

INTERNATIONAL PIPE BAND DRUMMER

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ALEX DUTHART: A DRUMMING LEGEND

by Bert Barr

This biography is an attempt to let you know a little about Alex Duthart. Alex was born on 7 October 1925 in Cambusnethan, Wishaw, Scotland. He started to play drums at the age of eight and was taught by his father, John Duthart. Alex's father was a bass and snare drummer in the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders Band during World War I and he, too, was a well-known figure in the pipe band world.

At the age of twelve, Alex joined Craigneuk Parish Church Pipe Band where he played the bass and snare drum. One of Alex's first awards was a Cowal medal which he won playing the bass drum in the juvenile grade contest.

He then moved on, and in 1942 joined the Home Guard Pipe Band, which later became Dalziel Highland Pipe Band, in Motherwell. I think this is where Alex's greatness as a pipe band drummer was about to start. He went on to build a drum corps which was to win the World Drumming Championship in 1953. Shortly thereafter Alex retired from pipe bands

for a four year period.

During these four years Alex devoted his energy to playing the drum set. During the day Alex was employed as a blacksmith in a local steelworks. His evenings were spent playing the drum set with some of the local dance bands.

He became a very accomplished performer on the drum set and was held in very high regard by a lot of professional drummers at the time, such as Bobby Orr, Andy White and Joe Morrello, to name but a few. He went on to play with the top big bands in Glasgow.

In 1957, Alex was invited to take charge of the drum corps for Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia Pipe Band. I was already at this time with Shotts and had played with John Kerr and Alex Colville who had both been lead drummers with Shotts. I think this was the challenge Alex had been waiting for. During his four years away from pipe bands he had been working on a whole new technique. This was to be a completely new concept in pipe band drumming. He had seven weeks to get a drum corps ready for the first contest of the season. At that time the drum corps consisted of Alex, Dave Armit and myself. I think 1957 was the start of a new pipe band era. In the past, pipe band drum corps played more to the melody line of the tune. It was during this time that Alex had the idea of a more

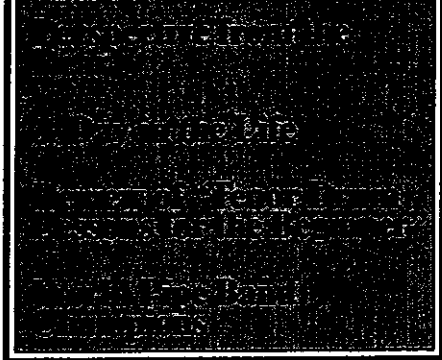


rhythmical sound. This would stand in good stead in later years when ensemble came to play such a big part in pipe band contests.

Alex stayed with Shotts for a long number of years and went on to win every pipe band honor many times over. To list all of the awards would probably be

continued on page 2

What's inside...



From the Editor

First of all, I would like to thank three people starting with Bert Barr for writing the biography on Alex Duthart. Bert was most gracious in providing a good biography of Alex. He also contacted Mrs. Alex Duthart who I thank for allowing us to print Alex's favorite score, Donald Cameron.

Next I would like to take this opportunity to do something that should have been done long ago. I would like to thank our managing editor, Nancy Taylor. Without Nancy this endeavor would never have gotten off the ground. I really appreciate (as all drummers should) her tireless effort which just adds to her already hectic schedule. Anyone who has ever met Nancy knows that when she gets involved in something, she gives it her all. Thank you!

As the new season approaches in this part of the world, we are looking forward to many articles in future issues. People such as Arthur Cook, Joe Noble, Jimmy Stewart, Lisa Frazier, Harvey Dawson, Charlie Cablish, Paul Turner, and many, many more should make the magazine even better than it has been.

We appreciate your continued support and the many letters that have been coming in. As always, we encourage your participation. Let us know what you would like to see in future issues. We are here to inform and entertain you.

All the best in the 1994 season, and I hope to meet many of you this summer.

Jim Sim

ALEX DUTHART

continued from page 1

impossible and in any event futile. Suffice it to say that there is no drumming award in the pipe band field of any importance that Alex Duthart or his drum corps did not win.

However, in 1965, a new challenge came up and he was invited to take charge of the drum corps of Invergordon Distillery Pipe Band. He spent two years there and two years with Edinburgh Police Pipe Band; then he returned to Shotts in 1969 and stayed there until 1982. In 1982 he was to take over British Caledonian Airways Pipe Band. Alex played there until his death on 27 November 1986.

Shortly after his return to Shotts, Alex was approached by a leading drum manufacturer to work on the sound of a pipe band drum. Through his effort in this project, the drum manufacturer was able to regain its leadership in the pipe

drum market. Alex also developed and produced his own style of drum stick which is still used by drummers throughout the world today.

He also had a great solo drumming record, winning every solo prize there was to win. He won these awards so often that the Scottish Pipe Band Association suggested that he step down from solo competition. From time to time he would return to the solo contests only if he felt he had to prove a point.

Over the years a great number of drummers have had the privilege of playing with Alex. His youngest son, Drew, played in Shotts and B-Cal with his father and is now in Canada carrying on the Duthart pipe band name.

Alex's life in pipe bands covered a wide range. He was the drumming principal of the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association and with Willie Sloan, John McAlister and Alex Hamilton, he compiled the drumming section of the RSPBA tutor books. He was the first to use above and below the line for writing drum scores.

This idea was born from a meeting with the great Swiss drummer Dr. Fritz Berger. He incorporated a lot of Dr. Berger's Swiss rudiments into pipe band drumming.

He also introduced broader versions of the drum salute. This was to display time signature changes and feature the dexterity of the pipe band drum section. As you know, this proved very successful and drum salutes are now adopted throughout the world. In 1958, the first Duthart drum salute was played by Shotts in Russia. Today the drum salute is a great source of entertainment to the audience and allows drummers to demonstrate their special skills.

Alex spent a number of years teaching drumming in the local secondary schools. During his spare time, he compiled his own two books. One book contains his drum scores, and the other is a tutor book of drum rudiments plus scores.

Above all, Alex Duthart was always ready to help. He was a very kind and generous person and spent long hours with people from all over the world. He was always ready to impart his great knowledge on drumming to others. Through a piping colleague, Seamus MacNeil, Alex was introduced to summer schools in Canada and the United States. For a long number of years Alex played a big part in summer schools and seminars all over the world, and his services were always in high demand. There are a great number of such schools



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that continue today as a result of the early efforts of Alex Duthart. A great deal of the technique in Canada and the United States can be attributed to Alex's teachings.

Every time a drummer practices or plays a drum score, they may not know it, but they are playing rudiments Alex developed. His scores are played all over the world, his famous Donald Cameron, Cameronian Rant and Pretty Marion can still win world solo contests in Scotland to this day.

As you can tell from reading this biography, Alex was deeply involved in the art of drumming. That was only part of the man who was Alex Duthart. He was a great family man and was completely devoted to his wife, Cathy, and their four children. Cathy was always there to provide the love, support and encouragement necessary for a man to become the success that was Alex Duthart.

Alex could always bring out the best in people. Alex's overwhelming enthusiasm rubbed off on others so that everyone was prepared to put forth a great deal of effort. He had this quality about him, where everyone who played with him had an immense respect for him. This made it easier for the drum corps to achieve a lot of our ambitions. I think if you respect the man in charge, you are more willing to make the sacrifices required for success. I feel that this is a necessary ingredient for any successful group. This is one of the many qualities that made Alex such a great leader.

There will be a lot of drummers who will read this article. Please do not think this is all that can be said about Alex Duthart. He was truly a great man. I had the privilege of being with him from 1957 until 27 November 1986. I, like many more drummers who really knew Alex, can say that there will never be another Alex Duthart.

Truly a legend!

Bert Barr is from Wishaw, Scotland. He played in the same drum corps as Alex Duthart for 29 years and probably knew Alex better than any other drummer.

THE ROLE OF PIPE BAND MANAGEMENT

by Denver Cardwell

With reprint permission from the author; original appeared in a recent issue of The Pipe Band.

Introduction

Apart from the obvious objective of creating a competition winning band the principals in this role could be assessed as a management team with the pipe major as the most important controlling factor. It is essential that the team should consist of a Chairman Administrative Officer (Secretary), Treasurer, Stocktaker and Travel Administrator. If possible, the management team, apart from the pipe major, should be non-playing members. Once these officers are established the pipe major can get on with his primary objectives and produce the band. He has to have management qualities as well as an abundance of leadership ability. He must know of traits and psychological moods of all his players. An enormous amount of understanding is an essential ingredient as the personalities of each individual are different. Some are more sensitive than others and reactions to criticism at an inopportune moment can cause offence.

Basic Understanding

Conversation is an important aspect of the pipe major's relationship with his team. In the process of "getting the job done" he needs to be able to undertake an assessment of the performance, at periods, if difficulties are to be overcome and standards achieved and maintained. A lot depends on the content and character of the conversation which the pipe major embarks upon and how constructive it is. Let's look at some essential characteristics of the encounters with the band members:

--At the very least it should provide an opportunity for reaffirmation/clarification of the standards being achieved and some assessment of how far the performance is coming up to expectations.

--If it is to be useful, then it should be based on accurate, recorded (if possible) information, and not on reactive, subjective impressions and opinions otherwise there is little chance of agreement and a very good chance of conflict and rancour.

The conversation should aim to be helpful in jointly determining:

- a) what went wrong
- b) why it was successful
- c) next practical steps
- d) changes
- e) actual targets.

Above all there must be a motivating influence. Clearly, the encounter must carry a sense of discipline with it; yet it will be characterized by warmth, openness and honesty.

The Need for Review

Whether it is by conversation or in a more formal manner, there is an obvious need for performance review. This must be accepted and, at its simplest, the review is a means of ensuring that current performance by the band can be used effectively to influence future results and achievements. It serves to remind both pipe major and its members of the interdependence of their roles and can create the opportunity for each to state exactly

continued on page 5

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN INTERNATIONAL PIPE BAND DRUMMER

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| MWPBA | Midwest Pipe Band Association |
| PPBSO | Pipers & Pipe Band Society of Ontario |
| WUSPBA | Western U.S. Pipe Band Association |
| EUSPBA | Eastern U.S. Pipe Band Association |
| RSPBA | Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association |
| AFPBA | Australian Federation of Pipe Bands Association |