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ChampionCountry

Screamfest guaranteed to scare visitors

By Robin Downton-Poirier
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

The creepiest time of year is quickly approaching and the folks at Screamfest have been working hard to make their guests' screams more shrilling and louder than in years past.

Screamfest 2006, the spooky haunt-

ed house located at White Rock Ostrich Farm on Fourth Line in Nassagaweya, is sure to frighten even the most die-hard horror fans with their maniacal creatures, bizarre rooms and hideous sounds as tours are lead through Halton's scariest house on the weekends before Halloween.

Screamfest, the brainchild of After Dark Productions, began many years ago as a family tradition but was moved to White Rock Ostrich Farm in 2000.

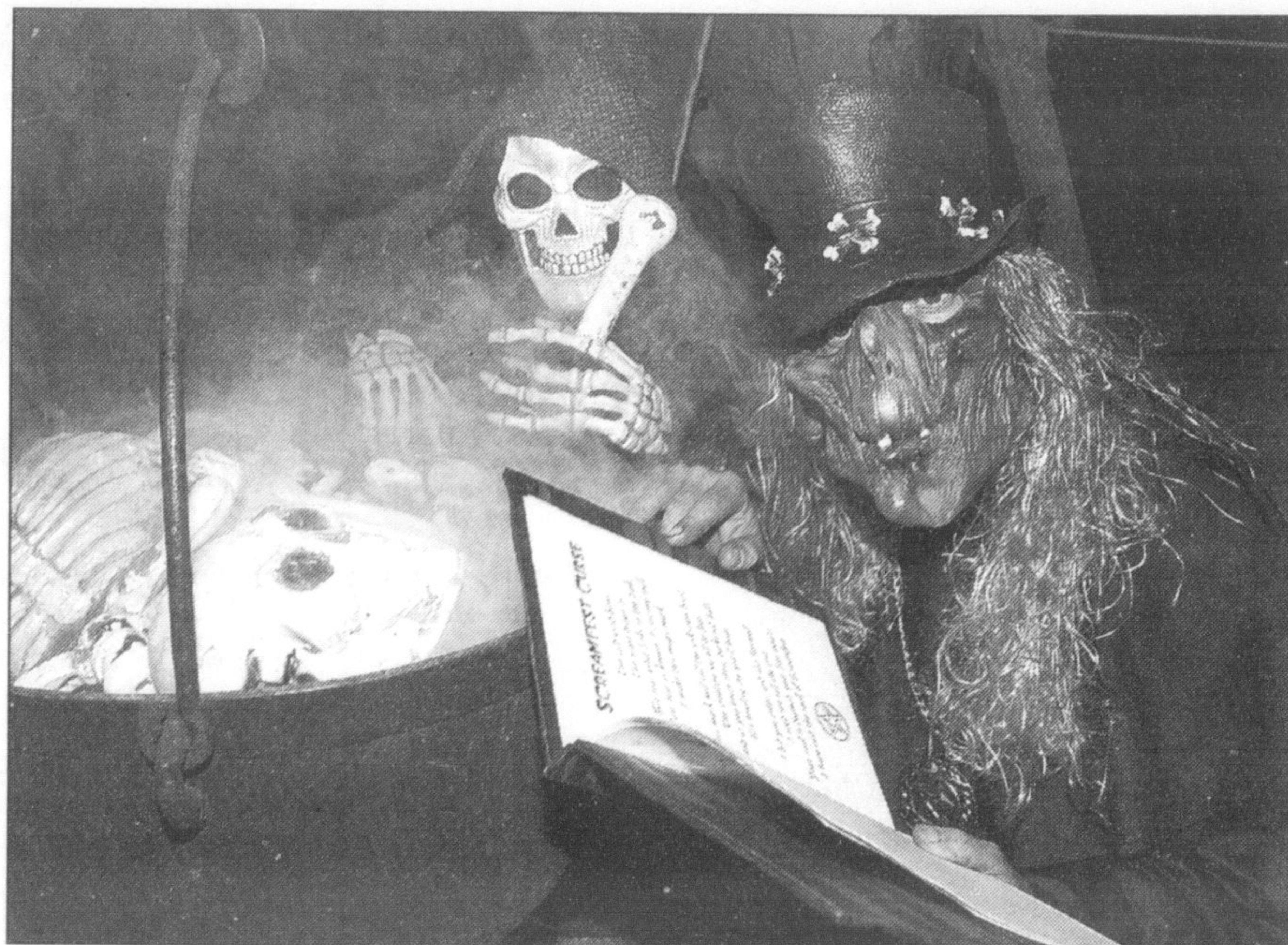
Attendance has increased year after year, said John Platt, one of three owners.

With more than 1,500 visitors in 2005, a larger attendance is expected again this year.

"We started this as a family thing where we would decorate our house at Halloween then we moved because the crowds were getting bigger and bigger," said Platt.

"In 2000, we moved to the White Rock Ostrich Farm, home of Deb and Don Simmonds, who, through no fault of their own, unwittingly gave us the opportunity to set up on their property and create our first professional attraction."

Platt owns After Dark Productions with Paul Clinton and Richard Gehres. Each of them uses his unique talents



FILE PHOTO BY GRAHAM PAINE

This creature, from Screamfest's 2004 season, is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to frightening faces encountered at the popular Halloween attraction.

with electronics and creativity combined with "very twisted minds" to make the haunted house as frightening as possible every year.

They began working on this year's production in May, spending about eight hours a day several times a week inventing new features, building new

rooms, and making sure all the lighting and props work.

They also work several evenings just before their opening weekend to 'test the look' before they have visitors, said Platt.

This year, there are seven rooms including the Clown Room, the Not-So-Living Room, the Autopsy Room, the shower area, and the Horror Hallway. Platt said the Clown Room is new this year and plays on a fear that some people have.

"A lot of people are afraid of clowns so, being the twisted maniacs that we are, we decided to play on that fear a little," said Platt. "I can't say how we plan on doing it though. Everyone will have to wait and see!"

Outside of the haunted house, the graveyard will have more lurking creatures to provide a scare. Visitors can even light up their life in the electric chair and have their picture taken. They can also purchase a 'Certificate of Survival' afterward for \$4. There will be a bonfire area for people to keep warm and a television will continuously play horror flicks to entertain them while they wait. As well, the gift shop will be open and a refreshment area will be set up that will include ostrich burgers and hot dogs.

To make the production a success, Platt said it takes between 14 and 16 people, costumed and behind-the-scenes, to ensure operations run smoothly. Many of their 'dedicated souls' have helped out for several years and do it simply for the fun.

Platt warns that the haunted house is 'extremely scary' and isn't recommended for children under 8, pregnant mothers, or people with heart conditions. As well, strobe lights are often used and could adversely affect people with epilepsy.

Screamfest 2006 is open Fridays and Saturdays until October 28 from 7 to 10 p.m. Admission costs \$8 for kids aged 8 to 11 years and \$9 for adults 12 and over. For more information and a \$1 off coupon, visit the Screamfest Web site at www.screamfest.info.

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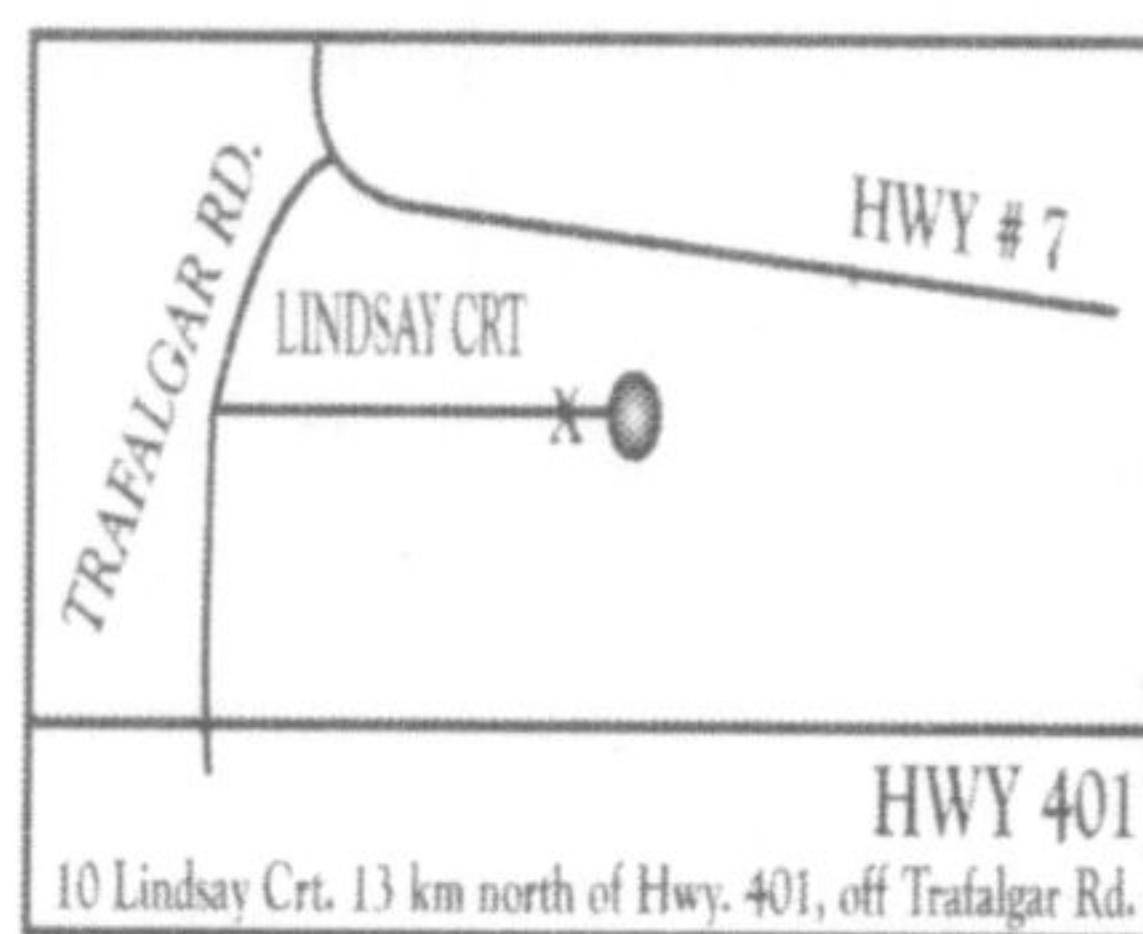
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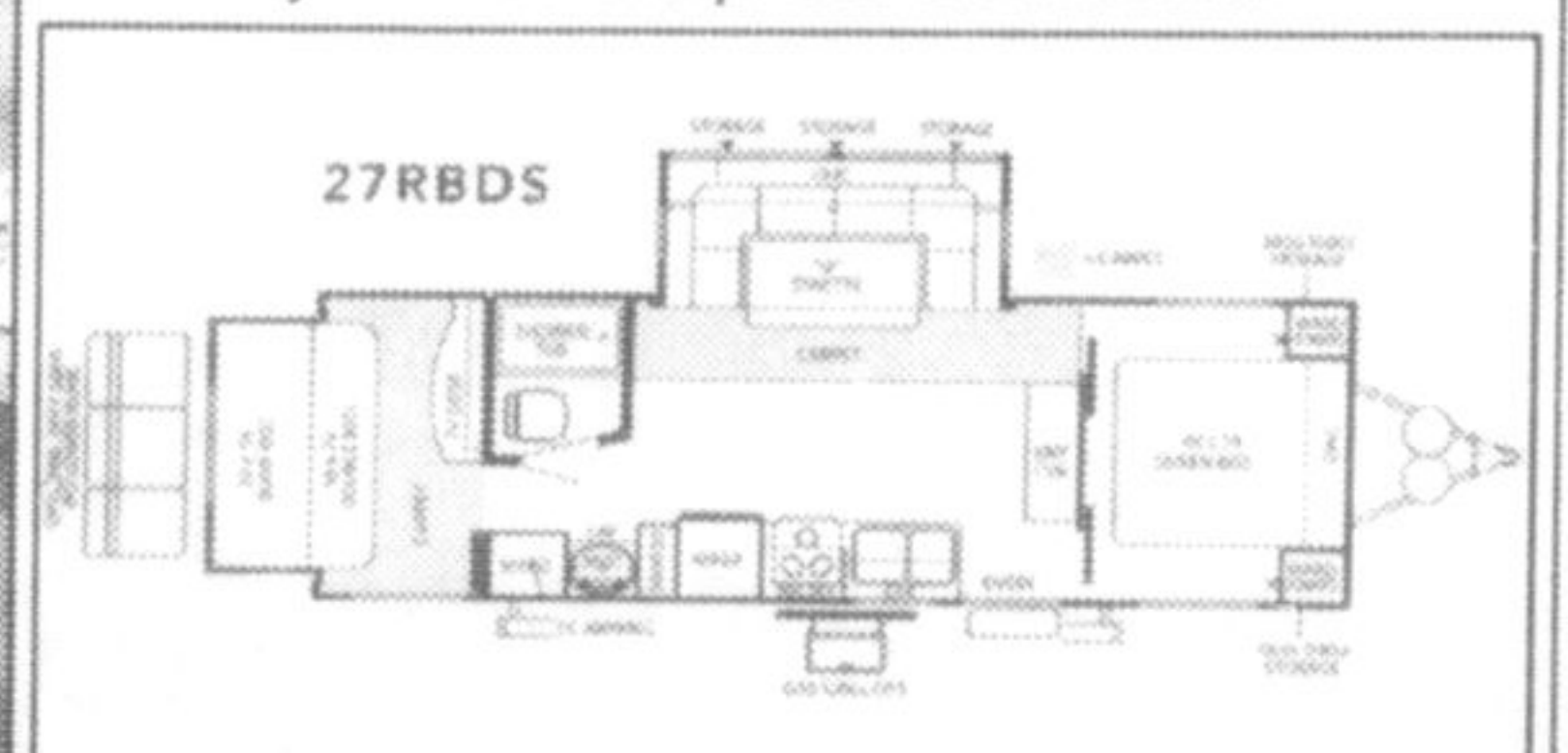


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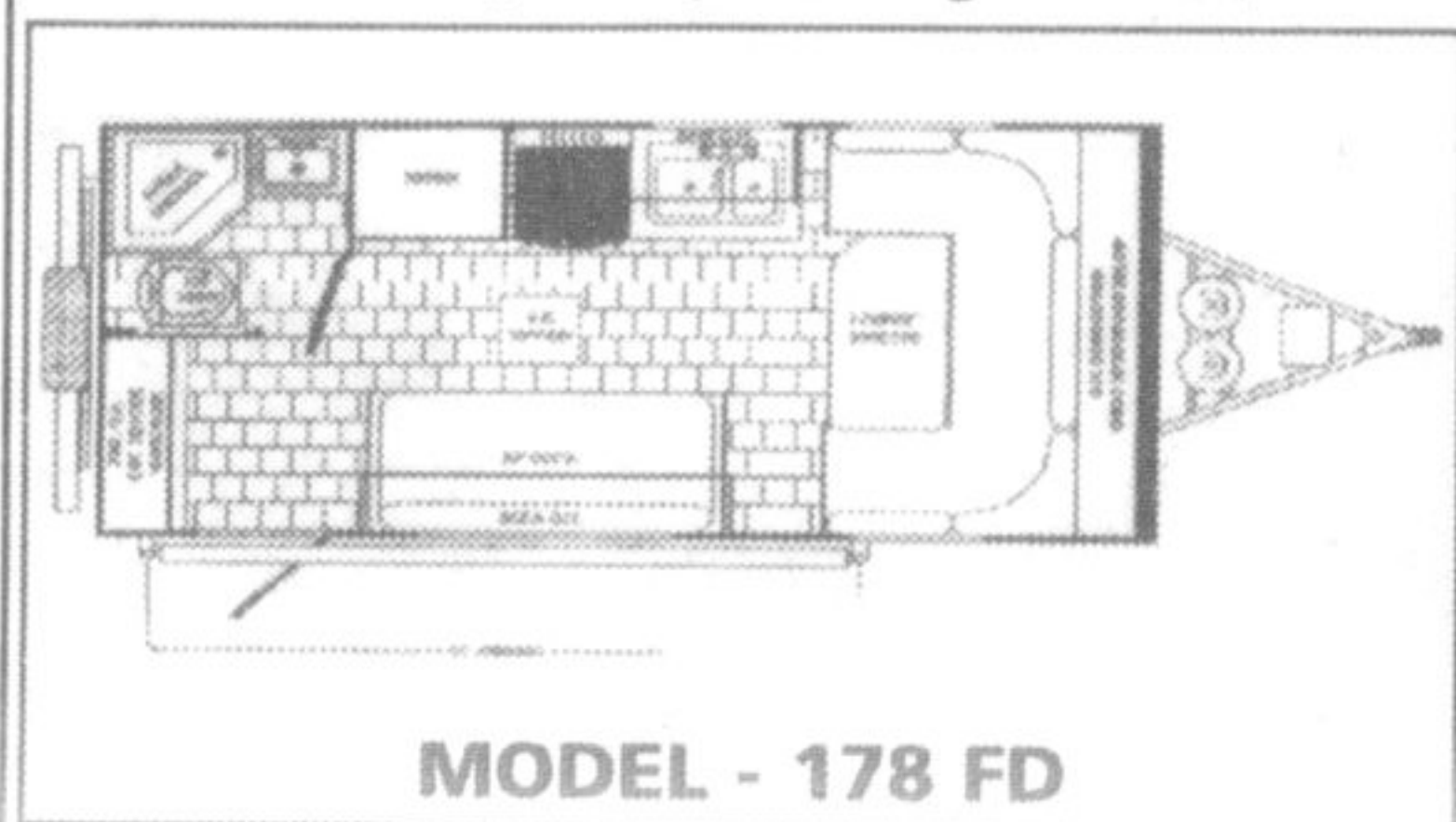
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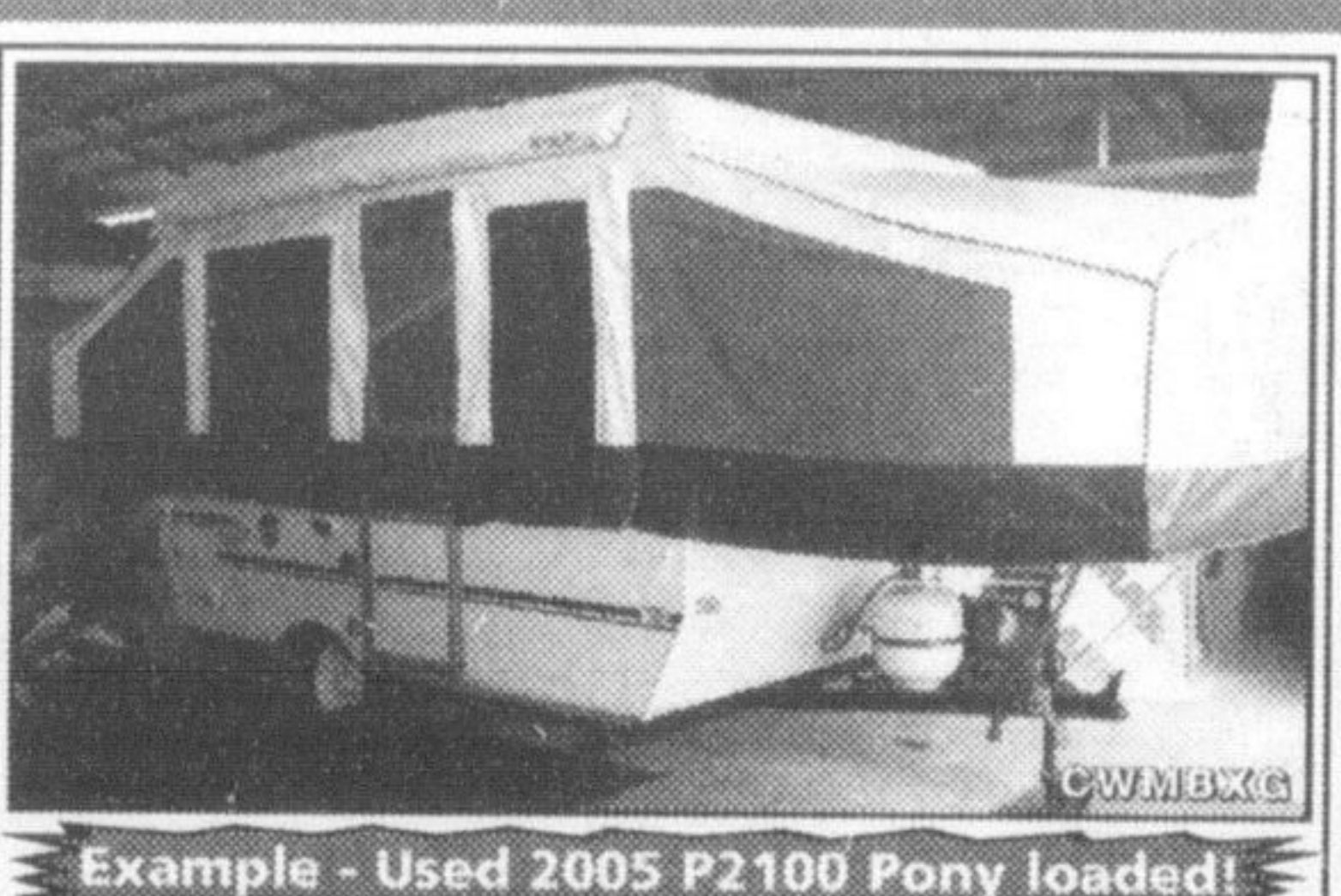
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