

... Wreck hurts 5

Victims trapped in Pullman

2 Coaches Leave Track, Smash Idle Locomotive

(Ohio State Journal, June 8, 1948)

Five passengers were injured, two of them critically, when the last two cars of the Pennsylvania railroad's *The Spirit of St. Louis* passenger train broke loose and rammed the locomotive of a stationary passenger train of the same line in the Union station yards just beyond the Fourth St. viaduct, at 9:35 o'clock last night.

All of the injured were trapped in the wreckage of the Pullman, a solid room car, and had to be freed by the rescue efforts of fireman, police and railroad workers.

Some 10 others, who were not injured, also were trapped in their compartments when the metal doors were sprung by the impact and by debris piled up in the car. They had to be taken out of windows broken open by fireman.

Police and firemen identified the injured:

Harry G. Fitzgerald, Jr., of Rt. 1, Blacklick.

E.D. Johnson, 45, of Jennings, Mo.

John Avery, 45, of Connersville, Ind.

Hart W. Reaves 54, Los Angeles.

Charles W. Denker, Baltimore, Md.

Fitzgerald, an attorney with the Ohio Public Utilities Commission, suffered possible fractured leg. He was taken to Grant Hospital.

Most critically injured was Johnson, a mechanical engineer with the Wagner Electric Corporation of St. Louis. He suffered fractures of both legs and a severe laceration of the lower abdomen. He was taken to St. Frances Hospital. Johnson was en route to Allentown, Pa., on business.

Denker suffered a crushed pelvis. He was taken to St. Francis Hospital, and later listed as in "critical" condition.

Avery, a business executive, suffered possible back injuries. He was taken to White Cross Hospital.

Reaves, an insurance adjuster, suffered a fractured arm. He was taken to White Cross Hospital.

Observers declared the lives of Avery and Reaves were saved by the alertness of the porter aboard the wrecked Pullman. He cried out: "Hit the deck!"

Both immediately tumbled to the car's hallway.

Railroad officials last night were seeking to determine how the two cars became derailed before ramming into the stationary locomotive.

Fitzgerald, pinned in the aisle, was cutting himself loose with a jackknife when Fire Department Emergency Squad men reached him.

They were forced to cut a hole in the floor of the car to release him.

Fitzgerald was taken to St. Francis Hospital in an Egan-Ryan funeral home ambulance.

Avery, president of the Roots-Connersville Blower Corporation, suffered a heart attack after the accident. He also suffered possible back injuries and sever shock. He was taken to the hospital in a P. F. Rutherford funeral home ambulance. The hospital said his condition was "not serious".

Reaves, en route to Washington suffered a broken wrist. He too, was taken to the hospital in a O. R. Woodyard funeral home ambulance. Hospital officials said his condition was "not serious".

Both Reaves and Avery were injured when the metal walls of their compartments were crushed.

The porter whose warning saved the two men's lives was not immediately identified.

No one was injured on the train that was standing on the side track waiting for the eastbound "Sprit" to clear the way so it could enter the Union Station and discharge its Columbus-bound passengers.

T. J. Dempsey, 366 St. Clair Ave., engineer of No. 155, told officers he was standing near the switch waiting for the *Spirit of St. Louis* to clear when "the Pullman jumped the track."

This was the car ahead of the observation car, last on the 18-car long flyer.

Homer D. Howard, 26, of Ft. Worth Tex., a passenger on the Sprit's observation car said he was standing in the aisle when he heard someone shout:

"We're off the track – hang on."

The impact threw him 20 feet against the forward wall of the car, he reported. A porter landed beside him, Howard related.

T.E. Rood, conductor of the Sprit, estimated his train was traveling three miles an hour, as it had just pulled out of Union Station and was proceeding along main line tracks into the yards.

C. E. Wharton, 1114 Wildwood Ave., was the fireman on the westbound train.

Railroad officials said J. W. Hartsough of 1020 Twentieth Ave., was engineer on the eastbound train, with F. H. Hillyer as his fireman.

Police sent 20 men to the scene under direction of Capt. Joseph Tibe. Two radio cruisers each manned by two patrolmen, 11 motorcycle men and two sergeants formed the detail.

The Fire Department dispatched its two emergency squads, the fire squad, a ladder company and two chiefs.

No. 30, the road's banner *The Spirit of St. Louis* was en route to Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and New York, having come from St. Louis and Indianapolis.

The westbound No. 155, *The Metropolitan*, was due here at 9:32p.m. from Pittsburgh and the east, en route to St. Louis.

Merrill Black, 984 E. Seventeenth Ave., a freight conductor, suffered minor injuries while assisting in removing wreckage. He was taken to Grant Hospital.

Freeman T. Eagleson, 152 N. N. Drexel Ave., a passenger, was taken to Grant Hospital for a checkup. Hospital attaches said he was uninjured. Mr. Eagleson, an attorney at 16 E. Broad St., was en route to Washington.

The Spirit of St. Louis resumed its trip eastward at 10:32 p.m., while the other train in the wreck arrived in Union Station at 11p.m. and discharged its passengers.



Station Yard Wreck Injures 16 Passengers

Cars Jump Tracks, Ram Locomotive

Some of injured Trapped in Debris

by Perry Morison

(Columbus Citizen, June 8, 1948)

Sixteen persons were injured, one critically, when a blue ribbon train sideswiped the locomotive on another train near Union Station Monday Night.

Force of the impact cut a swath through almost the entire side of one of the cars. In the garish light of rescue torches the gaping hole reminded war veterans of a shell torn battleship.

The accident occurred 300 yards east of Union station. The trucks of the next to last car of the Pennsylvania Railroad's "*Spirit of St. Louis*" jumped the track. The derailed car pulled the observation car along with it until they stuck the standing locomotive with terrific impact.

This locomotive was the westbound *Metropolitan* from Pittsburgh, Pa. It was awaiting a signal to enter the station when the eastbound train, bound for New York and Washington with 169 passengers in its 16 cars, plowed onto it. A call for help was sent out.

Swing Into Action

The Red Cross Disaster Unit swung into action on its first big test, with 20 doctors and 12 ambulances, scores of policemen and fire men responding.

Fire Chief Walter G. Strickfadden said 24 men answered the call for help. Police Captain Joe Tibe had a dozen police officers on the scene and Sheriff Ralph J. Paul sent a squad of men. They assisted a score of railroad police.

The spirit of St. Louis carries no day coaches. Its equipment is the very latest in construction and design. It was pulled by a diesel powered engine and left the station 15 minutes late at 9:30p.m. The accident occurred at 9:31p.m.

Engineer T.J. Dempsey, 366 St. Clair Ave. at the controls of the standing train. The *Metropolitan*, leaped to safety when he saw the coaches lurching toward his engine.

Fireman E.A. Wharton 1114 Wildwood Ave., did not have time to jump. He crouched behind the boiler. Neither of the men was hurt.

Thrown From Seats

The 10 passengers on the *Metropolitan* were thrown from their seats by the impact. The derailed cars tore off some of the machinery on the standing engine before they stopped.

The injured on *The Spirit of St. Louis* were in the next to last car, a roomette and bedroom car. It normally has room for 20 passengers.

Two of the injured, John Avery, Connersville, Ind., and Harry Fitzgerald, Blacklick, O., could not be removed from the shambles until the standing engine pulled away from the car they occupied.

Engineer J.A. Hartsough, 1020 20th Ave. handling the Diesel engine on the *Spirit of St. Louis*, did not know of the accident until the airbrakes went in emergency. This was caused when the careening last two cars of his train swerved and broke the air connections. When the connections break the brakes automatically lock.

“Shudders” Through Car

John Avery, Connersville, Ind., was in the next to last car. He said:

“The car left the rails and there were shudders going through it. There were bumps as it plowed along the ground.

“Then someone yelled ‘Hit the floor.’ I think it was the porter (R. Burton of Washington, D. C. was porter on Car 201, railroad officials said.) I heard this as I ran out of my compartment.

“I met Reaves (Hart Reaves of Los Angeles, Cal.) in the aisle. We both dropped to the floor. As we lay there I could see the wall collapsing. There was a terrific crash and then silence.

“Reaves and I were entangled in a mass of torn steel. We wriggled and crawled to get out. I looked into my compartment. It didn’t exist anymore. The whole side of the car was gone. I worked my way to a window and someone lifted me out.”

Avery said he was ready to go home two hours after the wreck. But he stayed at the hospital all night. He suffered multiple cuts and bruises.

Reaves, at the same hospital, was treated for a fractured left wrist and given a sedative.

Continue Journey

About 28 passengers on the *Spirit of St. Louis* were taken from the three last cars of the train to cars further forward. They continued their journey an hour and 20 minutes later.

The *Metropolitan* was delayed about two hours.

Railroad officials said it was a miracle that there was not a heavy loss of life or more passengers seriously injured on the *Spirit of St. Louis*.

Railroad workmen used acetylene torches to cut away the debris before the badly damaged car could be moved.

Huge crowds of spectators watched rescue efforts. Emergency lights threw a weird light about the scene. Wrecking cranes drew up and their crews quickly began the work of clearing away the wreckage.

Superintendent W.H. Mapp division passenger agent, Frank Roth and the road foreman of engines, C.J. Sears, began an immediate investigation. Investigators from the State Public Utilities Commission and the Interstate Commerce Commission joined them Tuesday.

The Red Cross Disaster Relief Unit is headed by Robert (Bob) O’Brien, 1872 Stanford Rd. as chairman. He said 400 persons were alerted Monday night on the first call. This unit was formed 18 months ago and became active two months ago.

Twenty doctors answered the emergency call and interns are alerted at hospitals.

Mr. O’Brien has several assistants who take part in the calls for help. The Medical Bureau is a key point. The Academy of Medicine co-operates with the Red Cross in the unit.

The Columbus Red Cross had completed notification by wire of the next of kin by noon Tuesday.

Two emergency squads of firemen, a fire squad, a truck company and the fire department's new communication car also answered the call.

A score of policemen sent to the scene herded spectators back from rescue operations. These people retreated to a high bank on the north side of the tracks. From this vantage point they witnessed one of the most exciting events in Columbus railroad history.

Rescuers approaching the scene immediately after the wreck saw the rear coach of the Spirit of St. Louis, its rear sign still lit. The coach leaned drunkenly to the right. Just ahead was the next to last coach, its steel side ripped away like so much tin foil.

The standing engine of the westbound *Metropolitan* had its nose buried in a mass of twisted metal. It had sheared the better part of the passenger coach off, exposing ripped compartments, a litter of passenger belongings and bedding.

Flash of Light 'Lifesaver' For Man Trapped in Train

by Mervin Roland

(Columbus Citizen, June 8, 1948)

"The good Lord gave me just a second of light and I was able to save myself." They Harry Fitzgerald Jr., assistant state attorney general for the Public Utilities Commission, described his miraculous escape in Monday night's wreck of the *Spirit of St. Louis*.

"Freeman T. Eagleson (general counsel for the Ohio Fuel Gas Co.) and I had just got on the train at Union Station" Mr. Fitzgerald said in the Grand Hospital operation room.

"We had a roomette and had just begun to discuss our plans for oral arguments tomorrow before the Federal Power Commission. We were going after more gas for Ohio."

Mr. Fitzgerald paused and squeezed his eyes shut. The pain of an injured back was intense. He was unable to move from a crouched position.

"The train started pulling out of the station and soon afterwards we knew our car was off the track.

"I jumped up and ran into the aisle to get the porter. I wanted to have him pull the emergency stop cord. The train was gaining speed fast.

"I saw the porter lying face down on the floor, holding on.

"Then there was an awful crash and the lights went out," Mr. Fitzgerald said.

"I had the sensation that the walls were closing in on me. I fought it down, but just then the lights flashed on for only a moment.

"I had the sensation that the walls were closing in on me. I fought it down, but just then the lights flashed on for only a moment.

"The walls were closing in."

Mr. Fitzgerald paused again in recounting his experience. Then:

"I dropped to my knees and the walls pinned me in a crouch. I thought I had been there for hours before help came.

"I talked to the men who came. They brought a hydraulic jack, but it wouldn't work. They got another, and it wouldn't work either.

"So I just got plain mad and hauled myself out of there." As Mr. Fitzgerald finished his story, the doctors came into the room.

The injured man looked up at them and said:

"Please, fellows, get me out of here in time for the convention."

He plans to accompany the Ohio delegation to the Republican Convention in Philadelphia this month.

Mr. Fitzgerald lives at Blacklick. His condition was listed Tuesday at Grant Hospital as fairly good.

Here Is List of Injured In Collision of Trains

(Columbus Citizen, June 8, 1948)

Injured passengers on the *Spirit of St. Louis*.

E.D. Johnson, 45, of Jennings, Mo., severe laceration of left groin, compound fracture of the left leg and shock. Condition critical. St. Frances Hospital.

Charles W. Donker, 34, of Townson Fork, Me., fractured pelvis and internal injuries. Condition serious. St. Frances Hospital.

John Avery, 45, Connorsville, Ind., multiple body and head lacerations and burses. Condition good. White Cross Hospital.

Hart Reaves, 54, Los Angeles, left wrist fractured, Condition good. White Cross Hospital.

Harry Fitzgeralds Jr., 35, Route 1, Blacklick, O., dislocated right hip. Condition fairly good. Grand Hospital.

Freeman T. Eagleson, 70, of 152 N. Drexel Ave., Columbus. Treated for shock and dismissed at grant Hospital.

Injured on the Pennsylvania Railroad's *Metropolitan*:

Ross L. Cobb, 37, Caretta W. Va., injured right leg.

Gust Frungay, 33, Ambridge, Pa., injured knee.

Miss Lucille Justice, Columbus, sprained left leg.

Mrs. Mary K. Stokes, Fremont O., leg injury.

Miss Kathleen Cooper, 33, of 1574 Northwest Blvd., Columbus, O., injured right leg.

Mrs. J.O. Burdette, 68, Dennison O., injured left leg.

Mrs. J.D. Leahy, 26, Harlowton, Mont., laceration left leg.

Miss Pauline Spanaugle, 26, of 50 S. Ohio Ave., injured right hip.

Mrs. J.A. Ziskind, 49, of 384 Linwood Ave., injured left thigh.

Miss Marguerite Boyer, Groveport, O., cut left knee.

Injured while helping rescue trapped victims.

M.O. Black, 984 e. 17th Ave., a freight train brakeman.

Those injured in the *Metropolitan* were treated at the scene by Columbus doctors. The Columbus passengers were taken to their homes, while the others were taken to Union Station. These left two hours later on the *Metropolitan*, the same train that was in the wreck.

Officials Probe Union Station Wreck

Five injured When Pullman Hits Engine

Two cars of Spirit of St. Louis Jump Tracks as Train Leaves

(Columbus Evening Dispatch, June 8, 1948)

The Interstate Commerce Commission and Pennsylvania Railroad pressed a joint investigation Tuesday into the crack-up of two cars of the *Spirit of St. Louis*, which caused injury to five persons here Monday night.

Objective of the probe was to determine what caused the last two cars of the train to break loose and ram a locomotive near the 4th St. viaduct.

Two of the five injured remained in serious condition Tuesday.

All of the injured were trapped in a Pullman of the eastbound *Spirit of St. Louis* and were freed by fireman, police and railroad workers.

In critical condition in St. Frances Hospital is E.D. Johnson, 45, of Jennings, Mo., a mechanical engineer for the Wagner Electric Corp., St. Louis. He suffered fractures of both legs and severe laceration of the lower abdomen.

In serious condition in St. Frances is Charles W. Denker, 34, of Baltimore, Md., who suffered a crushed pelvis.

The other three injured in the wreck were:

Harry g. Fitzgerald, Jr., 40, of Route 1, Blacklick in "fairly good" condition in Grant Hospital.

Hart W. Reaves, 54, of Connersville, Ind., "good" condition in White Cross Hospital.

Freeman T. Eagleson, 70, of 152 N. Drexel Ave. a passenger on the train was taken to Grant Hospital for a fracture and treated for shock. He is an attorney at 16 E. Broad St.

Merrill Black of 984 E. 17th Ave., a freight conductor, suffered a puncture wound on his right thigh while assisting in the removing of the wreckage. He was treated at Grant Hospital.

Some 10 other persons were trapped in the car when the impact sprung the metal doors and piled debris into the aisle.

They were taken out of windows and Fitzgerald was taken through a hole cut in the floor by firemen. He was pinned in the aisle and was attempting to cut himself loose with a pocket knife when reached by fireman.

No one was injured on the *Metropolitan*, a westbound train which had stopped to permit the *Spirit of St. Louis* to continue on its eastward run. The accident occurred at 9:35pm.

Other passengers in the Pullman said the lives of Avery and Reaves ewer saved by a porter who shouted: "Hit the deck."

They leaped to the hallway of the car as the sides of the car caved-in.

The Pullman was just ahead of the observation car, the last two on the 18-car train. The Pullman jumped the track after leaving the rest of the train.

The conductor of the *Spirit of St. Louis* said his train was traveling about three miles an hour having just pulled out of the Union Station. Engineer on the eastbound train was J.W. Hartsough, 1020 20th Ave. and the fireman was F.H. Hillyer.

T.J. Dempsey, 36 St. Clair Ave., was the engineer on the westbound train and his fireman was C.E. Wharton, 1114 Wildwood Ave. Both said they were "standing by" when the Pullman jumped the track.

Twenty policemen under Capt. Joseph Tibe were sent to the scene and the fire department dispatched two emergency crews, a fire squad and a ladder company who were directed by Fire Chief Walter Strickfaden.

The police and firemen were aided by railroad workers as they worked to batter the doors open and cut holes in the floor of the metal car to reach the injured victims.

Also on the scene were Red Cross disaster workers. Robert O'Brien, general chairman of the disaster committee said relatives of the injured were notified. The Red Cross said it had 20 disaster workers on the scene and dispatched 12 ambulances to remove victims.

Since those in the Pullman car could not be reached immediately, it was feared at first that many more were injured or killed, police said.

The Spirit of St. Louis resumed its trip to Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and New York at 10:33 and the Metropolitan went into Union Station when the right-of-way was cleared by railroad workers.

Fitzgerald, an attorney for the Ohio Public Utilities Commission, suffered dislocated of his right hip and bruises.

Avery is president of the Roots-Connersville Blower Corp. He suffered possible back and rib injuries, shock and a heart attack.

Reaves suffered a fractured left arm. He is an insurance adjuster.
