

President's Report to CMSUSA Council
1 December 2018
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This will be my last report to Council as President, Clan MacLeod Society USA. On 27 April 2019, I shall pin the president's ribbon on John W. McLeod. The content of this report will be, primarily, self-evaluation. I should begin, though, by saying what a great honor it has been to serve Clan MacLeod Society USA as president.

The role of chief executive of this clan society is more nearly “freestyle” than other offices in this organization, which are, necessarily, more closely defined. But the president's role is not entirely a matter of his or her abilities and preferences. The president, in official meetings, must convene, preside, moderate, and seek in the most democratic decision-making mode to draw forth the best contributions and reach the best decisions. The president is ultimately responsible, particularly for anything that goes wrong, but also for giving the credit for what goes right to the members who were the high contributors in that particular matter. I would estimate that the defined presidential responsibilities have amounted to scarcely 15% of my CMSUSA time, effort, and expense during my tenure as president.

I must give credit to my spouse Rosalie for accompanying me in all my travels on behalf of CMSUSA, proofreading my writings, reminding me when I forget something, encouraging me when I am discouraged, and for so much more.

I have taken it as a major part of my calling for my time as president, to be, as best I can, a face and voice (orally and in my writings) for Clan MacLeod Society USA. (This isn't always easy for an introvert.) Accordingly, I have responded to all communications regarding Clan MacLeod, whether from members or non-members. I have exchanged letters even with incarcerated MacLeods. My spouse and I have traveled widely in the continental United States in order to be present to the membership, to the public, and to those who represent Clan MacLeod Society USA so faithfully at Scottish games and festivals. We are too affected by age, disease, and injury to be much help with the physical labor, but we have tried to interact with the public for the benefit of CMSUSA, and to provide encouragement and companionship to our representatives, sometimes being helpful in supplementing the information being provided to the public. Rosalie and I, during my tenure, have traveled twice to California, once to far northwest Washington State, once to Montana, once to Colorado, once to Kansas, once to Missouri, twice to Iowa, once to Minnesota, once to Indiana, once to Tennessee, once to Upstate New York, once to Georgia, once to South Carolina, once to North Carolina, once to Florida, once to central Texas, once to northern Virginia, and four times to Alexandria, Virginia (including the Council meeting where this report will be presented). We have traveled to the 2016 North American Gathering at Merritt, British Columbia, and to the 2018 Clan MacLeod Parliament at Dunvegan on the Isle of Skye. In this final year, Rosalie's movements at our destination locations have been by wheelchair. It is very likely that I am the oldest person to have occupied the CMSUSA president's chair. I was seventy-five and one-half years old when John Norman MacLeod pinned the president's badge on my jacket. By the conclusion of my tenure, I shall have physically traveled to only two of the four February Associated Clan MacLeod Societies Management Council meetings in Scotland at which my presence was expected. Since giving up our plane in 2013, we have traveled exclusively by automobile in North America. Our recent trip to Parliament was our last trip “across the water” by commercial air. We, Rosalie and I, have been fortunate in needing relatively little of our income for living expenses and, therefore, have not been impoverished by, and have not begrudged, the considerable expense of our travels.

Continuing the “freestyle” theme, presidents contribute, ideally, in terms of the best of what they have to offer. Consequently, the presidency of every president is different from the last. I am a reasonably competent organizational analyst, and so much of my effort to contribute to the organization, has been in that area. We have a very good organization. As I viewed it upon taking offices, I saw only a very few, seemingly minor, flaws. I must make the point, with emphasis, that bad practices and bad habits perpetuated, are not “traditions.” They are simply bad practices and bad habits perpetuated. Three bad practices I thought had identified were the mode of selection of the president and vice-president, the utilization of the vice-president, and the seemingly routine awarding of our Clansperson of the Year to all past presidents.

In Clan MacLeod Society USA, the practice was that the new president selected his or her (we haven't had a “her” yet, but I have hope that we shall) vice president, and that the vice-presidency was, in effect, mostly a waiting station for the presidency, being also a “spare” in case of death or incapacity of the president. One effect of this practice was to effectively remove democracy from the process of electing presidents and vice-presidents. Yes, the membership has the opportunity to “rubber stamp” the selections on a ballot; however, the actual selection has been long-since done. Case in point: The present sitting vice-president announced his selection at the 2017 AGM of the individual to be his vice-president. That meant, in terms of our present practice, that the selected individual was “locked-in” to the 2023-2027 presidency from 2017 through 2027 – a ten-year “lock-in” for a four year term. Things change over such a long period of time. People change. Needs change. Challenges change. The world changes. I had been working toward introducing in 2018 a proposal for direct election of both the president and vice-president via a more democratic process, hopefully with more than one candidate for each office, nominations to occur the year before the expiration of a presidential tenure. The surprise announcement in 2017 effectively obviated the possibility that any remedy could be placed in effect before 2027. It is very likely that I won't be alive to see this defective practice corrected. Therefore, I have failed on this very important matter.

I accepted the vice-presidency in 2011 to demonstrate that the vice-presidency could be a functional position. My intention, as I announced, was to demonstrate this and encourage a suitable younger, healthier, and more energetic person to come forward and become president. That did not happen, so I became president. My position on the vice presidency was that the vice-president was to be fully engaged and involved as an active part of the presidency itself. As president, I have attempted to “practice what I preach” by keeping my vice-president informed, inviting comment and input, posing problems and possibilities – in short, attempting to make him a part of the shaping of policy and procedure recommendations to be ultimately presented to Council and the general membership. One thing I have observed in almost all organizational settings is that the attributes, qualities, and characteristics of a good #2 are quite different from the attributes, qualities, and characteristics of a good chief executive. Seldom is the good chief an introvert. Seldom is the good #2 an extrovert. The #2 analyzes, recommends, and advises. The #2 carries out special assignments and projects. (The downside of being #2 in some organizations is that #2 gets to be the “bad guy” when there are unpleasant tasks or bad news to deliver, thus leaving the chief to be the “good guy.” Some think organizations need that. I think the chief ought to take the unpleasant duties upon himself, or herself.) If the organization needs to fill the chief's seat, the organization usually should not fill it with #2, though #2 may occupy the chair as an interim. I conclude this commentary on the differences in attributes, qualities and characteristics required for the chief and the #2 by admitting that I am suited for the #2 slot, and am very good at it when fully utilized, I am not suited to the top position, but have done my very best upon my succession to that position. A footnote to this examination of the distinctive characteristics required for president and vice-president is that I was surprised to find that, at

least in our organization, persons like me, suitable for the office of vice-president, seemed to be more common than capable extroverts suitable to the office of president.

One thing I have been trying to convey during my time as CMSUSA president, is that a president is not a king or an emperor, or a commander, or a Highland chief of 700 years ago. In a volunteer organization such as ours – democratic in structure, with by-laws, and a parliamentary mode of governance – a president simply convenes, presides, consults, and invites ideas, solutions, and other forms of participation. The mode is collegiality. (I used to write curriculum and teach this sort of thing. I hold degrees in two different kinds of administration. For a full four years I wrote and taught organizational theory, organizational dynamics, participative management, and related topics.) Ideally, the president, in cooperation with the vice-president, analyzes situations, problems, and methods and offers ideas that are not meant to be taken final solutions. The ideas the president throws out are an invitation for members of Council and other members to improve upon them, or to offer better ideas. (I'm a good analyst, but not the best. I have good ideas, but not always the best.) A leader who accepts a better idea than his own is not “wishy-washy” but, instead, good leader. My self-evaluation in this area is that I have not been very successful in reinforcing the collegial, democratic mode of operation.

In 2012, as vice-president, I proposed a study of the geography of our regions, in terms of reachability and manageability by the RVP's. No one was very interested back then. Back then and previously there had been members and couples (not a many, but more than now) like Art and Audrey Nicoll, and Corelane and Harry Boyes, and Don Mack and Kathrine McLeod, and Bob and Sandy McLeod and even Rosalie and me, who would go anywhere and expend large percentages of their own energy, time, and resources on behalf of Clan MacLeod Society USA. We still have people (not as many) who will accept responsibility and do things, but they have fewer discretionary resources and less time to devote to causes and organizations, even good ones. An RVP does not have to (and should not have to) go everywhere in his/her region, or do everything, but it should be feasible for him/her to get to anywhere in the region if necessary. Gulf Central Region, for example, is so tall, bottom to top that it wasn't feasible for Jack Lewis to reach all of it from way up in Kentucky. The region was over 800 miles tall by road. It is unfortunate when the RVP is based way on one side of his/her region, and even worse if the populated part of the region is all the way on the other side, as was the case when I was Missouri Valley RVP. Alaska is not within personal range of the Northwest RVP, nor is Hawaii within personal range of the Pacific RVP. The Mid-Atlantic Region might seem like a concentrated, high-population region, but Pittsburgh is way across the mountains and on the other side of a lot of underpopulated territory. And so on. You get the idea. I have resurrected the idea of looking at regional boundaries and territorial assignments, and this time there has been some interest. I will look to an addition to the By-Laws that will allow Council to modify regional numbers and boundaries as Council deems necessary. (After all the thirteen regions are not “etched in stone.” There were not thirteen regions when CMSUSA first was formed, almost 65 years ago.) I should add that I approve of the title Regional Vice President. The equivalent in most clan societies is “Commissioner.” “Regional Vice President” is a more impressive title, and suitable to the degree of responsibility the RVP carries. This might be considered another area in which I have not been successful; however, I am beginning to sense some agreement that regional boundaries need another look.

Now a few words on Council. Arguably, our Norse Viking ancestors were the real pioneers in functional democracy. A lot of theory may have been developed during some periods of Greek and Roman history, but our non-theoretician Viking ancestors evolved a functional democracy because it worked. There were leaders, but woe to them if they tried to have their way without the consent of those they led. Everybody had a say in the “things” (councils). Women had a vote. The crown of Norway was not hereditary, though it sometimes stayed in a family. When our Norse Viking relatives

founded the “althing” (parliament) in Iceland in 1000 A.D., that was the beginning of the world's first, longest-lasting, and still-existing democracy. A democratic organization has to have an actively debating and deliberating legislature. Our CMSUSA legislature is the CMSUSA Council. For Council to function as a debating, deliberating and voting legislature, the members have to meet face-to-face. Proxies may allow business to legally take place, but they are more rubber stamp than democratic vote. Not just ideally but really, we need a Council of members who are committed to taking part in person. (There always will be individual exceptions for good reason.) We have a number of appointed and, arguably, some elective positions in which persons may serve CMSUSA to good effect, without attending Council meetings. As to membership on Council, we should honor our appointees by publishing their names and positions on our website, but without identifying them all as Council members. Sorting out which, if any, appointive offices should be Council members is a matter for Council to address and occasionally revisit.

A member has alleged that I changed the By-Laws of this organization, and that I removed the Chiefs from Council. These allegations are unfounded. Any change to the By-Laws during my tenure was accomplished by Council via a democratic parliamentary process. The Chiefs remain at the top of the Council roster. Though, inasmuch as we are an American 501c3 organization, and they are not American, it is appropriate that their membership be intended as a gesture of honor and respect, not a matter of voting privilege. I should point out that our method of including the Chiefs parallels that of the Associated Clan MacLeod Societies Management Council.

Regarding the Associated Clan MacLeod Societies Management Council, of which, as president of a national society, I am a member, I am quite sure that I have not met expectations. I can only say that the other presidents are presidents of very small societies, or national coordinators of a collection of local societies, and that none of their responsibilities to their home societies are anywhere near as all-consuming as mine. CMSUSA has membership approximately equal to that of all the other national societies combined, and it is a full-time job. I have attended two meetings of the Associated Clan MacLeod Societies Management Council in Scotland, in person, and one via Skype. I admit that I was able to contribute very little. One more failure.

As to the matter of 25% of awards of the Clansperson of the Year Award going to former presidents, I can't say that my original estimate of the practice as a flaw, is accurate. My original opinion of the practice as flawed had to do with the awards to past presidents having the effect of depriving very hardworking, effective, and dedicated members of recognition they richly deserve. A past president receives a beautiful medal with a beautiful blue ribbon (even more impressive than the president's medal) to wear for the rest of his life. In general, I don't think the additional honor is needed for someone who has experienced the honor of serving as president of this organization. I wish to state to anyone who might, in a state of delirium or temporary insanity, wish to nominate me, that I shall decline. I have to add that during my tenure, I presided over the awarding of the Clansperson of the Year Award to John Norman and Judy MacLeod, as a couple. They have been, almost certainly, our hardest workers both before and after John Norman's tenure as president. The award to them was most deserved, to say the least. I guess all I can say to the presidents who come after me, please try to avoid depriving the hardworking members who do not hold high-level office, of the Clansperson of the Year Award as recognition.

Moving toward closing, I would like to declare that my three predecessors as president, have served, in various ways, as models and sources of wisdom and encouragement. Any failure of mine, though, is not their failure.

I have hopes, other than the ideas I have mentioned above, for Clan MacLeod Society USA. I hope we soon shall have a woman president. At least 50% of our brightest and most dedicated members are women. I hope we shall come to include our MacLeod and sept brethren of color. I remember well President Bill C. MacLeod's righteous and rightful indignation at the Chicago NAG in 2004, when someone made a lovely young black MacLeod couple feel unwelcome. I can declare to you now that, in my opinion, and in much informed scientific opinion, the whole concept of race lacks validity. Of course we cannot deny how that false concept has interwoven itself into our personal histories, into human history, and into the history of our country. (Many of my own ancestors and some of my spouse's ancestors were slave owners.) As a factor in how humans treat each other, though, race is dying before our eyes as a consideration. Look around next time you are among young people...and learn. Race means nearly nothing to most of those of the generation of my grandchildren. Face it and do the right thing! (Or, don't face it, and risk being just one more anachronism!)

In closing summary (really, this time), I can't say that I have been successful in selling any ideas; however, I hope some seeds have been planted. As to successes, I have paid attention to every issue, answered all correspondence (as I said, even from incarcerated MacLeods). I have tried, and I think perhaps succeeded, to be an effective face and voice (both spoken and written) for Clan MacLeod in the United States. Rosalie and I have tried to travel widely within the US and be present where CMUSA is being represented, to talk with members and the public, and to promote CMSUSA and gain memberships. We have urged, not just paper membership, but involvement in the family of MacLeod. If I have had any success at all, it may have been as ambassador, not as analyst or theorist. I say may, not being qualified to judge my own successes, if any. Failures I know.