

# Former Canadian Receives Unique Honor in U.S.A. 1974

A native son of Saugeen Township, also well known in Port Elgin has been honored with a degree from North Idaho College.

Air Force Lt.-Col. (Ret) John McEwing, Spokane, received the Honorary Degree at convocation exercises held at the College in May.

Col. McEwing founded, and heads the North Idaho College Piobaireachd Society School of Bagpiping in Coeur d'Alene, the largest such school in the world.

President of the College, Barry Schuler, presented the degree for Col. McEwing's "rich contributions to the preservation of

the colorful heritage of the Scottish people in the New World, and for his tireless efforts in pioneering and building the outstanding program at the Spokane-based college."

John McEwing is the youngest son of the late Mr. and Mrs. James McEwing, and was born at Queen Hill Farm, Saugeen Township. In 1931 he moved to the United States, living first in Hollywood, where he served as a technical adviser with the motion picture industry for many movies which had a Scottish theme and in which the bagpipes were used.

In December 1941 he offered

his services after the bombing of Pearl Harbour. He was commissioned in July 1942 and served in the U. S. Air Force, remaining on active duty for 21 years.

His final assignment was with NATO in Oslo, Norway, where he served for two years. During this period he was made Honorary Piper for the Caledonia Society of Norway, of which the late King Olaf was a most illustrious member.

After retiring in 1963 he settled in Spokane and here he conceived the idea of establishing a School for the Pipes, which are one of the real loves of his life.

In 1967 - 68 the summer school

drew 13 and 18 students respectively and was held in the Navel-Marine Reserve Complex.

In 1969 the school was moved to the magnificent campus of the College at Loch Couer d'Alene where it has continued to increase in enrolment and interest.

Last year the student body totalled 130 and this year is expected to reach 150. Nothing but individual piping is taught here, and the College is the only school which offers five college credits in applied music.

The Spokane Piobaireachd Society is world renowned. It has been proclaimed in journals throughout the English speaking world and on more than one occasion mentioned by the B. B. C.

In his acceptance speech Col. McEwing said "without the unfailing support of every one associated with North Idaho College, it would have been impossible to achieve our objectives so effectively."

"I am convinced that these ideal relations between the College and Society of which I am founder-president, will continue for many years," he stated.

"Your people have told me the haunting music of the Piobaireachd has brought a new dimension into their cultural lives: hundreds and hundreds of non-Scots or even descendants of Auld Scotia are attending the school in order to express themselves via this immortal legacy handed down to us by the ancient McCrimmons who played, taught and composed musical masterpieces," the native born man said.

President Schuler termed Col. McEwing "The Dean" who has brought so much pleasure to those who love the music of this famed, grand old instrument, the bagpipes.

John McEwing is well remembered in this district. He was the spark which resulted in having the school bell from No. 5, Saugeen School placed outside the new Port Elgin-Saugeen Central School about two years ago.

He had attended the Saugeen Township School and the bell and its final resting place was a matter of deep concern to him.

Many people who attended the recent Ontario Genealogical Society Seminar in Port Elgin commented on the beauty of the bell and its setting, reading with interest the accompanying plaque.

It has often been said the sound of the pipes reaches far: it is gratifying to know the sounds and results reach way back to "Port" from Spokane.

Col. McEwing has a sister, Margaret, residing in London, brothers Dan of Bruce Township, Andrew and James of Port Elgin, and Archie, also of London.



President Barry Schuler of North Idaho College, presenting Lt. Col. John McEwing with an honorary degree, Associate of Arts, at a convocation exercise held in May. This is only the third time in the history of the College that an honorary degree has been bestowed upon a chosen recipient.