

# Quick-thinking hero earns York Region police certificate for bravery

BY ADAM SEGAL  
Special

When Michelle Bernstein learned First Aid, she didn't expect she would actually put her skills to the test one day.

But when an emergency unraveled before her eyes in August, it took only seconds for Bernstein to take on the role of life saver.

The 20-year old Thornhill resident, who modestly says saving a woman from drowning shouldn't warrant special recognition, was presented with a certificate by York Region police on Wednesday commending her bravery.

"I'm in shock," Bernstein said after York Region Deputy Police Chief Terence Kelly praised her quick thinking and handed her the certificate.

"I didn't even think it was a big deal."

Bernstein was swimming with two friends in an indoor condominium pool on Townsgate Drive in Thornhill last August, when she noticed 65-year-old Kyung Lee struggling to swim.

When Bernstein saw Lee's head go under water, she thought the woman was kidding around.

"I started laughing," Bernstein said.

But the vigilant York University student soon found out it was no laughing matter.

"I poked her three times and she didn't move. Then I pulled her head out (of the water) and she was completely

blue."

Bernstein and a male swimmer rushed to pull Lee out of the water placing her on the pool deck while Bernstein's friend Susan Shapiro called 911.

In the commotion, Bernstein briefly forgot she learned CPR in high school, screaming out, "Does anybody know CPR?"

But no one answered her plea for help. And since private indoor swimming pools are not required by law to have lifeguards, Bernstein performed the life saving procedure herself.

Lee coughed up water and started breathing just before paramedics came on the scene to tend to Lee.

While happy she came to Lee's rescue, Bernstein was shaken up and had nightmares about the ordeal for the next five nights.

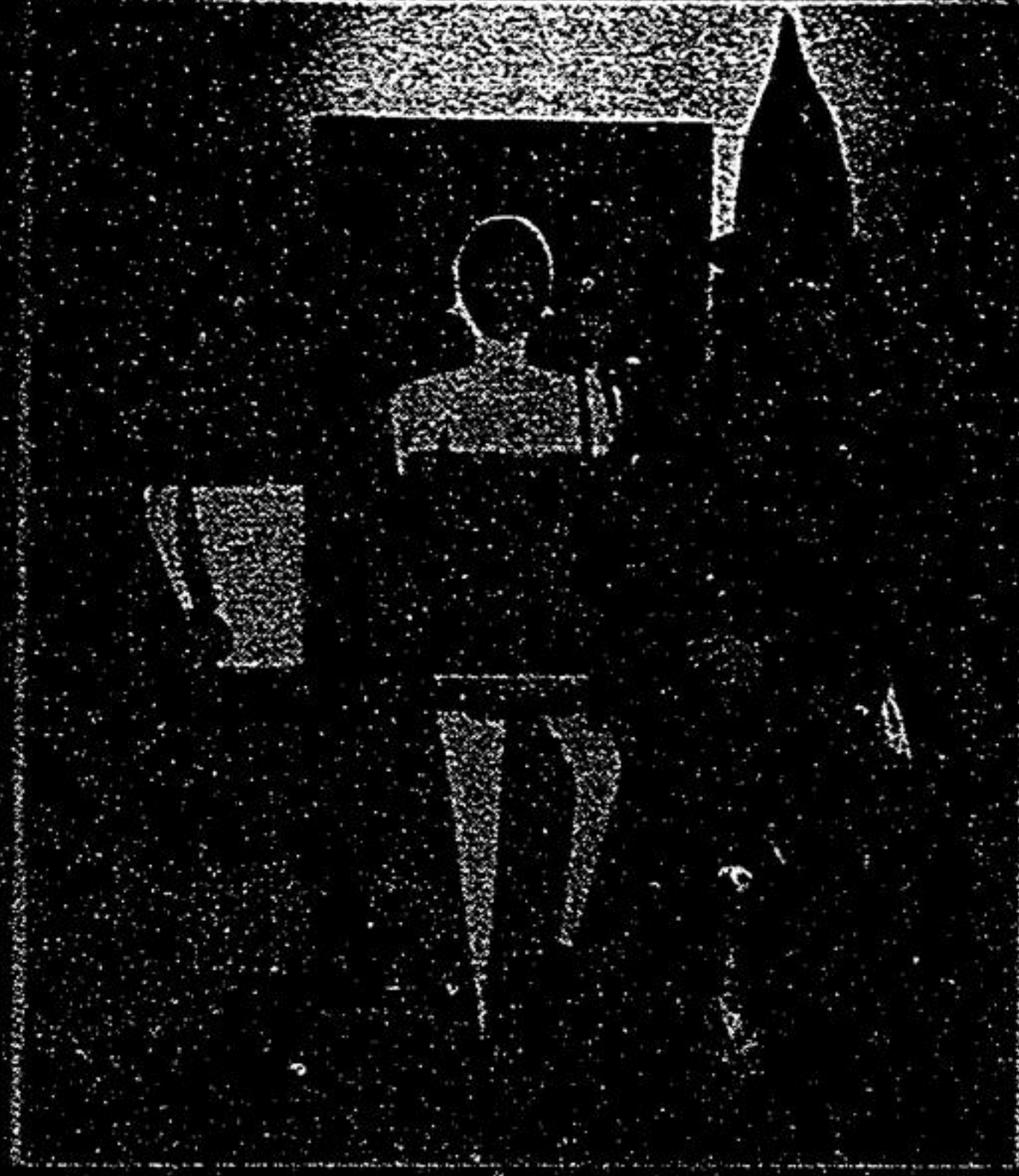
Bernstein's mother Liza and grandmother Raia were on hand for the award presentation and are both proud of her.

"A lot of people are afraid to do anything when someone is in distress," Liza Bernstein said. "(Michelle) was brave enough to take action."

Diane Winick, president of Control Property Management which manages the building, said a lifeguard has not been hired since the near drowning.

"We're not obliged to have a (lifeguard at the condominium)," Winick said. "It's a private enterprise."

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