

Jury recommends high speed policy... Red carpet heads way to 'Venturers' bargains

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in his personal opinion, the leaving of keys in a car should come under the Highway Traffic Act.

In the investigation of the accident, which was conducted by the OPP, four reports were filed. Two of them were made by Constable Roduck.

One of the other two reports was prepared by OPP chief inspector of traffic Theodore Craig. While there was general agreement in the three other reports as to where constable Roduck activated his cruiser's roof lights inspector Craig's report differed.

Constable Roduck's attorney, Monty Hyde, told the jury in his summation that an error in inspector Craig's report is the inspector's responsibility and not the constable's.

In a post-inquest interview Dr. Bennett smoothed over the inconsistencies by saying that each person was making a different interpretation.

Concerning a possible motive for Couture taking the Snook car, the jury heard that he had once threatened to commit suicide. The coroner, however, said to the jury that he believed the collision which brought about the multiple deaths was an accident and not a deliberate act.

Elizabeth Thomson, Couture's one-time girl friend, said he swore "to kill himself if I ever broke up with him. He said he'd take a car and wreck it up".

Police Commission

No comment on inquest

Once again Halton Police Commission refused to comment on any aspect of the inquest delving into the deaths of seven people last month following a high speed police pursuit near Acton.

Meeting Thursday, midway through the three day inquest, Judge William K.

Police will buy 20 new cars

Halton Regional Police will buy 20 new vehicles this year including 12 new marked cruisers, six unmarked cars, a van and a station wagon. Halton Police Commission approved the call for tenders on the new vehicles Thursday.

While buying 20 new cars the police department will also trade in 16 used vehicles. The force will continue to use the standard size cruiser since it is necessary if plastic partitions between the front and back seats are to be installed.

At the same time the force

Edmonton Miss Thomson, who knew Couture since last June and had been with him in Edmonton, broke off with him in February. She said she had not seen him since.

Crown attorney James Treleven said in his summation that what Couture said to Miss Thomson may be only what a young teenager says to deter his girlfriend from going off. "We don't know why he stole the car", Mr. Treleven said.

"I believe it was an accident", Dr. Bennett said. He assumed Couture knew Highway 25 and said that drifting snow and ice patches contributed to Couture crossing the middle of the road.

Dr. Robert Hayward, a psychiatrist who briefly interviewed Couture, said that the then 14-year-old's thoughts centred on day-dreams which would involve him in serious accidents after which he would get well in hospital.

Dr. Hayward said he did not interpret Couture's day-dreams as "a danger to himself (Couture) or others". The psychiatrist agreed with the crown attorney that the day-dreams were normal for a 14-year-old.

Testimony from Couture's probation officer Thomas Barker showed the young man to be "extremely quiet".

The issue of high speed chases surfaced several times during the inquest; however, a definition of that term was never settled.

Quiet

Testimony from Couture's probation officer Thomas Barker showed the young man to be "extremely quiet".

Previously the commission had refused to comment on the incident, while the inquest was pending.

Warrender informed the press the commission would not comment on any aspect of the inquest and gave no indication if the commission would ever comment about the inquest.

In addition, the commission approved the call for tenders for uniforms. The force will buy 190 pairs of police boots, 30 pairs of police oxford shoes and 120 pairs of galoshes. A total of 1,430 shirts will be purchased along with 281 pairs of trousers and 144 tunics.

Chief Ken Skerrett told the Commission the force is now experimenting a new tunic, in the field, which is expected to last longer than five years.

Dr. Bennett said a Webster dictionary definition of chase, "to follow or trail rapidly", seemed to fit this situation. He noted, however, that Metro police deputy-chief Ackroyd said evasive action by the pursued car is part of a high speed chase.

"Was the excessive acceleration (by Couture) evasive action?", said the coroner. "We'll never know", he added. He did say though that he believed Couture was aware of Roduck's cruiser's presence.

The chase, which covered a distance of 1.7 miles, reached a speed of between 90 and 100 m.p.h.

The jury made no comment in its report on what a high speed chase is.

Blood

Pathologists who tested blood samples from both drivers testified there was no evidence of non-medical drugs in either of the bodies. Evidence of alcohol was found in McHugh's body, but a toxicologist from the Centre

of Forensic Science said the finding was "meaningless".

A friend of Couture's, Russell Elliott, had testified that he (Couture) had two drinks of rye earlier in the evening of March 6.

Dr. Bennett told the inquest that OPP corporal Robert Arbour and constable Robert Willmott, the officer in charge of the investigation, had done a "magnificent job".

On the 6th of March around 10:40 p.m. the McHugh car

stopped on Highway 25 to help John Oudesluis start his truck. The attempt failed, and Oudesluis took a ride from McHugh and his passengers to get more help from Acton.

The two Halton police officers, Roduck and Pearce, were leaving the Station Hotel following an occurrence, and were on their way by separate routes to the Reliable Taxi stand for a coffee.

At about the same time Mr. Snook had parked his Ford LTD in back of his landromat and was intending to lock up for the night. A woman was doing her wash, so Mr. Snook left the building and discovered his car was gone.

The right hand turn made by Couture from Church Street West onto Main Street South somehow caught the attention of constable Roduck, who had turned onto Main Street South from Mill Street East only moments before.

Constable Pearce approached the Church and Main streets intersection along Church Street East. He saw Roduck's cruiser about a car length behind the Ford.

Constable Roduck estimated his speed at below 30 m.p.h. because he intended to turn around to go to the taxi stand.

Mr. Snook, who walked onto Main Street, hailed Pearce. At 11:02 Pearce radioed his report of the stolen Ford.

Roduck only heard part of the radio report because of poor reception. The constable

kept an equal distance between his cruiser and the Ford.

Roof

Near Kingham Road, Roduck activated the roof lights of his cruiser. "I couldn't say if the Ford speeded up after or just as I put the lights on", Roduck said.

The constable accelerated in an attempt to keep sight of the car. He radioed that he was following the stolen Ford.

In the area of Sideroad 25 the cruiser's speed was between 90 and 100 m.p.h. but the Ford was pulling away.

Just south of the side road Roduck said he could still see the red tail lights of the Ford and that he saw a set of car head lights coming north.

"Suddenly he head lights dipped down", Roduck said. Moments later a car burst into flames.



HALTON CROWN ATTORNEY Jim Treleven, carrying the white file, enters the Milton courtroom for an afternoon session of the three-day long coroner's inquest. Walking to his right, and slightly behind, is Corporal Bob Arbour of Milton OPP (with moustache) who headed the police investigation into the March 6 accident.

Douglas will lay off 150

A total of 150 workers at the Douglas Aircraft plant, Malton, where many Halton Hills residents are employed, will gradually be laid off between now and the three week summer vacation shutdown which begins July 16.

It is expected an average of 30 workers will be given their notices each week until all 150 people are laid off. The reduction of 150 workers will leave between 1,300 and 1,350 still on the job.

This series of layoffs is a far cry from the 800 person layoff announced earlier this year, which never materialized because of an increase in business at the factory.

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