

ABAIR “hello” RIS a ’PHÌOB MÀIDSEAR DARLENE MORTON

(“Say ‘hello’ to Pipe Major Darlene Morton”- translated from Gaelic)



Darlene Morton, from Victoria-Tobique Branch, has a unique passion – sharing her Scottish heritage, especially through music. She grew up in Kincardine, part of the Scotch Colony in northwestern New Brunswick, and doesn’t remember a time when she didn’t sing on the stage at the Kincardine Burns Hall. Her love for bagpipes and drumming began in 1965 when she was twelve years old. At that time the *Southern Victoria Pipe Band* formed with tutelage from instructors who travelled from Saint John. The band included young people in Victoria and Carleton Counties, with Darlene playing the snare and two of her sisters playing the bagpipes. While in high school she became lead drummer and travelled with the band to parades, concerts and competitions in New Brunswick and neighbouring Maine and as far away as PEI, Montreal’s Expo ‘67 and Quincy, Massachusetts.



After two years at UNB, while working as a summer student in Fredericton, Darlene watched a concert performed by the *Fredericton Society of Saint Andrew Pipe Band* and was hooked again. She joined their drum corps that fall and played with that band until 1982. During those years, the band played many concerts and parades in NB and Maine and attended competitions in Saint John, Antigonish, NS, Montreal, Toronto, New Hampshire, the North American Pipe Band Championships in Maxville, Ontario and in 1975, the highlight – *Scotland and the World Band Championships* in England.



After graduation from UNB with a BA and a BEd, Darlene spent four years teaching in Richibucto and Plaster Rock and travelling to band practice in Fredericton on the weekends. During this time, she was teaching snare drumming to the *Southern Victoria Pipe Band*, learning how to play the pipes, and eventually becoming **Pipe Major** and principal instructor of that band. From 1980 to 1982, she took a leave of absence from teaching and attended the *College of Craft and Design* in Fredericton, majoring in weaving. While living in

Fredericton, she continued to play snare drum with the Fredericton band and travelled to Perth-Andover on weekends to play pipes with Southern Victoria.

After her marriage to journalist Robert LaFrance in 1982, she left the Fredericton band and continued playing pipes and instructing the *Southern Victoria Pipe Band* in Perth-Andover. Since then, the SV Pipe Band has performed in many parades, concerts and competitions in NB and Maine and every few years to PEI, NS, Montreal, Maxville, Ontario and in 1994 a two-week trip to Ireland and Scotland.



She has great memories of her years as drummer, piper, and instructor, and has made life-long friendships. The most special times were those times playing in bands with sisters, Amber and Bonnie, sister-in-law, Isabel, brother, Blair, nephew, Matthew, and especially daughters, Kate, and Marjorie.

In her years as a teacher at Tobique Valley High School in Plaster Rock, Southern Victoria High School in Perth-Andover and a brief stint at Perth-Andover Middle School, Darlene says that she has taught almost everything, (some better than others!). She worked also as a Resource and Methods teacher for a few years at SVHS. During those years, she and her husband moved back home to Kincardine where they raised a family of three.



Since her retirement, she has continued instructing and playing pipes with the SV Pipe Band, leading lay church services, singing in the church choir, performing, and organizing concerts, helping to organize the Scotch Colony anniversary celebrations, and has joined the Perth-Andover Community Choir and Wednesday Evening Fiddlers. Recent years have found her dealing with Lyme Disease which has resulted in her relinquishing her position as Pipe Major of the SV Band and reducing the instruction of beginning pipes. She has, however, brought in younger people to take over the reins for the next generation.

