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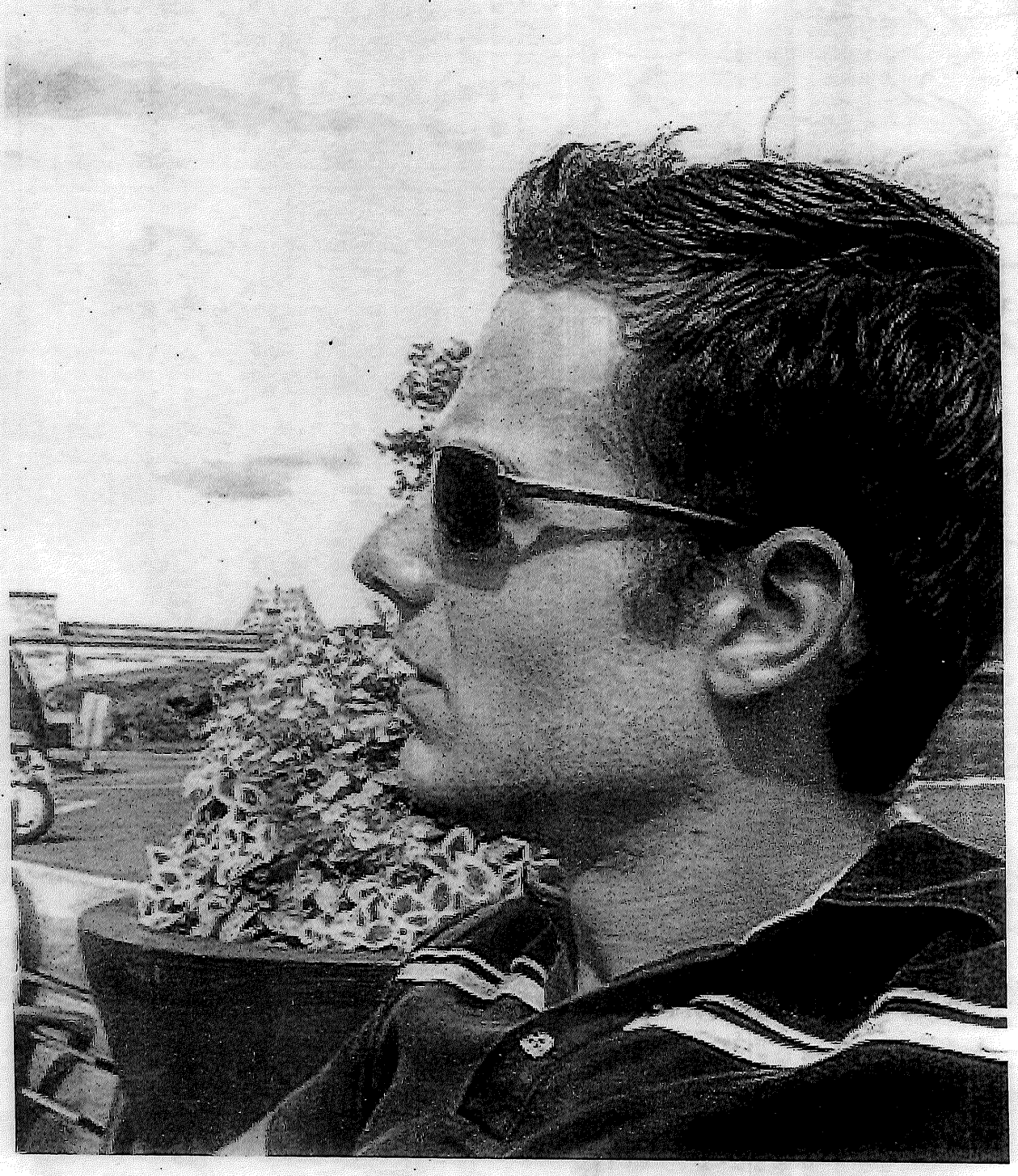

David P. Civile died in a kayaking accident on the Shrewsbury River in 2010. His parents have created a foundation to work for greater boating safety. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE DAVID P. CIVILE FOUNDATION FOR BOATING SAFETY AWARENESS

AMAZING DAVID

In memory of their son, a family advocates for boating safety

By Susan Bloom :: For the Asbury Park Press

On Nov. 17, 2010, Joan Civile received a call from her 26-year-old son, David, letting her know of his plans to go boating on the Shrewsbury River for about an hour that afternoon.

An avid outdoorsman who'd moved from the family's home in Cranford to Tinton Falls two years earlier to be closer to the Shore, David was a longtime canoeist. And he was eager to try out the new kayak he'd purchased just three weeks before.

"To use his own favorite word, I can only describe David as 'amazing,' " Civile said of the outgoing young man who loved life, his family and friends, and his job as a manager at Trader Joe's.

Outfitted in new waterproof pants and armed with only a flotation seat cushion on board, David launched from ankle-deep water in Little Silver into the day's bright sunshine and unusually warm weather.

But the idyllic excursion he'd awaited was not to be.

Concerned when they were unable to reach David after several hours and with darkness setting in, his family called 911, triggering the start of an intense four- to five-day search by a network of relatives, friends, colleagues, kayaking clubs and local authorities, the conclusion of which would bring tragic news from police: Amid the river's 50-degree temperatures, volatile currents and windy conditions, David had gone missing.

Officials would find no trace of David for more than two years, leaving his heartbroken, close-knit family — including parents Joan and Rich of Cranford and sister Laura and brother-in-law Jon Davies of Tinton Falls — to mourn their beloved son and brother.

On Dec. 5, the Civile family received word that remains found in Little Silver were positively identified as David's.

"We were shocked after all this time, and it brought up everything for us all over again," Joan Civile said.

"Our lives have been broken and our loss is devastating, but our faith is strong and our hope is that we can spare another family from this tragedy.

"He was so energetic and loyal, so full of joy and compassion, and was just a light for anyone who knew or worked with him," she said. "People were just drawn to him, and co-workers referred to him as 'Superman.' "

But, as police would later piece together, the windy conditions of the channel likely pulled David out of his kayak, leaving him to suffer from hypothermia in the cold water and ultimately drown.

"It's still surreal to us because David could do it all," Civile said.

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