

B/N McKenley, Herb

Herb McKenley – definitely one of a kind

HEROES DAY is the occasion on which Jamaica recognises and rewards its sons and daughters, who by their service and contribution, have had a meaningful and significant impact on national life.

Over the years, the ceremony, held on the lawns of King's House, has been a touching affair as people from all walks of the society gather in the morning sunshine to say thank you to those who served the nation and to those who sacrificed for the nation.

This year's ceremony was no different. In fact, remembering the cheers that greeted not only Herb McKenley who was invested with the Order of Merit for his distinguished service to athletics

locally and internationally, not only Miss Donna Parchment who was invested with the Order of Distinction (Commander) for outstanding service in the field of Dispute Resolution, but also the late Heron Cousley and the late Jorghinio Johnson who were awarded, posthumously, the Badge of Honour for Gallantry, it was probably even more touching than any before.

COURAGE AND BRAVERY

The two scouts, 17-year-old Cousley and 12-year-old Johnson, lost their lives while rescuing three of their colleagues and attempting to rescue others from drowning at Yallahs last year. That was courage and bravery, and the applause that echoed around the ground was



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FROM THE BOUNDARY

such that despite the pain that they must still experience, Heron's father and Jorghinio's mother must have felt proud of their sons as they walked up to collect the awards.

Although nothing can compare with the ultimate sacrifice, even though doctors and teachers were among those serenaded, the toast of Monday morning was McKenley, – one of, if not the greatest, sports personality in Jamaica's history.

Winner of the silver medal in the 400 metres at the 1948 Olympic Games, winner of a silver medal in the 400 metres and the 100 metres and winner of the 4x400 relay gold medal in the 1952 Olympic Games, McKenley was a great sprinter – a master athlete.

He was, however, more than that, and that is why he is one of a kind and truly deserves the highest honour that has ever been awarded a sportsman or sportswoman by the Government of Jamaica.

After hanging up his spikes, McKenley assisted the development of Jamaica's athletes and therefore Jamaica's athletics as a coach.

He secured places for young Jamaicans in U.S. universities. He motivated young Jamaicans. He

served as president of the Jamaica Amateur Athletic Association and he served in many positions on the International Amateur Athletics Federation.

INSPIRATION

As a Jamaican sportsman whose great performances serve as an inspiration, as a Jamaican sportsman who worked to develop young sportsmen and sportswomen and thus the sport he loves so much, McKenley is one of a kind.

In the days leading up to Heroes Day, the Government and the people of Jamaica said thanks to the heroes of Athens at functions around the country, and that was great.

So too, however, was the move

to award McKenley, already decorated with the Order of Distinction (Commander) and Order of Jamaica, the Order of Merit.

By saying thanks to the athletes, by saying thanks once again to McKenley, the Government and the people, in the space of a few days, not only said thanks to the champions of today, not only said thanks to a champion of yesterday, but also said thanks to a man who, as great as he was – as easy as it would have been to sit on his laurels – devoted his life to track and field, to making others great to ensuring that Jamaica remain, certainly in his sport, the envy of the world.