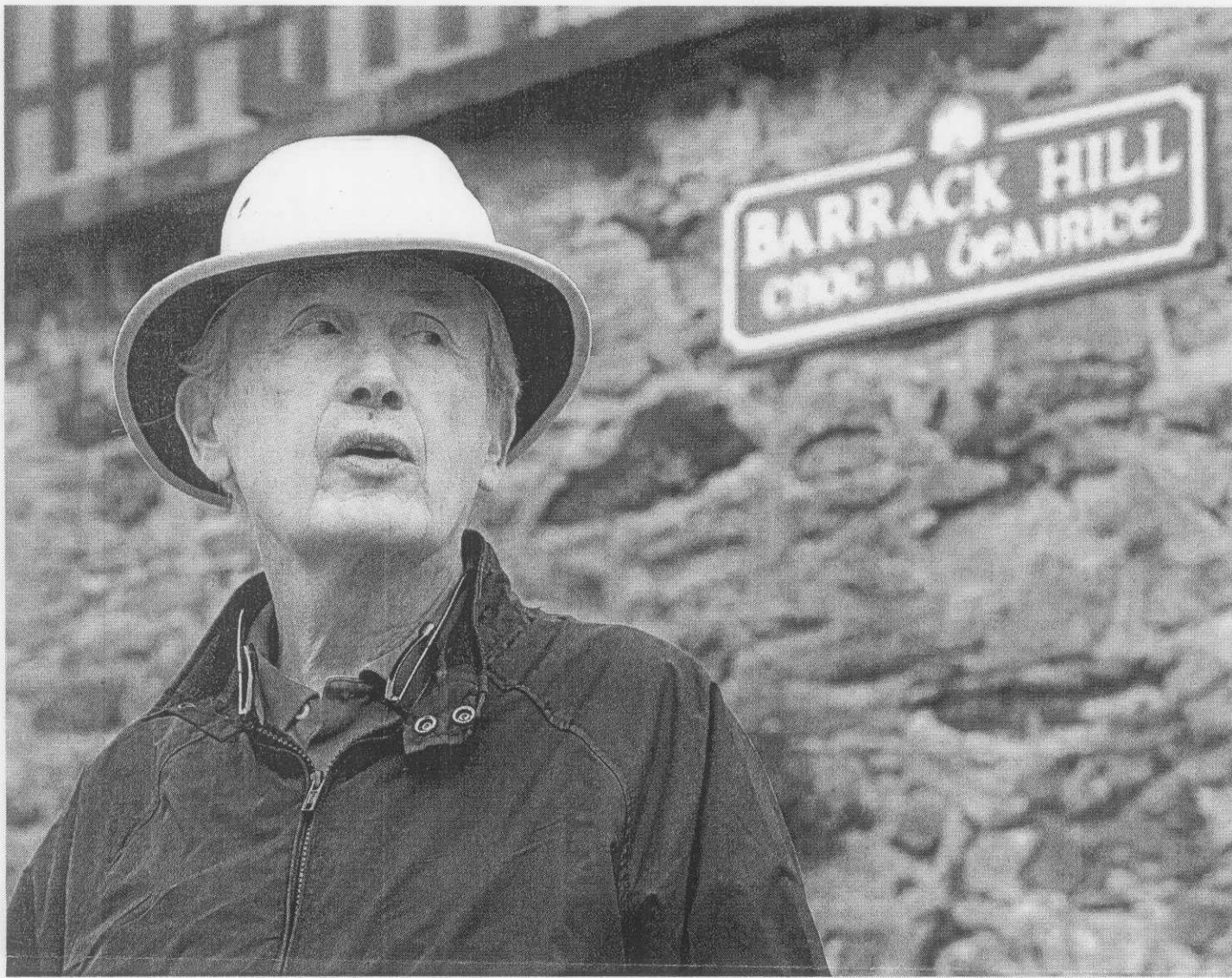


## News



Limerick made me: Frank McCourt had to learn the hard way in Limerick and eventually made something great from the lesson

PICTURE: SEAN CURTIN

"He never forgot that Limerick shaped him for better or otherwise. He was always the student and sometimes the teacher and he loved, I repeat, he loved the open-hearted people who looked after us in our times of death, disease and despair"

Malachy McCourt

# Frank told everyone's story through his own

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IT'S at death time the mind gets loose from its moorings and flies off into a towering inferno of rage and frustration at the unfairness of the grim reaper mowing down the person we deeply love and respect.

So it is with my brother Frank who died on July 19 last at 3.02 pm New York time with family present. Then came an avalanche of publicity and memories of great times, but also memories of insult and slander by some Limerick begrudgers.

Those ignorant people forever trapped in the slime of their own decomposing minds, devoid of anything resembling humanity, never let up on their attacks on my brother. One journalist revived an attack by Dickie [Richard] Harris who said "Frank McCourt was the ugliest most bitter man I have ever confronted (yes confronted, he said, not met) who hated me because of my success yet used it to promote himself."

If Frank was the ugliest

He wrote thousands of words and whilst he may have mentioned that other actor Mickey Mouse there appears to be no mention of the bould Dickie.

So what was this brother of mine all about? When our father (who art in some hole) got the Irish divorce - ie disappeared into England - it fell to Frank, at aged ten, to take the patriarchal reins and take them he did. He was a smallish fellow with brown eyes, black hair and somewhat sallow, like my father, giving rise to the suspicion that there was Protestant blood somewhere due to the fact that said father was from the North.

Scabby eyes were the morning agony for Frank as they had to be practically boiled open every morning and some how he had to get the bit of bread, the drop of tea, a slight of milk for our sumptuous breakfast and get us off to school. Not many people become a parent at aged ten. However we discovered PG Wodehouse and that writer convulsed us all the years of our lives by his satirising the British upper

the best of entertainment.

The scum that attacked Frank for his writing were unable to tolerate truth. Laughably they even disputed events in our lives that took place before they were hatched.

On the other side of this divide are the people of Limerick with a history of generosity of decency, of openness, of magnificent vision, like Aengus Finucane, unequalled in any community.



**Malachy McCourt: 'Frank envied no one, least of all insecure actors, gossips, half-wits, hypocrites or thieving plagiarists'**

Even my grandmother Sheehan, who didn't like us

bag naysayers made Frank laugh because they were rendered powerless and helpless in the face of worldwide identification with our story, as former United States President Bill Clinton said at our family gathering recently: "Frank told everyone's story through his own."

What we learned through growing up in Limerick can never be taught in any school or university. The love of songs and music was as natural to Limerick people as is breathing to anyone else. I never remember learning songs but somehow we knew dozens of them, ranging from plain chant to cowboy songs.

Our childhood friend Eric Lynch and his wife Florence carried on the singing tradition for years at his pub, which is now gone. Unsung singers like Billy Campbell and his sister Joy abounded in our town. Limerick people were not much for the boring joke but great yarn spinners. Folk like Sean and Mary Costelloe of Janesboro were two of the tellers of tales, as well as being terrific singers

as its purpose a design to keep us from getting above ourselves.

That was the theme of Frank McCourt's life. He never forgot that Limerick shaped him for better or otherwise. He was always the student and sometimes the teacher and he loved, I repeat, he loved the open-hearted people who looked after us in our times of death, disease and despair.

The naysayers amused him and in his own generous way he forgave those who maligned him because he knew they were stuck in the muck of their of their own minds with no hope of release. And he helped all aspiring writers with blurbs and quotes and never turned away from helping children.

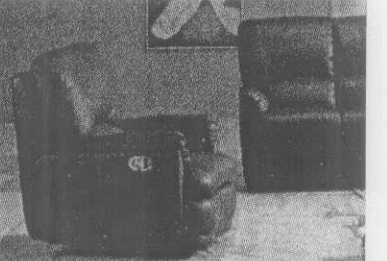
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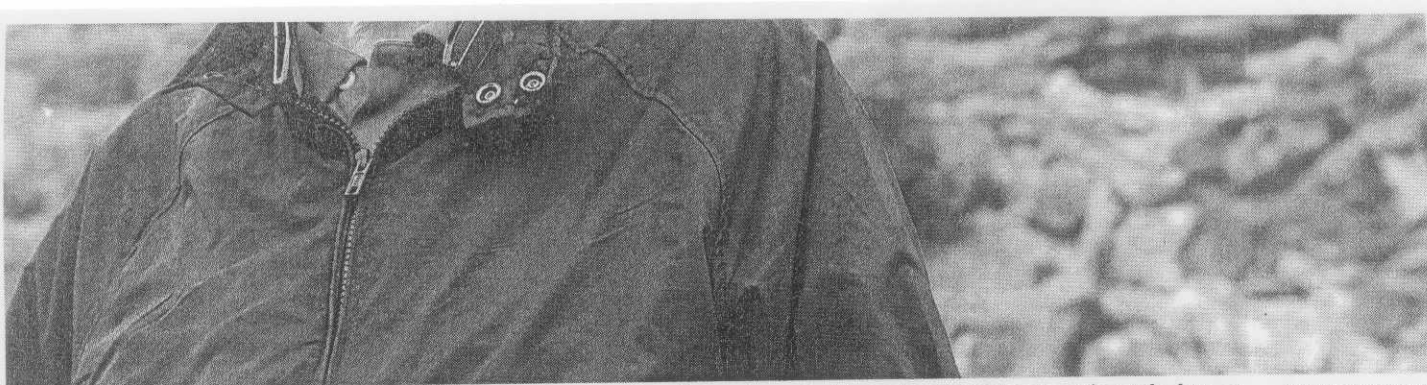
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PICTURE: SEAN CURTIN

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If Frank was the ugliest most bitter man Dickie had ever confronted he must never have looked in the mirror or hung out with the other jealous Limerick slime. Why would a great writer, like my brother, be jealous of someone who creates nothing and merely parrots the words of the writer?

Frank envied no one, least of all insecure actors, gossips, half-wits, hypocrites, or thieving plagia-

rists. He wrote thousands of words and whilst he may have mentioned that other actor Mickey Mouse there appears to be no mention of the bould Dickie.

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The coming of the Carnegie Library was the greatest event in our lives, even though the people who worked there looked on us dirty little laners as the lowest form of creation who shouldn't be allowed near a book.

But enter we did, and not only read the books but we nearly ate them. Outside of sneaking into the Lyric or the Colla that was

the best of entertainment. The scum that attacked Frank for his writing were unable to tolerate truth. Laughably they even disputed events in our lives that took place before they were hatched.

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Even my grandmother Sheehan, who didn't like us McCourts, and was not kind to us, was good to her other grandchildren and to needy neighbours.

And our own neighbours, the Downes family, the Knights, the Hannans (the intelligent, good ones) the Meehans, the Sextons and the royal family of Barrack Hill, the Horrigans, who would never see any man, woman or child go hungry.

The yahoos and scum-

bag naysayers made Frank laugh because they were rendered powerless and helpless in the face of worldwide identification with our story, as former United States President Bill Clinton said at our family gathering recently: "Frank told everyone's story through his own."

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Not every Catholic in Limerick was or is a Christian but the people with little of the world's possessions or goods were very generous in sharing them with those in need. The humour of our city, at times cutting and unkind to the pompous rigid statue eaters (who give money to Holy Mammy Church in hopes of buying salvation after robbing the poor) has

as its purpose a design to keep us from getting above ourselves.

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Frank never wanted to be mistaken for a king and never forgot that no matter how high you rise in the world, what university chair they give you, what throne you occupy, you still have to sit on your own arse.

Limerick you may not be a lady but you are fine as someone's 'oul wan'.

Frank died very quietly and peacefully with all of us in the hospice with him. In case you don't know, people don't draw their last breath, they expel it.



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