

Acton teen crusades for helmets after accident

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

If telling the story helps just one child, Acton's Fran vanHelvoort is willing to relive her worst nightmare — the traffic accident her son Jeff, 12, broken and bruised.

"If we can make one child put on their helmet — Jeff is so fortunate that he doesn't have a head injury — if we can make a difference with one child, that's what I'd like to come from this," Fran vanHelvoort said recently.

The family's nightmare began June 9 at 8:20 p.m., as Jeff and a friend rode their bikes northbound on Dublin Line, heading home from a friend's house.

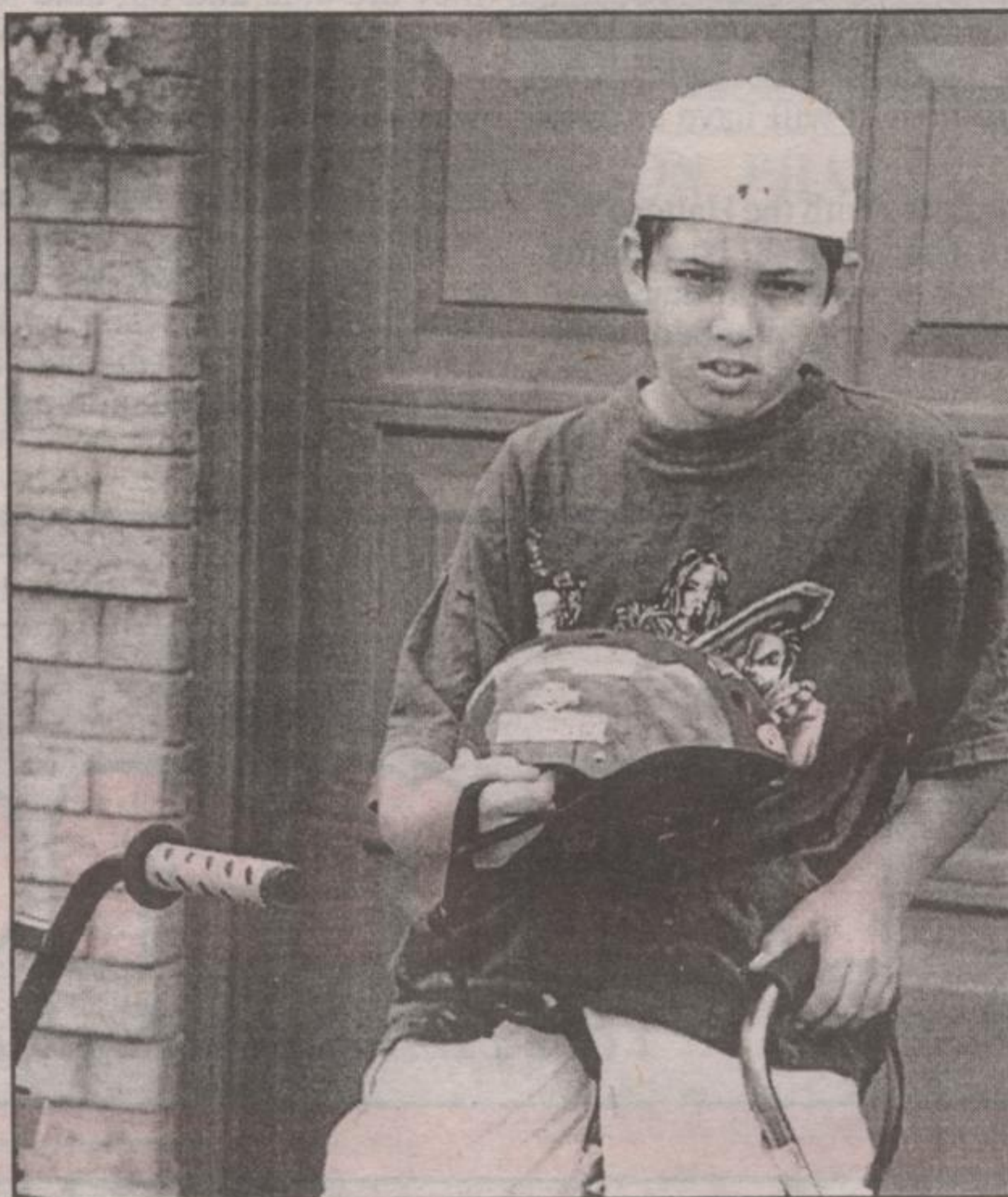
The police report says Jeff slowed, but did not stop, at the stop sign at 25 Side Road — Jeff says he stopped at the

sign, didn't see the truck and started to cross.

A westbound Ford pickup truck, driven by an Acton man, hit the rear of Jeff's bike and he was thrown 30-feet, landing in the ditch on soft grass, saving him from more serious injuries. No charges were laid against the driver who told police he attempted to avoid the cyclist by swerving out of the way. The accident had occurred before Jeff's friend, riding behind him, got to the intersection.

Jeff's helmet, which was not done up tightly enough because it's not a "cool" look, flew off his head mid-air.

His right leg was broken in two places, and a year from now the metal plates holding the bones together will be removed. A metal post repairing his broken pelvis has been removed. Although Jeff



Jeff VanHelvoort

still needs a wheelchair for long distances, he graduated to a cane last week and has started physiotherapy in a

positive mood.

Anyone under-18 must wear a helmet while riding a bicycle and Fran vanHelvoort

said she shudders when she sees kids not wearing them, or wearing them with the chinstrap undone and admits to "harassing" one of her older son's friends until he bought a helmet.

"I don't understand that. The older boys have been around Jeff the whole time, watching what he's gone through. You'd think it would click," vanHelvoort said.

Jeff, who readily admits to not wearing a helmet before the accident, said he also can't understand how one of

his friends still rides without one.

"The day before (the accident) my mom had actually told me to put on a helmet... and I did," Jeff said, adding he didn't tighten the strap because it's uncomfortable.

Fran vanHelvoort said it's probably the toughest lesson Jeff will learn.

"He's probably been through more in the last three months than an adult will ever experience. He's really realized how lucky he is and how fortunate he's been."

POLICE BEAT

Impaired

A 24-year-old Wingham man was charged with impaired driving and having over 80 milligrams of alcohol in 100 millilitres of blood after being stopped on Friday at 11:11 p.m. on 25 Side Road and Town Line Road east. The man, driving a 1987 Dodge van, was charged after a routine traffic stop.

Attempted entry

No damage estimate is available, but a door, window frame and window were damaged at 3:44 Saturday morning when someone attempted to break in to the Red Dog Café. AA west window was smashed with an unknown object and an attempt was made to pry open a door before the suspects were scared off by an alarm.

Blue Springs hit, again

The Blue Springs Golf Club continues to be a target

for Break and Enters. A "large" unknown quantity of clothing, cigars, money and a cash register tray were stolen during a break-in at the Dublin Line facility's pro shop at 1:03 a.m. Monday morning.

Willful damage

A hood ornament and mud deflector were ripped off the hood of a 1979 Chev Wrangler pickup truck parked at a Main Street South residence between 1:30 and 6:30 a.m. on Saturday. Damage is \$50.

Dumpster fire

Acton firefighters quickly extinguished a mattress found smouldering in a dumpster at 130 Church Street at 3:42 last Tuesday afternoon.

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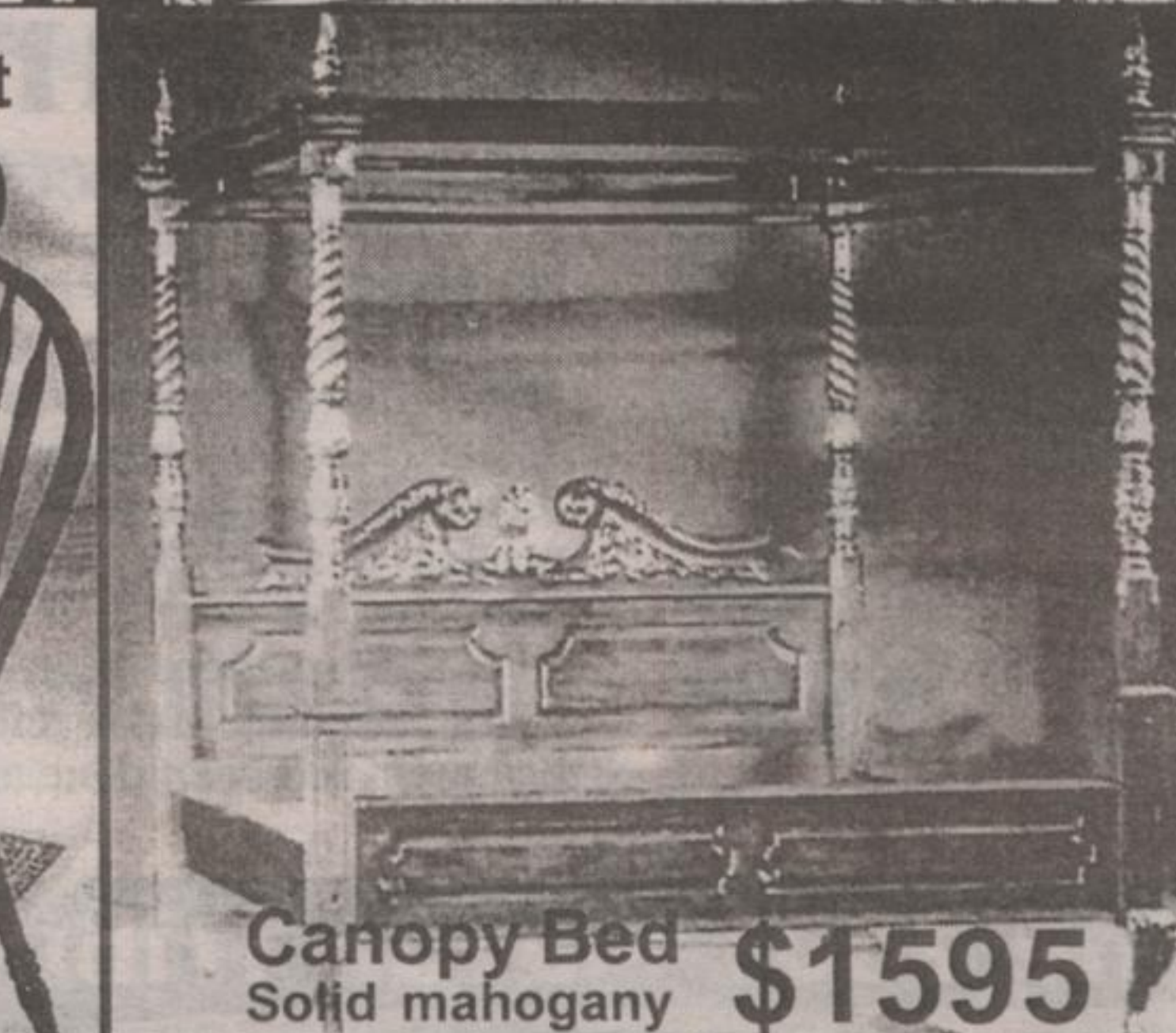


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