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No Trace of Two Slide Victims



SEARCHING FOR BODIES of two young people believed to be still buried in Saturday's slide at 11-Mile on the Hope-Princeton highway Monday, this 25-man party turned up a few fragments of the oil tanker the pair were believed to be sitting in when the slide struck. Scene is a small ravine at the north-east side of the giant slide which covers the highway for nearly two miles. Bodies of Bernie Beck of Penticton and Thomas Starchuk of Aldergrove were recovered in this area Sunday. Still missing and believed buried in the slide are Mary Lakmakoff and Dennis Arlitt, both of Penticton.

May Abandon Search Completely This Week

Bodies of two young people are believed to be buried in the 50 million ton slide which swept across the Hope-Princeton highway at dawn Saturday, but police and searchers have just about given up all hope of ever finding them.

After a large bulldozer, assisted by a small rescue party, failed Wednesday to find any trace of the cab of the tanker which the pair is believed to have been sitting in. Hope R.C.M.P. officials said they felt the search would soon have to be abandoned.

On Wednesday, the bulldozer, under direction of the Search party, dug up most of the top end of the ravine, down to 25 feet in places, but found no trace of the cab or the bodies.

Hope Search and Rescue members shouldered their biggest task yet when they took on the job of attempting to find the bodies of four persons killed in the big slide on the Hope - Princeton Highway on Saturday, Jan. 9.

First notification of the slide reached Hope at 6:50 a.m. when it was report-

ed to the R.C.M.P. office by the driver of a Canadian Pacific truck who had been turned back by one of the small slides west of the main slide.

His story virtually eliminated any possibility of cars from the Hope side being under the slide, since he had been stopped for a considerable time putting chains on his truck and had seen only three transport trucks go past him. All of these got through.

Since highway slides are not particularly a police concern, no action was taken until 8:20 a.m. when Jack Chalmers of the De-

partment of Highways at Allison Pass called to tell police here that two cabins at Nine-Mile Creek had been carried away.

Dan Chervenka, head of the Search & Rescue group, was contacted with a request to check to see if there was any indication either of the cabins had been occupied.

Information about the cabins presumably was passed on to Chalmers by radio from this side of the slide. Power shovel operator Eric Douglas and loader operator Gordon Hawes had gone in to work before daylight and had been stopped by the slide.

A shovel kept by the department for use of crews loading sand on trucks and a small tractor were lost near the middle of the slide area.

Dan Chervenka with Herb Swain and Bob Miller checked the cabin formerly occupied by William Jameson, which had been wrecked and swept up to the side of the road by some upsurge of the slide. They could not find the other cabin, closer to Hope and also below the road, which was recently sold by E. Hagen to an unknown owner.

It wasn't until 9 a.m. that Hope police were notified that there was a car trapped in the slide. They returned to the scene and Dan Chervenka, Laimon Kanders, Herb Swain and Constable Art Giesbrecht then climbed up onto the slide--no small undertaking in itself, and started making their way over it.

They had walked over part of the slide when a Vancouver Island Airways helicopter, hired by the Department of Highways, spotted the silver-grey oil tanks from the Arrow oil tanker at the extreme east side of the slide, north of the highway. The 'copter then air-lifted the searchers to the area where the tanks had been sighted.

Hope R.C.M.P. had sent to Cloverdale for the R.C.M.P. search dog "Prince" and its handler, Const. George Hawkins. On arrival at the slide, the dog and its handler were flown in to assist the searchers.

After some time the dog unearthed two sweaters, both severely shredded, but no other trace of the vehicles or the people was found.

On Sunday 13 men from the Search and Rescue were flown in to help recover the bodies.

The search dog led the party to the area where they later uncovered the two bodies. Digging to recover them was all done with pick and shovel, and was made all the more difficult by an overburden of brush and big logs which had to be sawed and moved out of the way by the searchers.

Two North Vancouver R.C.M.P. officers with special training in this type of disaster, the dog and its R.C.M.P. handler and 22 volunteer search and rescue men had been working several hours Sunday when the body of Bernie Lloyd Beck, 27, of 269 Vancouver Avenue, Penticton, was found in the cab

of one of the vehicles, a hay truck.

Less than an hour later, the second man, Thomas Starchuk, 39, of 28810 South Fraser Way, Aldergrove, was found. He is the father of four small children and was returning from the Okanagan with a load of hay.

Beck's body was found within three feet of the surface of the slide, with one hand only a foot down. Starchuk was found about four feet further down.

A witness to the number of vehicles and people in the slide area at the time was Norman Stephanishin, 734 Stuart St., Kamloops; driver of an Arrow Transfer oil tanker, who reported to Princeton R.C.M.P. Saturday that at about 4:45 that morning he was westbound on the Hope-Princeton Highway when he came upon a small slide at the top of what is known as the Nine-Mile hill. He said there was a small yellow convertible stuck in the slide ahead of him.

There were two young men and a young woman in the convertible and they were trying to dig the convertible out. The young woman complained she was cold and he told her to get into the cab of the oil tanker. Shortly after, a hay truck pulled up behind him.

Stephanishin then decided to walk back to Sumallo Lodge, some three miles east, to get help. He reported he flagged down two busses and later stopped a C.P.R. mail and express truck at Sumallo Lodge.

At Sumallo Lodge Bob Sowden was awakened. Bob took a Pick-up and rushed to the scene. After determining that he could not move the convertible or get the snow off it, he drove back to Allison Pass Department of Highways camp and awakened Jack Chalmers, foreman there. Together they returned to the slide area, but when they arrived at the scene the big slide had already come down and there was no trace of the vehicles or the people.

When daylight came, the pair were startled to see the huge slide across the road to the west.

Starchuk was the driver of the hay truck. Beck drove the yellow convertible.

Still missing are Mary Kalrriakoff, 23, of Penticton, and Dennis Arlitt, 23, of Penticton. They were traveling together, in company with Beck, and since Miss Kalmakoff was last seen in the cab of the tanker it is thought that both of them will probably be found there.

Numerous parts of that truck have been found, but not the cab. On Monday nearly two dozen men worked digging into the rubble near one of the tanks from the tank truck, where the tracking dog showed great interest.

Bob and George Sowden of Sumallo Lodge took part in the search Monday.

He had promised to bring a wrecker within an hour, after reporting the slide, but on his return couldn't get close to them and eventually had to flee himself because material was still coming down.

"The ground was shaking so much I was falling down with every step"

he is quoted as saying.

At the time he saw the first slide it was only snow about 15 feet thick and 40 feet wide. The main slide hit while he was gone and there was a third from which he narrowly escaped.

Highways people report that a snow slide shortly after 4 a.m. preceded the avalanche of mud and rock which came down shortly after 5 a.m.

More than 50 million tons of rock and earth swept down the mountainside, across the highway, blotting out completely a little lake south of the highway known as Beaver or Outram Lake. Force of the slide at this point was so great that it sent water and mud shooting up Mount Coulter across the highway, as high as 600 feet.

Roy Corbett brought his cat in Saturday morning to cut through the two road blocks below the main slide.

Civil Defence rushed feeding and emergency units from Abbotsford Saturday. On Sunday morning, the feeding unit was taken to the western end of the slide. It was staffed by volunteer women workers from Hope and did an excellent job of feeding the search party and others involved in the search. Bill White, Hope Civil Defence coordinator, was in charge.

The emergency unit was taken to the slide Monday, where it is reported the big generator on the unit was used as a stand-by unit in case anything went amiss with the lighting plant set up for night crews working on the temporary road over the slide.

Construction men and geologists estimated there was upwards of 50 million tons of rock, snow and debris in the slide. They reconstructed the events of early Saturday this way:

The snow slide shortly after 4 a.m. set up a vibration which shook the mountain which is about a mile north of the highway.

Highways Minister Gaglardi believes there was an earthquake in the area, and Bob Sowden's report about the ground heaving tends to support this theory.

Hundreds of man hours, nearly all by volunteers and R.C.M.P. personnel, were spent searching and digging the area where the bodies of Beck and Starchuk were found Sunday.

Hope Search and Rescue Group members took part in the search Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. They were joined by seven members of the Princeton Search and Rescue group Sunday and three members of the Chilliwack Search and Rescue Corps Monday.

The Hope men taking part included:

Saturday - Dan Chervenka, Bob Miller, Herb Swain, Laimon Kanders and Doug Cox.

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George Blumer, Laimon Kanders, Stan Haroldson, Clarke Beck, Bob Miller, Dick Collier, Jack DeLair, Al Peters and Walter George.

Monday - Jack DeLair, Al Hudson, Merv Wejr, Mark Pretty, Clarence Kolcun, Herb Swain, Walter George, Bob Miller, Al Peters, Ed Aylwin, Dick McCrimmon, Dan Chervenka, George and Bob Sowden.

Tuesday - Herb Swain, Bob Miller, Jack DeLair and Dick McCrimmon.

Wednesday - Fred Jones, Keith Hannah, Dick McCrimmon.

On Monday, four members of the Chilliwack group showed up but John Andermatt suffered a severe cut to his hand while loading axes onto the helicopter at the west side of the slide and had to be taken to Fraser Canyon Hospital for treatment. He then returned home. Others from Chilliwack were Gordon Currie, John Robinson and Dan Leavens.

Also taking part in Monday's search were two men from the B.C. Forest Service at Hope, Bruce Halloway and Phil Haycroft.

The two avalanche experts from North Vancouver, who took part in the search, were Constables Doug Hall and Lou Biggeman.

Hope R.C.M.P. Constables Glen Sullivan and Dough Simondson also took part in most of the search parties.

On Thursday Constable Glen Sullivan and Clarence Kolcun accompanied the avalanche experts to the scene to continue the search.

A number of Hope women volunteered their services on the Civil Defence feeding unit. On Sunday, Mrs. Les White was at the slide with the unit by herself for a short time. Later she was joined by Mrs. Ron Duncan, Mrs. Rex McConnell and Mrs. Bill White. Bill White, local Civil Defence co-ordinator was in charge of the unit.

Relatives Await Search Results

John Kalmakoff, Shoreacres, father of Mary Kalmakoff, arrived in Hope Tuesday to await the results of the search for his daughter's body. With him are Alec Dutoff, Grand Forks, and Mike Malakoff, Shoreacres, husbands of two of his other four daughters.

Newspaper Pix of Slide Displayed At Hope Standard

A billboard display of pictures and stories relating to last Saturday's slide at 11-Mile on the Hope-Princeton highway has been set up in the Hope Standard window.

Monday's editions of the Vancouver Province and the Vancouver Sun sold like hotcakes here. By 10 a.m. there wasn't a Province to be had anywhere and the Sun was sold out within an hour of its arrival.

While it may not be as satisfactory as having your own paper you can see most of these pictures in The Standard window.