

by Paul Dirmeyer

Engineer reports on rail shattered by derailment

United Press International
MARSHALL — A chief engineer for the Missouri Pacific Railroad said Wednesday he had never seen a rail shatter the way a section of track did last November where an Amtrak train derailed, killing four people.

The National Transportation Safety Board concluded two days of hearings Wednesday on the Nov. 12 accident in which four women were killed and 72 people were injured.

C.D. Barton said a 30-foot piece of rail that had been used to repair the track less than an hour before the accident was broken into at least 50 pieces by the derailment.

"I looked at that and I couldn't believe it," Barton said. "I've never seen a rail break like that in my 30 years of railroad-ing. Normally a rail will break and not shatter into so many pieces."

Fragments of the rail recovered from the scene near Marshall ranged in size from one inch to seven feet long, he said.

Previous testimony indicated the method used to cut the rail to repair the track violated company and federal safety standards. Instead of using a saw to cut the rail, a torch was used.

An NTSB spokesman said

heat from torch cutting can weaken a rail and cause it to split. Under company guidelines when a torch cut is made, trains should be required to travel only 10 mph over that section.

The Amtrak that derailed was traveling 70 mph because two supervisors said Tuesday they believed the track was safe.



Low tuition public colleges: Good investment for society

United Press International

Low tuition public colleges and universities are a good investment for society, providing higher education opportunities for millions who otherwise would be locked out, a report from the National Coalition for Lower Tuition states.

The report cites research showing low tuition at public colleges and universities and at community, technical, and junior colleges is essential for equal educational opportunity in the United States.

"Low tuition is an investment that is repaid many times over — in the greatly increased federal, state and local taxes paid by college graduates and in the increased productivity and well-being of the American people," the report said.

The coalition issuing the "Low Tuition Factbook" includes the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges.

Schools belonging to these groups are subsidized by state or local tax funds. Their costs of instruction are close to those at private and independent schools, but the tuition they charge is lower because of the large portion of their budgets covered by public funds — taxes.

On occasion this fact is brought up by independent and private colleges that point out they, too, could offer lower tuition if they received big subsidies from state treasuries.

James Trulove, director of public affairs for the AASCU, said the coalition hopes the report will help state legislators focus on the need to keep the subsidies coming and in amounts sufficient to keep tuition as low as possible.

He said some schools have had to raise tuition because state legislators did not give public colleges and universities requested amounts. One state

notably not in this situation is California. A treasury surplus made it possible for California to lower tuition recently.

Trulove said some two million students at the nation's public colleges come from families that are below the poverty line and that higher tuitions would lock many out of higher education.

The case for low tuition in the report is supported by research that shows:

- The percentage of high school graduates going to college generally is lower in states with high tuition.
- The percentage of veterans receiving benefits under the G.I. Bill who go to any college has generally been low in states with high tuition.
- A great many students at public colleges have parents who can provide little or no assistance. They earn a substantial part of their college expenses and are dependent on low tuition.
- Most Americans, including

the great majority of minority and working-class students, are dependent on low-income public colleges for an education.

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Doctors can predict weight gain resulting from quitting smoking

United Press International

BOSTON — Most people gain about 10 pounds within two weeks after they stop smoking, and doctors said Wednesday by measuring a certain chemical in the body they can now predict exactly how much that gain will be.

Scientists aren't sure why, but most smokers weigh less than their non-smoking counterparts. Smokers' fat cells also contain higher levels of an enzyme believed to help regulate the depositing of fat into body cells, according to a report published in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Enzymes are substances the body uses to regulate the speed at which chemical reactions take place. By measuring the level of this enzyme — adipose-tissue lipoprotein lipase — doctors can predict within a pound or two how much weight a person will gain, or possibly lose, after he or she stops smoking.

The enzyme is measured by taking a sample of fat from a patient's buttocks using a needle about a week before they

stop smoking. Fifteen smokers were tested at the University of Washington School of Medicine and the method was found to be accurate.


"We've been able to identify an enzyme that has allowed us to determine how much weight people would gain if they stopped smoking," said Robert M. Carney, an assistant professor of psychiatry at Washington University Medical School.

"Most people gain weight when they stop smoking and this is often the reason people give for not wanting to stop. Now we can predict within a pound or two exactly how much they will gain," he said in a telephone interview.

Carney and co-author Dr. Andrew P. Goldberg believe smokers probably weigh less because either smoking lessens the taste of food, therefore reducing the incentive to eat, or it somehow changes smokers' metabolism, making them use up energy faster.

"Either one or the other or both may be the case," Carney said. "We're just not sure."

OFF THE CUFF



BY
BOB DODSON

Time is the great healer—but money is a great pain killer.

The most fattening thing you can put into a banana split is a spoon.

The only thing most folks know about money matters is that it does.

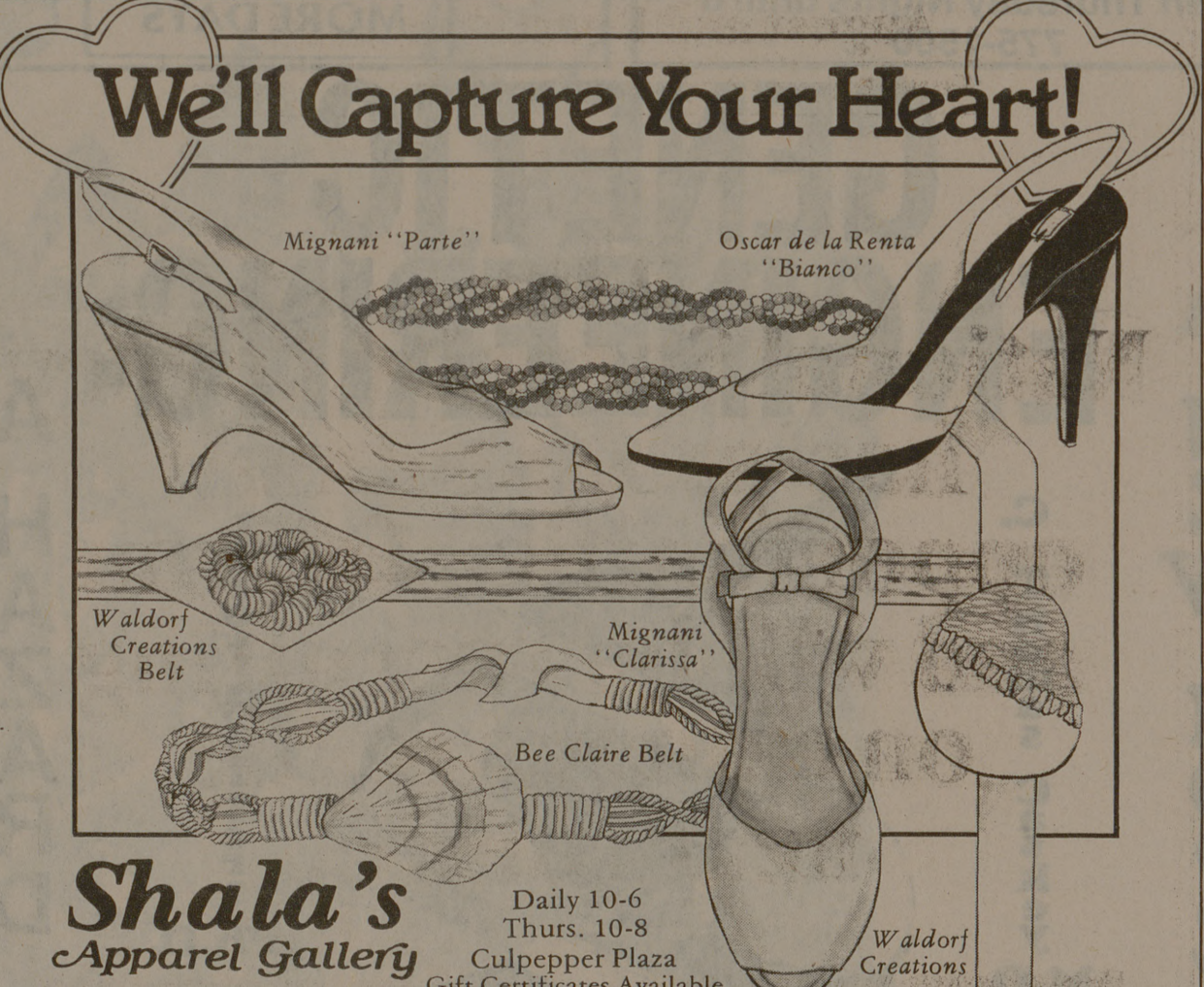
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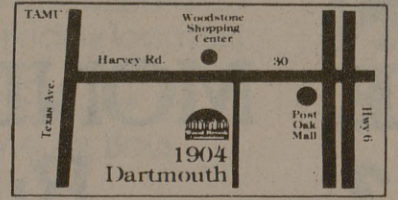
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