

# Strong legs make Carol a good kicker

"This one's for you, Mom!" Carol Pickett yelled out from the center of Patty Gym. The crowd laughed, then went silent as Pickett focused intently on small, furry object hang-

ing six feet above the floor. The excitement and anticipation radiating from her eyes and face could easily be seen from the bleachers.

Pickett had just broken her

own World Eskimo Indian Olympics two-foot high kick record by reaching five foot, ten inches. Now, she was set to break it again. She took a little run, jumped . . . and missed. She did the same on her second, and unfortunately, third and last jump. She smiled and shrugged.

Still her mother, Beatrice Pickett, could not have been too disappointed. Her daughter had just won one of the four gold, two silver and one bronze medals which she would bring home from this year's WEIO. She had set a new world's record. A mother could easily be proud of accomplishments such as these.

Pickett herself, 18 years old and a recent graduate of West High in Anchorage, had a new goal to shoot for next year when she returned to the WEIO to defend her title. "I missed six feet only by about an eighth of an inch," she said afterwards. "Next year, I'll get it."

Pickett believes she could have hit five-eleven, which would have matched the record Lady Laroux set in this year's Arctic Winter Games, but time was running short. The judges moved on to the next event.

Pickett won her other gold medals in the one-foot high kick, the toe kick, and the kneel jump. She earned her silver in the drop-the-bomb and the Alaska high kick events and her bronze in the greased pole competition.

It was a bit amazing to see a young woman who stands only five-feet, two-inches tall doing so well in events where

height would seem to give a person more advantage.

"I've got strong legs, and a lot of coordination for kicking," Pickett explained. "I just think it's all in my legs." Although Pickett does practice her kicking occasionally, and especially during her school days would do the games with her friends during lunch breaks, she does not spend a good deal of time working out.

"Kicking is like riding a bike," she explained. "Once you learn it, you don't forget. You just have to stay in shape. I don't eat junk food, except for Pepsi. I've got to have my Pepsi." Spectators at the games noticed this, as Pickett took frequent drinks of soda pop between jumps. "Drinking something calms me down," she noted.

Pickett first got into Native games when she was a sophomore in high school. "I practiced for two months," she remembers. "Then I took the gold at the Native Youth Olympics in all events that I entered." This showing led to her representing the Cook Inlet Native Association at that year's WEIO.

"I only did the one-foot high kick. I really got into it! All the events are so interesting. I can do all of them, although there's only a few I can do well." Modesty aside, it seems that there are only a few which Pickett can't do well.

Now that she is out of high school, Pickett plans to be involved in teaching young people Native sports. "I'm really into preserving the culture.

Eskimo games is one tradition I can pass on. It is one of the best things Alaska has."

Helping others learn is also one way Pickett can help herself stay in shape. Although her athletic background does include other sports such as softball and football, her focus now is entirely on Native sports.

Pickett knows that by teaching others, she may well train athletes to beat her own records. Already, she said, some of them can jump as high as she can. "During competition, I can kick higher. It's the adrenalin."

That adrenalin shows when Carol prepares to jump. She paces. She ponders, meditates and concentrates. "I think about the negative parts, and then I think about the positive parts," she explained. "The thoughts which go through her mind. 'Then I get rid of the negative. 'I can do it!' I tell myself. 'Now I will smash the record! I can do it!'"

Pickett also concentrates to drive out the pain. "My ankles are weak. To prevent pressure on them, I try to land on my toes, then come down on my heels. Sometimes it hurts." The crowd can see that hurt. It shoots across her face, sometimes causing her to lose her balance, and miss her kick. "Then I think, 'well, what's a little pain.' Then I kind of forget about it, and it doesn't hurt as much." Then she kicks, and sets records.

Although Pickett holds the world's record of six-feet, nine inches on the one-foot high kick, she had little chance of breaking that this year. Last year, contestants ran to the mark, jumped with both feet, and did the kick with one. That style apparently migrated in from Canada.

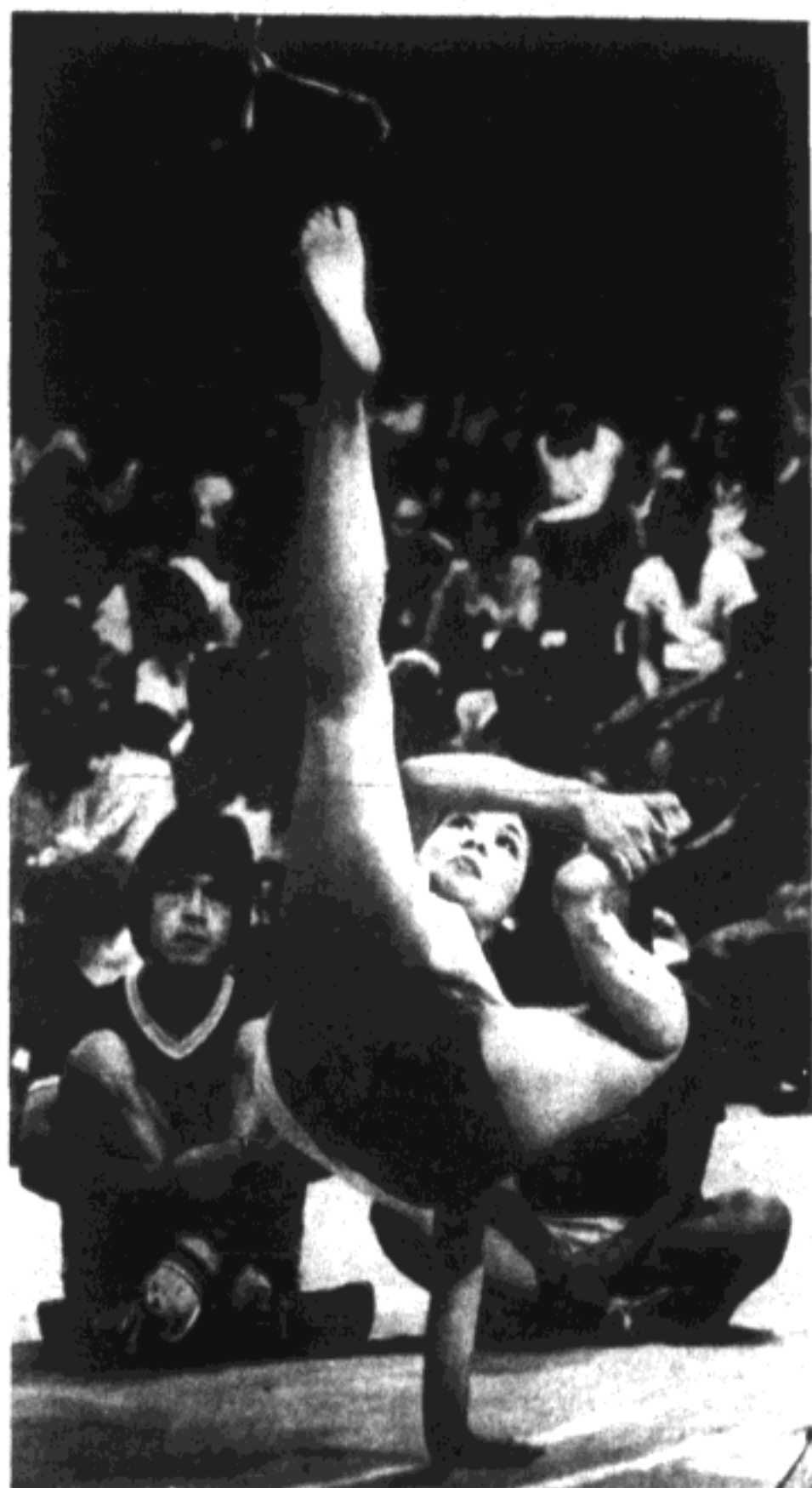
This year, the games returned to the traditional Alaska style of hopping to the take-off point on one foot, then jumping off and kicking with that same foot.

Even so, Pickett was able to kick six-feet, two inches, despite having never kicked that style before.

Can the record set leaping off with two feet ever be broken by an athlete leaping off with just one? "Oh, yes," said Pickett. "I'll break it!"

She will do it for her mother. "She has always supported me," Pickett explains. "I can't do it for my dad, because he died. He has never seen me kick. Yet every year when I kick, and I have been kicking for four years now, I always think he's watching me. So I think, 'this one's for you, mom!' That makes me try harder. It makes me happy. It makes her happy!"

—BILL HESS



Carol Pickett competes in the Alaska high kick for the first time, yet she was still able to win a silver medal.

PHOTOS BY BILL HESS



After breaking her record in the two-foot high kick, Pickett listens to advice from Greg Nothstine and her competitor, Peggy Friemering.