

Wood, Phelps inquest Jury urges protection for all rail crossings

Electric signals for the protection of motorists should be installed at all railway crossings in the County of Halton, a coroner's jury recommended Wednesday evening.

The five-man jury of Esqueving residents, called to investigate the tragic death of two Milton teenagers on Christmas eve, added a rider to their recommendation. They said efforts should be made to expedite the installation of flashing lights and bells at the No. 5 Sideroad crossing in Esqueving, where Michael Robert Wood, 18, and Brenda Jane Phelps, 16, died on December 24. The car in which they were driving was rammed broadside by the C.N.R. train at the Sideroad crossing.

Evidence presented by witnesses indicated that Wood, the driver of the car, did not appear to have seen the train. There are signs indicating the crossing but no lights or bells. The jury ruled both occupants of the car died of multiple traumatic injuries, and the accident was caused by "inattention on the part of the driver and lack of flashing warning signals and a bell at the crossing."

Const. James Hodson of Milton O.P.P. was the investigating officer. He told the inquest the accident happened at approximately 4:50 p.m. and it was a bright, sunny day. The southbound train rammed the right side of the westbound car and carried it 87 feet down the track, where it hit a hand-car take-off and flew another 34 feet in a southerly direction. Corporal J. L. Kneale submitted 11 photographs of the wrecked car and the accident scene.

C.N.R. brakeman Robert Honsberger, who was sitting on the left side of the train engine, said he saw the car approaching the crossing when it was about 300 feet east of the crossing. He yelled to the engineer to put the train on "emergency stop" when he saw the car did not appear to be slowing down for the train.

Mr. Honsberger said he saw only the driver in the car, and noticed the driver did not appear to turn his head in the direction of the train, despite the train's whistle, bell, and full beam headlight. "The driver was looking straight ahead, he never turned at all," said Honsberger.

The train's fireman John King, who was also sitting on the left side of the cab, gave a similar testimony. "It appeared to me the car wasn't going to stop and I yelled to my mate to put the train on emergency," he said. Engineer Bruce Dunlop was sitting on the opposite side of the engine and did not see the car until the crash, when two or three feet of the car projected onto his side of the train. The train's whistle had been blowing while the 50-miles-an-hour train had traversed about one-quarter of a mile, he testified.

Two Milton residents who witnessed the crash, Mr. and Mrs. Reg Zanatta of Martin St., were following the Wood vehicle as it approached the crossing. They estimated the car's speed at 30 to 40 m.p.h. The car did not alter its speed and there were no brakelights, they testified. Mr. Zanatta said the driver did not appear to look either way as he approached the crossing, and he was sure the car's occupants did not see the train.

Crown Attorney P. K. McWilliams called Esqueving Township Clerk K. C. Lindsay to the stand, to review the township's progress in obtaining automatic crossing protection for the accident site. Mr. Lindsay said council applied prior to April of last year and an order from the Board of Transport Commissioners for Canada dated November 17 had approved the installation. The order allowed the railway 10 months to install the protection.

There are about 30 trains a day passing the Five Sideroad crossing, Mr. Lindsay reported. A county engineer's traffic study on

the crossing last summer showed 314 vehicles crossed the crossing each day on a four-day count.

Testimony from the township clerk about the C.N.R. mainline crossing at the Fourth Line promoted the inquest jury to add the rider to its recommendations about expediting the installation of lights at the Five Sideroad crossing. Lights were applied for and approved, but the railway was given a six months extension on the installation date. While the signals were finally being installed, another fatality claimed the life of an area man. Crown Attorney Bruce Dunlop suggested the township should also press the Board to speed up the construction on the Five Sideroad Crossing.

The Crown submitted reports showing both occupants of the car died of multiple traumatic injuries. There was no alcohol indicated in blood tests taken from both deceased.

Michael Wood's father W. E. Wood told the inquiry his son had been driving three years, was considered to be an "expert" driver, was in good health and seemed to be in excellent spirits the day of the accident. He had worked at a part time job that morning and in the early afternoon had gone for a walk on the Bruce Trill with his sister and a nephew. There was no radio in the car, he said.

Mel Phelps, Brenda's father also gave evidence concerning the time his daughter left the house to go for a ride with the boy.

In his charge to the jurors, Crown Attorney McWilliams suggested "your verdict here tonight is not going to bring back these two young people, but we hope to learn something that will prevent further accidents of this type."

Jurors Craig Royce, Clay Jubb, Robert Crawford, Leonard Zions and Percy Hicks deliberated for an hour and 15 minutes before returning with their conclusions. Coroner Dr. G. E. Syer conducted the inquest.

Sicily disaster fund launched by A. Crisci

Several Milton are residents among the Canadians making donations to the Canadian Disaster Fund for Sicily.

Sicily has been almost put into total ruin by storms and earthquakes which have not only killed many, but left much of the population homeless.

The fund was started to raise money to go towards alleviating the situation.

Alfonso Crisci, a Mill St. businessman, has allowed his store to become one of the collection depots for the project. Mr.

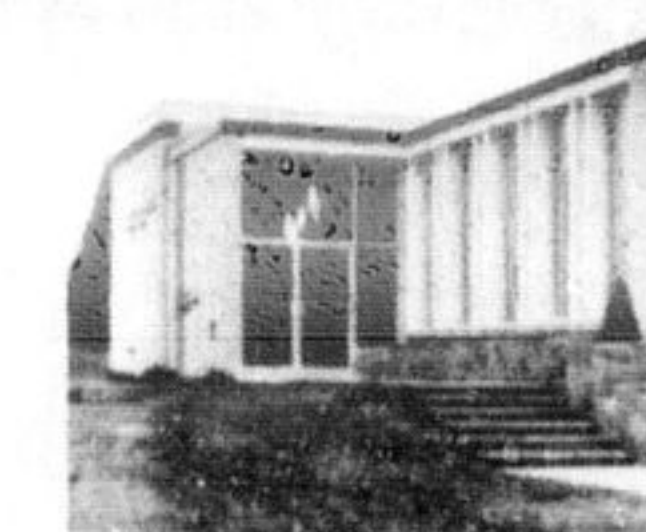
Crisci came to Milton from Sicily in 1951.

The money is donated by the C.D.F.S. to the Canadian Red Cross, and transferred to the Italian branch for use in the area.

To date, \$40 has been donated by customers of the store.

"I hope you don't think me too young for marriage with your daughter," said the young man anxiously.

"That's all right, my boy," was the cheerful reply. "You'll age fast enough!"



Nassagaweya Council Briefs

At a regular meeting of Nassagaweya Council Tuesday, January 23, Council:

fatal accident in early December taking the lives of four Nassagaweya youths may have been prevented. He urged council to speed up their three year stop sign program.

* Authorized presentation of honor scrolls to Grant Campbell and Alex Near for active service to the township.

* Heard Gus Goutouski express dissatisfaction about the action taken on providing stop signs in the area. Mr. Goutouski suggested as hindsight that if a stop sign had been at the First Line and 10 Sideroad, the

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Knox annual meeting

Approves \$15,900 operating budget

"We are trying to get an organist on half an organ," Knox Presbyterian Church elder Bob Laking stated at the congregation's annual meeting Monday evening.

Mr. Laking's statement followed a proposal by the board of managers suggesting no salary increases be authorized for any church employees for 1968.

The aging organ is one of several problems at the church requiring financial aid.

Last year's allocation from the Presbytery of \$4,000 was missed by \$212. A bank loan has been taken out to raise the deficit.

Several members of the congregation felt borrowing money from outside the church was an unbusinesslike method of making up the allocation.

A suggestion from the session asked endorsement for the National Development Fund, which will require the raising of \$11,260 over a five-year period.

Knox N.D.F. acting chairman Ken Marshall showed a movie of a speech by Dr. Finlay Stewart of Kitchener, outlining the aims and format of the Fund.

An anticipated five and one-half million dollar budget for the fund will be spent on shaping the destiny of the Presbyterian Church of Canada and making it a more active service.

Since some people felt the money proposed for donation to the N.D.F. would be better spent in the local congregation, further discussion of the project was deferred until after a joint meeting of the Session and the Board of Managers.

A proposed operating expense of \$15,900 was suggested by church treasurer Ken Hassard for 1968, and approved.

Changes within the congregation include, in addition to the 446 members as of January 1, 1967, 16 added by profession of faith, one by transfer and one by reaffirmation.

This was lowered by five transfers out of the congregation and five deaths, leaving a total membership as of December 31 of 454.

During the year there were eight infant baptisms, five adult baptisms, four marriages and 16 funerals.

A local branch of Presbyterian Young People's Society was organized, and immediately became active.

Resignations during the year include those of organist Mrs. Doreen Simpson, and Junior church school superintendent Mrs. R. Mackay.

The Christian Word Program, under the stewardship of Mrs. P. Denboer, made available Christian and other literature at reasonable prices throughout the year.

Mrs. L. Wills, senior church school superintendent reported a total enrolment of 96 in the school, with an average weekly attendance of 80. During the year the pupils purchased as a Centennial project, two communion table lecterns and Bibles for presentation to Milton and Bramalea congregations.

Mrs. Mac Elliot, new junior church school superintendent, reported the school has an enrolment of 65 with an average attendance of 50.

The Presbyterian Memory work course was initiated this year.

First Milton Company, Boys' Brigade captain A. L. Whiteside noted the senior group, as well as the juniors, are in desperate need of officers. It is feared the senior branch may have to be terminated if more help is not received.

A report from the Robertson Auxiliary of the Women's Missionary Society noted 10 meetings were held with an average attendance of 16. During the year, a needy burned-out family was helped.

The evening department held nine meetings with an average attendance of 14.

Ladies' Aid, under the presidency of Mrs. Ruth Lockie, served refreshments and lunch at

several church functions throughout the year.

Choir president Bill Lockie reported the male section has been praised as 'most unusual for a church of our size', but the ladies section could stand some building up.

Sixty-two subscriptions were sent to Every Day, including those donated to the Manor, hospital and church vestibule.

P.Y.P.S. president Marg Bell traced in her report the numerous activities entered into by the newly-established group.

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MR. D. I. YOUNG, B.A., B.Paed.

ASSISTANT TO THE REGIONAL SUPERINTENDENT,
ONTARIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION