

## FEATURES

# The Games

*Scottish clans gather to celebrate heritage*

By EDWINA RALSTON

The Galbraiths, the MacDougals and the MacShannachans gathered their kinfolk together at Grandfather Mountain last weekend. So did the Elliots, the Lindsays and the MacClachans.

The families sang, danced, competed in athletic events and searched for their heritage in MacRae Meadows — a usually quiet spot in the North Carolina highlands. The event that brought the Meadows to life was the 26th annual Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, a time when families of Scottish descent gather to celebrate the heritage of their clan by participating in traditional games passed down from Northern Scotland.

This year more than 20,000 people went to the Meadows to enjoy the display of the Tartans and the friendly competition of Scottish athletes, traditional food, song and dance. Scotsmen dressed in colorful kilts offered Gaelic bagpiping to the crowds while stout athletes participated in such events as the caber toss (a 100 to 120 pound pole) and the kilted run.

Young girls competed in the Highland Fling and the Sword Dance — Scottish dances that originated as early as 1600 as celebrations for marriage, victory, defeat, or simply joy for living. A highlight of the Games for many spectators was the demonstration of the sheep dogs as experienced herders coached the skillful dogs to coax first geese, then sheep, into a fence.

The Games were only briefly interrupted by a thunder storm that sent crowds scurrying to the display tents of the Clans. Although lightning singed the hair off one man's legs, the dedicated athletes continued to compete on the field as drenched bagpipers played on. As one Scotsman put it: "The Games must go on."

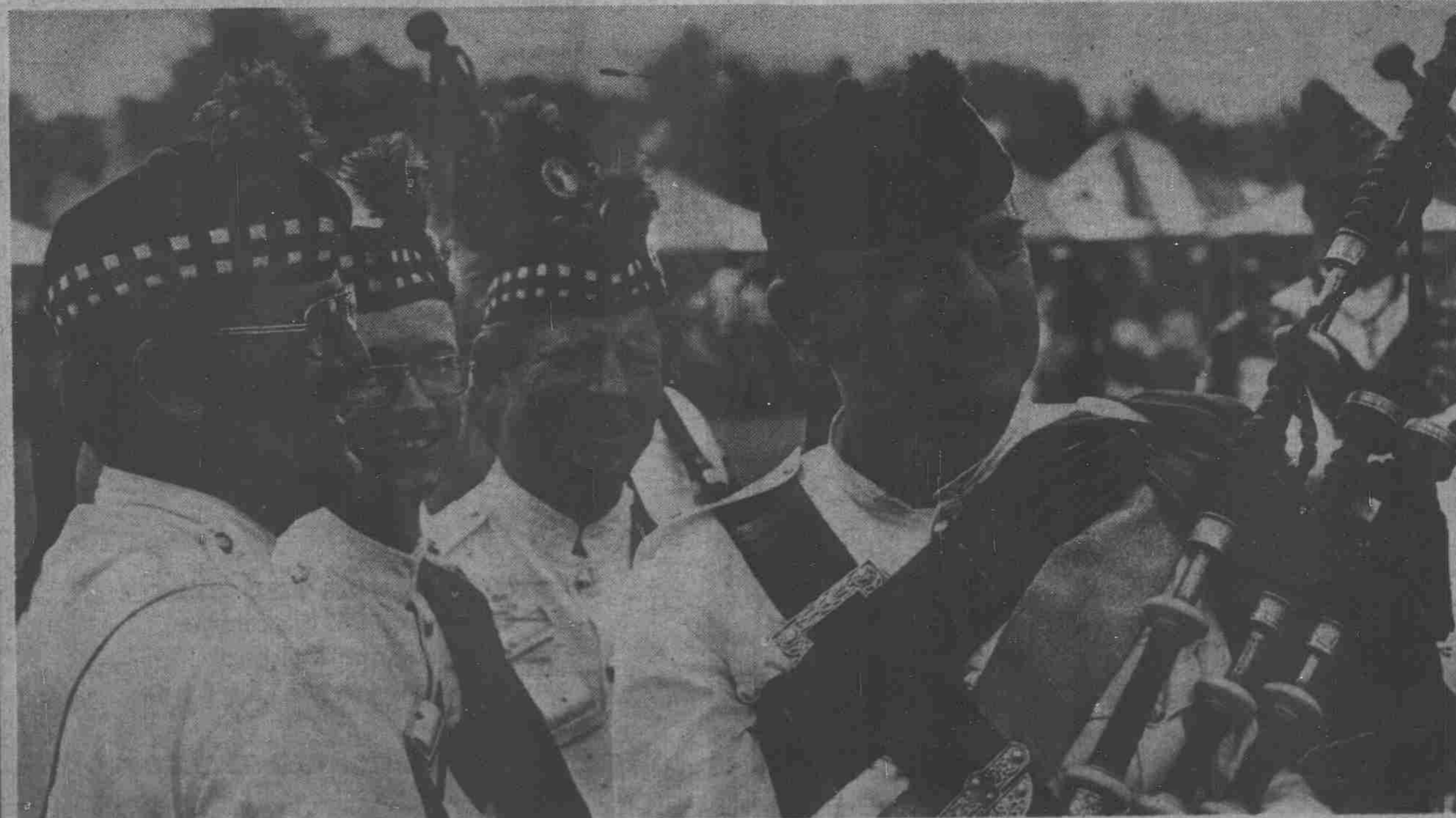
And the games did continue, to have two records broken — the 16-pound stone throw and the 28-pound weight throw — and the tossing of the sheaf record tied.

After the games, the clans participated in an informal gathering and sing kown as the ceilidh before they left Grandfather Mountain to return to their homes in different parts of North Carolina, the United States and Canada. They packed away their kilts and scarves to resume their modern lifestyles — until next year when they will again celebrate their heritage in MacRae Meadows.



Staff photo by Scott Shreve

**Clan members compete in traditional dances**



Staff photo by Scott Shreve

**Scotsmen in traditional highland dress entertained the crowds with Gaelic tunes performed on bagpipes**