

# Resignation speech critical of electorate, councillors

Since ex-Reeve Leverne Harris's resignation back on Nov. 21, a number of readers have asked that we reprint the text of the one-term reeve's resignation speech.

Now that Rick Hughes has completed the transition from deputy reeve to the Township's top job, we thought it would be appropriate to publish the speech - before closing the book on the stormy political career of Leverne Harris.

The speech was a lengthy one - so long, in fact, that we must reduce the type size and run it over two editions of *The Miller*. We plan to print 'Part 2' next week.

"To the Council and People of Eramosa,

"Serving as a member of a Municipal Council is, I believe, the most effective and fulfilling way to become involved in local government and to participate in the making of the many decisions which affect our daily lives. In the past, people stood for office in Eramosa because they wanted to make their contribution to the community and because they believed they could assist with, or perhaps improve upon, the decisions made by a previous Council. The electorate made their selection on the basis of their perception of each candidate's abilities, and with due consideration for those principles and positions which a candidate represented. For example, in the 1991 election each candidate put themselves forward having independently formed their opinions as to the issues before nominations. Each offered alternatives and solutions to the community's dissatisfaction with the track record, policies and resolutions enacted by the incumbents. This *did not* happen in Eramosa during the election of 1994. What went wrong?

"In my opinion the electorate did not take objective account of the track record of the incumbents. The ability of Council to deal with and improve administrative overhead and to make

the system accountable was not considered. Council's achievements in setting budgets with zero tax increases, while increasing reserves and concomitantly providing capital improvements to all departments within the Township, seems to have been of no account. Neither does its ability to digest and assimilate technical detail and to deliver well reasoned and measured decisions on the most difficult of issues appear to have influenced many of those who participated in the election and cast their votes. Countless hours were spent in deliberation with developers and their agents and with all levels of government so that the costs of development would not fall on the shoulders of current residents. These efforts were made so that all members of the community might benefit.

"It seems that these achievements have been forgotten. It concerns me deeply that in forgetting, in reducing my vote to an insignificant margin and in voting Deputy Reeve Ken Mercer out of office, the electorate has allowed a dissatisfied and disaffected but very vocal minority, whose principal tools have been innuendo and misinformation, to deprive the Township of much needed leadership skills and technical abilities. There is no doubt in my mind

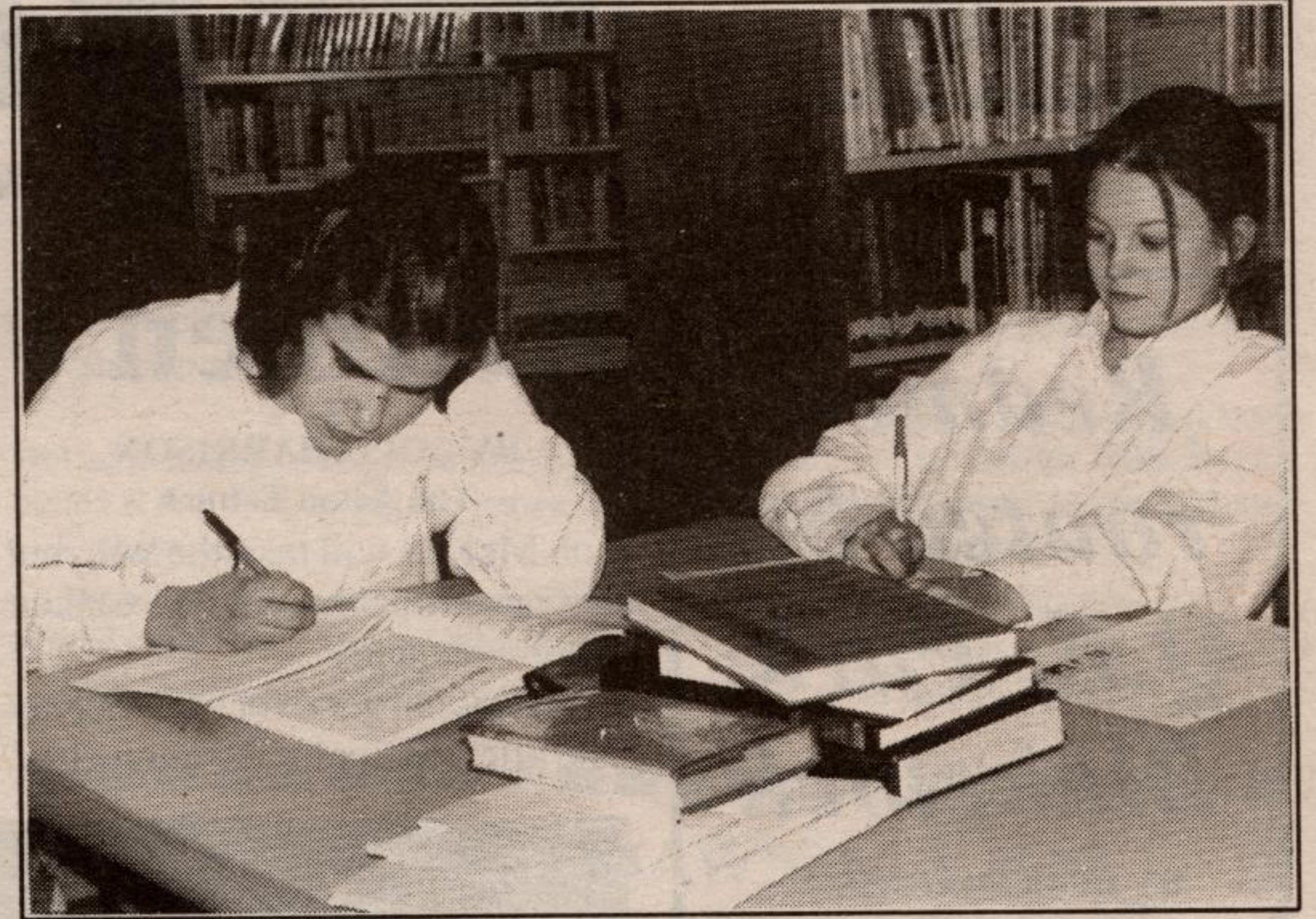
that the concentrated activities of the members of these minority constituencies have clouded peoples' minds and have created the perception of problems where none existed, and thereby have influenced the outcome of this election. Their actions have included slander and the promulgation of deliberately misleading and deceitful comment. I am profoundly saddened that members of this community would stoop to such practices to promote personal agendas and to respond to perceived grievances. In a democracy all constituents have a voice. They also have a responsibility to use that voice responsibly.

"It has been an honour and also a privilege to serve on Council with Ken Mercer, a man for whose abilities and integrity I have the highest respect. Ken and I have carried equally the greatest burden in undertaking detailed assessment of the many, often highly technical, issues placed before Council and in framing Council's policies and responses. I am aware that some members of the community have been unhappy at times with our style and that we have been seen as dictatorial and controlling. Lest anyone should misunderstand, however, it must be clearly stated that not all members of Council

were either capable or prepared to put in the necessary and appropriate effort to attend to technical detail and respond in a timely manner to issues at hand. Without the benefit of a full

appreciation of the facts, the electorate has chosen to return one of these councillors to higher office."

(We will print the conclusion of the resignation letter next week.)



**DEDICATED STUDENTS!** We caught St. James high school students Sabrina Hornick, left, and Lori Hewitt, working hard after school recently on independent environmental projects at the Eramosa Community Library. (Doug Harrison photo)

## 'Hear, see and speak' in 1995

### ROCK-A-LONG NEWS

The January meeting of the Rock-a-long Women's Institute was held at the home of Mrs. Margaret Dyer, with six members and two visitors present.

President Myrtle Mitchell wished everyone a Happy New Year and read a poem, *Our Life is a Book*. Faith was the theme of meditations by Joan Ramsey.

Mrs. Ann Parkinson, south Wellington president, and Mrs. Jean Hume, assistant secretary of the district, were guests and brought greeting to our Branch.

Thank you notes for Christmas cheer were read.

Communication is the program theme of the Federated Women's Institute of Ontario for 1995. Communication is not a one-way street: you must hear, see and speak.

Roll call was to name a career field open to women today.

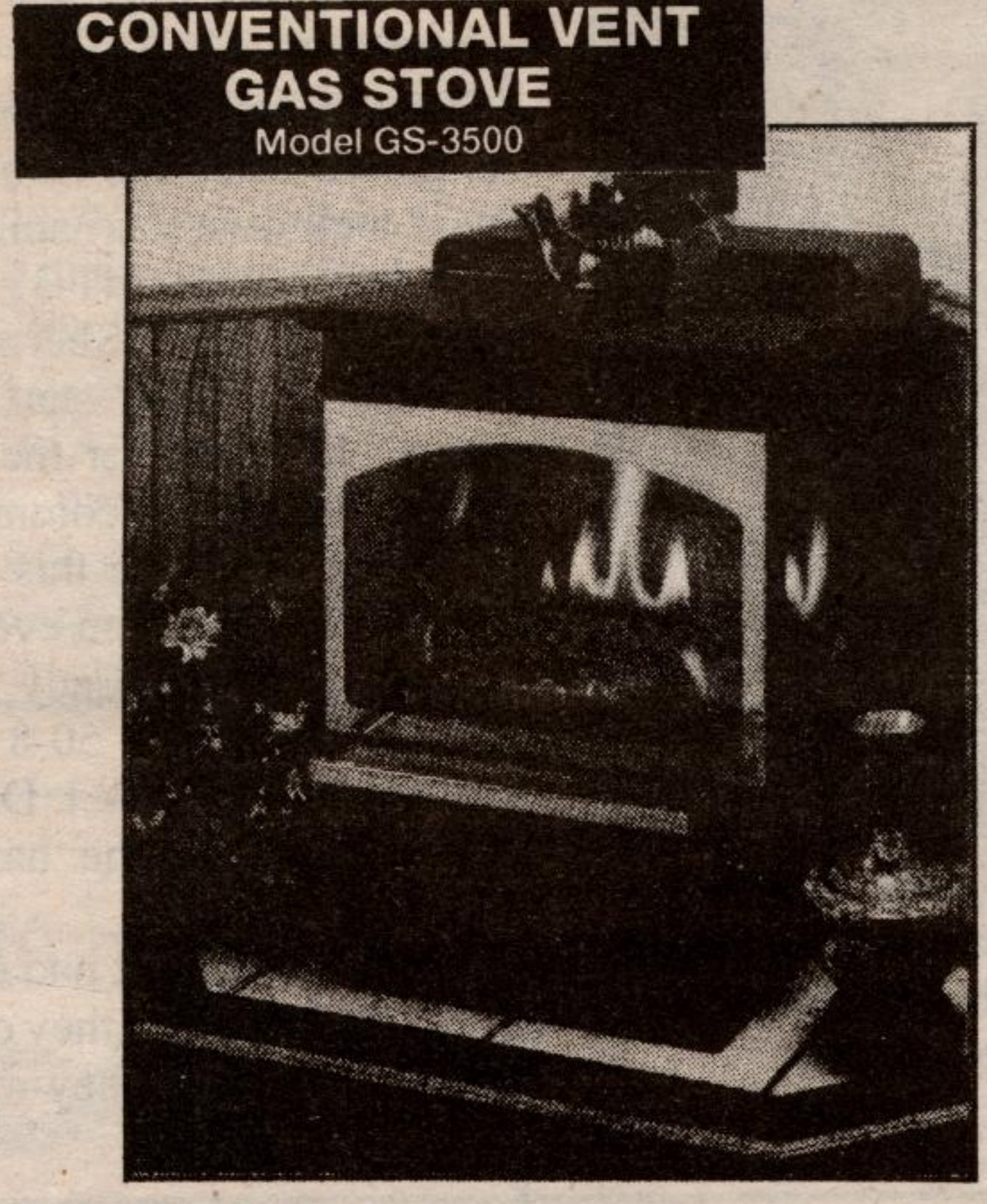
Agnes Dunbar was in charge of the program and she read the history of the Victorian Order of Nurses. In '94 the VON celebrated 75 years of service to our area.

The hostess and Agnes Dunbar served lunch and a social time was enjoyed.

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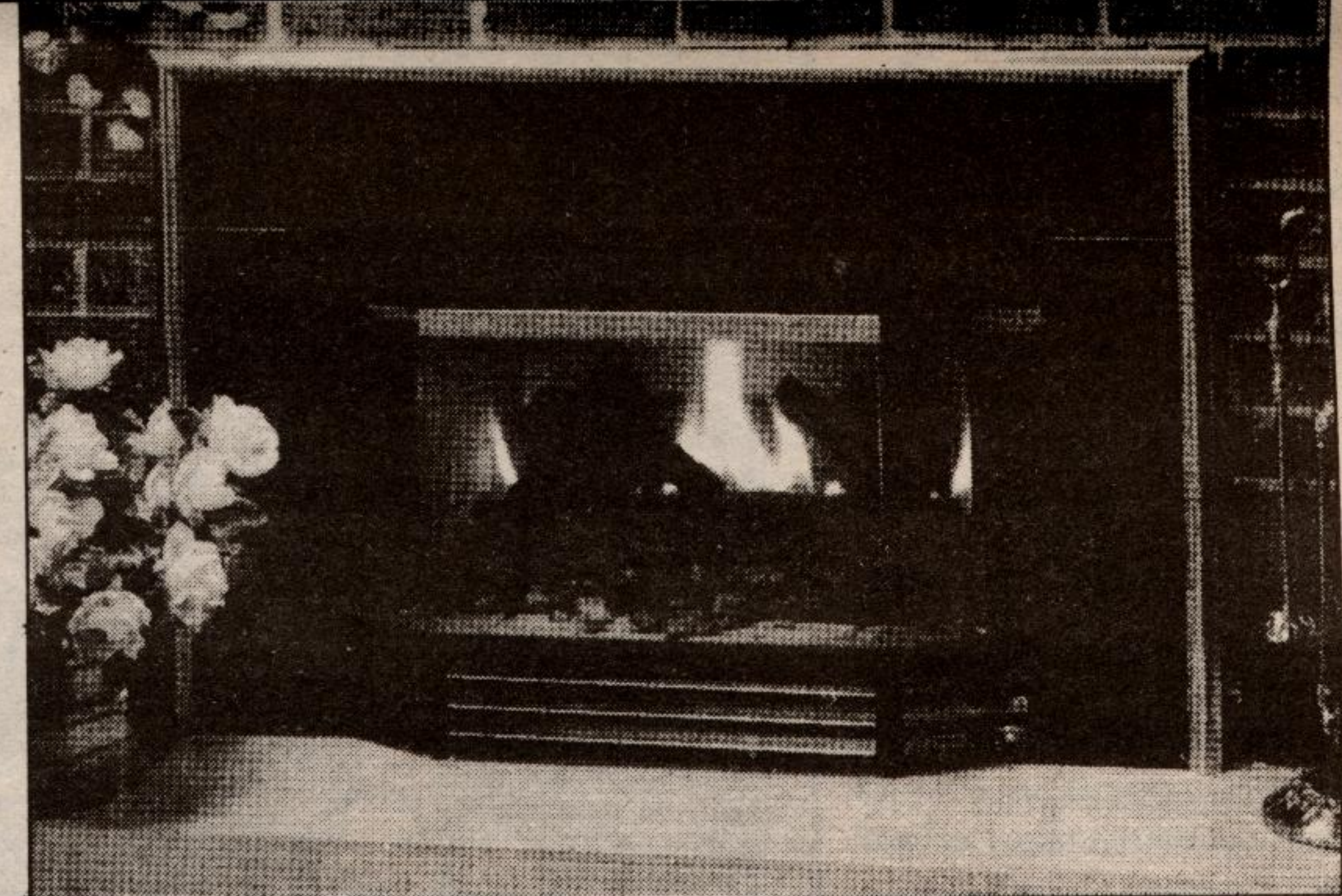
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