



2005 Scottish-Texan Achievement Recognition



Earl Ullrich Linzza (1921-2005)

THE 2005 SCOTTISH TEXAN ACHIEVEMENT RECOGNITION (STAR) AWARD - will be presented to Mr. Earl Linzza for a lifetime of work promoting Scottish culture and heritage in the State of Texas. Earl faithfully supported the traditional Scottish Highland athletics throughout Texas and Louisiana and mentored many young men through the years.

We are very saddened that Earl passed away on July 1st, 2005 before he was able to receive this very deserved recognition. We will present the award and letters of recognition in his honor at the Salado Festival in November 2005.

Early Life

Earl Ullrich Linzza was born in San Antonio, Texas on January 13, 1921 to Otto and Emmett Ullrich. Four years later his parents had divorced and his mother remarried. Earl's stepfather Henry Linzza moved the family to the Houston Northside where Earl became a Houstonian, a title that he has now proudly had for 79 years.

As a young boy Earl spent the summers with his grandparents on Galveston Island. It was here that he learned much from his Scots-Irish grandfather James Tadlock. Earl still remembers his grandfather fondly as, "The best man I ever knew, a true Gentleman who never raised his voice but always gave and commanded respect." It was Tadlock's heritage that would one day lead Earl to his involvement with the Scottish Highland Games.

Service in World War II

Earl graduated from Houston's Jefferson Davis High School in 1938 and went to work for the Houston National Bank as a courier and clerk. Finding bank work unsatisfying and being in the midst of the Great Depression he turned to the military for adventure and security enlisting in the United States Army Air Corps in October 1941. His background in banking led to an assignment as a "graphite spreader" or Company Clerk stationed at Ellington Field south of Houston.

December 7, 1941 found PFC Linzza visiting his neighbors the Christoffels in Houston where he learned over the family's RCA radio that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. He told his host family, "Well, we're at war now and I need to go back to the Base." Upon returning to Ellington he found a .50 caliber machine gun circled by sandbags at the front gate. Earl found this amusing because the other two and a half miles of Ellington Field frontage along Galveston Road was wide open, not even a fence.

By February 1942 he had been promoted to Sergeant and was headed to the 94th College Training Detachment at South West Texas Teachers College in San Marcos. He would serve there for the two years helping to produce 90-day wonders before shipping out to Europe. Assigned to the 12th United States Army Air Force in Italy Sgt. Linzza spent Christmas 1944 on a troop transport in Norfolk, North Carolina. Hearing Bing Crosby sing *I'll be Home for Christmas* while you are going the other way is one of the saddest things a man can experience but Earl went where his Uncle Sam sent him. Once in Europe he was stationed in Corsica, Naples, and finally Wiesbaden, Germany where he learned that the war with Japan was over and the road back to Texas would not be going through Tokyo.

Family & Gulf Oil

Earl returned home and married Melba Christoffel on November 11, 1947. Melba being the neighbor in whose house he had learned the news about Pearl Harbor almost six years before. Earl and Melba settled into their home on 17th Street in the Heights and had two daughters Debbie and Pam. Earl also went to work for the Gulf Oil Company at about the same time building pipelines across Southeast Texas. His job with Gulf would lead the family to Midland, Texas, Anderson, South Carolina, and finally Atlanta, Georgia where their son Chris was born. By 1969 the family had had enough "*Southern Hospitality*" and took the opportunity to return home to Houston. Earl's new position as a pipeline dispatcher had him moving product through some of the very same pipelines he had helped build years before. The family lived in the Sagemont subdivision of Southeast Houston for the next fourteen years. And then came 1983.

1983 was a watershed year for the Linzza Family. In that year Earl saw: his daughter Pam wed in February, his lovely wife Melba pass away in April, his son Chris graduate from High School in May, daughter Debbie give birth to the first grandchild in July, and his own retirement from Gulf in August after 37 years of service. Little did Earl know then that a new opportunity awaited him and that it would involve large men in kilts.

Highland Games

The year following his retirement Earl read an article in *The National Geographic Traveler* about the Highland Games held at Middleton Place Plantation in Charleston, South Carolina. Earl's son was on the track team at San Jacinto College at the time and wanted to try his hand at what he considered a thrower's version of a

fun run. So after a 1,200-mile drive Earl and Chris took part in their first Highland Game where Chris dropped a Caber on judge Ed Holcomb. The accident would have ended the Linzza's involvement in the games, but Holcomb sent Chris a kind letter taking responsibility for not getting out of the way and encouraging him to continue with the games. Earl told Chris that Mr. Holcomb had reminded him of his grandfather James Tadlock with his strong yet easygoing way.

In the spring of 1985, Earl saw an advertisement in the *Houston Post* that the Houston Highland Games were to be held the next day at St. Luke's Methodist Church. He and Chris decided to go and had a grand time. It was the beginning of a decade that would lead Earl and his son to games in: Arlington, Biloxi, Estes Park, Gatlinburg, Jackson, Lafayette, Miami, New Orleans, Salado, Stone Mountain, Tulsa, and of course back to Charleston.

In 1988 he joined the HHGA as Athletics Director and has organized the Men's Heavy competition at every Houston Games since. This includes the 2002 games held less than a month after Earl had triple by-pass surgery. Earl has also served as the Athletic Director for the Jackson Highland Games, the New Orleans Celtic Festival, and the Salado Games. He has also judged at Arlington, Biloxi, Lafayette, and numerous other events. Earl has always enjoyed the competition and fellowship among the competitors and has mentored many young athletes along the way.

Earl served as Athletic Director for the Trinity Scottish Highland Games for several years, and was instrumental in 1999 for the creation of the June McRoberts Memorial Trophy (<http://www.txscot.com/images/JMR%20Trophy2005.pdf>) to recognize an annual "Athlete of the Day".