

# OPINION

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**Sun-Tribune**

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## EDITORIAL

### Hero made ultimate sacrifice

Det.-Const. Robert Plunkett was cut down last Thursday in the prime of his life and in the line of duty.

And while Det.-Const. Plunkett was the first York Regional Police officer to die on the job in more than 20 years, it is a grisly reminder of just how risky and, at times, deadly the profession can be.

Det.-Const. Plunkett was investigating the theft of airbags from cars in Markham last Thursday just before dawn that fateful day.

When he approached the open driver's side door of one of the vehicles to arrest the driver, the man allegedly put the car into reverse, ran up over a curb, across a lawn and shrubs, and pinned the 22-year veteran between the open door and a tree.

When the suspect tried to drive away, Det.-Const. Plunkett was dragged onto a nearby lawn and thrown from the car. Assisting officers rushed to help their comrade, but Det.-Const. Plunkett later died in hospital from his injuries.

One man who paid his respects to the fallen officer at a Barrie funeral home chalked the death up to this: "He lost his life because of something stupid someone did." This newspaper couldn't agree more.

It is clear the nature of police work means it can be unpredictable and fraught with risk.

Yet, day after day, York Region's officers get out there on our streets, patrolling, investigating and apprehending those who have no respect for the law.

Even when they are off duty, officers spring into action if they believe a crime is being committed or someone needs help. That is a tremendous 24/7 responsibility that's not asked of many other professions, but police officers accept it as a matter of duty.

Sure, most of the time you see our community's police officers at the side of the road writing traffic tickets or on standby at an event to keep the peace in case a ruckus breaks out.

Increasingly, you also see them interacting with the public, building relationships with young people in our schools and getting involved in our ethnically diverse com-

munities by organizing a friendly game of cricket, for example, as they did in Vaughan recently.

It is, without a doubt, a job that requires dedication. And, tragically, as we saw last week, often the ultimate sacrifice.

Det.-Const. Plunkett is the eighth officer to die in the line of duty in York Region and the first since 1984.

One officer was fatally shot several times in the chest while responding to a burglary call, another tripped on high voltage wires while investigating a car that crashed into a hydro pole.

What most of us don't see is the heated and out-of-control situation that often awaits police at the door when they respond to domestic violence calls or when an armed suspect is surrounded and an arrest is being made.

Things can go from routine to critical in a matter of minutes, particularly when you are dealing with the most dangerous members of society.

Granted, police officers are trained to handle these kinds of situations. They learn to quickly analyse and make the best decisions that bring about desired results.

They are well-equipped with driver training, firearms safety and bullet-proof vests. But they can't possibly predict the unpredictable. And for this, they risk paying with their lives.

That is why our police officers, keepers of public safety, deserve recognition and respect — not just following tragedy, but every day. Now is the time to thank them for their courage, strength, dedication, compassion and belief that they can make our communities a better place.

Martin Luther King Jr. said faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase. Det.-Const. Plunkett did that last Thursday morning and thousands of his colleagues across the country will do that again today and tomorrow, and forever more.

For this, we are grateful. Our sincere condolences go to the family, friends and colleagues of Det.-Const. Plunkett, as they struggle to make sense of this sudden and traumatic loss.

#### A Police Officer's Prayer

Lord I ask for courage  
Courage to face and  
Conquer my own fears...  
Courage to take me  
Where others will not go...

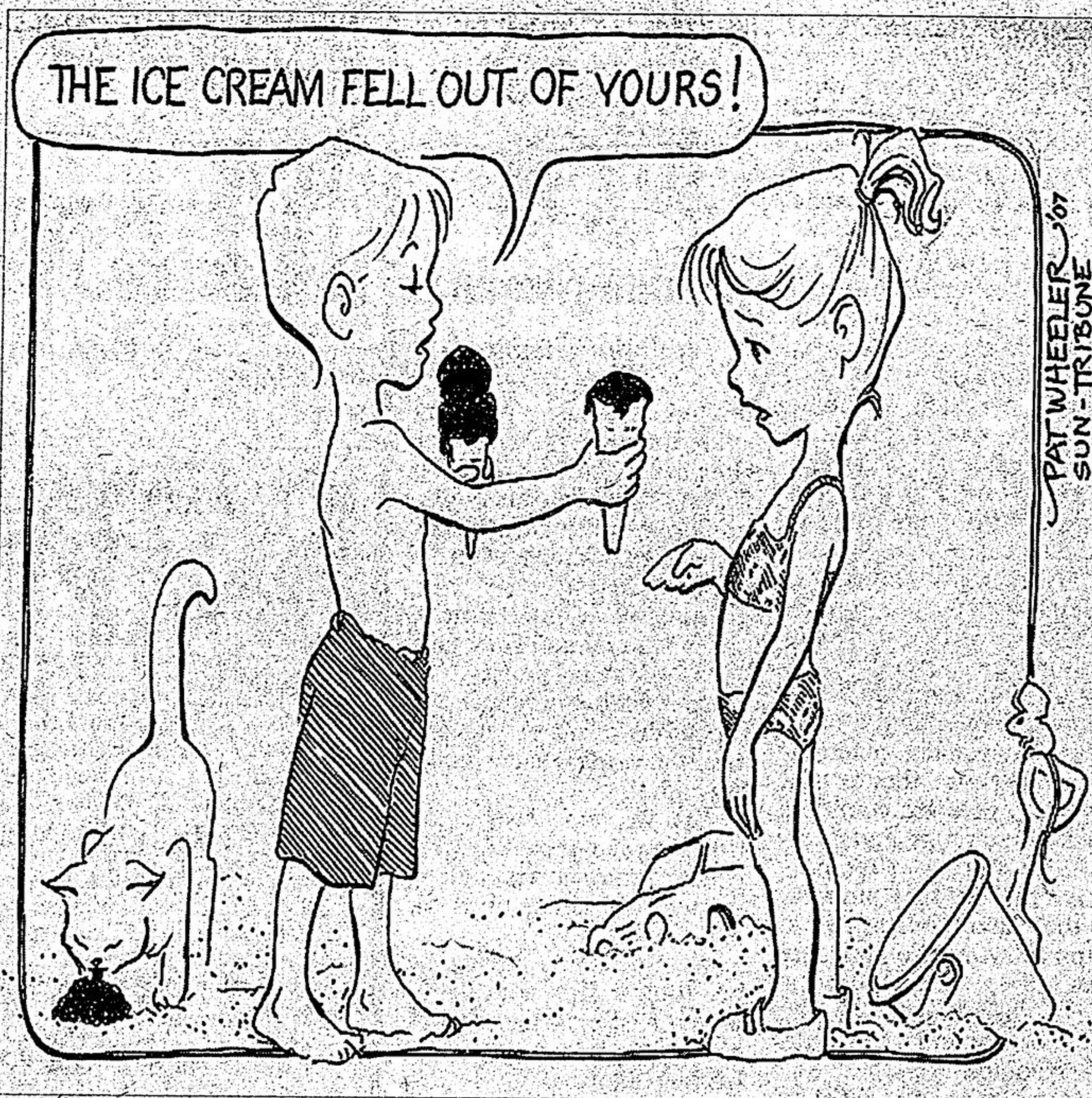
I ask for strength  
Strength of body to protect others  
And strength of spirit to lead others...  
I ask for dedication

Dedication to my job, to do it well  
Dedication to my community  
To keep it safe...  
Give me Lord, concern  
For others who trust me  
And compassion for those who  
need me...

And please Lord

Through it all  
Be at my side...

— Author Unknown



### Family issues statement on officer

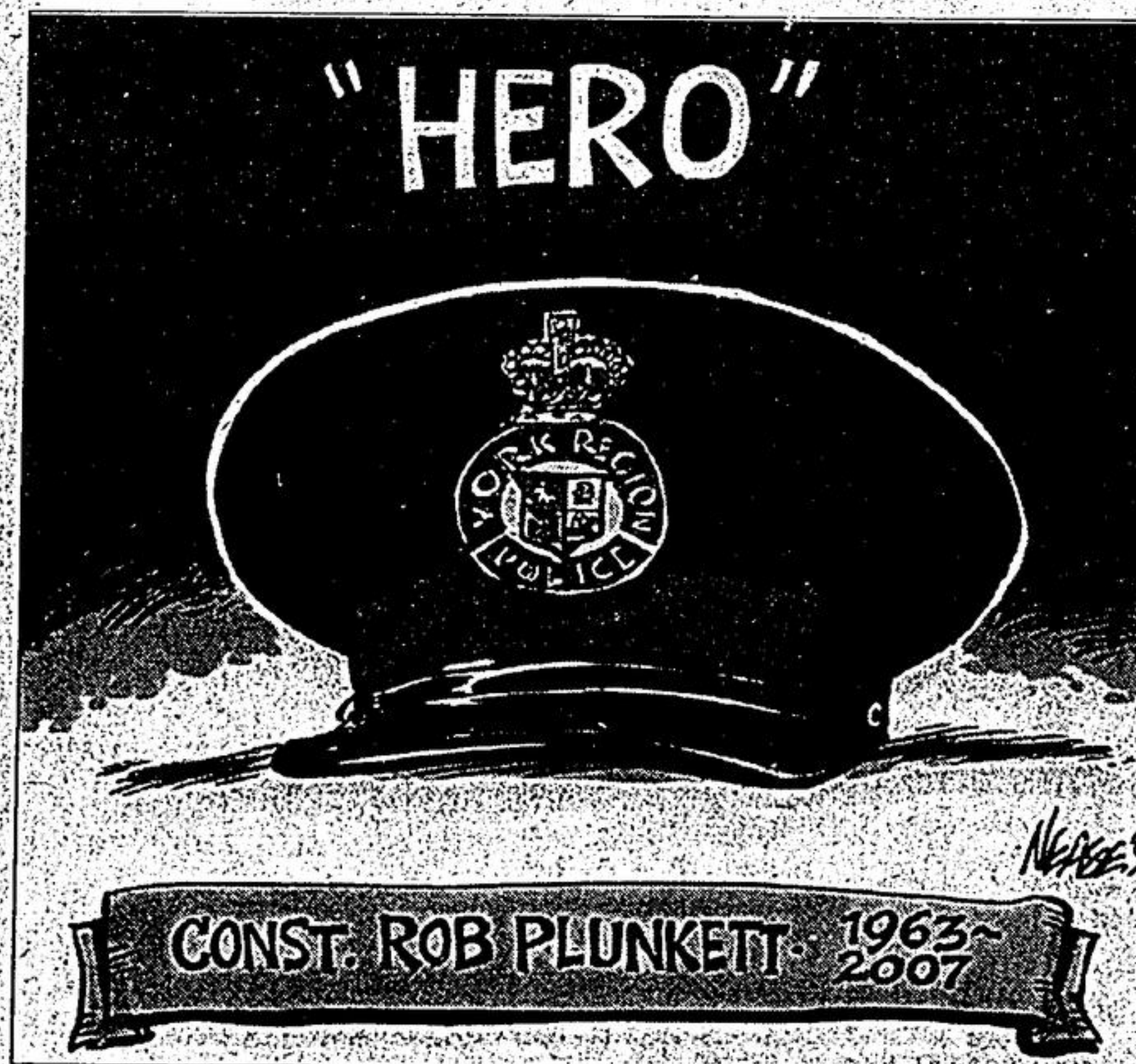
The family of Det.-Const. Robert Plunkett released a statement prepared by the fallen officer's wife, Sonja, yesterday afternoon.

"The Plunkett family would first like to thank the emergency responders who attended the scene on Thursday morning and who made every effort possible to save Rob's life in his greatest time of need.

"We would also like to thank York Regional Police and the York Regional Police Association for its unwavering support and comfort and the many expressions of sympathy we have received.

"Our family members, friends and the community at large have also offered an overwhelming show of support and sympathy and we are grateful and touched.

"Members of the media are to be commended for the manner in which this tragic event was covered, balancing the community's need



to know with respect for the family's need for privacy.

"Rob loved his job and was a dedicated police officer. He was totally committed to his calling while balancing his family responsibilities.

"He was deeply loved as a father and a husband and will be sorely missed.

"It is the family's hope that the person(s) responsible for Rob's death will be held accountable for their senseless actions."

#### LETTERS: POLICY

The Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit letters for clarity and space.

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