

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

CONNECTING DANCERS PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

NEWS & FEATURES

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Alumni Updates

We have pins for our alumni- if you have not received your pin yet, please look for your region's rep at the next local competition!

Our virtual Happy Hours have been a huge success! Thanks to those alumni that have already attended a HH. If you haven't checked one out yet, be sure to stay tuned for our next Alumni Happy Hour, scheduled for late this summer.

In July of 2022 Madison, Wisconsin will be the site of the ScotDance USA National Championships (USIR), which includes competitive events for dancers of all ages and categories in highland dance. Each year the event attracts more than 300 of the world's best competitors, their families, teachers and fans from all over the United States, as well as Canada and Scotland, with occasional attendees from as far away as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. We anticipate more than 600 people will descend upon Madison from July 13-17 to join in this national event & celebrations!

You are invited to support the Scottish Arts and the outstanding athletes competing in this event by making a tax deductible donation. ScotDance USA (financially known as FUSTA) has been granted tax exempt (501(c)(3) status (ID #:93-0933775) by the Internal Revenue Service, making all contributions tax deductible. All expenses of the event are paid through donations and fundraisers, and the event is conducted entirely by volunteers.

For information to make any contributions, please contact:

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Madison 2022 Fundraising Chairperson
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BEYOND THE GHILLIES

JOYCE MACFARLANE MCINTOSH

My name is Joyce MacFarlane McIntosh, and I have been involved in the Scottish Arts for many years. My parents, along with my brother, immigrated to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, from Motherwell, Scotland in 1954. That made me the only person in our family to be born in the US. At the age of 5, I began taking Highland dancing lessons from the daughter of another set of immigrant Scots, Mary Elizabeth Davidson. She was better known as M.E., and she was one of the founding members of the USHDA, United States Highland Dancing Association. Others involved in that project were Cathy Girvan (later Cathy Hynd), and recently deceased Margaret Callander. This Association was a long-time forerunner of FUSTA, followed by ScotDanceUSA.

My first performance was at the Pittsburgh Folk Festival, a huge 4-day event each year, which celebrated the ethnic melting pot that represented Pittsburgh, then a steel-producing capital in the US, and well-known in part, because of Dunfermline-born Scot, Andrew Carnegie. My first competition was at the Scottish Picnic at Kennywood Park. My photo was in the newspaper, as I danced the Sword Dance, nearly flat-footed. No prizes were won that day!

These were the days when there were only two categories: Novice and Open. If one placed in a dance in Novice, one was eligible to compete in Open, in that dance only, on the same day. One win in Novice, and you were thereafter in Open (what we now call Premier) for that dance. It was all done on the honor system. My first trophy came in August of that first year, at the Ligonier Highland Games, when I had just turned six. My title was "The Best Novice Dancer in Western Pennsylvania". It was engraved on the trophy. From that day, I was hooked on the competition scene. I was motivated to practice in order to win more of those shiny medals and trophies!

Thus began a 20-year career of competing in many places around the US, Canada, and eventually Scotland. Although my first teacher moved from the area after she married, I was then able to take lessons from the daughter of yet another set of Scottish immigrants, Sarah Jean Erskine Thompson. Pittsburgh was in a good location for reaching Michigan, Ohio, New Jersey, New York and Maryland. On occasion, we could make it to certain parts of Ontario, Canada. Competitions were always a one-night drive away. Very few traveled by air to compete in those days. My Mum and I would travel with another dancer and her parents, by car. The dancers would sleep in the back of the station wagon, and the driver drove all night. We'd arrive at the venue, get into our kilts, and compete, while the driver slept. After the competition, we got back into the car, and once again the dancers slept in the back of the station wagon, as we returned home in the wee hours of Sunday morning. That procedure repeated itself each time we went to a competition. There was never a hotel stay. How things have changed.

CONTINUED WITH JOYCE MACFARLANE MCINTOSH

When I was 15, turning 16, my parents planned a trip to Scotland to visit our many friends and relatives. My Mum was able to find out how to enter me for the British Overseas Championship, as well as Cowal, and we worked visiting our family around those two competitions. Before the days of the internet and online registration, this was all done by mail to an unknown address, and you just hoped the entry got there before the cut-off date. If you have visited a typical Scottish home, you will know there is very little room for practice. In addition, because my birthday is in August, I competed in two different age groups during the month, which required two different sets of Championship steps. I was fortunate enough to win 1st runner up in the British Overseas Championship in Edinburgh. By the time we went to Cowal, I had changed the steps, and practiced as much as possible in the tiny bedroom of the friends with whom we stayed. After a bus, train, and ferry boat ride, my Mum and I arrived in Dunoon. My Dad went to a football (soccer) game in Hamilton! How surprised was he, when I returned to Hamilton that evening with a trophy naming me 1st runner up in the Junior World's Championship! Champion was Noreen Keros of Michigan, then me as 1st runner up, then Aileen Robertson of Ayr, then Maureen Barr of Kirkcaldy. What a memorable day.

By the time I went to Cowal that year, I had begun lessons on the practice chanter at age 14. I was allowed to start the study of the pipes, only if my dancing came first (my Mum's rule). The music came to me rather easily, as I had heard the rhythms and idioms all my life, and as I had been dancing to strathspeys and reels for years by then. The hardest part for me was transitioning from practice chanter to pipes, and it took a bit of trying before I was able to inflate the bag without becoming lightheaded. That accomplished, my teacher progressed me gradually until I could play an entire tune with all three drones sounding. Eventually I entered my first solo piping competition.

For the ensuing years, I competed in solo piping, dancing, and band competitions, so long as the band contests did not overlap with the dance competitions. I competed in all three areas throughout my 5-1/2 years of university—4 year BS,Ed., plus 18 months Master's study in Education.

I began teaching Highland dancing when I was 16, with a young neighbor girl in the very small basement of our house. I used methods that my own teachers had used and developed some of my own. As I became more familiar with teaching methods during my university training, I tried to apply some of those methods to teaching dancing. I taught in all sorts of places: small basements, garages, the back room of a graphic artist's premises, churches, and eventually my own garage, converted to a studio, after I was married.

CONTINUED WITH JOYCE MACFARLANE MCINTOSH

I also began teaching piping at some point. I wasn't sure I was ready, and there is no kind of teacher's test that must be passed before you show someone how to begin on the practice chanter, but my teacher at the time convinced me that I was very capable of getting someone started on the pipes. I am pleased to say that my very first student, who was 11 when I began teaching him (in that same small basement of my parent's home), has led a prize-winning band, has become an Open competitor, is on the Judge's panel, and is still actively playing in a pipe band.

In 1980, I sat my judge's exam for the SOBHD, now RSOBHD, and as a result, I finished up my competitive dancing career. At first, I found it unnerving to be on the opposite side of the table, within a year of being on the platform. I had some good mentors, though, and I soon became more comfortable.

In 1981, I met my future husband at the Delco Workshop, back when it included both pipers and dancers, and it was held in Valley Forge, PA. What a wonderful mid-winter weekend took place there for years, with a huge ceilidh on the Saturday evening, complete with Scottish dance band, additional Scots from the area, and performances from the piping and drumming instructors. This is where I was first introduced to piobaireachd. Although I had played pipes for 11 years by that time, and had advanced to the top Amateur grade, I had never found anyone who could explain piobaireachd to me, until I met Jimmy McIntosh, the workshop instructor from Dundee, Scotland, whom I had never heard of before. That man became my husband of 36 years! And I've had plenty of piobaireachd instruction since meeting him.

From 2002 to 2011, I also had the opportunity to serve as Pipe Major in what one may call a youth pipe band. All of the members were either taught by Jimmy or by me and most were teenagers; thus, all pipers played in much the same way right from the start, which was a great advantage. Over the course of eight years, the band, The Balmoral Highlanders, were able to win 40 overall trophies, and trained many young folks to move on to play in Grade 1 bands, as well as for some to compete in the World Pipe Band Championship in Glasgow.

I sat my piping judge's exam in 1990, and again, felt quite overwhelmed when I judged my first contest. Judging piping is extremely different from judging Highland dancing, because you have one person in front of you at a time, and you have the opportunity to give a written critique to each competitor. A piping judge is able to tell a competitor how to improve, as well as giving the competitor some words of encouragement, while recognizing and acknowledging what they are doing correctly.

CONTINUED WITH JOYCE MACFARLANE MCINTOSH

I find it very difficult at times, not to have a word with a dancer about just one thing he/she could do to make a big difference to his/her performance. It makes me wonder why we cannot do so? On occasion, I have called together the entire group of dancers, and have addressed one of my pet peeves: dancing to the rhythm, staying with the tempo, having proper timing. So often when I judge dancing, I find dancers are not paying attention to the tempo set by the piper. They land before or behind the beat, as if they are dancing to their own piper in their head. It is the dancer's job to dance to the piper. It is the judge's job to ensure the piper is keeping within correct tempos.

When I am judging dancing, I find I tap my foot nearly continuously. Some dance pipers have told me they tend to watch my foot for guidance. If the dancers are off-time, I find myself banging the pen or my hand on the table.

On occasion, I also play pipes for dance competitions. I always remind the judge to give me a sign if they want the tempo altered. At times though, I find I need to look away, as none of the dancers are keeping time with me, which is quite disconcerting. I suppose this is where the two arts overlap for me. I cannot focus too much on the dancer, as I start to critique the dancing in my head, and I can easily go off the tune. I well know that the importance for the dancer, judge and audience is not the tune being played, but the consistency of the tempo for all dancers within a group. This is where some budding dance pipers may go astray and where they need a mentor. Dance pipers need to remember that in this arena, no one really cares about the difficulty of the tune, the accuracy of the gracenotes, nor even the tuning of the drones—just keep a steady beat and know when to change to the quick time!

I do feel that if one has been both a dancer and a piper, and if that person is piping for dancing, he/she can bring musicality and 'lift' to the dancer by the tunes selected, and by how the tunes are expressed. I recall way back in my younger days of competing, that I was always pleased when I arrived and saw that Jimmy Bell was playing for dancing. Although, he was younger than me, I knew from experience that he always kept a steady beat, and played tunes that gave the dancer that extra lift near the end of the dance. Perhaps this was due to having been trained as a Highland dancer in his early years by Mary Stewart, of Kearny, NJ, a well-known teacher and judge? Jimmy's mother, Shirley Bell, was also a piper, dance teacher and adjudicator, so Jimmy had been well-mentored.

In closing, I would say that I have experienced nearly all aspects of piping and dancing: competing in both, teaching both, judging both, and playing for dancing. Each has its own set of goals, and in my view, I have been blessed to have such a long career being involved, and trying to master the dancing, piping, teaching, and furthering of these two forms of Scottish Arts.

FEATURED ASSOCIATION:

KANSAS CITY ST. ANDREW HIGHLAND DANCERS

Featured Performances

KC Ethnic Enrichment Festival

KC Burns dinner for the KC St. Andrew Society and the Knights of St. Andrew of the Scottish Rite

Winter Storm - the Pipes and Drums Event KC, concert

KC Irish Festival

April 2022, co-hosted the Ethnic Commission Ball for the city of Kansas City's Ethnic Enrichment Commission

Mission Statement

Our organizations aim to educate and spread our love of Scottish art and culture in Kansas City.

Get in Touch!

Visit KChighlanddancers.com or follow us on Facebook or Instagram @KChighlanddancers

Scottish Dancing in Kansas City began around 1962 or 1963, Malise Graham began teaching Scottish dance to young students in the K.C St. Andrew Society. Several other teachers were part of Kansas City dancing history including Dennis Byrne who was a former dancer/drummer with the Black Watch.

In 1970, Betty Lawrence came to KC for our first official dance clinic. From there, some of our dancers went on to prepare for competitions, medal tests, and professional exams and began a long tradition of dancing and dance teachers in Kansas City. Jean Forbes, Betty Lawrence, and Sheila Mittig offered exceptional instruction to those dancers who wanted a competitive dance career during this time.

Despite many generations of teachers beginning their own schools in the area, we all consider ourselves Kansas City dancers, working toward the dance education of each new generation. We offer community lessons on Saturday mornings that are free to attend and taught on a rotational basis by all of our area professionals in order for anyone who would like to learn Scottish dancing to do so.

Officially, the group was found in 1979 and became the Kansas City Highland Dancers. Later, with the support of the St. Andrew Society, we became the Kansas City St. Andrew Highland Dancers.



HOLIDAYS AROUND THE US

Please keep sending and tagging us in your photos! Here are some pictures we've shared on social media of recent "Scottish" holidays in the United States

Celebrating St Patricks Day with the Irish Jig



1954



Early 1960's



Costa Mesa, CA



Lisa Staley
Early 1980's in Phoenix

TRIVIA QUESTION FACEBOOK CHALLENGE

Bobby watches over Mr. and Mrs. Potter, McGonagall, Scrimgeour and more at this graveyard in Scotland's capital



UPCOMING EVENTS

In addition to our own Alumni events, we present to you competitions happening around the United States.

We hope to see you there!

Midwest Region

6/25/22 Ohio Scottish Games
6/25/22 Duluth Scottish Heritage Dance
Competition
7/9/22 Saline Scottish Festival
7/16/22 USIR Madison, Wisconsin

Northwest Region

6/25/22 Tacoma Highland Games
7/9/22 Payson Scottish Festival
7/9/22 Skagit Valley Highland Games and
Celtic Festival
7/23/22 Pacific Northwest Scottish
Games
8/20/22 Mount Hood Competition

East Region

8/13/22 Central New York Scottish Games
8/20/22 Maine Highland Games
8/27/22 Quechee Scottish Festival

Southeast Region

7/7/22 Grandfather Mountain Highland
Games

Southwest Region

6/25/22 Cortez Celtic Faire
7/16/22 Elizabeth Celtic Festival
8/6/22 Colorado Scottish Festival

West Region

6/25/22 San Diego Scottish Highland
Games
7/17/22 Arizona Highland Celtic Festival

CONTACT US

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