

Houle sharp

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However, those punches were landed with the attacker's back turned to the judges so points could not be awarded.

"Computer scoring has to be done by at least three of the five judges within a second of the punch," Houle noted. Houle's opponent also pressed home the fight with body punches when his opponent was along the ropes. That's not allowed. "Those body shots he got in during the last round when I was along the ropes weren't legal either," Houle noted.

Houle delivered a handful of solid jabs in each round and completely dominated the third, during which he landed a punishing uppercut.

His fight was one of the most scientific and entertaining of the tournament, which featured several female and pre-teen boxers.

Each bout lasts only about eight minutes, but according to Houle this is more than enough time to physically drain participants.

"One round of boxing is the equivalent of being on a two-minute breakaway in hockey. Times that by four and you get tired pretty quick," he said. "You're not throwing punches every second, but your heart is racing throughout the whole thing."

A former student at E.C. Drury High, Houle's introduction to the sport came at age 15 when his family first relocated to Edmonton.

His new high school didn't have a wrestling program. That sent him looking for another athletic outlet — which presented itself a few miles down the road at a club in St. Albert's.

While his father had boxed for many years and always had a heavy bag around the house, Houle didn't have a whole lot of expectations when he first laced up the gloves.

"I was just looking to stay in shape for wrestling. It turned out that I was a much better boxer than I ever was a wrestler," he recalled.

After months of training — including 300 sparring rounds — his debut came at the Bronze Gloves in Drayden Valley where a quick, effective jab helped him prevail.

Since then he's had 26 bouts, 18 of which were victories, including three technical knockouts. His list of accomplishments include three Alberta provincial championships as well as a gold medal performance at the 1996 Golden Gloves in Los Angeles.

Contrary to popular opinion, he said, not all boxing is brutal and animalistic.

While even the amateur level can be dangerous, a number of safeguards like mandatory headgear and shorter fights help minimize the risk.

"The referee can make all sorts of calls to protect a fighter in amateur boxing. In those big pro fights you see on pay per view the referee is just there to count to 10," remarked Houle.

"They (pro fights) can give people a negative attitude about the sport. Of course there's some danger in amateur boxing, but all I've ever had were a few black eyes."

He's currently sporting one such shiner — a small price to pay really to be hoisting another championship trophy.

"Saturday's fight has got me really motivated for future challenges. I'm a lot farther ahead than I had thought," he said.

Added coach John Melich, "Brad did exactly what we had worked on and did a great job. His stamina could use a little work, but otherwise I've got another national champion on my hands."

Team folds, gets pounded 14-1

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broad margin of defeat.

After battling Iroquois Ridge to a 1-1 draw in the opening frame, the 'Stangs folded like cheap tents and abandoned all but the faintest trace of effort.

While opposing snipers were lighting up a hapless Brett McClure, they were busy arguing among themselves and even carrying on conversations with friends in the stands.

By the time double digits were reached the home-town defencemen had gone from turnstiles to pylons.

McClure was finally put out of his misery after goal number nine, replaced by Doug Laroche.

Together the two goalies were assaulted with 52 shots, while their visiting counterpart was challenged just twice in each period.

Rogers scores

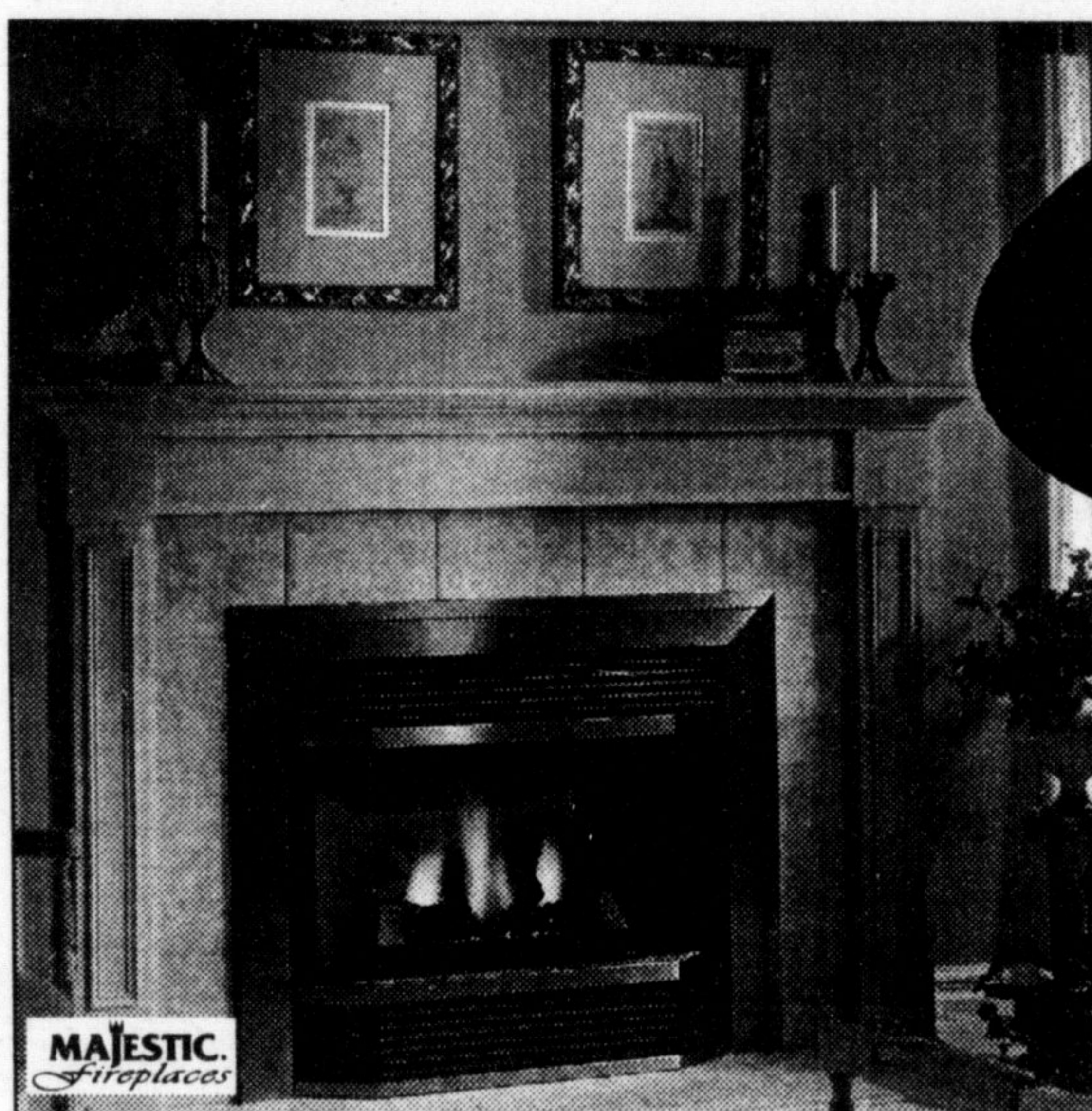
Josh Rogers was the lone marksman for MD, sinking a low wrister nine minutes into the contest. Assisting on the play was Mike Neath.

Nine different Trailblazers dented the twine. For all their scoring, creativity was in short supply. Most of their goals came on blatant defensive miscues and with a man advantage.

MD's next home game is Monday at Memorial against the Oakville Trafalgar Devils at 3:30 p.m.

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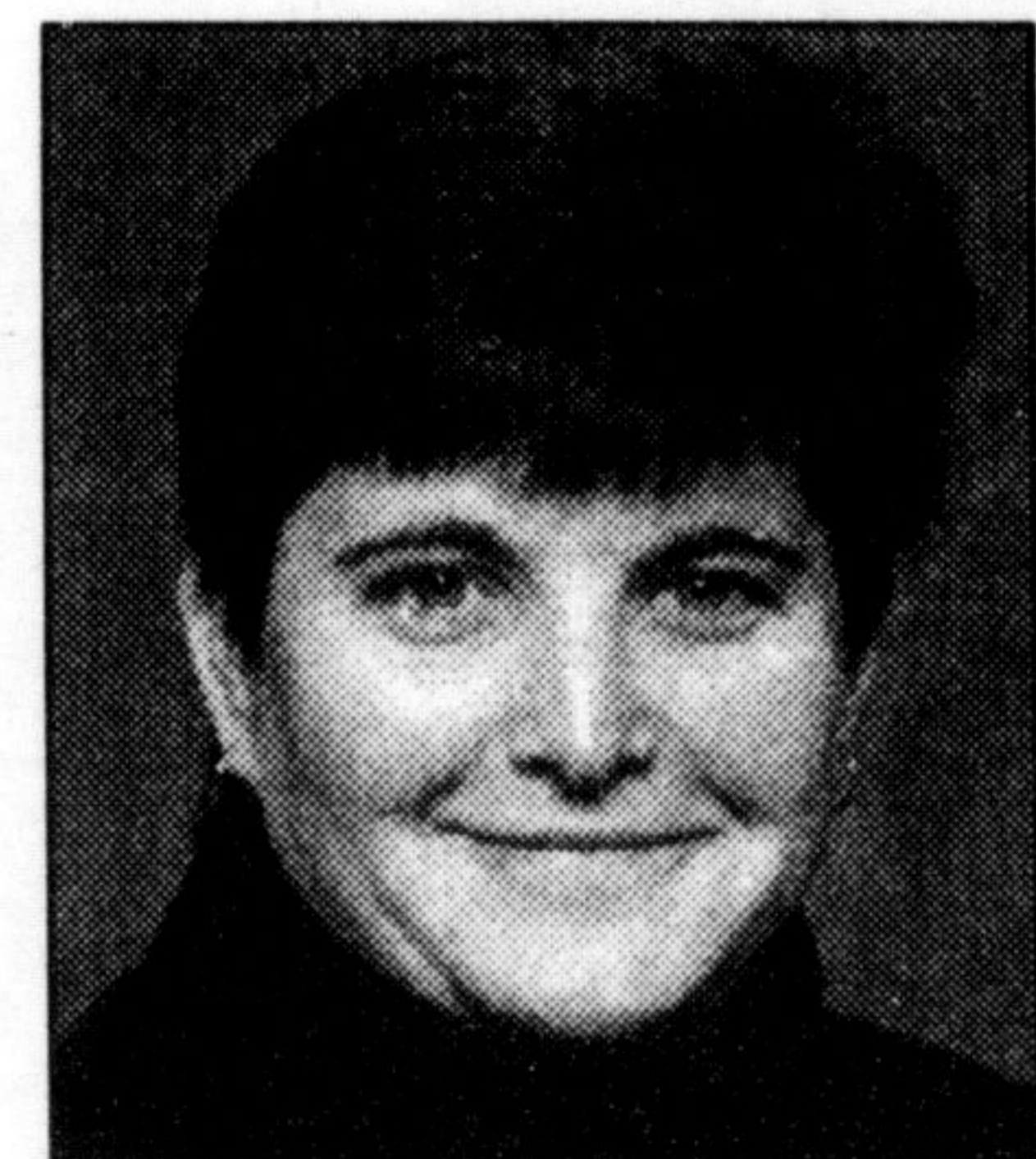


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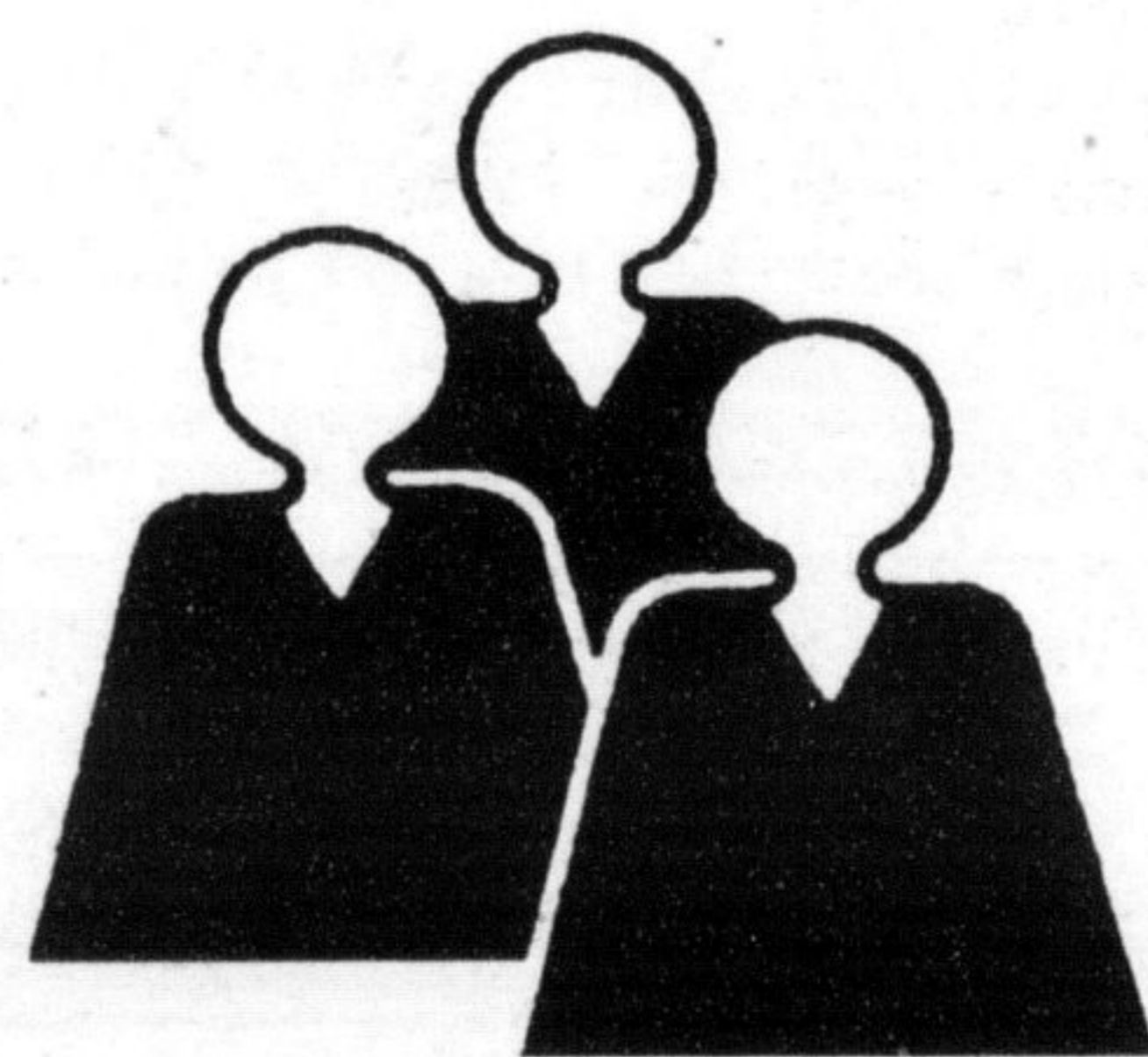
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