

IT WAS Sunday on Friday, August 21, 1964, when I left my Ottawa apartment about 7 a.m. to board an eastbound Canadian Pacific train for Montreal. About the same time as the train pulled out of Ottawa's Union Station, Basil Czopyk was driving his truck, full of gravel, towards Leonard, Ontario, a small village on the CP rail line between Ottawa and Montreal. Czopyk usually stopped for coffee at Leonard. From time to time he boasted how he raced and beat the early morning train over the rail intersection in the middle of this quiet hamlet. This particular Friday morning, he wasn't going to make it. My train picked up speed as it left the outskirts of Ottawa. Twenty minutes after departure we were hitting around 70 mph. I had taken a chair in the dining car to eat breakfast and read the newspaper. Then it happened.

The car began to pitch and lunge. People and furniture were thrown everywhere. Orange and yellow flames enveloped the windows. I was thrown the length of the car with other diners. Finally it, came to a crashing halt at an acute angle. I scrambled out and jumped onto the gravel rail bed. It was hard, at first, to understand just what had happened. In front of me was the wreckage of a ruck amid a pile of gravel. Czopyk had driven into the middle of the train. He was killed instantly. The engine and front cars continued on. The car he hit left the tracks and turned end over end before falling on its side in a nearby field. Those in the dining car, including myself, and in another car at the rear of the train were fortunate. Automatic brakes went on and while many were shaken up as these two cars ripped up 100 yards of track, many injuries were prevented and lives saved. But the car that was hit lay on its side near an old farm shed. I could hear screams and moans.

Sliding down the embankment to the scene, I could see what had happened. As the car spun in mid-air, many people were tossed through broken windows, then the car rolled over and crushed them. It was difficult to tell who was dead and who was injured. A stunned trainman attempted to set up communications with some equipment which he attached to the tracks. I ran to a nearby farm-house and on an old crank phone told the operator of the accident, asking for ambulances. Forty minutes later, a country doctor arrived. Helicopters from the news media hov-

TOO MANY HAVE DIED

By Heward Grafftey