



PHOTO/MATT RICHOLLS

It was a fun day last Friday for Stouffville Preschool students, as they visited Lionel's Pony Farm on McCowan Road. Here little Laura Smith rides her favorite pony with the help of Marie Reed.

## Childhood an endangered state

A recent meeting organized by Orchard Park Public School's principal Jan de Laat on the loss of childhood underlined the fact that we no longer allow our children the luxury of growing up at their own pace.

It would be simplistic to lay the blame on the unprecedented number of two-income families and single mothers. Many parents in those situations more than compensate for their absence during the day, perhaps because they're especially aware of the potential problems of neglecting their children's emotional needs.

Perhaps the fastest-growing phenomenon of modern life is the disappearance of free time. It seems that parents panic when they find a spare hour or two in their children's schedules and feel an almost pathological desire to fill the time with a structured activity.

When I was in elementary school, I went to Brownies (leav-



**KATE'S CORNER**

Kate Gilderdale

ing only when I could no longer avoid the knitting test) and took ballet lessons. The fact that I had, to put it kindly, two left feet and minimal co-ordination didn't stop me from enjoying it or my parents from providing un-qualified support.

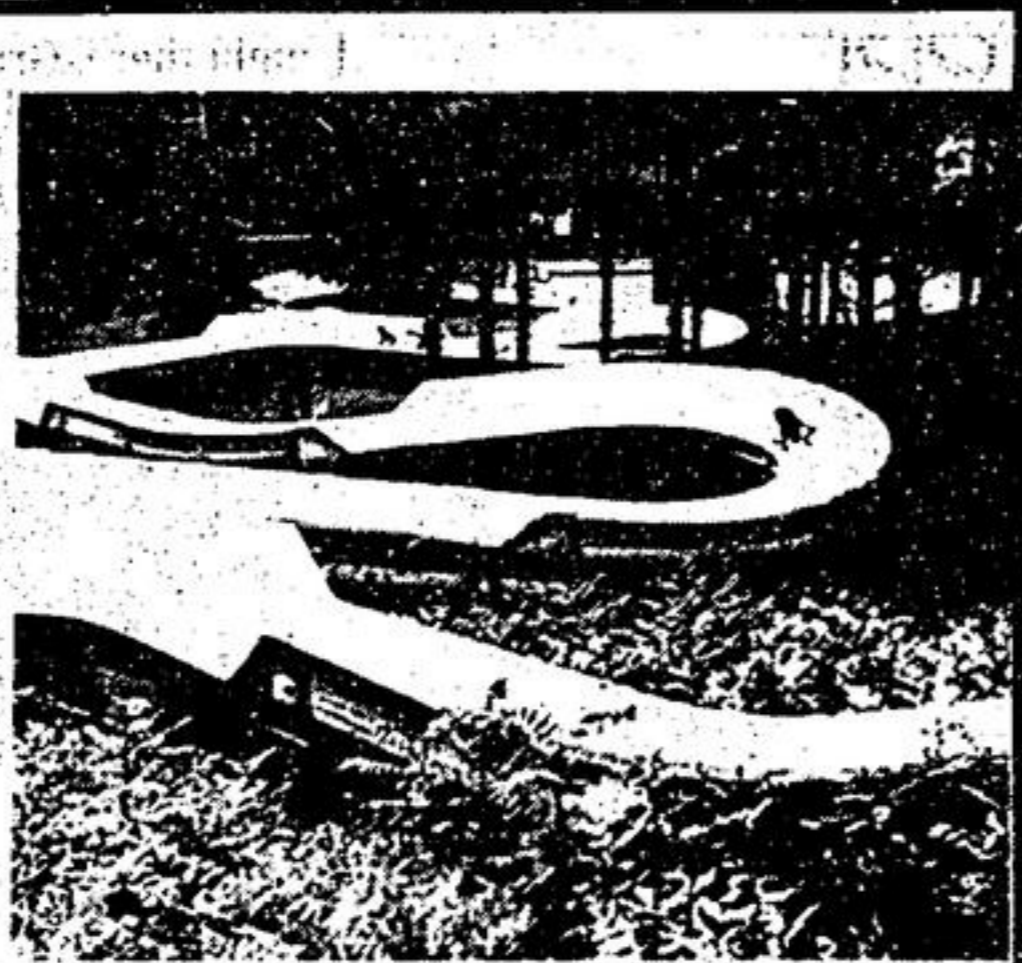
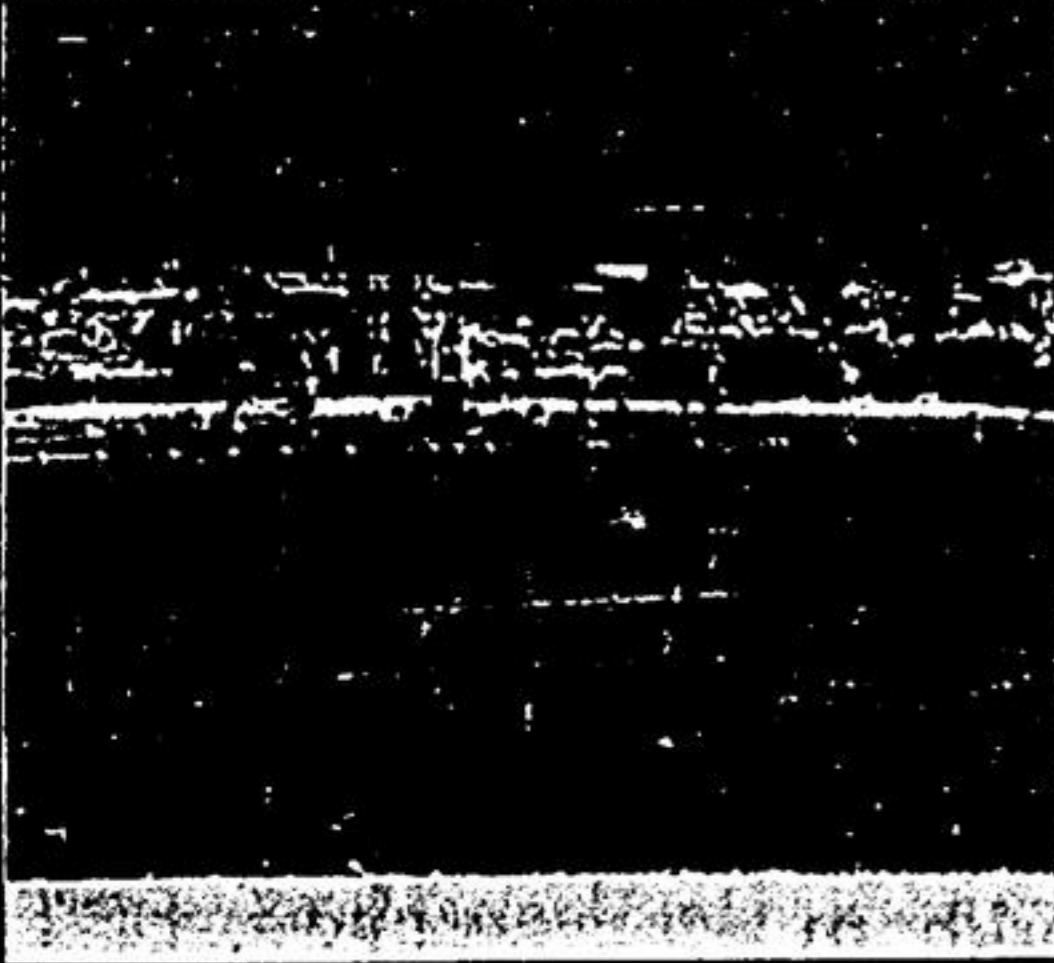
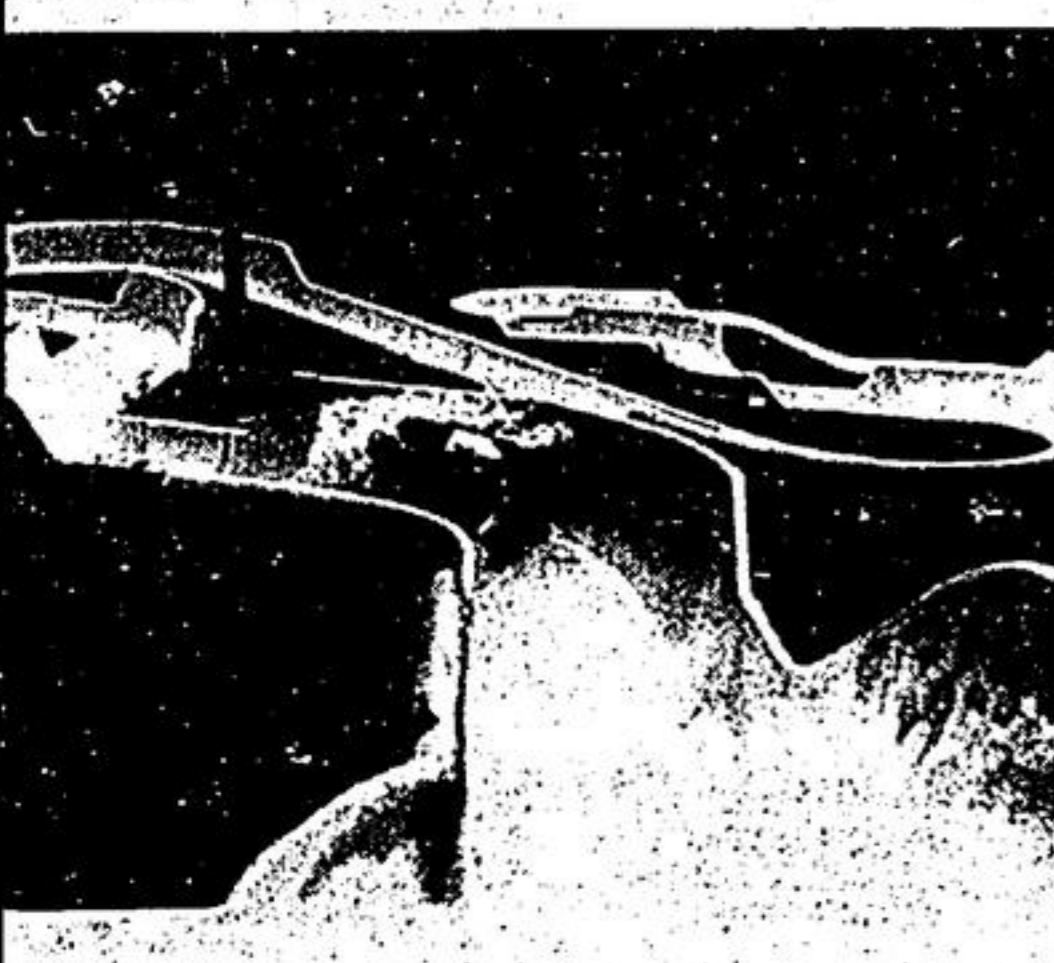
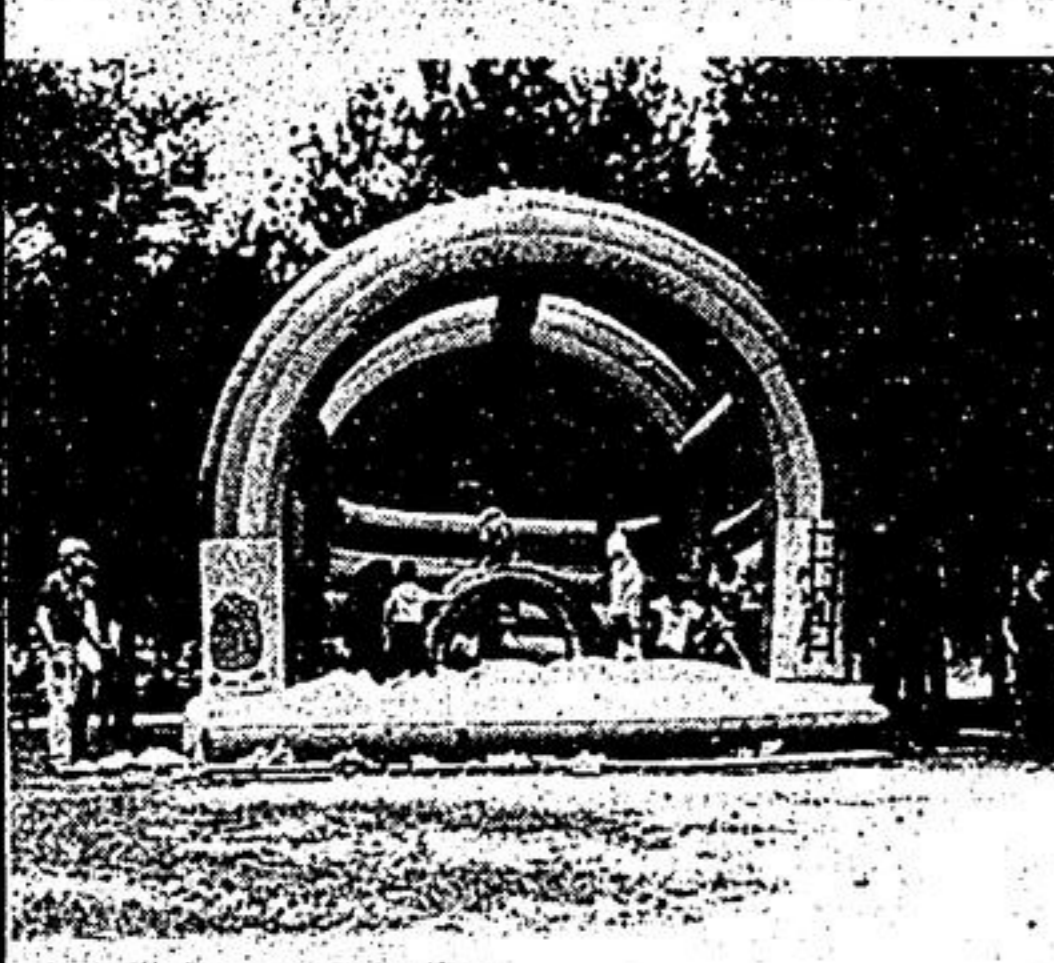
During my teenage years, I worked as a volunteer at the local hospital. I wasn't there at my parents' insistence; it was what I wanted to do and I loved it. The patients enjoyed having someone young and healthy to talk to, while I discovered the true pleasures of giving and the dawn- ing realization that I really did

have something worthwhile to offer other people.

I also spent a lot of time in my room, listening to my scratchy old 45s, day dreaming and talking endlessly about love, life and the unfairness of the world to my closest friends. On Saturday mornings, we'd go to the local coffee bar and listen to our favorite records on the juke box until we ran out of pocket money.

My free time was my own; we all helped out with chores but there was plenty of time left over to read, to organize our own games, to dream and to discuss our hopes and fears with our parents. Even then it was a hard, cruel world, but my parents' generation didn't feel it was necessary to force it down our throats.

It's not children who should grow up, it's adults. If we continue to put our own needs and aspirations before theirs, then childhood is indeed an endangered state.



## DISCOVER Pleasure Valley

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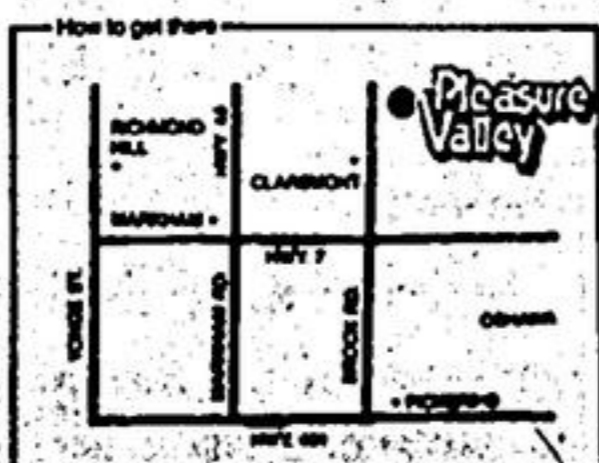
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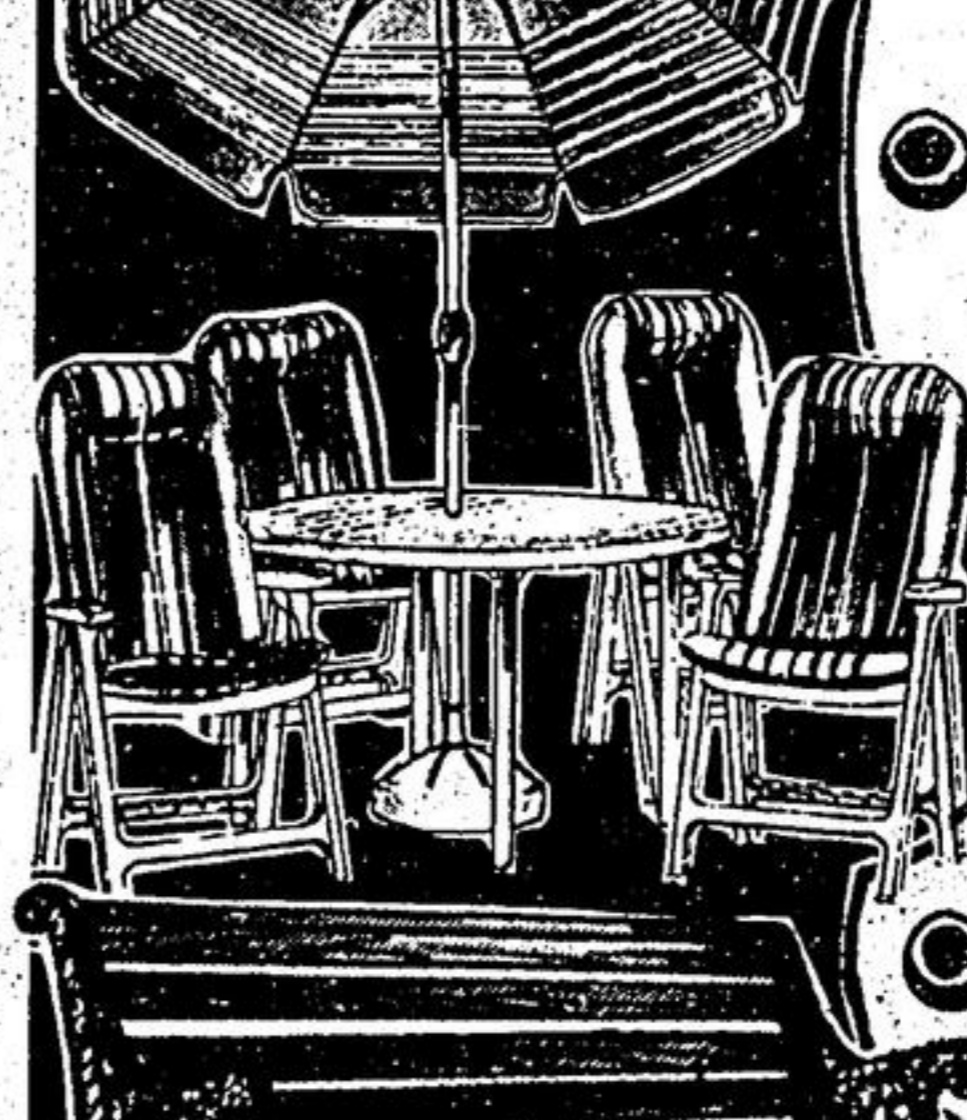


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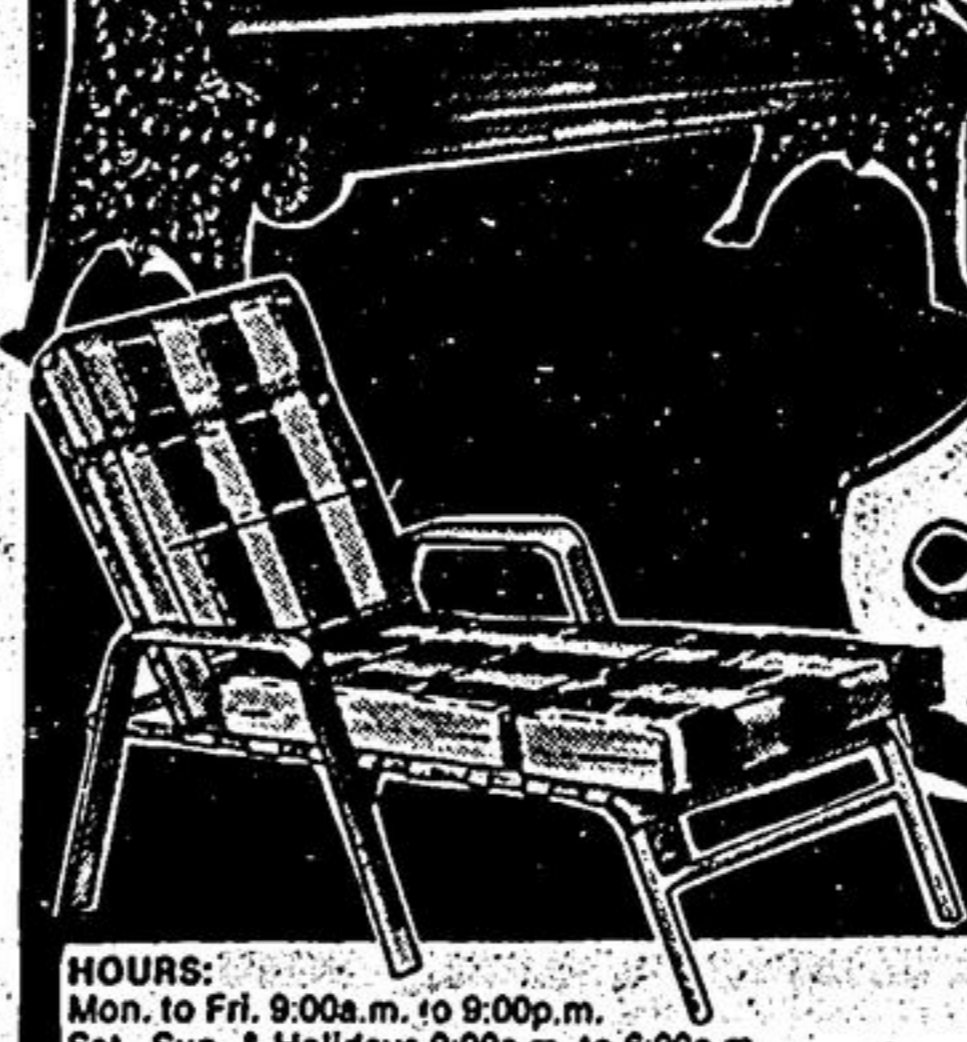


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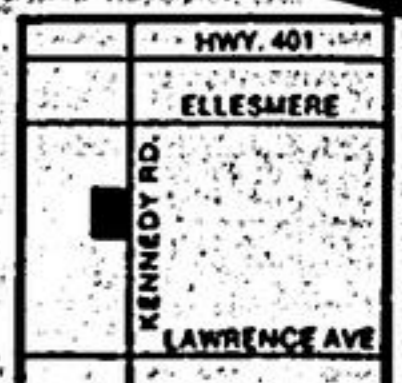
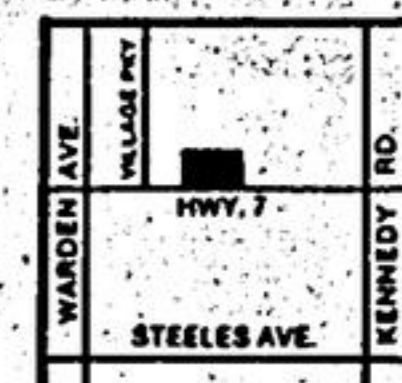
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