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# Community Focus

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## Gymnast vaulting into Stouffville

By DENISE McDONALD  
Gymnast Andrea Thomas will join the ranks of Stouffville's best-known residents, when the University of Georgia freshmen returns home next month.

The former Markham resident, a 14th all-round finisher at the 1984 Summer Olympic Games,

will spend her summer holiday with mother Rita and sister Tracey, who relocated to Blake St. in Stouffville last August.

According to her mother, Andrea's gymnastic prowess was evident at an early age, particularly to her nursery school teacher, who informed Mrs. Thomas her daughter had excellent

co-ordination.

"At first I didn't believe her," Rita explained. "Andrea was forever running into things and I had thought she had a co-ordination problem. I even once considered taking her to a doctor. I had no idea she had any sort of exceptional ability."

Shortly after Andrea's eighth

birthday, Mrs. Thomas enrolled both her daughters in a University of Guelph gymnastics class, marking the beginning of an endless succession of teams and coaches wanting to tap on Andrea's ability.

One week after entering their first class, both girls were invited

to compete at the provincial level with the Guelph Saultos. However, after moving swiftly up the ranks, they soon joined the Cambridge Kips and began competing in nationally-rated events.

Shortly after, Tracey's gymnastic career was tragically cut short when a severed tendon in her hand developed into nerve damage, thus ending any hope of competing on uneven bars.

Continuing on alone, Andrea moved through several teams before meeting up with David and Judy Holmes of Markham, who she trained under for a year and a half.

While under their tutelage, Andrea secured third place all-round at the 1983 Commonwealth Championships; was a member of the 1983 Canadian World Championship team; came second all-round of 1983 Elite Canada, and was second on beam at the 1983 pre-Olympics. She was also ranked second all-round in optionals at Pre-Worlds in Hungary, first in all-round 1984 Elite Canada; first in all-round 1984 second Olympic trials; fifth in all-round 1985 USA vs. Canada; as well as being a member of the 1985 Canadian World Championship team.

After graduating from high school, the 18-year-old star athlete began searching for universities in order to pursue both her academic and gymnastic careers. She received scholarship offers from several highly-respected American institutions, but finally decided on the University of Georgia where she'll enter her second year in September.

"It was a hard decision," Mrs. Thomas said. "After weeks of indecision, I finally made her fill out all the forms, sent her out the door and told her not to come back until she mailed one of the envelopes. Looking back, she's really glad she chose Georgia."

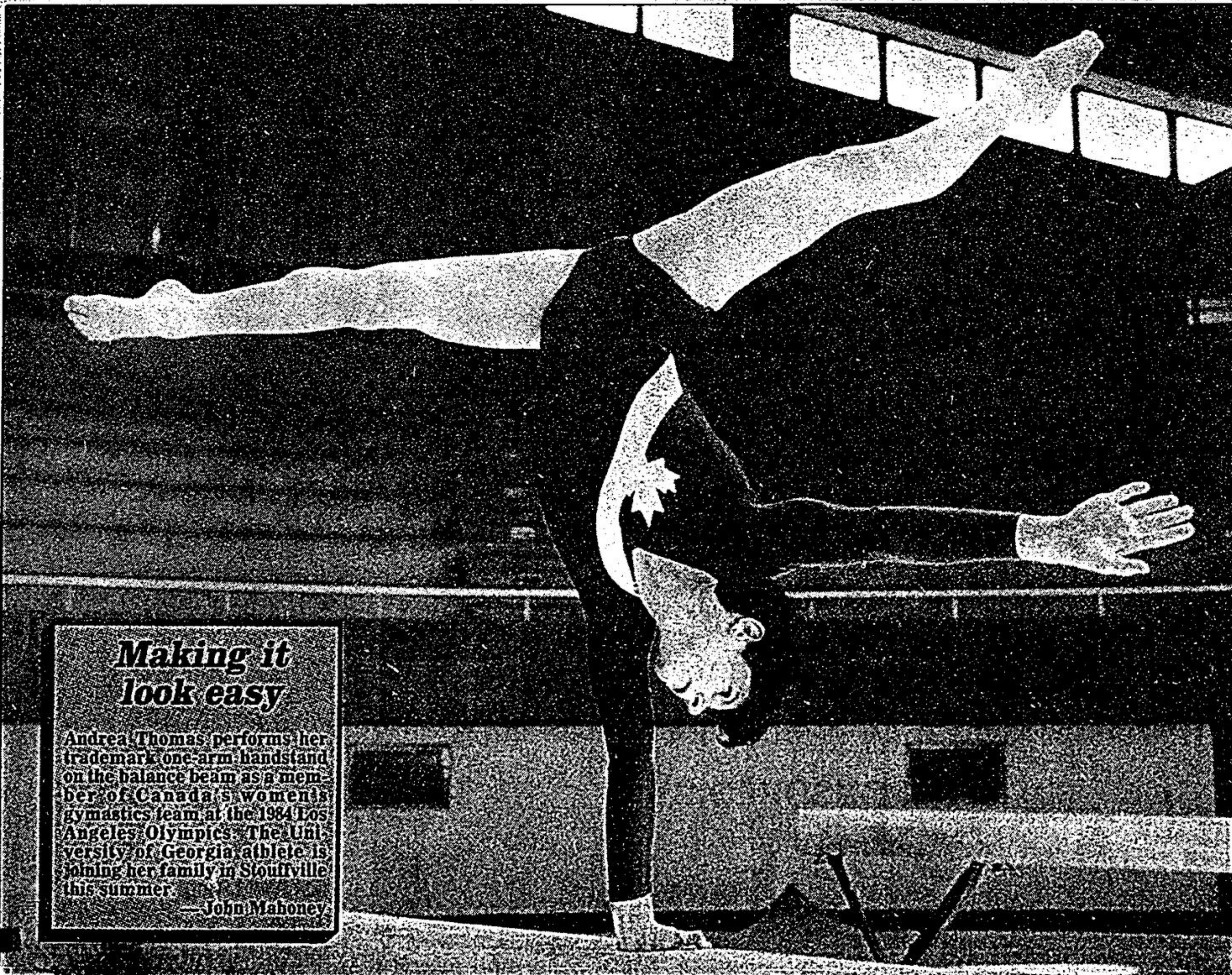
While eventually planning to major in business, Andrea's immediate goal is to maintain her position on the University's NCAA championship gymnastics team — the Lady Dogs.

"Andrea can't compete nationally any longer but she'll still continue to play an active role on the team," her mother noted. "Damage to the rotator cup in her shoulder has prevented her from working on the uneven bars. You have to be able to compete in all four disciplines to qualify nationally."

According to Mrs. Thomas, Andrea's shoulder injury was due in part to excessive wear and tear, particularly during her famous one-arm handstand on the balance beam.

However, the injury did little to prevent her from posting an impressive third-place finish on the beam to earn All-America honors at last month's NCAA Gymnastics Championships in Salt Lake City, Utah.

"Andrea is such a good kid and extremely disciplined," Mrs. Thomas claimed. "Not only does she have the energy for studies and her team, somewhere she still finds enough to have a good time, too."



### Making it look easy

Andrea Thomas performs her trademark one-arm handstand on the balance beam as a member of Canada's women's gymnastics team at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. The University of Georgia athlete is joining her family in Stouffville this summer.

—John Mahoney

## Events in brief

A Stouffville-area man, legally impaired when he crashed an ATV into a police cruiser last spring, has been sentenced to 15 months in jail. Dennis Smith received two concurrent terms after he was convicted of dangerous driving causing bodily harm and driving with more than the legal amount of alcohol in his system. In handing down sentence Friday in Whitby District Court, Judge E.R. Lovekin said the public must be protected from motorists who drink and drive. Judge Lovekin suspended Mr. Smith's driving licence for five years and also placed him on probation for two years upon his release from the Ontario Correctional Institute. The judge recommended the 40-year-old R.R. 3, Claremont man serve his sentence in that Brampton facility so he can take part in a rehabilitation program for alcohol abusers, and also receive skills training related to an injury suffered in the accident. A district court jury found the accused guilty March 31 of the two charges and another related impaired driving offence stemming from a crash in north Pickering April 27, 1986. Mr. Smith lost part of his left leg and a passenger on his all-terrain vehicle, Sherri Wannop, was seriously injured when the ATV struck a marked Durham Regional Police car. Court was told that police officers Richard Bates and Paul Mooy had earlier pursued Mr. Smith after they received noise complaints from residents on Conc. 8 near Sideroad 30. During sentencing, the Crown called for maximum imprisonment of two years less a day while Mr. Smith's defence lawyer asked for a minimum jail term of three months.

**STOUFFVILLE MISSION EXPANDING:** Christian Blind Mission will expand to more than double the size of its existing facility on Stouffville Rd. near Kennedy Rd. Several area dignitaries will take part in a ground-breaking ceremony on-site June 12 at 2 p.m., according to mission centre co-ordinator John Bettsworth. Plans for the Whitchurch-Stouffville mission's new community outreach project will also be announced at that time.

The work of R.W.F. Capel, a well-known Toronto artist who sketched with members of *The Group of Seven*, is featured at Stouffville's Blue Orchid restaurant/gallery until June 1. The exhibit includes some of the late Mr. Capel's original oil paintings and watercolors plus originals by his granddaughter, Lyn Marnoch-Wenger of R.R. 4, Stouffville. The Blue Orchid is located at 124 Main St. East.

The NDP riding association for Durham West will hold an 8 p.m. nomination meeting Thursday, June 4, at CAW local 1090, 140 Hunt St. in Ajax. Two people vying for the NDP nod to date are Bernie Emoff of Pickering and Ajax's Jim Wiseman. Norah Stoner has already gained the Liberal nod in the newly-created Pickering/Ajax riding, while MPP George Ashe will represent the Progressive Conservatives.

Uxbridge Chamber Choir performs Bob Bobowitz's rock cantata, *The Creation*, June 6 at the Music Hall. Tickets costing \$7.50 for adults and \$5 for senior citizens and students are available at Yellow Brick Road in Uxbridge, or at the door.