

Statement of Trainman Marquis, with Conductor Turner on train No. 11 ex
Nelson October 28th, 1924. ET 24-55 ✓

After leaving Nelson I went through the train to attend to my usual duties; our first stop was at Taghum and a man and little girl boarded the train there. The next stop was at Bennington and quite a few people got off there. The next stop for passengers was at Brilliant. I was standing at the steps at the forward end of day coach and as soon as the train stopped a Doukhaber got on with a grip and left it in the coach, I do not know just where but assumed it was Peter Veregin's as the latter was ready to board the train. The first man spoke to Mr. Veregin as he got off and Mr. Veregin then boarded the car followed immediately by a lady. A Doukhaber man then followed the lady, having no hand baggage as far as I know. Mr. Veregin and the lady were together and went immediately to a seat about the centre of the car on the north side, the lady seating herself by the window and Mr. Veregin next the aisle. The man who boarded the train with them was seated three or four seats back of Mr. Veregin on the same side of the car. I noticed this man again at Castlegar where he left the train as I am sure he was not on after we left that point. I was through the coach several times between Castlegar and Farren but there were no passengers or anything in particular to in any way attract my attention out of the ordinary. We stopped at Tunnel and picked up three Doukhobers whom I took to be sectionmen; they loaded two or three bundles into the baggage car and as near as I can remember they took a few small bundles into the coach with them. They occupied a double seat three or four to the rear of Peter Veregin on the same side. We arrived at Farren about 24.35K and did our usual work there, nothing out of the ordinary occurring. I did not see anyone at Farren except the regular employees.

We left Farren about 24.55K and to the best of my knowledge no one got on the train there and got off again without my knowledge, though it would be quite possible for anyone to do this without my knowledge as our time is occupied picking up the cafe car, inspecting our train and with other duties.

As the train pulled out of Farren I got on the head end of day coach. I closed vestibule doors and looked for retainer on car and noticed it set up and then went on to the next car, proceeding through day coach and noticing that all the

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passengers had settled down for the night and were more or less in sleeping attitudes. I passed on through to the sleeping car and went to the rear of it where I found Conductor Turner; retainers were up and we watched together for the steam to come through train. When the steam was adjusted Conductor Turner started through the train to head end and I followed immediately behind him. He went straight through to the baggage car but I stopped at the steam heat regulating valves in centre of the car and closed two of them off. I then went into the baggage car, but just before entering I turned around and took a look at the ventilators to see that they were all properly adjusted. I had just taken about three steps inside the baggage car after closing the door behind me when there was a terrific explosion; this would be about 1K, just a few minutes after leaving Farron. The baggage car end door was blown off and some distance into body of the baggage car. Conductor Turner, Baggage man Brennan and myself immediately rushed to the open end door of the baggage car, though Brennan returned and jumped out of baggage car side door to the ground. Conductor Turner and myself went on into the damaged day coach and found the entrance to it blocked with debris. We noticed a man and lady to the south side of the car as we entered. We rushed the lady to the window and then pushed the man out; he was practically helpless and there was someone outside the window who received them as we passed them through. Then we looked about under the wreckage and found a man right close to where the lady was and put him through the window the same way. I then saw two men a little further on but all they required was a little assistance and I understand both these men were able to proceed to Vancouver on the ^{same} train NKK. They were on the train with me as far as Midway at least and to the best of my knowledge they went on through. After leaving the scene of the accident I met these men in the baggage car and we passed a few words about the occurrence and one of them stated there were two explosions. I formed the opinion it was merely the echo he heard, and exchanged no further remarks with them.

There was fire in the coach immediately after the explosion; I saw a flash of flame in the coach before we entered it to rescue people.

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When we reached the first man and woman I noticed blue flame shooting out from underneath the car towards the rear on the south side. We finally got off the coach ~~at~~ at the east end on the north side and were quite content that everyone was out of the car; by this time it was burning freely. Conductor Turner then gave Brennan and I instructions to cut off the sleeper from the burning day coach which we did, pulling it down a short distance where we stopped and then went to the head end of the day coach, blocked the wheels, cut off the baggage car and then pulled ahead again and stopping so as to be clear of the fire.

After moving the baggage car clear I returned to the burning car and looked along underneath it to see if anyone was beneath it or anything else that required attention and immediately observed the gas tanks were in place and intact. On my way back I met the sleeping car porter who said his car was on fire. I picked up a fire extinguisher that was lying on the ground that had evidently been used by someone working to put out the fire in the day coach. I climbed to the roof of the sleeper and put the fire out with the aid of the extinguisher; this fire was caused by a burning piece of what appeared to be a man's pantleg. I stayed up on the sleeper roof for a while to protect against flying sparks and then got down and assisted in caring for the injured people, carrying them to the sleeping car.

When all the injured were taken care of and had left for Nelson we proceeded west with our train.

I was quite well acquainted with News Agent Fawcett and have never known him to carry an alarm clock. I am more or less familiar with what he carries with him, and have never known any news agent on this run to carry an alarm clock. I am positive that after we left Castlegar and Farron there were only two women in the day coach, and one of them was the Doukhobor woman with Veregin. The other was the lady seated with the man at the west end of the day coach whom we rescued first.

W. Marquis.

Nelson, 30th October, 1921.

P.S. After leaving Castlegar there was doukhobor gentleman asked me where Peter Veregin was going, and I said Grand Forks, and further on I never noticed this gentleman again. He asked me if he could have his baggage put off at the switch at the West End, and I said he had better see Mr. Brennan.

W. M.

J.B