

Donald E. Varella 1929-2001

DONALD Varella, piper, drummer, composer, and publisher, suffered a heart attack and passed away at the age of 72 on October 4th, 2001 at his home in Detroit, Michigan. Donald was a native of New Zealand, where he played the pipes as a schoolboy with the champion Hamilton Caledonian band. He emigrated to North America in 1950 at the age of 21 to pursue a career as a jazz and big band drummer. Taking up the pipes again while working as a drummer in New York, he travelled to Glasgow in 1966 for a period of full-time instruction with P/M Donald MacLeod, of whom he was, and remained, an ardent admirer and supporter. This tuition reputedly began with Donald sitting on MacLeod's doorstep until the wee man agreed to take him on! Although he was an accomplished player of both light music and ceol mor (of which he had an extensive repertoire), Donald had little interest in competition, but did play for the Gold Medal in 1966 during his sojourn in Scotland. Among his many piping ventures, Donald was the compiler and publisher of the four volumes of the 'United States Bicentennial Collection of Bagpipe Music', was involved with P/M MacLeod's New York recording sessions in 1967, and toured as a piper



with Peter Schickele's P.D.Q. Bach ensemble. In the late 1970s he published the 'Piping Press News' newsletter, and in the mid-1990s, the 'Mid-American Pipers Society News'. Eventually settling in Detroit, Donald continued to make his living as a gigging drummer and piper as well as taking on a small number of piping students.

Possessed of a contrarian spirit, Donald lived life on his own terms, and was a challenging but rewarding friend, tutor, collaborator, and correspondent. Donald willed his collection of piping materials and a substantial endowment to an educational trust intended to further solo piping in the United States, the details of which will be announced in due course.

Ewan A. Macpherson,
Michigan

The Turnbull's March

Donald Varella, 1979

* 2nd Time, 2nd Part

(1st Time)

AS ABOVE

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