

was when the war came into it, and therefore we know a little better than we did before what it is that is being saved. Not saved by force of arms or by victory, entirely. Saved primarily by the fact that the English are enduring war without giving up all that which, in England, existed before the war and which must continue to exist or else the war, even if it is won, is lost. Miss Stern is not surrendering to war her novelist's train of mind nor her careful workmanship; these qualities she has saved. And, precisely because she has not yielded them up—in order to write propaganda, or through fatigue, or through distress—she now bears valid witness to her people's strength.

The Inner Forum

Frances Sweeney

FRANCES SWEENEY, who died in Boston at the age of 36 on June 19, is mourned by Protestants and Jews throughout the country as "Boston's one-woman crusade against the anti-Semites, the Christian Fronters and the fanatical isolationists."

A group of citizens including Max Lerner, Arnold Beichman, and Frank Sullivan are attempting to establish a Frances Sweeney Memorial Foundation, either to aid Catholic charities or to be at the disposal of a Catholic college. A Frances Sweeney memorial window has been offered to her parish church, through her family, by a Jewish business man. A group of prominent Jewish lawyers in Boston has asked if they may present a perpetual memorial, in the form of a medal to be awarded each year to the outstanding graduate of Frances Sweeney's alma mater, Mount Saint Joseph's Academy in Brighton. In the forums and columns of New York and Boston newspapers, clear-sighted citizens continue to pay singular tribute to this Irish Catholic girl who literally gave her life in the fight against racial and religious prejudice.

It is no secret to any Bostonian that anti-Catholicism is the bitterest, most universal and never-mentioned of the many social antagonisms in unhappy, witch-hunting Boston. Predominantly Catholic both in population and in political office holders, all of Boston's social ills are regularly parcelled up by non-Catholics and dumped onto the steps of Holy Cross Cathedral and its subsidiary edifices throughout the archdiocese. Anti-Semitism, most shameful of these social ills in its vicious personal attacks upon Jews so unfortunate as to be at large and vulnerable in the Catholic suburbs of Boston, is admitted to stem largely from carefully-nourished Christian Front propaganda. Unfortunately, all Catholics are tarred and feathered for the public misdeeds of people whose Catholicism is no curb to their private chicaneries. It was defense of the Faith against their internal smirches that led Frances Sweeney, three years ago, to embark upon a single-handed war against persecution and, literally, to fight it to her death.

Warned at the start that a merciless round of speeches, committees and crusades of counter-propaganda could not be sustained by her congenitally weak heart, Frances had a ready answer: "Well, then, I'll die fighting for what I believe, won't I?" With a tongue and a typewriter as

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question we must know
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By Eleanor Ruggles

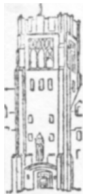
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Irish and as Catholic as the spirit of St. Patrick's Day, she exposed and fought against every utterance and deed of racial hatred or political corruption that could be traced to a Catholic individual. In so doing, it is worth repeating for emphasis, she became "Boston's one-woman crusade against anti-Semitism."

While continuing to work at her job in a Boston advertising agency, she contrived to organize the first and only meeting of the American-Irish Defense Association, to be held in Boston's Faneuil Hall on the now-historic date of December 7, 1941. Nobody came to the meeting except about 100 Christian Fronters. It shortly became evident to the audience that none of the speakers for the American-Irish Defense Association hated the Jews; not one even blamed the atrocity of Pearl Harbor, reported over the radio that afternoon, on the chicaneries of Jewish financiers! The audience of Christian Fronters showed its high calibre in a rebuke to "Jew-lovers": as one man they rose up and walked out of the meeting in a body, leaving Frances Sweeney at a pitch of shame and fury.

That meeting, obscure and unfinished as it was, can never be called a failure. We were at war; the American-Irish Defense Association was going out of existence, but Frances Sweeney was given the right to retain its office, stationery and name if she could think up something to do. Frances had already thought that in a war marked by violent racial prejudices the next group in line for distinguished hatred would be, following the lessons of history, the Catholics—and particularly the Irish Catholics.

She began by getting acquainted with people. Every ward-heeler who ever corrupted a vote or planted enmity where it would do his party the most good was known to Frances Sweeney by sight, name and character. She also knew the great and the good of her city and beyond it. Before her death she had become the unofficial advisor of many a public figure. One of the greatest losses attending her sudden and early death was due to the fact that her complete, uncannily accurate file of "who's what in Boston" was locked in her categorical brain.

Her first public service was to interest the Boston *Herald-Traveler* in launching a newspaper crusade against the Christian Front's subversive wartime principles. Within three days the Boston Police Commissioner had demanded that Christian Frontier Francis P. Moran disband his organization.

St. Patrick's Day is a double holiday in Irish Boston. March 17 commemorates the day of the Revolution when the British were forced to evacuate Boston. Each year the City of Boston appropriates \$5,000 of public funds to enable the South Boston Citizens' Committee fittingly to celebrate Evacuation Day. In 1942 South Boston decided to celebrate the March 17 double holiday by inviting the Reverend Edward Lodge Curran to be its principal Evacuation Day speaker. Father Curran's brand of social justice is not one that the taxpayers of Boston should be expected to finance with any degree of pleasure. Frances Sweeney led a protest to City Hall, demanding that public funds be denied to spread anti-democratic political philosophy. Her protest was overruled. She was thrown out of the Evacuation Day meeting at which Father Curran spoke, and she was thereafter branded by thoughtless Catholics as "anti-clerical."

If it be anti-clerical to hold the priestly office in such high respect as to be unable to endure its being misinterpreted as a cloak and a license for promoting fascism, then Frances Sweeney was anti-clerical, but many prominent

Catholic clergymen, including Bishop Sheil of Chicago and Monsignor John A. Ryan of Washington, seem to have thought otherwise, for they applauded her activities.

The next straight-shooting Sweeney barrage at anti-Catholicism within the fold was the widely publicized Rumor Clinic, begun in the *Boston Herald* at Frances Sweeney's suggestion. For many months she did the work of tracking down rumors and submitting them to an investigating committee made up of Harvard faculty members and public officials. *Reader's Digest* and *Life* published articles describing the work of the Rumor Clinic and in doing so said what no Boston newspaper had so far said: that Frances Sweeney was fighting anti-Semitism in Boston through the Rumor Clinic. To mention a fight against anti-Semitism implied that anti-Semitism existed; the *Boston Herald* felt called upon to deny, in an editorial, any official association with Frances Sweeney or her far-fetched notions. The Rumor Clinic staggered on for a few months without her and died when big name sponsors withdrew their support.

Next came the *Boston City Reporter*. Digging into her own lean pocket, Frances Sweeney prepared a mimeographed paper which expanded the work of the Rumor Clinic. It exposed (by name and with quotations) the seditious utterances of well-known Christian Fronters and isolationists; it ferreted out and warned against the social disease carried by anti-Jewish ribaldry in circulation. The *Boston City Reporter* was mailed monthly to 5,000-10,000 Irish names in the Christian Front wards of Boston's voting lists. Each of the ten issues published before Frances Sweeney's death went to a different mailing list, with the exception of the 1,000 copies reserved for prominent citizens throughout the country. An effort is now being made to organize a Catholic editorial board to carry on Frances Sweeney's work with the *Boston City Reporter*.

She never received one penny of salary in her life for her crusading activities. The *Boston Herald* was given the Rumor Clinic without charge. The only speaking fee Frances Sweeney ever received was \$15, paid her for a speech she made only because the money was needed to mimeograph a stymied issue of the *Boston City Reporter*. She organized and investigated and worked against the anti-Semitism of Catholics; she exposed the nefarious political didoes of Catholics which breed anti-Catholicism by spreading the impression that a Catholic can dispense with a social conscience so long as he is seen at Mass and Communion on Sunday, and she did it primarily to help save her own people from the boomerang of their misconceptions. "Except your justice abound more than that of the scribes and pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

ISABEL CURRIER.

CONTRIBUTORS

F. G. FRIEDMANN was born in Augsburg, Germany, and educated there and in Italy. He was expelled from Italy in 1939 and went to England. Since 1943 he has been connected with the Naval Flight Preparatory School at Murray State Teachers College, Murray, Kentucky.

Albert EISELE is columnist and farmer in Blue Earth, Minnesota.

Eugene BAGGER is the author of "For the Heathen Are Wrong" and other books. He at present lives on the island of Nassau.

Isabel CURRIER is the author of "The Young and the Immortal." She has been a newspaper woman for ten years and has contributed to such periodicals as the *American Mercury*, *Cosmopolitan*, the *Saturday Review* and the *Reader's Digest*.

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