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MORRISCOUNTY

It's Hope and glory for Madison man

By **MICHAEL VALKYS**
Daily Record

MADISON — Islyn Thomas answered the door yesterday and found a letter addressed to him.

From Bob Hope.

"I've known him for years," Thomas said. "His mother was Welsh and anyone who is Welsh I'm active with."

The famous comedian was born in London, but his mother hailed from Wales. "He always thought he was English but I always told him he was Welsh," Thomas said.

He met Hope while interviewing people for his book "Our Welsh Heritage," a compilation of facts and figures about Welsh culture now in its fifth edition.

Hope wrote to congratulate Thomas, who is to be honored Saturday



Islyn Thomas awaits honor.

in Scranton, Pa., with the National Welsh-American Foundation's Heritage Award, which the

organization gives annually to honor contributions to the Welsh community.

Thomas, the son of a coal miner, left Wales at 11 in 1923 and went on to become a musician, scientist, toy manufacturer and one of the world's leading plastics expert.

Along the way he helped develop plastic parts for the atomic bomb, which he didn't know he had done until years later, and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth for his contributions to the plastics industry.

Now 80, with a shock of gray hair and bushy eyebrows, Thomas works out of his Madison home as a consultant to companies around the world.

Thomas recalled entering the Welsh mines as a boy for coal to heat the family home.

"I remember going into the

mines and loading up a sled and taking it down the mountainside," said Thomas, who visits Wales two or three times a year.

His family moved to Scranton when the coal mines closed and Thomas worked while attending college, eventually becoming chief engineer for Consolidated Molded Products.

He moved to the Ideal Toy Co. in New York in 1942, where he converted the 3,200-employee company's efforts to the war effort.

While at Ideal, Thomas led the work force that produced plastic parts for the Manhattan Project that developed the atomic bomb.

Thomas founded his own company in 1944, Thomas Manufacturer's Corp., which was one of the largest plastic toy manufacturers in the United States for 12 years before he sold the business.

Madison man honored by queens and presidents

By **NORMA HOPCRAFT**

MADISON — He's a Welsh coal miner's son who came to this country when he was 11.

His dedication to his Welsh heritage and his contributions to his chosen industry have brought him kudos and awards from presidents and queens.

On October 24 Dr. Islyn Thomas, O.B.E., will be presented with the National Welsh-American Foundation's Heritage Award in Scranton, Pennsylvania, home to a large Welsh-American community.

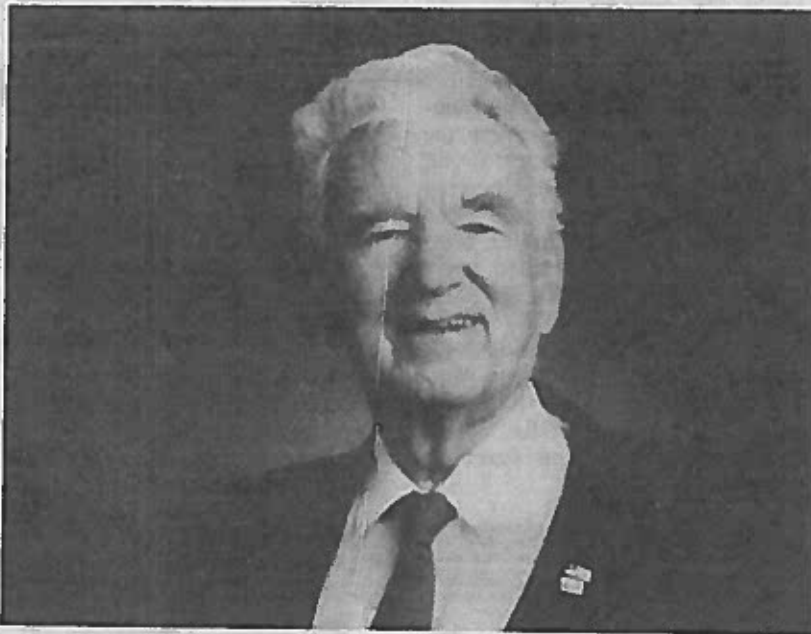
President George Bush sent him a letter from the White House dated Sept. 8 congratulating him. "Your commitment to preserving your Welsh heritage has enhanced the rich mosaic that is American culture," the President wrote.

In 1975, also in October, Dr. Thomas was invited to Buckingham Palace to be appointed an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, this time for his work in the plastics industry.

During the ceremony, Queen Elizabeth tapped him on each shoulder with a sword. Dr. Thomas said it made him feel very important, but it wasn't the best day of his life.

"My biggest thrill was the day I got married," he said. He married the former Ruth Hohl of Madison and raised two sons and a daughter in Madison.

For the knighting ceremony, palace officials told him where to rent a top hat and morning coat with tails. For his award in Scranton, Dr. Thomas said he would just wear a tux. "I'm a casual person," he said.



Dr. Islyn Thomas

Dr. Thomas has also written a book, "Our Welsh Heritage," a compendium of facts and figures about Welsh culture and Welsh Americans that is coming out in its fifth printing in the next two weeks.

Dr. Thomas is a member of many Welsh organizations, including the Gorsedd of the Bards, established in 1792, and the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorian, established 1751. The Welsh Society of Philadelphia, the National Welsh Gymanfa Association, and the St. David's Welsh-American Society.

The most interesting time in his long career in the plastic industry has been as a consultant, he said.

"I've been around the world eight times, helping other companies and countries prosper," Dr. Thomas said.

During the war, Dr. Thomas converted the Ideal Toy Co. in Hollis, Long Island to war work, making nine million gas masks, plastic parts for the Manhattan Project that developed the atomic bomb, and dust masks for troops in North Africa.

When the war ended, Dr. Thomas turned his attention to making toys for the next twelve years. Then he began to help establish plastic companies in England and Wales. He has also worked in Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

Now he is Chairman of the Board of the Plastics Academy, which represents a \$150 billion a year industry and 1 million workers and is a member of the National Plastics Hall of Fame.