

St Mary's priest and tenor Frank



Fr Cyril O'Mahony, who encouraged the young Frank Patterson, with James O'Shaughnessy, Athlunkard Street, at his ordination in Rome in 1928

By DENIS O'SHAUGHNESSY

THE death of interationally acclaimed tenor Frank Patterson came as a shock to many of his admirers in Limerick and throughout the country.

The Clonmel-born singer performed in Limerick on several occasions, notably in the UL concert hall, where with his wife, Eily, on piano and son, Eanan, on violin, they delighted large audiences.

Frank sang here first when as a very young man in the 1960s he visited Athlunkard Boat Club with the visiting Hillview Tennis Club from Clonmel.

After a series of table tennis matches, a social evening followed at which the young tenor sang to much acclaim.

While his voice, particularly in the early years, did not appeal to some amateur critics in Limerick, his recordings of the old traditional hymns with choir and orchestra, proved highly popular and there are few homes here whose occupants from that old traditional hymn-singing era do not have a copy of the recording.

Frank, who was a household word in America particularly, was formerly a compositor in the family printing works in Clonmel.

Limerick Leader employee, Billy Butler, had many dealings with the tenor when he worked for the Sporting Press back in the late 1950s.

"He was a very quiet young man then, with little sign of the ultra-confident artiste that was to emerge in later years,"

he said.

And it was a St Mary's parish man who helped instill confidence into the emerging young star and help him on the road to a glittering career. He was Fr Cyril O'Mahony, OFM, a member of a talented musical family from Bishop Street, who was based in Clonmel when Patterson started out on his career.

The late Fr Cyril was ordained in Rome in 1928 in the presence of his father Jim, and great friend James O'Shaughnessy of Athlunkard Street. Their trip had been financed by the Archconfraternity at Mount St Alphonsus.

After a stint in Ennis, where he helped found a musical society there, Fr Cyril came to Clonmel where became friendly with young Patterson at sessions of the Clonmel Gramophone Society and heard of the youngster's ambitions of making singing a career.

Patterson had also



Frank Patterson . . . a regular performer in Limerick

expressed interest in drama.

Frank could not have met a better mentor as Fr Cyril had a life-long keen interest in drama and proper speech technique. Under the St Mary's man, the young singer came on in leaps and bounds regarding proper breathing technique, an important requisite for singers and actors.

Encouraged by the results, Patterson went to Dublin for training and won a scholarship to study in Holland where the French soprano, Janine Michae, heard him and offered him four years free tuition in Paris.

In 1974 RTE gave the young singer his own television series, For Your Pleasure; the rest is history.

Despite his world-acclaimed fame, Patterson never forgot his mentor from St Mary's, mentioning that he was grateful for the help, enthusiasm and encouragement that launched him on a glittering career that sadly has come to a sudden end.

Changes in the Household Refuse Collection from

