

ECONOMIST & SUN/TRIBUNE  
**SPORTS**  
& recreation**Finding your way in the world**BY AMY WEST  
Staff Writer

**T**he ultimate meeting of body and mind, orienteering relies not only on physical strength but on intellectual prowess.

"It is the epitome of the Greek ideal of perfect mind, perfect body," said Winnie Stott, nine-time national orienteering champion.

The 56-year-old King resident has been orienteering for more than 20 years.

Participants use accurate, detailed maps and a compass to find points in the landscape.

"Orienteering teaches you to read maps and look at land features. Beginners aren't even allowed to use a compass so they don't come to depend on it," Mrs. Stott said.

The sport began in Sweden in 1918 as the "brainchild" of Major Ernst Killander, a youth and scout leader. To get young people involved in athletics, he sent them on route-finding missions in the forests to make running more interesting. Four years later, the first area championship was held.

A standard orienteering course consists of a start, a series of control sites marked by circles connected by lines and numbered in the order they are to be visited and a finish. The control-site circles are centred around the feature to be found. On the ground, a control flag marks the location the orienteer must visit. To verify each visit, participants must use a punch at each site on their control card. Each punch makes a different pattern only officials can identify.

The route between sites is not specified and is entirely up to the orienteer. This element

of route choice and the ability to navigate through the forest are the essence of the sport.

And although the fastest route from A to B may be a straight line, faster is not always better.

"Even though it is a timed event, you need to use common sense or you can miss a marker," Mrs. Stott said, recalling one event where she had to crawl on hands and knees under a fallen tree to locate a flag.

In most orienteering events, participants compete in age groups and are given staggered start times.

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Winnie Stott

Orienteering courses are graded and each event will offer courses of different grades, thereby offering something for all ages and skill levels.

Although orienteering can be enjoyed as a walk in the woods or as a competitive sport, Mrs. Stott saw it as a challenge.

"It all started as just something to do," said Mrs. Stott, who has twice won the North American championships and has competed in Sweden, England and France.

"I was working at the Toronto Sports Centre in the 1980s and walked in on one of the orienteering club meetings. They invited me to come to one of their competitions and I accidentally won."

See ORIENTEERING, page 17.



Anne Howland

Been There, Done That

**She floats through the air with a whimper and wheeze**

*Dear Ma and Pa,  
I won't be coming home 'cause I've run off to the circus. Boss is stern but treats me fair. I bed down in a caravan and take my meals round the fire. I aim to juggle and ride the unicycle and I sure would like to try the trapeze. Don't worry about me.*

Love, your gal,  
Anne

**A**h, the romance and magic of the circus. For me, it was more like pure panic as the trapeze swung faster and higher and I sat on the bar, knuckles white on the ropes.

"Stand, stand!" encouraged Yuri Nadtotchii, owner of Big Top School of Circus Arts, operating safety ropes from the ground.

"I can't, I can't!" I yelped.

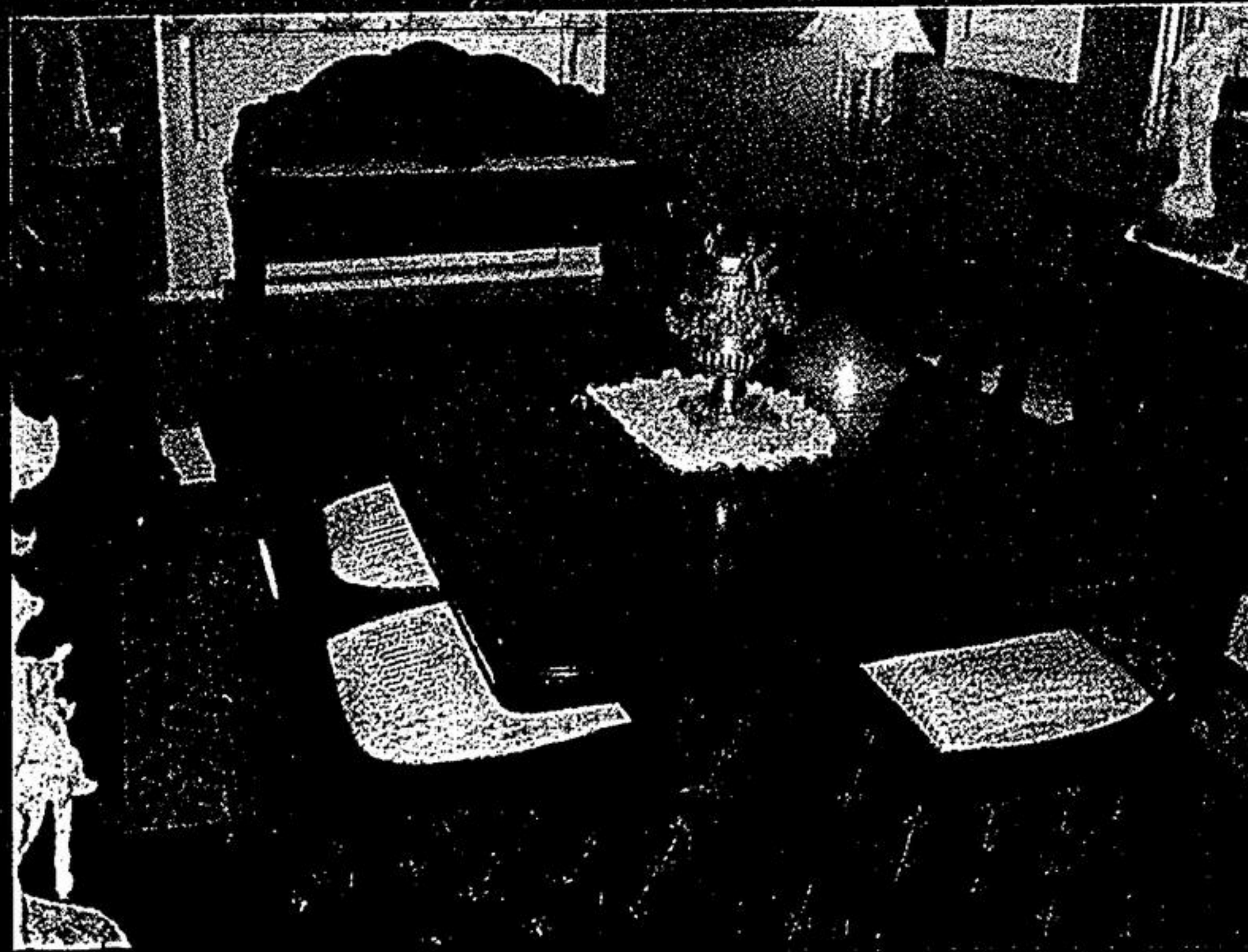
His tug at my harness insisted I try. OK. Oh my God. Wobbling desperately as the trapeze continued its powerful swing, I lifted a knee and got one foot on the bar. Swoosh, the wall rushed at me and receded, breath left me like the tide. Grappling for balance, I straightened one leg, then the other. Finally, I stood paralysed in a star position, body aching, hands raw, lips twisted in the grimace of death.

See BIG, page 18.



STAFF PHOTO/ROB ALARY

Winnie Stott, seen here with her vizsla Check, is a nine-time national orienteering champion. She has published a series of books on the sport and has put out a Trivia Orienteering package for people who are interested in learning about orienteering at their own pace.

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