

STOUFFVILLE TEEN PLANS TO CLIMB MOUNT EVEREST

Reaching for the top

BY BRUCE STAPLEY
Correspondent

Amanda Crowder will be out to reach new heights this spring. The 18-year-old Stouffville District Secondary School graduate is embarking on a journey to Nepal where she will climb halfway up Mount Everest to draw attention to the growing pollution there.

Crowder is to depart for the month-long adventure April 26 along with 18 other university-aged students who belong to Canadian Youth Abroad, a Kingston-based organization formed three years ago and dedicated to global environmental awareness.

The Canadians will spend two weeks teaching an environmental education program to students in Katmandu, Nepal at the base of Mount Everest before undertaking their climb to a base camp 17,000 feet up the mountain.

"About a million people have flocked to Katmandu and it's created a huge pollution problem," Crowder said.

"Air pollution is extreme from all the fuel used in dirt bikes, and there are huge problems with human waste and yak dung. Cows are considered sacred there so they are allowed to roam free."

Add to that the waste strewn along the trails of Mount Everest by an endless swell of climbers and the accompanying pollution of mountain streams that has affected the quality of water in the villages below and the problem is almost out of hand.



Amanda Crowder is heading for the hills on an environmental mission.

"We'll spend a day with each school to work with the kids on how to deal with the pollution," Crowder said.

The young people will be shown ways to counter the pollution on a year-round basis. The group will also visit orphanages to help spread their gospel of environmental awareness.

The climb to Mount Everest's half-way

point is being done with the assistance of renowned climber and environmentalist Jamling Tenzing Norgay, the son of Tenzing Norgay, who, along with Sir Edmund Hillary, were the first men to reach the summit of Mount Everest in 1953.

Crowder is preparing herself for what she has been told will be a shock to her system due to the questionable food the group will eat, the bad air and water quality and the elevation.

And while the Everest climb is being undertaken at the most favourable time of year for weather, Crowder also knows there are risks involved.

"Our biggest threats are illness and weather. One of the areas we'll be climbing near is known for avalanches."

She's been told to bring clothing and gear to enable her to withstand temperatures as low as minus 40 degrees.

Crowder said the climb itself will be less strenuous than that undertaken by adventurers attempting to reach the summit, which stands at an altitude of 28,000 feet.

"This isn't the intense climb with ropes and all that other equipment. But we do cross some sections with the kinds of bridges like Indiana Jones crossed."

She is convinced that spending a month in the Third World will have a lasting effect.

"It will be an eye opener. I've never been outside North America. I'm sure it will change me. After all, I'm just a very fortunate Western girl from a small suburban town. This will be a reality check as to what is important in life."



Joan Ransberry

The slower the better

Every time I hear the Hwy. 407 extension plan is in jeopardy, on hold or in a creep mode, I cheer.

Extending the 407 from Markham to Pickering is close to gaining approval. This makes me nervous. Does this mean the original plan to extend it beyond Pickering will resurface?

About 15 years ago, I stood in a community hall in Brooklin and stared at a map. It showed the route for the first proposed 407 extension. There was a little flag on each of the affected properties, starting in Pickering and ending in Clarington.

The last flag, pinned into the junction of highways 35 and 115, confirmed what I feared: In the middle of silent tears and sucked-in anger, I reminded myself that I'd have a little trouble being objective as a journalist.

The proposed monster highway touched my family farm. My grandparents bought this farm in 1904, raised 12 children and, when the time was right, their eighth child (my father) took over in 1945, the year I was born.

I left the farm in 1962. My father lives there still. When my 77-year-old dad makes his daily trip to a nursing home to help care for my mother, the chat is usually about the farm.

Like most family farms, ours houses our roots, our memories and especially our souls.

While I'm concerned about the environmental impact of Hwy. 407, I'm more worried about the impact on my family, especially my father.

At 77, getting evicted from your birthplace should not be one of your worries.

The elected are quick to point out the highway route has been the subject of an extensive study with public consultation under stipulations of the provincial Environmental Assessment Act. I'm sure it has.

Still, I'm not convinced it's the right thing to do.

People often suggest the affected farm families should live on the profit that will come from expropriation. My answer is always the same. This is my grandfather's farm, my grandfather is not for sale.

Some politicians insist a further environmental assessment could serve no purpose except to stifle economic growth and development of east Toronto.

Since I'm not a politician, I get to ask, at what point do we decide economic growth is simply too expensive?

I believe, in the long run, this highway will hurt more than it helps. It will hurt the environment, especially the wildlife; it robs us of a great deal of premium farmland and it hurts farm families. It is especially devastating for the senior farmer. He's done more work than three politicians and two bureaucrats put together, and yet he's being asked to make the biggest sacrifice.

Significant cash shortfall behind Klees' withdrawal

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the group of about 200 supporters who gathered at the Hollywood Princess banquet hall. "And the reason is the people in this country who I know are hungering for a government that is prepared to respect them and be accountable to them to serve the people, not dictate to them."

Klees learned Sunday night that an individual donor had offered him a considerable amount of money to aid his \$3-million leadership campaign, but the person put conditions on that pledge.

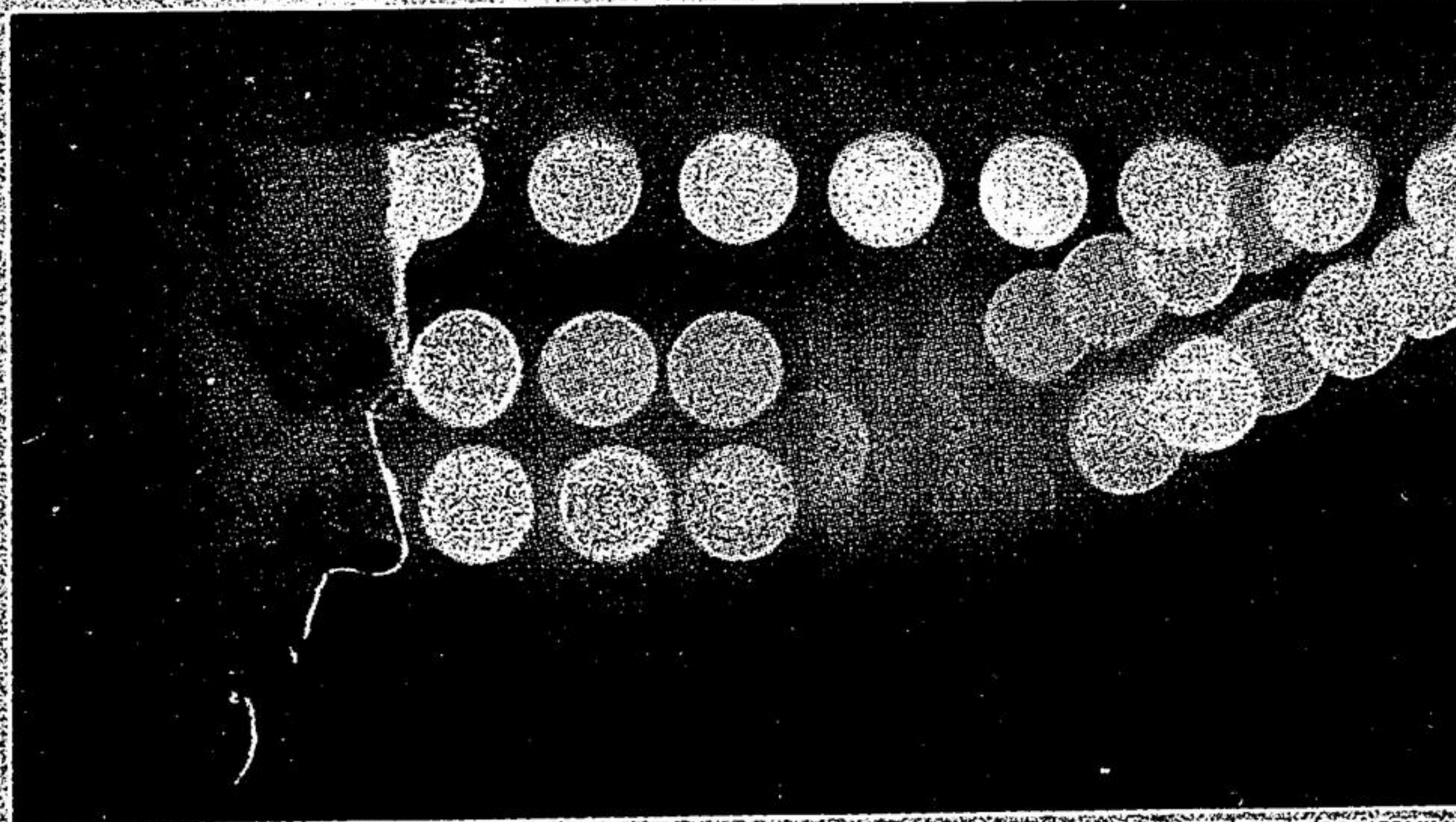
The donor stipulated that Klees must promise to throw his support to another candidate if a second ballot is required at the June leadership convention.

Klees refused, giving up his chance to be the serious contender he thought he could be.

"Do I feel like a fighter who has been asked to take a fall? In a way, yes," he said.

But some reporters questioned whether there were other reasons why Klees would back out after so much fanfare has been made about his candidacy.

"I'm out of the race because I don't have enough money," Klees said emphatically.



STAFF PHOTO STEVE SOMERVILLE

Local MPP Frank Klees bows out of the Alliance leadership race and thanks supporters at a rally in Concord Tuesday evening.

when pressed by reporters. "I'm not prepared to compromise my principles, or that of any supporter of my candidacy, to that scenario. It's not because I lost my enthusiasm or passion for the job."

Klees acknowledged his budget was \$3 million, but would not say exactly how much he was short.

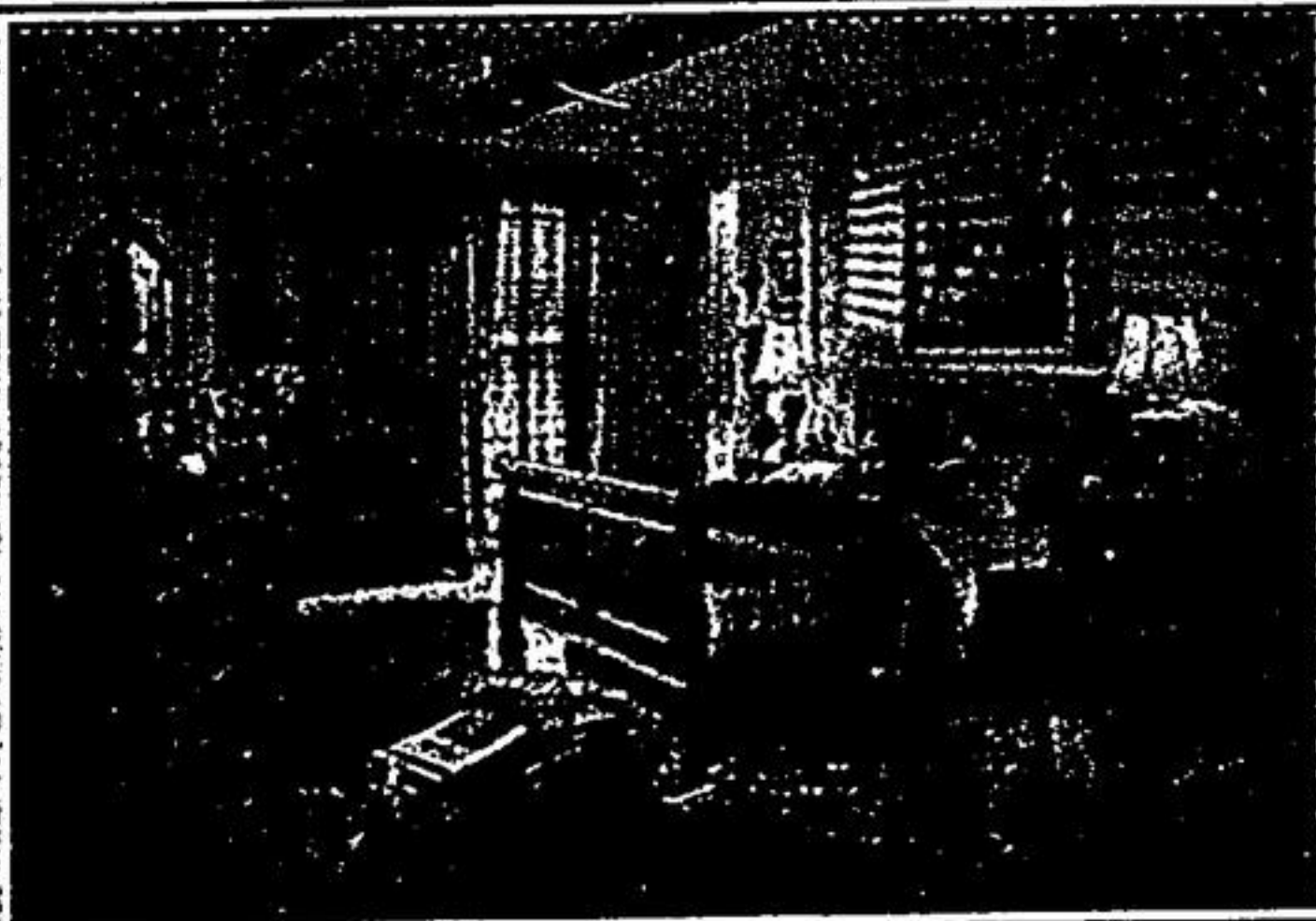
"The shortfall was significant enough to cause me to close it down," he said.

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