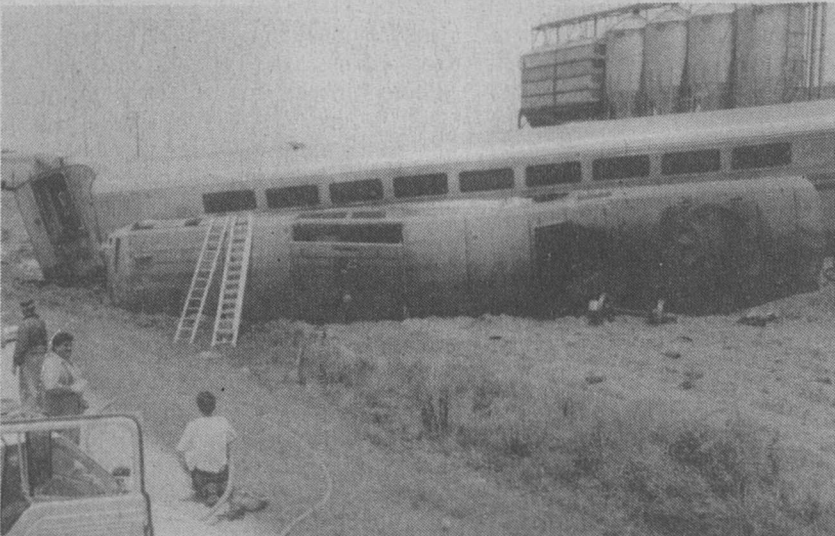


Pictorial of a train derailment



Approaching the front of the train on Hwy. 90-A, one could see that most of the completely derailed cars were in the forward section. The remaining cars more or less "jumped" the tracks.



The ladders were used to remove Amtrak personnel from the engine which was laying on its side. Eagle Lake Volunteer Firemen Arnold Cardenas and Sam Mims stand ready with a hose in case they're needed.



A baggage car, badly damaged.



Another angle shows where the engine and front cars came to a stop. There was at least one car up the track from the engine's resting spot.



Colorado County Director of Emergency Medical Services Marc Jordan (center, pointing toward ambulance) directs Wharton County EMS personnel to stand by in case they are needed. Eagle Lake and Garwood EMS personnel were nearly finished with the triage of the passengers at this point. Also on scene were Colorado County Sheriff R.H. "Curly" Wied (in white hat walking away from Jordan) and Eagle Lake Police Officer Brian Lasley and Sgt. Tim Crume (talking to each other at right).



A large group of the Amtrak passengers took refuge from the sun and heat as best they could while awaiting transport to the Eagle Lake Community Center. Unfortunately, there was only this one tree in the area to provide much needed shade.

Note: Many thanks to Jay Anderson for allowing us to sort through his rolls (and we do mean rolls) of pictures and chose the ones we thought would bring our readers the most complete "picture" of this near tragedy. Most of the pictures on this page are his since the heat turned out to be more than Headlight publisher Jeannine Fearing could tolerate so soon after her hospitalization. Again, to Jay, many thanks.

A model to all

Dear Eagle Lake Community,
You can imagine how touched the Amtrak passengers were upon entering your Community Center. Women were handing us cool towels; others were feeding people drinks and food. I felt like I walked into a family reunion.

To meet your community really made the trip an adventure and heart-warming experience for myself and my family.

If it happened again, I couldn't think of a better town to land in. I will remember all of you and your action if this happens in my community. You were a model to us all.

God bless you all.

Yvonne Babb and Family
Babson Park, Florida

Take a bow!

To the Citizens of Eagle Lake:

Congratulations. Thursday, July 8, Eagle Lake had a chance to show what our town is about. And we did.

The fire department, including some retired members, and the EMS volunteers responded in the professional manner that we have come to expect. City employees worked to secure the area and, with Lions Club members, got the Community Center ready for the passengers and crew of the derailed Sunset Limited.

In a way that amazed our unexpected guests, barbecue, hamburgers, pizzas, plate lunches, bread, cold cuts,

action was over in 45 minutes to an hour," said Glaisher.

Debriefing meetings with the local fire department, Amtrak officials, the Department of Public Safety and the National Transportation Safety Board took place Saturday.

The local firemen worked at the scene Friday for another four hours and Sunday at the railroad yard while wheels were replaced on the train cars.

Mark Davis, a spokesman for Union Pacific which owns the tracks, said crews worked throughout the night to clean up about 2,000 gallons of diesel fuel spilled from the train and to replace 800 feet of rails.

The tracks were re-opened between 8 and 8:30 a.m. Friday, according to Davis. Hwy. 90-A was re-opened later in the day.

Eagle Lake citizens from all sectors bonded together to furnish food, water and hospitality to the passengers and crew housed at the Eagle Lake Community Center prior to their being bused to Houston to proceed with their trip.

City Manager Ron Holland said the last persons left the Center around 8:30 p.m.

Rice CISD buses (the first one manned by Superintendent Dr. Richard Gott and his son, Ricky) and Colorado Valley Transit vans were used to transport the passengers out of the intense heat to the air conditioned Community Center.

Units from Garwood, Columbus, East Bernard and Wharton also responded to assist Eagle Lake, according to Glaisher.

soft drinks, coffee, fruit, cookies, water, and ice (donated by local businesses) just materialized at the Community Center, together with a great deal of tender loving care.

Someone provided coloring books and crayons for the children, and the library invited children and parents over to watch videos. Children (also) got Prairie Chickens Festival tee shirts.

The injured went to our hospital, and the EMS and a hospital Crisis Team went to the Community Center to screen the folks transported from the accident scene by buses. The Red Cross helped there, too.

The drugstore worked to replace prescriptions that folks were afraid they couldn't recover. Boot camp youngsters and employees kept the trash picked up and returned Friday to finish cleaning the Center.

Dozens of citizens came by just to help out by making sandwiches, delivering food, answering questions, and just listening.

The federal, state and county accident investigators used City Hall and the fire department facility as headquarters on Friday and Saturday. The fire department and EMS prepared hamburgers for them after the final briefing on Saturday.

The National Transportation Safety Board representative said that the actions of the citizens of Eagle Lake had renewed his faith in the real world, the one that lies outside Washington, D.C.

Take a bow, Eagle Lake. You deserve it.

Michael Cooper
Mayor of Eagle Lake

Photos By Jay Anderson
and Jeannine Fearing

"A warmer bunch of people you couldn't find. God bless 'em." — Joseph Kawensky, Bloomfield, New Jersey

Your generosity won't be forgotten

To the citizens of Eagle Lake and surrounding communities:

I would like to personally take this time to thank each and everyone of you from the bottom of my heart for all you did for me and for all the passengers and crew of the Amtrak train which derailed in your vicinity last week.

Words cannot express what all of your efforts, both emotional and physical, meant to me. Each one of you made an enormous difference to me and to us.

May God bless you all. Your generosity will never be forgotten.

Sincerely,
Phil Morales, Houston

We'll never forget you

The following message was e-mailed to City Manager Ron Holland.

I couldn't find a newspaper to write to, so I'm hoping whoever reads this will please pass it on to the whole community.

July 8, last Thursday, my wife and I were passengers on the train that derailed outside of your wonderfully kind and generous community.

Some of you might remember us,

my wife was the woman in the wheel chair.

Your community will stand out in every person's mind who was on that train for as long as they live.

The message is simply and sincerely... THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU.

Sincerely,
Willie and Pam Ward
Sarasota, Florida



It appeared as though every member of Eagle Lake's Ambulance Corps plus some from Garwood responded to the call Thursday morning. Driving Eagle Lake's Unit #803 was Carolyn Baird. Passing by was Eagle Lake Volunteer Fireman Buddy Mascheck.



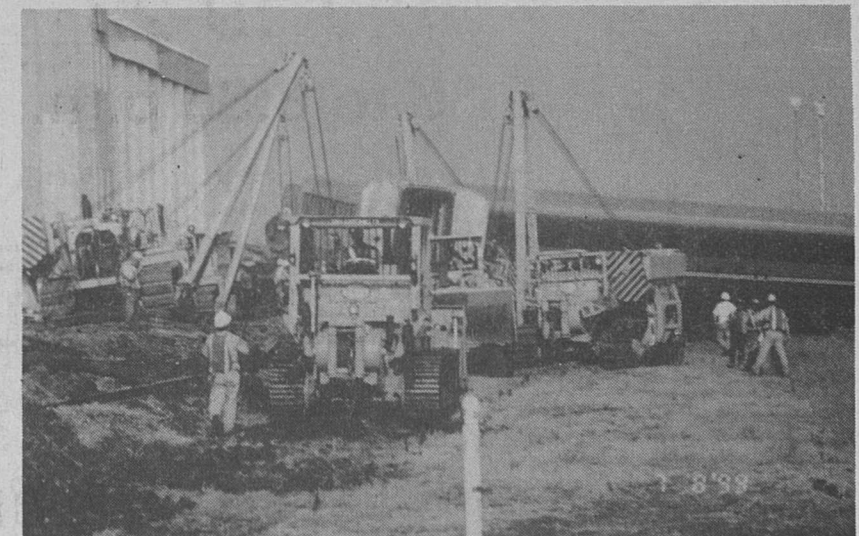
Members of the Eagle Lake Volunteer Fire Department not only responded to the original call just before lunch time Thursday, but were on the scene Friday washing down the highway before it was opened to traffic. Pictured are Curtis Rose, Greg Contreras, Howard Wilkerson, Todd and Buddy Mascheck and Joe Lee Perez.



Also providing assistance to the Amtrak passengers was the American Red Cross which set up at the Community Center.



By mid-afternoon, several Coach USA charter buses arrived in Eagle Lake to transport the passengers to the train station in Houston (their next scheduled stop).



The cleanup was a massive undertaking involving a large number of workers and numerous pieces of heavy equipment.



Cleaning up the derailment site and repairing the rails went on through Thursday night into Friday. Here a worker is directing the crane as it lifts the engine into an upright position to be loaded on a trailer.



On Friday, the tracks were cleared and awaiting laser alignment before trains were allowed to pass the area doing speeds exceeding a crawl.