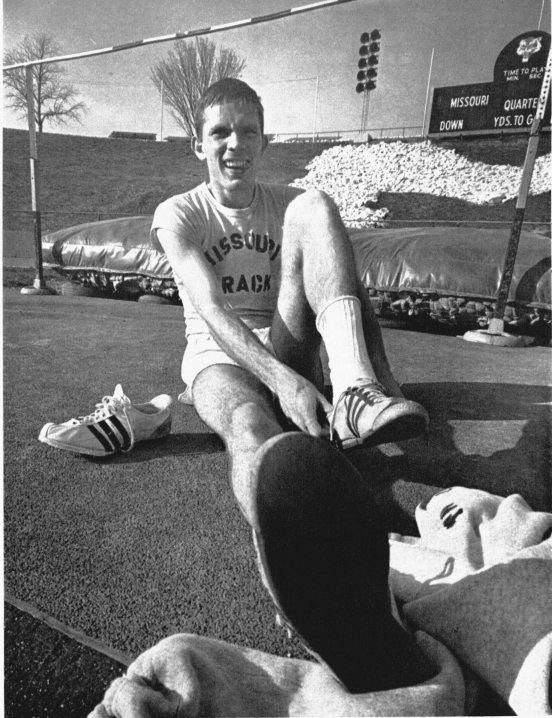




Bill Callahan is in his 20th year as the University's sports information director. A native of Rhode Island, he was graduated from Missouri's Journalism School in 1947.



The Designing Mr. Herndon

By BILL CALLAHAN

EVER SINCE THE DAY he won a quarter from his junior high school gym instructor by touching the basketball rim, Frederic (Steve) Herndon has been meeting challenges quite successfully.

Nope, Steve didn't all at once decide to be a high-jumper after that achievement. Nor did a perceptive instructor see in this basketball-minded ninth-grader a future track star and suggest that he try out for the sport. In fact, Steve's first exposure to track came a year later—as a discus thrower.

Eventually, though, the wiry youth with fire in his muscles did find his niche. In June of 1966—his junior year—Herndon became the first high jumper in Tiger history to wriggle over the seven-foot barrier—managing 7 feet, 1¾ inches to win the Central Collegiate title at Notre Dame.

Last month, Herndon cracked the magic mark on successive weekends. He cleared seven feet to win his second Big Eight indoor crown, setting a new conference record. He repeated that feat at Detroit but settled for second place in the N.C.A.A. indoor championships.

Assuredly, the outgoing 6-foot, 2-inch and 155-pound senior is a potential Olympian in 1968, and if his classmates are somewhat unaware of his athletic deeds, it's only because co-eds don't habitually read the sports pages or lend an attentive ear to sportscasters.

Steve, you see, is majoring in interior design at the University. Most of his courses are in the School of Home Economics, an environment envied by M.U.'s adventurous males; however, Steve already is married and he is one of three or four male students whose log of courses includes such frilly titles as residential interiors, contemporary design, history of the house and its furnishings, and architectural design.

Herndon hopes to enter the commercial field as a designer, but is planning on getting a master's degree in business administration. He has a two-fold motivation.

"I don't want to stay exclusively in design," he says. "I hope to do some selling eventually. And, too, if I go immediately to graduate school, I can continue in track and try out for the 1968 Olympic team."

The route to stardom hasn't been tailor-made for the slim Mizzou co-captain whom Coach Tom Botts describes as "quite consistent, and an outstanding competitor."

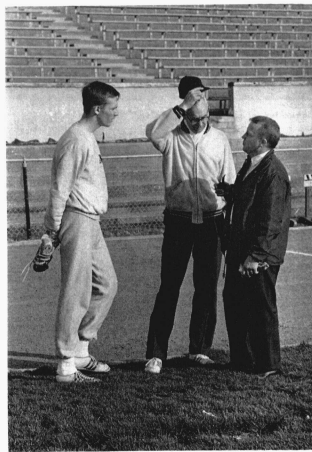
"As a fine athlete and leader of our team, Steve conducts himself with modesty and dignity," compliments the M.U. coach. "He has developed poise and will continue to improve if he stays in competition."

That Olympic goal must have been a way-out vision for Herndon when he first came to Missouri on a minimum scholarship. Blessed with exceptional spring, he had jumped 6-ft. 5 inches as a senior at Kirkwood, Mo. high school under Coach Sam McClanahan. But Mizzou—and a stepped-up level of competition—presented a new challenge.

Fortunately for Steve, another high jumper—Ross



One of few men taking interior decorating curriculum, Steve spends most of his class time in University's Home Economics department.



Steve talks over bothersome aches and pains with veteran Coach Tom Botts (center) and the Athletic Department trainer, Fred Wappel.



Biggest fan, of course, is his wife, Sue.

The Designing Mr. Herndon

Tunnell—was then competing for the Tigers. A “walk-in” volunteer from a California junior college the year before, Tunnell promptly took the young, eager novice under his wing and convinced him to change his jumping technique drastically.

“This was a wonderful association,” Botts recalls. “Tunnell was an orthodox straddle jumper with one of the best styles I’ve ever seen. He was what you might call a model jumper.”

That transitional period, however, was frustrating

and somewhat traumatic for an emotionally-impatient freshman. For weeks Herndon could not twist over the bar at six feet. Then one day everything fell into place—and Steve jumped 6-6 in Brewer field house for a new freshman record. With each successive clearance, an exuberant Tunnell—doubling as a consultant and cheerleader—predicted to all within earshot that his protegee would some day be a seven-foot jumper.

Tunnell, it turned out, was prophetic. Herndon raised his personal ceiling more than two inches each year.

“Now it gets kinda tough,” he noted recently, “but I have this year and next to pick up another inch or two.”

In his approach, Herndon attacks the bar at medium speed, divulging however, “I do come in harder (faster) at the higher heights. My last four steps are faster, for instance, at the 7-foot level than at 6-6. At those earlier heights, I try to be more relaxed to conserve energy.”

The high-jumper’s thrust at take-off—his transfer of



Practice for a track star is an individual and a constant—and a lonely—thing.

forward momentum to upward momentum—is of course, all-important. It's one of Herndon's strongest facets.

"Steve has fine spring, and he is able to take off closer to the bar than most top-flight jumpers," Coach Botts discloses.

Herndon prefers to jump off board surfaces indoors but says the Tartan or rubberized asphalt bases now prevalent outside are equally good. What bugs him the most?

"Dirt takeoffs that are crusted on top and soft underneath. They can really throw me."

Throughout his career, Steve has been a "weekend competitor." A notoriously poor practice jumper, he is extra-tough whenever an official begins charting jumps. No one is more aware of the Herndon paradox than his coach.

"If Steve has a handicap, I'd say it is his inability to clear routine heights in practice. He usually jumps about six inches higher in a meet. If he could get within

two or three inches of his customary jumps during practice, I think he'd be even more consistent."

If many of his Home Ec classmates might confuse a cross-stitch with a cross-bar, Steve at least has found one young lady who knows the difference. She'd better. . . . Married to the former Sue Wehner of Kirkwood, Herndon gives his wife credit for improving his emotional stability.

"Last year I was a little nervous and was pressing to the point where it hurt me in some meets. Sue has helped me to relax and not worry about the pressure."

That relaxed approach boosted Herndon into the elite strata of collegiate jumpers this year—and earned him invitations to the major Eastern indoor meets, the Millrose Wanamaker, Boston A.A., and Philadelphia Inquirer games. He also will compete in the Penn Relays on April 28-29.

And you might watch for him in the '68 Olympics, too. □