

Focusing on You - the first story

(read the first of five stories)

Dr. John Winslow

condensed from Urlar Issue #152 (Summer) 2014

Dr. John was born into a military family six months after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. It was natural for him to also be in the military, for he served in the US Navy and saw service in Vietnam on board a mine sweeper.

His association with Clan Macpherson started about 19 years ago, when he visited England, Ireland, and Scotland.

Dr. John is a poet. Through his poems, he tells stories of times in ancient Scotland. While visiting Stonehenge, he was inspired by the ravens sitting atop the massive stones. He wrote a short poem about how the ravens called him to Skye:

*‘The Ravens talked as I knelt on the path,
and as they squawked I heard “going to Scathe?”
And I knew from these stones that they would fly,
and I knew by the tomes I would soon go to Skye.
A pagan was I, in the midst of no others,
a pagan encircled by dead sons and brothers.
From the sides and the barrows Spirits called me to Scotland
and tears of the Goddess rained down on my Homeland.
Before the Picts, the Romans and the Brits,
there were the people.’*

And the next day he flew to Scotland, and began to feel a kinship down very deep in his soul. For the next 4 years, he focused on researching his Celtic

heritage. At a Renaissance Fair in Sonora, California, he joined Clan Macpherson Association. Over the ensuing years, he's made many close friends, brothers and sisters in the Clan, and has attended the Gathering in Scotland at least 7 times. In 2012, he gave the words to his poem, "Of Singing Swords In The Highlands" to Dee McPherson, who wrote the music for it. This song appears on her third CD "Love Songs For A Scot." Together, they sang this song at the 2013 Ceilidh.

He has served our US Branch as Pacific Central Region Commissioner and has attended countless US Branch Highland Games Events, and many of the US AGMs. He's also been known to ride his Harley wearing his kilt.

In his own words in closing, *"over the last 10 years I've shared hundreds of events with close friends: Scottish games, AGMS, fantastic trips to Scotland. I love you all and thank you for making my experience with Clan Macpherson one of the most special parts of my life."*

Focusing on You: the second story
(read the second of five stories)

Ken and Karyl Clark

condensed from Urlar Issue #163 (Spring) 2017

Ken and Karyl married in 1978 and moved to Northern California in 1980. They have lived on two forested acres in the small mountain community of Cohasset since 1983, where they have an orchard, brew beer, keep chickens, and raise meat rabbits.

Some years ago they saw an ad for a Senior bus tour to the Pleasanton Scottish Games, took that bus ride, and began their Highland Games experience. Walking through the Clan tent area, they found the Clark name to be an Associated Family of Clan Macpherson.

They have since worked on their genealogy and found that some of their ancestors came from the area of Perth. As Life Members of Clan Macpherson Association, they attend as many Games and Celtic Faires as possible, as well as the US Branch AGMs. They also enjoyed their trip to the Platinum Dhubh in Scotland.

Retirement has allowed them more time to commit to the various organizations of which they are members. Ken is currently Pacific Central Region Commissioner. In his words in closing, *"Come say 'hi' and sit awhile at the Clan tent. We might then rustle up a wee dram. Slainte."*

Focusing On You: the third story

(read the third of five stories)

Norma Bierens

*written by her son Edward nearly four years ago
condensed from Urlar Issue #155 (Spring) 2015*

Norma Stevenson-Bierens R.M.A. is the Junior Membership Chairman and the Assistant Editor of The Urlar. She was born and raised in Wichita, Kansas, and is still there, says her son Edward, who wrote the Focusing On You story nearly 4 years ago. She writes the Fettle, which appears in each of the Urlars, and she mails a lot of birthday and holiday cards to Junior Members. She likes kids, and she was the leader of Edward's den for Boy Scouts. She buys knick-knacks for the Clan Macpherson tent at the Highland Games, and Edward helps distribute them to kids who visit the tent.

Edward told us that R.M.A means that she is a Registered Mass Appraiser with the State of Kansas. She works for the Sedgwick County Appraiser's Office. Her primary job is called "QC" which stands for Quality control: she makes sure appraisers are doing their jobs right. In her spare time, she crochets and knits, and she makes Scottish bonnets like they wore back in the 17th and 18th centuries. She has a store on Etsy called "ScottishandMoor."

In Edward's own words in closing: *"My mom is beautiful inside and out. I'm glad she is my mother instead of someone else. Even if I make her mad, she still loves me. Yes, she loves me and I love her, too!"*

Focusing On You: the fourth story

(read the fourth of five stories)

Jan Smith

condensed from Urlar Issue #151 (Spring) 2014

Jan serves as the Secretary for the US Branch. When she and Marvin took a trip to the Woodland, California, Scottish Games some years ago, they were wandering around the Clan tents and stopped by the Clan Macpherson tent. They found the "Smith" surname on a list of Associated Families. This discovery began their association with Clan Macpherson.

Jan was a project manager in her job for Pacific Gas and Electric Company, and she could organize anything. While in California, she helped organize many lunches at the Pleasanton and other Highland Games. She has been US Recording Secretary and helped with the Monterey AGM.

After retirement in 2006, they moved to Roswell, New Mexico, where she started volunteering in the community. She has been Garden Club President, a Girl Scout Leader, on the Board of the Roswell Symphony, and helped coordinate a Field of Honor in which they posted 1500 flags on the grounds of new Mexico Military Institute for the 10-year anniversary of 9/11. She was the 2014 Convener of the US Branch AGM in Albuquerque.

Focusing on You: the fifth story

(read the fifth of five stories)

David Gilliss

condensed from a previous Ular story from this website

Many members join Clan Macpherson much the way David Gilliss joined . . . he attended several Scottish Fairs, interested in the colorful parades, music, and games, and in his heritage. Upon seeing the Gilliss family name on the Associated Families list and talking to then US

Branch Chairman George McPherson, he became a full member and has enjoyed his membership ever since.

His mother Louise Gilliss (1913-2002) had traced the family heritage back a couple hundred years. The Gilliss relatives include names like Hall, Ricketts, Perkins, Ian, Murdoch, and MacPherson. David's ancestors from Scotland settled in Maryland nearly 500 years ago. The planetarium at Annapolis is named 'the James Melville Gilliss' planetarium.

David comes from a family of achievers: his twin brother Douglas is an FAA Flight Examiner, and founded the stunt flying team known as the **Thunder Delfins**. Sister Gwyn has acted in TV soap operas, she coaches young aspiring actors, and has written a book The ABCs of Soaps. Sister Sandra is a retired manager and lobbyist for a pharmaceutical company, as well as a busy grandmother of six.

After college, David became an Air Force officer, initially assigned as Navigator in the two-seat RF-4C reconnaissance aircraft. Over a four-year period, he flew the reconnaissance version of the Phantom jet in all of Southeast Asia from the Philippines to Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Okinawa and Thailand. He flew more than 200 combat missions, often against MIG fighters and Surface to Air Missiles, in the Vietnam Conflict. For his meritorious service to our country, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and more than a dozen Air Medals.

David is an avid photographer. He holds an FAA Commercial Flight Certificate, and he enjoys flying with Douglas' team (the **Thunder Delfins**). He takes photos from the aircraft as well as on the ground. These photographs have been featured in magazines worldwide.

He earned his Master's Degree after military service, worked as Operations Manager/ Manufacturing Manager in several growing high-tech companies in Silicon Valley, has taught graduate and under-graduate courses, and is now teaching at San Jose State University.

In his own words, "I am proud to be a member of the Clan Macpherson Association."