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## Plane crashes Florida condo while town family on holiday

By JIM THOMAS  
Editor

STOUFFVILLE — For Earl and Wendy Thompson, daughter Lori and son Craig, there's always lots to see in the area of Fort Walton Beach, Florida. They've spent Christmas there the past several seasons.

Their most recent experience, however, is something they'll never forget.

On Dec. 25, a single-engine plane, with two people aboard,

crashed into the 19th floor of the Hidden Dunes Resort Tower, a 20-storey condominium where the Thompson family of Rupert Avenue, Stouffville, were staying.

Deanna Atkins, 31, of Milton, Florida, died a short time later. Timothy Butler, 39, her husband and pilot of the craft, was seriously injured but will recover.

Lori and Craig were in the apartment when the crash occurred. Their suite was five floors below. Their parents had gone shop-

ping and knew nothing of the accident until they returned.

Craig said the impact shook the building but he wasn't immediately aware of the cause. On hearing a moaning sound from above, he looked out to see the plane wedged into the side of the condo and a woman dangling from the seat.

Both he and Lori ran down 14 flights of stairs and outside.

Adding to the horror of the incident, the pilot, in attempting to reach his wife, fell out of the plane and became wedged between the craft and the wall. He was pulled through a window on the 18th floor.

One of the heroes of the day was Mrs. Thompson's cousin, Ed Jordan and son David of Thunder Bay. They ran up two flights of stairs, broke through a window and helped rescue the pilot.

Craig said his parents weren't allowed back into the building for fear of fire. "They knew we were all right but not 'really all right'," Craig explained. They spent several frustrating minutes on the outside looking up until their son and daughter came running out.

The condominium was never evacuated, Craig said, until equipment arrived to take the craft down.

Craig praised the work of local paramedics. He described how they provided first aid to the pilot and had his condition completely

stabilized before taking him to an ambulance.

Craig said it was foggy at the time of the crash but the mist rolled out soon after.

Plans for a family Christmas dinner, to have included Wendy's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Lee of Ringwood, were hastily changed, Craig noted. Rather

than return to the apartment, they went to a nearby restaurant. "But it sure was eery sleeping there that night," Craig concluded.

### Stranded couple

## Provided aid

GORMLEY — Jim Ryan, area canine control officer, performed the role of the 'Good Samaritan' Dec. 28.

It was late at night. Mrs. Annie Neal, Albert Street South was being driven home to Stouffville by her granddaughter, Nancy Neal of Shelburne when their car suddenly 'died'.

The location was 'Brodie's Hill', east of Bruce's Mill Conservation Area.

Nancy started out walking, hoping to obtain help. She'd gone about a quarter mile when she spotted a manger scene and a lighted candle on the south side of the Stouffville Road. She asked to use the phone.

"They were the kindest people," Mrs. Neal said. "They invited us in to get warm, then drove us to Stouffville. They were truly Good Samaritans."

According to Mr. Ryan, a lighted window candle is an old Irish custom meaning "if you're in trouble, we're here to help."

## Snowmobile plunge kills area couple

MARKHAM — Service was held Wednesday, (today), from the Dixon-Garland Funeral Home, Markham for Douglas Keith MacKenzie and Christine (Tina) Smolski following a tragic snowmobile accident, New Year's Day.

The young couple, Doug, 22 and Tina, 26, were heading across Go Home Lake, Muskoka, on the way

back to the MacKenzie family cottage, when their machine plunged into about 20 feet of open water. OPP divers recovered the bodies Sunday.

Mrs. Margaret Smolski of R.R. 4, Stouffville, described her niece as "a good girl" who, like her boyfriend, enjoyed cottage life. She and her brother, Norbert had

been living with her father, John Smolski in West Hill. Helen, her mother, resides in Markham.

A graduate of Markham Dist. High School, Mrs. Smolski said her niece would have started a new job with a Scarborough insurance firm on Monday.

Doug and Tina had been going together several months, his father, Russell MacKenzie of Gladiator Road, Markham said. A graduate of Durham College, Doug was an employee on the staff of AMP Canada Limited.

Mr. MacKenzie described his son as an avid outdoorsman who lived for his cottage. Tina also spent considerable time at her father's cottage on Lake Rosseau, Mrs. Smolski said.

According to police, there was no snow on the lake, making it difficult to see the water. Time of the accident was placed at 2:45 a.m.

Hundreds of friends called at the Dixon-Garland Funeral Home, Tuesday, to pay their respects. The service, Wednesday, was also largely attended. Interment was made at Elgin Mills Cemetery.

## Racing pigeons called 'patriots'

STOUFFVILLE — Verbal abuse inflicted on racing pigeons has ruffled the feathers of one Karl Winterstein of Claremont. So much so, he plans to appeal the Society's case to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Dept. of National Defence.

Mr. Winterstein regards the breed's forebearers as heroes, claiming their exploits during World War I and World War II are well documented.

These birds, he says, have been honored with three of the highest medals of bravery including the Military Cross, the Victoria Cross and the Croix de Guerre.

"They've been involved in some of the most dramatic rescues imaginable," says Mr. Winterstein. "It's a shame they're being maligned in this way."

In France, he explains, monuments have been erected to their memory.

"They're as much a veteran as any Legion member," he points out. He claims he could fill an entire newspaper with stories related to their heroics.

"All this has been totally shoved under the rug," he states. "In addition, Mr. Winterstein says pigeon-racing's a fascinating hobby. He knows of only two such fanciers in Stouffville."

He claims one of these hasn't released a single bird and yet an 81-name petition has been filed with Council.

"Let's not get carried away," he insists.

Mr. Winterstein insists any action by the Town that would ban pigeon-keeping here would be "the thin edge of the wedge". He's promised a fight to the finish, employing all the resources the Racing Pigeon Union can muster.



Diane Vague, of Ringwood, holds Silver, the lead Siberian husky in her three-member dog-sled team. Diane's been racing competitively for the past six years with several awards to her credit. However, she says it's 'all for fun' and criticizes the 'win at all cost' attitude of some drivers. — Jim Thomas

### Ringwood's Diane Vague

## Prays for snow

By JIM THOMAS

RINGWOOD — "Hike!" This command echoes over hill and dale, as 22-year-old Diane Vague of Ringwood urges her dog-sled team on to victory.

From now, until spring, Diane and her three Siberian huskies, Silver, Bullel and B.J. will be participating in race meets across the country. The route usually covers three miles (one mile per dog), although longer distances and stronger teams are not unusual.

"I all began with one dog, (Hobo) on a toboggan," Diane recalls. "But I wanted something faster," she remembers. She began racing competitively six years ago.

"But it's not for the money," she insists. "It's for the fun."

Like in all sports, there are hazards, Diane explains. For instance, if the lead dog should spot a rabbit or a deer, look out!

So far, Diane's never lost control of her team but run-aways aren't uncommon. To steer a sled, the driver shifts his/her weight from one runner to another.

"I do a little skiing," Diane says. Her practice runs are held on trails in Vivian Forest. Diane loves it there.

Diane has two sleds, one for racing and one for freight. The racing sled was constructed by Bruce Carter, formerly of Stouffville and now of Pefferlaw. Everything's transported in the family's pick-up truck. Alice, Diane's mother, always goes along. In fact, she enjoys the meets almost as much as her daughter.

Racing rules are strict, Diane explains. Should a dog be injured or killed, the animal must be brought back. Whipping is not allowed.

Diane hopes to add a fourth Siberian to the racing team next winter. Hobo's now retired.

While Diane frowns on the win at all cost attitude of some drivers, she's proud of her first female award won at Cold Creek Conservation Area near Nobleton and a third prize received at Hamilton.

For Alice, there's a side benefit to all the thrills and spills of dog-sled racing. Mixing husky hair with wool, she weaves beautiful sweaters, mittens and scarves, highly prized by family members and friends.

"And while most townsfolk cringe at the sight of a few flakes falling through the air, Alice and Diane Vague are praying up a storm.

The lettering on Alice's sweater says it all: "Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow!"

## Christmas Day baby 'their greatest gift'

UXBRIDGE — She wasn't packaged under the Christmas tree but for John and Anita Speers of R.R. 1, Uxbridge, she's their greatest gift.

Leah Erin was born at 3:26 p.m., Dec. 25 in Scarborough Centenary Hospital. She weighed seven pounds, one ounce.

John and Anita had been visiting neighbors that evening, (Christmas Eve), and were en

route home when things began to happen. They set out for Scarborough Centenary a few hours later and Leah arrived that afternoon.

"It's their first but hopefully not their last, says Anita.

Proud grandparents are Edgar and Rosemarie Herrell, Conc. 2, Uxbridge and George and Ethlewyn Speers of Brantford. Proud great-grandmother is Mrs. Ethlewyn Daniels of Ingersoll.

### Clinic

A Red Cross Blood Donor Clinic will be held in the Legion Hall, Friday, Jan 8.

The location is Ninth Line North, Stouffville.

Donors should take note of the change in hours — 2 p.m. through 8 p.m.

Babysitting will be provided.

### First arrival

ZEPHYR — The population of Zephyr increased by one, Monday.

Daniel Robert Joseph Grimshaw, son of Karl and Joanne Grimshaw arrived at Uxbridge Cottage Hospital at 8:06 a.m.

He tipped the scales at seven pounds, twelve ounces.

He's the area's first baby in 1988 and a first child for Mr. and Mrs. Grimshaw.

The mother hopes to return home with her 'bundle of joy' on Friday.

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