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ACROSS THE ISLAND

S'side Lad Rates As Nations Best

BY NEIL A. MATHESON
Provincial -Farm Editor

I WANT to doff my hat this week to Vaughan Groom, the nation's top pole vaulter. It's a big statement, but he has earned the title beyond any shadow of a doubt. The young Summerside athlete was doing a repeat performance when he won the Canadian championship at Toronto last week. He did the same thing at Winnipeg a year ago. What more can you ask of a guy?

This year he was up against British and American stars. There were so many contestants the event took 4 hours to compete, which added to the mental and physical strain.

Alfred must have been bitterly disappointed when he failed by a whisker to get his name in the all time record books as the Canadian title holder at 14 feet. Alfred has done better than 14 feet, and in competition at that. But it's difficult to hit the peak of achievement consistently, in an event that calls for so much form and coordination as the pole vault. The average person shudders even to think of falling from that height. The pole vaulter has to worry about getting up there, before he thinks of hitting the pit on the way down.

THE THING that amazes me is how Alfred is able to retain top form without nearly enough competition. He had the Canadian meet at Toronto Saturday, and there's the Antigonish Highland Games in August. The ideal situation would be a meet a week. So the chap is working under unusual difficulties.

A track and field man has to be on top of his form to turn in a good performance. He has a few fleeting seconds to clear the pole and he has to be at his best in those seconds, not a few seconds before or afterwards. The concentrated demand is equalled in few other sports. If he can't be at his best for those seconds he's just another name on the entry list.

Training is the most difficult part. It has to be done alone for the most part, and discouragements are many.

It all adds up to a tough old battle and the boy who can win two national titles back to back, merits the warmest commendation.

Interest Stirs In 5th Kings

THE BYELECTIONS in 2nd Queens and 5th Kings are stirring up unusual interest. George Kitson and Lloyd MacPhail are putting up a vigorous battle in their district and anything can happen in 5th Kings from what I heard yesterday on a trip through a large part of the County.

This column was written before the result of last night's Liberal convention at Georgetown was known. It had to be, for this page closes early. But there were some interesting possibilities.

There was a sharp conflict of opinion yesterday on whether the Liberals should reverse their decision and nominate an opponent for Leslie Hunter. One of the district delegates told me, "We promised Mr. Hunter we wouldn't oppose him if he got the nomination." The implication was that an acclamation would develop if Mr. Hunter became the choice, through the withdrawal of James McConnell, Georgetown who had tied with Mr. Hunter for the PC nomination at their first convention.

THERE WAS no indication of how much authority there was behind the promise, but my friend assured me a group of Liberals did make the undertaking.

Best reaction I could get yesterday, though, was that the Liberals would change their stand and nominate George Ferguson, the Murray River man who heads the County Liberal association.

There were hot tips in 5th Kings yesterday that the PCs will call another convention for tomorrow night and reverse their decision on candidates, if the Liberals choose Ferguson. If that happens, the next rumor is that they will run James McConnell, on the grounds that he will poll a much bigger vote in the Georgetown district than a man who does not live in the area.

That would be a direct switch but it would become possible only if Mr. Hunter agreed, as he is now the chosen candidate.

Nothing was certain as this was written, but there was evidence in 5th Kings yesterday that the riding was in the mood to continue causing surprises.

Leavitt Woodcraft Plant Visited

IT STRUCK me this week that Herb Leavitt's woodcraft plant at Alberton is the type of "small family industry" that is often said to have disappeared from our province. I've heard our public men speak with regret of the passing of these Island craftsmen, but a walk into the Leavitt yard reveals a small industry that's a credit to P.E.I. as well as to the young man himself.

I know little about woodcraft, but the pieces in the Leavitt shop show the mark of a master craftsman. It's Birdseye Maple that he uses for the most part, and it's "a beautiful wood that is easy to work with". The quotes are Mr. Leavitt's but I know that much of the beauty is in the hands, and mind of the master who moulds the products that have been acclaimed across the nation.

Herb started about six years ago on his present endeavour. Prior to that he had built small boats. The products were superb but they didn't represent a living and a fellow has to live.

His father told me the boy had played with a fret saw at the age of six and Herb explained that his dad had bought him some beautiful pieces of wood with which to work. "He started me off in the right way", the son observed.

INCIDENTALLY THE father is William Leavitt whose heroic feats I recalled several months ago in connection with the A.G. McKean rescue. Calvin Lewis, who never misses a chance to boost his native Alberton around this office, tells me that Herb

earned the Distinguished Flying Cross during the last war with some unusually daring work over enemy territory.

I was interested to find that some of the wood Mr. Leavitt uses comes from Will Cameron's farm in Stanchel which is next to my old home in Rose Valley. Some of it comes from Glenwood in Prince County and some more from Iona in Eastern Queens.

So great is the reputation of the product that the P.E.I. Government purchases examples of Mr. Leavitt's work as souvenir gifts for distinguished visitors. Sir Saville Garner, who was here last week, was the latest recipient.