

Identifying victims was gruesome task

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tying process, Dr. Wylie recalls that he and his assistant received phone calls from reporters and other calls, which they referred to the coroner's office.

By Aug. 12 the *World-Telephone* reported that only three of the victims of the fiery wreck (near Dolan north of the city) remained to be claimed by someone. Descriptions released by Dr. Lyons were stark in their brevity:

"MALE — AGE 20 TO 30 — height 5' 10" to 6' — weight 160 to 180 pounds — four fillings in upper teeth and two in lower ones — blue or gray and white striped shorts.

"Male — age 50 to 60 — height 5' 4" to 5' 7" — 125 to 130 pounds — full dentures — probably a heavy smoker — flannel shirt with diagonal striped tie with gray, pink and blue.

"Male — age 25 to 35 — height 6' — weight 180 to 190 pounds — removable lower denture — a Lafayette Transit System token and a striped Zippo lighter in his pocket — a waterproof watch with 31163 engraved on the back — hairy legs — possibly a white shirt and white shorts with red stripes."

Body number 12 was never identified. The second of the above three victims, he was unoriginally dubbed "John Doe." Local authorities did receive some inquiries about him. Mrs. George Courterier of Lewiston, Me., thought it might be her husband, who was on his way to Chicago to look for a job, but Doe's and Courterier's ages didn't tally.

MRS. NORMA HAWKINS called from Evansville to see if the number 12 was possibly her father, Richard Thrasher, 68. She said he had been "up north visiting relatives and was overdue home". But that turned out to be another false lead.

By Aug. 16 John Doe had to be buried. Dr. W. H. Wylie, a retired Methodist minister, volunteered to conduct a simple graveside service in Rose Hill Cemetery. There did remain the question of who was financially responsible for the burial. Because no relatives could be found for John Doe, Greyhound Lines paid the costs.



Staff photo by Don Vardeventer

Concrete still missing from bridge at site of bus accident near Dolan

Those bodies identified by Dr. Lyons and his co-workers were listed as follows: Charles Raymond, 77, Evansville; Richard Kunkel, 23, Jasper; Dale Aikman, 30, wife Joan and two children; Barbara Jean Roberts, 18, Bedford; Mrs. Grace Cardwell, 29, Evansville; MRS. IDA WILLIAMS, 50, Grindstone, Pa.; Mrs. Georgia Tandy, 50, Evansville; Omar Brown, 55, and wife Arminta, Indianapolis; Charles Ellerbrook, 79, and wife, Ruth, Evansville;

Vernon Trisler, 32, Bedford (tentative)

Trisler's identification turned out to be very tentative. Tagged as body number 11, it was first claimed by his relatives on the basis of what the *World-Telephone* termed as "facial features". However, a Bedford woman, Mrs. Elsie Adamson, was seeking the whereabouts of her husband, whom she said had disappeared from there on the day before the wreck and was last seen heading for the Greyhound terminal at about 8 p.m. She had returned from visiting relatives in Illinois and found him missing.

By August 17 the *World-Telephone* reported that there was some doubt in Dr. Lyons' mind

about his identification of body number 11. Mrs. Adamson came to Bloomington to check further on why it was decided that the body was that of Vernon Trisler. A door key with the name of "Morrison" imprinted on it had been found in the wreckage, but not specifically on the body of number 11. Returning to Bedford with the key, Mrs. Adamson found that it fit the apartment she shared with her husband, Maurice, 24.

DR. WYLIE RECALLS that he checked the

dental work of a body in a local mortuary in the presence of two Indiana state policemen. (By this time the temporary morgue at the Armory had been closed.) Dr. Lyons had requested and received Maurice Adamson's Army records.

On September 9, Dr. Lyons as Monroe County coroner, ruled that body number 11 was not Vernon Trisler, but Maurice Ervin Adamson. He based his decision on Army fingerprints and the apartment key.

For a time after that people in Bloomington speculated about the other body identifications. Were some of them incorrect, too?

Who was John Doe in Rose Hill Cemetery? Dr. Wylie remembers that there was no question about the age range of body number 12, because of the condition of the bone structure in his jaws. In attempting to identify John Doe, Wylie even sent a description of Doe's upper and lower plates to dental journals in the hope that some dentist somewhere would remember making the plates. There was no response.

PERHAPS THE oddest twist to the whole problem about identification of the bodies was that another key was found in the wreckage, and it happened to fit the Trisler's Bedford apartment.

To be continued

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