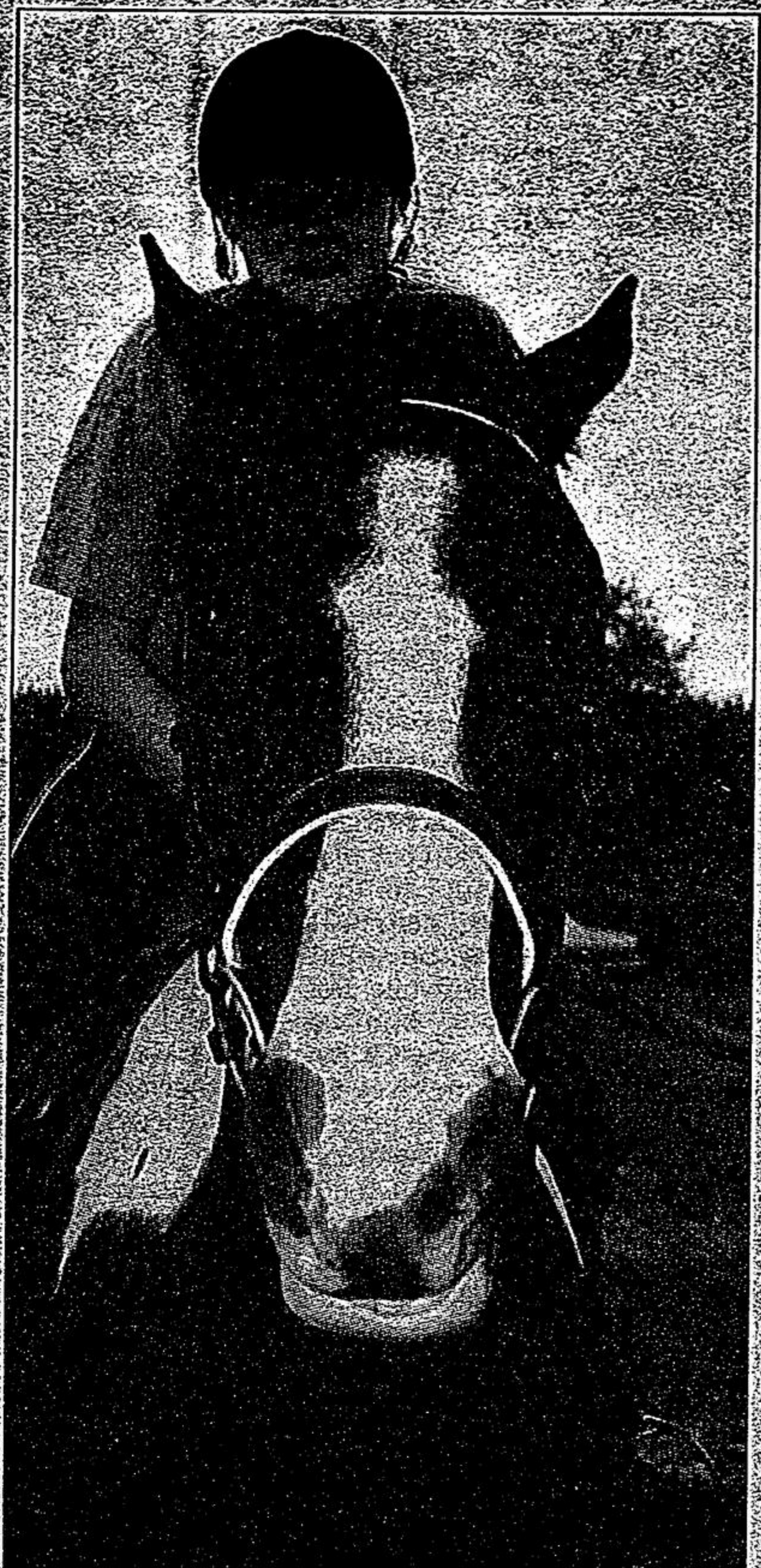


CAUSE TO RIDE



PHOTO/LORI EMMERSON

Genevieve Pairaudeau rides Picasso, the smiling horse, from Al's Tack Shop to start the recent 25-kilometre Great Canadian Ride for Cancer.

# Bell blamed for 911 'mix-up'

FROM PAGE 1

Pickering instead of to Markham where the region's calls are supposed to go.

Not knowing where else to turn, Gibson phoned 911 once again. "They tried to transfer me to Pickering, I told the operator that I had been there, done that, only to be told that they didn't know quite what to do for me. After another 10 minutes of telephone follies, I finally got hold of the local (Stouffville) fire department and they promptly responded," she said.

The 911 system needs improvement and failed in this instance, Stouffville Fire Chief Bill Brown admitted.

"Yes, this is serious," he added.

Brown and York Region officials are blaming Bell Canada for the glitch, but say they are working with the phone company to fix the problem.

Bell Canada "may not have registered the call with the 911 system," agreed Gord Landon, York Region's emergency systems committee chairperson. "This call shouldn't have been transferred to Pickering — it's obvious the closest fire department would be the one to respond."

While acknowledging the problem does exist, this case is "very unusual," he said. "Bell just hasn't got the information yet."

Bell Canada is supposed to register all new telephone numbers with the main routing system in Ottawa where all York Region 911 calls are directed. But Bell won't take all the blame.

In the case of new development, "the municipality works with Bell Canada long in advance" to make sure the mapping is in the correct order, said Bell Canada spokesperson Don Hogarth. "The correct address should have been in hand for that house."

While an unacceptable situation, Gibson's problem is not common, Hogarth said. "It's a very unusual set of circumstances."

As a safeguard, Hogarth advises owners of new homes across the region to call Bell Canada to ensure their address is registered with the 911 system.

Gibson has nothing but praise for the local fire department. "This (complaint) is no way directed to our fire department. Our firefighters are fabulous," she said.

Brown said since this mix-up took place, he's been working with Bell Canada to make sure all local addresses at new homes are registered with 911. "There was a mix-up. But, we've fixed it. Because of this, we've averted trouble in the future for (Gibson) and for the others," Brown said.



Joan Ransberry

## Time to ban all guns from community

If I woke and was told there was not a gun left in Canada, I'd dance in the streets.

I hate guns.

When I was driving to Bloomington Road on Monday morning to interview a man about a gun incident, I thought about another gun story published 20 years ago. It was so very tragic. Two Oshawa children were playing with a gun which belonged to the father of one. The gun discharged killing one boy instantly.

Because I was a newspaper reporter, I was asked to do a "cold call" and a "pickup." In media language, a cold call for a pickup means going to someone's home unannounced and picking up a picture of a dead person. I sat in my car at the curbside trying to get enough courage to go to the door. At that moment, I hated my job. I hated guns. I hated death.

While I made it to the door, I didn't get a picture of the dead child. A grief-stricken father told me to leave the property pronto. I did as I was told. I glanced next door to where the boy was shot. I wondered what they did with the gun. And, today, I wonder how the gun owner has lived with himself for the past 20 years.

In the course of my career, I've carried out many, many successful cold calls and pickups. And I've had the misfortune to cover stories involving guns and death, including the death of kids.

I simply don't understand the right-to-bear-arms mentality. I don't know why Canada didn't ban guns years ago. Canadians are peaceful people. The Canadian lifestyle does not include guns.

Here in Whitchurch-Stouffville, hunting is restricted in about 60 per cent of the town. It's a good start. Now let's finish it.

Two years ago, a pregnant Elmvale woman and her toddler were sitting on their front step. A bullet whizzed by and lodged in the door directly behind the mom and the tot. The woman launched a campaign to get council to restrict the use of firearms. Council responded to the plea to keep hunters away from residential areas.

The shooting incident last Monday shocked a Bloomington Road resident. Buckshot from a shotgun showered a truck seconds after Charles Alldred climbed into the cab. Pellets from a shotgun laced the roof and hood of his truck. It happened when Alldred was about to back out onto the busy highway.

"As the pellets struck my truck, I could hear the geese flying above," Alldred said.

The pellets could have hit a car, started the driver and caused a terrible accident. Of course, hunters would simply call it a fluke incident and rattle on about how many people didn't get shot.

If the buckshot struck and blinded Alldred's two-year-old granddaughter, hunters would also call it a fluke. I'd shudder to think of how the hunters would make out after Alldred got finished with them.

York Regional Police are combing the area looking for the hunter while Whitchurch-Stouffville chief bylaw officer Keith Saunders reminds hunters the maximum fine for violating the town's gun laws is \$5,000.

While I commend the town for having a law linked to discharging firearms, complete with its fine, I encourage the town to go the limit.

Let's ban all guns.

## Volunteering can be frustrating, Sword says

FROM PAGE 1

the University of Western Ontario. As a high school student he had watched with interest the changes in the universities brought on by the student protests of the 1960s.

But when he arrived on the scene, he was confronted by a lack of follow-through by the students.

"All this change had occurred, but when I got there I saw that the students weren't doing the work sitting on councils, etc." Sword earned a Bachelor of Arts degree, and then a masters in library arts, at Western.

Sword's employment history since moving to Stouffville has been dotted with various full and part time positions in and around Stouffville, along with some computer contract work.

But his preoccupation with volunteer commitments has always come first. Even a bookstore he opened in

1993 became a base for his extracurricular activities.

"We were always having meetings of the historical society and the recycling group there," says Sword, who recalled hosting a 'Save the Post Office' meeting at the store with then-MP Jag Bhaduria in attendance.

Ten years after coming to town, Sword says he's still in the volunteer mainstream.

"I'm certainly no less involved now." He said the trick lies in deciding what is of the most value for the community. "You can never do everything, but it's easy to do too much."

He said it can be discouraging when the efforts of himself and his fellow volunteers seem to go unnoticed at times.

"There's a frustration sometimes

when you can't get people to come out to the meetings or pay their \$7.50 membership fee."

He said he fears a trend that has seen many volunteer groups go from being active workers to mere fundraising bodies.

"That irks me. You find yourself becoming the middle man, the finder of funds rather than the actual doer."

The various levels of government have, in some cases, turned volunteerism into a complex task, he suggested.

"It seems things just can't be done informally anymore by throwing together a bunch of volunteers to get a job done."

Now, they (government bodies) tender it out, and it's back doing what he likes in the company of like-minded people. "I really enjoy the things I'm involved in. We just seem to have a good time together."

**You can never do everything, but it's easy to do too much**

• Steve Sword

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