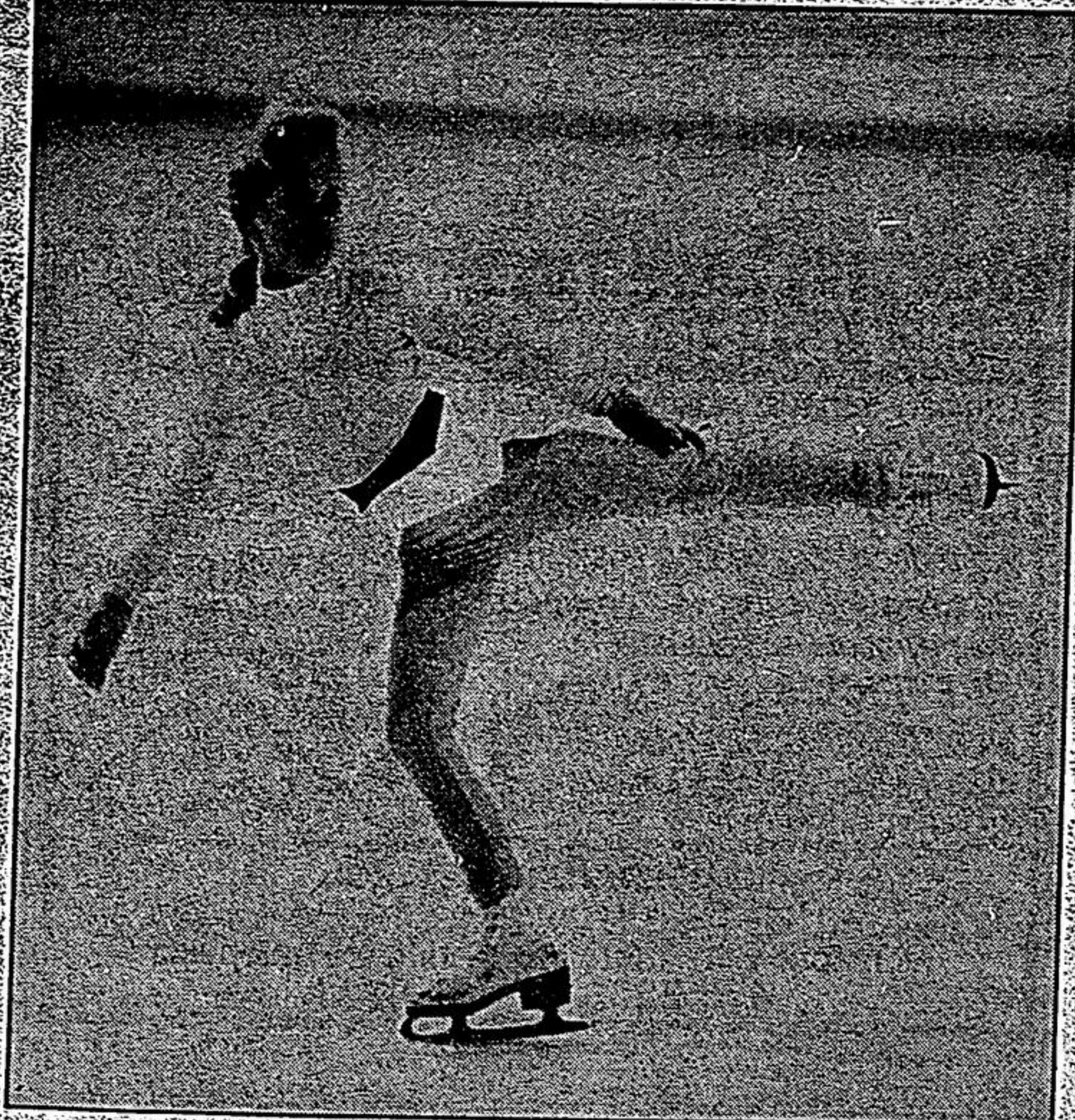


Stouffville's ballerina in step with her blossoming career



Stephanie Hutchison did a three day pirouette through town last weekend, spending some time with her family in Stouffville before going on to fulfill the dream of any aspiring Canadian Prima Ballerina.

Only 19, Stephanie has been under contract with the Ottawa Ballet for the last year and a half.

But it's been a long haul from her first ballet lesson as a five year old in Port Coquitlam, BC to the point where she is about to dance opposite Frank Augustyn in the company's upcoming production of "Come Rain or Come Shine", to be performed in eight California cities this winter.

Way of life

For Stephanie, ballet has been a way of life for as long as she can remember. Born in Kitchener, she lived with her family in BC before moving to Stouffville at the age of eight.

She took lessons from local dance instructor Pirkko Eagar for a year, then enrolled in the National Ballet School in Toronto as a child of 10.

The institution combines academics with ballet instruction, and Stephanie was a live-in student, returning home to spend weekends with her family.

Her father would visit her one night a week, and Stephanie recalls being more than a little bit homesick the first few years at the school.

Dedication

But her dedication saw her through and when she graduated

FROM WHERE I LIVE

Bruce Stapley



in June of 1989, she was immediately picked up by the Ottawa Ballet.

In her first year with the highly regarded company, she spent five weeks touring California and Oregon, before performing in Florida and the north eastern states.

Her summer break was spent partly in relaxation, and partly in upgrading her skills by way of her attendance at a two and a half week, extensive dance course in Cologne, Germany.

It was back to work in September, and she finished up the fall season performing in the Ottawa troop's production of "The Tin Soldier".

Rehearsals

This past Tuesday found her back in Ottawa beginning six weeks of rehearsals for the upcoming California tour. And she's more than a little in awe at the prospect of working opposite Augustyn.

"It's exciting to work with Frank," she told me. "It's such a good feeling."

Stephanie feels she's got another 15 years minimum at her chosen profession, after which she'll think seriously about such other life pursuits as starting up

a family of her own. She says she may decide to move on to a larger ballet company at some point, but that for now she's more than happy to be where she is.

Dispensed

And then, having dispensed with the pertinent details of her still blossoming career, I asked Stephanie the question that arises in my mind each time I watch the ballerinas stepping about on tippy toes across the stage of the O'Keefe Centre.

Namely, doesn't it hurt the feet?

"You get used to it," she assured me. "You learn to ignore it over the years of training."

As for preparing her toe shoes for personal use, she, like all ballerinas, has a standard procedure for softening the hard toes of a new shoe.

"I just step on the toe with my foot. I sometimes hit the back of the shoe against the wall to soften the sound when I'm dancing."

So there you have it.

The big picture, and the inside story of the back stage preparations, of a local girl who went after a dream at an early age, and made it happen.



Blades of glory

Above, Jennifer Ozolins of the Uxbridge Skating Club, performs in the pre-preliminary ladies division at the 1991 EOS Interpretive and Artistic Event at the Uxbridge Arena recently. Jennifer placed fourth in the competition. Below, Tiffani Foster completes a spin.

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