

# Tragic bus accident near Dolan in 1949 still creates vivid images for witnesses

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** In the first of three articles, author Rose Woertz recalls local reaction to the bus wreck in August, 1949, just outside Dolan on what was then Ind. 37. Fifteen persons were killed as a result of the accident.

By ROSE WOERTZ

Special to The H-F

In years afterward it was known as "that awful bus wreck at Dolan." One "Dolanite" who was at the scene says today, "I still don't want to think about it or talk about it."

BLOOMINGTON AREA people were stunned when they saw the photographs of the bus and read about the wreck in the Aug. 10, 1949, edition of *The World-Telephone*. The story was to occupy newspaper space for many days because of some of the strange twists to it.

Driver of the Greyhound bus, Wayne Cranmer, 25, had been called out of bed in Indianapolis as a relief driver. His run was to Evansville via Bloomington.

By 1:45 a.m. on Aug. 10 he had driven through the community of Dolan on what was then Ind. 37. Approaching the narrow concrete bridge at the foot of what local residents call Mose Ryan Hill, the bus struck the north end of the bridge in the right-hand lane, overturned, skidded along

the bridge, and quickly caught fire.

Some of the passengers, no doubt napping at that early morning hour, were jolted awake. In the horror and confusion 13 persons managed to escape. Fifteen others perished in the fire.

LUKE SHUTE, 50, the only Bloomington resident on the bus, got out through the windshield. A lathe operator, he had taken the 8:10 a.m. bus from Bloomington to Indianapolis to pick up his vacation check at Schwitzer-Cummings and was returning home.

Driver Cranmer, among the survivors, managed to escape with a burned right hand and was reported to have helped some passengers escape.

Quick-thinking Edgar Davis, a taxi driver from Indianapolis, kicked out the back window and led seven others to safety. His heroic action landed him in the hospital with burns. But he had earned the gratitude of those he saved.

Ambulances from local funeral homes were dispatched to pick up the injured, but the bridge was blocked by the burning bus. Even though Bloomington Hospital had no emergency room doctors on duty in those days, the staff responded quickly, and were praised for their efforts.

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Scene of 1949 bus accident near Dolan