

Local Railway Items from Area Papers - 2000

26/07/2000

Ottawa Citizen

Winchester

Monkland

Freight train slams into car killing driver

Car's sole occupant died at scene after failing to stop at level crossing

By Jake Rupert

Alfred Rochefort understandably didn't feel like talking much last night.

Mr. Rochefort, a Canadian Pacific freight train engineer, was driving a train from Smiths Falls to De Beaujeu, Que., just over the provincial border, yesterday morning when the unthinkable happened.

As he neared a level crossing over Highway 138 just north of Cornwall at about 10:20 a.m., Mr. Rochefort, 43, saw the warning lights go on and swing arm barriers come down.

However, this crossing would be different.

From Mr. Rochefort's left, police said a rented 2000 Pontiac Grand Am driven by an 84-year-old man crashed through the barrier and the train smashed directly into the car.

With the car crumpled in half and stuck on the lead engine of the train, Mr. Rochefort and his crew slammed on the brakes, bringing it to a stop about 500 metres down the track in the middle of the village of Monkland, about 15 kilometres north of Cornwall.

An air ambulance was dispatched, but the man was declared dead at the scene, and the helicopter was cancelled.

His body was transported to the Hotel Dieu Hospital in Cornwall, where an autopsy was scheduled to take place last night or early this morning.

Ontario Provincial Police were not releasing the man's identity, or even saying where he came from, last night.

As police were doing their work, Mr. Rochefort was at home in Smiths Falls dealing with what had happened.

"I really don't feel like talking about it right now," he said. "I'd rather try and relax."

After the man's body was cut out of the mangled car, police started their accident investigation. Their starting point was the southbound barrier lying on the side of Highway 138.

"Somehow that barrier came down," Senior Const. Hugh McClements said.

"The lights were functioning and the barriers were operating and down. Somehow the car got in front of the train."

Why the car went crashing through the barrier is what OPP's technical collision investigators will be trying to figure out in the coming days.

The car will be examined for mechanical failure, and autopsy results may shed light.

"We look at every possibility," Const. McClements said, "but it's also a possibility we may never know what caused him to go through the crossing."

26/08/2000

Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Barrhaven

VIA to alert reesidents before cutting trees

Railway changes policy after battle in Barrhaven

BY JOCELYN BELL

VIA Rail is reviewing its approach to cutting down trees along railway tracks after a battle with a Barrhaven resident.

Ranald MacDonald, VIA's manager of transportation and planning, said it would have been "wiser to give adjacent landowners some warning" that trees would be cut down.

Quickly adding that he wasn't obligated to tell any- one that trees were coming ; down on VIA property, Mr. MacDonald said in the future he would consider alerting residents before trees are cut "out of courtesy."

On Thursday morning, Townsend Drive resident Vivien St. George woke to chainsaws cutting down trees along the VIA Rail tracks that run behind her house. She got on the phone and kicked up enough of a fuss to stall workers from cutting down the few hundred trees at the edge of VIA property.

A manager for Rail Term Inc., the company that handles maintenance for VIA, reassessed the trees Thursday night and determined they did not impede sight-lines for the train conductor or for drivers crossing the tracks at Jockvale Road. They'll be left standing indefinitely, Mr. MacDonald said. "For now, we'll leave well enough alone."

01/10/2000

Ottawa Citizen

Alexandria

Limoges

Town to bid a final adieu

By Joanne Laucius

Residents of the Town of Limoges plan a mass gathering next to the railway tracks to watch a black-draped train carrying the casket of Pierre Trudeau speed past tomorrow morning.

Aurele Constantineau, fire chief in the town about 30 kilometres from Parliament Hill, is meeting today with officials from schools, the boy scouts, firefighters and other groups who plan to meet in the parking lot of a hotel to watch the train pass.

A crane is to bear a huge Canadian flag that once flew over Parliament Hill.

03/10/2000

Ottawa Citizen

Alexandria

One train journey thirty years of memories.

As the funeral train made its way from Ottawa to Montreal yesterday morning, thousands gathered on railway platforms along the route to pay homage to Pierre Trudeau, and witness, however fleetingly, a moment of history passing by.

The silver train, pulled by engine 6433, sounded its whistle as it rolled into each town and village. Invariably, the train slowed, but did not stop, as Mr. Trudeau's sons smiled and waved to the crowds.

The journey took about two hours two hours that summoned up more than 30 years of memories as ordinary Canadians recalled Mr. Trudeau and his effect on their lives.

18/10/2000

Eganville Leader

Renfrew

Barrys Bay water

Ontario's Last Remaining Wooden Water Tower Dedicated

Thanks to the dedication of a small group of people and the generosity of a great number of others, Canada's last existing wooden railway water tower has been completely restored and is now part of a beautiful park in Barry's Bay.

Village councillor John Yakabuski, who was master of ceremonies for the dedication, said the water tower was erected in 1943, but was almost demolished in 1975. A petition was started to save the tower and a year later it was designated a historical landmark, ensuring it would never be demolished. In 1989 the Barry's Bay Railway Station Restoration Committee was organized. Its main goal was to restore the turn-of-the century station in the village. In 1998 a group which came out of this committee decided to preserve the water tower and make the area around it more appealing.

Ottawa Central Buys Railway

By Craig Skinner

The Ottawa Central Railway has purchased the Ontario L'Orignal Railway, from Rail-America Inc. of Boca Raton, Florida.

The L'Orignal Railway is a 42-kilometre rail line based in Vankleek Hill. The track runs from Glen Robertson to Hawkesbury, then to L'Orignal

The railway's main account is with Ivaco rolling mills, which produces steel wool products.

James Allen, general manager of the OCR, said the addition of the L'Orignal Railway doubles its operations.

"We've gone from 10,000 carloads to 22,000 carloads (per year)," he said.

"We have enhanced our presence in Eastern Ontario. We're now able to provide a much broader level of services to our customers."

Wayne August, assistant vice-president of investor relations for RailAmerica Inc., said the sale is part of a plan to dispose of approximately \$100 million U.S. in non-core assets during the 2000 fiscal year, "The plan was announced in the early part part of the year to reduce some of the debt we incurred through our acquisitions," he said.

"We're very happy because we've pretty well exceeded our goal."

Mr. August said the L'Orignal Railway, which was obtained last February as part of Rail-America's acquisition of Rail-Tex Inc., didn't fit into the company's plans.

The deal was part of a series of transactions announced by RailAmerica on Dec 26, which included the sales of the company's 26.5-per-cent equity interest in the Quebec Railway Corporation back to the company, the L'Orignal Railway, and various other real estate and rail assets.

The deals were worth a total of \$114 million U.S.

The OCR, a division of the Quebec Railway Corporation, provides local delivery in the Ottawa area and freight service to the Pembroke area five days a week.

It also runs east six days per week, interchanging with CN in Quebec, near Valleyfield.

The OCR is based in Walkley Yard on Albion Road.