

Closing gallery a disgrace

LETTERS

Dear Editor,
 Latcham Gallery: To Be or Not To Be
 The spiritual health of our community seems to be a subject given little thought in our town these days. With total disregard for the wishes of fellow residents, with complete disrespect for thousands of hours of volunteerism, and in absolute ignorance of the loss to our community, the Board of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library is attempting to stop the operations of Latcham Gallery. Given the task of caretaking and advocating for the facility, with only a few weeks' experience to their credit, they are dismantling a program which has enriched our town for the past 19 years. The agenda item at last Tuesday's meeting was listed as setting a date for a public meeting regarding the future of the gallery. The real agenda was "Close the Gallery."

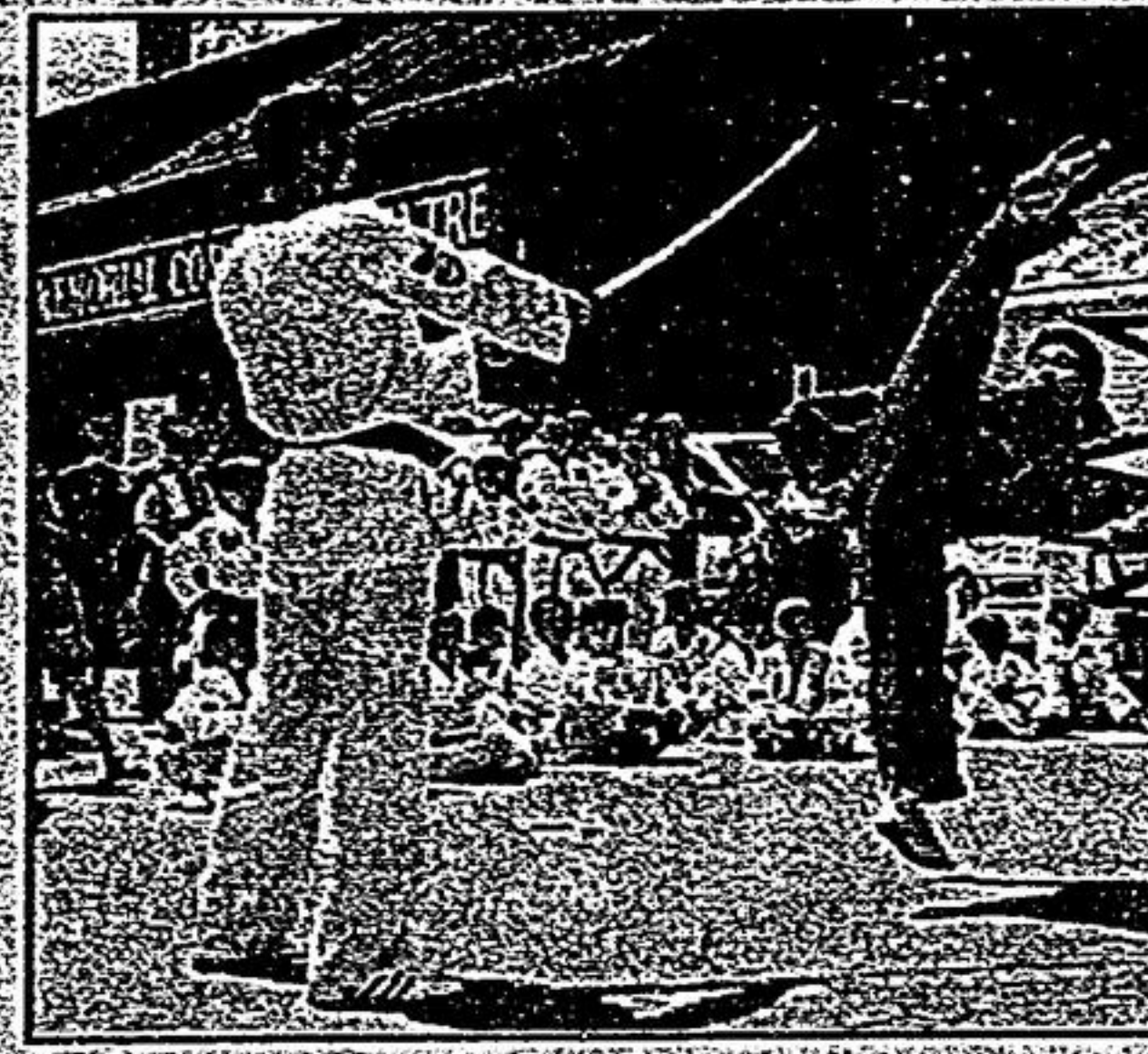
The behaviour of the Library Board as representatives of the public was disgraceful. The motion was preplanned and obviously discussed beforehand. I asked to speak in defense of the gallery, offering to share facts, history, hopes for the future. I was interrupted and thanked for my "passion." My pleas fell on deaf ears. Their minds were closed tighter than a steel trap. When informed that signed contracts existed with artists for exhibitions through into 1999, their concern was for the legal implications only. Artists, having received a commitment, whether legally binding or not, have a right to a moral commitment as well. This would be called integrity by those who understand the definition of the word. But integrity also seems to have vacated the premises.

This motion by the Board has the backing of Town Council. What does this say about the moral code of our elected representatives? Is this decision in the town's best interests? You may not personally understand or reap the benefits of the Gallery program, but you may agree that a community needs balance in what it offers its residents in leisure activity. With approximately 6,000 visitors last year, have you considered the economic impact to Main St. businesses? Have you checked with staff at Stouffville District Secondary School to see how many students in last year's graduating class went on to further education in the arts? Has your child ever been enriched during a school visit or a Saturday morning art class? Do you believe that culture is worth supporting with your municipal taxes?

If your answer is yes to any of these questions, please tell your elected representative. Let's hope there are minds and ears open enough to hear you.

Sharon Maude
 Former Board Member,
 Whitchurch-Stouffville Public
 Library, Latcham Gallery volunteer,

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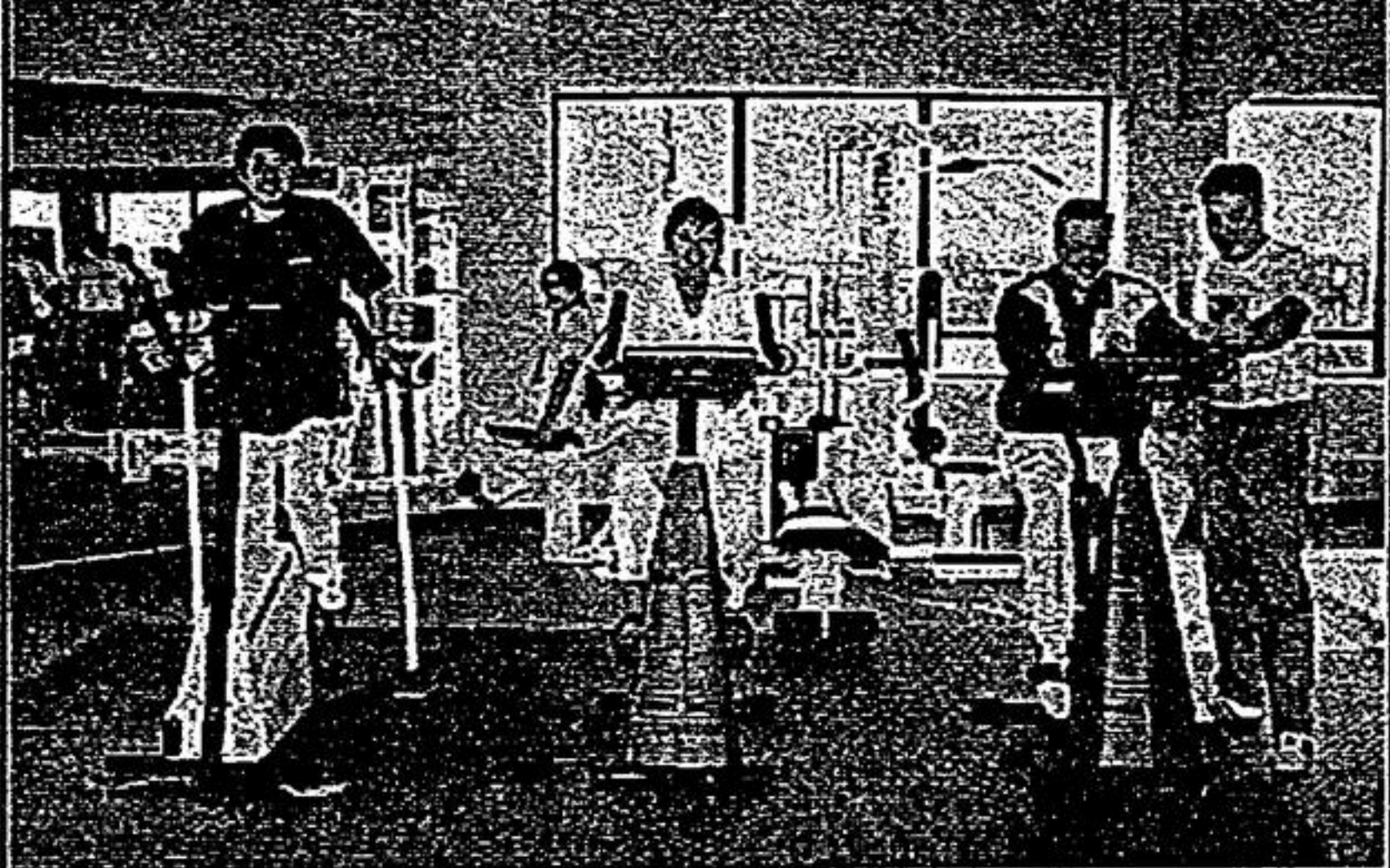
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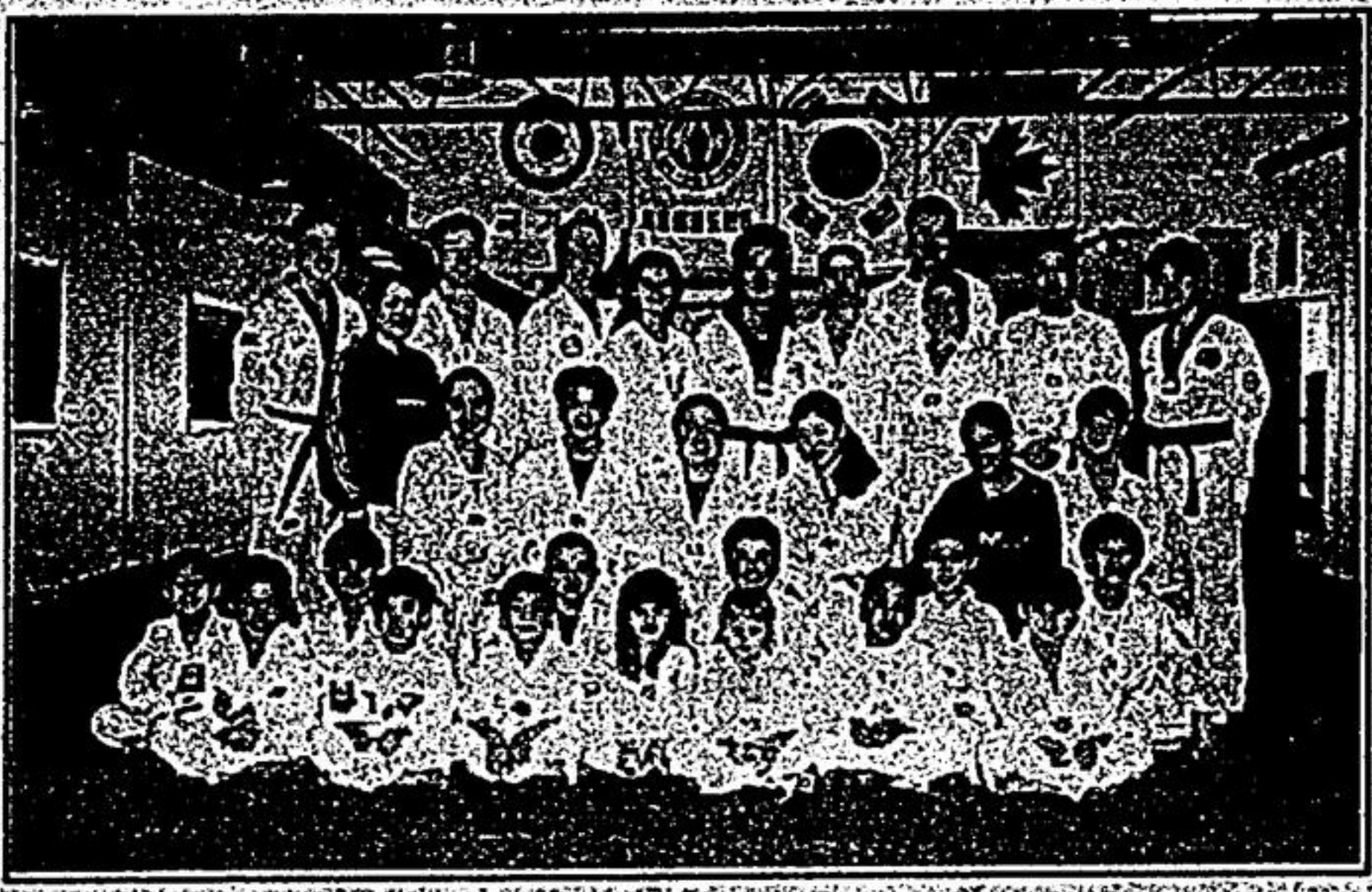
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