

Words and Music

Spring 2018

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Intermountain Branch to Host 2018 AGM

Drew McPheeters, Vice President
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The date and location of the 2018 Western United States Pipe Band Association (WUSPBA) Annual General Meeting (AGM) has been finalized.

As you may recall, starting last year the location of the WUSPBA AGM was to be rotated through each branch of the association in order to increase the opportunities for members to attend, meet the officers and take part in the business of the association.

The 2017 AGM was hosted by the newly created Southern Branch in Phoenix. This year it will be hosted in the Intermountain Branch, and next year in the Northern Branch.

Save October 27 and Plan to Attend

The 2018 AGM will be held on Oct 27th in Denver Colorado. The host hotel and location of the general meeting will be the recently remodeled Sheraton Denver Tech Center hotel (www.sheratondenvertch.com), located at 7007 South Clinton Street, Greenwood Village, Co 80112.

Rooms will be available for \$99 per night (plus applicable taxes) when reserved from the allocated block of rooms. This rate will be good through Oct 4th by calling Starwood Reservations at 1-800-325-3535. Please identify yourself as part of the Western United States Pipe Band Association to reserve this rate. Guests are eligible for Starwood Preferred Guest StarPoints during their stay.

Light Rail and Shuttles

The hotel is located near Interstate 25 and Arapahoe Road in the Southeast part of the Denver area and is convenient to several restaurants in addition to an on-site restaurant and bar, and has relatively close access to the Denver light rail system.

The hotel shuttle provides free transportation within 5 miles of the hotel from 7:00 AM until 9:00 PM. It will be possible to use light rail exclusively and forego the expense of a rental car if you desire to do so. For more information please refer to Denver RTD website.

Details to Come Soon

Exact times, agendas, and any possible clinics, round tables, or such are still in the process of being arranged. Your input on this matter would be most appreciated. As always the main purpose of the AGM is to address the business of the association, vote on proposed revisions and changes to the WUSPBA bylaws and Contest Rules, and elect new officers during the Saturday morning session.

Changes to Bylaws or Contest Rules Open to Sept. 12

Proposed changes to the Contest Rules or Bylaws must be submitted in writing and electronic form to the WUSPBA Executive Secretary at least 45 days prior to their consideration at the AGM per paragraph 75 and 76 of Article 19 of the WUSPBA bylaws.

This year they must be submitted by September 12th. This year, the offices of Vice President, Sanctioning Secretary and Solo Registrar are up for election.

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Deadlines

**Summer 2018 issue: July 20
Fall 2018 issue: September 20**

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The WUSPBA's Annual General Meeting will be held in the Denver Metro area on Oct. 27, 2018.

Special hotel rates and light rail and free shuttles make getting around easy – so plan now to attend!

Find more information on pages 1 through 3.

Consider Serving the WUSPBA

Some of you may have received a communication which related an exchange where I more or less challenged an aggrieved person to find a candidate to fill my position. Contrary to his assertion that I took offense at his suggestion that he would do just that, I never did or will object to that.

I would challenge everyone to consider possible candidates for each and every position up for election in the association and at every level.

Everyone who fills an association position spends more time, effort, money and stress than almost everyone imagines. Most of us have been pressed or persuaded into duty by other officers, and most of us have faced no opposition or alternatives when it came time for election.

Speaking Personally

Speaking personally, I work more than full time, try to run a drum corps and make it better, instruct players, and try to find a

way to make myself a better musician and play some competitive racquetball, and maybe relax a bit on my own.

I would love nothing better than to find someone that wishes to take my job, so when I go to a competition I am only worried about what my band does, and not every other band. I don't intend to actively campaign for reelection.

I will be willing continue to help the association in IT and other related issues. This, however, will not extend to helping people solve their own issues.

Sanctioning Secretary Reminders and Updates

By Amara Reddick, Sanctioning Secretary
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Hello Membership!

As we are a quarter of the way through the competition season, I'd like to provide updates and reminders related to sanctioning.

For Competitors

Competition dates are being added to the WUSPBA website prior to being sanctioned to allow more advance notice for scheduling purposes and to support increased attendance. Once these competitions have completed the sanctioning process, a "SANCTIONED" label will be added to the title on the WUSPBA website.

More organizers are using the R2 Sports system for registration (<http://www.r2sports.com/r2-sports-login.asp>) The online platform is intended to streamline the registration process.

If you have any questions regarding R2 please contact the organizer or your brach presidents for supports (<https://wuspba.org/administration-2/>).

For Contest Organizers

As soon as your date is confirmed for your event, notify me and your competition can be added to the WUSPBA website without the sanctioning application.

When using the R2 system, please send me a direct link to your registration page so that it can be added to the WUSPBA website.

In general, please remember to check the WUSPBA website regularly for updated competition information. Also, please ensure your updated contact information is correct in R2, as organizers can use it to email information regarding their events.

Good luck with your competitions!

Greetings from the Band Registrar

Jeffrey M. Mann, Band Registrar
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I wanted to thank all the bands for a very smooth transition for me as WUSPBA band registrar. I have Nancy Theriault to thank for helping to train me for this service.



I greatly appreciate your patience as I learn all of the specifics with regards to the R2 System. For the most part it does what we need it to. The

membership component is not the most user-friendly, but once it is learned it is a great tool. I use it every day.

One thing that I have found is that sometimes it does not work well with Google Chrome. If you find that type of issue, switch to Safari or Firefox. They both seem to be working fine. Be sure to clear your cache first. That might take care of the issue as well.

Please know that I am here to help and be of service. If you are having problems, please contact me and hopefully we can work through these issues.

Here's to wishing you the very best for the season. Good piping, drumming and drum majoring!

Intermountain Branch Report

By Jamie Cuthill, Acting Intermountain Branch President
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I hope everybody is feeling ready for the outdoor contest season just around the corner!



The Intermountain Branch has had a quiet winter with not much to report, so I'll just give a list of our up-and-coming contests in the Branch. They include:

- Rio Grande Highland Games, May 19 - 20
- Pikes Peak Highland Games, June 16 -17
- Intermountain Branch Contest at the Colorado Irish Festival, July 14 -15
- Elizabeth Highland Games, July 21 - 22
- Rocky Mountain Highland Games, August 4 -5
- Longs Peak Highland Games, September 8 - 9.

We look forward to seeing everybody here in the Mile High City for the AGM, and we wish all of you a successful contest season.

Southern Branch Announces AGM

By Ed Best, Southern Branch President
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The Annual General Meeting of the Southern Branch will be held on Friday, May 25, at 7:30 p.m. in the Irvine Marriot conference room.

Topics to be covered will include:

- Officer elections
- Changes to the bylaws
- Scholarship opportunities.

Please forward any agenda topics you would like, to the Southern Branch Executive Committee for consideration, and stay tuned for more details.

The Branch will serve food! I hope to see you there.

WUSPBA Piper to Play Tattoo in London

By Linda Snoddy
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Linda Robertson has auditioned for and been accepted to play with Pipers Trail at the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo in August 2018.

Began Piping at Age 14

Linda started playing pipes at the age of 14. Her musical education began at the age of seven on the flute.

She studied under the Principle flutist for the Bakersfield Symphony Orchestra for six years, and played in the Stockdale Christian School Orchestra.

The orchestra competed at several competitions each year in Los Angeles and placed first every time.

Music Major

Linda is a music major, working toward her teaching credentials in music.

In addition to playing the flute, she is a piano major. She also played all



Linda Robertson

percussion instruments and was section leader for her college orchestra.

Linda is very excited and honored to have this opportunity to be included in this year's tattoo and to represent the WUSPBA. It will greatly add to her future goal of teaching bagpipes and becoming an ensemble adjudicator.

Meet a WUSPBA Band: The Glendale Pipes & Drums

Recently, *Words & Music* interviewed Pipe Major Sandy Voris to learn about the history, philosophy and aspirations of the Glendale Pipes & Drums of Arizona.

W&M: *When was the Glendale Pipes & Drums organized?*

PM Voris: Our band began in 2002, as part of the Glendale (AZ) Police Department's Honor Guard. Several band members are still civilian volunteers with the police department, performing at police academy graduations, civic events and funerals.

W&M: *How big is the band?*

PM Voris: On average, we have nearly 30 players.

W&M: *Who are your other officers?*

PM Voris: **Ryan Rickard and Andrew Lahera** are Pipe Sergeants, and our Drum Sergeant is Bruce Voris. We also have a Business Manager (Ford Dudley), a Treasurer (Jim Swan) and a Quartermaster (Todd Mitchell).



The Glendale Pipes and Drums in 2013

W&M: *What's your philosophy about competitions and performances?*

PM Voris: We are a bit unusual in our makeup, in that the vast majority of our pipers and drummers began their musical endeavor as adults. They didn't start as kids, working their way through the various competition levels as soloists, to get into the higher ranks of their instrument. As adults, too, the priorities are somewhat

different – all of our players really enjoy learning the pipes and drums and work hard at it, but winning a solo contest is not a priority for most of them. They are busy with careers, have kids and in some cases, grandkids, and they are just at a different



point in life. Consequently, the traditional paths to piping success don't quite 'fit' for our people.

So, we use band competitions as opportunities to work harder as a group, to really get to the best level of musical excellence that we are capable of as a band. It's a bit of a balancing act, but we honestly have one of the hardest working groups of people I've ever known, and I've been in several musical groups over the course of my lifetime. I'm not the sort of personality who wants to push people too hard, but some pushing is necessary to get the best out of them, without crushing anyone's spirit. For example, I really WANT my weakest piper to get that jig idiom nailed down correctly, and I'll have o-on-ones as often as possible to help bring that about.

I believe in LOTS of encouragement, and that is the general culture of our band. We are a pretty social group, and enjoy spending time together outside of band rehearsal, too.

We especially enjoy performances where we can not only play, but interact with our audience – we take Q and A, and try to make piping and drumming more accessible to the public. In performances, our band endeavors to strike a balance between repertoire tunes and competition tunes. For our "audience-friendly" performances, we recognize the need to have some familiar melodies for people to hear, in addition to the more complex and sometimes obscure competition tunes. So, we are always balancing the time spent on a variety of music for different purposes.

And like most pipe bands, we are always looking for new people to join us.

W&M: *How often do you practice?*

PM Voris: We practice a couple of times a week. Our former pipe major, Ford Dudley, runs a student session at a local fire station, where newer folks are worked into the band. Our drum sergeant is doing the same thing with up-and-coming drummers. Sometimes, Tuesday nights get used for repertoire review, depending on upcoming gigs. Our regular band rehearsal is Thursday night at a local elementary school.

W&M: *What are some of the highlights in the history of the band?*

PM Voris: Our band has a strong connection with public safety – over the years, we have had police officers and firefighters within our group. We've had to do our share of police and fire funerals – a necessary but very sad task. The Glendale Police Department has lost two officers over the course of our existence, so our Honor Guard

pipers and drummers were front and center at those two funerals.



At other funerals for first responders killed in the line of duty, we are part of the larger group of pipers and drummers from several agencies, usually at the cemetery for the final honors. Our police department is always very gracious, and appreciates their uniform being visible in the piping and drumming corps. Some of our band members are founders and leaders in the recently created Arizona State Fire Band, which brings together firefighters from all over the state.

W&M: *What are some of your hopes for the future of the band?*

PM Voris: I would hope that our band continues to be as much ‘family’ as band! Recently, tragedy befell one of our members – she lost half of her family to a malfunctioning furnace in a cabin (carbon monoxide poisoning). The way our various members stepped in to help, even at the scene (some of our public safety members), was simply amazing. The band is still there for her as she works through her grief, and that support will continue indefinitely.

And we will always pursue musical excellence to the very best of our ability, while remaining a group of people that truly loves to hang out together. We’re friends,

first and foremost, but it was piping and drumming that brought us all together in the first place!

Piping and drumming schools, lessons, and solo competitions are always encouraged for those in the band who are interested, but they are not required. Our culture of encouragement seems to facilitate the desire to seek improvement on one’s instrument in any number of available venues. Occasionally, we bring in coaches to improve band performance.

W&M: *What else would you like other bands to know about the Glendale Pipes & Drums?*

PM Voris: We have recently designed a new tartan (one of our members is quite gifted at this – he did the lion’s share of the work, with support from a committee), based on the colors of the Arizona flag. That is being woven even as we speak, to be made into new kilts for the band. We are planning to register it with the Scottish Registry, and are seeking the needed permission from Arizona’s governor to use the name “Arizona” in naming the tartan (red tape!!). We look forward to premiering those kilts in 2018.

Pipe Major Voris can be reached at azsandpiper@gmail.com.

On learning music (and other memorable stuff)

Words & Music thought our readers might enjoy some tips on playing pipe band music from the ever-talented Neil Dickie. This gem, dating from Piper and Drummer Magazine, published by the Pipers and Pipe Band Society of Ontario,

Canada, in November of 2001, is just as relevant today as when it was written. Enjoy!

I don't like this time of year very much. Summer is over and all the pipe band contests are done. From now until the New Year my brain is sorely taxed because I have too many things I am supposed to remember. I am not allowed my usual luxury of distraction from dutiful behavior ("Sorry, dear, I completely forgot. I was thinking about the band," is a frequent spring/summer refrain).

Somewhere between the last halcyon days of summer and the dawn of the next year I am supposed to remember that my wife has a birthday, that we have a wedding anniversary in there somewhere and I even have to recall what my friends and family said they wanted for Christmas (way back in May). There are pipe band AGMs to attend (where all sorts of people grieve about things I had long forgotten – like, "We spent \$14 on Scotch tape. Can't pipers buy their own?" and, "Jock was out of step for the whole of the Kinsmen Day Parade. I move we stay in step. Second for the motion?")

My dog has to get shots sometime in October and every day I have to water the trees. (The dog doesn't water them fairly enough; she seems to favour only the willow and the crabapple.) It doesn't seem fair. I have a 2 megabyte brain in a 20 gigabyte world. And then, just to add more misery to the despair of my autumn, the pipe major hands out 18 new tunes to be learned and memorized by Halloween. (Why Halloween is significant I don't know, but it is a deadline imposed by pipe majors everywhere. Perhaps they agreed on that at some secret PM symposium – "Topic for resolution: imposition of cruel and unusual

punishment on band members while appearing consummately humanitarian.")

I don't agree with a lot of the things that go on in the pipe band world. And this music thing irks me the most. What's the big deal about memorizing tunes? As far as I can see we are the only musical ensembles that forego the use of sheet music in performance. (Except for people like N-Sync. But they only play four notes anyway.) Even the Queen's Guards have wee clips on their trombones and cymbals to hold miniscule manuscript. What's wrong with that?

Maybe it's a pipe band posturing thing. It's like we're making some grand statement: We're better than the rest of the musical world because we don't have those poofy wee clips. How grand and accomplished we are. We are the masters of memory."

"Fine," the musical world replies, "but at least stay in tune." We don't have an answer for that one. This is probably why only pipe bands attend highland games. We don't like other musicians hearing us.

Allow me to go on a wee tangent for a minute. . . . I was asked by musicians in a local orchestra why pipe bands are so different from the other ensembles. It was tough to answer the questions.

Q: Why don't you have a conductor?

A: We do. The Pipe Major conducts with his foot. It's always been that way.

Q: Eh? No baton?

A: Well, Robert Mathieson uses a practice chanter in concerts. Sometimes the bass drummer conducts by dancing around a lot.

Q: Why do you face each other in a circle?

A: To see fingers.

Q: Why can't you just listen to each other?

A: Well, the guy next to me always makes mistakes. So I ignore him and watch the Pipe Major's foot. It's always been that way.

A: Mistakes? Don't you use music?

A: Mostly in October. But then we lose it and just play from memory all the time.

Q: How come you abandon the manuscript so quickly?

A: It's always been that way.

End of tangential excursion.

Anyway, I find this annual music and memory ritual grossly unfair, and after many years of trial and frequent error, I have established some pretty efficient rules for the learning of new tunes. Here are some tips you may want to try out. First, I divide the music into three categories.

Category 1 (the best): Music I already know

I am always happy to find music in the new pile that I learned in earlier days, those days when my brain soaked up information like a dry sponge. When I was 15 I had nothing else in my brain, no anniversaries, no horticultural duties, no reports for work. My mother was my memory. "Neil. Did you

remember it's your granny's birthday on Sunday?" "Neil. Don't forget to wash behind your ears." "Neil. It's November 11th. Remember to go to the Remembrance Day Parade." Who couldn't miss a mother for that stuff?

So when I got new music, it was just like throwing paint on a blank canvas. Everything stuck. And it has stayed stuck. I can play "Rab's Wedding" till the cows come home. I even remember the obscure and unique: "Drummond Castle Laundry," "Archie McKinley," "Kyle Sku," "The Lady in the Bottle" (on the same page as "Back of the Moon") When you're young, memorize the extra tunes on that page even if your band doesn't.)

Once at a massed band we were asked to play "Dr Ross." I hadn't played it since I was in Knightswood Juveniles 30 years ago. But after two rolls the notes all just spilled out like jackpot coins from a slot machine. Brilliant! So if a tune is familiar in any manner, stick it in the Category 1 pile.

Category 2 (the smallest): Music I can sing

Here's a good rule of thumb: If you can sing it, you can play it. Put down the practice chanter and run through the manuscript whistling or humming as best you can. These are usually good tunes and deserve the extra effort of being learned.

Category 3 (the toughest): Music I have no intention of playing

Now I am a pipe band veteran, so I know pretty much all the good tricks and short cuts. Please, don't try this unless you are confident you can pull it off. You may have

witnessed this tactic somewhere along the line. Here's how it goes . . .

When the music is handed out you will know instantly if you will play it or not. Some tunes are just too tough and shouldn't be played by anyone except guys called Gordon (Walker, Duncan etc.), for some reason pipe majors think your band can handle a tune because SFU played it in last year's medley.

Some tunes are really incomprehensible. Usually these are tunes written by the 15 year old whiz kid who just joined the band last year and thinks he's the next Mark Saul or Chris Armstrong. When you find one of these efforts (they are marked by dissonance, imbalance and Alban Bergesque 12-note series on a 9-note chanter), you should roll it into a tube and poke the wee smartarse in the eye with it.

Some tunes in this category are neither tough nor stupid; these tunes are ones you just don't like. For instance, pipe majors seem to like to "revive" what they call Trad material. They reason they need revival is because they are dead tunes – and for good reason.

They were rotten when they were in fashion and death has rotted them further. These tunes usually reek and are only included in the "new repertoire" either because the PM ran out of material or his wife thought it would be really "neat" for the band to play them.

Having categorized the music into three manageable groups you must now keep your peace for a couple of weeks. Review and polish the Category 1 tunes and begin learning the Category 2 tunes. The Category

3 music now becomes the subject of your mutinous malice. You must talk to one other piper about each of the tunes you don't want to learn. (Never confide your misgivings about more than one tune to each piping peer.) Say things like, "I just can't get into this tune, can you?" Or, "I hear Field Marshal dropped this tune last year. One of them told me it was too tough for even them." Or, "I'm not bothering to learn this one. The PM told me we wouldn't play it this year anyhow. He said to focus on *^#@96^ (name one of the tunes you already know)".

Next you should phone the lead drummer and ask if you can help him write his scores. You will play all the new tunes for him as he composes. When the happy day arrives, play your selections well and screw up your rejects. Every time you stagger or stop, shake your head in bewilderment and mutter, "Jeez, this is tough. I wonder what (insert PM's name) was thinking? Let's leave it for now."

Finally arrive early at the next four band practices and steal the sheet music for the Category 3 tunes from other pipers' binders, folders and knapsacks. Don't do it all at once. Lift only two or three every practice until 12 pipers are left sharing two copies of the loathsome music. If the PM gives out new copies, do not falter but begin anew and you will be rewarded. (A note of caution: never keep the pilfered pages; always deposit them in a drum case or in the pipe box of that wee whiz kid eejit who wrote the "Suite for Candi My New Bird from Stornoway."

If none of the above techniques work, you can become a drum major (where you only have to memorize parade routes) or buckle

down and be a good camper and learn the stuff. Or better yet, get several friends from the band to establish a new pipe band in the same city where you can give out music that you pick yourself. That's pretty much how every band has started off anyway. Best of luck.

Must go now. I just remembered that I have to tighten the clamps on my Ross bag. What a pain. I remember how much more fun season the bag used to be. Ahhhh, memories. . . .