

Youngsters capture pile of awards

Kirk Brush winner in Scottish games

A young man with his heart set on winning the adult world's championship in highland dancing, 15-year-old Kirk Brush of Milton has four years to wait until he's old enough to try it. But he doesn't seem to mind waiting and preparing for the big event.

He just returned from a 10 week visit to the British Isles where he competed in 15 dancing competitions—winning 37 awards including the British overseas and the Scottish boys' championships at the famed Edinburgh Festival. He brought home 19 medals and 18 trophies, 27 of them representing first prize awards, plus the distinction of being the only amateur to place in the fling and jig competitions at the British Open.

Highland dancing has been almost a way of life for Kirk since he was seven years of age. He has competed all over Canada and the United States in the past eight years and has so many awards his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Brush of Main St. W. are wondering if they'll have to add another room to the house—just to house the trophies and medals.

This summer's trip to Scotland was Kirk's second trip overseas. He went to Scotland with his teacher Miss Mollie McGregor of Scarborough in 1964 and enjoyed the trip so much he has been saving every spare penny since that trip to finance his 1969 trip.

Miss McGregor went with Kirk again this summer and they took along a promising young Japanese girl, 10-year-old Elaine Kageyama of Toronto. The dancers called Miss McGregor's home at Gourock their home base for the summer. But they put 4,000 miles on a rented car, travelling around the countryside and attending festivals and dance competitions. Miss Kageyama had the distinction of being the first Japanese girl to enter the highland fling at the Edinburgh Festival, and she won 18 medals and several trophies in a variety of competitions. She also picked up a gold medal in tap dancing.

For Kirk, the Edinburgh festival and the Braemar Games were probably the highlights of the summer. His two championships at Edinburgh will never be forgotten and he danced 16 times that day. At Braemar he danced for the Queen.

It was at Braemar he saw some familiar faces from home. Among the audience were Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Hasselfeldt and their daughter Tammy from Milton, who left this summer to spend a year touring Great Britain and Europe.

There were many Canadians and Americans competing overseas this summer. And they brought home a majority of the awards. Angus McKenzie of Edmonton claimed the adult world championship, and a Toronto girl Carolyn Morrison won the adult British Open.

Kirk's competitions were mostly Saturday events, although there was one week he entered a contest each day of the week. When they weren't competing, they would spend their time practicing at Miss McGregor's or her sister's house.

It wasn't all work, though. Kirk had three days in London, and saw a lot of England. He also spent close to a week in Ireland and was in Belfast during the rioting. He saw the barricades, the soldiers and the children wearing helmets at Falls Road, and one day his bus was held up half an hour while a funeral procession passed. The funeral was for a boy of nine who was shot during the riots.

Kirk was careful to wear the right kind of dress, depending on which sections of Belfast he was visiting. He had a bright green sweater for the days he toured the Catholic districts, and a green sweater with orange stripes for wearing in the protestant sections.

He came home with a new dancing outfit—a Prince Charlie jacket and a new kilt featuring the McLean of Duart tartan. Plus, of course, two big shopping bags full of medals and trophies.

What's next in line for the young dancer?

His heart is set on staying in competition until he's 19 and old enough to enter the adult world championships. Between now and then he may just make another trip to Scotland—"I'd go every year if I had the money," he admits. A part time job at Ledwith's supermarket financed his summer trip.

This year he's back at Milton District High School in Grade 12 of a five year arts and science course. Upon graduation he'd like to go to Royal Military College at Kingston on the ROTP plan, get his college degree and enter the armed forces as an officer.



KIRK BRUSH came back from a summer in Scotland literally loaded down with trophies, shields and medals. He picked up 37 awards in 15 highland dancing competitions in Scotland.—(Staff Photo)

Piper Gail Brown charts her future

"You don't find many old women pipers, but I'm going to be one," says Gail Brown. Just 15 years old and with a host of bagpipe trophies and awards already on hand, she's got her future all figured out.

First, she wants to join the famous Knightswood Pipe Band of Scotland—an all-boy band. Secondly, she wants to complete her Grade 13 in Milton District High School, try for a scholarship, and go to University of Glasgow, Scotland. She wants to live and work in Scotland and plans to teach primary school over there. Her two goals are tied in together, for she plans to play in the pipe band while she's at University.

Gail has just completed one of her busiest summers to date. She piped in 14 towns and cities and came home with eight trophies and 21 out of a possible 24 medals. Prior to this summer she has amassed three other big trophies and 45 other medals—not a bad collection of awards for a 15-year-old.

This summer her biggest victory in piping contests was taking first prize in the Junior Piobaireachd (that's Gaelic, it's pronounced Piobrock) for pipers 17 and under at the Markham Highland Games. Gail describes the Piobaireachd as the hardest possible piece to play—"like a symphony". She was also best amateur piper, best girl piper of the day and took firsts in three classes at Markham.

At Detroit's Bob-Lo Island Highland Games she won the 17 and under class on the basis of total points for her Strathspey and Reel. At the Brantford games she won two firsts and was best group one piper.

They named her best girl piper for the second year in a row at Toronto's Indoor Games, and she won the highest points of the day. She took two firsts at the 1,000 Islands Games at Alexandria, N.Y., and at Legonier, Pa. she won the 18 and under march class.

Gail went to Maxville near Ottawa this summer and narrowly missed the trophy for the total points of the day. She tied with a boy and the boy won out when the judges considered their finger execution. This is the biggest piping competition in North America, and the town of 320 residents welcomes 12,000 to 15,000 competitors for the annual event.

She also competed at Alma, Mich., Fergus, Embro, Brantford, Colbour and Port Credit games.

Gail does a lot of travelling to band competitions and piping contests but her parents Mr. and Mrs. Norman Brown of R.R. 5 Milton don't mind it a bit. She's getting a real education while she's at it.

Recently she has been the only girl piper in the Woodstock Highlanders Pipe Band, which has just merged with the Highland Fusiliers of Galt. They play a lot of fairs and parades and the Woodstock band has also been in a number of competitions. They stood fifth in the world championships in Scotland last year, out of 73 bands. That contest meant a three week trip for Gail, and sparked an interest in her heading for Scotland next summer for the 16 and under world championship in piping.

The young Milton piper got her start in piping with Don Deming, who used to instruct the Milton Girls Pipe Band, when she was seven. She spent four months on the chanter before she picked up the pipes, which is considered pretty fast. Later she took lessons from Bus Featherstone of the Dundas band. For several years she played with the Oakville Pipe Band and was the band's pipe sergeant four years.

But she gives a lot of credit to Jean Sales who played with the Milton Band. "Jean is the one who shoved me into



GAIL BROWN of Milton had a busy summer, touring 14 towns and cities to compete in bagpipe competitions, and came home with a pile of trophies and 21 medals. Piper Gail is 15 and has been piping for eight years.—(Staff Photo)

competition," says Gail. "She really helped me a lot."

Next, she'd like to take weekly lessons from John Wilson of Toronto. She has been receiving some lessons from this man for the past couple of years but wants to enroll in a weekly class to gain more experience.

After eight years in the business, Gail is pretty outspoken about the role of girls or women on the bagpipes. "Girls definitely make the better pipers," she claims. She knows a woman who beat all the men in an open competition, and today there are no women in the open contests. Soon Gail plans to enter open competition herself, although she could continue to clean up the awards in the 16 and under, 17 and under and 18 and under classes for a few years yet. Last spring, for instance, she was fifth in a class of 20-19 men and Gail—in an open Piobaireachd competition. She has already been urged to

become a pro but she wants to stall that off as long as she can.

Besides attending MDHS, playing basketball, doing babysitting, playing in the band and attending all the bagpipe competitions, Gail has a few students taking lessons in piping from her. One boy, now in his third year of lessons, is doing well enough to enter competitions next year.

She feels eight or nine is the proper age to start learning the pipes. It takes six to eight months to master the chanter, then a year and a half to two years before you're ready for competition.

That, says Gail, is when the fun begins.

—Milton Community Credit Union's new office building on Main St. will be officially opened on Saturday, Oct. 18, with an open house following the opening ceremony.

Spotlight on teens...

In these days when everyone is blaming the so-called "younger generation" for most of the ills that beset the world, it's refreshing to hear some good news for a change from a couple of young teenagers who are doing well in their separate, yet related fields of endeavor.

During the past week The Champion talked at length with two local teenagers, Kirk Brush and Gail Brown, a pair of 15-year-olds who have both had a busy but rewarding summer. Kirk is a Scottish dancer and he spent his holidays competing in highland dancing competitions in Scotland—bringing home a pile of awards and honors for both himself and his country when he flew home to return to his studies last week. Gail plays the bagpipes and during the past few months she has been touring the country competing in piping competitions and, like Kirk, bringing home a fair share of the awards.

Hats off to a pair of fine young Canadian teenagers—the kind you don't read about in the court reports, the kind you won't find in gangs lolling around the local hangouts.

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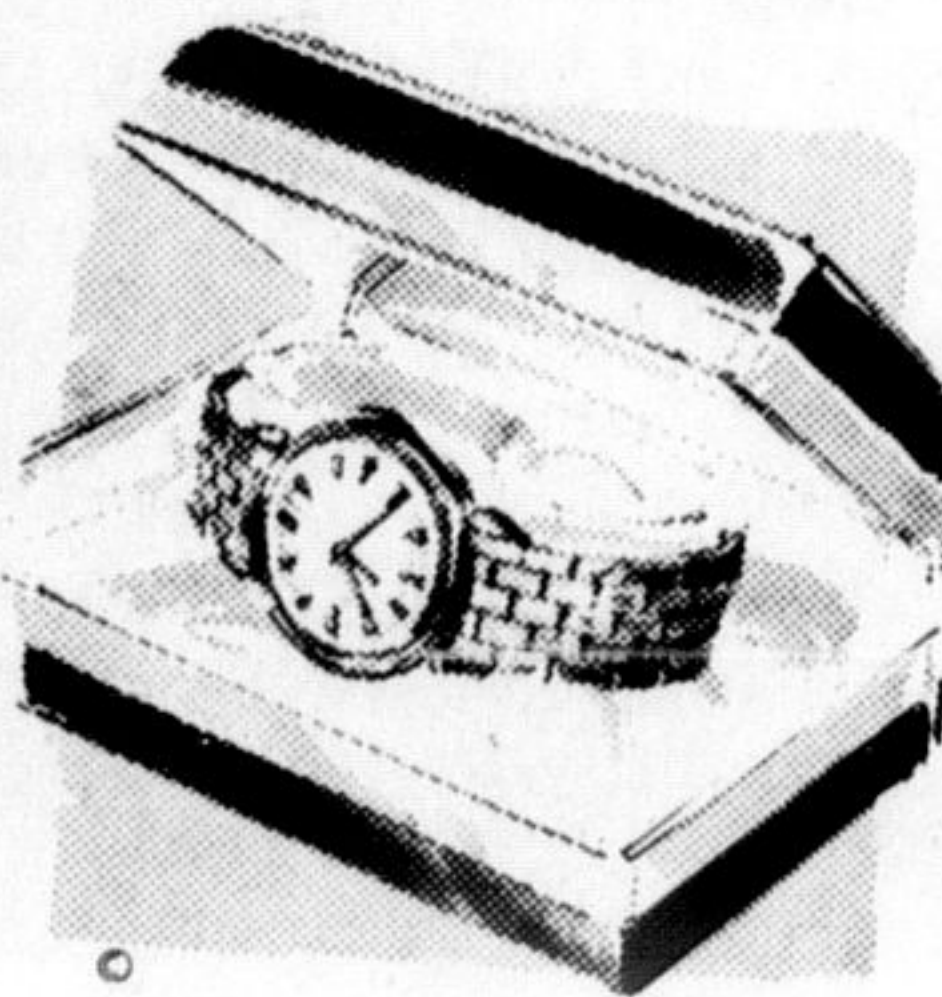
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GRADE 12 MARKETING CLASS at Milton District High School did a special project on Milton's business district—past, present and future—for display at Milton Fair. Teacher Mr. Leonard and students Karen Ricketts and Ken Parton, front, Donna Straub and Doris DeBruyn, rear, are shown with the display of photos.—(Staff Photo)

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