

PROFILE (1964) - ALF MURRAY



It would be superfluous to list Alf's prowess on the football field, his limitless enthusiasm for committees, his efforts for the language, because since he became President so many Sports writers and commentators have already done so.

He has even been interviewed on television by that well-known G.A.A. enthusiast, Ernest Strathdee, and to give you an idea of Alf's opportunism, he taught Ernie a phrase in the Mother Tongue. Ernie's blas wouldn't have reminded you of the Glenties, but, to paraphrase the late Mr. Hitler, "Today, Good Luck Alf - tomorrow, Hail

Glorious St. Patrick". But what, as they say, of Alf - the Man? What indeed?

He has a fondness, which falls barely short of mania, for schemes and lists of jobs to be done. These schemes he divides into sections; the sections, in turn, into subsections - and then the sub-sections into sub sub-sections. This tidiness of mind is evident in everything he does, and it helps to explain the pockets bulging with notes, memoranda and jottings on the backs of old letters and Income Tax returns. Of course, being but human, a little disorder creeps in occasionally when he is overwrought as, for example, when he drained half the tennis courts and left the other half to fend for itself.

When not busy with G.A.A. matters, he is learning all about farming from brother Peter. He can't milk yet - he can't seem to get the hang of it - and some of his theories on cattle breeding border on the eccentric - but he once built a septic tank, of which he is justifiably proud. He can handle a tractor with casual expertise, but if you hook a trailer onto it and tell him to reverse, his palms sweat, the eyes grow wild, and everybody edges back out of the way.

His dislikes are many. Strangely enough he hates dictatorial chairmen, although Clann Eireann Committee-members will greet this startling revelation with a hollow laugh. Neither does he like tipped cigarettes, but he'll take one if you have nothing else. He isn't crazy about Jazz dances, young love, stopping the Wednesday Whist, the "Glor" or Black's Court. After some misunderstandings at the Bingo, fourteen is not his lucky number. He used to enjoy reading the Sports page of the "Sunday Independent", but he has gone off it. It seems the standard of writing is not what it used to be. He has a real fear of flying, and before a journey will not be consoled. But he is brave about it. He managed a weak smile when assured that the air-lines provide little individual sick-bags, and anyway there's nothing to worry about as long as he's made a Good Confession.

He likes schemes, and all types of meetings, especially those of the special or extraordinary variety.

He also likes to speak in public, though naturally he denies this. His speeches are always preceded by a few words in Irish. Unfortunately, what comes after the Irish is never "a few words". He doesn't object to people glancing at their watches occasionally when he is speaking, but when they start shaking them to see if they've stopped, then he becomes annoyed and will talk an extra fifteen minutes for spite. He enjoys poking his fingers into lawnmowers, although he's not particularly mechanically minded. Finally, he likes tea and buns, and here it is interesting to note that he invariably throws out some of the tea from his cup, before he adds sugar and milk. There is a deep psychological significance in this, I'm sure, but it eludes me.

No matter how Alf fares as President, his monument will always be Clann Eireann. His readiness to do the hardest job, and his talent for encouraging others to work, were responsible for the Club as it is. One of the few regrets he had, upon becoming President was that he would have even less time to devote to the two most important objects of his affection - his family and Clann Eireann. Not necessarily in that order.