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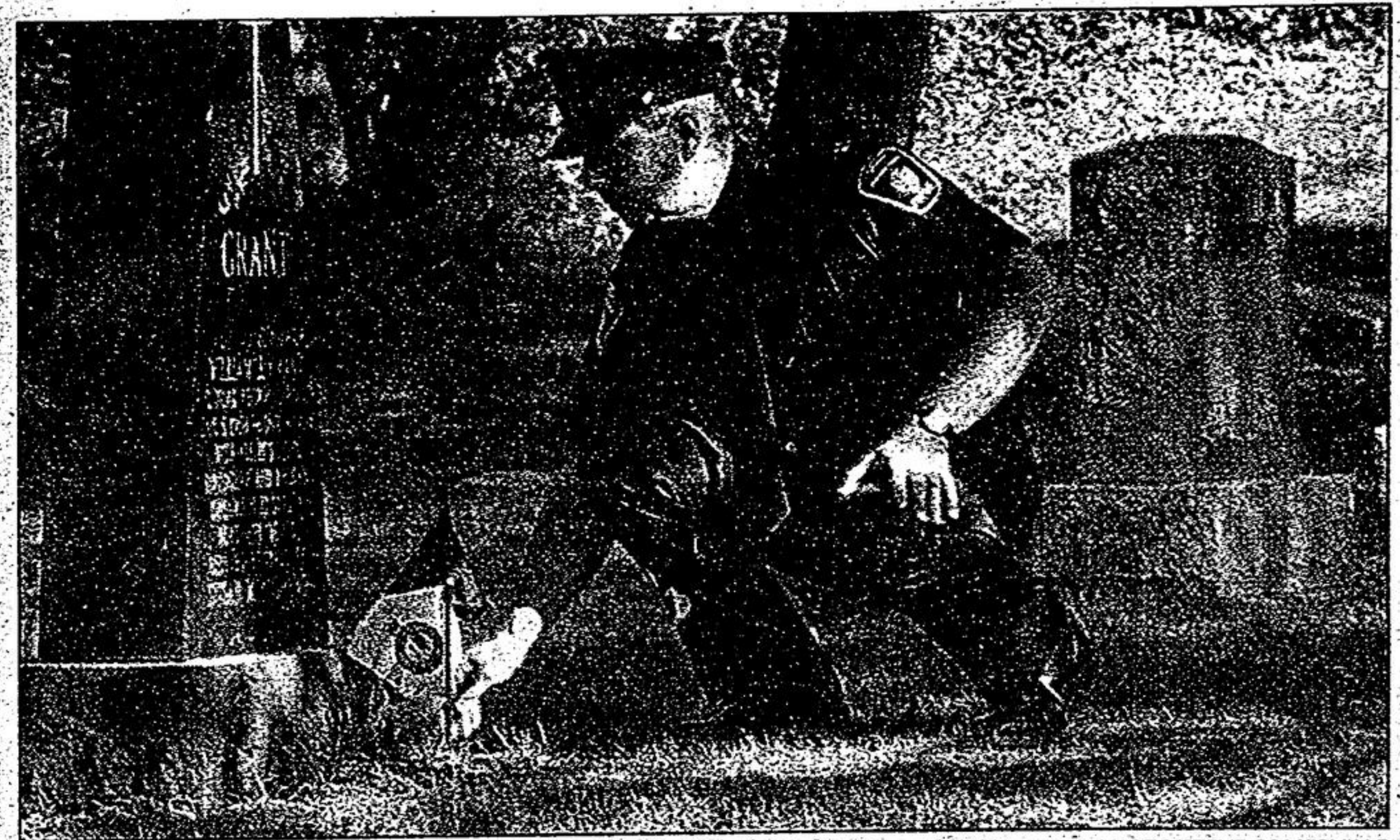
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STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Const. Dan Lanegraf places a York Regional Police flag at the grave of Const. William Grant who was killed in the line of duty in 1984.

Fallen officers honoured

BY MARTIN DERBYSHIRE
Staff Writer

It's a simple gesture, but a meaningful one. Without fanfare or ceremony, every year for the past six, during police week, a few York Regional Police officers have gotten together to place flags on the grave sites of York cops killed in the line of duty.

"We do it to remember. It is important they are not forgotten," said Insp. Richard McCabe.

"It's like a living link to them."

Eight police officers have been killed on the job in York, including officers from municipal forces that amalgamated in 1971 to form York Regional Police.

The idea came from a trip to the Arlington National Cemetery outside of Washington, D.C. which commemorates lost soldiers.

Insp. McCabe said he saw the American flags at the foot of 6,000 fallen soldier's graves and wanted to bring that kind of tradition home.

When officers return to graves to plant the flags every spring, Insp. McCabe said they often find last year's still flying high.

"I think people leave them there out of respect," he said. "It's good to see."

The goal of police week, which runs May 16 to 20, is to reinforce ties with the community, honour police officers, promote the work they do and inform the community about their role.

Although they've never notified the public about this practice in the past, Insp. McCabe said he decided to inform the media this year.

"Nobody knows we do this," he said. "It's kind of sad."

The eight officers who have died in the line of duty in York are:

Bank Robbers gang. Gang members had been on trial for breaking into the post office in Aurora and were being transferred from the courthouse to the jail in a horse-drawn carriage when an accomplice tossed them three revolvers;

- Sgt. Thomas Kirk, a York County Police officer. Sgt. Kirk was killed April 1 of 7, 1930 when his car was sideswiped on Yonge Street just north of Thornhill;
- Const. Lewis Durant. He was on duty in Markham Township Aug. 18, 1956; when he came across a vehicle parked on the gravel shoulder of Woodbine Avenue.

While questioning the driver, Const. Durant was hit and killed by another car;

- Const. Ed Holdsworth of Whitchurch Township Police was killed May 15, 1966, responding to an accident scene on Woodbine Avenue, north of Vondorf.

The vehicle involved in the accident had struck a hydro pole, killing the driver;

- Whitchurch Township Police Const. Gerald Mills. He was killed May 29, 1968; responding to a crash scene on Woodbine Avenue, just south of Vondorf.

Const. Mills was struck and killed by a passing motorist who panicked seeing the accident and drove off the road;

- York Regional Police Const. Douglas Tribbling was shot and killed Aug. 19, 1984, attending a burglar alarm at a Markham computer company;
- Const. William James Grant was killed trying to pull over an erratic driver Oct. 9, 1984.

After a brief chase, the driver rammed the front of Const. Grant's cruiser, killing him. The driver wasn't hurt in the accident, but took the dead officer's revolver and went to a nearby field where he shot himself.

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