

Ted Keenan (1934 - 2013) – The Younger Years

Ted Keenan was son to Jack and Nellie (nee Goodwin) born on 29 September 1934 at Cornagrade Terrace in Enniskillen, a small row of terraced houses located at the back of the Erne Hospital. Always fondly remembered as 'Ted' or 'Teddy', he was christened Edward Francis Keenan. He had three brothers, Jackie, Jim, Eugene and one sister, Maisie. Ted left school at the age of fourteen, he worked with McLoughlin and Harvey building contractors and was involved in the building of houses at Cornagrade and later Derrychara. Over time, Ted gained experience in the construction industry as a joiner by trade. He looked after major contracts including the building of the Erne Hospital.



Ted Keenan as a young boy at school.



Ted Keenan at the construction of the Erne Hospital. In the background, houses at Cornagrade housing estate.

Ted always maintained he had no recollection of learning how to swim but had been swimming from a young age in the back Lough and around Weir's Bridge. Ted met his wife Bridie (nee Quinn) in Irvinestown, while at a dance in a marquee. Ted & Bridie later married on 14 July 1958, they had three children, Brian, Tony & Chanele. Today, Brian and Tony live in Fermanagh, while Chanele lives in England.

He was in his late 30s when Ted took up long distance swimming challenges, initially started as a bet with a local man, as Ted recalled:

'What started me distance swimming seriously was a bet from the 'Yank' (John Gordon). He bet a half crown that I couldn't swim Lough Erne because of the whirl pools and undercurrents. Of course I took the bet and that was the beginning of many marathon swims'.



Bridie Quinn & Ted Keenan at a Carnival, 15 April 1958.

(Ted Keenan, 'Enniskillen in the Rare Ould Times 2, The Millennium Babes')

In the following years, Ted continued his career as Area Superintendent for Enterprise Ulster, later working as ground maintenance with the Western Education and Library Board (for Fermanagh and West Tyrone).

Over the years, Ted's children recall beautiful memories of their father and his countless trips, swimming and training to complete a number of swimming achievements. He met many life-long friends on his swimming journey, each have their own story to tell.