterday for the 78-year-old writer, who died in a New York hospice on Sunday after he contracted meningitis while receiving treatment for skin cancer melanoma.

McCourt became famous worldwide when his first book, 'Angela's Ashes' – about life growing up in destitute circumstances in Limerick city in the 1930s and 40s – became an instant bestseller, before winning the Pulitzer Prize.

The Mayor of Limerick, Kevin Kiely, was one of the first to offer condolences to the McCourt family and he will be going to the US for the funeral.

In an interview last year, McCourt, in humorous form, said that when he died, "let them scatter my ashes over the Shannon and pollute the river".

Malachy McCourt said the remains of his brother would be cremated and buried in Connecticut, near where he lived with his wife, Ellen.

Mr Kiely said Limerick was proud of Frank McCourt and he hoped the family would consider a request to scatter some of his ashes on the Shannon.

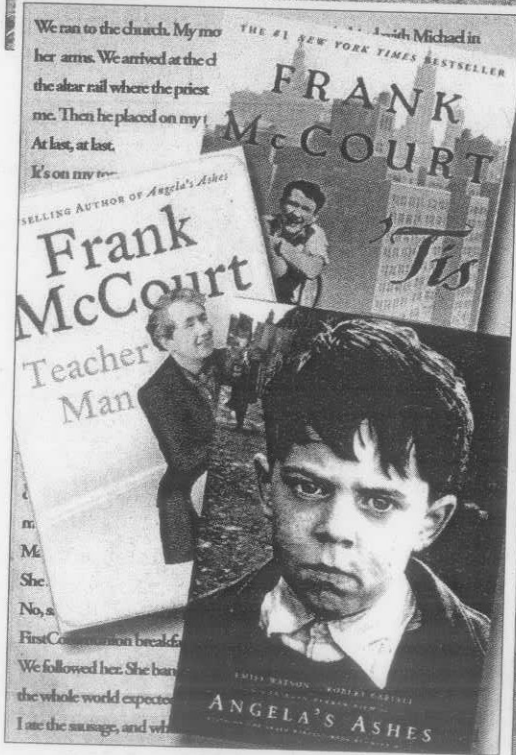
Honour

"It would be a nice way to honour him," Mr Kiely said. "Limerick city received worldwide recognition because of Frank and his first book."

"I had the pleasure of meeting Frank on quite a few occasions and, as someone who enjoyed his books immensely, I was delighted and honoured."

"Angela's Ashes", and the subsequent movie, thrust Limerick into the world spotlight; his compelling memoir brought a tourism boost to our city and he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Limerick, an institution he had always hoped would exist in his home town."

Arts Council director Mary Cloake said Mr McCourt was an outstanding writer, whose work reached a great number of readers and achieved critical acclaim. "Frank McCourt has made a unique contribution to Irish literature and its popularisation, both in Ireland and internationally," Ms Cloake said.



Clockwise from above: Frank McCourt (left) with his brothers Alphie, Michael and Malachy in South's Bar, Limerick, in January 2000; in March 1998 at Bronx Community College, where he was honoured at the college's annual Irish Heritage celebration; with his wife Ellen in the Four Seasons Hotel, Ballsbridge, Dublin, in June 2002; and the covers of his books 'Angela's Ashes', 'Tis' and 'Teacher Man'. PRESS 22 AND AP PHOTO/KATHY WILLENS AND TONY GAVIN

South's pub in Limerick was one of McCourt's favourite haunts on his returns to the city. Owner Dave Hickey said yesterday that the writer had last visited in August 2008. "He was in flying form and everyone wanted to meet him," he said.

Meanwhile, former US President Bill Clinton yesterday told Malachy McCourt that he would join mourners at Rosie O'Grady's bar on Broadway in New York tomorrow evening when family and close friends will say farewell. The public

will be invited to attend a more formal memorial on the city's Upper West Side in September. Ellen Frey-McCourt said yesterday that her husband requested that there should be no wake or religious service after his death.

New York mayor Michael Bloomberg recalled that, like many Irish immigrants arriving in the US, Frank McCourt had worked to build a better life. "A year or two ago, Frank and I were speaking when Frank said, 'New York is such a lovely

city. I was born here, and I'd like to die here too – in about 30 years.' Sadly, we lost Frank today, far too soon," Mr Bloomberg said.

Incoming 'Late Late Show' host Ryan Tubridy said the author was "one of my all-time

favourite guests, both on radio and television. Mr Tubridy, who is an avid reader, recalled having a pint with the writer after he appeared on his radio show. "We had a drink and did some breeze-shooting together," Mr Tubridy said. "I admired

him for his sense of humour, his slight boldness, and his decency. I'm sorry to see him go."

A book of condolences will be opened in Limerick City Hall at 3pm today.

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JOHN BOLAND: PAGE 14

Author found his global success after a long life of hard struggle

Barry Duggan

FRANK McCourt had an entire working life behind him before he became an overnight success at the age of 66.

By that time, he had spent almost 30 years teaching in the New York public school system, and much of it was devoted to instilling a love of creative writing in his students.

Then he took some of his own advice, writing his first book, 'Angela's Ashes', which became an instant success.

His story of growing up in terrible poverty in Limerick's lanes sold over six million copies. It was published in 27 countries, translated into 17 languages and was also made into a film.

The son of Irish immigrants, Frank was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1930, but his parents returned to Limerick a few years later because they could not find work in the US.

Angela and Malachy's family lived in squalor and Frank's sister and two of his brothers died at young ages.

Frank himself almost died at the age of 10 from

Timeline

● Frank McCourt was born in Brooklyn, New York, on August 19, 1930.

● Aged four, his family travelled to Limerick after failing to find work in the wake of the Great Depression.

● He was 13 when he left school and started working to help feed his family.

● In 1949, he returned to New York at the age of 19.

● A year later, he joined the US army as the Korean War broke out.

● When McCourt returned from war, he enrolled in New York University as a literary student and began teaching in 1958.

● He married his first wife, Alberta Small, in 1961 and they

had a daughter, Maggie. The marriage lasted 18 years.

● In 1984, he married his second wife, Cheryl Floyd.

● In the 1980s, with his brother Malachy, the McCourts produced a play called 'A Couple of Blackguards'.

● In 1995, he married for a third time to Ellen Frey. They lived in an apartment in Manhattan's Upper West Side and in a farmhouse in Connecticut.

● 'Angela's Ashes' was published in 1996 and McCourt became a world famous author.

● He later wrote bestsellers 'Tis' (1998) and 'Teacher Man' (2005).

● On July 19, 2009, McCourt died in New York. He was 78.

Korean War in 1950, he joined the US army and was stationed in Germany. He later returned to the US, working in various warehouses and quaysides.

Despite the fact he had no second-level education, he convinced the admissions office of New York University to accept him as a literary student on a year's probation.

He was one of the early beneficiaries of the GI Bill and the government paid his tuition fees.

In 1958, he began teaching. He would later credit his life teaching students from a variety of backgrounds for making a man out of him.

He married three times and had a daughter, Maggie, from his first marriage.

'Angela's Ashes' was published in 1996 and worldwide fame arrived. McCourt won several awards, including the US National Book Critics' Circle Award, the ABBY award and the Pulitzer Prize.

He is survived by his brothers Malachy, Michael and Alphie; his wife Ellen; daughter Maggie; grandchildren Ciara, Frank and Jack; extended relatives and many friends.

typhoid fever.

Frank left school at 13 to work as a rent collector and in a grocer's shop to help feed his family.

Abandoned

His father had, by this stage had abandoned them.

At 19, having saved enough money from a post

office job for the passage across the Atlantic, Frank returned to the US.

He would later say he discovered his literary love in a public library in Woodside, Queens, where he read works by Sean O'Casey and the Encyclopedia Britannica. But at the outbreak of the

'Pork scare' firm faces claims

Tim Healy

THE company alleged to have supplied animal feed containing dioxins that caused last December's pork crisis is expected to face legal claims for well in excess of the maximum of €6.5m its insurers will cover.

The Commercial Court was told yesterday that investigations into the alleged contamination are complete and Millstream Recycling Ltd, of Bunclody, Co Wexford, will be able to deliver its defence to the claims against it by the end

of this month. Counsel for the company said potential claimants should be aware the firm was subject to an indemnity for a maximum €6.5m and it was anticipated claims would well exceed that amount.

Millstream has said it would make no admissions in relation to the claims made against it and was advised there were unresolved issues in relation to the cause of the contamination.

It added that it was awaiting completion of the various investigations before it could properly assess whether to join other parties to the action.

Mr Justice Peter Kelly, who

dealt yesterday with procedural matters in two actions against Millstream, noted the barrister's remarks.

Among those suing the company are two Northern Ireland farmers.

Damian Conlon and his company, DC Cattle Ltd, of Newry Road, Crossmaglen, Co Armagh, are seeking €2.6m damages after 1,512 cattle were destroyed. Tests on some animals showed unacceptably high levels of dioxins were present.

Mr Conlon claims that between May and October 2008, Millstream factory supplied him with biscuit meal feed which

had elevated levels of dioxins and polychlorinated biphenyls. He said he understood oil used in the creation of the biscuit meal feed sold to him was the source of the contamination.

In another action, Co Tyrone farmer William Fulton is claiming €1.9m damages.

Mr Fulton, of Victoria Road, Bready, Strabane, and his company, W & F Fulton, brought the claim arising from the supply of biscuit meal feed purchased from Millstream between May and November 2008. Mr Fulton claims his herd later had to be destroyed, causing losses of €1.9m.



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