

Traffic Fatality Of 1963

William Russell, 33, Dies Monday As Freight Train Rams Into Truck

William H. Russell, 33, Iowa State Highway Commission inspector from Grinnell, died instantly shortly before 1 p.m. Monday when the state-owned truck he was driving was smashed by a southbound M&St. L. freight train.

Into Train's Path

Scene of the fatal crash was a rural railroad crossing a little over two miles south of Grinnell. Russell, traveling east at the time, apparently failed to hear or see the oncoming freight and drove directly in front of the diesel engine.

Engine struck the left front side of the pick-up truck and its tremendous weight almost immediately crushed the smaller vehicle's cab nearly beyond recognition. The truck was dragged and thrown for more than 100 feet south of the intersection before finally rolling to a stop, wheels up, in a ditch next to the railroad right-of-way incline.

Russell's body was found almost 40 feet beyond the point where the truck came to rest. County Medical Examiner Dr. Thomas Brobyn said Russell died instantly.

Motor Ripped Out

The Highway Commission truck, unbelievably battered,

was totally demolished. Its motor was ripped from under the hood cowl and lay on the ditch bank several feet from the cab.

F. C. Broenklander of Oska-loosa, engineer on the freight, said the train was traveling at 49 m.p.h. when the impact took place.

Highway Patrolman Gerald Kahler and Sheriff Bill Welsh, investigating officers, said no skid marks could be seen west of the crossing to indicate that Russell had heard or seen the train and attempted to stop.

When going east, vision at the crossing is partially blocked by a high bank.

Second Crash

A similar accident occurred at the same crossing earlier this year when a cream truck was hit by a train. Fortunately, the driver of that vehicle escaped injury but debris from the crash still is visible along the rail-

road tracks.

Russell's death, occurring on the final day of September wrote the concluding chapter in what was one of blackest months for traffic accidents in Poweshiek county's history. Only 11 days earlier, three other men were killed in two separate traffic crashes.

Earl Mintle of Grinnell and Iver Iverson of Longmont, Colo. were killed Sept. 18th when their car was hit by a truck at an intersection six miles east of Grinnell. Later that same day, Paul Krumm, local farmer, died in a two-car crash just northwest of the Grinnell city limits.

8th Fatality

Russell was the eighth to die on Poweshiek county roads in 1963. Besides Mintle, Iverson and Krumm, these traffic deaths have also been recorded:

June 4th—Joseph Lacina, retired Grinnell farmer, in a two-car crash six miles south of Grinnell on highway 146.

June 13th—Mrs. Elsie L. May, rural Malcom, in a car-truck collision at a rural intersection four miles north of the Malcom junction of highways 1

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Funeral services were held this afternoon (Thursday) from the Smith Funeral Home with the Rev. Chester Custer, pastor of the Methodist church, officiating. Organ music was provided by Mrs. Kathleen Heffner. In charge of flowers were Mrs. William Davis, Mrs. Adolph Kritz, and Mrs. Duane Earlton. Pallbearers were David Abarr, William Davis, Duane Earlton, Leon Jones, John Pearson, and Lloyd Scheriff.

Interment was in Cedar Memorial cemetery, Cedar Rapids, with American Legion graveside rites conducted by members of Hanford Post No. 5 of Cedar Rapids.

Born May 31st, 1930, at Fresno, Calif., he was the son of James D. and Ruby Dietz Russell of Friant, Calif. He served in the U.S. Navy on the U.S.S. General H. W. Butler, and following his discharge attended the University of Southern California for two years.

Here Four Years
Russell moved to Grinnell four years ago to make his home and was employed as an inspector with the Iowa Highway Commission.

He was united in marriage with Shirley June Joens on Nov. 17th, 1961, in the Grinnell Methodist church. To this union were born one daughter, Sandra Ruby Russell, age six months.

Survivors include his wife and daughter; his parents, two children by a previous marriage, William Hale Russell, 11, and Karen Jean Russell, both of Fresno, Calif. Also surviving are three brothers, James D. Russell Jr. of North Hollywood, Calif., Richard D. Russell of Pasadena, Calif., and Elbert D. Russell of San Pedro, Calif.