

# PM honours Stouffville hero

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Staff Writer

An act of heroism by a Stouffville carpenter has caught the attention of the prime minister.

Ninth Line resident

Bernard LePrieur, 50, has received a citation for bravery from Jean Chretien and Governor General Adrienne Clarkson.

Mr. LePrieur saved a blind man from a burning house

during a visit to his native Newfoundland a year ago.

It was just before midnight when Mr. LePrieur smelled smoke while driving through the village of Kippens.

He stopped his car, looked around and spotted a house on fire. Mr. LePrieur called the local fire department on his cell phone, then ran to the house.

When Mr. LePrieur called out, a male voice answered. So he covered his face and went in the direction of the voice.

"I found him lying underneath a window. I carried him to my car, placed him in the back seat and tried to stabilize him. I did what I could. I was in the right place at the right time."

When the fire brigade arrived, the fire chief assessed the crisis. The victim was in very bad shape, and the ambulance service was stationed miles away.

In the interest of time, Mr. LePrieur was asked to transport the man to hospital. He agreed without question. Bruce Barrett, 28, had serious burns to much of his body.

Originally firefighters thought Mr. Barrett's girlfriend and baby were in the burning house.

Using 13 bottles of air, to

breathe with, they swept the structure before determining it was unoccupied.

Meanwhile, Mr. LePrieur encouraged Mr. Barrett to hold on while he made the steady and careful trip to the hospital.

He was later transferred to a burn unit in a St. John's hospital where he remained for about seven months.

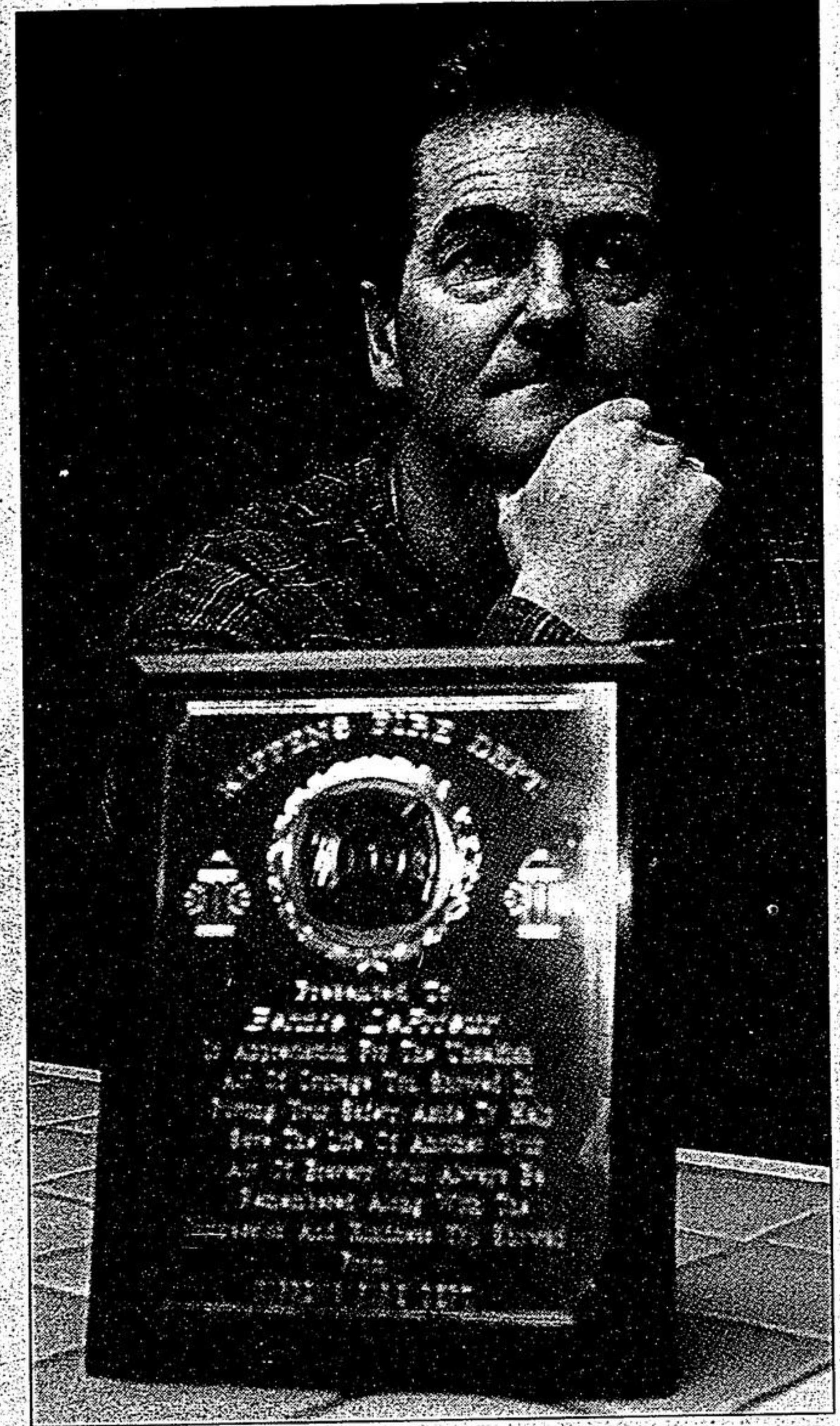
The fire marked Mr. Barrett's second brush with death. A few years earlier while on a vacation in Ontario, Mr. Barrett was put on life support after being gravely injured in a car accident. The collision claimed Mr. Barrett's sight.

A few days after the fire, Mr. LePrieur met Mr. Barrett's girlfriend and baby. But he has not seen the fire victim since that fateful night.

"I'm planning a trip home this summer. I hope to visit the Barrett family."

Soon after Mr. LePrieur returned home to Stouffville, his mother, a resident of Stephenville, Nfld., accepted a plaque for bravery on behalf of her son. The citation was presented by the Kippens Fire Department.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister's award arrived in the mail last week.



STAFF PHOTO/ERIN RILEY

Stouffville carpenter Bernard LePrieur rescued a man from a burning house while on vacation in Newfoundland.

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