

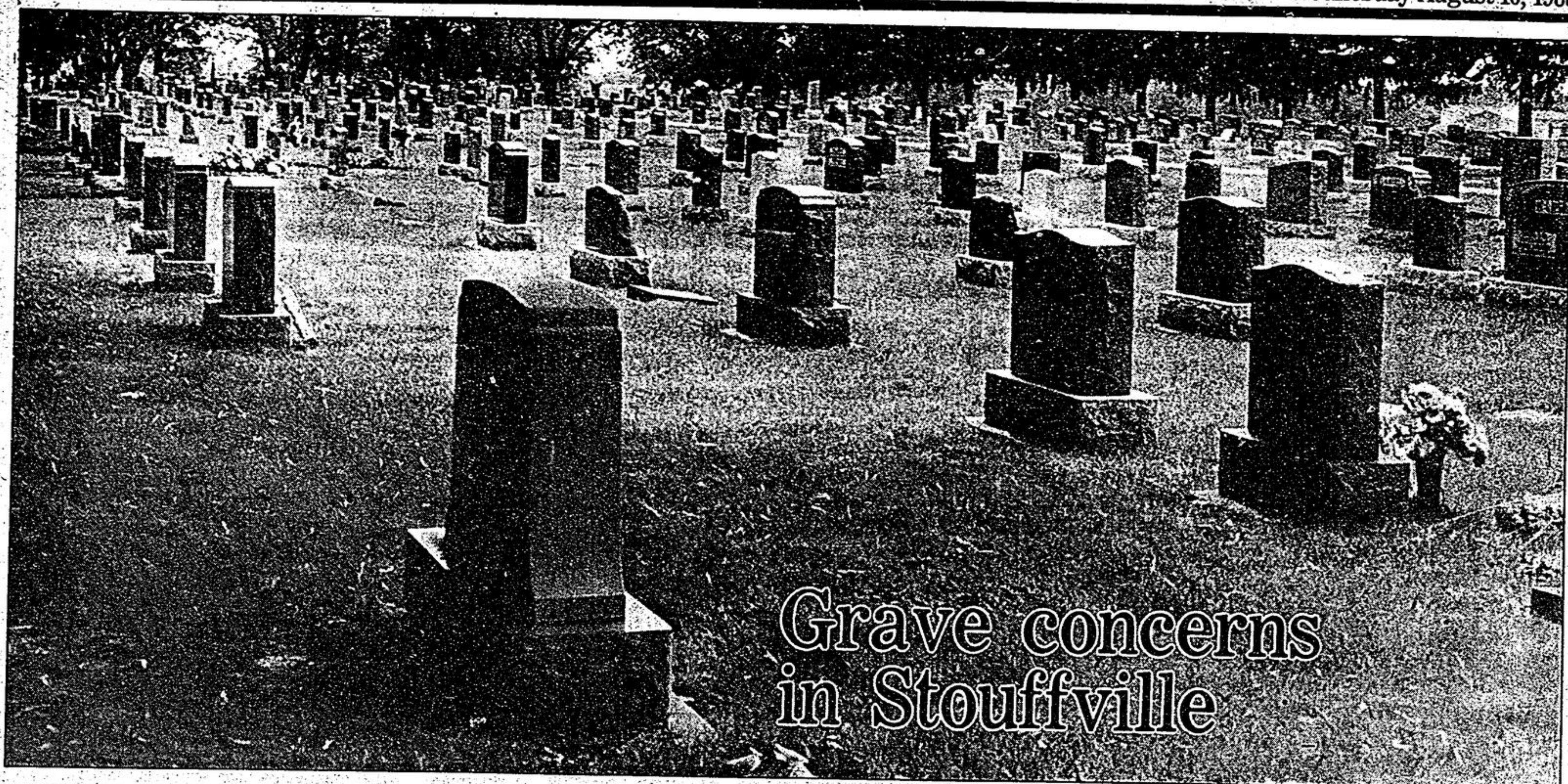
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Grave concerns in Stouffville

Cremation less popular than in larger centres

By KATE GILDERDALE
 It's human nature not to want to face up to one's own mortality. Nevertheless, the best time to plan for the inevitable is probably when the prospect of death is far away and therefore less overwhelming.

The realities of modern life make planning even more vital, says Allen Darling, a member of the Stouffville Cemetery Board. Allen points out that land values are skyrocketing and Cemetery space is becoming scarcer every year.

"If we continue at the current rate, we'll run out of land in 10 to 12 years," he contends.

The present site takes in just over eight acres.

"Some people have paid for plots but have never used them," notes Fay Minton, owner-operator of the O'Neill Funeral Home and also a member of the Cemetery Board.

When funds were needed, families bought blocks of plots and then moved away or changed their minds. "We can't sell these plots to someone else, even if they're not used," she says.

Another practical consideration for most people is cost.

A plot in the Stouffville Cemetery is priced at \$265. This figure will increase annually with inflation.

Eighty per cent goes into the

perpetual care fund, ensuring continued maintenance of the grounds.

"The Town does the work and charges the expense back to the Board," explains Fay.

Although the planting of shrubs and flowers by relatives is not allowed, many people ignore the restriction. Additional plantings make maintenance more difficult.

"It wouldn't be a problem if people took care of it themselves," Fay notes. She points out that Town employees, responsible for upkeep, haven't time to do the extra work.

Both Fay and Allen are pleased the Cemetery is financially self-supporting.

"If we ran out of money, the Town would support us. But we haven't had to ask them so far," observes Fay.

"It's important we keep the Cemetery self-sufficient so there's no cost to the taxpayer," Allen agrees.

One project currently under review is the building of a columbarium niche unit that the Cemetery Board hopes will be approved and installed by next spring. This will allow for cremation burials above ground.

"It's a concrete hexagonal unit encased in granite, with 144 niches that can each hold two urns," Allen explains, adding that the number of people opting for cremation is increasing annually.

Nevertheless, the difference in the percentage of cremations to burials between urban and rural areas is considerable.

Says Allen: "The city has a rate of about 50 per cent going for cremation. Ours is probably 10 per cent. The rest prefer burials."

With the Cemetery handling between 50 and 60 deaths annually, the unit would be viable for between 100 and 150 years at the present rate.

The Board plans to make the columbarium unit a focal point in the north end of the Cemetery, with a walkway and landscaping as well as benches for visitors.

Cost of the unit is estimated at close to \$25,000. Approval must be obtained from Town Council and the Provincial Government.

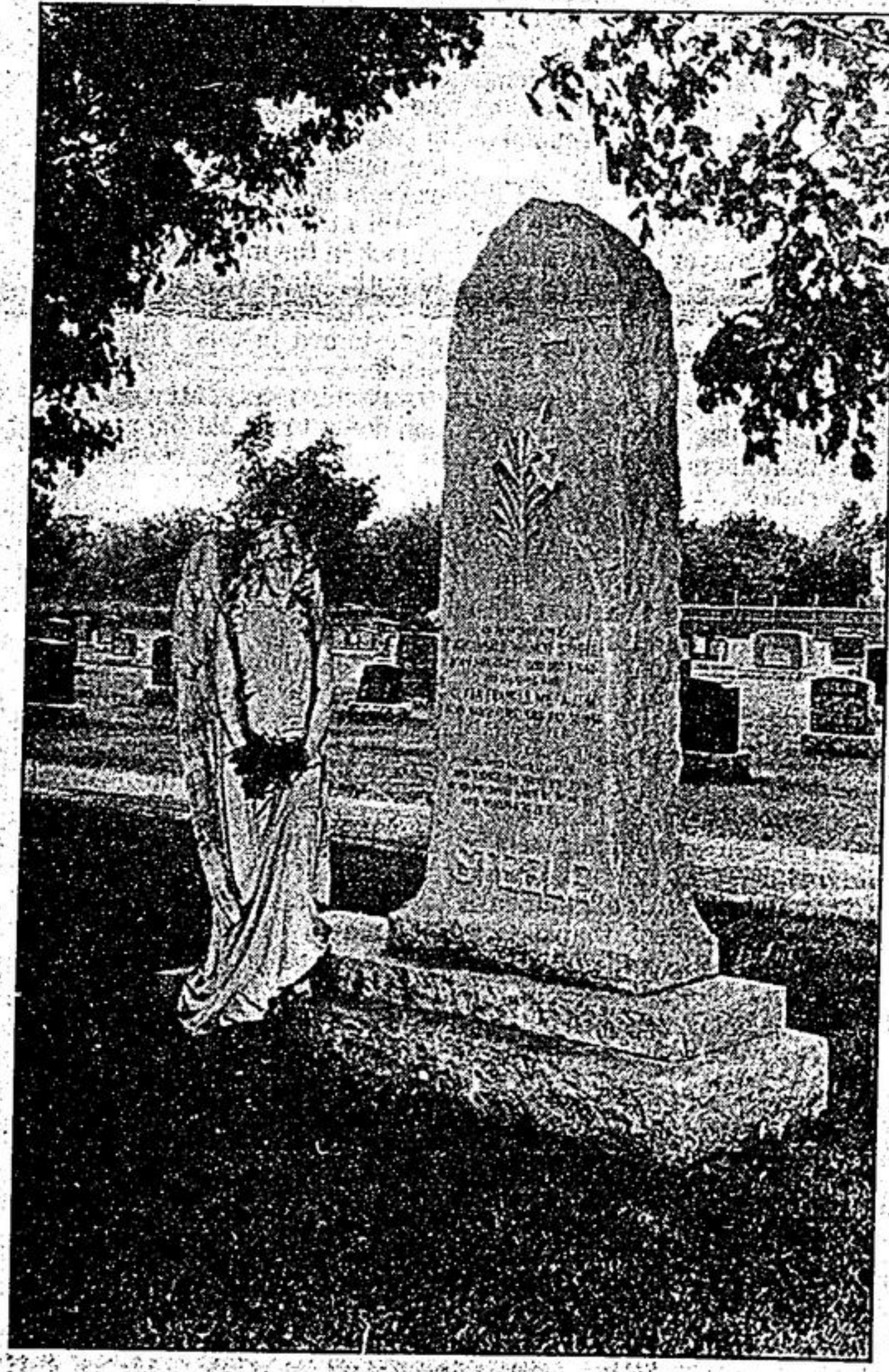
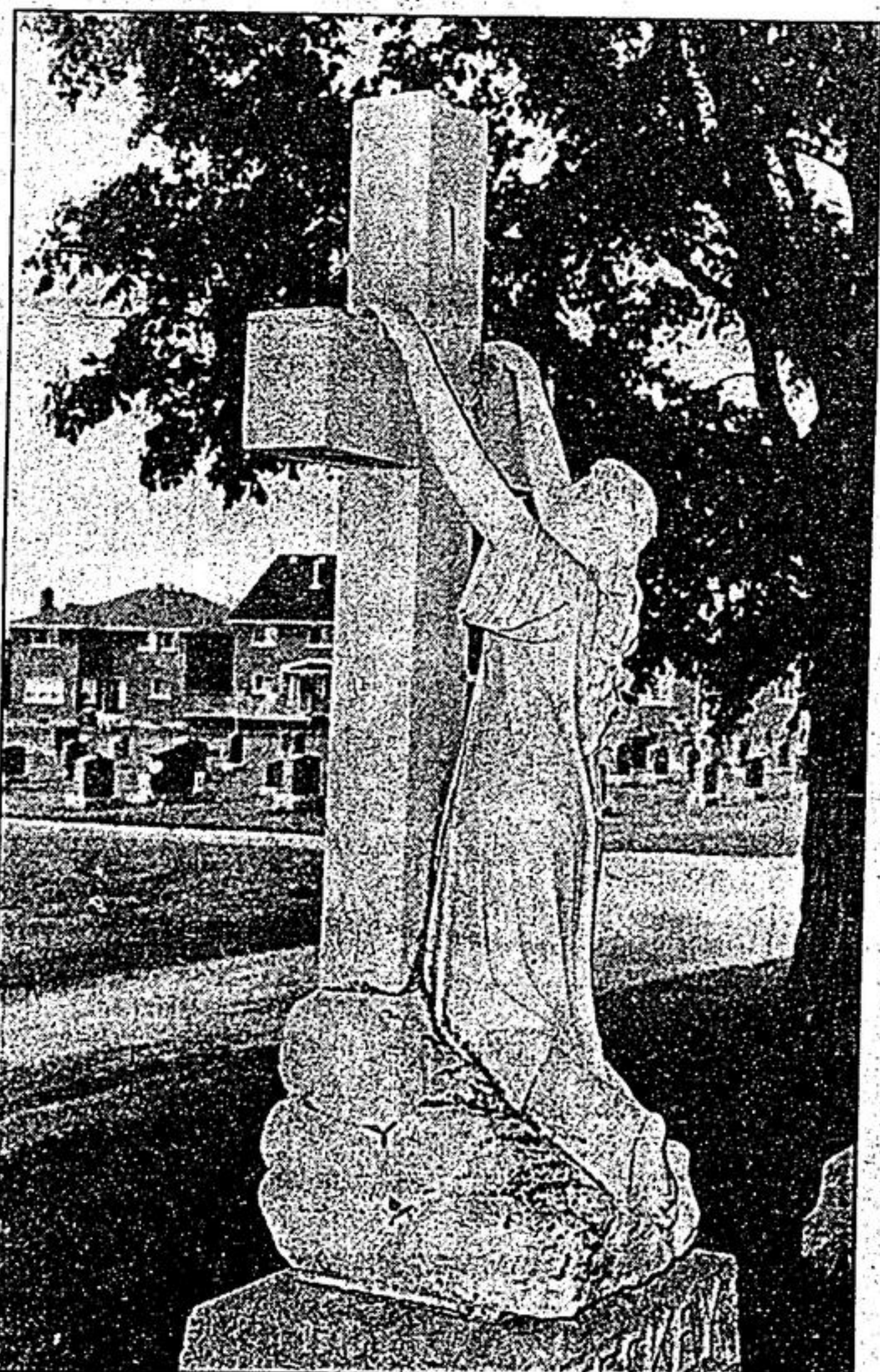
Although the installation was originally planned for fall, Allen now believes it won't be in place until spring.

Also under consideration is a site for memorial trees.

Once sufficient funds are available, it's hoped that perhaps 10 trees can be planted in a designated area.

Putting in all the trees at one time would be more cost effective than individual plantings, and would enhance a special place for the erection of a memorial plaque.

The names on the plaque would include all those in whose memory donations were made rather than a name for each



Frances Grove honored

By JIM THOMAS
 Seventeen-year-old Frances Grove displays an appreciative smile while displaying her Recognition Award for Outstanding Student Contribution.

The honor, received at a recent ceremony in Ajax, holds special significance. For Frances was born a PKU baby, a malady that spelled out means Phenylketonuria.

Solution to the problem is a low protein diet that Frances follows to the letter.

While the routine is ordinary now, parents Glen and Joan shudder at the consequences had the ailment not been detected. Frances, they feel, would have been mentally retarded.

It was Dr. Robert Allin of the Port Perry Medical Centre who performed the test only days after Frances was born. He contacted the family immediately and advised them to have her admitted to the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.

"I cried for three days and three nights," recalls Joan. "I couldn't understand what had gone wrong." Besides, their daughter seemed so bright.

She was, then. But her condition would have deteriorated if various procedures had not been followed.

Frances remained in Sick Kids two weeks. Even now, she at-



Frances Grove displays her Recognition Award for Outstanding Student Contribution. She recently taped a vocal audition for a musical at Canada's Wonderland and has a beautiful singing voice.

tends PKU clinics regularly just to make sure everything's on track.

Frances manages her own protein-free diet. Fruit and vegetables are fine. Meat, fish, eggs and cheese are out.

As a replacement for hamburgers, Frances eats mushroom burgers. She drinks powdered milk.

"We only go to restaurants that have salad bars," says Mrs. Grove. "At Christmas, she sets turkey aside and eats only her veggies."

Frances isn't complaining. In fact, she dislikes some of the food others consider commonplace.

Frances recently completed Grade 12 at Port Perry High. She was named to the 1988 honor roll.

separate tree, thereby allowing a permanent memorial for more people.

"We don't have a specific figure on this at the moment," says Fay, "but if a tree costs \$100 and someone donates \$25, we'll have several donations for one tree."

Another advantage of trees is that they will provide a screen between the Cemetery and new housing in the area, states Fay, although she points out that the problem of falling leaves on properties and other restrictions must be considered.

A fund has already been set up and people wishing to make donations for trees can approach the Board who will be responsible for having them planted.

Allen is in charge of selling plots and maintaining Cemetery records.

He feels people would be much better off if they planned their funeral arrangements well in advance, instead of leaving it to the last minute or letting distraught relatives handle arrangements after death.

"Probably 50 per cent leave their purchase of a cemetery plot until it's a case of absolute necessity," he observes. "With rates going up on an annual basis, it makes sense to consider it early." Furthermore, costs in Stouffville are far below those of the city, with some cemeteries charging more than \$1,000.

Fay's involvement with the Cemetery Board was a natural result of following in her father's footsteps.

"My father, (Tim O'Neill), operated the Cemetery on his own until the Village took it over in 1961. We still have the old maps," she explains.

The Cemetery Board includes three volunteer members appointed by Council. Serving in this capacity are Fay, Allen and town lawyer Eric Button.

"We maintain the Cemetery, make decisions on how to use donations and answer any questions people may have," notes Fay, adding that her position at the Funeral Home made her decide to volunteer her services.

Vandalism, a problem that often besets cemeteries is thankfully rare here, she states.

"This area is generally pretty good," she says.

Like Allen, Fay is concerned over the availability of land in the future.

"We're running out of property and there's no provision for a site at another location. The only way this can be overcome is for a developer to submit an application and the Town to agree, providing he sets a parcel of land aside for a cemetery," she suggests.

Allen has served on the Cemetery Board nine years, ever since he began working for the Town.

Although he acknowledges the position is one that some people might find depressing, he considers it a challenge. He also enjoys organizing the annual Decoration Day Service that always occurs the third Sunday in June.