

## **Remembering Ireland's Dance Masters**

*By Dunphy Public Relations*

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*Tuesday, 09 September 2008 - Speaking at the 14th Annual Dan Furey celebration of set dancing at the weekend, Mayor of Clare Councillor Madeleine Taylor Quinn paid tribute to two of Ireland's most celebrated Dance Masters.*

The late Dan Furey (1909-1993) James Keane (1918-2000), whose contribution to Irish dance and music is celebrated each September, are credited with being the saviours of the traditional dances of Labasheeda and establishing dance schools throughout West Clare.

Paying tribute to the Labasheeda men, Mayor Taylor-Quinn commented, 'Dan Furey and James Keane provided thousands of young people across West Clare with the skills and traditions that would otherwise have been lost.'

She continued, 'since their passing, the life-long friends have become icons for followers of the dancing traditions of this area. Dan was known far and wide for teaching dancing in the schools of West Clare and latterly came to prominence at the Willie Clancy festival. I am delighted to see that the Dan Furey festival continues to grow from strength to strength as by doing so it preserves Dan and James' memory and the traditions they devoted their lives to.'

Dan was single-minded in his teaching and dedicated his life to this art form. He was familiar to many in the county not least for his fiddle accompaniment for the dancers.

Dan and James were firm friends all their lives and in fact, Dan learned most of his dances from James' father Charlie Keane.

The most popular dances in their youth were The Plain Set, The Reel Set and The Paris Set, as well as two hand and individual step dances. James learned his first steps from his grandmother when he was very young and enjoyed going to dances in his youth. He spent most of his working life farming and doing skilled work. Following his retirement from farming he returned to the dancing scene where he commanded great respect from all who came in contact with him.

According to Mayor Taylor-Quinn, 'Dan devoted most of his life to teaching the traditional steps of the area and passed on his knowledge, skills and enthusiasm to younger generations. He influenced many great musicians and dancers, some of whom have since published various books and dvds on the steps and sets of the area, many of them collected from Dan. Not only was Dan a renowned dancer and teacher but also a great fiddle player and frequently accompanied dancers with his fiddling.'

'Dan and James toured the country and travelled abroad teaching the Labasheeda dances and getting to know people. When the Dan Furey Festival was launched in 1995, James became a major attraction and much of the credit for the success of the weekend is attributed to him. As a native of West Clare, I am especially pleased to see that the dedicated work of these two talented gentlemen is carried on through the Dan Furey Weekend', concluded Mayor Taylor-Quinn.

This weekend of set and step dancing in memory of Dan Furey in the village of Labasheeda is a special event for the local community and for anyone interested in the dancing and music communities to meet and enjoy a common interest.

This year's festival featured workshops, céilís and numerous other special events.

-ENDS-

Notes to Editor:

- Mayor of Clare Councillor Madeleine Taylor Quinn (087-2402341) is available for interview
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