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York's surprising police history assembled by retired cop

BY TERRY CARTER
Special

Some may think the 32-year-old York Regional Police service is too young to have a colourful past, but a quick glance at the collection being assembled at headquarters for police museum reveals a different reality.

Eight plaques — one for each police officer who has lost his life in the line of duty within York Region's boundaries — are mounted on the wall. The first, dated

1804, carries the name of Const. John Fisk of King Township who lost his life when the good ship Speedy sank on a voyage from Toronto to the Cobourg area.

Fisk was escorting a prisoner for trial. The schooner and everyone on her were lost in a storm.

As a chronicle of the many small police forces that existed within York, the curator of the collection, retired Sgt. Glenn Phillips, has mounted the shoulder badges of all 14 forces that were

rolled into the York Regional Force at its formation in 1970.

Sgt. Phillips is a bit of a relic around police headquarters himself. He joined the old Newmarket Police Force as a rookie in 1956 and retired several years ago from the regional force.

During his career as a Newmarket cop, he earned the nickname "Hawkeye" because of his ability to remember faces from wanted posters and then bust bad guys when they were passing through town. He was invited

back into uniform on a part-time basis. He and a number of "old hands" are back at the station helping out with things the full-time crime solvers don't have time for, such as courier work, the museum and fleet services.

Sgt. Phillips' growing collection of York police paraphernalia, photos and other records is displayed in the reception area. Each item triggers memories and stories for Sgt. Phillips and his fellow old boys.

There's an innocuous looking red light in one display case.

"Newmarket had four of those — one outside the police station (on Market Square), one at the top of Main Street hill, one at Main and Water streets and one at Main and Davis Drive," explained Sgt. Phillips.

When the station closed for the night and the force's one dispatcher went home, calls for police help were monitored by Bell Telephone chief operator in Newmarket, Annie Tunney.

She'd turn the red lights on if a cop was needed. Sgt. Phillips said when a patrolling officer spotted the red light on, he'd call Annie.

The first portable radio in York County was owned by the Newmarket force in the 1960s and it's in the collection.

"Must weigh about 40 lbs., but it was the envy of all the other forces. Whenever they had anything special on, they'd call up and borrow it," said Sgt. Phillips.

His collection has cameras that were used in police work in the '60s and '70s, fingerprinting equipment and the formal navy blue uniform worn by policemen from the 1800s to the 1970s.

There are metal badges, hand-forged handcuffs from the 1920s and many old photos. The first radar used in the 1960s is also on display.

However, Sgt. Phillips said he needs much more material for the collection and he's hoping police families across the region will dig into attics and family archives to help fill the shelves.

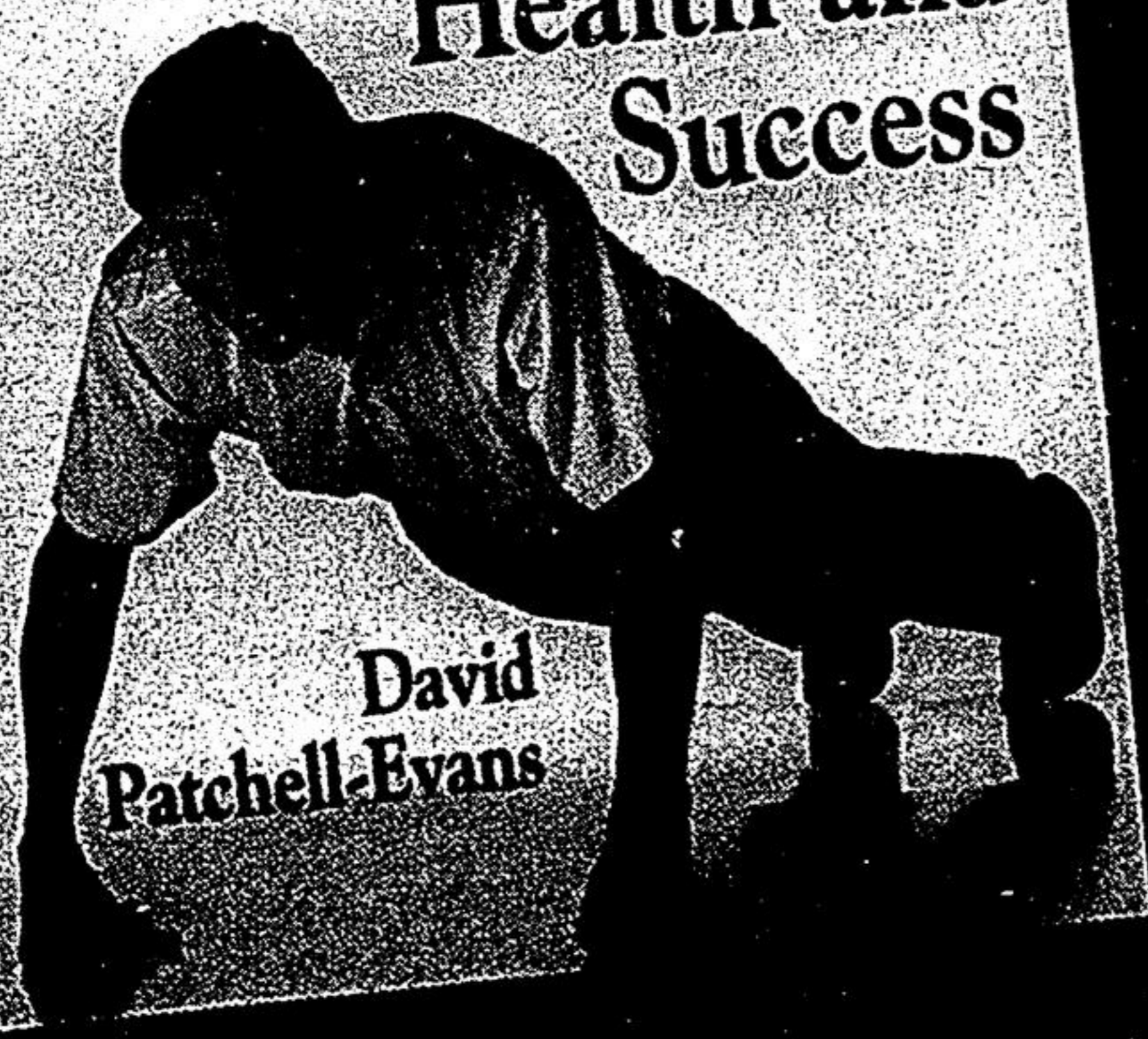
He can be reached at York Regional Police headquarters by calling 1-905-895-1221.

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FUTURESHOP CORRECTION NOTICE

In our September 18-24, 2002 Future Shop flyer the following error occurred:

- On page 2, the RCA "Complete Home Theatre Audio System With 6 Speakers" was incorrectly advertised at "\$199.99" the correct price should read "\$399.99"
- On page 13, the Toshiba "Progressive Scan DVD Player" advertised for \$299.99 is only available at Future Shop in black.
- On page 40, the Compaq "Intel Celeron Processor 1.4GHz, Including Cicero 17" Monitor" advertised for "\$999.99" is not available at all Future Shop locations, and is in limited quantities where available, no rain checks will be issued on this product.

We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused our valued customers.

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