

Car-train crash investigation continues



UNSUNG HEROES: The quick, expert response of local fire fighters and ambulance crews helped save the life of 43-year-old Beverly McHale of Hillsburgh after her car collided with a Via train Friday morning in Acton. (Frances Niblock photo)

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK
A 43-year-old R.R.1 Hillsburgh woman remains in serious but stable condition with head injuries in Toronto Western Hospital's intensive care unit after her car was demolished by a Via train Friday morning in Acton.

Eyewitness, Halton Cable System's vice-president John De Jong, was first on the scene as Beverly McHale's car was struck by the westbound Via-Amtrak train.

"I was coming in from Guelph, just past the Toth gas station, and I heard a train whistle. I just glanced to the side and saw the train hit the front of a car on the tracks," a shaken De Jong said Friday at the scene.

In an interview Monday De Jong detailed what happened. "The car just spun around and then bounced off the tracks with debris flying all over. It went sailing through the air. I went around the side of the car but the roof had collapsed when it landed and all you could see was an arm. I used to be an ambulance attendant but I couldn't get to the woman until the tow truck came and moved the car enough so the fire fighters could get to her."

One of McHale's two dogs died in the crash and a second was found dead hours later in a neighbouring backyard.

McHale spent more than 12 hours in surgery on Friday after being taken by ambulance to Georgetown and District Hospital and airlifted to Toronto.

Department of Transport, Halton Police, CN and Via investigators are still trying to determine the cause of the crash.

Via Public Affairs spokesperson Dianne Graham said Friday that the train was a combination Via-Amtrak train, travelling from Toronto to Chicago. The Amtrak's five cars and engine carried a Via crew which hands over the train to an American crew at Port Huron, Ontario.

None of the 70 passengers on the train were injured in the crash. The train was held in Acton for one and a half hours.

NEWS SHORTS

Rockwood man charged

A Rockwood man is charged with assaulting a police officer and drinking in a public place following an incident Friday night in Acton. Police found the suspect drinking in the IGA parking lot, and the suspect then gave police a false name when asked for identification. When an officer tried to make the arrest the suspect reportedly grabbed the officer's jacket and neck and broke free. The officer was not hurt and subdued the suspect who continued to try to get away. Charged is 21-year-old Donald Kenneth Winter. He appears in Milton Court Monday, Nov. 23.

Drunks arrested on Mill Street

Halton police arrested two highly intoxicated men Saturday night at the corner of Mill Street and Willow Street after other pedestrians complained that the two were breaking beer bottles on the street. Police cautioned the men against continuing to "hoot and holler" and arrested them for public intoxication. Charged are Peter Vandereyren of Acton and a man from Ajax.

Youth charged with indecent act

A young offender has been charged with committing an indecent act during an incident at the Acton Library earlier this month. Four youths threw stones at the library, tried to set a tree on fire and swore at a female staff person. One of the youths pulled his pants down in front of the librarian before all four ran away. The other three youths involved were cautioned about vandalizing the building and were ordered to apologise to the librarian.

Car vandalized

A Mill Street resident got a rude awakening Saturday morning when he looked at his car, parked overnight outside his house. Someone had smashed the rear window of his 1991 Ford Tempo, doing \$200 worth of damage.

Rockwood ripoff

Thieves pulled off a daring daylight smash and grab in Rockwood Thursday. The Frederick Street car-owner told Guelph OPP someone had smashed the rear window of the car, doing \$400 damage and stole \$200 worth of fishing equipment.

Lightning sparks inferno at Acres

A fierce lightning storm Friday night started a half million dollar fire at Acton's Smallwood Acres campground on Fairy Lake.

A wood-frame, steel-sided storage and equipment shed was hit by lightning about 7:45 pm and the 3-year-old building was completely engulfed in flames when fire fighters arrived on the scene moments later.

Everything in the shed, includ-

ing seven vehicles, two pieces of farm machinery and a vast assortment of tools and equipment, was burned in the blaze that firefighters quickly brought under control.

A park resident, who didn't want his name used, discovered the fire when he went outside to check his own home that had also been struck. The man told police the bolt that hit his house shook the walls so hard that pictures fell off their hooks.

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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I can't stand it when someone says someone is dying of cancer. They are not dying of cancer, they are living with cancer, and until the day they are dead, they are living."

- Lynda Bowen, Acton, Page 10

DID YOU KNOW?

The tradition of Hallowe'en dates back to 700 B.C. The Celtic tribes of Wales, Ireland and Scotland believed that on Oct. 31 the souls of the dead mingled with the living to find bodies to inhabit for one year before moving on to the afterlife. The Celts dressed up as ghosts and paraded to the edge of town to trick the spirits into following them, thus leaving their village safely behind.

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