

Four Killed When Light Truck Crashes Bus Near Churchill

About one mile north of Churchill last Thursday evening one of the worst accidents in the history of No. 11 Highway occurred around 7.35 p.m. when a light panel truck collided with a north-bound Gray Coach bus. Three men died at the scene of the accident. A woman died a short time later in Barrie hospital and two other women were very seriously hurt.

The three dead men are Lloyd Robbins, 37, and John Matteer, 36, both of Belle Ewart, and Donald L. Hill, 35, of Bradford.

Mrs. Dorothy Schauter is said to have jumped from the truck seconds before the crash but died of injuries she received, when she was run over by a second truck, in Barrie hospital about an hour later.

Mrs. Lloyd Robbins, wife of the dead truck driver, was most seriously injured of the two women survivors. One leg and her jaw were fractured. Her face and forehead were severely gashed. Her companion, Mrs. Bernice Hill, suffered severe chest injuries. Robbins was the father of two children, Kirwin, 9 and Douglas, 7.

The death car was a small panel truck in which the party of men and women were returning from Barrie. Other drivers are reported to have told police later they had noticed it swerving on the road before the accident.

In the bus only the driver was injured. Twenty-five other passengers escaped with a shaking-up.

Ontario Provincial Police, piecing the accident details together, said the truck was south-bound on No. 11 Highway, one mile north of Churchill, when the accident occurred.

They said it swerved into the path of a northbound truck driven by Hugh Ness, 33, of Stroud. Ness swerved his truck and avoided the collision. A woman jumped from the southbound panel and was struck by the Ness truck.

The bus and southbound truck met a second later, with terrific force in the centre of the highway. The whole front of the bus was stove in. The truck was reduced to a mass of tangled steel.

Two of the men were killed instantly. Robbins, the driver, was still alive when officers pried him from behind the steering-wheel with bars. The operation took nearly half an hour. Robbins bled to death while being readied for the trip to hospital.

Friends of the accident victims at Belle Ewart said that Mrs. Schauter had recently purchased the truck that figured in the accident. She had bought it for Matteer out of money received from compulsory savings refunds.

Police said the accident occurred at 7.15 p.m. Eyewitnesses were

amazed that passengers in the bus escaped injury.

Dr. Frank Shannon, Churchill, and Dr. N. M. Laurie, attended the injured at the scene of the accident.

Matteer and Robbins were partners in a Unsmithing business in Belle Ewart. Mrs. Madeline Roberts is a sister of John Matteer.

Bus driver James C. Dickinson, Toronto, is reported to have said he was following a small truck north on Highway 11. "I saw a truck southbound swing to the east in front of the truck ahead of me. The truck in front of me swung to avoid it and missed it. I had only time to swerve slightly when the truck hit the bus," he said.

"I was pinned in my seat and stunned. It took me a few minutes to get my bearings. My passengers were wonderful. Although they saw the crash coming there were no squeals or screams," Dickinson declared.

He said he saw a woman jump from the southbound panel truck into the path of the other northbound truck, just before the truck hit the bus.

A second woman fell from the right door of the death truck, just after the bus collision, Dickinson said.

According to later reports, Mrs. Donald Hill is doing very well and is making a good recovery, but Mrs. Lloyd Robbins, whose husband and brother were killed, failed to rally and died in Barrie hospital yesterday. Mr. and Mrs. Robbins are survived by two young sons.

The victims were well known throughout the district. The Matteer family is one of the old families of Belle Ewart and John Matteer and his sister, Mrs. Robbins, were born and grew up there. Hill, whose address was Bradford, had been employed as a driver around here and resided in the town.

Joint funeral services for John Matteer and his brother-in-law, Lloyd Robbins, were conducted by Rev. J. Newton-Smith in the Matteer home at Belle Ewart.

Provincial Police are reported to have said the investigation into the accident, the worst in years on No. 11 Highway, is closed. According to Coroner F. Shannon of Churchill, no inquest will be held. Both the coroner and Crown Attorney William Thompson, at Ponchartraine, said they were satisfied as to the cause of the accident, and the driver is dead.