

Scores Narrowly Escape Death in Excursion Wreck

Steel Coaches, Twisted and Scattered About Right-of-Way,
Save Passengers from Other Than Minor Injury.

(The Columbus Dispatch, August 19, 1929) – Luck and fate rode hand in hand on Pennsylvania train No. 614, a Cleveland – Columbus excursion, which was derailed about half-way between Sunbury and Centerburg at 11:20 a.m. Sunday. Although an engine and eight of the 12 cars were derailed, no one was killed.

Four score or more persons were injured, but none is thought in critical condition.

The double-header train was running at about 60 miles an hour when it left the track reducing some of the steel day coaches to a twisted mass of wreckage. Some of the cars were twisted almost double; another was sitting in a field; rails were torn up for about 500 feet; wheels and undercarriage of cars were torn off and sent scurrying into nearby fields.

A relief train was sent from Columbus, carrying nurses from Grant, University, Mercy and St. Clair hospitals, accompanied by Dr. R. H. Mitchell, 683 East Broad street, and Dr J. H. Richardson, Broad and Grubb streets. Ambulances from Columbus, Mt. Vernon, Westerville and other places helped remove the more seriously injured to hospitals in Columbus and Mt. Vernon.

Wrecking crews were put to work immediately, while officials of the company started an investigation to determine the cause of the catastrophe, which at first was attributed to a spread rail.

600 PASSENGERS ON TRAIN.

The 600 passengers on the train, most of them round-trip excursionists, were going to spend the day in Columbus, planning to leave on the return trip at 5 p.m.

First of the two locomotives, operated by T. L. Murtaugh of Orrville and E. G. Johnson of Akron, broke away from the second engine and came to a stop about 200 yards down the track.

The second locomotive was operated by G. S. Osborn, 443 King avenue, a gray-haired veteran engineer, who has been in the employ of the road for the past 40 years, and Enos C. Wagner, fireman, of Orrville.

Although the latter engine turned over on its side, neither the engineer nor the fireman suffered other than minor injuries.

BURIED BENEATH COAL.

John Buch of Orrville, the conductor of the train escaped uninjured.

Osborn was buried beneath coal from the bunker on his engine, extricating himself from the wreckage with difficulty.

“We were running smoothly, only about five minutes late, when suddenly the first engine became detached from us, it got bumpy, and my engine went over on its side. I was buried beneath a lot of coal which slid into the cab from the bunker. I fought my way out like a groundhog. I thought there would be an explosion,” the gray-haired veteran related while sitting on the edge of the coal container on his overturned engine.

FIREMAN GRABS WINDOW.

“I could see my fireman. He had grabbed the window ledge on the other side of the engine and was hanging on, free from the flying coal” he said.

He admitted that while he had been in other crashes, that this was his first real wreck. He remained on the scene after receiving first aid, refusing offers from persons to ride home in a machine with them. His answer to these offers was: “I haven’t been relieved from duty yet.”

Fractures, lacerations and head injuries constituted the extent of the injuries to the passengers. Many were cut by glass that showered over them as windows of the cars were broken either by the crash or by persons trying to get out of the wrecked coaches.

Work of ambulance drivers was hampered after reports of the wreck had spread to surrounding communities. Several thousand automobiles clogged up the highway by those eager to catch a glimpse of the derailed train.

Wire communication between the towns near the scene was disrupted when the third coach, forced off the track and headed toward the east, splintered several poles and severed the lines.

Repairmen were immediately dispatched to the scene and within three hours after the wreck, had again strung lines.

Many of those who were on the train, and who remained at the scene long after the relief train had taken its departure for Columbus, were assisted by motorists.



Girl Held Fast in Wreckage Jokes With Rescue Workers

(The Columbus Dispatch, August 19, 1929) – Standing out in the panic of the wreck of the Cleveland-Columbus excursion train on the Pennsylvania railroad, between Centerburg and Condit, at 11:20 a.m. Sunday, is the courage of a 14-year-old girl, Margaret Jane Koelges, of Lakewood, Ohio.

With no warning whatever, the girl, who was coming to visit Dr. and Mrs. F. L. Case, 235 East Rich street, found herself and seat heaved toward the roof of the coach and there pinned by wreckage, which had pushed upward through and from the door of the steel coach.

Margaret remained there several hours while doctors encouraged her, nurses were near, proffering what aid they could reach to her, and rescuers labored frantically but methodically with sputtering acetylene torches, melting away steel which held her fast.

And when she was released, her left leg crushed and lacerations on her face, she smiled and joked with workmen, doctors and nurses and declared “I feel pretty good.”

MISS KOELGES was the last to be taken from the wreckage. Preliminary attempts to free her failed, when it was found she was being held fast by a mass of twisted steel. An acetylene torch and tanks were obtained from a garage at Condit. She retained consciousness and answered the words of encouragement from nurses and doctors who stayed as near her as possible in the torn coach, administering every means of first aid possible. It was necessary to cut away a section of the steel floor of the coach before other debris holding her could be reached.

After a rather uncomfortable night, Margaret was resting at Grant hospital, Monday, under the influence of a hypodermic, the third administered since the crash shortly before noon Sunday.

Her mother, Mrs. Georgia Koelges, who suffered cuts on the head, leg and back, was lying in an adjoining bed, while her father, Arthur Koelges, who sustained a back injury, was in a room directly below.

Mrs. Koelges slowly recited the events of the accident in which her daughter displayed the bravery of a Spartan.

“**MARGARET** was going to spend the last few weeks of her vacation, before school started Sept. 5, with her aunt and uncle, Dr. and Mrs. F. L. Case, 235 East Rich street, and she was to make the trip alone. Mr. Koelges and I decided to surprise her and accompany her on the trip, so we didn’t tell her anything about it,” Mrs. Koelges said.

“We took her to the train, got on with her and said we would ride a short distance with her. As the train neared Newburg station (on the outskirts of Cleveland) Margaret

said, 'dad, give me my ticket and some money, because you and mother will have to get off soon.' We told her that we would ride a little farther.

"Again, when the conductor came around, Margaret said, 'let me have my ticket and some money, Dad, here comes the conductor.' Then Mr. Koelges pulled out three tickets and we told her we were going with her.

"Everything seemed to be wrong on the train," Mrs. Koelges continued. "I don't remember having seen anything on the train but a few fire extinguishers. Margaret seemed to have had a premonition that there would be a wreck, for she remarked how fast we were going around the hills. The entire train seemed to shake, and when we left the hills, she said she felt better and that she was 'breathing easier.'

"MARGARET was sitting next to a window and was riding backwards with a little girl who boarded the train at Cuyahoga Falls. Mr. Koelges and I were sitting in a seat directly opposite. Suddenly the train lurched and Mr. Koelges said, 'My God, it's a wreck.' There wasn't a murmur from Margaret, and for a moment, we were tossed about, and then the crash.

"I was thrown half way through the window, and our car, which was directly behind the smoker, was partially telescoped by another, I suppose the one directly behind us. The floor of our car buckled up and the metal heater, aside of the car, near the floor, was twisted around against Margaret's feet. Her first words were 'Mother, can't you get me loose?'

"She was a brave girl. Passengers attempted to get her free and they placed pillows under her back and head to make her comfortable as possible. An ax was found at one end of a car, but the blade slipped off the handle. Then someone found a hammer, but the handle slipped from its head.

"When first aid was brought from Mt. Vernon, an acetylene torch was used to cut the steel. It was thought that a bolt from the car heater had penetrated Margaret's foot. The supply of oxygen became exhausted and they sent back to Mt. Vernon for more.

"MARGARET didn't lose consciousness during the two and one-half hours she was pinned between the cars. A Mt. Vernon doctor gave her a hypodermic to relieve the pains and to keep her from fainting."

The nurse entered the room and Margaret awoke to eat a light breakfast of scrambled eggs, toast and tea.

"I don't remember anything but that my feet were caught." Was Margaret's version of the accident, when questioned, Monday.

"She was a brave girl," her mother repeated, to which Margaret replied, "Oh, there you go with that again."

There is a grocery back in Lakewood that will be closed for several days. Mr. and Mrs. Koelges have operated the grocery and meat market for 16 years.

Grandfather Saves Four-Year-Old Victim from Serious Injury.

(The Columbus Dispatch, August 19, 1929) – FULFILLMENT of his grandfather's promise to buy him an ice cream cone "If he were a good boy on the trip" was uppermost in the mind of Billy Sturgill, age 4, despite a severe cut on the forehead inflicted by flying glass when the Pennsylvania excursion train left the tracks near Centerburg, Sunday.

"Grandpa said I could have an ice cream cone if I was a good boy," related Billy as he sat on the ground a few minutes after he had been recovered from the ruins via a broken window.

At the time, blood was flowing from the wound but Billy was not particularly worried apparently. As the events of the previous minutes whirled through his brain, it was the ice cream cone which seemed most important.

Asked if he were scared during the moments of derailment, Billy explained, exactly, that "grandpa was there".

And this statement conveyed the idea that no great harm could come to him as long as he was under the protective guidance of B. F. Sturgill, the grandfather, of 989 Harrison avenue, with whom he was returning to Columbus from Akron.

The two were riding in the second coach from the engine when the mishap occurred. Sensing danger, the grandfather threw an arm around the lad's shoulders.

A fraction of a second later the boy was tossed into the aisle, the elder man on top of him. And glass was being showered down on them from all angles. Billy was removed to Mercy hospital in Mt Vernon and later taken to the home of his father, Delbert Sturgill, of the Harrison avenue address. The grandfather was not injured.

Billy got his ice cream cone after arriving in Columbus Sunday night.



Passengers in Thrilling Escapes.

(The Columbus Dispatch, August 19, 1929) – More than three hours were required in releasing Miss Margaret Jane Koelges, aged 14, of Lakewood, who was imprisoned in the wreckage of one of the Pennsylvania cars which was badly twisted in the wreck Sunday. Although she suffered severe injuries about her feet, she laughed and talked with the doctors and workmen working to release her.

Miss Koelges and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. R. Koelges, both of whom suffered minor injuries, were taken to Grant hospital. They were en route to Columbus to visit with Dr. and Mrs. F. L. Case, 235 East Rich street.

Mrs. Florence Weisenberg, aged 43, of 596 East Engler street, who also suffered painful injuries about the head, was separated from her four-year-old daughter, Reva, in the confusion that followed the derailment. The child was uninjured. The mother was taken to Sanitorium hospital at Mt. Vernon and later removed to Columbus.

THROWN INTO RACK.

Miss Nora Fitzgerald, Cleveland, narrowly escaped with her life when she was hurled into the luggage rack immediately above the place where Miss Koelges was imprisoned. She escaped with only minor cuts and bruises.

She was en route to Columbus to take moving pictures.

Four-year-old Billy Sturgill, of 989 Harrison avenue, suffered cuts about the head and was taken to Mt. Vernon for treatment. He later was removed to his home by his grandfather, who accompanied him but was uninjured.

M. T. Pyne, operator of a farm owned by C. E. Green of Condit, and on whose property the wreck piled up, told of the wreck.

FARMER WITNESSES IT.

“I heard a loud crash and the scraping of metal. I looked toward the tracks. Dirt was flying high into the air, and the head-end of the train was cut off from view by dust,” he said.

“Some fellow whom I don’t know was driving along the highway at the time. I got into his machine and we drove through the field to the scene. Women were screaming, windows were being smashed and everything was in turmoil.



"I didn't see anyone who seemed to be critically injured. We took several carloads of those who were cut and otherwise injured to the house, where we took care of them as best we could. I don't know what became of the man who drove me. Some said he took a load of the injured to Columbus."

Virginia Dillahunt of Cleveland, who escaped with a few minor bruises, said that she and another young lady, whose name she did not learn, were reading a newspaper.

"It seemed that the train jerked suddenly, there was a deafening roar, and all of a sudden I realized that I was being hurled through the air. I don't remember where I fell, but when I realized what had happened, everybody was screaming and rushing about." She said.

"I haven't seen the other girl since," she said.

COLLEGIANS ESCAPE.

Those who escaped uninjured or with only minor bruises removed seat cushions from the cars and sat about in little circles in an adjoining field. In the main, their faces bore expressions of wonderment. Others roamed about the scene of the wreck looking for their luggage which had become lost in the excitement.

Probably one of the happiest groups on the train was 10 young men, known as the Oklahoma Collegians, members of an orchestra who were en route from Akron to Louisville, Ky., where they were to open an engagement Monday night.

They were riding in the baggage car immediately behind the overturned engine. Although some of their instruments were smashed, none of the musicians was injured.

Mrs. Alice Aiken and her two daughters, Evelyn and Alvina, of Cleveland, suffered injuries about the legs. They were en route to Columbus to visit a son and brother.

Mrs. Weisenberg was traveling with Mrs. Bertha Goldbergh, 666 East Mound street and her two children, Jack, aged three and Sherley, aged 13 months.

Mrs. Myrtle Sparr of Cleveland is suffering possible internal injuries. Her husband, Marvin Sparr, who was accompanying her to Columbus on the excursion suffered lesser injuries. Both were taken to Grant hospital, where their injuries were treated.

Shortly after being admitted to the hospital, Mrs. Sparr lapsed into a state of coma, but was later revived.

A number of Columbus residents known to have been aboard the ill-fated excursion train, but who escaped without injury include: R. M. Murray, who gave his address as East Poplar street; Warden Henderson, colored, of 507 Fairfield avenue; Betty Peterson, colored; Esther Rokeach, 593 E. Main street; Bertha Goldstein, 414 S. Monroe avenue.

Mrs. J.W. Galloway, 89 N. Haldy avenue, and son, Joe; Mrs. Katie Carter, colored, 462 N. Monroe avenue; Miss Jessie Bryant, colored, 204 Hughes street; Julius Stone, 1591 Bryden road; P.J. Marcus, 1350 W. Fifth avenue; Mrs. Walter Frazier, 614 Linwood avenue; Mr. and Mrs. J. Smith Huffman, 1415 Ingills avenue; O.S. Kiner, 677 Reinhard avenue; Mrs. Bela Ayers, 220 W. Norwich avenue.

Mrs. T.M. Spurrier, 2543 Pontius avenue; Mrs. J. Bierstedt and two daughters, 247½ W. Fifth avenue; Mr. and Mrs. John Ernest, 21 Sixteenth avenue; Lucinda Ferguson, 23½ W. Price avenue; P.J. Morlan, 1350 W. Fifth avenue; Charles L. Lee, 433 S. Harris avenue; Neil Dent, 274 E. Cherry street; George North, 733½ N. High street; Mrs. Lena Rivers, colored. 772 Garfield Place.

Other Columbus persons injured include: Charles L. Lee, aged 35, of 433 Harrison avenue, minor bruises and lacerations; Amos Debolt, aged 50, 745 South Third street, cuts about left arm; Miss Ruth Wilson, aged 21, 877 Michigan avenue, back injuries; Miss Myrtle Sport, 1277 Michigan avenue, back injuries and Miss June Randles, aged 14, of 1154 Grandview avenue, injuries about the right leg.

Include in the others that were injured are; Mrs. J.E. Trucheon, Cleveland in Mt. Vernon hospital suffering severe injuries to the left leg.

Miss Floran Ferguson, aged 42, Akron, left arm and hip injured.

H.E. Conley, aged 29, Cleveland, back injured.

Miss Helen Alberson, aged 32, Cleveland, left leg hurt.

William Shirdas, aged 63, negro, Cleveland, shoulder injured.

Mayme Bost, aged 40, Akron, knee and back hurt.

Mrs. Fannie Mascus, aged 40, Cleveland, left hand and right leg hurt.

Mrs. Ann Winton, aged 45, Lakewood, back hurt.

William Collier, aged 35, Akron, knee injured.

R.J. Norman, baggageman, Orrville, cut face.

Joseph Rollins, aged 25, Cleveland, side sprained.

Mrs. Anna Wies, New York, en route to Columbus to visit at 438 South Wheatland avenue, left ankle sprained.

Julius Turos, aged 25 Cleveland, cut by glass.

L.M. Heycock, aged 33, Lakewood, knee and right foot hurt.

W.H. Ferguson, aged 51, Akron, left arm hurt.

Elizabeth Gottfried, aged 34, Cleveland, knee hurt.

John Neal, aged 49, Cleveland, right side hurt.

Alex Comos, aged 38, Cleveland, back hurt, serious.

E.B. Nesbitt, Cuyahoga Falls, left leg hurt.

Fred Keehl, aged 17, East Cleveland, minor injuries.

Cornelius Mission, negro, aged 49, Montgomery, W. Va., side hurt.

Miss Mary Hite, aged 61, Gore, Ohio, right shoulder bruised.

Leo Veit, Cleveland, bruised about body.

Mrs. Matilda Wescott, aged 32, Euclid, right arm bruised.
A Pocricks, aged 42, Pennville, Ohio, left side bruised.
Louise Wolfe, aged 48, Cleveland, head cut.
Miss Willis May Knowles, aged 30, Cleveland, leg cut.
Minnie Lehman, aged 33, Cleveland, side and back hurt.
Mrs. Lulu Homan, Cuyahoga Falls, back hurt.
Mary Baul, aged 20, Cleveland, injured hip.
Otto Friday, 223 Hamilton Ave.
Theresa Zilkvitz, Cleveland.
Mary Doborovik, Cleveland.
Rosella Papp, Cleveland.
Helen Bennett, Cleveland
J.A. Billman, Middletown, Ohio.
Anna Casper, Cleveland.
Minnie Hyman, Cleveland.
Sanford Hyman, Cleveland.
Annie Dulose, Columbus, Ga.
Lulu Hollman, Cuyahoga Falls.
George Joseph, Cleveland.
Mrs. H. Schlenker, Berea, Ohio, in Mt. Vernon hospital.
M. Mintz, Cleveland, Union News agent.
Mrs. Flora Upton, aged 35, Cleveland.
Rosie Evens, Cleveland.
James Manson, Montgomery, E. Va.
Earl F. Keyes, Wellsville, Ohio.

MANY IN LOCAL HOSPITALS

Others treated in Columbus are as follows:

St. Clair hospital – R.J. Norman, aged 39, of Orville, mouth lacerations and loss of several teeth; Tom J. Carroll, aged 47, of Providence, R.I., injuries to the right knee; Charlotte Hosdet, aged 18, of New Straitsville, minor head and back injuries; Norris Mintz, aged 27, Cleveland, minor injuries about the back; John Meal, aged 49, Cleveland, back injuries.

Carrie Edwards, aged 29, Cleveland, minor back injuries; Anna Morehard, aged 43, of 463 Fairfield avenue, arm injuries. One victim who was treated at St. Clair hospital took his departure before his name was obtained.

Mrs. John Donley, 510 East Gates street, is in White Cross hospital, suffering severe lacerations about the head, and has a possible fractured skull. An X-ray was to be taken Monday to determine the exact extent of her injuries.

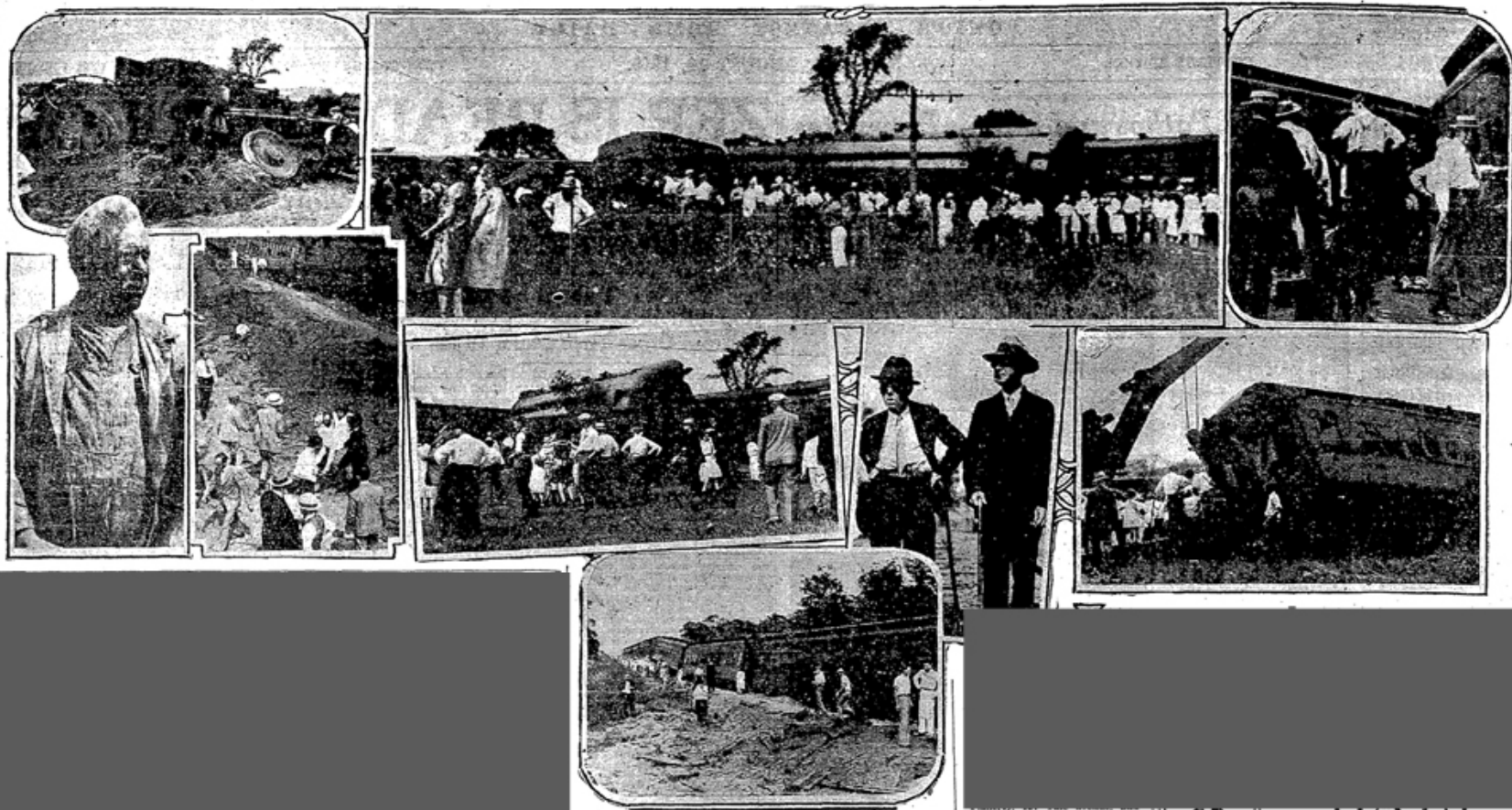
Francis Atkins, of Cleveland, is in Mt. Carmel hospital suffering severe injuries about the legs.

SOME TAKEN TO MT. VERNON.

Those treated at mercy hospital in Mt. Vernon include R.J. Norman, Orrville, baggageman on the train. He suffered injuries about the back but was later released. Mrs. A. Pocsics, Painesville, back injuries and lacerations; Mrs. Weisenburg, 596 East Engler street lacerations and bruises; Miss Minnie Lipman, Cleveland, body bruises; and William Sturgill of 989 Harrison avenue.

Five persons were treated at Sanitorium hospital in the same city. They are: Miss Mary Ball, Cleveland, body bruises; Charles Freeman, colored, and Mrs. Sophia McCraskey, both of 1630 Maryland avenue, suffered body and head bruises.

PICTURE STORY OF EXCURSION TRAIN WRECK BETWEEN CENTERBURG AND SUNBURY



See the next page for photo captions.

Photo Montage Captions.

(The Columbus Dispatch, August 19, 1929) – the wreckage of the Pennsylvania’s Cleveland to Columbus excursion train, which left its rails midway between Centerburg and Sunbury, Sunday, and rescue episodes are pictured above through the lenses of Dispatch cameras.

The second engine of the “double-header” is shown buried more than three feet in the ground with Engineer G. S. Osborn, 433 King avenue, who escaped uninjured when a 10-ton avalanche of coal from the car almost buried him alive. He is shown below his wrecked engine. The top center picture is a general view of the first four cars, from which most of the injured were taken.

The car with the end showing near the left center, sandwiched between cars No. 1 and No. 3 of the train, was bent into the shape of an “S” by the terrific force of the other cars. The top right picture shows rescuers working in this car to extricate passengers. The second picture from the left in the middle row shows a woman being carried to an ambulance.

The next picture is of a coach more than 100 feet from the right-of-way in a pasture, sections of rail 50 feet in length were jammed and twisted and carried away beneath the car. The next picture is that of James Flaherty, 127 Yale avenue, and Richard Hodgson, 933 Yale avenue, both blind, who were aboard the train, but received no injuries.

The next picture, on the left end of the middle row, is of the rear end of one of the coaches which left the roadbed, its vestibule a crushed and crumpled mass of steel. The lower photograph shows the last five coaches still on the rail and portrays graphically the damage done to the roadbed and many feet each side of the rail, as coaches and engines hurtled the rails and crashed through fences and nearby ditches.

Sandwich, Ice Cream Vendor's Call Interrupted by Screech of Brakes and Hiss of steam.

E.N. – Sometimes a postman will take a long walk when given a vacation, sometimes a street car conductor will see the sights of the city from a window of a street car. So, it was with Miss Ann Sherman, the writer of the accompanying story. Miss Sherman is a reporter for the Cleveland News. She was on the Pennsylvania train that was wrecked near Centerburg, Sunday. She was en route to Columbus to begin a vacation and has written this story of her experiences in the mishap for the Dispatch.

By **ANN R. SHERMAN**

(The Columbus Dispatch, August 19, 1929) – My first train wreck. It came with a crash as sudden as an earthquake. All I could hear was hissing steam and screams.

I had been sitting in one of the rear coaches which was not derailed. Like about 600 others, I was impatient because the train was late. It was a half hour late; I had just heard the candy butcher tell another passenger.

“Ham and cheese sandwiches, ice cream, chocolates,” he had been calling. He was plying his trade assiduously. We were still about 30 miles from Columbus, I had been told. We were hungry. He was doing a flourishing business as a consequence.

SUDDENLY a violent jerk – a terrific noise and before I could even think what had happened, I was sitting on the floor and the sandwiches, candy, ice cream were flying out of the train butcher's basket in all directions.

I was scared beyond any other realization for a moment. Then I had an uncontrollable desire to laugh. It looked so funny.

EVERYONE was thrown helter skelter. Everyone's face around me was so white and their expressions so stricken with terror.

Then just as quickly as the realization came to us that we were in a train wreck, just so quickly too did we scramble to our feet out of that coach.

I heard the same candy butcher, Herman Price, I later learned was his name, tell on the way going out that this was his first train wreck, too. And he had been doing this work for 10 years.

We were among the first out of the coaches. The spectacle of what had happened to the first coaches looked terrifying. I thought they must have all been killed.

The first car had nose-dived into the sand at an angle of 45 degrees. Windows were broken. Women were throwing their children through the windows. We ran to help all those people trapped in the cars up in front.

It seemed that everyone was trying to help everyone else. It seems remarkable to me now how quickly so many recovered their self-composure and were giving aid to those who had been bruised and cut.

Rumors were running rampant. First, we heard that 20 were killed, then 25. Men and women running back and forth excitedly looking for their companions. Children were lost from their parents.

Weeping of these children mingled with the cries and sobs of some high-strung women.

Soon doctors and nurses appeared on the scene. They seemed to make the people feel safer. A certain calm and relief returned to the crowd. The excitement subsided somewhat.

A FEW FEET from the wrecked train the uninjured sat down on the grass under the trees and began the long wait for the afternoon until the relief train was brought to the spot.

The final agitation subsided when the two passengers hemmed in under a seat in the first coach had been removed about three o'clock. Perfect strangers were being friendly with anyone at all who happened to be around.

We learned that John Buch, the conductor, had been in one previous accident that happened exactly 19 years ago to the day.

Reminiscences of other experiences were exchanged. Children romped about. The atmosphere of a grand picnic began to take the place of the earlier keen apprehension. No one was hurt fatally; the news was then. Spirits rose high and higher.

ONE lady who had run away from the scene of the accident to her son's home three miles' distant, came back to look for her baggage. She returned by auto and was still in a high nervous state.

Those persons who had been sitting on their baggage arose graciously to let her examine their bags. They moved around with her in the effort to aid her in the search.

This matter of identifying the stray luggage had been one of the chief activities earlier in the afternoon. When people finally located their own, they stuck close to it.

Sitting out there under the trees wasn't so bad. A friendly dog mingled with the crowd. People smiled at him and patted his head. A rabbit ran through the crowd, too.

In a bewildered fashion, he hesitated for a second and flashed out of sight. Everybody laughed. They seemed anxious to laugh.

THEN came the relief train after hours of waiting. We were all happy to leave the sight of that crumpled engine and those twisted cars. When we arrived in Columbus about 5 p.m., the passengers waved goodbye to each other as they hurried off to their separate destinations.

The common danger made one family of that crowd of strangers who had boarded the excursion at 7:43 a.m. complete oblivious of one another.

TRAINS DETOURED AROUND SUNBURY WRECK.

TEMPORARY TRACK LAID AROUND SCENE; LIST OF INJURED REMAINS AT 71

Trains Today Are Sent on Temporary Track
While Debris of Wrecked Coaches Is removed –
Three Resting in Columbus Hospitals

(The Semi-Weekly Gazette - Delaware, Ohio, August 20, 1929)

Columbus, Aug. 19 – Inspector W.F. Packard of the railroad department of the state utilities commission this afternoon begun an investigation to determine the cause of the train wreck near Condit, north of here yesterday which caused injuries to 71 persons.

Trains were being detoured today on a temporary track around the scene of the disastrous wreck on the Pennsylvania lines near Sunbury in which 71 people were injured when an excursion train left the track at 11:43 o'clock Sunday morning. Four hundred passengers were aboard the train at the time.

No cause for the wreck is known, although it is thought that a "Split" rail threw the trains from the track. Investigation of the wreck is being made by both railway officials and Delaware county officials.

Most of the injuries to passengers were of a minor nature.

The train, operating on a regular daily schedule, was carrying four extra day coaches filled with excursionists. Two locomotives were pulling the twelve-car train.

A mile and a half north of Condit, running fifteen minutes behind schedule and traveling 70 miles an hour to make up time, the tender of the first engine left the rail, breaking free from the locomotive as it did so.

Coaches Buckle

The second engine, No. 7271, driven by George S. Osborn of Columbus, derailed in the wake of the first tender and plowed into the soft strip beside the right-of-way, carrying its tender and five coaches with it.

The coaches buckled together and were scattered along the track tearing up telegraph poles and draping the wreck with tangled wires. Both tenders and the second locomotive went over on their sides. All the coaches remained upright, although several were battered.

The lead engine, No. 7124, driven by Thomas Murtaugh of Akron, remained on the track. So did two parlor cars and three day coaches. The front truck of one swung off the rails but the car was not carried into the ditch.

Coal Buries Engineer

Engineer Osborn was buried under a ten-ton avalanche of coal as his locomotive and tender careened from the rails and tipped over. He was dug out by his fireman, E. C. Wagner, of Orville, uninjured except for minor cuts and bruises.

Russell J. Norman of Orrville, baggagemaster, was pinned at one end to the baggage compartment of the combination baggage and day coach when the car tilted after leaving the rails and its entire cargo of trunks and boxes tumbled and slid down the slanted floor.

Norman, and nine of the injured passengers, were rushed by automobile to the hospital at Mount Vernon, 23 miles away. All available nurses at Mount Vernon, and as many from St. Clair and University hospitals, Columbus, as could be spared, were sent to the scene of the wreck.

Most of the injured were treated at a field hospital set up by nurses and doctors who came out from Columbus. One woman was taken to Grant hospital, Columbus, and two to Mount Caramel hospital for treatment.

Margaret Koegles, 21, of 1305 Edwards avenue, Lakewood, was trapped for three hours in the aisle of a smashed coach until members of the wrecking crew cut through the steel floor of the car with oxy-acetylene torches and released her. Her left leg was badly crushed.

Many of those who escaped injury made their way through the woods and cornfields to Condit and congregated at McElwee's general store.

For hours they stood in line at the telephone, awaiting an opportunity to communicate with relatives. Many, growing tired of waiting, walked or rode with passing motorists, to Sunbury, a few miles away.

No Cause Given

The train left Cleveland at 7:25 a.m., and was due in Columbus at 12:10 p.m. No cause was given by railroad officials for the wreck.



Follow up article 19 days after the accident

NUT MAY HAVE CAUSED WRECK

(The Columbus Dispatch, September 7, 1929) – O.B. Murray, railway inspector for the state utilities commission reported Saturday that a nut three-fourths of an inch thick might have caused the wreck of the Pennsylvania Railroad passenger train at Condit, August 18 when 254 persons were injured.

Murray said that he was unable to determine definitely the cause of the wreck, but said that a nut bearing marks of a locomotive wheel was found near the wreck. Experiments made with a similar nut in the Pennsylvania shops showed that it could have caused the derailment, he said.

In his report Murray said that the tracks at the scene of the wreck were measured and found to have been all right. The train was traveling at 60 miles an hour, the maximum allowed by the railroad, when the wreck occurred, he said.
