

PIPELINE

official publication of the S.U.S.P.B.A.

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January 2004 Issue

2003 / 2004 EXECUTIVE BOARD

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NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS...

- ✓ Snippets
- ✓ Membership update
- ✓ Games Reminder
- ✓ Orlando Games Results
- ✓ *Featured Band* of this issue
City of Melbourne Pipe Band
- ✓ Interview with Andrew Berthoff,
editor of the *Piper & Drummer*

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Sandy Keith

Where have you heard this before? **“Don’t believe everything you read!”** The SUSPBA is one of the founding fathers of ANAPBA, the Alliance of North American Pipe Band Associations.

Their mission statement states: to advance the development and quality of pipers, drummers, and pipe bands across North America through:

1. Fostering a culture of cooperation among member associations
2. Communication and sharing of information
3. Providing a forum for the study and discussion of issues
4. Making and receiving recommendations from member associations, regarding Education, Adjudication, Administration, Communication, Competition and other related issues.

The SUSPBA has no intention of joining any other of the founding member associations.

The Associations of ANAPBA are:



- Alberta Society of Pipers and Drummers
 - Atlantic Canada Pipe Band Association
 - British Columbia Pipers’ Association
 - Eastern United States Pipe Band Association
 - Midwest Pipe Band Association
 - Pipers’ and Pipe Band Society of Ontario
 - Prairie Pipe Band Association of Manitoba
 - Saskatchewan Pipe Band Association
 - Southern United States Pipe Band Association
 - Western Pipe Band Association
- Hosted Summit 2004
Hosted Summit 2003
Hosted Summit 2000
Hosted Summit 2002
Will host Summit in 2005
Will host Summit in 2006
Hosted Summit 1999

The Uniform Recommendations compiled by ANAPBA are:

1. Sound Files: recommended that due to technical copyright, other legalities, quality of sound, and choice of representative byte(s), not to post sound files on Website.
2. Band Score Sheets: Boxes will be used for introduction and finish only. There will be no subdivision of points into categories (like role off, attack, tone, execution, etc.) A simple reminder of the three main ideas will be noted on the sheet.
Summary statement will be at the top of the sheet in order to primatize those comments for the reader. Detailed notes will be at the bottom of the page. Band medley tune list could appear in the lower right hand corner. Information could include:
 - a. tune type
 - b. tune time signature
 - c. number of parts
 - d. in order

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The Uniform Recommendations compiled by ANAPBA:

3. Solo Score Sheets: Basically blank page with simple reminders about:
 - a. Execution
 - b. Expression
 - c. Intonation
 - d. Tuning
 - e. Rhythm
 - f. Tempo
4. Band scoring: Band scoring will be an unweighted ranking with equal weight between:
 - a. Piping
 - b. Piping
 - c. Ensemble
 - d. And drumming judgesSimply add up the unweighted ranks and low score wins.
5. If there are four or fewer bands in the contest consider a point system option where judges predetermined point spreads.
Ex. a 1 point difference for a close contest, a two point difference for a significant distinction, and a three point difference for a substantial distinction between bands.
6. Split large entry into separate events; avoid leets and playoffs.
7. Recommend regarding RSPBA grading of bands: The home association should send an official roster and grade recommendation to the RSPBA for bands traveling to compete in the UK.

Sandy Keith
President, Southern United States Pipe Band Association

SUSPBA Membership Update

SUSPBA has 319 members signed up for the 2003/04 year and 15 member bands so far. If you have not yet renewed your membership, do it today! The Bands of the SUSPBA are: City of Dunedin Pipe Band, City of Melbourne Pipes & Drums, Dunedin High School Pipe Bands - Grade 4 & 5, Dunedin Middle School Pipe Band, Elliot Pipe Band, Fort Lauderdale Highlanders, Jacksonville Pipes and Drums, Panama City Pipes and Drums, Rosie O'Grady's Pipe Band, Royal Palm Highlanders, Sarasota Highlanders, St. Petersburg & District and Tampa Bay Pipes & Drums - Grade 4 & 5.

The SUSPBA will maintain an email list to distribute the newsletter. Please submit your email address to faeh1@prodigy.net if you didn't record it on your membership form when registering / renewing.



GAMES REMINDERS

- ◆ Don't forget to attend the **Sarasota Highland Games and Heritage Festival** on Saturday, January 31st! Entertainment will include Off Kilter, The Brigadoons, Charlie Zahm, and the City of Dunedin Pipe Band. Their Ceilidh will be Saturday night at 6:30pm, \$10 limited seating. www.sarasotagames.com
- ◆ February 7& 8th are the dates for the **4th Annual Zephyrhills Celtic Festival**, featuring the Windbreakers, the Wild Highlanders, Military Skirmishes and Reenactors at Zephyr Park. Admission is free. Entries must be postmarked by 1/26/04. Come to their Ceilidh and Dinner on Friday night, Feb 6 at 7pm - pre-order tickets are \$25, a limited number at the door are \$30. Piping and drumming competitions are on Saturday. www.zephyrhillscelticfestival.com
- ◆ The **9th Annual Jacksonville Scottish Highland Games** will be held on February 28, in a new location, south of Jacksonville, at the Clay County Fair Grounds on SR 16, four miles west of Green Cove Springs. Entries must be received by 2/14/04. New events for this year include Scottish Cats, Petting Zoo, Scottish Horses, a Fencing Tournament and Motorcycle Rides to the Games. www.neflgames.com
- ◆ The **21st Annual Southeast Florida Scottish Festival and Games** are March 6th at C.B. Smith Park in Plantation. Entries must be postmarked by 2/21/04. The Ceilidh is Friday, March 5th at 8:30pm.

SNIPPETS

- ✂ Congratulations to Tampa Bay P&D - Grade 4 winner **and** City of Melbourne P&D - Grade 5 winner at the Orlando Games. The weather was great and the Games were well attended.
- ✂ A new band competing in Orlando was The Royal Palm Highlanders. They are a branch of the Palm Beach Highlanders, composed of members who wish to compete at Highland Games. Their P/M is Vince Sibel.
- ✂ The City of Dunedin Pipe Band has a new lead drummer, Charley Street. Charley grew up in Dunedin, has played with the band before, and is now here to stay. Charley's son Eric is also an accomplished drummer and plays with the grade 2 drum corps.
- ✂ Sandy Keith and Jeff Anderson represented the SUSPBA at the ANAPBA Summit in Vancouver. Jeff promises to give us a full report in the next issue.
- ✂ Pipe Sergeant for the City of Dunedin Pipe Band, Danette Rush has gotten married and is now Danette Rush Kokoris. She hasn't quit piping, as her new husband George is also a piper.
- ✂ Did anyone notice the smallest and youngest piper at the Orlando Games? At only 9 years old, Haley took 4th place on the pipes on her first try at competition!

Note from the Editor: Please submit news items of interest to faeh1@prodigy.net.

Competition Results Orlando Games 2004

(on the web, www.suspba.org/images/Orlando_1-17-04.PDF)

BANDS

Grade 4 (Medley): 1st Tampa Bay Pipes & Drums, 2nd Elliot Pipe Band, 3rd Dunedin High School Pipe Band, 4th Fort Lauderdale Highlanders.

Grade 5 (Medley): 1st City of Melbourne Pipes & Drums, 2nd McGuires Pipe Band, 3rd Jacksonville Pipes & Drums, 4th Rosie O'Grady's.

Open Slow March: 1st City of Dunedin Pipe Band, 2nd Elliot Pipe Band, 3rd Dunedin High School Pipe Band, 4th McGuires Pipe Band.

SOLO PIPING

Professional: Piobaireachd 1st Kelly Kennedy, 2nd Jeff Anderson, **MSR** 1st Jeff Anderson, 2nd Kelly Kennedy, **Hornpipe & Jig:** 1st Kelly Kennedy, 2nd Jim Nisbet, 3rd Jeff Anderson.

Grade 1: Piobaireachd 1st James Everett, 2nd Kevin Wiegand,

MSR 1st James Everett, 2nd Kevin Wiegand, 3rd Steve Bicknell, **Hornpipe & Jig** 1st Kevin Wiegand, 2nd James Everett, 3rd Steve Bicknell.

Grade 2: Piobaireachd 1st John Duff, 2nd Shaun Vaupel, 3rd Cassie Calo, 4th Chelsea Veldhouse, **March** 1st John Duff, 2nd Cassie Calo, 3rd Cary Spiegel, 4th Annie Astley, **Strathspey & Reel** 1st Cassie Calo, 2nd Chelsea Veldhouse, 3rd John Duff, 4th Annie Astley.

Grade 3: Piobaireachd 1st Ryan Enright, 2nd Brendan Ross, 3rd Chelsea Cyr, 4th Jason Marchand,

March 1st Brendan Ross, 2nd Matt McRae, 3rd Erin Kaminsky, 4th Ryan Enright,

Strathspey & Reel 1st Ryan Enright, 2nd Jason Marchand, 3rd James Faeh, 4th Matt McRae.

Jig (grades 3,4,5): 1st Ryan Enright, 2nd Roberta Sefcik, 3rd Matt McRae, 4th Courtney Calo.

Grade 4: Piobaireachd 1st Sheldon Hamblin, 2nd Robert Boyd, 3rd Roberta Sefcik, 4th Carl Donley,

March 1st Miriam Fortune, 2nd Courtney Calo, 3rd George Bell, 4th John Higgins.

Grade 5 - 29 and under: 2/4 March 1st Jason Wright, 2nd Mariah House, 3rd Kourtney Kaiser, 4th Haley Brinton.

Grade 5 - 30 and over: 2/4 March 1st Robin McQuay, 2nd Mark Pinks, 3rd Peter Green, 4th H. Phillips Stall.

Open New Composition: 1st Kevin Wiegand, 2nd James Faeh, 3rd Calvin Doyle.

SOLO DRUMMING

Professional: MSR 1st Dan Eaton, 2nd Charley Street, 3rd Michael Paige, **Hornpipe & Jig** 1st Dan Eaton, 2nd Charley Street, 3rd Michael Paige.

Grade 2: 1st Eric Street, 2nd Tim Garren.

Grade 3: 1st Sandy James, 2nd Kathy Cioffi.

Grade 4: 1st Brian Ross, 2nd William Sefcik, 3rd Keith Marshall, 4th Ray Devlin.

Amateur Bass: 1st Tom Behrens, 2nd Christoph Schutze, 3rd Ray Devlin, 4th Mike Messer.

Amateur Tenor: 1st Heather Womack, 2nd Jessica Reedy, 3rd Matt Lent, 4th Mary Miller.

Open Drum Major: 1st Steve McClure, 2nd Kiley Kaiser.

Amateur Drum Major: 1st Ken Hosey, 2nd Kourtney Kaiser, 3rd Lauren Eldridge, 4th Robert Larcom.



Interview with Andrew Berthoff

Andrew Berthoff is the editor of the *Piper & Drummer* magazine and *Piper & Drummer Online*. Andrew has been a prominent prize winning professional solo piper since 1981, a player in top Grade One bands for over fifteen years, an adjudicator with the PPBSO and a member of that organization's Music Board. The *Piper & Drummer* magazine is an award-winning quarterly international publication on the Scottish arts. It is the world's most widely circulated publication devoted solely to piping and drumming, and upholds an unparalleled commitment to editorial excellence, with the world's most knowledgeable and experienced pipers and drummers contributing.

When did the *Piper & Drummer*, the premiere piping magazine, first get started?

First, it's a pleasure to do this. I've done over 50 feature interviews for the *Piper & Drummer* now, so it's very different being on the other side of the table. I'll do my best.

The *Piper & Drummer's* evolution actually began in the 1940s with an Ontario-based publication called "The Piper & Dancer Bulletin." This was a small, digest-sized monthly booklet that was very popular then and highly collectible today. It actually predates and perhaps even inspired the *Piping Times*, which many erroneously presume is the world's first regular organized publication for pipers. "The Piper & Dancer Bulletin" was put together by a prominent Montreal-based piper named Steve McKinnon.

With the demise of "The Piper & Dancer Bulletin" after McKinnon's death in the 1970s, the Pipers Society of Ontario (then the name of the organization) wrote into its rules that it would publish a regular magazine. This was started in 1982 as the *Canadian Piper & Drummer*. As often happens with fledgling piping periodicals, the *Canadian Piper & Drummer* was passed from editor to editor, after each discovered just how much work it is to put together a magazine.

In 1985, Michael Grey volunteered to take on the magazine, and he asked me to work with him on it. I was living in Scotland then, and I would send him articles and scoop from over there. Some of the things we did were pretty silly and sophomoric, but we were young and having a laugh. Michael's style is to be inventive, unique and different, and it really was he who first threw down the challenge to the piping world that this publication was going to push buttons, be creative, and strive to challenge people to think differently simply by asking courageous questions and discussing sensitive topics.

Are you a native Scotsman?

I'm actually also a United States citizen, born and raised in St. Louis. In Scotland I went from nine-month tourist visa to nine-month tourist visa, and, after the authorities started questioning just what I was doing in Scotland to make money (I was actually busking on Princes Street and working under the table in a restaurant in Edinburgh's Grassmarket), I decided to try to emigrate to Canada, since I knew Michael and Bill Livingstone, and had an invitation to play with the then World Champion 78th Fraser Highlanders.

I eventually got into Canada, and settled in Toronto in May 1988, and continued to work on the *Canadian Piper & Drummer* with Michael until he also found it took too much of his time. It was then that I really started to edit and publish the magazine on my own, always, of course, with the strong backing and support of the Pipers & Pipe Band Society of Ontario (PPBSO).

I came to Toronto with the idea of putting to use my English degree from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, and getting into publishing. After waiting tables for over a year, I got a job as an assistant editor with a publishing company after the publisher was impressed that I published my own magazine. I worked on several publications, and these happened to be computer trade magazines. I knew nothing about computers or technology. In fact, I even resisted it. But this job suddenly thrust me into the computer world of 1990, when the PC was about to go from being a hobbyist device to becoming a ubiquitous productivity tool.

Consequently, I was learning to use early "desktop publishing" software. The *Piper & Drummer* was being laid out then by hand, being typeset with that old Linotype process, with it then being pasted onto boards. It was a long, expensive, and sloppy process. I recognized the

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Interview with Andrew Berthoff -- *continued*

opportunities that desktop software presented to me and the magazine, so I started typesetting and designing it myself.

I also decided that, if the magazine were to be truly international, it would have to drop its "Canadian" name and approach. So, I renamed it simply *Piper & Drummer*, and worked with a designer at the publishing company where I worked to develop the "pd" logo that we still use.

I edited, designed and laid out the magazine until 1998, when I realized that we needed a professional layout artist because, 1) it was taking too much of my time, and 2) I really was not trained in graphic arts. So, I asked my friend Yvan Gagne if he would like to take on that aspect of the magazine. Since then, Yvan and I work together to put it out four times a year. It's grown from an eight-page black and white booklet distributed to handful of people to being a full-colour, glossy 64-page, magazine-size publication that goes to some 3,000 readers worldwide. Sharon Duthart expertly handles the advertising accounts, circulation and distribution.

The success of the *Piper & Drummer* can be chalked up to a few primary reasons:

1. **Continuity.** The magazine has had one editor in the last seventeen years. The issues come out on time with topical and timely material.
2. **Originality.** The *P&D* will not run anything that is not 100 per cent original. We don't reprint anything from other piping magazines, past or present. Never have, never will.
3. **Support.** The PPBSO, starting with President George Forgan in the 1980s, recognized that it needed a strong publication to improve its communication and marketing. Each president since then—Henry Roberts and now Bob Allen—has basically stood out of the way and not interfered with the *Piper & Drummer*. They also did not permit the PPBSO executive to interfere with it, and stayed true to the magazine's vision, even when it was a cash drain on the society. In addition to the intangible marketing and public relations benefits, the *P&D* now turns a handsome monetary profit for the PPBSO.
4. **Courage.** My friend George Campbell once said to me in the early 1990s, "That's courageous stuff you're doing with the magazine." I had never thought about it until then, but, perhaps sadly, he's right. The *P&D* has never been afraid to ask tough questions with the simple aim of creating constructive dialog on important issues.

Only by asking questions will we be able to get answers and come up with new solutions. Until the *Piper & Drummer* came along, the piping and drumming world was basically afraid to ask questions in public. This was reserved for hushed conversations in the beer tent. Even today, some organizations and people are suspicious of the *P&D*. I get the feeling that, seventeen years later, they're still hoping that it will just go away. Meanwhile, the subscriber base increases.

5. **Humour.** A key differentiator of the *Piper & Drummer* is its sense of humour. There are plenty of very serious articles, but there are also healthy doses of comic relief. We never lose sight of the fact that all this piping and drumming stuff is supposed to be fun.

How do find the time to do it all?

I've always been good at time management, and I never procrastinate with anything. I usually know what most of the content of an issue will be several issues in advance. It's such a part of my life, that I really don't think about the time commitment. As long as people enjoy it, and I enjoy doing it, I'll keep doing it.

Do you have a preference playing solo or playing with a band?

After playing with Grade 1 bands for 15 years – five years with Polkemmet in Scotland in the 1980s, and ten years with the 78th Fraser Highlanders until 1997 – I've dedicated my piping to solo competition, which, like everything else, I enjoy when it's going well. But it's like exercise: if you're not in a routine and physically fit, it's agony. When you are fit, practice and competition are a pleasure.

But solo piping is extremely self-indulgent. We don't normally have big audiences, the judges are hyper-critical, and you're really just playing for your own satisfaction. Nothing wrong with that, but it's completely different from performing and competing with a top band.

My greatest piping thrills, I would have to say, are ones with bands, when stars aligned at certain contests or concerts, and something like an out-of-body-experience takes over. This happened several times with the 78th Frasers – the band's medley at Maxville in 1988, an MSR at the Canadian Championship at Cambridge in, I think, 1992, and a set of 12 reels the band played at the "Megantic Outlaw" concert in New Brunswick in 199x. Those reels, unfortunately, had to be cut from the CD because of the step dancers on stage. Their clomping feet spoiled the recording. We had a small pipe section, but every player was a professional standard piper. Person for person, it may have been the best pipe section ever.

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Interview with Andrew Berthoff --

continued

I'm concentrating on solo piping now merely because of time. I don't have enough time to do both bands and solos well, and time is running out on my hands, so it's now or never for solos. I'm sure I'll play in a band again some day.

Did your time with the 78th Fraser Highlanders help or hinder your solo playing?

The biggest hindrance to my solo playing was renting an apartment for eight years after I came to Toronto. I had nowhere to practice pipes when it was cold, which it is here a lot. For that reason, I had to drop out of solos for about five years, until Julie (my wife) and I were able to buy a house in Toronto, where real estate prices are high. Once I was able to practice at home, I got back into the solo thing, and started winning prizes in the Ontario circuit. I decided to set my sights seriously on the Gold Medals at Oban and Inverness, and that meant giving up the band. To answer your question, though, after I left the band it did take awhile to undo Bill's style of playing 2/4 marches and strathspeys, especially, which work for him and his band but not for me on the boards.

Piobaireachd seems to be your first love in piping. Where and when did you start?

I was very lucky. I was introduced to piobaireachd in my first year of playing, and was playing "Lament of Alisdair Dhearg MacDonnell of Glengarry" along with "Scots Wa Hae." That was in St. Louis. The late, great Gordon Speirs used to travel through St. Louis on business, and the Invera'an band, which I played with, would snag him for Sunday workshops. He was a great motivator and inspiration. My parents also supported my hobby without ever being interfering, and allowed me to attend piping schools in Cape Breton, Timmins, North Carolina, and Virginia, where I got piobaireachd instruction from Finlay MacNeill and Jimmy McIntosh.

When I went to Scotland in 1983 as a student at Stirling University I started to work with Andrew Wright, who was just up the road in Dunblane. I also got help from Jack Taylor in Aboyne from time to time. I had met him at a summer school one year. Jack's one of piping's nicest and smartest people. But Andy has been a great support to me. I had a lot of in-person instruction from Andrew in the 1980s, and most of my work with him has been by tape since I moved to Toronto. I've been through probably 75 tunes with him. Unlike some piobaireachd instructors, Andy is very open-minded, and always encourages people to shape tunes with themselves in it. Like all but a very few

Brown and Nicol students, he doesn't charge for private instruction, because Brown and Nicol never charged their students.

While I may have had more consistent success in piobaireachd, I do love light music. Overall, I'd rather listen to a light music contest than a piobaireachd event. But I'd rather listen to a great piobaireachd performance than a great MSR.

What are your favorite piobaireachds?

My favourite tune is "Lament for Mary MacLeod." This is a technically simple, yet complexly beautiful tune. It's often mistakenly considered a beginner's tune. The first variation, to me, is one of the hardest pieces of piobaireachd to express well. It's all about the F's and C's, and when they're played the way I like it, the way Andrew Wright taught me, it's poignant. It was also my dad's favourite tune, and I played it at his funeral and memorial service in 2001. What's more, the track named "Annabel" on Michael Grey's 2001 *Shambolica!* recording features "Mary MacLeod," includes a tune Michael wrote for my daughter, and is dedicated to my father's memory. The track is personally very touching.

I also really like "Lament for Captain MacDougall." Again, the F's are brilliant. Other favourites are "Lord Lovat's Lament," "The Prince's Salute," "Lament for Patrick Og MacCrimmon," and "The Old Men of the Shells, #1." These are all highly melodic tunes, with simple, effective songs. And that's really what compelling music is first all about – at least to me. I'm partial to tunes with variations in compound time.

What piobaireachds would you recommend for a young piper?

I think any relatively uncomplicated, fairly short piobaireachd that introduces a strong melody is a good tune for a beginner. "Alisdair Dhearg" certainly worked for me. "The Company's Lament" and "Lament for the Old Sword" are good, straightforward tunes. I also like "Lament for Donald of Laggan" as a second or third piobaireachd. It introduces a so-called "irregular" urlar, and really requires the piper to express the tune in an interesting way, without making it maudlin. If a young piper identifies with "Donald of Laggan," I guarantee he will be hooked for life.

The biggest tip I have for young piobaireachd players (and perhaps more for their teachers) is to make the music interesting. Show variety, and, for God's sake, don't play the things so slowly that they become dirges. Nothing turns a listener – or a good a judge – off faster than a ponderously played piobaireachd.

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Interview with Andrew Berthoff --
continued

I notice you do a feature in the *Piper & Drummer* asking professional pipers to list their favorite tunes. Would you list your favorites?

Yes, we often ask interview subjects that question. I love lists, and they abound in the *Piper & Drummer*. Here goes:

2/4 March: "The Royal Scottish Pipers Society" – Roddy Campbell is one of the most underrated composers, and this is a wonderful example of his ability. Incredibly uplifting, and completing the summary phrases on an E is simple brilliance.

Strathspey: "Dora MacLeod" – a terrific tune. The third part, when handled by a great player, is sensational. Unfortunately, bands routinely butcher this strathspey.

Reel: "Broadford Bay" – a great melody that makes perfect musical sense. Not a tremendously hard tune, but one that

really just swings when played well. Love the first part phrase balancing between the hi G's and hi A's.

Hornpipe: "Duncan Johnstone" – Donald MacLeod, for my money, is, overall, the greatest light music composer ever. No one produced more consistently creative, unique, and melodic tunes than he, and this is one of his best.

Jig: "Donald MacLean" – another Peter MacLeod gem. "Jig of Slurs" is also a wonderful tune.

What keeps you motivated?

I owe just about everything I have to piping. Piping got me in to the universities I attended. I met my wonderful wife because of piping. Piping brought me to Canada. I got in to Canada because of piping. Piping got me a job in journalism, which led to my career in PR. Everything I have that I love is due to piping. I owe piping a lot. If I can return anything through my work with the *Piper & Drummer*, it's the least I can do.

The Piper & Drummer comes out quarterly, and is free to all members of the Pipers & Pipe Band Society of Ontario. Subscriptions are available to all, however, and the magazine enjoys a worldwide circulation in Canada, the United States, Scotland, England, Ireland, Ulster, South Africa, New Zealand, Wales, France, Japan, Norway, and Australia. You can subscribe online (www.PPBSO.org) or by regular mail, send check to:

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JANUARY ' S
FEATURED BAND

The City of Melbourne Pipes and Drums

By Pipe Major David Spurlock

The City of Melbourne Pipes and Drums has had a long history by Florida standards. Conceived as the Oceanside Pipes and Drums in 1991 under the direction of Pipe Major Jim Nisbet, the band came onto the piping scene with guns blazing. The competition corps of the band soon garnered top awards and became a force to be reckoned with. I joined the band in 1994 and competed with them for two seasons. Unfortunately, its early success was to fall prey to personnel changes. The band found itself with too small a corps to compete with and the final



David Spurlock, P/M

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The City of Melbourne Pipe Band – *continued*

blow came when Jim Nisbet moved from the area in 1997. However, the decision was made to try to keep the band going even though it was made up of only several beginners and a small corps of former competitors with no Pipe Major to pull them all together. I, David Spurlock, Pipe Sergeant at the time suddenly found myself in the position of Pipe Major. At this time, I should give you a brief history of myself so you can understand the ramifications of this decision. I began my piping career in Rockville, Maryland at the age of 16. My high school, Robert E. Peary, had a pipe band and I became its Pipe Major for both my junior and senior years. However, all of the normal duties of a Pipe Major were handled by the instructor; including taming the 2x4 reeds that were the standard of the time. This would become a



City of Melbourne Pipes and Drums Before
Competing - Dunedin 2003

problem that I would have to overcome as Pipe Major of The City of Melbourne Pipes and Drums. After I graduated, I found myself ill equipped to continue the instrument and have a life at the same time. I did not pursue the instrument seriously for the next 30 years.

As the new Pipe Major of the band, I decided to make some changes. I changed the focus of the band from a competition group to a street band with competition aspirations. I also changed the name of the band to The City of Melbourne Pipes and Drums. The theory being that the community would be aware of us as a local band and our opportunities for gigs would improve.


The next few years would be educational for both the band members and especially for myself. Slowly our new direction and attention to improvement began to pay off. We scored a few new members and put the band on firm financial ground with our local gigs.

By 1999, we were ready to get our feet wet in competitions again. And get our feet wet we did. Our first competition was in the pouring rain. We didn't place but I was impressed with the member's grit and dedication.

Our competitions of 1999 and 2000 were mostly learning experiences. Our low rankings and the loss of a critical second snare drummer put the brakes on competition. So we refocused on the street band aspect. This worked out fine until something odd happened. Even though our gigs were rolling in, band attendance at our weekly practice began to thin out. After several stabs at different motivational plans, I found one that worked. The band had become complacent. Rehashing band music every week wasn't cutting it anymore. The band needed to be challenged to keep the interest up. Hence, back to competition.

This time we were armed with an expanded drum line and a pipe corps that had expanded in both numbers and in proficiency. Band attendance was back on track and we were headed for the games. In 2003, our first games brought in a fourth place at Plantation, Florida. Our second and final for the season garnered a second place at Dunedin, Florida. The band's highest achievement to date was winning first place in the grade 5 band competition at the Central Florida Highland Games in Orlando in 2004. It should be said that our winning competition medley for the 2004 season showcases two original compositions by the band's former pipe major, Jim Nisbet.

The highland games set the standard of excellence for piping and the Scottish arts. They have played a very important role toward the progression of this band since its conception. An alarming trend lately has been to eliminate the competition aspect of the games. As we have all seen this is usually their demise and a tragic blow to the piping community. The story of The City of Melbourne Pipes and Drums is a testimonial to the importance of these competitions.

Tune Selections  REMINDER

- * **Tune selections (Grade 4)** for Games competitions are as follows:

(don't follow the odd/even rule)

Orlando, Jan 17	Quick March
Sarasota, Jan 31	Medley
Zephyrhills, Feb 7 & 8	Quick March
Jacksonville, Feb 28	Quick March
Ft. Lauderdale, March 6	Medley
Dunedin, April 3	Quick March
Clermont, April 24	Medley

- * The **Bass and Tenor** Committee will administer all Bass and Tenor Competition when NOT offered by the Games. Those games offering Individual Bass and Tenor must give time slots to competitors. (for the 2003/2004 Season)
- * **Grade 4 Piobaireachd** – Ground and 1st variation.
- * **Band Points** – Will be changed to Ranking if 5 bands or more compete. If 4 or less bands compete – use the point system.



* The above news items were posted to the SUSPBA website (www.suspba.org) under "News Updates" at the beginning of December 2003. **Check the website often** for future "News Updates", which will be posted between newsletter issue dates.

Any questions/ comments / suggestions / complaints?
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