

**WELLNESS:** Cases of dementia could spike in next 6 years

# Alzheimer society report shows disturbing trends

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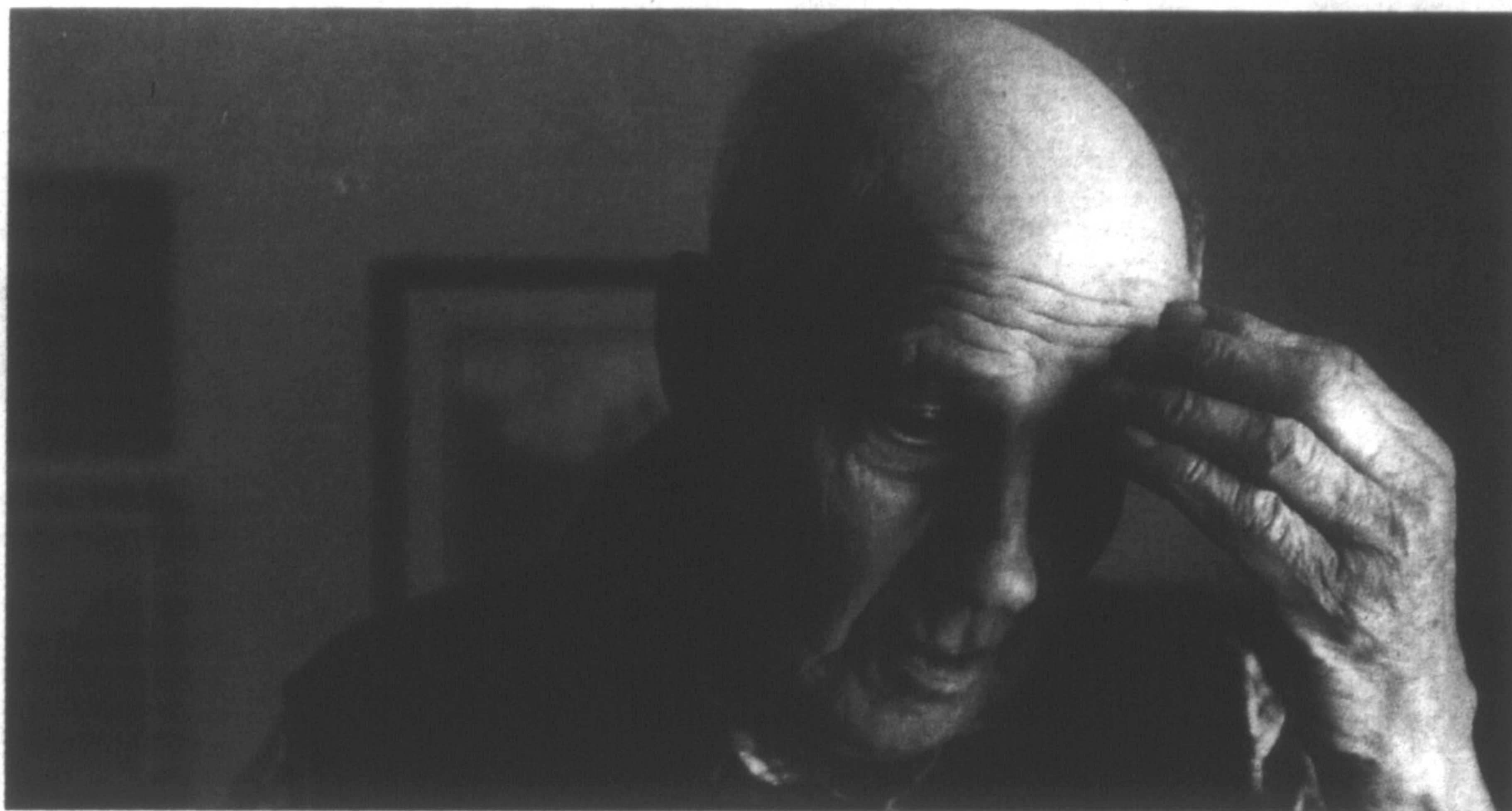
Within six years, York Region can expect a 35-per-cent spike in Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, states an Alzheimer Society of Ontario strategy report released this week.

If unabated, the economic and social toll of the disease is a ticking time bomb, Alzheimer Society of York Region executive director Loren Freid said in reaction to research predicting the malady could cripple not only the health care system but countless families as well.

It's alarming and it will continue to grow, he said of statistics contained in 10 by 20: Ontario action plan for dementia, a follow up to Rising Tide, an Alzheimer Society of Canada report released in January.

It projected the number of Canadians with dementia will double to 1.1 million and related annual costs will increase tenfold to \$153 billion by 2038. Dependence on informal family care will also increase, resulting in enormous pressure and health impact on caregivers.

The Ontario society's report,



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Harold Culham of Aurora suffers dementia after a series of small strokes while his wife, Irene, is afflicted with Alzheimer's disease.

a comprehensive 10-step action plan that, by 2020, would reverse the escalating economic impact of the disease on patients and families

and curb the province's health care spending, is welcome and workable, Mr. Freid said.

"It's a call to arms," he added.

The plan looks at five key areas, including prevention, earlier diagnosis and intervention, accessible and equitable caregiver supports

and a co-ordinated and better trained dementia workforce.

The report also calls for greater research investments toward treatment and a cure and leadership from the province.

Because of our aging population in Ontario, more people every year are diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, Alzheimer Society of Ontario chief executive officer Gale Carey said.

The plan offers solutions to tackle the social impact of the disease and reduce the cost to our health care system, Ms Carey said.

Ontario was the first province to spearhead a five-year strategy over 10 years ago, but since then, the numbers have increased dramatically and there is no cure in sight, she said "We're giving the Ontario government an opportunity today to reaffirm its leadership," Ms Gale added.

"What is required is a systematic societal approach toward the management of dementia, integrating all levels of care giving, from physician to caregiver support and patient services," Toronto Sunnybrook Research Institute Neurosciences Research director Dr. Sandra Black said.



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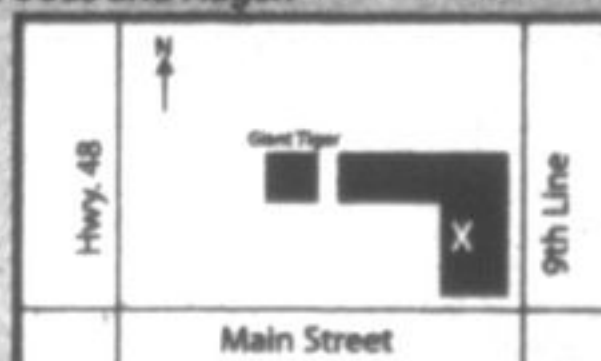
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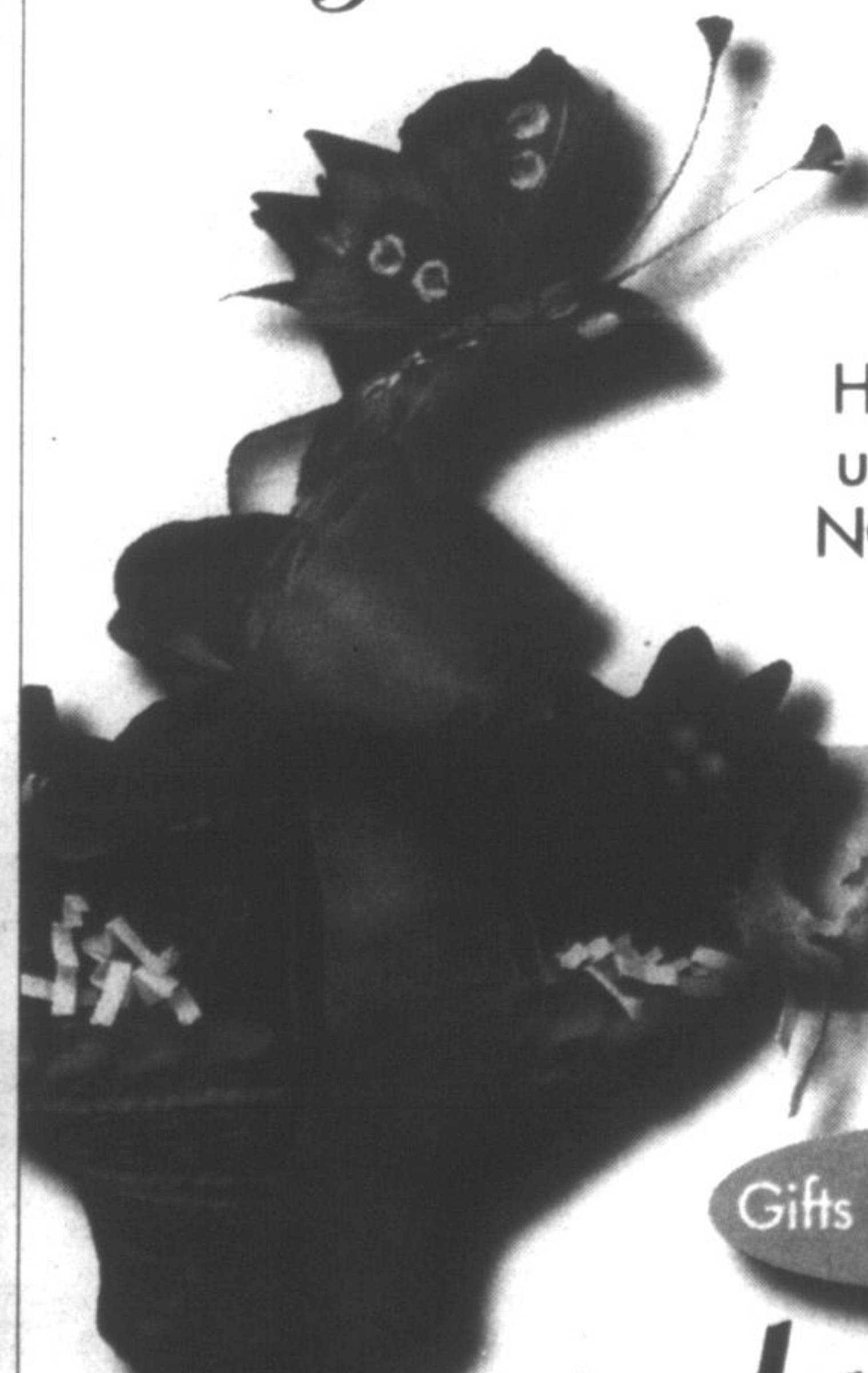
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