

# PEPPER-TALK

with  
Harry  
Pepper

It is now almost two weeks since the passing of one of Rossland's young super-athletes and I have had a chance to think about the sports career of a young man that spanned almost the total course of his short life.

Stevie McFarland started in sports when he was very young; and after perusing his scrapbooks, diligently kept up to date by his parents, I can say without much fear of contradiction that he had as much printer's ink expended on his exploits in Western Canada as any young man who has passed this way.

Steve was a very honest young man. When he was happy he made everyone around him that way and if he didn't like you he never bothered with you; it was just that simple. During his last few years he had been a member of Rossland's fun leagues and I like to think that this was the way he liked his sports. Commitment is there, but it isn't the only ingredient. Essentially, if you enjoy what you are doing, the rest comes naturally to someone as talented as Stevie was.

As I said at the outset, Stevie started in sports at a very tender age. I well remember him and his older brother, John, when they played Little League ball back in the Rossland Colts heyday; clippings and photos tell the story of the boys' successes in



**STEVE MCFARLAND**  
... happy days remembered

During his years in the WCHL, Steve played with some of the great ones, names that dot the NHL rosters today. Tom Lysiak, Lonny McDonald, Stan Weir and a number of others were on the Tigers' roster while Steve toiled there in the nets.

Through it all, Steve never failed to keep in touch with the folks. His mother, Ethel, and father, John, tell a number of humorous stories about the phone calls and letters they

got from him, one such was a report that he had spent the previous day, his birthday, on a bus trip. "What a way to spend a birthday", he remarked.

After he tired of the dog-eat-dog life in the juniors, Steve returned home and was soon in demand in the camp of the Trail Smoke Eaters. When the Smokies goalie of that time, Pierre Hamel, was given an indefinite suspension by the league for some infraction, Steve was called upon to fill in, a job he did so well that he became their first-string goalie shortly thereafter.

Sport writers around the league never seemed to tire of telling of his amazing abilities to stop pucks fired at him from any direction at speeds up to 100 miles an hour.

And again he was the recipient of MVP awards as he led the Smokies with his stellar net minding in the seasons he played for them. At his peak I think he could easily have crashed the ranks of the NHL. He chose not to go that route, and after returning to Rossland he confined his hockey and baseball to the fun games that he liked so much.

During his life span Steve McFarland gave the sports fans wherever he played more than a full measure of en-

tertainment. Whether they liked him or not, they had to have a great deal of respect for his ability to do his chosen job in a top-notch manner and supply the measure of color to his performance which is the mark of a truly fine athlete.

In closing out this tribute to a young man for whom I had a great deal of admiration, I want to extend my deepest sympathy to John, Ethel, John Jr. and Danny along with Steve's family in their loss. There was lots of happiness along the way and I will remember that part of it. I hope a lot of others will too.

On the local sports scene, I would like to congratulate Helen Bouchier and her gallant MacLean School volleyball team for their success in the Trail district tournament. To every one of you youngsters I'd like to say, "Well done, it was a fine effort."

This weekend is Grey Cup time and we shall have the same pattern on view as we have had the past couple of years, the Edmonton Eskimos v Montreal Alouettes. And if the semi-final games were any criterion I would say that this will be another low-scoring affair. Both defences are

terrific and the emphasis, I imagine, will be to develop some scoring punch.

To say the least, it will be interesting; I say the Esks will come out on top.

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As I said at the outset, Stevie started in sports at a very tender age. I well remember him and his older brother, John, when they played Little League ball back in the Rossland Colts heyday; clippings and photos tell the story of the boys' successes in international tournaments — top hitter, MVP awards were almost a foregone conclusion for them in the days when Bev Berry coached them along as kids.

Every phase of minor hockey saw them in the thick of things, Steve concerned mostly with stopping them and John trying to get all the goals he could. During their minor hockey days John was always near the top of the scoring stats while Steve's GA average was invariably among the lowest around.

Then came the opening of the KIJHL and Rossland's entry into it. I don't think the Warriors won that many championships, but Steve captured his share of awards in those days and the Warrior fans just loved him. The hottest forwards in the league disliked playing Rossland because they knew that scoring goals against McFarland was not the easy way to pad their scoring stats.

Then, as surely as day follows night, or vice-versa, came the bid to try a higher strata of our national game and Steve was called upon to try out with the then powerful Estevan Bruins under the tutelage of Ernie "Punch" McLean. He did not catch on with the Bruins, ending up with the new kids on the block, the Medicine Hat Tigers. McLean had reason to wish he had kept the acrobatic Rossland native; he seemed to save some of his better efforts for the Bruin games.

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