

Claremont school urges canoe caution

By BRUCE STAPLEY
Correspondent

A local private boys school with 30 years experience in wilderness canoeing has expressed its shock and surprise following two separate canoe disasters in Ontario's north country recently.

St. John's School for Boys in Claremont, itself a victim of a canoe accident resulting in 13 deaths on Lake Temiskaming in 1978, is afraid that most people embarking on long distance canoe expeditions are unprepared for accidents.

"Back in 1978 we were in the same position as the people at C.W. Jeffries school in Toronto that almost lost two kids to hypothermia the other week," says St. John's Headmaster Rod Voss, himself an experienced canoeist.

"It could have happened to us any time. And despite the fact it was a freak accident at Temiskaming, and there was no criminal negligence, we were forced by the incidents to undertake a complete overhaul of our canoeing program."

And St. John's officials are not surprised that a McMaster

"No matter how close you are to shore, you can be overcome by hypothermia if your canoe tips this time of year."

University student died so quickly last week when the canoe he was travelling in tipped on Whitefish River.

"No matter how close you are to shore, you can be overcome by hypothermia if your canoe tips this time of year," says Mr. Voss.

He adds that St. John's doesn't permit canoe expeditions in May.

"The water and the temperature are just too cold this time of year. We always do our trips in mid-August," he says.

Mr. Voss says his school is willing to share its accumulated knowledge with anyone who is interested.

Since their own disaster, school officials have prepared a 17-chapter guide for the safe operation of the multiple-person canoe expeditions their students take annually.

"It wasn't based only on our own experiences," said Mr. Voss.

"It was written in conjunction with other knowledgeable experts in canoeing."

St. John's brigade leaders have a minimum of 100 days experience on the water, he says, and each canoe expedition is preceded by a rigid three-day training program where boys become well-versed with dumping and rescue procedures, as well as hypothermia avoidance and treatment.

"The boys learn about fire-drying themselves and their clothes," says Linda Hutt, an official at the school. "They are equipped with sleeping bags that keep them warm even when they are damp."

Mr. Voss says his school's six-man voyageur style canoes are each equipped with a two-way radio, and that the canoes travel at least in groups of three.

"And each canoe has a \$2,500

life raft, with the theory being that the best way to survive cold water is to get out of it as soon as possible," says Mr. Voss. "Hypothermia is the killer of the unprepared."

"It is absolutely essential that you have a healthy respect for hypothermia and the environment. There's a fine line between respect and fear," he adds. "It sounds like the hypothermia suffered by the C.W. Jeffries kids was simply the result of cold weather. They weren't able to warm them up and they had no radio."

Ms. Hutt says the point of the handbook is to "reduce the variables" that cause accidents.

Mr. Voss says those who take part in expeditions should make a point of studying material available, as well as undergoing training.

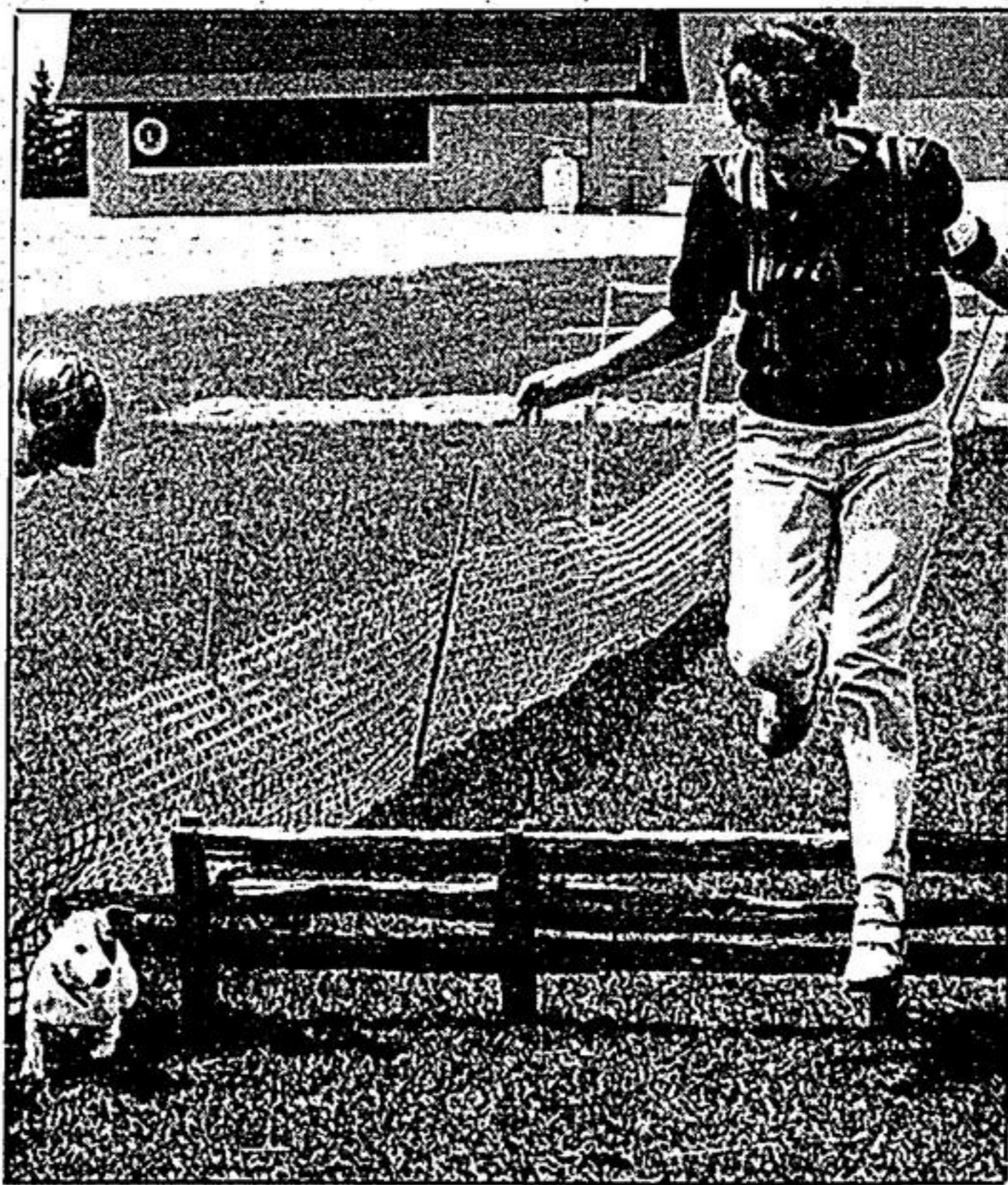
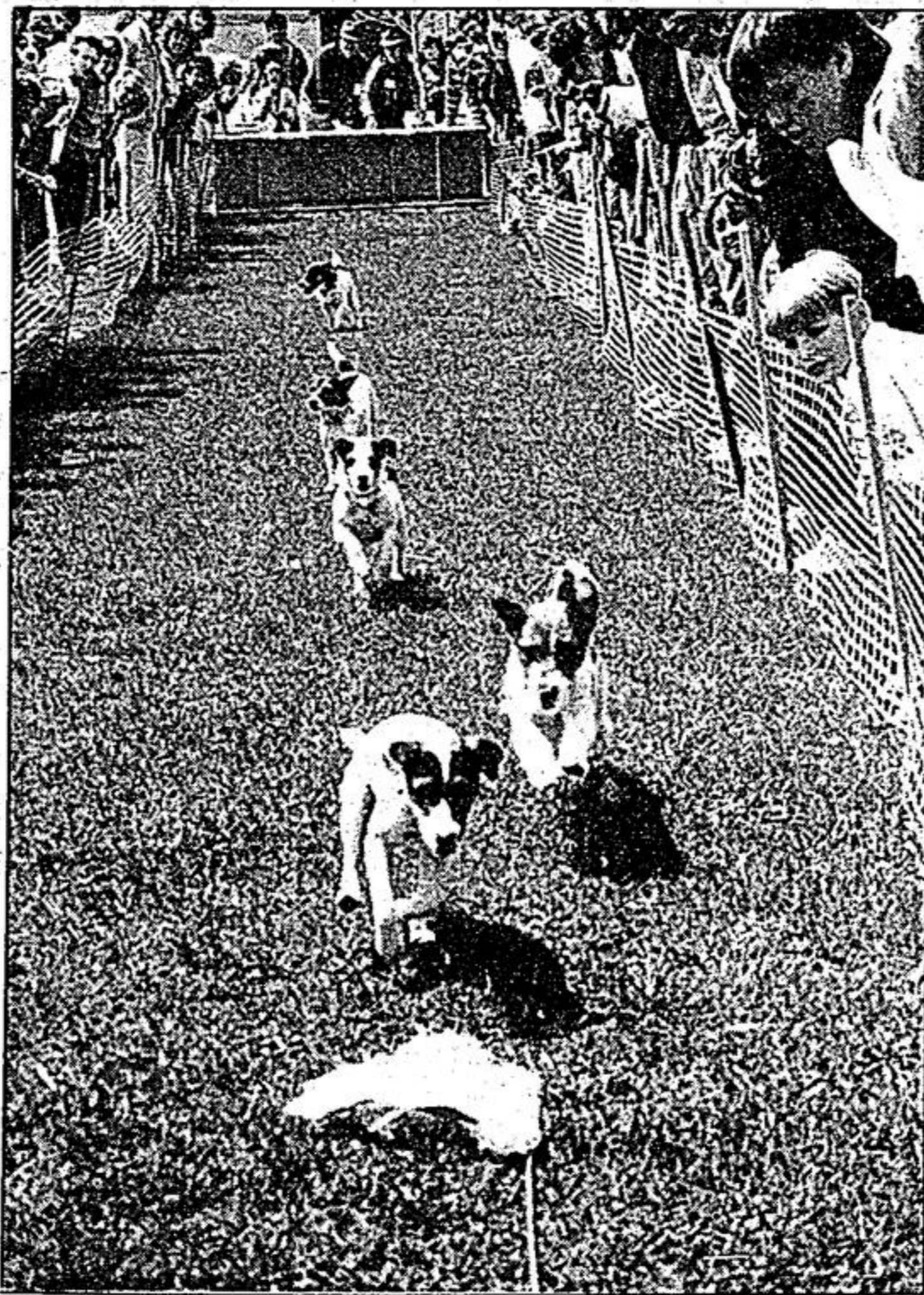
"Wilderness canoeing is not just another recreational activity like a trip to Canada's Wonderland," he says. "We now have the experience and knowledge. But the others must learn as we did. We're always happy to pass along what we have learned from others."



A strict training course and preparation are the keys to avoiding disaster while canoeing at this time of year when waters are still frigid, says St. John's Headmaster Rod Voss. The Claremont school's officials now wait until late summer before embarking on canoe expeditions, after a school outing turned tragic when 13 people were killed in an accident in 1978.

Local show teaches old dogs new tricks

Dog owners turned out with their best pet forward at a dog show held Sunday at Markham Fairgrounds, where pretty pooches and smart spaniels turned tricks and competed in a variety of fun competitions. The day brought out the best in the competitive canines as they barked, growled and licked their way to the top. In the photo at right, a pack runs in the Hillsborough Stakes to see which pup can catch the rabbit's tail. Far right, Gordon Rupay and his best buddy Corky take a break from the pressures of the day. In the bottom right photo, Maureen Lord tries unsuccessfully to teach Digger the way through this steeplechase course. This pup (bottom centre photo) wouldn't give up the rabbit's tail after all the work he went through to get it. Officials at the show tried to coax it away from the sore winner. In the photo below, Janet Sutcliffe takes her dog Foxden Badger through the paces before his competition.



Photos by
Andre Wolbert

Douglas 'Jack' Bielby was 'always cheerful'

Funeral services were held April 14, 1989 for Cyril Douglas "Jack" Bielby who died suddenly in Florida while out for a Sunday afternoon drive with his wife, Florence.

Jack, as he was known to his many friends, had been in failing health, having suffered a severe stroke 14 years ago. He also had several heart attacks and was unable to work, and spent winters in Florida.

Mr. Bielby was born Oct. 21, 1919 in Green River, the son of Charles and Elizabeth Bielby. He lived in the surrounding communities except for four years in Saskatchewan and during the Se-

cond World War when he joined the Elgin Regiment.

He served overseas as a transport driver with the Canadian Armoured Tank Corps and spent much of that time in Italy.

On March 20, 1948 he married Florence Reesor. They farmed at Atha and in 1958 they moved to Cedar Grove where he worked in trucking and dealt in livestock. Later, he worked at the IBM Country Club.

Hundreds of friends and relatives came to the Dixon-Garland Funeral Home in Markham to pay their respects and the largely attended funeral service was held at Zion Cedar

Grove United Church where Mr. Bielby was a member.

Rev. Kenneth Deer spoke of Mr. Bielby as a person who always looked on the bright side of life, despite his handicap. Even while he was in hospital, he was always cheerful.

Mr. Bielby is survived by his wife, three sisters, one brother and four daughters: Janet Dean of Uxbridge, Laura Campbell of England, Irene Orchard of Stouffville, and Alice Gillespie of Markham.

He also had seven grandchildren.

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