

Thirty-one people under quarantine for SARS

By **JASON MISNER**
The Champion

While there are still no SARS cases in Halton, 31 people were under quarantine as a precaution at press time yesterday.

Halton Medical Officer of Health Dr. Bob Nosal said the quarantined had either visited or been discharged from Scarborough Grace or York Central Hospital — where SARS is prevalent — or been in close contact with someone who has been identified with the disease.

None of the quarantined have shown SARS symptoms, Dr. Nosal said, and none have travelled from Asia.

People in quarantine — meaning they're staying at home during the 10-day incubation period for SARS exposure — are required to wear masks if more than one family member lives inside. The health department is monitoring all conditions.

So far seven people from the Toronto area have died from having contracted SARS. The latest death came Wednesday night, and four have died from SARS since Sunday.

It's a highly contagious illness with symptoms that include high fever of more than 38 C, shortness of breath, sore throat and coughing. Symptoms can show up to 10 days after close contact with an infected person.

The virus is believed to be contracted by inhal-

ing bodily fluids from the cough or sneeze of an infected person.

The risk of getting SARS is very low. But as a precaution, the Province is urging people who may have come in contact with someone who's showing SARS symptoms, or have visited high-risk areas, to quarantine themselves and to contact the local health department to have their condition monitored.

It's also stressing that people should wash their hands to further prevent possible SARS infection.

All Halton hospitals, including Milton District Hospital, are following strict directives imposed by the Ministry of Health to guard against SARS. They include restricting visitors, requir-

ing staff to wear masks and assessing individual cases to determine if elective surgeries should be postponed.

As part of new screening measures, hospitals are checking everyone who enters a hospital for SARS symptoms.

Halton regional police officers are carrying masks in case they have to visit hospitals.

And Milton firefighters are taking directives from the Office of the Fire Marshal and increasing protective measures against SARS. That includes wearing medical gowns, goggles and masks if they arrive first at the scene of an emergency.

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SARS stretching health department

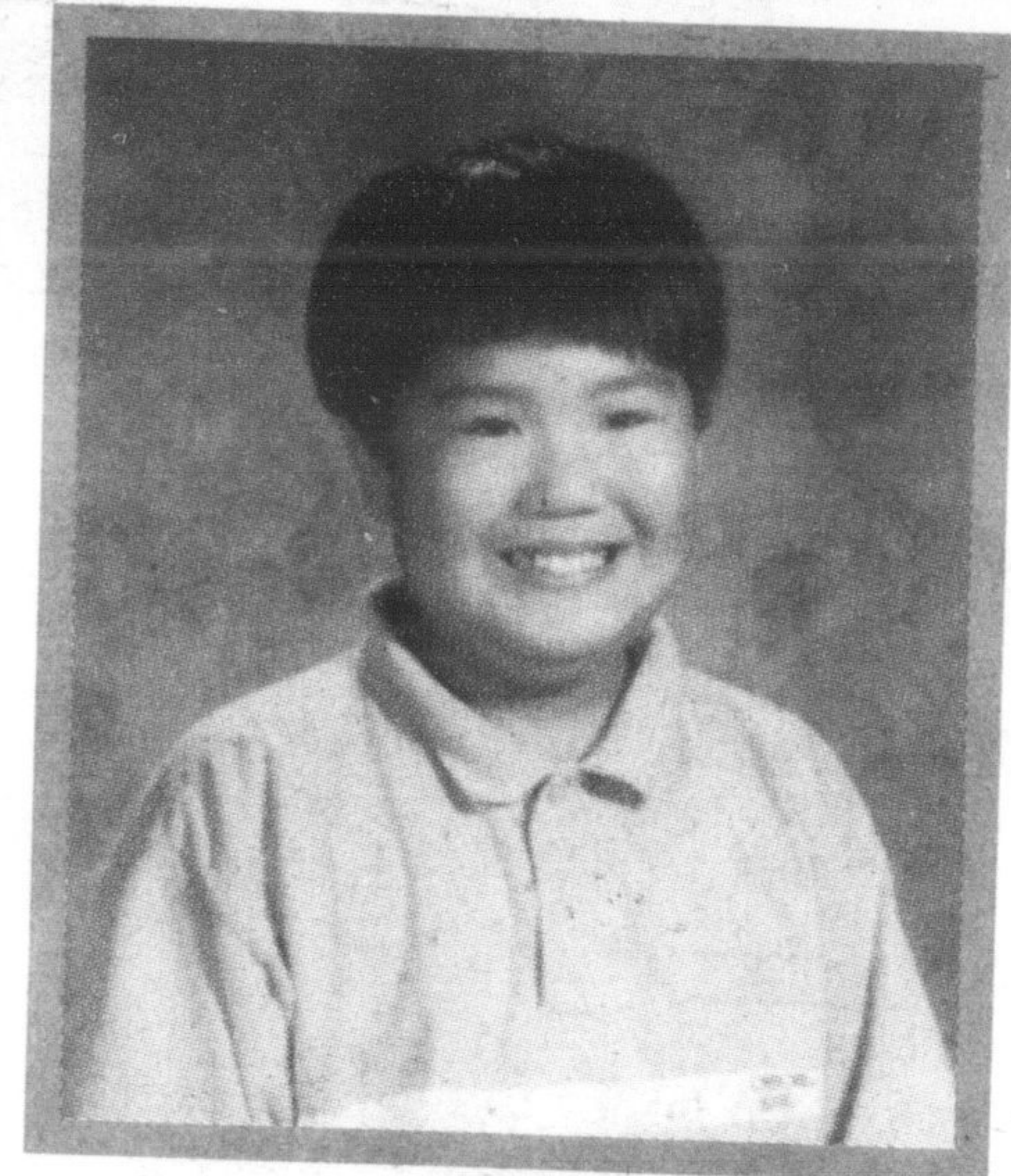
By **JASON MISNER**
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There are no cases of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Halton, but the immediacy to curb any potential outbreak here is stretching the Region's public health department.

The 30 staff members of Halton's communicable disease control are working overtime in an effort to identify, document and monitor the condition of those quarantined for possibly being exposed to the illness in Toronto hospitals, like Scarborough Grace, where SARS was prevalent.

The increased workload in Halton also includes manning the phones to answer concerned residents' hundreds of calls that have flooded the Region since it was put on high alert for SARS eight days ago.

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