

Off-duty officer hailed as hero in saving three men

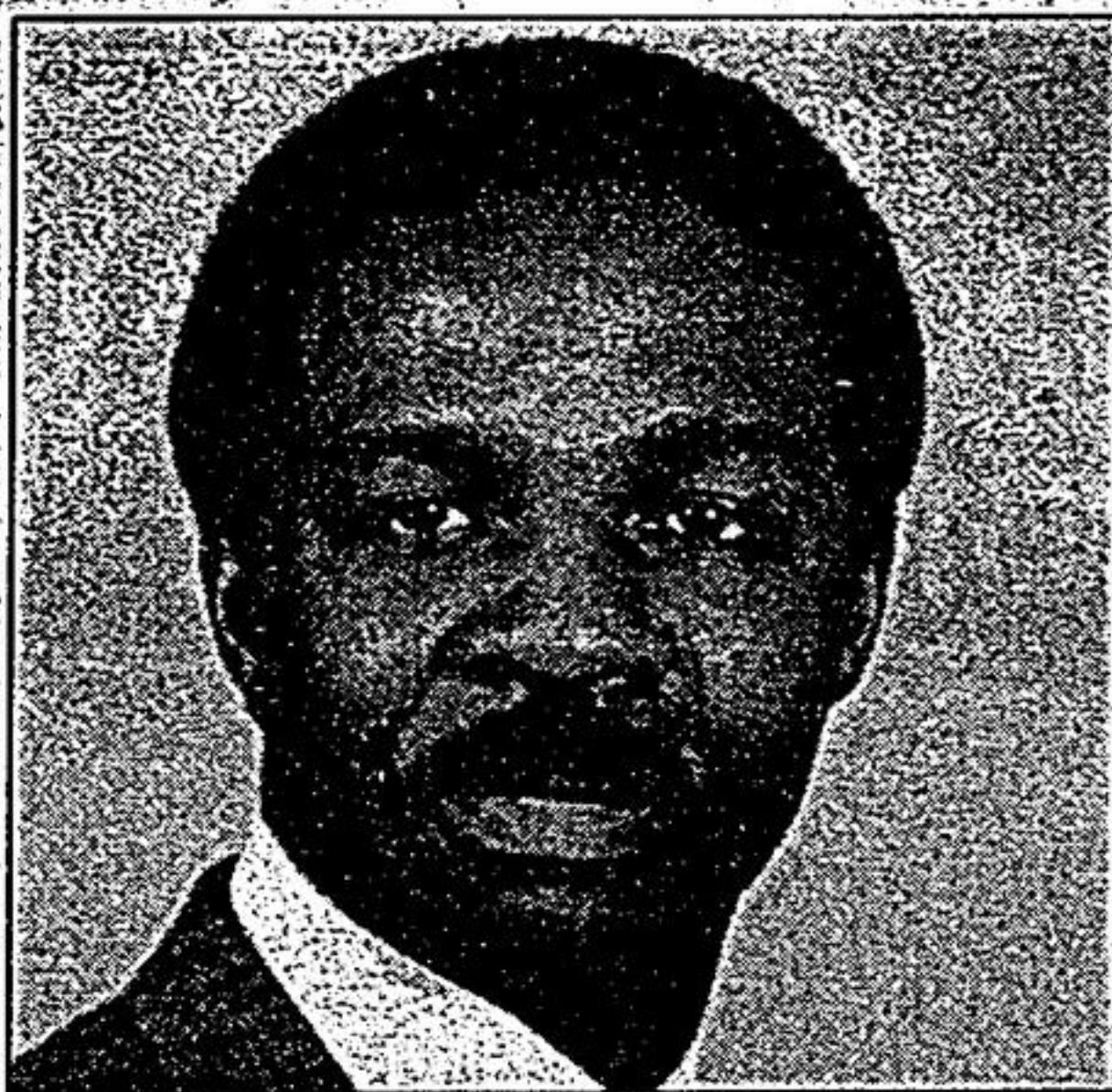
BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

An off-duty York Regional Police officer is being hailed as a hero after saving the lives of three drowning men in Lake Ontario Friday night.

Unfortunately, a fourth man died. Sgt. Tony Browne, 51, was in Humber Bay Park with a friend about 9 p.m. when he heard cries for help coming from the water.

He looked up and saw three men thrashing in the water about 75 feet offshore, while their brand new boat was sinking fast.

Two were wearing life jackets, one was not and none could swim.



SGT. TONY BROWNE: Off-duty police officer was able to save three men from drowning.

'This officer should be commended for his immediate and unselfish act of bravery.'

Browne instructed his friend to call 911 and jumped in to the lake, helping three of the men to shore.

He then went back and spent at least 15 minutes searching for the fourth, but couldn't find him.

Toronto Police said Dinh Phuc Nguyen's life-jacket wasn't properly fastened and slipped off as he struggled in the water.

The boat, a 14-foot Sidewinder, had been purchased only four days before. Police are investigating reports the men neglected to put the drain plug in for the boat's maiden voyage.

"After speaking to the three survivors, it is apparent to me Sgt. Browne assisted them in reaching

shore safely and made a valiant effort in attempting to locate and rescue the missing man," reads a memo from Toronto Police to Browne's Staff-Sgt. Rick Metcalfe.

"This officer should be commended for his immediate and unselfish act of bravery," the memo states.

Metcalfe said Browne, a 19-year veteran, has reason to be proud and he'll recommend he receive a commendation for bravery.

"The public generally expects that police officers and other emergency services staff routinely do these things, but it's not really routine," Metcalfe said. "He wasn't called to this, he was just there and took quick action."

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