

Sale will raise funds for prosthesis

FROM PAGE 1

Millennia, a Snap-On Tools chest, a silver tea service and golf accessories.

"We're raising money to try to offset the cost of the prosthesis," explained Sonja. "The government will pay a portion and our insurance will pay some, but the problem is no one will commit the money until there's a final bill. We don't really know where we stand."

Matthew also hopes to get a sturdier sports foot and a soft neoprene bootie so he can continue his karate career (he's a black belt) and do such ordinary things as riding his bike or walking on the beach.

One morning last spring, Matthew woke up feeling sick. Fever, nausea and diarrhea grew increasingly worse through the day and, by the evening, he was extremely ill. When he got up around 8 p.m., his feet were blue and he was developing the spots on his skin, indicating septic shock. He collapsed and was rushed by ambulance to Markham Stouffville Hospital, where quick-thinking staff stabilized him and airlifted him to the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.

Meningococemia is the same virulent bacteria as meningococcal meningitis, except it attacks the bloodstream, rather than the tissue lining of the brain. The disease progresses with deadly speed. Patients go into shock, blood pressure drops, kidneys fail, the heart pumps less blood. Extremities, such as hands and feet, are at risk as the body conserves blood for vital organs and the tissue begins to die.

It took five operations to amputate Matthew's foot, as doctors tried to save as much of it as they could.

"The pain he went through, well, you can't describe it, from the onset right through the amputations. Until the day I die, I will not forget the screams and the smells. For what he's gone through, I know he is destined for something

great," Sonja said, adding despite Matthew's struggle, he still made time to talk and sit with other children in hospital.

"He hated the screams of the other kids. He'd always go and try to help, calm them down."

Matthew is a little nervous about beginning Grade 11 at Brother Andre, but he's a little excited, too.

"I haven't seen a lot of people from school for a long time," Matthew said. "I don't think there will be too many problems at school."

He means nasty comments. He's had a few since he came home.

"I don't know if people are just ignorant or being fools," he said. "I try not to let it get to me. It's not like I asked for this to happen — looking at me like that only makes me feel worse. If this article helps change that, I'd be happy."

He said the most frustrating part of his future will be relearning the skills most of us take for granted. Walking, bike riding, even driving will present Matthew with difficult challenges.

And sometimes he still can't believe this happened to him.

"I don't think it's completely hit me yet," he said. "Does it get to me? Yes. I'm upset this happened. But there's nothing I can do."

Nothing anyone can do.

"The first thing you do as a mother is count your baby's fingers and toes," said Sonja. "You try to make sure they are safe, they eat properly, you watch their ball games, go to the park, set curfews. Then, in the blink of an eye, it can all change. They say suffering makes you stronger, but it also takes a lot out of you — you're never the same after."

This disease is horrible. Matthew went through hell and he'll have the scars for the rest of his life. But he's still here and we have him. We are extremely lucky."

Raffle tickets and bargains will be available Sept. 11 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Murphy's home at 9 Brogan Ct., off upper Raymerville Drive.

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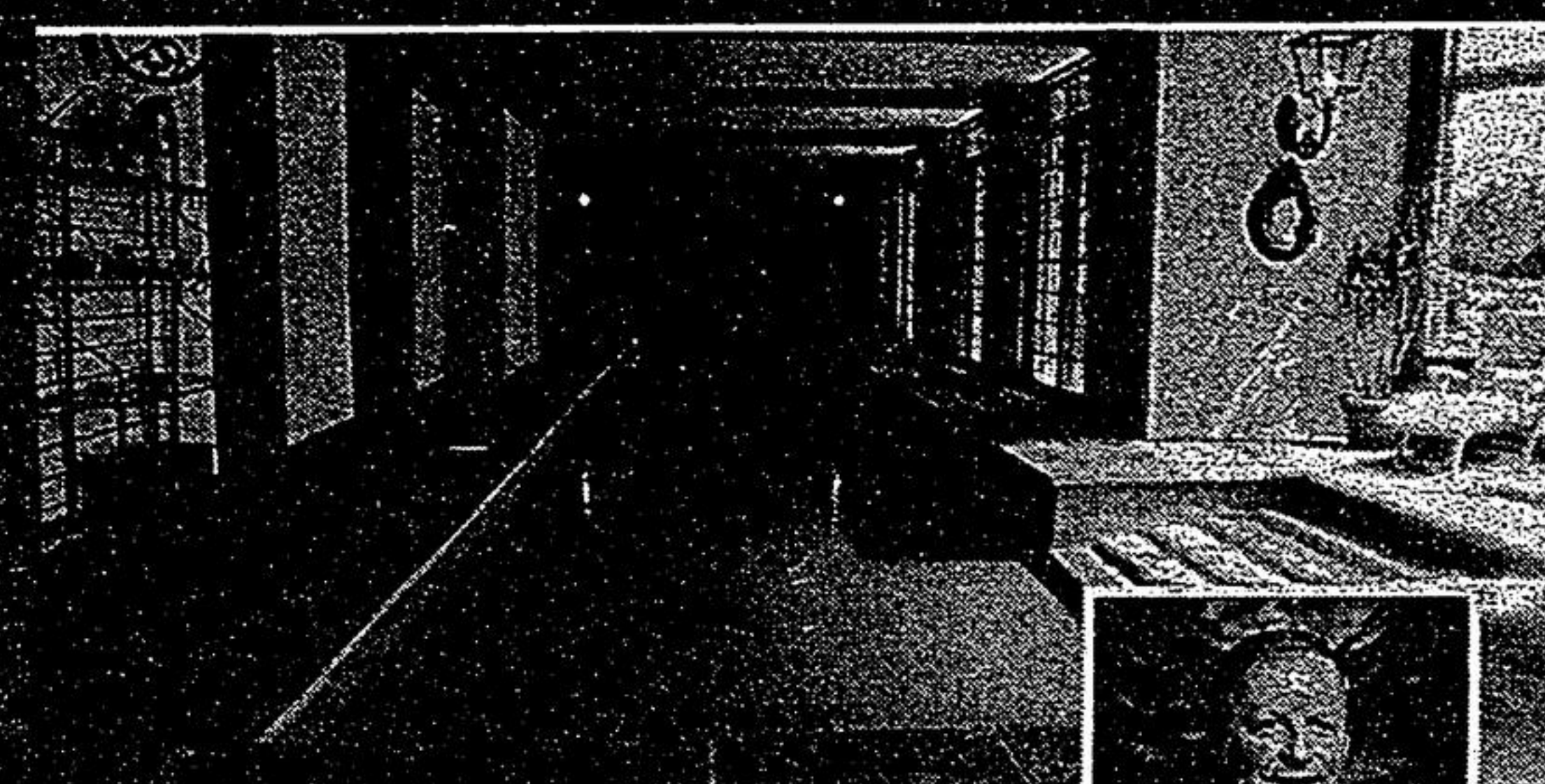

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