

The highnote of a quiet life

I sat in the living room of an Uxbridge senior couple last Thursday night, holding a cheque for \$250,000 in my hands.

The couple, whose last names won't be given here for discretionary reasons, had been presented with the cheque just a few hours earlier by the Ontario Lottery Corporation in Toronto.

It had been an action packed, fate-filled 24 hours. Wednesday afternoon, Ray picked up his cane, made his way to the couple's six-year-old car, and headed to Zehrs to buy two tickets, just as the pair had been doing for years.

He put the tickets on the dining room table, and told his 85-year-old companion Reta to pick one. Reta pointed to one of them, and then handed him a two dollar bill as payment.

Later in the evening, Reta, who



From Where I Live

Bruce Stapley

spent most of the winter in hospital battling a bowel problem, went to bed. Ray stayed up to watch the 11 o'clock news, writing down the winning numbers for the night's Lottery 649 draw and Encore selection. He checked his own ticket, then, upon noticing Reta hadn't left her ticket in its usual spot on the buffet, woke Reta to ask her about it.

She produced it, and asked Ray to read off the Encore numbers. He began with the final digit, a

seven. Another two dollar prize, she thought, as she saw her number also ended with a seven.

Ray then called off the other five numerals. Reta couldn't believe it. Hers were identical. They were so excited they couldn't sleep the rest of the night.

The next morning, they pulled themselves together. Ray picked up his cane, and Reta took hold of her walker. The couple, who have been together since 1978, 10 years after the death of Reta's husband, made their way to the car, then to Zehrs.

When the cashier ran the ticket through the computer to verify it, a sense of unbridled excitement overtook the store employees as well as the smiling couple.

They then braved the traffic congestion of Toronto, which they refer to as "a rat race". They finally arrived at the lottery office in downtown Toronto, but had to park a full two blocks away.

According to the winners' assistant at the Lottery Corporation, the first thing Reta said she was going to do with her windfall was go out and buy a new handbag. After that, she said she might buy a few things for the house, and maybe even a new car.

They said they might celebrate by heading out to Swiss Chalet, one of their favorite eateries, after catching up on the sleep missed amid all the excitement.

Reta, who has six children, 18 grand kids, and 23 great grandchildren, hasn't driven since suffering her heart attack in 1980. But before slowing down due to health reasons, she had taken a grand total of 72 foster children through the years in conjunction with the Children's Aid Society.

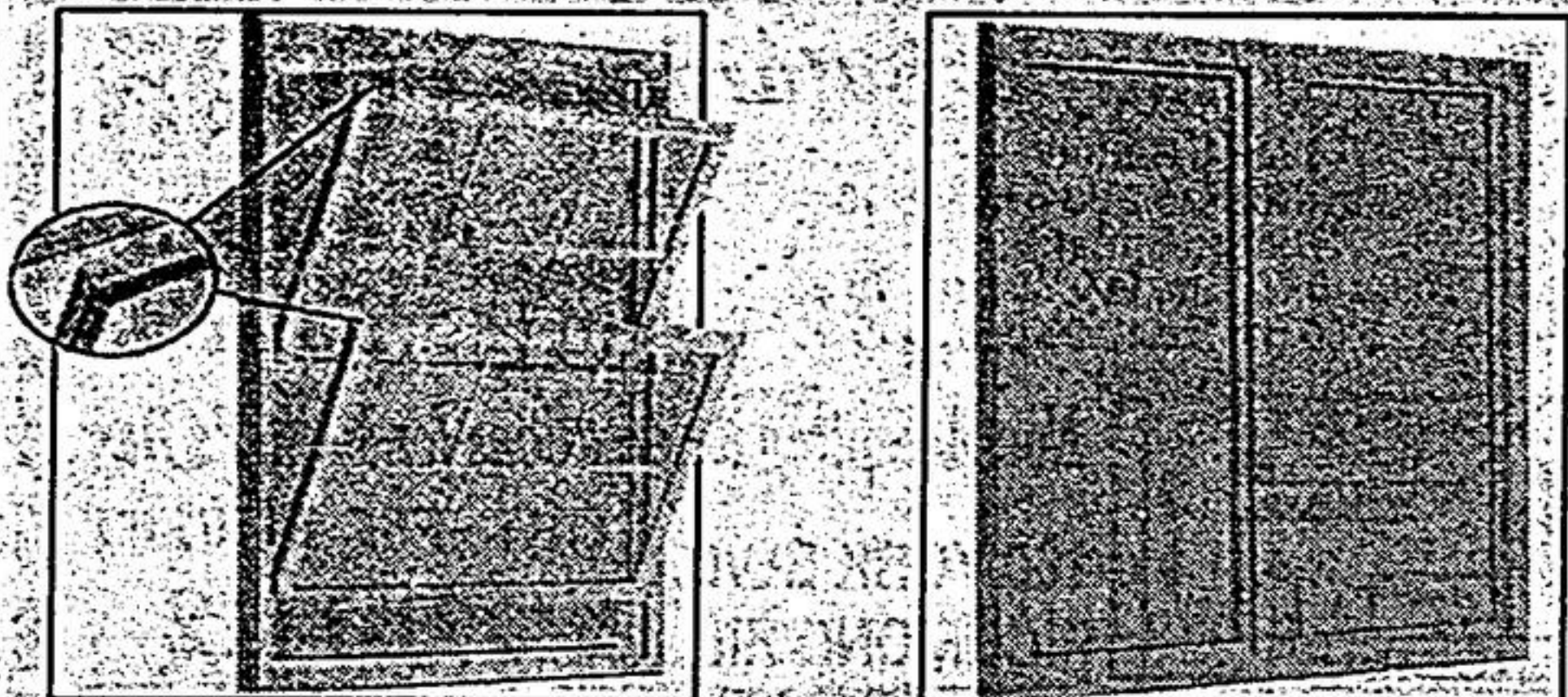
Ray, who has managed to overcome several serious illnesses and recently had an artificial hip inserted, has long since retired from a local gravel company.

"We're just a couple of cripples" laughed Reta, overstating things more than a little bit. In fact, the two are delightfully lucid, and nimble enough considering the health wars they have fought.

As for whether or not they would continue to buy lottery tickets now that they finally won a "biggie", Reta said they most certainly would.

After all, old habits die hard.

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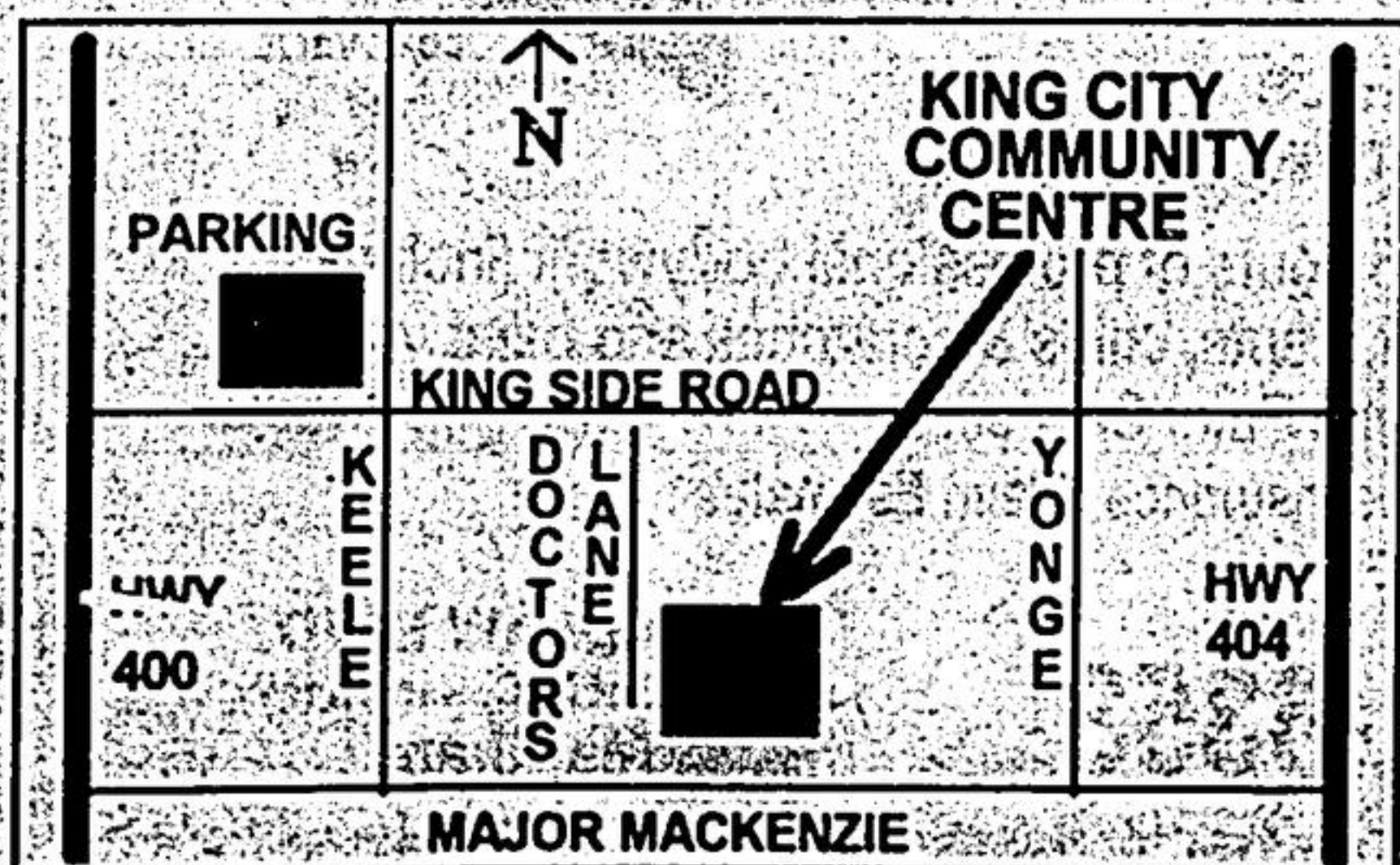
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