

# Frank immortalised in bronze at his former school



Ellen McCourt unveils a bust of her late husband, Frank, outside Leamy's School in Limerick last week.

By Rebekah Commene

AN emotional Ellen McCourt, wife of Frank McCourt, was in no doubt that her late husband would be "touched and thrilled" at the bust which was unveiled outside the Leamy School on Hartstonge Street, where the writer went to school as a boy.

Befittingly, and in the tone of the author's most famous work 'Angela's Ashes, light rain fell on Thursday evening as the bronze bust, sculpted by Seamus Connolly, was unveiled by Mrs. McCourt to a crowd of hundreds of family, friends and onlookers.

"We can't thank you enough for the tribute", said Ellen, "especially Una and John Heaton.

"I can't think of a more fitting place to have it as Frank's chosen profession was as a teacher.

"His principal here was 'Hoppy' O'Halloran, who was a real inspiration to him", Ellen added, before placing a gentle kiss on the bust depicting her husband's image.

"He would have had something caustic to say and probably would have stormed off, but secretly have been delighted!", Frank's brother, Mike, told the Limerick Post.

He made the trip from San Francisco to be in the presence of Ellen and his brothers Malachy and Alphie for the unveiling, but said that Limerick would always be his home.

"San Francisco is a beautiful

place but Limerick will always be in here", he told this reporter, pointing to his heart.

Long time friend of the McCourt's, local artist Una Heaton, commissioned the bust and organised for the family to visit for its unveiling.

"All it took was a phone call", an emotional Una told the Limerick Post, of getting the family together.

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"When they were coming into Limerick and saw the banner on the roundabout saying, 'Welcome to the McCourt family' there were tears in their eyes.

"It's a special occasion because they are visiting to celebrate his life. Frank would have been very pleased deep down".

Taking to the podium outside their former school, each of Frank's brothers spoke about

their talented brother with wit and humour, and the odd swear word.

"If Frank was here he'd laugh and say 'go away home and have a pint!", said Alphie.

"He was always into music and literature and was a member of the Boherbuoy Band. He loved to sing 'A Wandering Minstrel'.

"He was just a child of Angela and Malachy who met in New York, but he did for Limerick what James Joyce did for Dublin. He opened the door without ranting or preaching.

"Our brother the great artist".

Mike said they were always sick of being asked about their bigshot brother, "but today, he is a bigshot".

Malachy said that Frank had never finished his primary school education, but had last year been awarded an honorary primary certificate from the Minister of Education.

"He discovered PG Woodhouse in the library here", added Malachy, referring to the Leamy School.

The brothers then all sang a song taught to them by their cousins the Costelloes, about the days when they were children.

On Friday, Frank McCourt's family granted his final request by scattering ashes in the River Shannon, near Carrigogunnell Castle in Clarina.

Una Heaton will retain some of the ashes at the Leamy Art School where she will keep them in a "secret place".



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