

Acton youth gets Star of Courage, Canada's second highest citation

A small town in Newfoundland was the scene of a dramatic rescue just over a year ago for which a Halton Hills resident will soon receive the second highest award for bravery available to Canadian civilians.

Denny Andrews, 18, of Ransom Street, Acton, will receive the Star of Courage at Government House in Ottawa later this month for his efforts to haul Roland and Lorne Sheppard from the freezing waters of Notre Dame Bay on Dec. 28, 1977, just days before he left his home town of Point Leamington to come to Ontario.

Mr. Andrews, a quiet spoken young man who works at Standard Products in Georgetown, was surprised to learn of his award when he was contacted by reporters on Monday.

"I got a plaque from the town when I got home in July and I figured that's all there'd be to it," he said. "It's been so long I never dreamed of this. I didn't do anything. I was just the first one there but I'm not going to argue with them."

Mr. Andrews has no idea of when the presentation will be made although he understands he has a registered letter waiting for him at the post office.

LETTER WAITING
"I hear there's a letter waiting for me but I've been in Point Leamington so I haven't been to find out about it yet," he explained. "I've been three days driving back and we just got in this morning (Monday)."

The rescue took place fairly early in the day, Mr. Andrews said. He had gone out to visit people around his home town and met a young boy running up the street yelling.

"He was screaming his head off, right hysterical. I tried to slow him down and find out what was the matter but I couldn't get him to make any sense. So I jumped in my car and drove up to the post office to find out what was the matter."

Two older men there including the post master were equally agitated, he said, but they kept looking out into the water and he realized there were two people out there that had gone through the ice.

"They must have figured the ice was still safe, for skating," he said, "even though it was pretty black. We only had a couple of days of rain after several days of frost. Anyway, one fellow went through the ice and the other one fell through the hole before he could stop."

Denny said he yanked a clipboard off a neighboring fence and ran out on the ice which was a pretty stupid thing to do because the ice kept shattering with each step and sinking. He stuck the board across the hole but the men

had already been in the water several minutes and couldn't seem to get up on the board. They couldn't hang onto the edges because their hands were too numb and the ice kept breaking, he said.

By this time other people had arrived on the scene and had thrown Mr. Andrews a rope to try to toss to the two in the water.

"I was 1 1/2 or two feet away from the hole," he said, "and the next nearest fellow was about five feet back from me."

He spent several minutes trying to throw a rope to the pair but either the wind would blow it out of their reach or they'd have to let go since their hands were numb. The 23-year-old Roland, was getting pretty exhausted and kept asking him to come into the water, he said, but the idea didn't appeal to him in the least. That was exactly what he had to do in the end however.

They also tried pulling them in with a fire hose but that didn't work either. "I just walked to the edge and let myself fall in," he said. "I don't know if the others could hear Roland asking me to come in or if they figured I fell in. I was pretty heavily dressed at the time. I had on all the new clothes I'd got at Christmas because I was going out to visit friends so I lost all that."

FASTENED ARMS

Roland Sheppard immediately fastened his arms around Denny's neck and he went down too far to be able to breathe. He managed to get the hold loosened and push the younger boy 14-year-old Lorne up higher in the water. Another person stretched an aluminum and a wooden ladder across the ice and the younger boy grabbed the wooden ladder.

"I can't take any credit for helping the younger fellow much," he said. "He seemed to be much livelier than his brother. When I got him up a bit he could grab the ladder he hauled himself most of the rest of the way himself."

The other man was something else. He weighed around 200 pounds and Mr. Andrews just wasn't strong enough to hoist him up. Nor could he have held onto anything. Mr. Andrews grabbed hold of the ladder and hung on while the others hauled them in.

He was pretty cut on the hands and stomach, he said, because the ice kept breaking and digging into him. His hands froze to the ladder but he was only in the water about five minutes as compared with the 15 to 20 minutes for the Sheppards, he said.

The two Sheppard men were whisked to the hospital by ambulance as soon as they got them safely out of the water but Mr. Andrews just went



Denny Andrews, 18, will receive the Star of Courage at Government House in Ottawa later this month for rescuing two brothers from the icy waters of Notre Dame Bay on Dec. 28, 1977. Mr. Andrews and Lorne and Roland Sheppard are all natives of Point Leamington, Newfoundland. (Herald photo)

home. They went into shock immediately and were hospitalized for a couple of days. Mr. Andrews' mother had his cure in the shape of a hot whiskey drink poured into him as soon as he arrived home but it took him 45 minutes to stop shivering, he said.

Mr. Andrews arrived in Acton Jan. 2 last year and worked for Beardmore for about three months before he went to Standard Products in Georgetown. He came to town looking for a job because he'd finished

high school and done a year of accounting in a vocational school. He couldn't find anything in his field so he has settled for work as a labourer. Mr. Andrews isn't thrilled with Ontario and will be leaving again by fall if he can get accepted at St. John's College of Trades and Technology in the two year forestry course. He wants to go home and feels

"Personally I can't stand this place," he says. "It isn't the people. They're nice enough and I have quite a few friends here but it isn't home. All my family are there and I just like it better."

Mr. Andrews has several relatives in Acton and is boarding with a family friend. His family in Point Leamington consists of his parents a younger brother, two younger sisters, and an older sister. His father, George, is a carpenter. Point Leamington is basically a logging community, he said.



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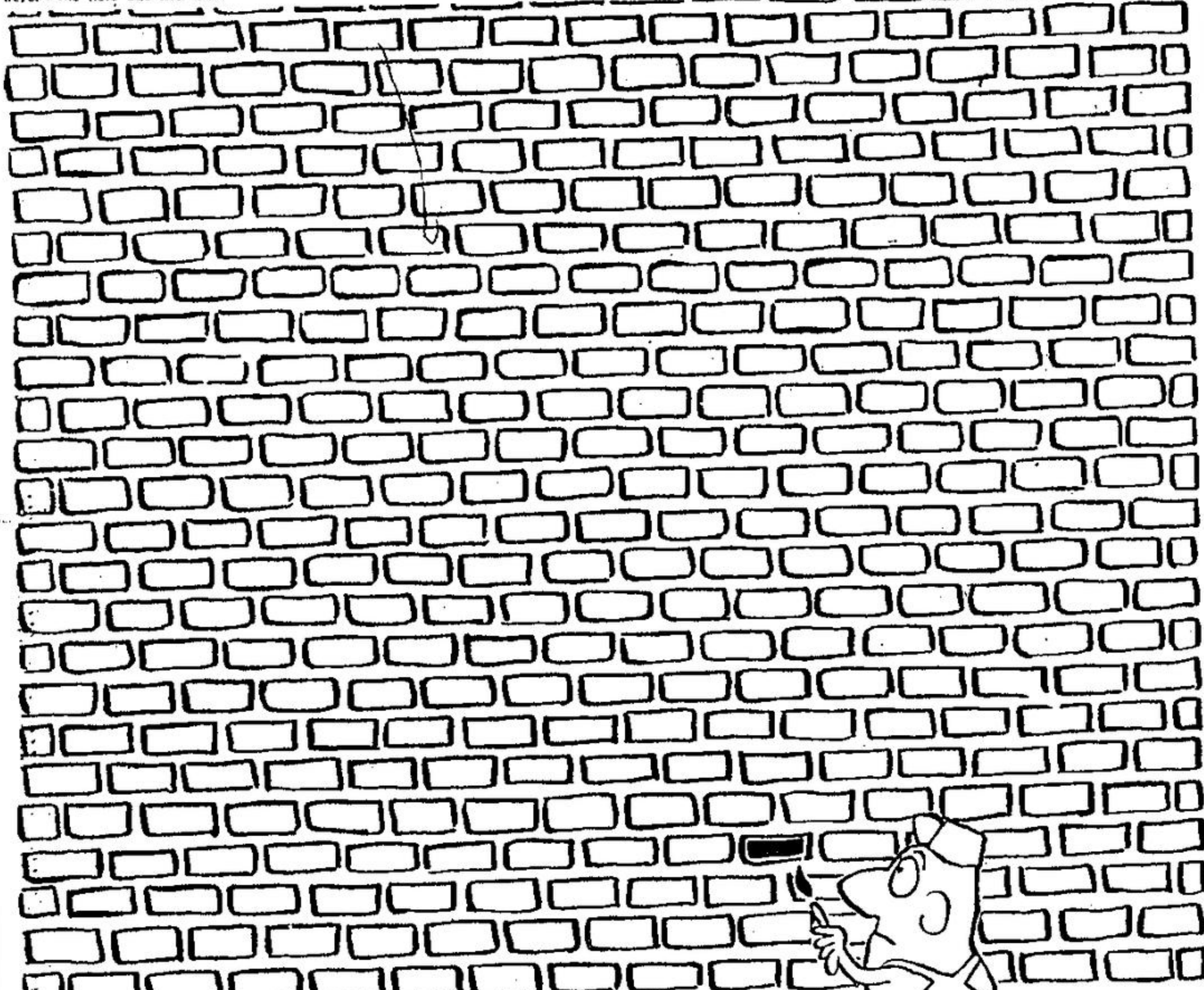
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