

King off to crier's championship

(Continued)

made miniature plaster mice dressed like town criers and christened the first one "Marty Mouse."

In 1975, King was in a speedboat accident and couldn't take the job for the summer. He's thankful to have gotten it back the following year. "It's a great summer job," he said. "I'll keep doing it for as long as I enjoy it."

The only days King doesn't work are rainy ones. This year, he got three days off in a row. King works from the weekend of the Blessing of the Fleet in late June until early September. This year he's working longer than usual to get in shape for the competition.

To keep in shape for the job, King jogs five miles a day up and down Commercial Street before work, and he takes honey for his throat.

King, who was born and raised in New York City and summered in Provincetown, remembers the last town crier, Fred Baldwin, but didn't begin the job trying to follow in his footsteps. "People have to accept that we're all individuals and I'm one too," he said.

Crier George Washington Readey walked the streets of Provincetown starting in the 1880s and is famous for his tale of a 300-foot-long sea serpent which he claimed came ashore at Herring Cove beach. The tale, told in Nellen Hatch's book, "The Log of Provincetown and Truro on Cape Cod, Massachusetts," includes Readey's vivid description of the monster. Readey signed an affidavit saying he had given "a true description of the serpent as it appeared to me that morning and I was not unduly excited by liquor or otherwise."

"He [Readey] was a little inclined to drink too much but he had a terrific imagination," said Margaret Mayo of the Pilgrim Monument Museum.

King, who has done a tremendous amount of research about his predecessors, said Readey rang the same bell for 30 years.

Walter "Happy" Smith was Provincetown town crier during the 1920s. According to King, he is said to be a renowned pickpocket who was banned from the city of Boston. His uniform was a suit and bow tie and he wore a hat that said, "Town Crier of Provincetown" on it.

One of Provincetown's criers, Amos Kubik, was also a champion rower. Thirty years after he won the National Rowing Championship in 1898, he took every opportunity to show off his skill when he was town crier. He retired in the 1940s.

In the 1950s, Arthur Snader, the "singing" town crier, started in Provincetown and worked until 1965 when he injured his back.

The most recent well-known crier before King was Fred Baldwin, better known as the "old salt of Cape Cod." He was a professor and superintendent of schools in addition to his town crier's job. He retired in 1970 at age 83.

Other town criers Provincetown had were: Rufus Williams, Charles Marston, Ambrose Hill, Frank Atwood, Dinsmore Walton, Billy Clark, Barney Turner, Archibald McCurdy, Andrew Coleman, Joseph Henry Smith and John Gaspie.

Traditionally, King said, Provincetown town criers have been bald and toothless. Last year in a jogging accident King knocked out three of his teeth and can now laugh at the fact that he is following in their footsteps.

But none of them had entered a crying contest. At least five criers from England will be going to Halifax for the

competition. For them, competition is nothing new. Each year Britain has an annual crying contest and this year's winner, Ian Clarkson, will be in the Canada contest.

Contestants will be rated by three judges on volume, clarity of cry and interpretation. The first-place award is the Chuddy Chaulker Trophy, named for Halifax's famous crier in the 1800s who had memorized more than 2000 special dates and anniversaries. Three plaques will be awarded to runners-up and three plaques for the best-dressed will also be awarded.

Each of the entrants will cry a standard proclamation and a second one from their individual towns. In the case of a tie, a surprise test piece will be cried off.

King said he will take his youngest brother with him "to push me out in front of the crowd."

"I really wish I wasn't nervous. I think it's just part of being Irish that I smile a lot," he said.

After the competition King will return to New York where, at age 37, he will begin four years of nursing school at Pace University. "There's a critical shortage of male nurses," he said, adding that his ten years in business were wasted.

But even in New York City King can't get away from his Provincetown occupation. He recalls with a laugh the time that he was riding a New York subway when he heard a girl screaming at him, "There's the town crier!"

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HEAR YE. Town Crier Marty King returned to Provincetown Tuesday after a fun-filled weekend of parades and parties at the second annual International Town Criers Championships in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

King competed against 20 other town criers from five different countries before an audience of 7000 people. He did not place in the competition. But as Provincetown officials told him in a "good luck" telegram sent last Friday, King is still the number one town crier for Provincetown.

King took an escort to the competition, Bonnie Hamilton of Provincetown. Hamilton, dressed in the traditionally austere Puritan clothing, escorted King in the parades and lent him moral support.

Though disappointed, King, as always looks on the bright side of things; he is already making plans for next year's competition. Right now King has to concentrate on more serious matters. He is returning for his second gruelling year of nursing school in New York City.

Town crier is off again to



Towanda DeNagy with banner made for Marty King

championship contest

Once again Martin King, Provincetown town crier, is bound for Halifax, Nova Scotia, to participate in the Third International Town Criers' Championships.

Last year King finished eighth, a performance he hopes to improve September 20. King will cry dressed in his best uniform of blueberry blue with pewter buttons. He will ring his new bell, which replaces the older bell that cracked recently.

King intends to shorten his cry to hold attention, and he will display his newly made town crier's flag, which shows an onionskin yellow Cape Cod with a cranberry red Provincetown monument and a blueberry blue background.

King has gone to the championships all three years they have been held. He has been town crier since 1972 when he answered an ad in The Advocate "because of the money."

The criers' pay is \$132 a week for a four-hour day, but the job obviously means more to King than just money. There is tradition involved which King is very serious

about. He pays his own way to the crying championships, and when he ran in the New York Marathon last spring he wore a tee shirt saying, "I am the Town Crier in Provincetown, Massachusetts."

"You should have seen people trying to read all those words as I ran by," he said.

King takes his running as seriously as his crying. He won a 15-kilometer race (9.3 miles) in Honesdale, Penn. in May. He runs to be alone. "We all need space and quiet. When you're in the public eye you really need to be able to spend time alone," King said.

When he's not running or crying, the 39-year-old King is a nursing student at New York's Pace University. When he graduates he plans to work in a hospital. Will he give up the crier's job? "We've had town criers who did it for 25 and 30 years. I'm just a newcomer," King said, indicating he intends to be back for many years to come.