

Stone carving a Little family tradition

From page 16.

Some clients will only bring sketches or photographs of an antique or family heirloom and expect him to reproduce it.

Little said even antique dealers have been fooled by his replicas.

But with today's fast-paced lifestyles spurring demands for original stone art and antique reproductions at record pace, sophisticated machinery has come into play that he feels takes away from the art of the trade and the character of the pieces.

"People want it tomorrow... In the late 1940s, '50s and '60s, concrete took over, but now it's tired out. People want to bring back the quality of the 1910, '20s and '30s. It's not possible (unless hand-crafted)," he said.

"I come from a family of history. If it dies, fine, but it won't live on with machinery, not with me. Sometimes it's better lost for the right reason if our generation doesn't take the time to appreciate it."

Little learned his appreciation for the art first-hand, coming from a family of stone carvers that dates back 12 generations.

His other four brothers are all stone carvers, doing most of their work on castles, and even one of his sisters became one of the first female stone carvers in Ireland.

Little himself is known for his work on famous British and Irish landmarks such as Westminster Abbey, Holy Cross Abbey and St. Margaret's Church in Westminster, Square before coming to Canada.

When the government work ran out, he decided to try his tools in either New York or Toronto. Toronto won by the toss of a coin, however, he still does a lot of work on Park Avenue.

Little secured his first job — creating a fireplace for a Forest Hill home — on the day his flight landed at Pearson International Airport. He hailed a cab to take him to construction sites.

That entrepreneurial spirit helped build his company, Galway Stone in Stouffville, whose work is behind some of Toronto's most exclusive homes and finest old buildings, including the St. Lawrence Hall, constructed in 1850.

People have paid as much as \$29,000 for a specially designed fireplace mantel, although the average mantels start at \$3,000.

Little also said he has some famous clientele from around the world whose names he can't divulge.

"The stuff we do is very personal," he said.

Although decorative pieces for the home, such as mantels, urns and brackets carved out of limestone, marble, granite or slate remain the company's bread and butter, Little also completes three to four larger projects, such as an original piece of art, a year.

He divides his time between his Stouffville shop and his own personal workshop at home, sometimes working until 3 a.m. He may need to, considering some of his projects take more than 500 hours to complete.

He's got a pacemaker. She's got a grandfather.

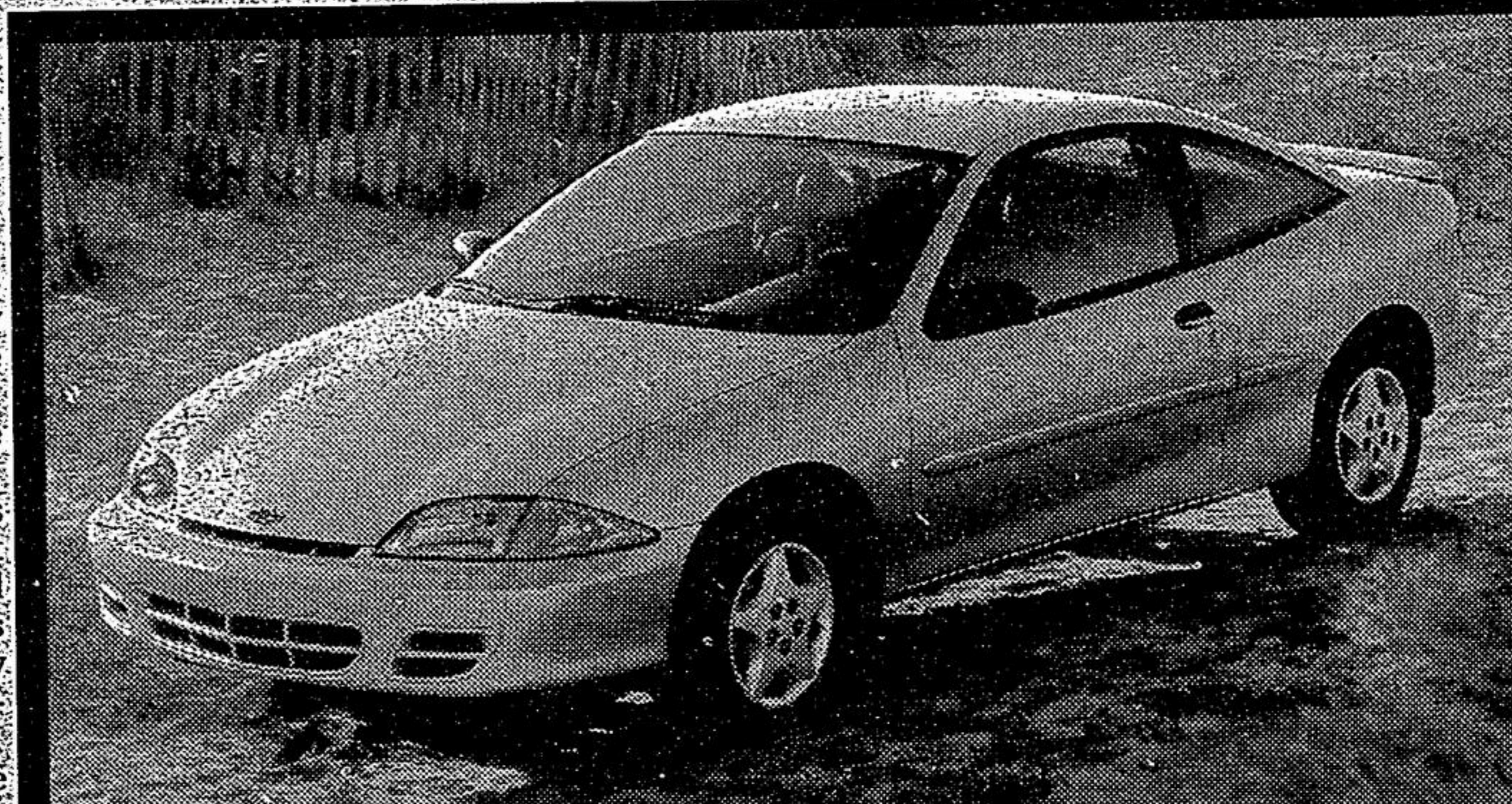
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POSTAGE and Tax On Payment	576
SECURITY DEPOSIT	700
TOTAL AMOUNT DUE ON DELIVERY	7,407

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POSTAGE and Tax On Payment	576
SECURITY DEPOSIT	700
TOTAL AMOUNT DUE ON DELIVERY	5,913

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