

Teen sacrifices to spend 10 months in Japanese school

By BRAD REAUME

The Champion

MEGHAN LEWINGTON is turning Japanese. The 15-year-old Milton District High School student is travelling to Japan for 10 months on an exchange arranged by World Youth Services. She will live with a Japanese family in Tokyo and attend a Japanese high school.

The idea came to her mother, who saw some information in a Toronto newspaper. A call to the program's Canadian co-ordinator in Hamilton sparked him to begin searching for a suitable family in Japan. Meghan, who carried an average of nearly 80 per cent in her Grade 10 classes, says compatibility with suitable-families is the cornerstone of the program.

Unfortunately the school year in Japan is such that Meghan will arrive in the middle of one year and depart in the middle of the next. That problem may cost her some credits and Meghan figures she'll have to make up the time by spending longer in high school. She figures the trip is worth it.

"I like to travel and learn about different cultures and languages," said Meghan. "I want to see how people in other countries live and their ways of doing things."

The Victoria Street resident said she had just returned from several weeks in England where she spent some time attending classes. The level of learning in England was comparable with Canada, she said, but the discipline level was much higher in England.

"Life is pretty similar there but they seem more relaxed and they seem to enjoy life," Meghan said. "It's not as rushed or as commercial as here. The milkman still comes. They have kept the goodness in life."

Japan is one of only a handful of countries with populations of more than 100 million. In addition the country is small and mountainous, making for little living space.

A 21-year-old daughter in the Tokyo family

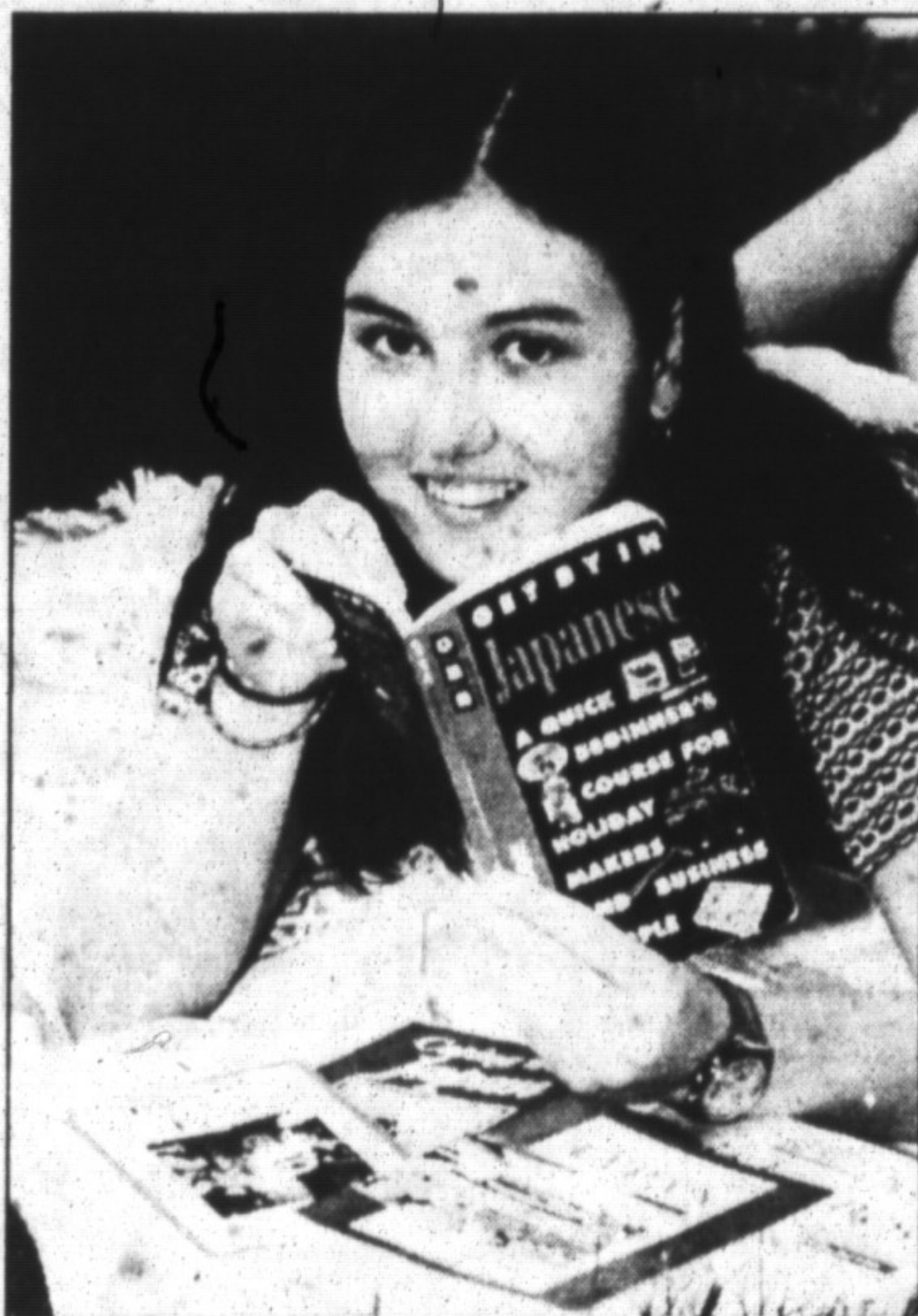


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

An excited Meghan Lewington is Japan-bound. She will be there for almost a year.

Meghan will be living with a family in Japan for a year in Canada on a similar exchange. They also have a second daughter who is 17 years old. The girls will commute by train and bus to a private girls' school about 90 minutes away from home.

"She is already familiarizing herself with the language. One of its forms is written in the Roman alphabet, making it a little easier on Western sensibilities than the characters used in the more formal version of the language."

• see ON JAPANESE on page 10

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