

Survival Map skills 101 — more important than a compass

It goes without saying that while navigating through the wilds it is best to be equipped with both a map and a compass. But what if you had to make the choice between the two?

What if the bush plane you were flying in just crashed smack-dab in the middle of nowhere. You have only seconds to exit the burning plane before it explodes and you only have time to either grab a detailed topographic map or a compass. Which one would you choose?

I'm constantly surprised to learn how many people grab the compass. Sure, with a compass you can discover which way is north, but where does that leave you? What if, unknown to you without the aid of a map, a wilderness resort is only two kilometres south. You decide to travel north, however, not realizing that 100 kilometres of bush lies ahead.

You can find north without the aid of a compass, but there's no Boy Scout trick to replace a good topo.

Topographic maps places the lay of the area right in your lap. Trekking with a detailed back country blueprint is like driving across country with a detailed road map. You can travel from point A to point B along the highway by looking out for roadside cafes and small hamlets. Travelling in the back country you can do the same by spotting river mouths, islands and rock outcrops.

A good topo map can be judged on its scale (the smaller the scale the less detail can be shown), age, the size of the area it covers, types of symbols shown (it's good to know if a swamp blocks the trail or a falls is ahead on the river), and its contour interval.

The wavy brown lines on the map are the contour lines. They mark the position of land above sea level. Every fifth contour line, called the index contour, has the elevation marked somewhere along its length. If the distance between the lines are far apart then the landscape is relatively flat. If the lines are close together then you can be sure the grade is quite steep. To figure out which way a creek or river is flowing simply take a look at the con-

NATURE'S WAY

Kevin Callan

tours. The closed ends of the contour line point upstream.

After you have taught yourself how to read your map, it's time to prepare it for your trip. First, you must make the map waterproof. In the past I have tried large zip-lock plastic bags or cheap holders with built-in zippers, and it didn't take long before I trashed them. If you happen to have use of a laminator, that's great. Laminating not only completely waterproofs the map, but you can write on it. Some people prefer "Thompson's Water Seal," available in both aerosol can or tins from the neighborhood hardware store, but the maps are only water-repellent. Personally, I like my "Granite Gear" map case (made in the U.S.A.). It cost me \$20 and is equipped with a velcro flap and shock cords on each side for easy attachment to either your pack or the canoe thwart.

It's a good idea to trim away the section of map you do not need. When I purchased the entire map collection for the Missinaibi River, starting from the town of Missinaibi all the way to Moosonee (426 kilometres), there was no way I could have packed all 18 maps in their entirety. So I snipped off everything except the river itself, leaving me with a small bundle of detailed topos.

In Canada you can order topographic maps from Canada Map Office, 615 Booth Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0E9, telephone (613) 952-7000, fax. (613) 957-8861.

It may be best to first order the updated Index Map, and once you have located the area you wish then order by grid number, e.g. Map Number 31 G/5.

The Canada Map Office recommends that you purchase your map requirements from the authorized topographical map dealer in your area. Many dealers advertise in the "Yellow Pages" under Maps. Lists of authorized map dealers for each province may be obtained from the Canada Map Office.



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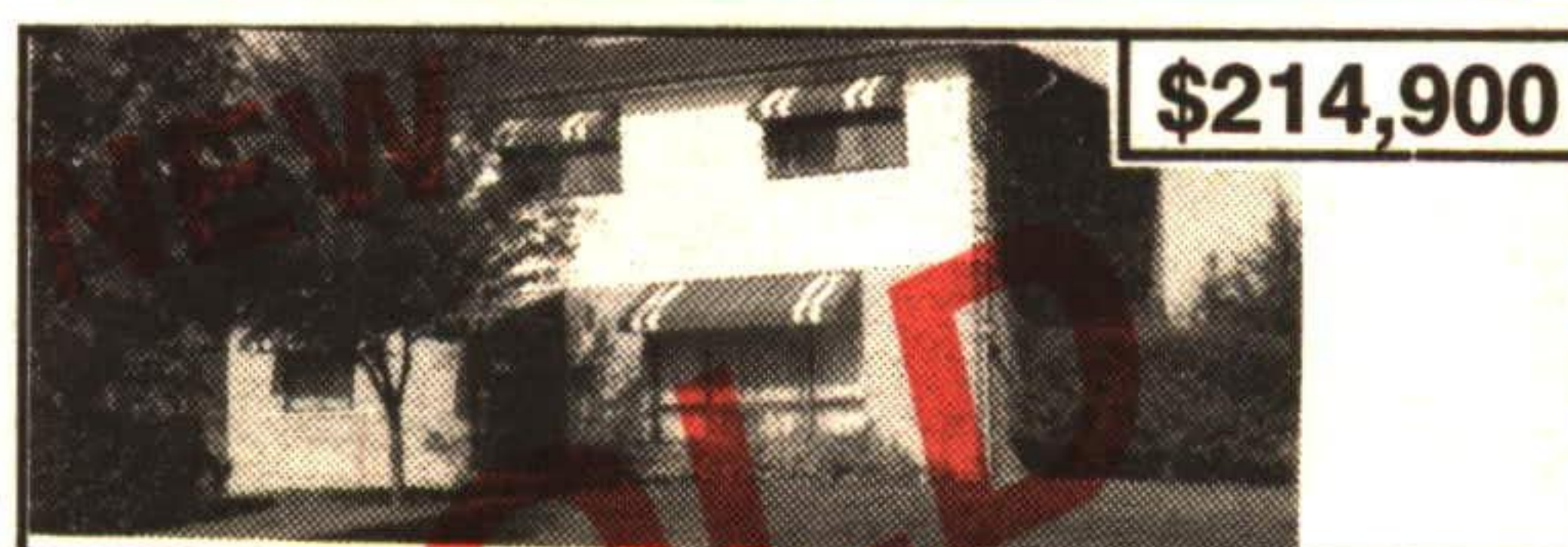
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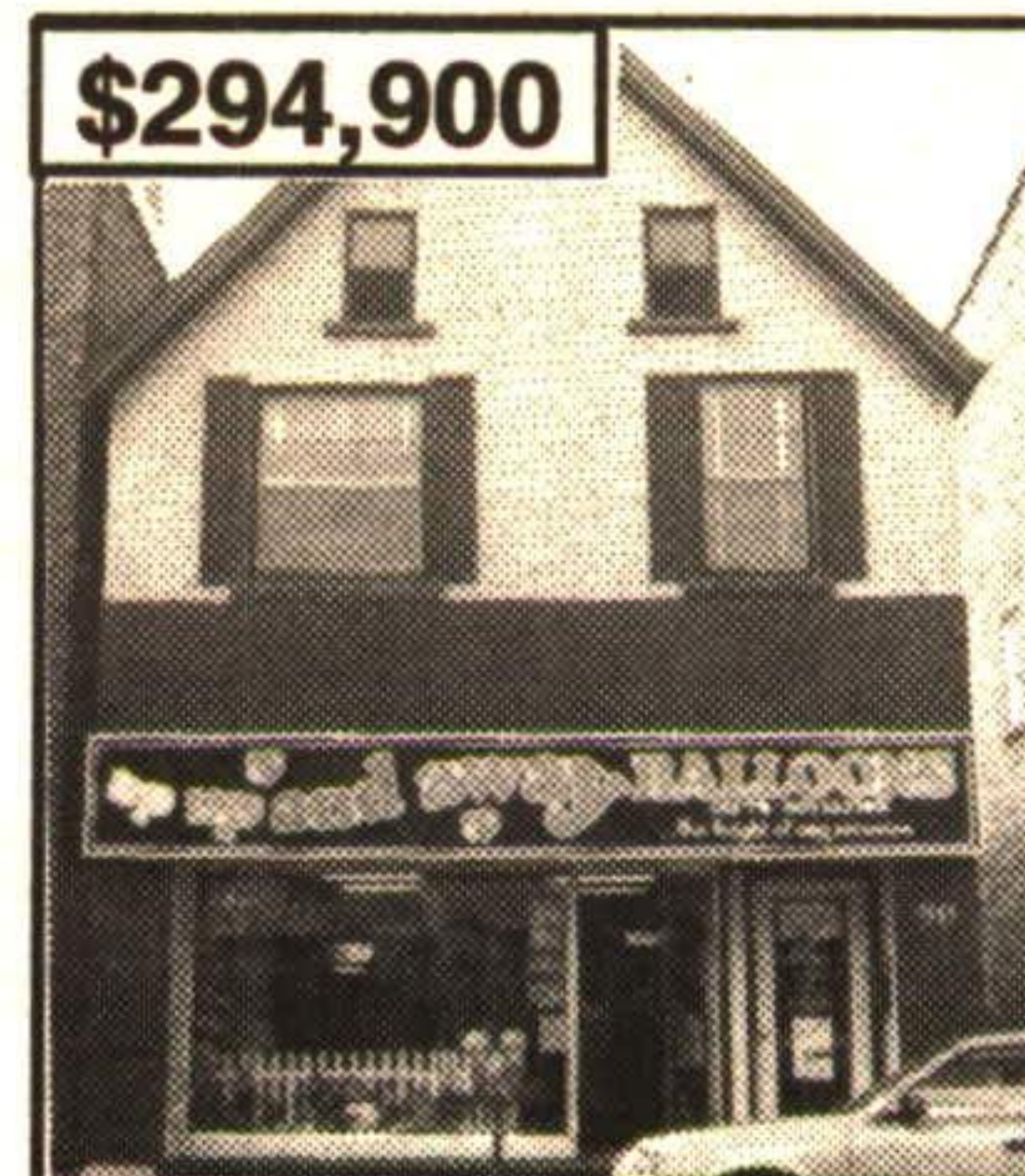
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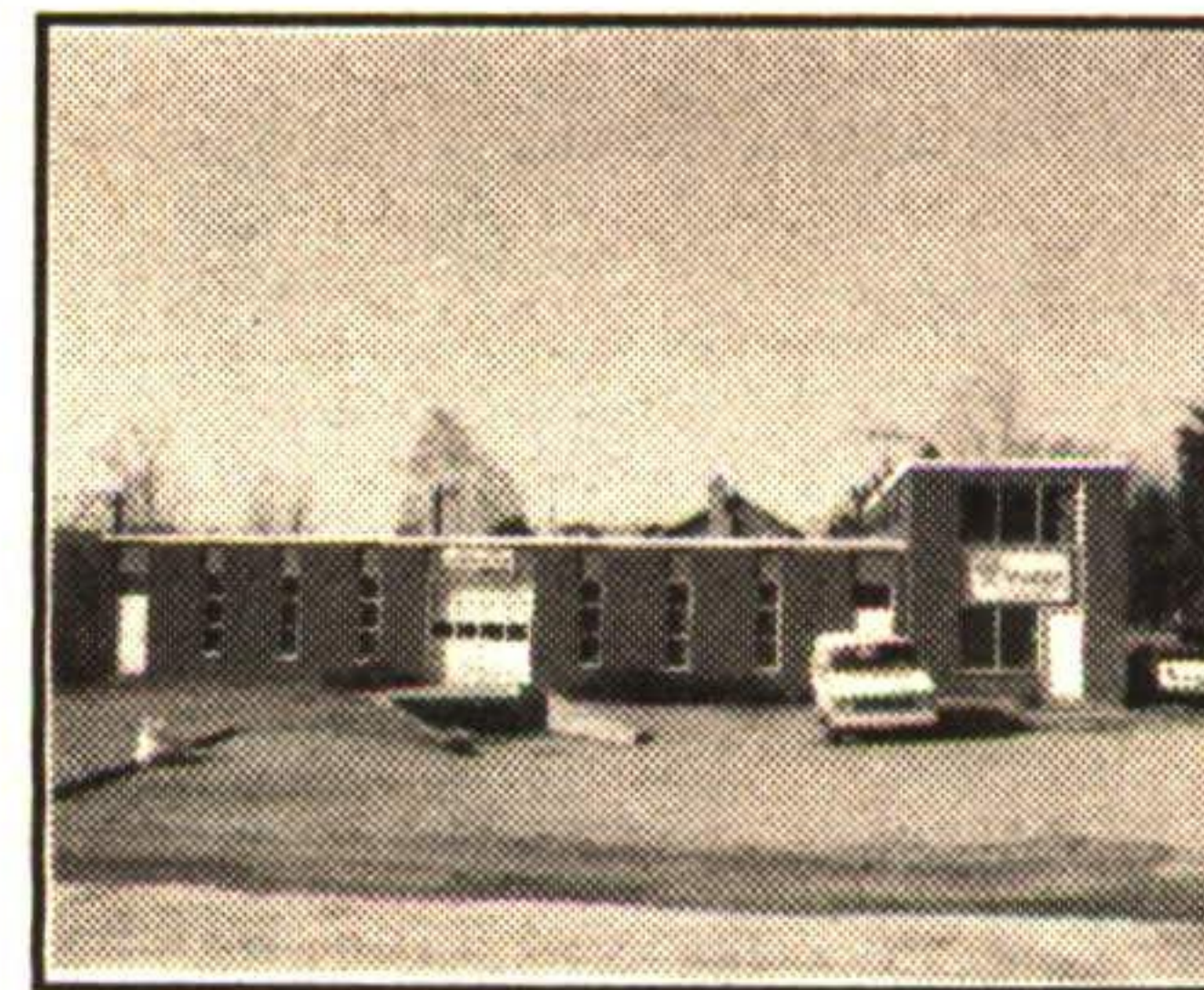
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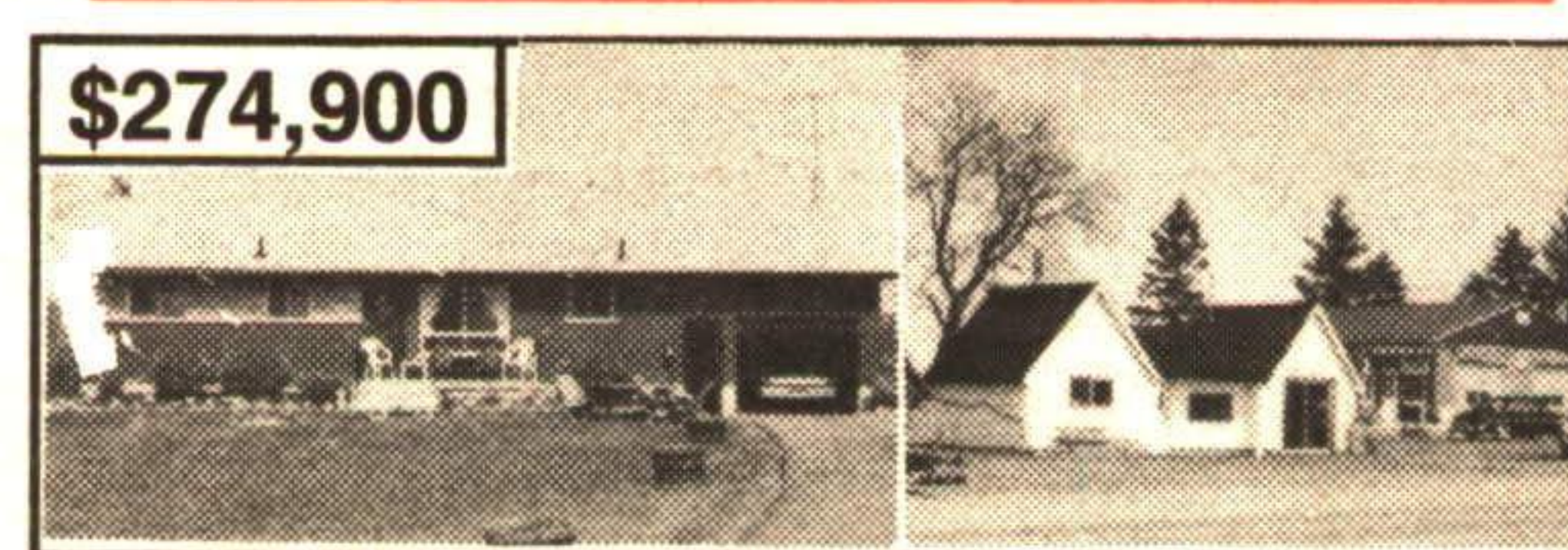
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STATELY MAPLE



and Spruce trees dominate the landscape of this quality built home on quiet street in town. Large living room with bow window. Huge rec room with wood burning stove. Bright eat-in kitchen. Hardwood floors throughout. Super clean and waiting for you! \$182,000. RM209-92

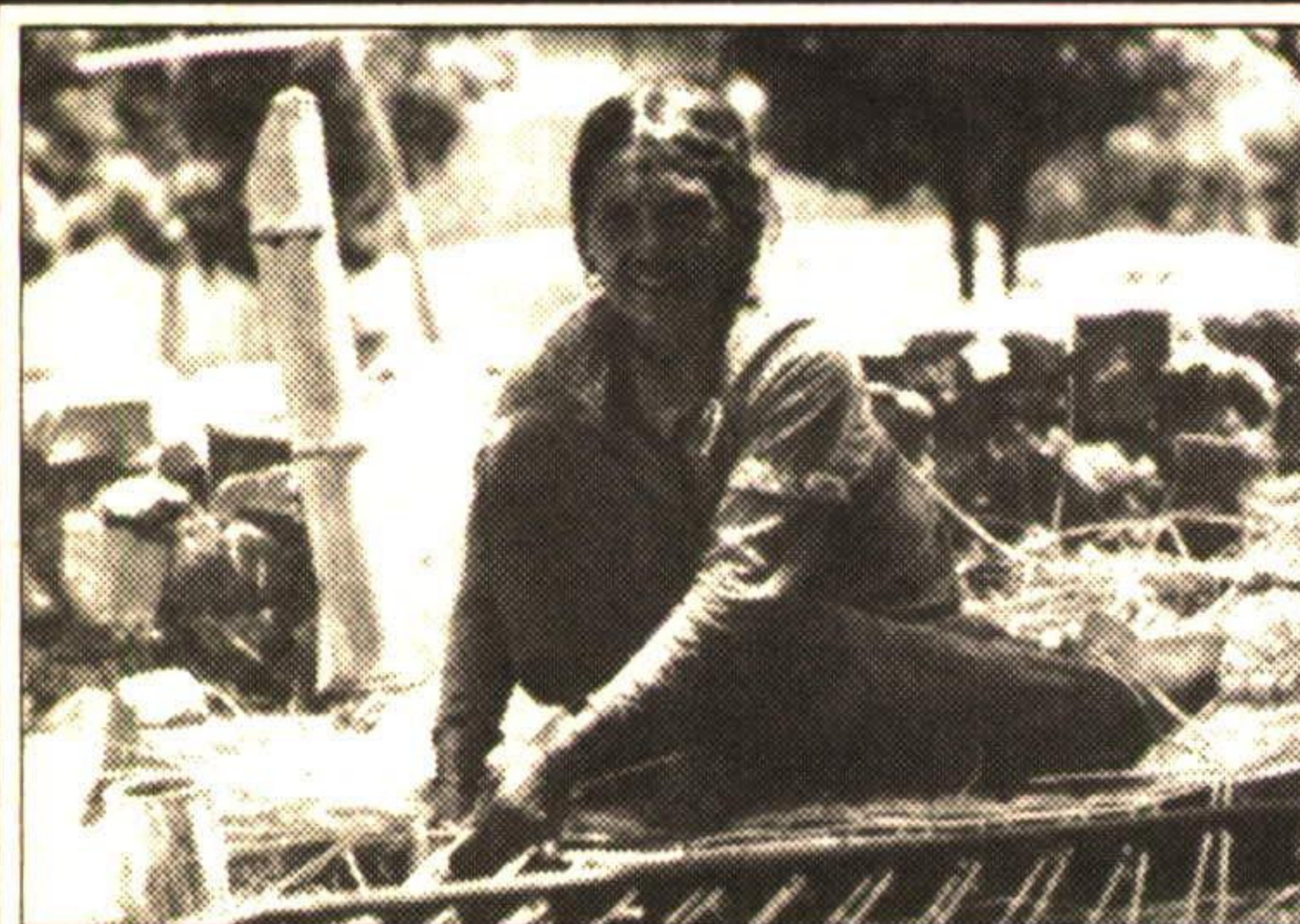
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