



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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~ Media Advisory ~

The Day the Whistles Cried: The Story of America's Deadliest Train Wreck

Presentation by author Betsy Thorpe

On Saturday, June 27, 2015 at 11am, the Springfield Library invites you to join author Betsy Thorpe for a historical presentation based on her book about America's deadliest train wreck.

Do you know what happened near Nashville, Tennessee ninety-six years ago?

If not, you're not alone. Most people don't.

It's hard to believe an event which changed thousands of lives could be forgotten about just a hundred years later, but then, very little has been recorded about the people involved in the 1918 occurrence at Dutchman's Curve in Nashville. Because of a series of simple human errors, two loaded passenger trains met around a blind curve and collided head-on at full speed. The steam engines exploded in a terrific blast, telescoping the front cars high into the sky before crashing back down into a twisted heap of metal, boiling water, people, and body parts. The wreck killed 101 riders and crew, injured more than 170 others, ensured major change in railroad safety regulations across the country, and remains to this day the single deadliest train accident in US history – yet it all goes unmentioned in local lore. We just don't talk about it much.

To one Nashville woman, our collective amnesia seemed a jarring injustice. Springfield native, author Betsy Thorpe learned offhand about the wreck at Dutchman's Curve and felt a personal responsibility grow in her to make sure the story was finally told as a whole. ***The Day the Whistles Cried*** (*Published by Westview, 2014*) comprises the dedicated efforts of her seven-year journey to find the truth and uncover the individual human paths taken before and after the "Great Cornfield Meet," the tragedy that

left so many families with empty chairs at the dinner table instead of the presence of their loved ones.

Some missed the train by minutes and had friends taken while they were spared. A few onboard even traded seats, changing their fates (for better or worse) without knowing it. Some worked the railroad and had expected just another day at the office, so to speak, but came home with scarring visual images that would haunt them for life. Many never came home at all. But one thing the victims and witnesses all share is that each deserves to be remembered.

“The sound of the crash shattered the quiet morning. Upstairs at Saint Mary’s Orphanage, a group of children rushed to a window to see what had happened. An eerie sight greeted them in the cornfields beyond the wreck. The white tunics and black veils of the Dominican habit fluttered in the field — caught on the cornstalks where they’d landed.

The fields near the tracks were littered with fragments of wood and steel, hurled from the demolished cars. Thousands of pieces of mail had burst from the car, filling the air. They filtered down and now lay strewn across the site. Trunks and suitcases had been hurled out of the crashed baggage car. The baggage lay broken and empty on the ground; the belongings they once held lay scattered across the cornfields. From across the wreckage and beneath, shrieks and muffled cries arose, and helpless victims prayed for speedy deliverance or death.”

-- Excerpt from ***The Day the Whistles Cried***, Betsy Thorpe, Published by Westview, 2014.

An editable version of this release, advance praise quotes, and a print-resolution cover photo are available upon request. Please contact betsy.thorpe@gmail.com for assistance.

What: America’s Deadliest Train Wreck

When: Saturday, June 27, 2015 at 11am

Where: Springfield Library in the Library Meeting Room, 225 5th St. Springfield, OR

Additional Information: Contact Carrie Schindele-Cupples at (541) 726-2237

