

Community in mourning for three friends

Continued from Page 1

and hunter, while Rory had plans to be a professional mountain bike racer. Clearly, the three boys who liked to "goof around and have fun" were maturing into strong individuals.

A SUNNY FALL DAY

A crisp, fall day with the sun shining brightly and three friends going to school in the red Jetta. Then something went terribly wrong. When Acton firefighters arrived on the scene, the Amtrak train was stopped west of the level crossing. Part of the car was on the front of the engine. The rest of the torn wreckage of the car was scattered amongst the gravel which lines the track. In-between the train and the wreckage of the car were the bodies of the best friends.

At approximately 7:45 a.m. a Chicago bound Amtrak double decker passenger train with four cars and one engine collided with the Jetta on the Fourth Line crossing south of Highway 7. Killed instantly were Rory, Travis and Mark. None of the train's 62 passengers or crew were injured.

THE DAY IT HAPPENED

By 9 a.m., while the passengers were still on the train, the accident scene was crawling with people. Police, firefighters, investigators, Transportation Safety Board, Mayor Marilyn Serjeantson, media, the curious and even one who is running for office in the upcoming election. A constant topic for all was how this could have happened for a second time in less than a year?

Around town, speculation about who was involved. Names of the boys and others who had been suspected of being passengers in Dick's Jetta were running rampant. By late afternoon when confirmation of the boys' names had been released, friends of the boys at both E.C. Drury and at Acton High School were devastated. The Halton District School Board had also sent in a response team to help support students and staff at E.C. Drury.

As quickly as the names of possible passengers in the car had raced through town, so had the talk of the circumstances. "It's (the sun) blinding everyone's vision. People try to run across", said Adrian Wilson who lives on the Fourth Line near the railroad tracks. "Two times in the year is pretty ridiculous."

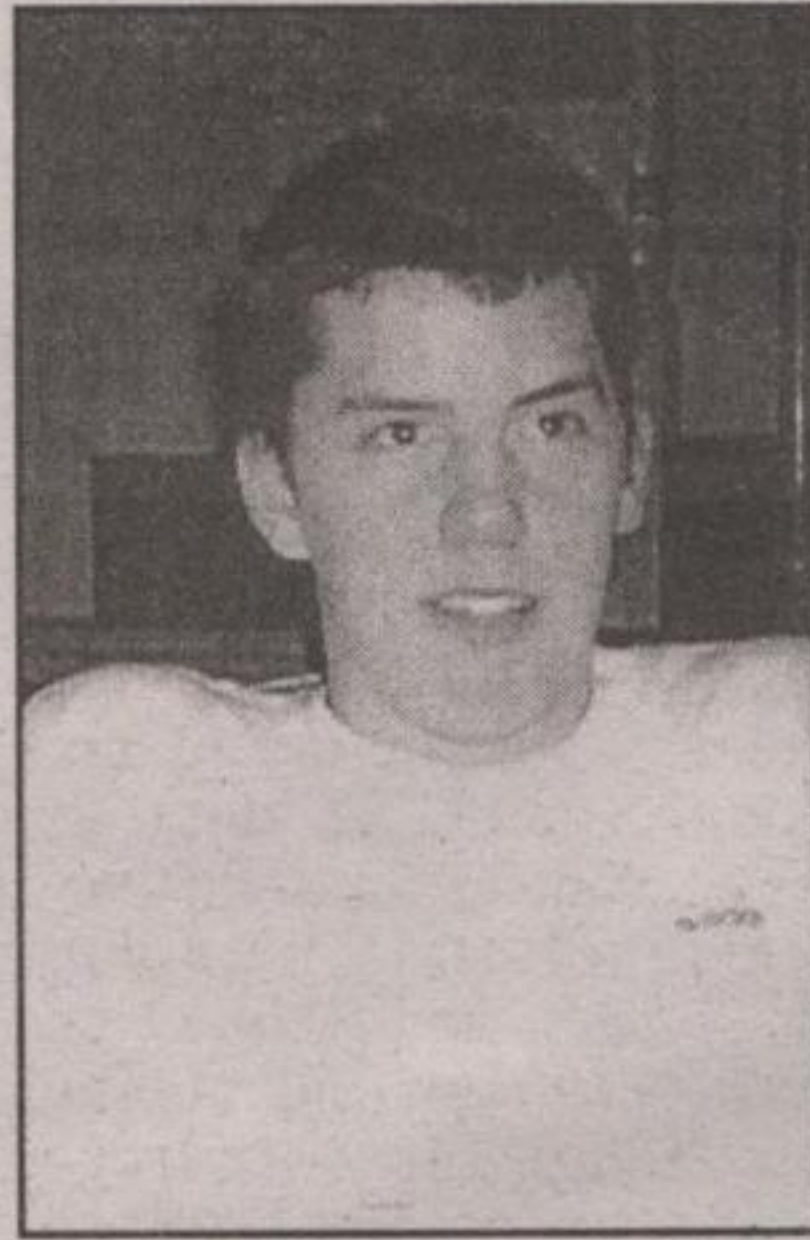
Mayor Serjeantson summed up the sentiment for the town, for those who knew the boys and even those who didn't, "I feel for these people," she said at the crash site Thursday morning.

THE NEXT DAY

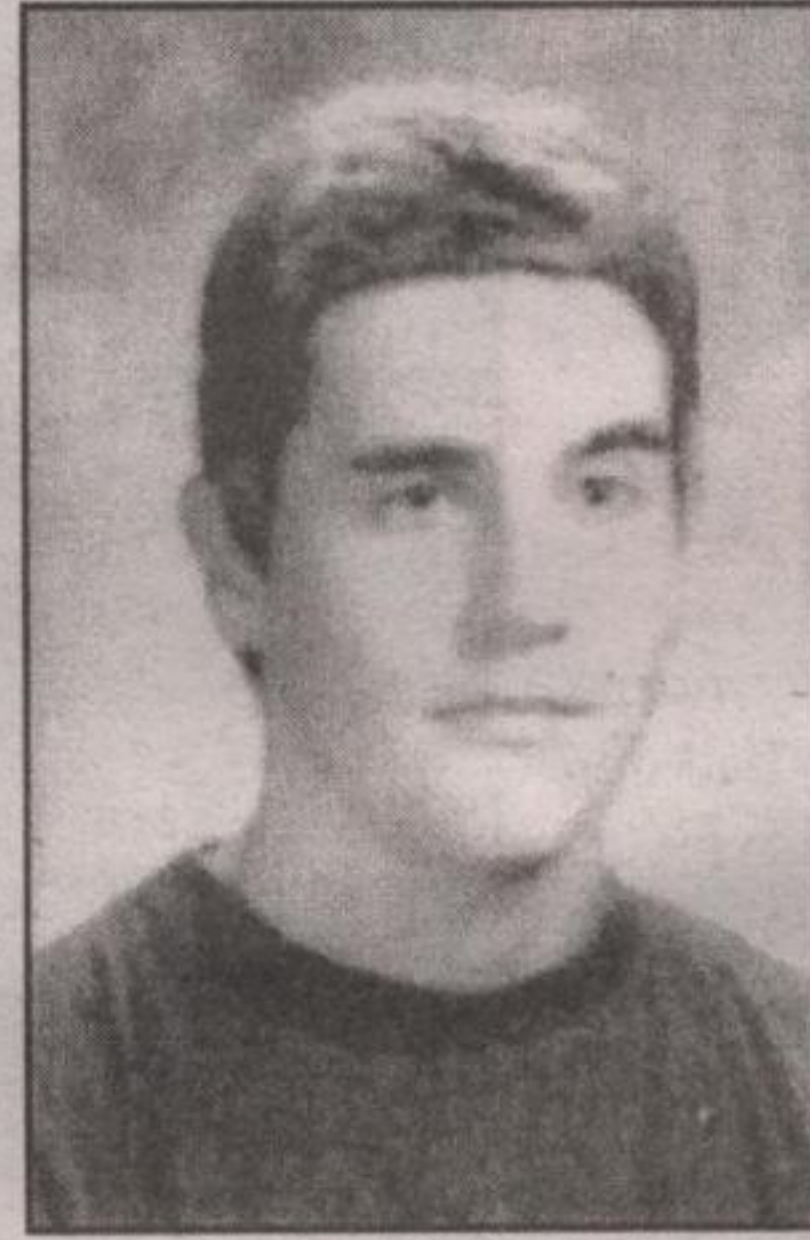
Early Friday morning, with the same conditions and a sunny sky, a re-enactment took place. With the Mayor,



Rory Dick



Mark Everson



Travis Toth

Councillor Rick Bonnette, Transportation Safety Board, the work crew preparing to lay fibre-optic cable, insurance investigators, media and others who were there Friday, returned to see if they could find the answers to how this happened. Did the morning sun blind Rory's vision? Could gates have prevented the terrible event? Were there other factors that needed to be considered to try to find the answers? This was the task at hand.

The train, which has a 'black box' similar in concept to an airplane's, had been recovered on Friday and the information is being processed. The Transportation Safety Board stated a full report to the incident would be conducted.

"There were various things to impair their (the boys) abilities to see the railroad", said Gerritt Roosenboom, District Investigator for Railway Investigations for the Transportation Safety Board. The re-enactment also included a work truck that was parked partially in the southbound lane and partially on the shoulder of the road. The work truck was parked on the north side of the crossing, near the warning lights.

Mayor Serjeantson is still looking for the official report from last year's incident. "I haven't received the report," she said following the re-enactment. "I've talked to the people from Transport Canada, the Goderich-Exeter Line and Julian Reed in Ottawa" she said in regards to getting gates at this crossing. "I don't care now," Serjeantson said in reference to possible obstacles.

According to Roosenboom, there are many factors to be considered when analyzing a crossing. There is more involved than just the Town of Halton Hills wanting the barriers.

The crossing had been reviewed in the past and had not met the requirements for gates. The numerous factors to be considered include the speed of the trains and the design of the roadway. This section of the line has a permissible speed for passenger trains of 70 miles per hour according to

Roosenboom. This train was going 50 miles per hour. He also said that witnesses said the car was going no more than 10 kilometers per hour as a result of the work being done. He said at the time of the accident, a group of workers were gathered on the south side of the tracks, preparing for their workday when they noticed the car. The workers had apparently motioned to the car, in attempts to stop it.

Roosenboom confirmed that the report the Town has been waiting for from last year's accident in which 22 year old Brett Wade was killed has still not been finalized.

Not waiting any longer, Monday, the Mayor and representatives from the Town of Halton Hills Engineering Department met with Transport Canada in Toronto to discuss this location further.

A TOWN IN MOURNING

By late morning Friday, a large gathering of students from E.C. Drury had gathered at the accident site. With Halton Regional Police watching over the area, friends came to a place that they thought would help them find solace. For some it seemed, the rituals of mourning brought comfort. On one side of the tracks, stretched between two posts was a blue plastic banner with the names of the deceased. On the other side of the track, near where the car came to its final resting place, a makeshift shrine of flowers, notes and

pieces of the wreckage, including a seatbelt clasp, was building. Young men and women, with tear filled eyes gathered, hugging each other or walking near the tracks.

A few media people watched nearby. If the students were approached in any form, the media was bombarded by anger from the young men and women. Shouting the words "bitch", "Show some respect" and told to "f.k off". One photographer from out of town was forced by a group of students to north of the tracks where police had to block them from him.

By Saturday, the names had been confirmed, the boys' faces had been in most of the newspapers and people in town were talking about the tragedy. Still people of all ages, mothers, fathers and children were going to the accident site over the weekend. There was a growing mound of flowers covering the shrine.

The Eversons are overwhelmed by the outpouring of emotion and support from the community. Gone was the frustration mixed with anger at the accident scene. Now young people were calling and some were even stopping at their front door. Sunday evening hundreds of people gathered in front of MacKinnon Funeral Home to pay their respects.

WHAT'S NEXT

On Monday, the Mayor and Town staff met with Transport Canada to discuss the now infamous railroad crossing. Ac-

ording to the Town's traffic co-ordinator, Bob Butrym, Transport Canada has agreed to advocate for protective barriers at the crossing. However, after this decision it still has to be agreed upon by the railway and the road authority, which in this case is the Town. After that, a detailed estimate is established, and a request forwarded to the Federal Ministry for subsidy. Each year, \$7.5 million is allotted for railroad crossing improvements for all of Canada. A crossing such as the one on the Fourth Line is roughly estimated at a cost of \$200,000 and could take up to 12 months.

Butrym said when the Fourth Line crossing had been looked at for improvements the Town has done traffic studies on the area. "There are approximately 900 vehicles per day at that crossing. Four passenger trains and two freight trains and the freight trains are not

every day," he said. With the support from Transport Canada and the Mayor wanting the improvements, he said the Town is already asking what it can do to help with the process.

Colleen Dick is a little guarded about what is next for her. When asked if she was going to become an advocate to get barriers at the crossing, she replied, "It's going to go further than that." After first hearing about the collision, Mark's dad thought to himself "what were they doing?" Now he said it is more of a case of them being at "the wrong place and the wrong time."

Mr. Everson returned to the site during the re-enactment. After seeing it he said, "There was too much confusion" in reference to the numerous distractions that were at the crossing that morning. "I know an arm would have prevented it," he said.

T-RAX DINER GIFT SHOP
 Located on Hwy. #24 N. between Osprey and Brisbane opp. Penny's Bus Lines
 833-9777 • OPEN 6am-9pm

COUPON
 Sunday, October 8

Thanksgiving TURKEY DINNER \$8.99 PER PERSON
 with all the Fixings.
 Soup or Caesar Salad, Tea or Coffee & Dessert

W.S.A. logo
 We pay the Tax on Take-Out orders

TOWN OF
HALTON HILLS
 Working Together Working for You!

ELECTION WORKERS NEEDED

A number of workers are required for the Town of Halton Hills to work in the upcoming municipal election as:

- Deputy Returning Officers
- Poll Clerks

Successful applicants:

- must provide their own transportation
- must arrive at the voting place approximately 30 minutes prior to opening of the polls (10:00 a.m.) and remain at the voting place until the close of the polls at 8:00 p.m. Monday, November 13, 2000
- must remain after closing of the polls to count ballots and to return all election materials to a specified location
- must attend a training session
- if selected to work at the Advance Poll, being Saturday, November 4, 2000 or Wednesday, November 8, 2000 you must also be available to return to the municipal office after polls close on the regular voting day to count sealed ballots.

Please submit a letter, or call the undersigned, indicating you previous municipal, provincial or federal election experience, to the attention of:

Leesa Emmerson
 Clerks Department
 PO Box 128, 1 Halton Hills Drive, Halton Hills
 (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 5G2
 (905) 873-2601 Ext. 2333.

ACTON PHARMACY LIMITED
 Headquarters for Health

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday..... 9-7
 Thursday, Friday 9-8
 Saturday 9-6

2 Main Street North, Acton
 853-1620

In order that our staff may enjoy the Thanksgiving Holiday with their family we will be CLOSED MONDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2000

ACTON IGA Hometown Proud!

We have lots of Turkeys!

12 Main St. Acton
 853-1960