

Interurban Cars Crash; Find 5 Dead

Excursion Trains Collide Near Milwaukee; Toll May Grow.

(Columbus Evening Dispatch, Sept. 2, 1950)

MILWAUKEE, Sept. 2 – Two interurban excursion trains, carrying 80 model railroad fans each, collided head-on today. An Associated Press staff reporter counted five dead as they were removed from the wreckage and said “there are more.”

The forward car of one train telescoped into the first car of the other, trapping many of the passengers. The second cars of both trains remained upright on the tracks.

Both trains, operated by the Milwaukee Speedrail Co., were excursion specials arranged by members of the National Model Railroad Association which opened its annual convention here today.

The association had arranged picture-taking roundtrips between Milwaukee and Hales Corners for convention delegates. One of the trains was northbound on its way back to Milwaukee and the other was enroute to the suburban community. They were traveling a single track.

The crash occurred about nine miles from downtown Milwaukee on a straight stretch of track. There was no immediate cause given.

Nine ambulances answered the first call from the Milwaukee sheriff's department and others responded as the injured, estimated as high as 50 persons, sped back and forth between Milwaukee County General Hospital and the scene. The hospital is only a few miles away.

Cutting tools were rushed to the scene to help remove trapped persons from the wreckage.



9 KILLED, 50 INJURED AS INTERURBANS CRASHED

Milwaukee Scene of Tragedy as Railfans Open Convention.

(Columbus Sunday Dispatch, Sept. 3, 1950)

MILWAUKEE, Sept. 3 – A model railfans' holiday convention opened tragically today when at least nine delegates were killed and an estimated 50 injured in a head-on crash of two interurban trains.

The collision, about nine miles from downtown Milwaukee, was between two special two-car excursion trains of the Milwaukee Rapid transit and Speedrail Co. Delegates to the annual convention of the National Model Railroad Association had leased them for a sight-seeing trip.

The forward cars of the two electrified trains were smashed to bits as one telescoped into the other, splitting the sides back like a banana peel. Rear coaches of both trains remained on the tracks.

One of the trains operated by Jay Maeder, president of the railroad was returning from its trip to suburban Hales Corners. The other was enroute there. Both trains were traveling on the same track.

The dead: Raymond Kratt, 27 and his wife, Marion, 25, Chicago; John Willian, Park ridge, Ill; Emil H. Beck, Detroit; Willian Greenaway, Louisville, Ky; William A. Wight, 25, Wauwatosa, Wis; Huntley G. Burrough, Detroit; Charles J. Suizbach, about 27, Minneapolis; William Roberts, about 40, Taylor, S.C.

Maeder, who told an Associated Press reporter he "jumped or was shoved" from the control booth of the inbound train before the crash, said – "I have no idea how it happened."

"I saw the southbound train coming around a bend about 200 yards away," Maeder said. "I slammed on the brakes, but saw a collision was coming. I opened the door to the control room and I don't know whether I jumped or was shoved. Someone said he pushed me.

I have no idea of how it happened." Maeder added. "Someone must have missed a signal."

Maeder, who purchased the Speedrail Company less than a year ago, said he had worried all last night about operating the special trains over his line which serves the southern and western Milwaukee suburbs.

He said the model enthusiasts had arranged for five such trains for today's picture-taking trips and he was concerned about their operation along [with] the regular daily trains.

The motorman assigned to the run was with him in the control booth at the time of the crash, Maeder said.

The collision scene is only a few blocks from a heavily traveled beltline highway carrying traffic around the Milwaukee metropolitan area. Many of the cars carrying Labor Day week-end vacationers turned off at the site, choking movement of emergency vehicles.

The injured were taken by ambulance to Milwaukee County General Hospital, only a few miles away, until the emergency room was too overcrowded to handle more. The rest were taken to another institution.

Workers with acetylene torches cut the twisted steel from around bodies of the dead and injured. Many of those hurt were trapped in the wreckage. A Roman Catholic priest administered last rites of his church.

A passenger told of diving to the floor to save himself when he hears "screeching brakes." Later, after crawling through a shattered window, he said he found a man with one leg torn off lying beside the tracks. He applied a tourniquet.

Local Man Hurt in Train Crash.

About 40 Columbus residents, model railroad enthusiasts, are attending the National Model Railroad Association convention.

V.A. Ketcham, Jr., 37, of 2940 Calumet St., listed as one of the injured in the crash of two interurban cars at Milwaukee, left Columbus Friday with his wife to attend the convention.

Ketcham is an attorney whose offices are at 50 W. broad St.

Mrs. Ketcham reported by telephone that her husband has suffered only cuts and bruises and would leave the hospital Monday. She said no other Columbus residents were injured, although some were severely shaken up.

Among other Ohioans hospitalized were Patty Spicer and Walda Morris of Zanesville and Cecil Vaughn of Akron.