

Identifying bodies was gruesome task after bus accident near Dolan

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the second of three articles, author Rose Woertz recalls local reaction to the tragic bus accident 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-T

In the wake of the disastrous bus wreck on Aug. 10, 1949, authorities began the process of identifying the 15 victims. To say that some of the victims were horribly burned is an understatement.

ON THE MORNING of Aug. 10, Dr. Robert Lyons, Monroe County coroner, requested Indiana radio stations to announce that if any persons — relatives or friends — who had knowledge that someone they knew was on the bus traveling from Indianapolis to Evansville should not come to Bloomington to help in identification unless they brought dental records.

The victims were so badly incinerated that except for one or two bodies, it was impossible for Dr. Lyons to determine whether they were male

or female. (In one instance the wrist of one body still had a woman's watch relatively intact on it.) On other bodies there were a few scraps of clothing left as clues.

Because the only remaining way to identify the victims was through dental records, Dr. Lyons called Dr. Charles Wylie, a local dentist, to help him. Wylie recalls that he cancelled his appointments for the day and went with his assistant, Miss Laura Willard, to the Armory to make a record of past dental work for each body.

WHAT THEY FOUND were rows of bodies, sprayed with formaldehyde, tagged with numbers, and covered with sheets. Dr. Wylie also remembers that the bodies looked more like so many burned logs than human beings.

Having completed his work in charting the dental record records of the victims, Dr. Wylie turned them over to Dr. Lyons and asked that any statements regarding identification be issued by the coroner's office. Back at work in his office after performing his part in the identi-

(Page 4, col. 1, this sec.)