



JOHN ROBERTSON
Off to India

Markham man chosen for Indian exchange program

By **PAULA CROWELL**
Staff Reporter

The chance to travel and learn a new culture, as one of a chosen few, was too much temptation for Markham's John Robertson to pass up.

He's heading out next month on a seven-month trip where he'll explore the other half of Canadian culture as well as the customs and traditions of India.

Twenty-year-old John was selected for Canada World Youth (CWY), an organization of External Affairs Canada which arranges community service exchanges with many third world countries including Costa Rica, Ecuador, Brazil, Zaire and Indonesia.

Participants from Canada are chosen by means of a rigorous selection process which involves group dynamic sessions and one-on-one interviews. For every 10

applicants one is chosen.

Selection is based on creating a cross-section of Canadian youth. Factors taken into consideration include sex, race, family income, hometown, special skills and life experiences. Participants must be between the ages of 17 and 20.

John believes his advantages are his bilingualism and the fact that he is in the workforce (many applicants are students).

Participants are paired with counterparts from the exchange country and divide their time between their respective homelands doing volunteer community service work.

John will be matched with an army cadet from India — the Indian government chose cadets to participate — and will be assigned to work in one of three towns in Quebec.

The group of 21 Canadians and an equal number of Indians meets

in Montreal Aug. 3. Seven from each country will be sent to one of three towns — Trois Rivieres, Joliette or St. Jerome.

John explained that while in Canada their work could involve anything from farm labor to helping out with a small business.

The pairs are billeted with families to get a better idea of how the local people live.

On Nov. 13 the group will move on to India where John believes they will work in agriculture.

He first heard about the program while participating in Katimavik, a similar Canadian venture founded by Senator Jacques Hebert.

The Liberal senator made headlines last spring when he fasted for three weeks to save Katimavik from the Conservative government ax.

Senator Hebert also founded CWY 15 years ago to give young Canadians a chance to learn about other cultures, help their fellow man and travel to places they otherwise might never see.

John looks forward to learning new languages and better people skills.

Until he leaves, John will be looking for sponsorships in the community. Part of the program involves speaking engagements after the trip.

If you're interested in inviting John to speak to your group after his trip, he can be reached at 294-9617 or 469-4646.

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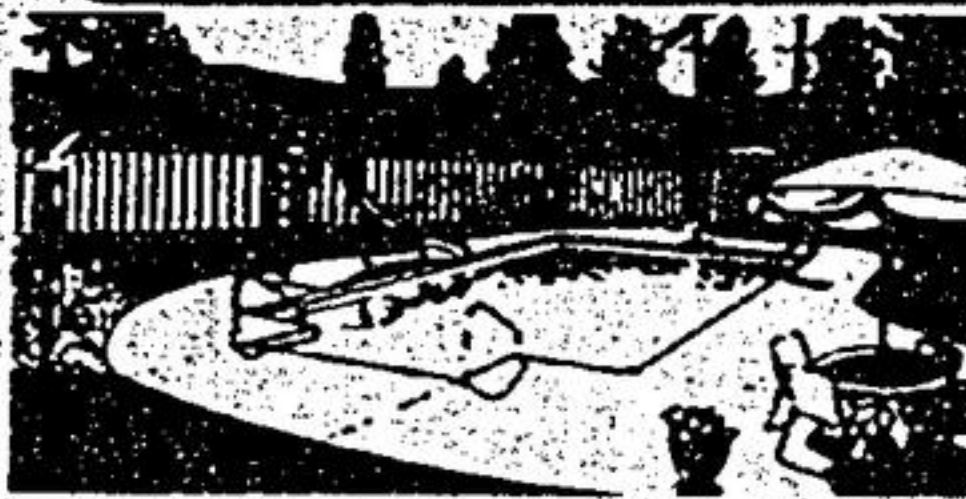
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