

THE CROSSING Chapter 10

Letter from bus driver Duane Harms
and his wife, Judy, to Colorado Sen. John Carroll,
his reply letter and the Congressional Record
with his statement and newspaper editorials
on the crash

DETAIL FROM CONGRESSIONAL RECORD
SHOWING DUANE HARMS' LETTER

GREELEY, COLO., *December 29, 1961.*

Senator JOHN A. CARROLL,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR SENATOR CARROLL: As you recall on December 14, 1961, I was the driver of the schoolbus at Greeley, Colo., where 20 children lost their lives. This tragedy will never be forgotten, but I feel something should be done.

I have received ~~over 100~~ letters from all parts of the U.S.A. and the general opinion is: there are hazards on every bus route and especially at railroad crossings, which have been ignored. Surely something can be done and I am asking you to support or introduce some law that might correct such a situation. No one knows but the driver the responsibility that is involved in handling a bus load of children when windows are frosted. We cannot erase the tragedy, but we can certainly profit by this so that a tragedy like this may never happen again.

I will appreciate anything that can be done and I will be glad to help in any way I can.

Thanking you for the above favor I remain.

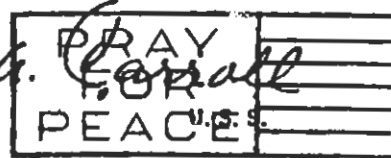
Sincerely yours,

DUANE HARMS,
JUDY HARMS.

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS

FREE



Mr. and Mrs. Duane Harms
Route 4, Box 247
Greeley, Colorado

JAMES O. EASTLAND, MISS., CHAIRMAN

ESTES KEFAUVER, TENN.
OLIN D. JOHNSTON, S.C.
JOHN L. MCCLELLAN, ARK.
SAM J. ERVIN, JR., N.C.
JOHN A. CARROLL, COLO.
THOMAS J. DODD, CONN.
PHILIP A. HART, MICH.
EDWARD V. LONG, MO.

ALEXANDER WILEY, WIS.
EVERETT MCKINLEY DIRKSEN, ILL.
ROMAN L. HRUSKA, NEBR.
KENNETH B. KEATING, N.Y.
NORRIS COTTON, N.H.
HIRAM L. FONG, HAWAII

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

February 1, 1962

Mr. and Mrs. Duane Harms
Route 4, Box 247
Greeley, Colorado

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Harms:

I thank you very much for your heartfelt, moving letter. I have taken the liberty of having it printed in the Congressional Record because I believe it will help to emphasize to other Senators the great importance of seeing that such an accident as the Greeley school bus accident shall not happen again. A copy of my statement is enclosed.

I believe that the I.C.C. study into safety standards at railroad crossings will produce much useful information and will furnish helpful guidelines in regards the need of additional action or legislation.

In the meantime before this study is completed, I have been in contact with traffic engineers and scientists in the government and have discussed with them their research projects. Let me assure you there is much interest at all levels of government in seeing that responsible protective measures are taken to ensure the safety of our citizens at rail crossings.

My very best regards to you both.

Sincerely,


JOHN A. CARROLL

JAC:vjb

would have an obligation to support the bonds which others might purchase.

Today we have hundreds of billions of dollars of contingent liability which we do not think of when we talk about our national debt. The proposed United Nations bonds would be another vast contingent liability on the credit and the taxpayers of the United States.

Mr. President, I do not want to see the United Nations go down the drain because of its fiscal dilemma, whatever it may be. I agree with the Senator that we must ascertain to whom the money is owed and for what it is owed. But I agree that the issuance and sale of such bonds would not be a solution of the problem of handling either the current expenses or the unusual expenses of the United Nations. After all, there will be other unusual expenses in the future.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CHANGE OF NAME OF THE PLAYA DEL REY INLET AND HARBOR, VENICE, CALIF.

The Senate resumed the consideration of the bill (H.R. 157) to change the name of the Playa del Rey Inlet and Harbor, Venice, Calif., to the "Marina del Rey, Los Angeles, Calif."

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, what is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The pending business is H.R. 157.

The bill is open to amendment.

Mr. KUCHEL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a portion of the Senate committee report on the pending business be printed at this point in the RECORD. I have marked the appropriate paragraphs.

There being no objection, the excerpts were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

The purpose of the bill is to change the name of the small-boat harbor at Los Angeles, Calif., now known as Playa del Rey Inlet and Harbor, Venice, Calif., and also known locally by other names, to Marina del Rey, Los Angeles, Calif.

GENERAL STATEMENT

Playa del Rey Inlet and Harbor, Venice, Calif., is located on Santa Monica Bay, Los Angeles County, on the coast of California, 20 miles northwest of Los Angeles Harbor, and 410 miles southeast of San Francisco Bay. The project was authorized by the River and Harbor Act of 1954 (68 Stat. 1252), in accordance with the recommendations of the Chief of Engineers in House Document 389, 83d Congress. The project is nearing completion.

The Federal plan of improvement provides for establishment of a harbor for light-draft vessels, consisting of an entrance channel and basin which will provide protected berthing facilities for about 7,000 small craft

and for parking 2,500 trailer-mounted craft. The portion of the project in which the Federal Government participates is the main entrance channel, main harbor, revetments, and protective jetties. The side channels, bulkheads, relocations, smaller sheltered berthing areas, tide gates, access roads, parking areas, and necessary land required are to be provided at local cost. The Federal participation is limited to \$2,350,000, or about 10 percent of the cost of the entire project.

The name "Playa del Rey—The King's Beach," has come down from the days of the early Spanish settlement and is not considered descriptive of the harbor, which is a marina for small craft. In addition, other names have been used locally which has caused confusion.

Local interests, particularly the Department of Small Craft Harbors and the Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles County, Calif., have requested that the name of the Playa del Rey Inlet and Harbor be changed to Marina del Rey.

COMMITTEE VIEWS

The committee is in accord with the desires of local interests and recommends enactment of H.R. 157, which would change the name of the Playa del Rey Inlet and Harbor, Venice, Calif., to the Marina del Rey, Los Angeles, Calif., since this project is a harbor exclusively for the use of small craft. The committee is not aware of any opposition to the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there be no amendment to be offered, the question is on the third reading of the bill.

The bill (H.R. 157) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

CONVEYANCE OF CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY TO THE STATE OF WYOMING

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I move that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 889, H.R. 3879, and that it be made the pending business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill will be stated by title.

The LEGISLATIVE CLERK. A bill (H.R. 3879) to authorize and direct the Secretary of Agriculture to convey to the State of Wyoming for agricultural purposes certain real property in Sweetwater County, Wyo.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion of the Senator from Montana.

The motion was agreed to; and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, it is the intention of the leadership to withhold action on this measure pending the return of the distinguished senior Senator from Oregon (Mr. MORSE), who is absent on official business and at the request of the administration. I make this announcement only to indicate to the Senate that there will be no action taken on this proposal until the arrival of the Senator from Oregon.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRAFFIC DISASTER AT GREELEY, COLO., DECEMBER 14, 1961

Mr. CARROLL. Mr. President, on December 14, 1961—less than 2 weeks before Christmas—the worst traffic disaster in the history of Colorado occurred near the city of Greeley. On that cold bright morning, a school bus was struck and sliced in two by a streamliner, overdue on its way to Denver.

Twenty schoolchildren were killed. An additional 14 children were seriously injured. This accident has shocked and horrified the people of Colorado who, I believe, are determined to see that all within human power is done to insure that such a disaster shall not happen again.

It is perhaps ironic that, at the very time of the crash, the Interstate Commerce Commission was engaged in a thorough investigation into the prevention of rail-highway grade-crossing accidents involving trains and motor vehicles. This study, still in progress, is of a very great importance. The regulations and legislative recommendations which will result from the ICC study should go a long way toward insuring that all possible safety precautions are taken at grade-crossings.

In both 1959 and in 1960, I called upon the Commission to initiate such a study as this. I was therefore most pleased by the action of the ICC, on February 6, 1961, in initiating the investigation. It has long been needed.

This need was never more tragically demonstrated than it was by the school bus disaster at Greeley.

Gov. Steve McNichols, the Colorado Public Utilities Commission, and other State officials have carefully investigated the causes of this accident. There is much to be learned from their study, much which will be of value to the ICC in its investigation of grade-crossing safety standards. For this reason, I addressed a letter on January 16, 1962 to the Honorable Rupert L. Murphy, Chairman of the Interstate Commerce Commission.

I request unanimous consent that this letter be made part of the RECORD at this point:

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

JANUARY 16, 1962.

HON. RUPERT L. MURPHY,
Chairman, Interstate Commerce Commission,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. MURPHY: As you know, over past years, I have called upon the ICC to launch a complete investigation into the prevention of rail-highway grade-crossing accidents involving trains and motor vehicles. I have long felt the need for a full review of our safety standards in this regard is imperative.

I was therefore most pleased when the Commission on February 6, 1961, saw fit to begin such a study. It has long been needed. This study is currently in process.

The importance of this subject was tragically and forcefully brought home to all Coloradans on Thursday, December 14. On that day in Greeley, Colo., a school bus was sliced in two at a grade crossing by the streamliner City of Denver.

Twenty children were killed, 13 more hospitalized.

This is the worst traffic accident in the history of our State.

It is an accident that could have been prevented.

The Colorado Public Utilities Commission, the Governor, and State officials have carefully investigated the causes of this accident. I deem it of the highest importance that the results of this study be heard by the Commission as part of its investigation No. 33440. I request, therefore, that a hearing be held by the ICC in Denver, Colo., so that the lessons learned from this appalling disaster will be made a part of the Commission study.

It is my understanding that the commissioners engaged in this study will be holding hearings in California in the near future. I suggest, therefore, that the Denver hearing be held as part of the commissioners' western trip, as they return from the west coast.

Kind regards,

Sincerely,

JOHN A. CARROLL.

Mr. CARROLL. Mr. President, I was most pleased to receive a reply from the chairman on January 17, and I ask unanimous consent to make this reply part of the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION,
BUREAU OF SAFETY AND SERVICE,
Washington, D.C., January 17, 1962.
Hon. JOHN A. CARROLL,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR SENATOR CARROLL: This has reference to your letter of January 18, 1962, requesting that an investigation be made of the Greeley, Colo., train-school bus accident which occurred on December 14, 1961, and that it be made a part of the investigation into the prevention of rail-highway grade-crossing accidents involving trains and motor vehicles covered by docket No. 33440 currently in progress.

A recommendation has been made to the appropriate division of the Commission for the holding of a hearing in the Greeley, Colo., accident and if approval is obtained; such a hearing will probably be held at Greeley on February 8, 1962. Every effort will be made to have all pertinent information received at such hearing made a part of the proceeding in docket No. 33440. In this respect it should be pointed out that a hearing in the investigation instituted by docket No. 33440 is to be resumed on January 23, 1962, in Washington, D.C., while the recommended hearing in the Greeley accident will not be held until February 8, 1962, that being the earliest available date for the Commission.

Regarding the holding of future hearings in California in docket No. 33440 I wish to advise that while this matter was discussed at a prehearing conference and at past hearings in that docket no definite conclusions have been reached in this respect; although some of the parties to the proceeding expressed a desire to have continued hearings in California. This question will be opened for discussion at the January 23 hearing and undoubtedly a definite answer will be forthcoming at that time or shortly thereafter.

If I can be of any further assistance, do not hesitate to call on me.

Sincerely,

RUFERT L. MURPHY,
Chairman.

Mr. CARROLL. Mr. President, I was informed on Wednesday that this hearing will now definitely take place on February 8, at 10 a.m. in the Greeley City Hall. I am confident that hearing will be of great value to the Commission.

As an example, Mr. President, of the great concern felt by the people of my State and of their desire to see that shortcomings are eliminated from present safety standards, I ask unanimous consent to introduce into the RECORD at this point, three editorials from Colorado papers, from the Denver Post, the Rocky Mountain News, and Arapahoe Herald.

There being no objection, the editorials were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Denver Post, Dec. 17, 1961]

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY CAN BE IMPROVED

A manslaughter charge has been filed against Duane Harms, 23, driver of the Greeley school bus which was struck by a train, killing 20.

This is the obvious thing to do. Harms was the person whose actions appear to be most directly responsible for what happened.

But we say this, also: Harms was not alone.

He was not alone because there were plenty of other people—and plenty of public jobholders—who had a hand on that steering wheel almost as firmly as did Harms, if only symbolically.

It is easy to blame people and conditions in retrospect. And yet there are a few observations about the unsafe condition of that crossing that invite the suggestion that somebody's safety standards were out of joint.

The road crosses the tracks at an extreme diagonal. Looking to the right, as Harms did, obviously was difficult. He told authorities that he looked in the rear view mirror as part of his check of track conditions.

With testimony indicating that Harms possibly did not come to a complete stop, this is no excuse. And yet the conclusion is inevitable that this angle crossing may have added to the dangerous condition which exploded at 8:01 a.m. Thursday.

In correcting this situation and others like it, wherever they exist, Coloradans ought to ask these questions:

Should not school officials be required by law to report any unsafe bus route conditions to the county commissioners? One former school official contacted said he, as a superintendent, made annual studies of road safety. He says he received good cooperation from the commissioners in correcting bad conditions, including unsafe crossings.

One Weld County commissioner told The Denver Post all he remembers discussing with school officials last fall was the district's complaints about "rough roads and the need for gravel."

And are all county commissioners, themselves, sufficiently awake to the problem?

What, also, about the Colorado Public Utilities Commission? Its authority seems fairly broad in regulation of a utility as the operation of that utility affects public safety.

Actually, the PUC has ordered some flasher signals installed north of Denver.

Apparently more are needed, although the cost of installing them at all crossings (at \$20,000 per mainline flasher) would be prohibitive.

Straightening out diagonal intersections might also be worth investigating. The State highway department, for example, discourages angle crossings on State highways.

One possibility seems to have merit: requiring flashers at crossings where two critical factors are involved; school bus routes and high-speed trains.

This would cut down the area of expense considerably. Not many rail lines are really high-speed affairs, and not all the crossings involve school buses.

There are many things that need to be done. Many agencies need to get together and find out how such tragedies can be averted.

The atmosphere should not be—and we know it will not be—to fix blame. It will be correction. And we suspect that Duane Harms, himself, would go happily to jail if he could feel assured that the public was taking a hand to try to make sure nothing like this happens again.

[From the Rocky Mountain News, Dec. 17, 1961]

TO PREVENT ANOTHER TRAGEDY

The tragic school bus accident near Greeley last week has focused attention on another frightening statistic.

In the first 10 months of 1961—January through October—there were 63 accidents involving school buses in Colorado. And on just 1 day last week, the State patrol recorded three school bus accidents in the Denver area, all fortunately without injuries.

It is true that in these accidents on the record through October, there were only 21 injuries and one fatality.

But that is a near thing. It would have been so easy—just a few seconds either way for the bus or for the train—to have missed the shocking tragedy which claimed 20 lives.

As long as there can be near misses, the danger of such tragedies exists. So long as these are possible, the boys and girls on their way to and from classes are not completely safe.

It would be difficult to put too much stress on the need for full and complete training for all drivers of school buses. What may be adequate for other drivers, including those holding chauffeur licenses, can still be inadequate for the drivers in whose care the lives of children are placed.

Driving a school bus is a tremendous responsibility. Not only must the driver handle the vehicle safely, but he must watch over and control his young charges and, at the same time, be on the lookout for outside hazards. This is certainly expecting a great deal of any individual.

That means the utmost care must be taken in selecting drivers. And they must be given the most complete instruction—including full training in all aspects of safety.

Even that, however, will not always be adequate.

It seems to us worth the trouble—and expense—to make certain that school buses cross railroad tracks only where they have protection, mechanical or human.

A full stop at crossings is a minimum. Even a stop with the driver walking out in front of the bus for an unobstructed view of the tracks is not fully protective.

In most cases there certainly should be flashing lights or even mechanical arms to protect crossings which are being used by children and by buses.

Most city schools organize safety patrols—utilizing children themselves—to help protect the boys and girls at street crossings.

Perhaps some form of this safety patrol idea can be devised to add safety at otherwise unprotected rail crossings.

It is no use blaming the driver, or anyone else, for the tragedy at Greeley. Rather let us look to the shortcomings in the present methods and precautions and see that this tragedy is not likely to be repeated ever again.

[From the Arapahoe Herald, Dec. 19, 1961]

TWENTY PUPILS DIE

After a tragedy like the one at La Salle, Colo., last week, everyone starts asking what can be done to prevent railroad crossing deaths.

Several suggestions have been made.

Mature bus drivers should be hired when possible. Men and women in their thirties or forties have developed a sense of caution and they still have good reflexes.

The rule about stopping at crossings is good, and it is generally observed. What is not strictly followed is the requirement to open a door on the bus so that the driver may hear a train's whistle. We have recently observed three different Greyhound bus-drivers, and all consistently opened the door after the bus was a full yard on the tracks.

Motorists in private cars should turn off the radio and open the window before crossing the rails. A woman called us this week and complained that the bell at the Main Street crossing sometimes doesn't ring even though the red lights flash. She admitted that she never rolled down a window to let the sound in.

The most dangerous type of crossing is the diagonal one, such as at La Salle or at the South Prince Street tracks in Littleton. Motorists see trains better if they approach at a 90° angle.

Some crossings are more dangerous than others. In 90 years, no one in a vehicle has been killed at Main Street despite the traffic volume. But on West Tufts Avenue, the death toll has been high. Since 1948, 12 persons have died there. Eastbound traffic cannot readily see northbound trains owing to a building. One newcomer recently had a train zip behind him just as he cleared the Tufts Avenue tracks. He sold his nearby house the next week.

Grade separations, like that at Hampden Avenue, are the ideal answer. But they cannot be built on all roads. Even automatic lights have been too expensive thus far. But some day the armament race will slow down and the Government will need to look around for peacetime projects. It can spend a few billion on underpasses, interchanges, and warning signals in order to provide jobs for defense workers.

Meanwhile the average citizen must realize that he has a serious responsibility for looking after the safety of his own family.

Mr. CARROLL. Lastly, Mr. President, I would say a word about the driver of this tragic schoolbus. Twenty-three-year-old Duane Harms almost miraculously escaped serious injury. He is now charged with involuntary manslaughter.

Young Mr. Harms has written me a letter—a letter which I feel all Senators will want to read. This letter speaks for itself. It speaks of the urgency of insuring that such an accident shall not happen again. Mr. Harms rightly says:

This tragedy will never be forgotten, but I feel something should be done.

I ask unanimous consent that this letter be made a part of the Record at this point:

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

GREELEY, COLO., December 29, 1961.

Senator JOHN A. CARROLL,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR SENATOR CARROLL: As you recall on December 14, 1961, I was the driver of the schoolbus at Greeley, Colo., where 20 children lost their lives. This tragedy will never be forgotten, but I feel something should be done.

I have received over 100 letters from all parts of the U.S.A. and the general opinion is: there are hazards on every bus route and especially at railroad crossings, which have been ignored. Surely something can be done and I am asking you to support or introduce some law that might correct such a situation. No one knows but the driver the responsibility that is involved in handling a bus load of children when windows are frosted. We cannot erase the tragedy, but we can certainly profit by this so that a tragedy like this may never happen again.

I will appreciate anything that can be done and I will be glad to help in any way I can.

Thanking you for the above favor I remain,

Sincerely yours,

DUANE HARMS,
JUDY HARMS.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, as everyone familiar with Federal elections knows, many qualified Americans are systematically denied the right to vote—a century after the enactment of the 15th amendment.

Those responsible for this unconstitutional practice employ various means for denying the vote to men and women whose color, race, or origins they consider objectionable. Intimidation is one means; and in an attempt to protect Americans from such intimidation, whether physical or economic, the Congress enacted the civil rights laws of 1957 and 1960.

Another means by which the vote is unlawfully denied to qualified persons is the so-called literacy test. In many localities, these tests—often fair and nondiscriminatory on the surface—are used to prevent certain of our citizens from voting. The President of the United States, in his state of the Union address, spoke of the "insidious" use of these tests—and insidious it is. It saps at the strength of our democracy, and cannot be defended by anyone concerned with the fundamental rights of all Americans.

I do not think the requirement of literacy for voter qualification should be abandoned altogether. It is vitally important that those who select the men and women responsible for the operation of the Government be able to understand the questions on which they make their decisions.

But what must be prevented is the unfair and discriminatory use of these tests which results, not in determining whether a person can read, but in perpetuating the denial of the right to vote solely on the grounds of race, color, or national origin.

Therefore, I am, today, introducing a bill to prohibit the arbitrary use of literacy tests to deny the right to vote to citizens of the United States, including the natural born, Spanish-speaking cit-

izens both of the United States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

The bill does not attempt to eliminate literacy as a proper and reasonable qualification for voting. It prohibits arbitrary or unreasonable tests which do not simply test literacy, but instead contain vague and indefinite standards. Our experience is that such tests can be and have frequently been used to deprive citizens of their right to vote without distinction because of race or color.

The bill would require States which use literacy tests to use an objective test. The test is whether a citizen has completed six grades of an accredited school in any State, the District of Columbia, or Puerto Rico. This is a recognized standard of literacy which has long been used in the maintenance of our national statistics.

The bill is limited to the imposition by the States of qualifications to vote in Federal elections. This is clearly a matter of national and congressional concern, and not solely of interest to the various States.

The purpose of the bill has had the endorsement and support of the Republican as well as the Democratic Party, and the unanimous recommendation of the Civil Rights Commission.

The need for congressional action in this field is apparent from the finding incorporated in the bill that literacy tests have in fact been misused to deprive citizens of this country of their right to vote because of their race. There can be no disagreement that it is proper and appropriate for Congress to take all necessary action to eliminate such practices in the United States.

If enacted, the bill would also prevent the denial of the right to vote to Spanish-speaking citizens who may be literate, well-educated and informed, but who are not permitted in some areas to participate in the democratic processes of the country because they were born and educated in a part of the United States and its related territories where Spanish is the historic and chosen language of the people. The vast majority of these Spanish-speaking citizens of the United States have available to them all the information necessary for an informed citizen in Spanish-language radio and press. There is no reason why they cannot vote intelligently on issues and candidates. The legislation is necessary to make it possible for them to do so.

I express the hope that the committee to which the measure is referred will hold hearings shortly so that the Attorney General and others interested in the question can be heard, and so that witnesses both for and against the measure can be given the consideration which the proposal calls for. In my opinion it is only fair that a proposal of this kind receive quick and serious consideration in the committee which will have jurisdiction over it.

Mr. President, I send to the desk the bill to which I have referred in my remarks.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection the bill will be received.

The bill (S. 2750) to protect the right to vote in Federal elections free from

The atmosphere should not be—and we know it will not be—to fix blame. It will be correction. And we suspect that Duane Harms, himself, would go happily to jail if he could feel assured that the public was taking a hand to try to make sure nothing like this happens again.

[From the Rocky Mountain News, Dec. 17, 1961]

TO PREVENT ANOTHER TRAGEDY

The tragic school bus accident near Greeley last week has focused attention on another frightening statistic.

In the first 10 months of 1961—January through October—there were 63 accidents involving school buses in Colorado. And on just 1 day last week, the State patrol recorded three school bus accidents in the Denver area, all fortunately without injuries.

It is true that in these accidents on the record through October, there were only 21 injuries and one fatality.

But that is a near thing. It would have been so easy—just a few seconds either way for the bus or for the train—to have missed the shocking tragedy which claimed 20 lives.

As long as there can be near misses, the danger of such tragedies exists. So long as these are possible, the boys and girls on their way to and from classes are not completely safe.

It would be difficult to put too much stress on the need for full and complete training for all drivers of school buses. What may be adequate for other drivers, including those holding chauffeur licenses, can still be inadequate for the drivers in whose care the lives of children are placed.

Driving a school bus is a tremendous responsibility. Not only must the driver handle the vehicle safely, but he must watch over and control his young charges and, at the same time, be on the lookout for outside hazards. This is certainly expecting a great deal of any individual.

That means the utmost care must be taken in selecting drivers. And they must be given the most complete instruction—including full training in all aspects of safety.

Even that, however, will not always be adequate.

It seems to us worth the trouble—and expense—to make certain that school buses cross railroad tracks only where they have protection, mechanical or human.

A full stop at crossings is a minimum. Even a stop with the driver walking out in front of the bus for an unobstructed view of the tracks is not fully protective.

In most cases there certainly should be flashing lights or even mechanical arms to protect crossings which are being used by children and by buses.

Most city schools organize safety patrols—utilizing children themselves—to help protect the boys and girls at street crossings.

Perhaps some form of this safety patrol idea can be devised to add safety at otherwise unprotected rail crossings.

It is no use blaming the driver, or anyone else, for the tragedy at Greeley. Rather let us look to the shortcomings in the present methods and precautions and see that this tragedy is not likely to be repeated ever again.

[From the Arapahoe Herald, Dec. 19, 1961]
TWENTY PUPILS DIE

After a tragedy like the one at La Salle, Colo., last week, everyone starts asking what can be done to prevent railroad crossing deaths.

Several suggestions have been made.

Mature bus drivers should be hired when possible. Men and women in their thirties or forties have developed a sense of caution and they still have good reflexes.

The rule about stopping at crossings is good, and it is generally observed. What is not strictly followed is the requirement to open a door on the bus so that the driver may hear a train's whistle. We have recently observed three different Greyhound bus-drivers, and all consistently opened the door after the bus was a full yard on the tracks.

Some crossings are more dangerous than others. In 90 years, no one in a vehicle has been killed at Main Street despite the traffic volume. But on West Tufts Avenue, the death toll has been high. Since 1948, 12 persons have died there. Eastbound traffic cannot readily see northbound trains owing to a building. One newcomer recently had a train zip behind him just as he cleared the Tufts Avenue tracks. He sold his nearby house the next week.

Grade separations, like that at Hampden Avenue, are the ideal answer. But they cannot be built on all roads. Even automatic lights have been too expensive thus far. But some day the armament race will slow down and the Government will need to look around for peacetime projects. It can spend a few billion on underpasses, interchanges, and warning signals in order to provide jobs for defense workers.

Meanwhile the average citizen must realize that he has a serious responsibility for looking after the safety of his own family.

SENATOR CARROLL. Lastly, Mr. President, I would say a word about the driver of this tragic schoolbus. Twenty-three-year-old Duane Harms almost miraculously escaped serious injury. He is now charged with involuntary manslaughter.

Young Mr. Harms has written me a letter—a letter which I feel all Senators will want to read. This letter speaks for itself. It speaks of the urgency of insuring that such an accident shall not happen again. Mr. Harms rightly says:

This tragedy will never be forgotten, but I feel something should be done.

I ask unanimous consent that this letter be made a part of the RECORD at this point:

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

GREELEY, COLO., December 29, 1961.
Senator JOHN A. CARROLL,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR SENATOR CARROLL: As you recall on December 14, 1961, I was the driver of the schoolbus at Greeley, Colo., where 20 children lost their lives. This tragedy will never be forgotten, but I feel something should be done.

I have received over 100 letters from all parts of the U.S.A. and the general opinion is: there are hazards on every bus route and especially at railroad crossings, which have been ignored. Surely something can be done and I am asking you to support or introduce some law that might correct such a situation. No one knows but the driver the responsibility that is involved in handling a bus load of children when windows are frosted. We cannot erase the tragedy, but we can certainly profit by this so that a tragedy like this may never happen again.

I will appreciate anything that can be done and I will be glad to help in any way I can.

Thanking you for the above favor I remain,

Sincerely yours,

DUANE HARMS,
JUDY HARMS.