

# Sometimes luck is all in the numbers

I was 24 years old on March 10, 1993, when I boarded the 7:30 a.m. Amtrak train in Chicago's Union Station. At 11:10 a.m., in Comstock Township, Mich., outside Kalamazoo, our train, traveling 62 mph, collided with a liquid propane tanker truck. The trucker did not survive.

Like so many previous trips to Battle Creek, my coworkers and I were scheduled to present advertising plans depicting critters peddling breakfast carbs to kids. Very, very important stuff this was, plus the annoying train always ran late.

The moment of impact forever plays in excruciating slow motion.

■ A muffled thump from a distance ahead.

■ An involuntary lurch out of my seat, knocking me to the floor.

■ The expression on my boss's face – a shift from laughter to confusion.

■ "Dan," I say, not at all a question. Perhaps a plea? A final statement?

■ Screams erupt from up ahead.

■ Dan's face, frozen, into a stare.

■ A female voice.

■ The smell of fuel.

■ The realization I am screaming.

There is dead silence, then – though I'm crumpled on the floor – the brief sensation of whispers and free-falls, as if from a height. My clothes and hair lift briefly off my body then whip back against me in an invisible, crushing and sustained blast of heat.



**CHRISTINE WOLF**

You've heard how lives flash before our eyes? It really happens. My life's "movie" lasted all of four seconds, but I saw everything. I was certain I was about to die.

At that time, The U.S. Department of Energy estimated an individual's risk of death by a propane shipment accident was 1 in 15 million – half the chance of death by plane debris hitting a person on the ground and 13,333 times more likely than death by a meteorite. And it's really no wonder I remember that heat: the same DOE study pegged the approximate combustion temperature of a propane tank rupture at 3,500 F.

When I realized the train was still moving, I tried to see beyond flames outside every window – including those tiny ones cut into the exit doors. As long as I live, I'll never feel as trapped as when those flames surrounded us. Only later did I learn how fortunate we were: our engineer, who sustained second degree burns on his upper body from the fireball, had the presence of mind to avoid braking until every car passed through – and beyond – the raging fire.

When we finally stopped, our car immediately filled with smoke. I

can still feel the urgent, collective rush toward the doors, adrenaline surging as passengers pried open metal, still hot to the touch. We stumbled onto frozen land, smelling of panic, fuel and fear.

Within minutes, emergency personnel and reporters appeared, as breathless with their questions as we were numbed by shock. I zoned out, staring into the rounded, black sponge of a reporter's microphone, unable to describe the moment of impact.

A kind, local soul drove us to our client's headquarters, and we got there just in time for our afternoon meeting. I've never understood why we didn't just go home, but when you've just survived a fatal train accident, you're grateful to be anywhere.

Five years after the accident, I saw the movie "Sliding Doors," depicting two different ways a woman's life plays out, depending on whether she misses – or slides through – the doors of a train. I still love that movie and its evergreen message, that things always happen for a reason.

I am 46 years old, and this year I opened a writers' retreat 46 miles from the crash site. I am one of 46 people who survived the 1993 Wolverine Amtrak crash, thanks to a conductor whose name I never learned.

This column is dedicated to him.

DRESS	BUYER	SELLER	DATE	PRICE
29 Cottonwood Dr, Glenview	Kenneth Bahk & Carolina Bahk	Michael J Murphy	02-04-15	\$830,000
Irchard Ln, Golf	David Drehoib & Maggie Drehoib	Doyle Trust	02-06-15	\$915,000
20 W Winona St, Harwood ights	Pamela S Larson	William B Saveley	02-06-15	\$300,000
30 University Ave, Highland rk	Gerald Houlihan & Marjorie Houlihan	Nationstar Mortgage Llc	02-03-15	\$379,000
20 Sheridan Rd, Highland Park	E Thomas Gimble	Sara A Baron	02-05-15	\$560,000
36 Sunnyside Ave, Highland rk	Molly Rosemeyer & Joshua Rosemeyer	R 3 Llc	02-04-15	\$650,000
18 New England Ave, Morton ve	Bernadetta J Miskiewicz	Michael C Pluta	02-06-15	\$165,000
12 Parkside Ave, Morton Grove	Natasha Jindani	Sanwar Y Sadah	02-03-15	\$259,000
3 Theobald Rd, Morton Grove	Dilawarbai Mansuri & Nafisa Mansuri	Right Residential II Fund I	02-06-15	\$310,000
1 W Central Rd, # C6, Mount spect	William Wess & Cynthia Wess	Fannie Mae	02-06-15	\$66,000
1 W Huntington Commons Rd, 13, Mount Prospect	Janusz Pudelek & Bogumila Pudelek	Fannie Mae	02-03-15	\$79,000
8 N Boxwood Dr, # A, Mount spect	Peggy Nagel	Federal Home Loan Mtg Corp	02-06-15	\$105,000
1 W Bob O Link Rd, Mount spect	James A Gilliland & Christina L Gilliland	Bardley Trust	02-06-15	\$224,000
4 Pine St, Mount Prospect	Kenneth L Brey & Tamara A Brey	Fannie Mae	02-04-15	\$225,000
6 N Park Dr, Mount Prospect	Randy Weiler & Janice Culver	Jeffrey L Burnett	02-06-15	\$250,000
Hill St, Mount Prospect	Artur Nowak	Bank Of New York Mellon Ttee	02-06-15	\$251,000
8 Bonita Ave, Mount Prospect	Daniel Hajduga	Leszek S Lesiak	02-06-15	\$270,000
8 S Linneman Rd, Mount spect	Lisa E Osborn	Antoinette De Nicolo	02-03-15	\$305,000
N Pecos Ln, Mount Prospect	Oblora Tagbo & Kristine Tagbo	Harish Khambholja	02-04-15	\$363,000
5 Maple St, Mount Prospect	Dennis Dedecker II & Ann G Dedecker	Urban Investment Group Llc	02-04-15	\$490,000
5 Wa Pella Ave, Mount spect	Scott G Smoron & Katherine Elizabeth Smoron	Dlj Mortgage Capital Inc	02-03-15	\$727,000
8 W Terrace Dr, # 6N, Niles	Ililja Sumonja & Mirjana Sumonja	Fannie Mae	02-05-15	\$72,000
5 W Golf Rd, # 10H, Niles	Ameer Al Sabagh	Virginia J Niedziela Estate	01-23-15	\$76,000
1 W Courte Dr, # 206, Niles	Avram Pop	Maria Selden	02-06-15	\$140,000
2 W Carol Ct, Niles	Syed Tausif Abbas Zaidi & Syeda Zahara Jafrri	Max M Foreman	02-03-15	\$190,000
7 N Opal Ave, Norridge	Adriana Rudzinski & Craig A Backous	Helena Kowalzyk Estate	02-05-15	\$219,000
7 N Parkway Dr, # 2C, thbrook	Igor Shub & Yuliya Shub	Fannie Mae	02-06-15	\$112,000
Old Post Rd, Northbrook	Jeffrey S Freedman & Eliza S Freedman	Sebastian Siethoff	02-06-15	\$580,000
Jessica Ln, Northbrook	Monica Borkar	Jeri Calvetti	02-06-15	\$890,000
1 Maple Ave, Northbrook	Sanjay Vanjani & Jaya Vanjan	Gary L Grad	02-05-15	\$1,010,000
1 W Talcott Rd, Park Ridge	Almir Sakanovic & Senada Sakanovic	Stanley E Nelson	02-06-15	\$231,000
1 W Marcus Ct, Park Ridge	David Mark Hicks & Amy Virginia Krushinski	Lacyna Czapia	02-04-15	\$530,000
Vulberry Dr, Prospect hts	Kenneth Purczynski	Elizabeth A Iwanicki	01-23-15	\$305,000
Budd St, River Grove	Jonathan D Pecoraro	Federal Home Loan Mtg Corp	02-06-15	\$150,000
Irving Park Rd, # 11, ler Park	Lora A Pacian	Ferdinand P Ortiz Sr	02-05-15	\$80,000
Lamon Ave, # 2N, Skokie	George Chaharbakshsi	Mitchell Ambler	02-06-15	\$65,000
Greenleaf St, Skokie	Matthew J Tripp & Paige E Tripp	Jeremiah J Wittgen	02-03-15	\$180,000
Lowell Ave, Skokie	Damir Habibovic	Alvin Yonan	02-03-15	\$215,000
Tripp Ave, Skokie	Sharib Jamal	Wells Fargo Bank	02-03-15	\$221,000
Lincoln Ave, Skokie	Ruslan Khalilov & Sugra Khalillo- va	Shiyun Kim	02-04-15	\$375,000
Greenwood St, Skokie	Maurice Aaron	Leah Gutmann	02-06-15	\$408,000
1 Wolf Rd, # 60A, Wheeling	Olena Shovgeniuk	Maria Poddebski	02-04-15	\$41,000
lum Creek Dr, # 210 1, aling	Semion Krishtal & Irina Krishtal	Yevgeniy E Gofman	02-06-15	\$85,000
Heather Ct, # B1, Wheeling	Yolana Shehda & Ihor Shehda	Vladimir Hamalski	01-23-15	\$120,000
Holly Ln, Winnetka	Kevin M Brosche & Jessica Brosche	Barry I Levy	02-04-15	\$3,200,000
5 1st Ave, Maywood	Victor P Armendariz	Bob Filec	02-03-15	\$10,000
13th Ave, Maywood	Bruce Wasz	John A Roberson	02-06-15	\$30,000
5 25th Ave, Maywood	Andrew Martin	Fannie Mae	02-05-15	\$94,000
5 3rd Ave, Maywood	Pedro Velarde & Blanca Velarde	Astrit Shuaipaj	02-06-15	\$95,000
5 22nd Ave, Maywood	Secundino Galvez Amaya & Sandra Galvez	Charles E Mccraney Estate	02-04-15	\$98,000
5 15th Ave, Maywood	Kenya R Stewart	Randy Melton	02-03-15	\$138,500