

# People Profile:

By Joanne Peters

## RUSS: An Active Member of Community Life

Russ Stewart has been the manager of the UPEI Bookstore for eight years. He is also an active and concerned citizen, being a member of Charlottetown City Council. In the following interview with



him, much was learned about the operations of the bookstore and of Mr. Stewart's opinions on civic matters. This interviewer found Mr. Stewart to be very open and sincere in his opinions, unlike many politicians who often say only a minimum, so no one can find fault with their statements. Mr. Stewart, on the other hand, would rather be criticized for his statements, than continually say 'no comment' and I commend him for his openness.

Russell Stewart was born and raised in New Glasgow, N.S. After high school he worked with the Woolworth company for 15 years, throughout the Maritimes. After having spent some time in Charlottetown and Summerside with the Woolworth stores, Russ moved back to P.E.I. in 1969. He operated his own business in Charlottetown for a couple of years before taking over as manager of the UPEI Bookstore.

Many students wonder what causes large increases in textbook prices each time a new shipment comes in, how much of a mark-up is made at the Bookstore, and who receives profits from the Bookstore. Mr. Stewart was very willing to clear up these matters. The bookstore is owned and operated by the University and any profits made go directly into the University account. However, Stewart revealed, that on the average, the Bookstore operates at a loss. No profit is made on textbooks; rather, the money-making articles are the accessories: clothing,

cigarettes, confectionary, magazines, etc., which account for 50% of sales. There is an average 25% mark-up from the price paid to the company to the price which the Bookstore charges students for textbooks. However, this is only enough to cover shipping charges of both books being sent to the Bookstore and of unsold books being sent back to the publisher. For example, \$5,000 worth of books were sent back last week alone. Thus, mark-ups on textbooks only cover the expenses.

Mr. Stewart agreed that prices of textbooks are increasing by leaps and bounds. For example, one textbook which, in the spring of 1978 cost \$19.95, increased to \$24.75 in June and was approximately \$28.00 this fall. Mr. Stewart explained the main reason for the increases was the low value of the Canadian dollar. With approximately 75-80% of the textbooks coming from the U.S., the increasing exchange rate for the dollar, plus shipping charges, plus charges which must be paid to Customs all combine to raise the price of our textbooks. I asked if there weren't more Canadian publishers which could supply some of the textbooks, to help reduce costs. But Mr. Stewart said, regretfully, that there aren't. Even McGraw-Hill Canada buys many books from their head office in New York. Mr. Stewart's opinion is that the market in Canada for publishers isn't as big as that of our southern neighbour and that perhaps, "Canadian publishers aren't as aggressive". In the Maritimes there are only a few small publishers. Mr. Stewart does some business with a company in Halifax. He also distributes many things for the Island company, Square Deal Publishing, owned by Reshard Gool. Mr. Stewart feels we've already hit the hardest part of the price increases, but that we can probably expect another 20% increase next fall. We can take some consolation from the fact that Mr. Stewart tells us if the Bookstore wasn't owned by the University, but was a private enterprise, prices would be 10-20% higher.

Besides being a businessman, Mr. Stewart is active in civic life. He is one of Charlottetown's 10 aldermen on City Council. His 3-year term began in January, 1978. In the little more than a year that Mr. Stewart has been on Council, he feels that he hasn't accomplished as much as he would have liked. He says it requires a lot of patience to put up with hindrances to get something. I asked him if recent controversy over cutting down trees to widen University Avenue, of which he is in favour, is an example of that. He replied that he could understand conservationists' viewpoint, but that widening of University Avenue is a necessity to keep the downtown area alive, by bringing traffic in. He feels this is one of the most major needs for Charlottetown today - improvements to University Avenue. He feels this is more important than the planned construction of a bypass which, in his opinion, would not be used that much. Also, it has been suggested that a mall would be built on the new bypass, and Mr. Stewart feels the Charlottetown area doesn't need more malls. A major department store, such as Simpsons, The Bay, or Eaton's, would be more of an asset for Charlottetown, he says. They would perhaps keep more money in Charlottetown, by encouraging citizens to shop here, rather than going to Moncton and Halifax for the these same stores. He says some people may criticize these national chains, but they do create money and provide jobs.

Mr. Stewart feels the move of the D.V.A. to Charlottetown will be a definite benefit, in that it will add \$15,000,000 to our economy and provide jobs. When asked if Charlottetown can accommodate the influx of people, that accompanies this move, Mr. Stewart said the only problem could be traffic, but the new Parking Garage will be a help, and he feels a second bridge, parallel to the present one across the Hillsborough River would be a big help. This is now in the planning stages.

Mr. Stewart enjoys being involved in public work. Before being on City

Council he was on the Unit 3 School Board. In Council he's on the Charlottetown Regional Planning Board, along with officials from thirteen municipalities in the Charlottetown area. He's also on such committees as Recreation, Public Works, and the Tree Committee. Mr. Stewart finds that work associated with his position only takes up 4-5 hours per week, less than he had expected. At this point, he says he wouldn't run again for Alderman when his term expires, but he says that feeling may change.

On the subject of the future of UPEI, Mr. Stewart said he likes its smallness, as it is now, but would like to see perhaps 200 more students coming here. He feels the possible incorporation of a Veterinary School with the University would be a great asset both to UPEI and Islanders in general, since agriculture is our number one industry.

The Bookstore, besides being owned by the University, thereby reducing prices of textbooks, also provides part-time jobs for five



UPEI students. They work an average of 8-10 hours per week and can arrange their schedule around their classes. When asked if he found any differences between operating a business in the usual downtown business sector and being manager of a business on campus, Mr. Stewart said he found the Bookstore much more enjoyable; the students he meets being the main reason for this. He likes to watch someone who may come to work for him as a Freshman grow and develop during their years at UPEI.

Mr. Stewart is a good example of growing relationships between UPEI and the community, which are so important for the University's growth.