

Brown paddles his way onto Canadian team

Stouffville resident to take part in European Dragon Boat Festival in Malmo, Sweden

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Sports Editor

Dragon boat racing does not exactly have a huge following in Stouffville.

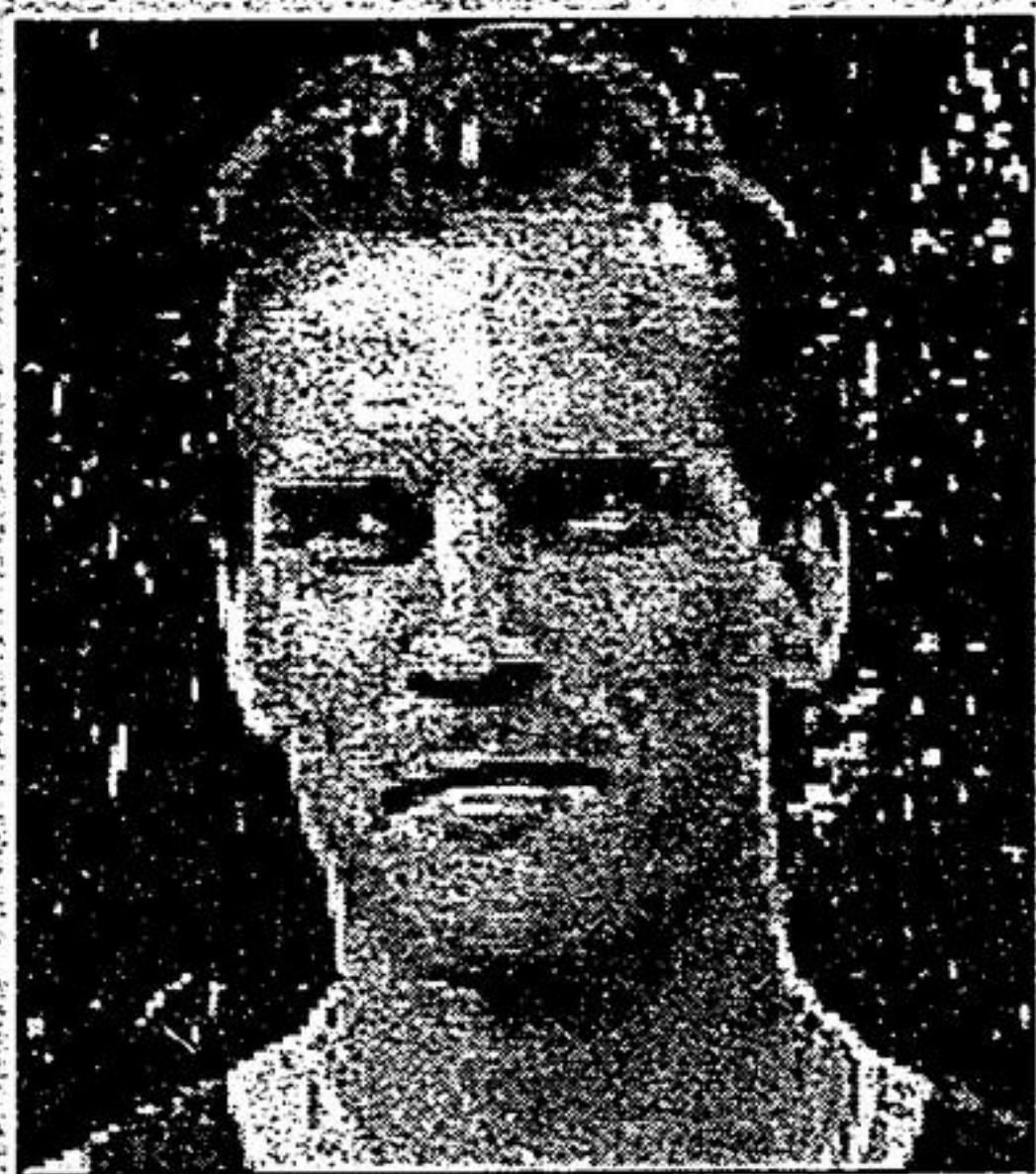
But for Randy Brown, it's a recreational activity he would travel a long way to be a part of.

And to prove his point, the 28-year-old Stouffville resident jetted across the Atlantic Ocean to Malmo, Sweden along with the rest of a Canadian contingent that will take to the water in the European Dragon Boat Festival.

Employed by the Bank of Nova Scotia, where he's been in their real estate department for the last 10 years, Brown notes that close to 600 teams are expected to be on hand for the 10-day event, which began Monday.

Brown acknowledged his involvement with the Canadian team came about through being at the right time at the right place.

A paddler with the Scotiabank Spitfires corporate team, Brown met some friends that were members with a Bank of Montreal men's entry at a recent race in Montreal. It was there where Brown's friends



RANDY BROWN: Stouffville man began racing just three years ago as a way to stay fit and relieve stress.

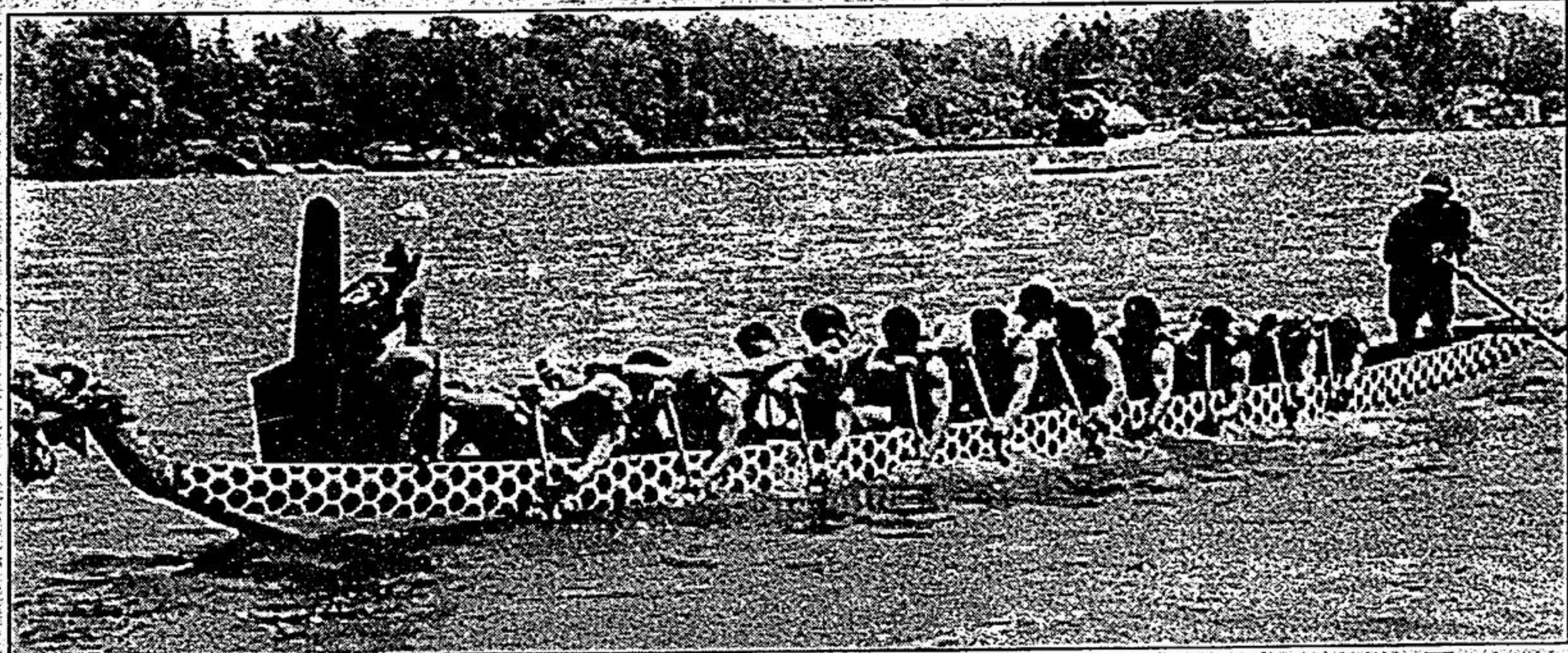
introduced him to some fellow teammates that were members of the Canadian team that would be going to Sweden.

"They came to bat for me," Brown said of his friends with the Bank of Montreal team, who helped him get on the Canadian team.

The rest, as they say, is history as Brown became their newest member and only had a couple of practices with the team before they departed overseas.

Introduced to dragon boat racing three years ago through some friends in Toronto, Brown acknowledged that he never had any prior knowledge of rowing a boat or paddling a kayak or canoe.

In a sport which employs 20



Dragon boat racing is a recreational activity that employs 20 paddlers, a drummer and steersman. The event caters to men and women and is gaining popularity around the world. In Ontario, events are staged at various places including the Toronto Islands, as shown in this photograph.

paddlers, a drummer and steersman per vessel, Brown said he enjoys dragon boat racing for the pleasure it provides.

"It's good exercise and it's a fun thing to do. There's something tranquil about it. It's a stress reliever," said Brown prior to his departure for Sweden.

When he's competing with his Scotiabank mixed corporate entry, Brown said the team practices three times a week for a one-hour period.

When he's not paddling with that team, Brown can be found on the Tsunami community team in Toronto, which works out at the mouth of the Humber River.

Canadian team practices were

conducted twice a week at HumberSide.

"It's a sport that's growing across Ontario and around the world," he pointed out. "Once you're in it and find out how big it is, it's a huge commitment."

Brown notes there's a variety of categories which dragon boat teams can enter including mixed teams, men's teams, corporate teams and community teams.

Most races, he said are 500-metre events.

When Brown paddles with the national team though, they will be entered in the men's national event and will take part in the 250m sprint, 500m and 5,000m

endurance race.

Competing overseas for the first time, Brown is excited with the prospects of seeing what other teams from other countries have to offer.

If the Canadian team hopes to be competitive, Brown notes a combination of factors must fall into place.

Among those, he revealed, are technique and fitness and "to have the best paddlers."

Regardless of what happens, Brown's priority will be to ensure that it remains a fun activity.

"I do it mostly for the entertainment and for the challenge."

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