



IAAS Walks of Life 2006
Theresa Burke

Theresa Burke was born in the Bronx, New York, the daughter of Tom Scott, from County Sligo, and Theresa Lernahan from County Clare. Her father was a fiddler who often played with the famous Sligo musician Michael Coleman. He began assisting her father at the age of nine when, in 1942, he opened a traditional Irish step dancing school in Cleveland.

Following his retirement, "Tessie," as she is popularly known, opened her own school in 1958. After traveling overseas to study with master teachers, in 1965 she became the first North American-born woman, and the second overall, to receive her Irish dancing teacher certification (TCRG) and Irish dancing adjudicator certification (ADRG). She currently teaches in Cleveland, Youngstown and Pittsburgh.

Many of her students have gone on to become certified teachers and adjudicators, among them her sister, Betty Scott Kish. At least 31 are registered across the country and four former students, all certified teachers, now assist her.

Tessie has had many first place winners in regional and national Irish dance competitions as well as medal winners in the world championships every year since 1984. Each year the Burke school has qualified at least 14 dancers for world competitions. A current student is a two-time world champion.

Tessie has held many offices in the Mid-West Region of the Irish Dance Teachers Association and since 2001 has been vice regional director. She served as regional director for two terms (1990-1993) and chaired three regional Oireachtas competitions as well as one national competition.

Tessie kept up with a demanding teaching schedule while rearing four children. She and her husband, Francis Burke, are the parents of GERALYN, PATRICIA, TIMOTHY and THOMAS.

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