

# Markhamite off to Zaire, Africa

By PAULA CROWELL  
Staff Reporter

Markham's Tony Vetter is on a mission.

A mission which will teach him about other cultures and languages and will immerse him in two community atmospheres with which he is unfamiliar.

Tony, 19, has been chosen as a participant of Canada World Youth, an exchange program which combines a cross-section of Canadian youth with counterparts from a developing nation. The goal is to broaden horizons by living and working together in Canada and in the exchange country.

Tony will spend Christmas in Zaire, Africa. He begins his exchange in Quebec in early September where participants from both nations meet. Tony will be paired with someone from Zaire and will remain with his partner for the duration of the exchange.

After about 3½ months in Quebec, the group will move on to Zaire. The volunteers will find work in community service, agriculture or small business, but nothing is definite and circumstances can change. That's why one of the qualities participants must possess is flexibility.

"We might have to find something to do on our own," he said. "They have a plan, but nothing is exact."

Zaire used to be known as the Belgian Congo, but gained its independence in 1960. The country is just north of the equator and consists of tropical rain forest and grasslands. The average temperature is 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

The country's official language is French and Tony will be taking a one-week immersion course in Quebec before he begins the exchange. He hopes to have a good working knowledge of the language by the time he returns to Canada in March.

The Markham District High School graduate turned down acceptances at several universities to participate in this non-profit program.

"I felt it was better to do something like this before university to have a different point of view of how I'll spend the next few years. I hope to narrow in on what I want to learn," he explained.

His interest lies with science and Tony hopes to have the opportunity to apply his knowledge practically. He adds that this gives him a chance to travel.

Mainly though, the exchange gives him a chance to see how people live in a different environment. "They'll have different

priorities. I hope to pick up a different point of view on life."

Tony expects to do several presentations at his alma mater when he returns from Zaire March 31. He and John Robertson, another Markham resident who is on an exchange to India, will co-ordinate a slide presentation to show at the Markham Community Library and schools.

His is one of the first formal exchanges with Zaire which has only recently settled down after years of violent revolution. And despite the fact that he would have preferred to go to India, he's happy to have been accepted to go to Zaire.

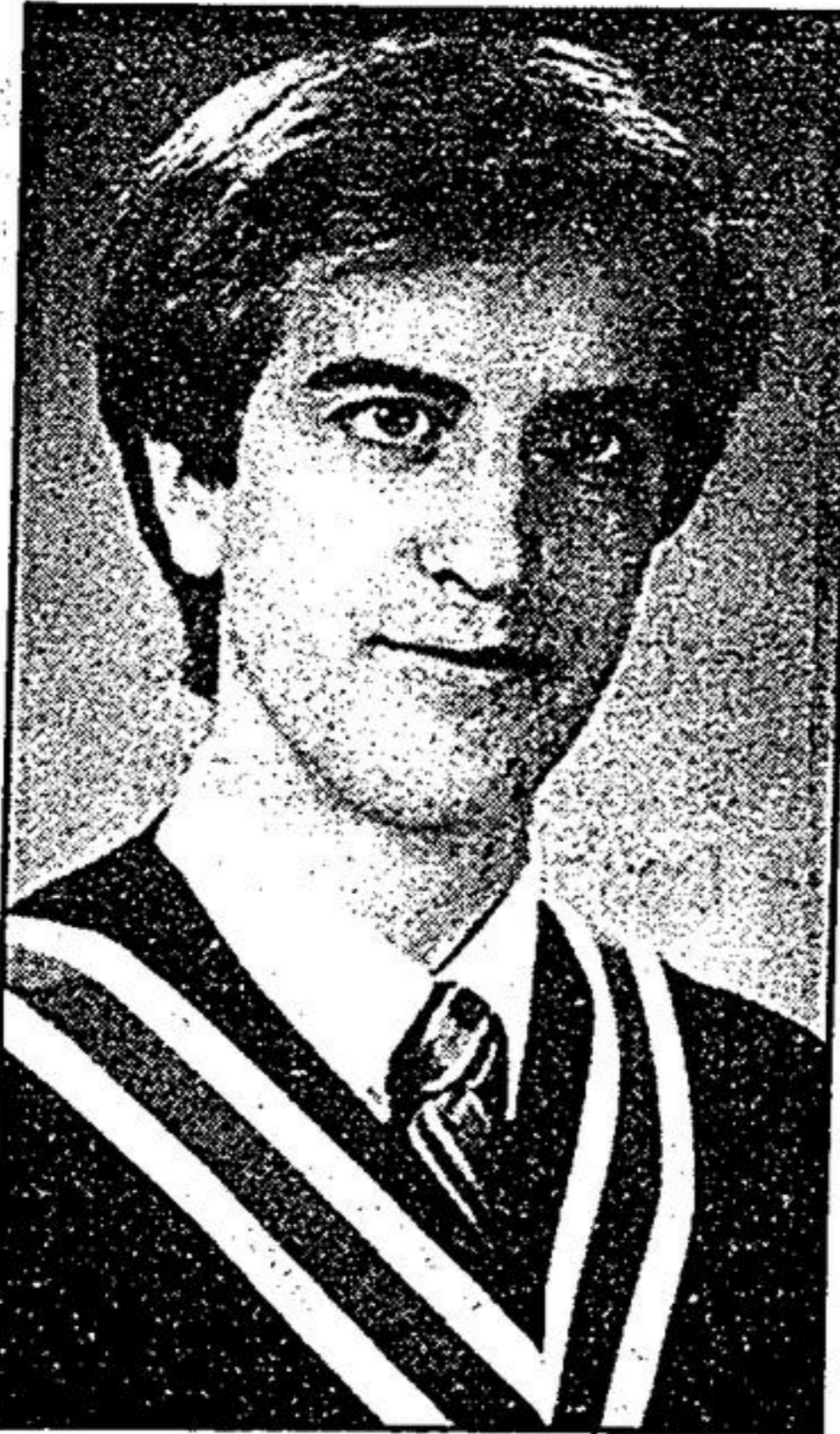
Each year many young Canadians send in their applications. The first draft is done by random selection. From there organizers of Canada World Youth conduct interviews and group tests to determine who will be chosen.

"When they told me I was chosen from the random selection it was like winning the lottery," he said.

The program is designed so that participants don't see their family or friends for the seven months they are away, but Tony explained he'll be breaking that rule in November.

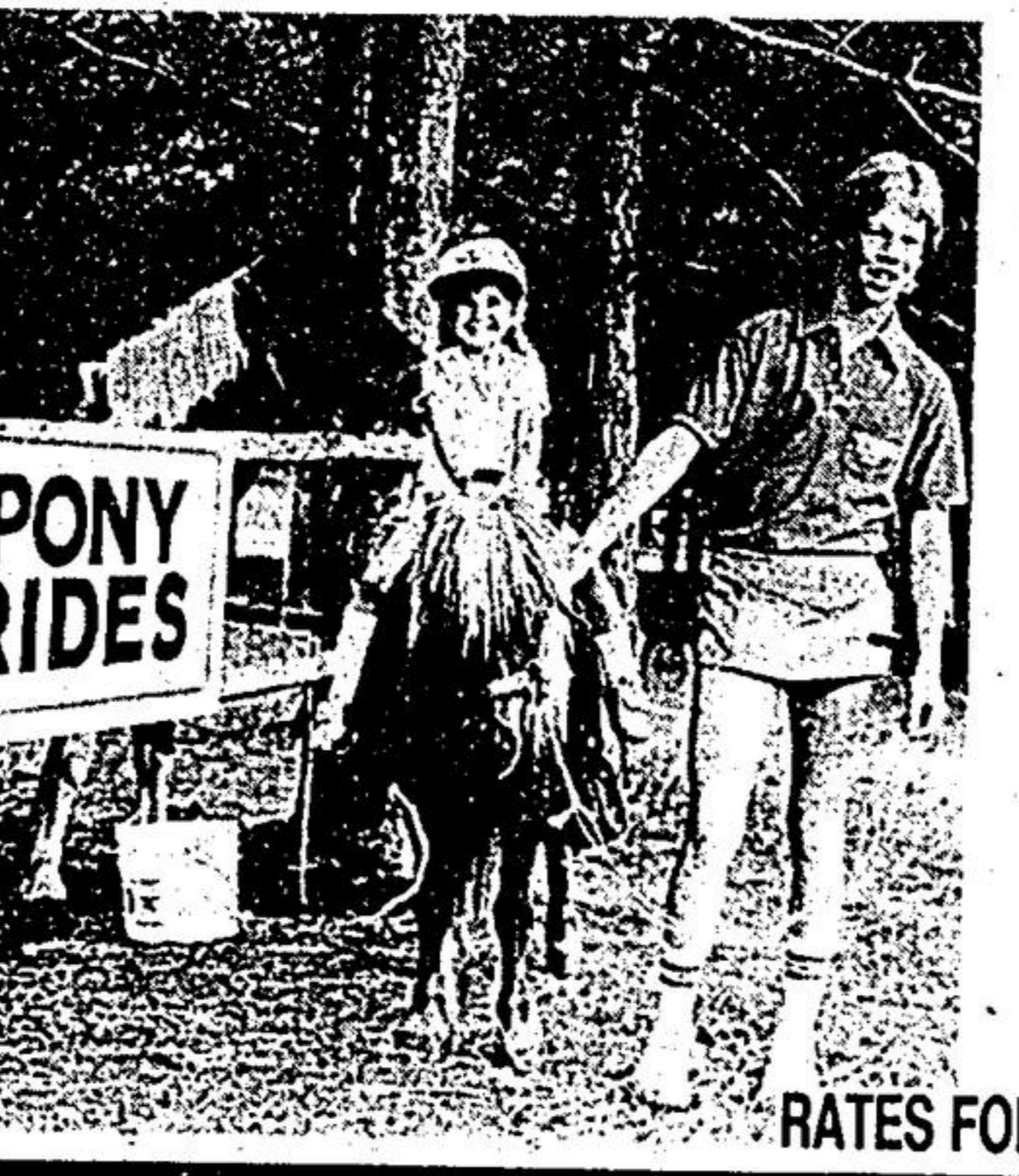
He was chosen valedictorian of his graduating class and will return to Markham for commencement exercises.

When he returns home for good, he hopes to have a better idea of what he wants to learn and a broader perspective that comes from experience.



TONY VETTER  
Exchange participant

PLAN A  
PICNIC  
THIS WEEKEND



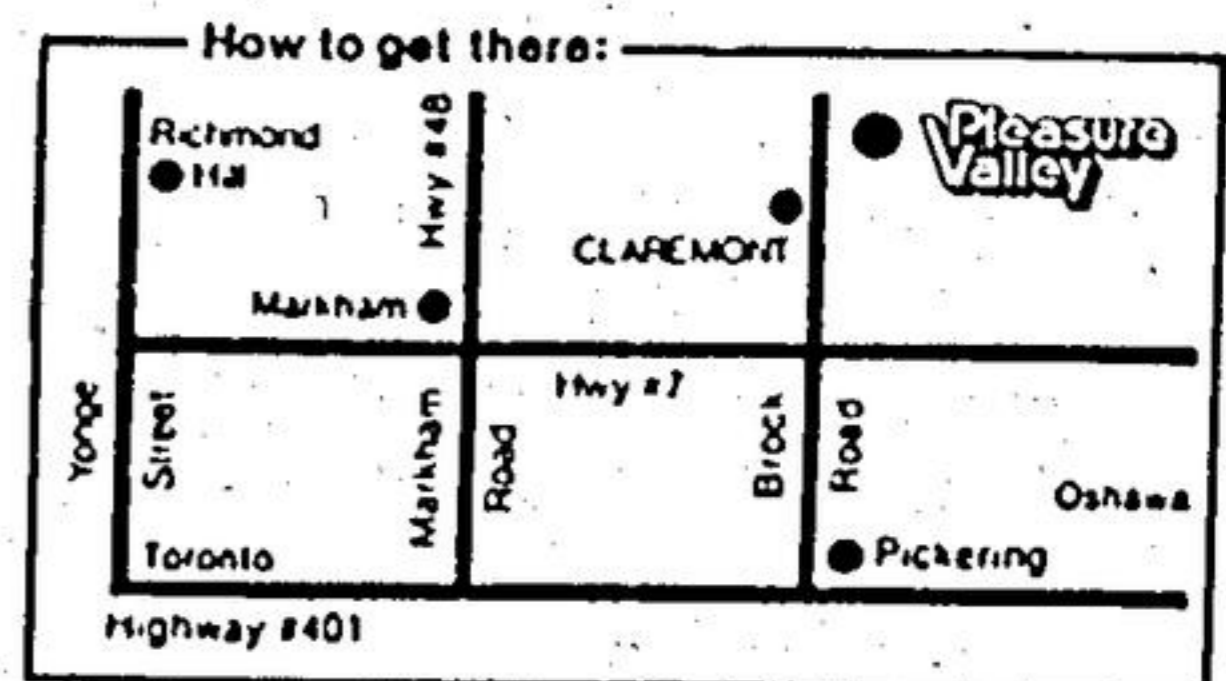
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