

**PIPE MAJOR THOMAS THOMPSON (Tommy)
1931-2000**



P/M Thompson was born in 1931 in Overtown, Lanacshire, Scotland. Later, he moved to Newmains (down the road) a town close to Glasgow. It was here he was introduced to the bagpipes at the age of 9 years, and from that time on according to siblings and later his wife Janette, he was never without the chanter in his mouth. He was born for the bagpipes.

His first band was the Law Pipe Band which he joined as a junior piper. It was not too many years later he moved up to the Shotts and Dykhead Colliery Pipe Band as a senior piper.

Tommy enlisted in the army with the Royal Scots and went to Korea as a piper and “kilted runner” from 1951 to 1953 and was with the band in Korea when it stunned the American army base by marching over a hill playing Scotland the Brave to “help” the “Yanks” celebrate Robbie Burns. Tommy saw action and sustained a slight wound to his throat. On returning from his tour of duty he was selected to be the “Solitary Piper” on the parapet at Edinburgh Castle for the Edinburgh Tattoo, a singular honour.

On his return to Scotland he once again re-joined Shotts and also worked for the Ford Motor Company and became their foreman in their autobody department. It was during this time that the Shotts band, under the direction of PM Tom McAllister, won the World Championship of piping 4 years in a row from 1957 to 1960. Tommy, according to PM McAllister, was the only piper to never be cut at any time during his years with the band, an amazing confirmation of his piping abilities!

In 1967 Tommy and his bride Janette immigrated to Canada and “ended up” in Winnipeg. The “wee mahn”, as he was affectionately known, started the Centennial Pipe Band in 1969 and was the Pipe Major. They competed as a Grade 1 band with such notables as Ian Conn, Sandy Cherry, and Jim Barrie playing. They won the CNE in Toronto and stirred the competition blood not only in Winnipeg but in Western Canada as well with that victory. He took over as Pipe Major of the Selkirk and District Pipe Band in Selkirk for a few years as well as combining the Stirling Pipe Band of Pine Falls and Centennial Pipe Band into a powerful band called Stirling-Centennial that was a dominant force in Manitoba and Saskatchewan for a number of years.

PM Thompson, along with PM William MacLeod and others in Saskatchewan started the Prairie Pipe Band Assoc. to standardize the competitions across Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and the Assoc. is still in existence in Manitoba today. If that were not enough, he and PM MacLeod and PM Jim McWilliams from Moose Jaw, started the Qu'Appelle Piping School under the umbrella of the Saskatchewan School of the Performing Arts. It was tremendously successful and brought in instructors from Scotland with PM Donald MacLeod being probably the most notable. Ever the teacher, Tommy also taught piping at the piping school at the International Peace Garden Music Camp and he was a fixture for 25 years. It was another chance for youngsters to be introduced to the wonderful world of piping and drumming.

In 1990 the Stirling-Centennial Band dissolved and Tommy took most of the junior pipers and drummers and formed the Glenaura Pipes and Drums. The band name was suggested by his wife, Janette. The band competed across western Canada, B.C., Minnesota and Ontario as well as parades in countless towns and cities in Manitoba. An annual Xmas concert was held at a church in Winnipeg to large audiences and the annual Robbie Burns Dinner is still a mainstay of the band. Tommy was PM until 1999 when he became too ill from cancer to continue running the band. He passed the torch to PM Leigh Ward, a skilled piper, for whom he had great respect. The band in its 25 years of existence has moved between Grade 4 and Grade 3 and continues on the path that PM Tommy initially set out.

PM Thompson left this world March 29, 2000. His talents, skills, personality and loyalty to the piping world are dearly missed.