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— M A Q U O K E T A —

SENTINEL—PRESS

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Runaway horses spread horror in Bellevue parade

By SARA MILLHOUSE

The Fourth of July is Bellevue's pride and joy. This year, it was also Bellevue's shock and tragedy, as two spooked horses trampled children gathering candy and adults settled in lawn chairs along the Heritage Days parade route Sunday morning.

At press time, Janet Steines of Springbrook, age 60, had died. Four more victims were in critical condition after the accident. All told, 25 people were injured ranging from ages 2 to 62. More than half of them were under the age of 12.

Bystanders described the scene as "horrifying" and "surreal," more like a scene from a movie than real life. The havoc caused by the runaway team and buggy left bystanders, and an entire community, in shock as a public celebration turned into chaos and tragedy. "This is the sort of situation that you see on TV, but you hope to heck it never happens here," said Bellevue fire chief Chris Roling.

AS IT HAPPENED

The horses swept along the west curb of Riverside for seven blocks at speeds estimated up to 30 miles per hour, scattering parade watchers and trampling those unable to get out of the way.

The horses became uncontrollable when one rubbed the bridle off the other on the corner of Oak Street and Riverview, said law enforcement. "These people had years and years of experience," Roling said. "They knew their animals."

Witnesses described driver Mardell Steines as a lifelong horseman dragged by the reins in a vain attempt to control the horses.

They said that his wife Janet Steines held on to the buggy for dear life. "She was just frozen," said Herald-Leader sports-writer Willie Freiburger, who was watching the parade from across the street with

his grandkids.

Janet Steines was thrown from the buggy when it hit a "Natural Area" road sign on the block between Spring and Franklin Street. Roling reported that two other people were also riding in the wagon when it took off.

Two blocks south of where the horses first got out of control, Jim Blitgen was proudly driving his 1943 John Deere tractor and pulling a 1956 combine in the parade. As the horses came up behind him, he remembers slamming on the brakes. "I thought I'd do what damage I could to stop them," he said. "It was a pretty good hit. I was sure that inside horse was coming down."

That inside horse didn't come down, but the wagon shaft broke upon impact with the combine. Blitgen hopes the crash gave the crowd immediately in front of him a few more seconds of warning, though.

"One thing just led to another," he said of the accident. "All I could think of was all these kids. That's where everybody's mind's at. Little kids wanting candy."

The horses stepped on some bystanders, while some sitting on the curb suffered broken legs run over by the wheels of the hitch. Other victims got thrown to the concrete by the runaway team.

John Hoff saw the hitch for a moment as the carriage flipped over. "They went by like a loose stagecoach," he said. "Most people who were hit didn't even see it coming."

Luciano Pomatto of Chicago echoed Hoff. "It happened so quickly that people were not even aware," he said.

Pomatto was watching the parade from the east side of the street with his wife Elizabeth Pomatto. It was their first visit in Bellevue and their first opportunity to cel-

■ PARADE,
Please turn to page 24



Photo by Sara Millhouse

An estimated 60-70 emergency personnel responded to the scene, while bystanders, some with medical training themselves, pitched in.

Board discusses horses in parade

By DOUGLAS MELVOLD

In the aftermath of the Heritage Days parade tragedy in Bellevue last weekend, the Jackson County Fair Board this week will discuss whether to place limits or ban horses from the annual fair parade just three weeks away.

The fair board will take up the issue at its next meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday, Fair Manager Lanny Simpson said Monday July 5.

"I'm sure on Thursday we will have much discussion in making a determination at this late date," Simpson said.

"It has been the talk of the (Jackson County Fair) association and board and there have been many phone calls flying back and forth today and yesterday," she said.

"Our hearts go out to those in Bellevue," Simpson said. She called the Sunday, July 4, tragedy in Bellevue "a freak accident that is so unfortunate."

Janet Steines, 60, of Spragueville died and at least 23 people were hospitalized when two horses hitched to a carriage bolted and stampeded along the route of Bellevue's annual Heritage Days parade Sunday morning, July 4.

Simpson noted that horses are a longstanding tradition in parades, including the parade through downtown Maquoketa that annually kicks off the Jackson County Fair.

This year's parade will step off at 6 p.m. July 28.

She also noted that many spectators may be fearful of another incident, with the Bellevue tragedy still a fresh memory.

Simpson noted that one or more parade entrants may have hired a team of horses to be in the parade to represent their organization or business.

"It would be hard for us to tell them no at this late date," she said.

Simpson recalled that last year's fair parade included three horse or saddle clubs and a person who represented her church on a horse.

She also noted that Bob Johnson of Delmar has provided draft horses for the parade many times in the past.

Motorcyclist dies in traffic accident

A LaMotte man died last week when the motorcycle he was driving collided with a farm tractor on a northern Jackson County road.

Leon D. Murphy, 39, died as a result of the accident, which occurred at 3:50 p.m. Friday, July 2, on 230th Avenue at 400th Street.

The location is just south of the Jackson-Dubuque county line about seven miles north of LaMotte.

Iowa State Patrol troopers said Don Edward Capesius, 59, of LaMotte was driving an Allis 7050 tractor north on 230th Avenue. He was preparing to turn left into a field driveway.

Murphy was driving a 2005 Harley-Davidson motorcycle behind the tractor. He pulled out to pass the tractor just as Capesius started his left turn.

Although Murphy applied his brakes to avoid a collision, he was not able to stop in time. The motorcycle collided with the rear of the tractor.

Murphy was transported by Key West ambulance to Mercy Medical Center of Dubuque, where he died.

Capesius was uninjured.

The accident remains under investigation, troopers said.

Murphy became Jackson County's second traffic fatality of the year.

Timothy Fosdick, 18, of Savanna, Ill., died June 8 when the all-terrain vehicle he was driving on a Jackson County road about six miles northeast of Miles.