

## Bringing comfort, hope

# Help coping with terminal illness

By EDO VAN BELKOM

A terminal illness is something most people rarely think about until it affects someone close to them, such as, a relative or neighbor.

Suddenly something that was always thought of as happening to someone else, happens to them. Family and friends are confronted with dozens of decisions about their care.

### Decision made easier

One important decision about care being provided in the home or at a hospital will be made easier in the future by Hospice-Thornhill, a new volunteer service offered to the residents of Thornhill.

Hospice-Thornhill will provide lay volunteers who will perform non-medical duties in the home to assist the dying person to live life as fully as possible and remain at home as long as he or she wishes.

"We're not going to duplicate any care already provided by established services such as VON (Victorian Order of Nurses),"

said Joan Wilson, a founder and member of the Hospice-Thornhill Board of Directors.

"We have the support from existing agencies and will be providing non-medical help they don't provide. Volunteers might be doing things like picking up groceries and medicine, or just sitting with someone for a while."

This kind of palliative care is not new, but community based service is a recent development. In King Township, Hospice-King has been serving the community with great success since 1983 and that agency is passing on the benefit of its experience to Hospice-Thornhill.

Hospice-Thornhill has already recruited 15 volunteers who will begin a six-week, one night a week training course that will cover everything from listening, nutrition, pain control and the spiritual aspect of dying.

Mr. Phillips said the training is vital for volunteers enabling them to handle the emotional aspects of the patient's inevitable death.

"Before we put a volunteer in a home setting we train them

because they must be able to deal with very emotional situations. They must learn the skills to cope with that type of stress," she said.

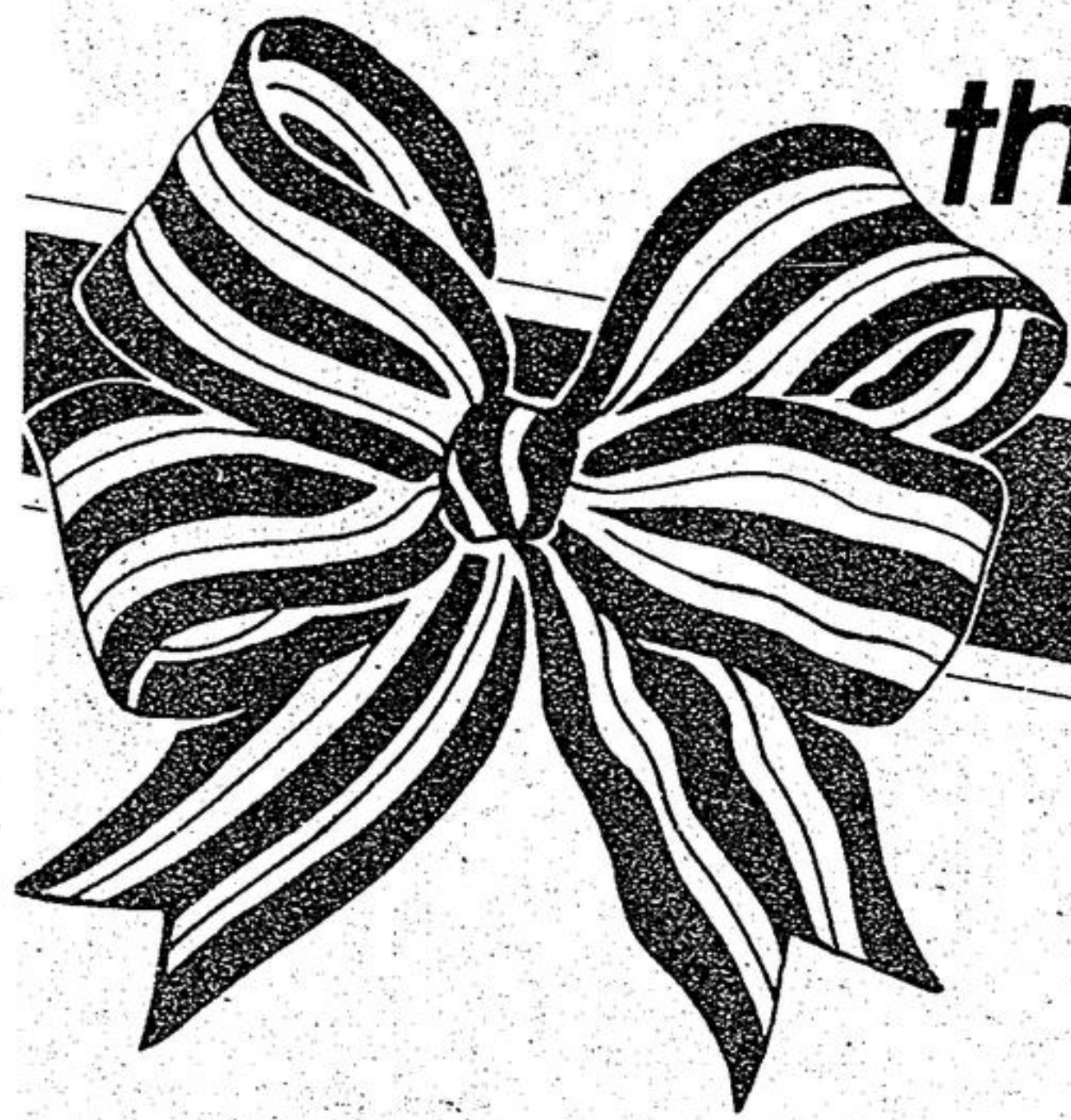
Despite Hospice-Thornhill being a volunteer organization, Mrs. Phillips said it will require an initial start-up budget of \$50,000. The money will go toward one full-time co-ordinator, office space and clerical staff. The agency is currently seeking funding as well as more volunteer staff.

### Could spread to Markham

Hospice-Thornhill will of course be serving the area of Thornhill, but according to Mrs. Phillips their service could be extended to outlying areas such as Markham if there is a great need and enough staff.

But ultimately she hopes that hospices could be set up in all of the towns in York Region.

For more information about Hospice-Thornhill call Joan Phillips at 889-7715 (evenings) or Marleene Kretchman 881-3147.



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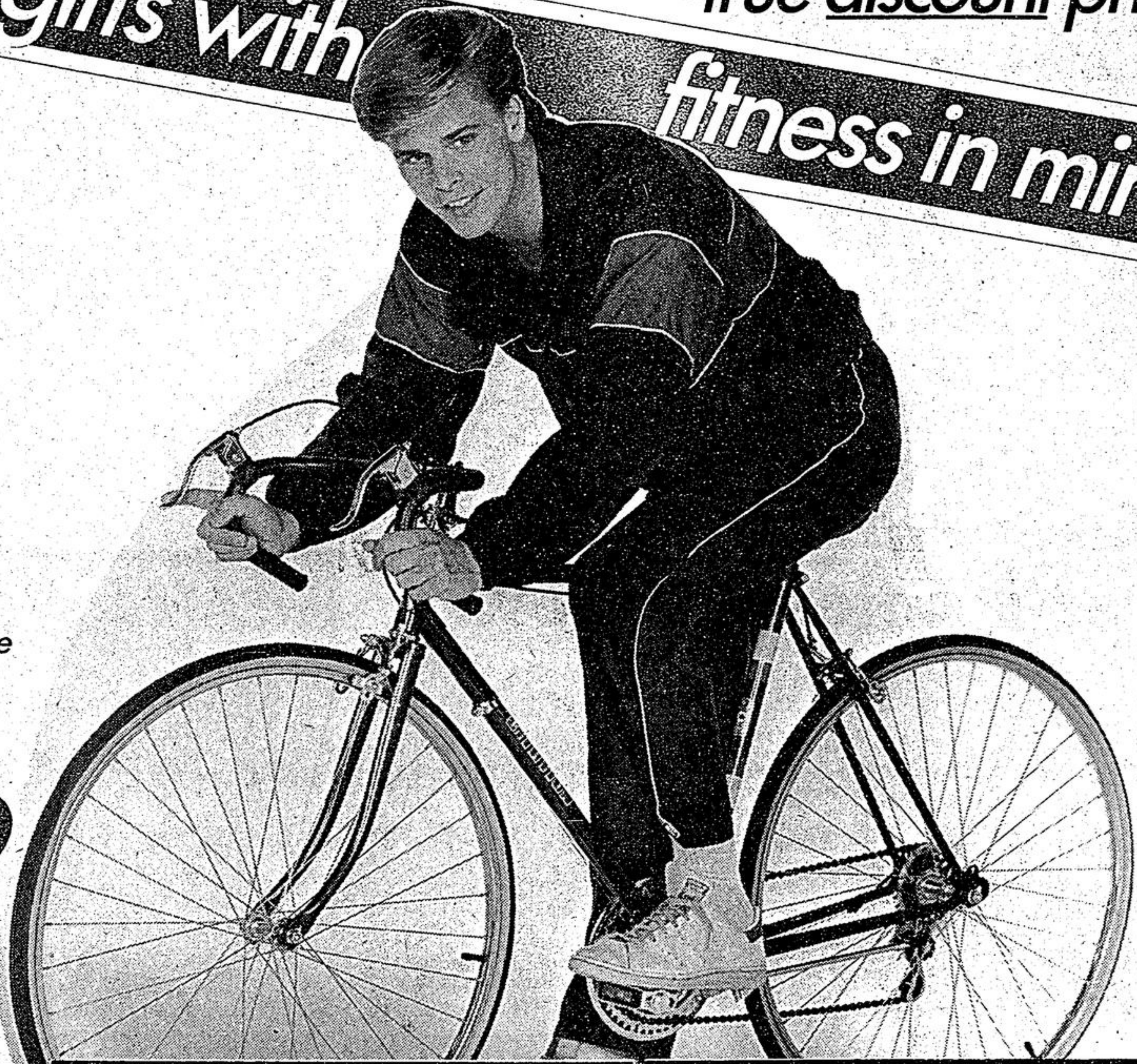
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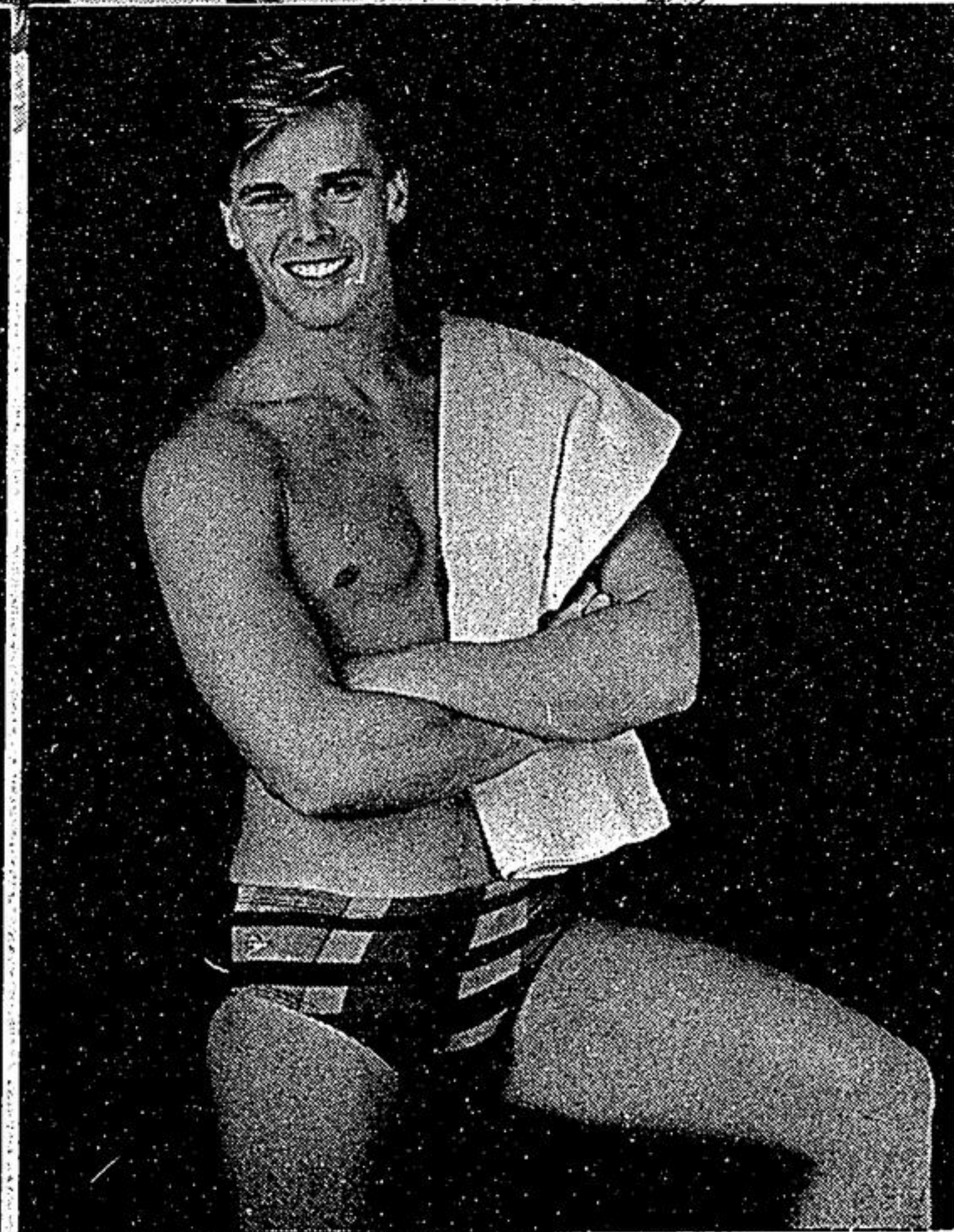
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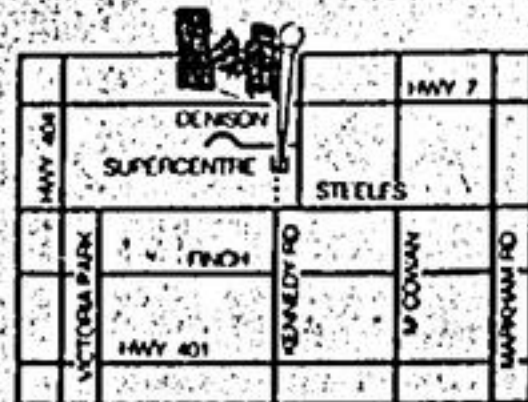
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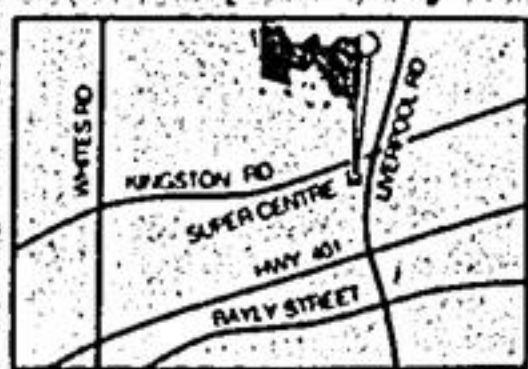
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