

# Korean teaching experience has local man wanting to go back

BY JANET DUVAL  
Special

**D**oug Thompson of Georgetown was a novelty to citizens of Taegu, the Korean city where he taught conversational English for the past year.

"We were the first foreigners they've seen except in movies. Now I know what it's like to be a rock star."

An University of Ottawa arts graduate, who couldn't beat the intense competition for a place

in teachers college here, Thompson landed work at a private academy, catering to children ages 8 to 18. After a full day at their regular school, pupils arrived at the "hagwan" for evening classes in English between 4:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., depending on their age group.

"They were a joy to teach," he reports. "And they're brilliant. Middle school calculus there would equal our OAC level." Parents of the children ranged from embassy workers and Forbes 500 executives to taxi drivers, some of whom would "sell everything" to finance their

children's future.

While misbehavior wasn't usually a problem, unruly children would hold out their hands for a whacking, or kneel on the floor awaiting discipline. "We felt uncomfortable with that, so they got away with murder." The school's teaching style would



D. THOMPSON

have been appropriate in the 1940s or 1950s he says.

Mornings, Thompson studied martial arts, practised much more aggressively in Korea than in Canada. Every Korean male is physically fit and has a black belt. Without one, you don't get out of the army after your two-year conscription period. He also found time for travel to Thailand and the demilitarized zone between north and south Korea, and performed in a band from time to time.

His Korean employers were wonderful, Thompson reports. "I never experienced such

kindness. They called me to see how I was getting along, taught me to cook Korean, and sent food and someone to diagnose me when I was ill."

Was leaving Canada worth it? Definitely. "I really enjoyed the experience, and I paid off all my student loans. Next year, I've been offered a job at a university there, with more money and vacation time. It's an opportunity to experience a culture that is thousands of years old, and a country that is fast becoming a major economic player. I see them exceeding Japan in 10 years."

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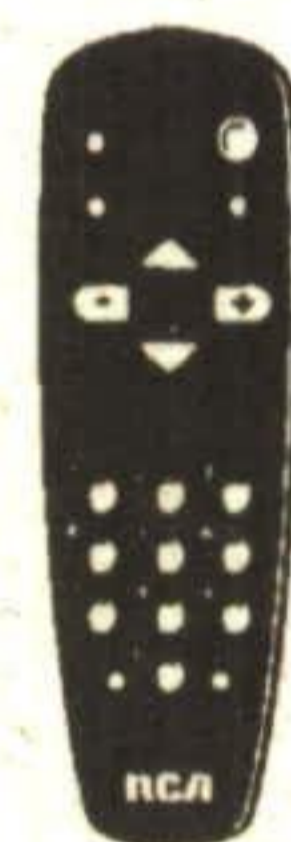
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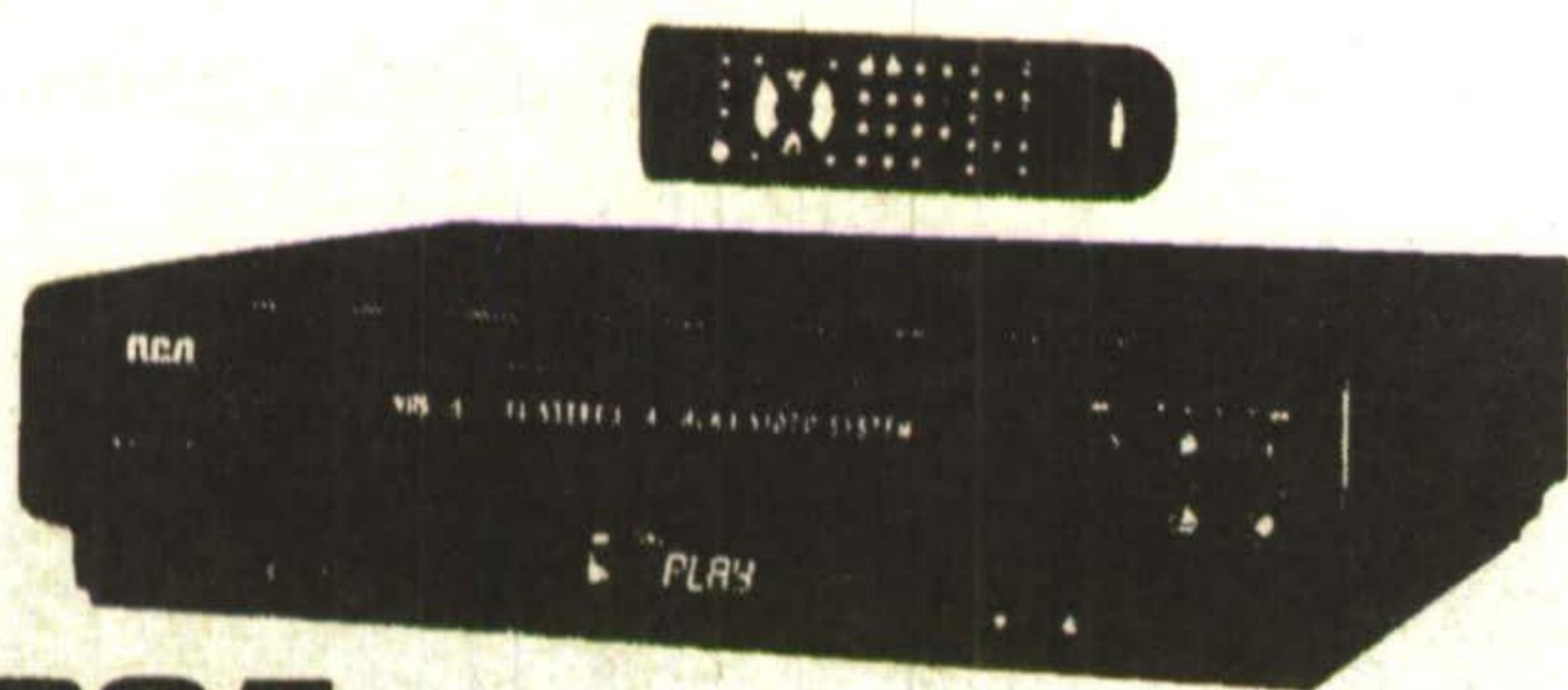


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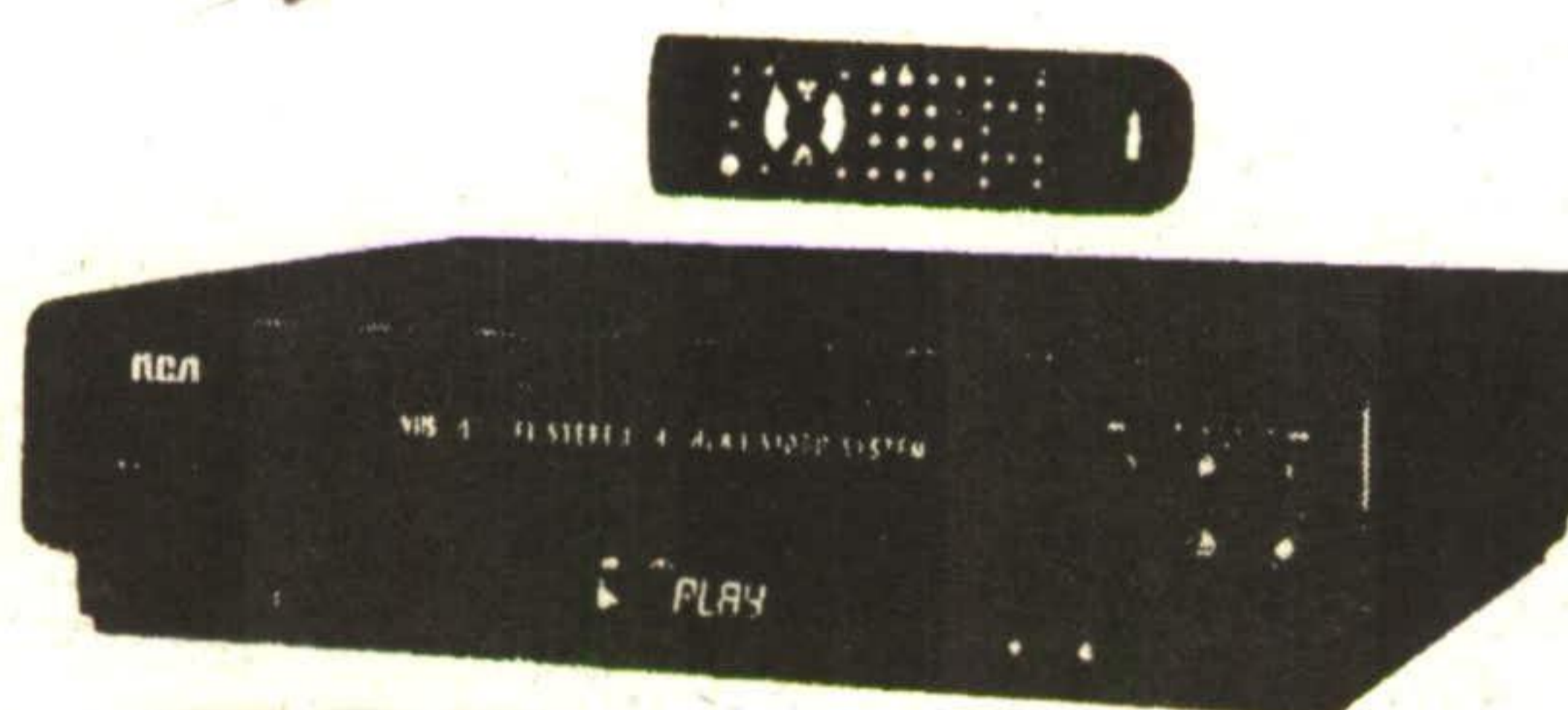


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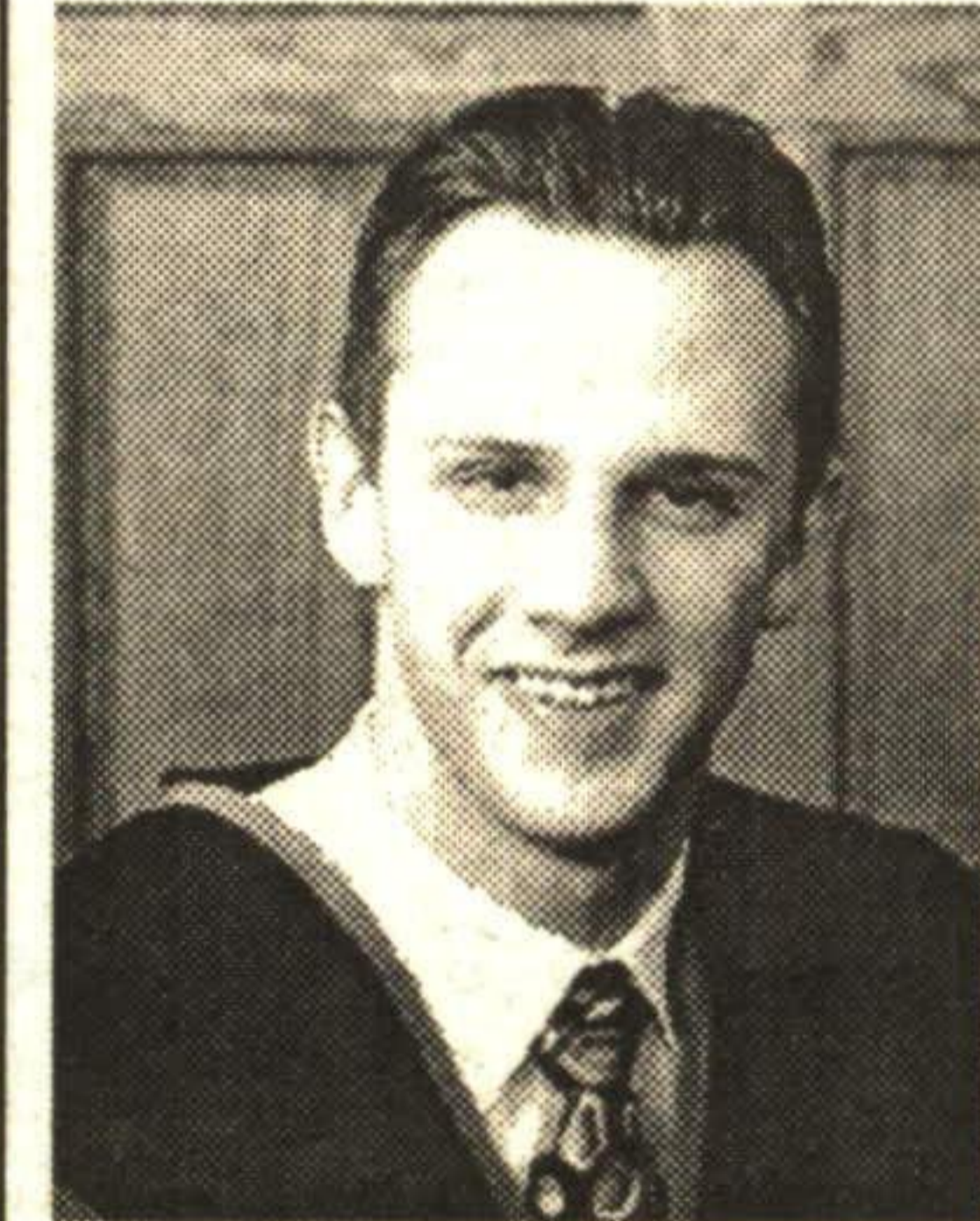
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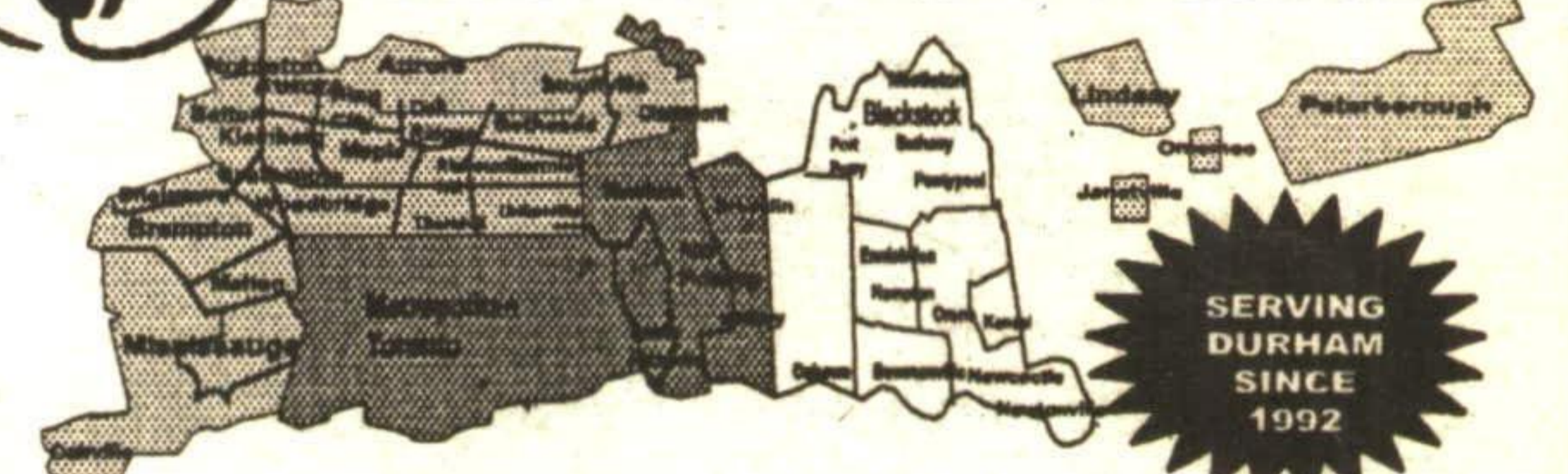
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