

## THE CROSSING Chapter 5

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Front page of the Greeley Tribune on Dec. 14, 1961,  
the afternoon after the accident.

# 20 Children Killed as Passenger Train Hits School Bus East of Evans

*The Greeley Daily Tribune*  
AND  
THE GREELEY REPUBLICAN

Written by Horace Greeley in 1871

VOLUME 54—NUMBER 59 GREELEY, COLORADO THURSDAY, DEC. 14, 1961 WEEKLY TRIBUNE ESTABLISHED 1870



**THIS WAS THE SCENE** at the train-school bus crash, which killed 20 school students east of Evans Thursday morning. Trucks in the background are parked on the road on which the

school bus was traveling when it went onto the tracks. Tribune photo by Jim Hitch.

## Parents Assemble At Courthouse To Give Identification

## Hospital Scene of Anguish But Efficiency After Crash

Weld County General Hospital on the emergency floor was one of a scene of suffering, anguish, of bedlam, with distraught parents and injured officials.

## 16 Others Injured as City of Denver Plows Into Greeley School Dist. Bus

Twenty school children were killed Thursday morning in a tragic school bus-train collision two miles east and a mile south of Evans.

The accident involving a Greeley School District (No. 6) bus,

was the worst in the Greeley area's history.

Bodies of the victims were taken to the old Armory on 9th Ave. Last time the Armory was used as a morgue was when the plane bombed by John Gilbert

Graham crashed in southwest Weld County.

Sixteen youngsters were rushed to Weld County General Hospital by ambulance and private automobiles. Seventeen doctors were

called into action to handle the emergencies at the hospital.

The bus carried 38 and the driver.

The school bus was carrying students to Delta School, east of Greeley, Arlington Elementary School, Meeker Junior High School and Greeley High School.

Law enforcement officers barred admittance to the hastily prepared morgue, where white sheets covered the 20 victims.

The accident occurred about 8:30 a.m. at an open, but diagonal crossing.

The school bus, driven by Duane Harms, rolled onto the track first and the westbound Union Pacific streamliner, City of Denver, No. 111, smashed into it at the rear.

### Bus Carried Over 100 Yards

The impact carried the huge 60-passenger bus down the tracks more than 60 yards. The hood, engine, wheels and parts of the passenger section were ripped to shreds.

The engineer was Herbert Sommers of Denver. The crash did little damage to the train.

Speed limit for trains in that area is 79 miles an hour. The train was reportedly preparing to slow down prior to arriving in La Salle.

Officers ordered the train moved several hundred yards west of the crash scene, where it was held (Continued on page 28)

## Many Parents Rush To Accident Scene

Hysterical, grief-stricken parents dotted the scene of Thursday morning's tragic school bus-train crash two miles east of Evans on the Union Pacific tracks.

Within minutes after the death-dealing collision, parents poured into the crash area from all directions.

### School Closed

Delta School was closed following the accident. Local authorities reported all off duty firemen and policemen had been called into service to and at the scene and at the morgue set up at the old Armory Building.

### Spectators Sob

Some spectators who did not have children on the bus stood near the bodies sobbing.

One woman kept crying, "Oh, my God, Oh, my God."

A doctor was rushed to the scene to administer first aid to the shock victims.

Ambulances came screaming down the road, one after another, loading up bodies and injured students.

### Cars Carry Some Injured

Many of the injured were rushed to Weld County General Hospital by private cars with lights on.

The Union Pacific City of Denver, 111, was pulled to a stop a few hundred yards west of the

reportedly went to the hospital to offer more blood.

Wreckers were dispatched to the scene to pick up the parts of the scattered school bus. Books and homework papers were scattered about the area.

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## Crash To Be Investigated

The District Attorney's office Thursday afternoon was reported to be launching an investigation into the train-school bus collision which claimed the lives of 20 school children early Thursday morning.

The District Court clerk's office told the Tribune Thursday afternoon that Deputy District Attorney Karl Ahlborn would be in charge of the investigation.

A spokesman said many of the persons to be questioned were already on hand at 1:10 p.m. Of

## List of Dead

Coroner Ross Adams said early Thursday afternoon 19 of the 20 dead had been identified as follows.

Pamela Heimbeck, 9, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Heimbeck, student at Delta school.

Sheryl Mitchell, about 6, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Mitchell, student at Delta school.

Kathy Heimbeck, 13, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Heimbeck, Rt. 4, Box 255.

Linda Alles, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Reuben Alles Rt. 4, Box 245.

Kathy Brantner, 9, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Brantner, Rt. 4, Box 265.

Calvin Craven, 9, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Craven of Rt. 4, Box 241.

Ellen Lou Craven, 8, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Craven of Rt. 4, Box 241.

Cindy Dorn, 11, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Herman Dorn, Rt. 4, Box 248.

Jimmy Vaughn Ford, 13, son of Mr. and Mrs. James Ford, Rt. 4, Box 262.

Steven Larson, 7, son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Larson, Rt. 4, Box 261.

Janet Paxton, 11, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Paxton, Rt. 4, Box 262.

Marilyn Paxton, 13, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James R. Paxton, Rt. 4, Box 262.

## Farmers Must Try Control, Official Says

The grim process of helping to identify victims of the bus-train disaster southeast of Evans was begun shortly after 11 a.m. Thursday in the district courtroom on the fourth floor of the Weld County Courthouse.

Parents of children aboard the ill-fated bus were called to the courthouse to give Weld County officials information on what their children were wearing or other items of identification.

#### Stenographers Take Information

The information taken by stenographers Betty Pryor, Barbara Adams and Susan Fahey was quickly shuttled to the old Armory by Greeley police.

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### Tragedy Attracts Nationwide Concern

The accident immediately brought national concern. Within an hour after the mishap the Tribune received calls from the New York Post, a Chicago radio station, the London Daily Express, Life Magazine and a Montreal, Canada, radio station, seeking details of the tragedy.

Denver area newsmen swarmed over the scene.

#### The Weather

The temperature at 2 p.m., Thursday was 26.

Local for 24 hours ending 3 a.m., Thursday: Public Service: High, 17; low, -6. Great Western: High, 18; low, -10. College weather: High, 14; low, -6.

**COLORADO**—Cloudy west, partly cloudy east tonight and Friday; scattered snows mountains and west with snow locally moderate in southwestern mountains; chance of scattered light snow or snow flurries northeast portion late tonight or Friday; locally warmer east portion tonight; low tonight zero to 10 below mountains, 50 to 15 above lower elevations; high Friday 20s west, 30 to 40 east.

**WYOMING**—Mostly cloudy over and west of Continental Divide with scattered light snows; partly cloudy east of the Divide with widely scattered light snow or snow flurries tonight and tomorrow; low tonight zero to 10 below mountains, zero to 10 above at lower elevations; high Friday mostly 20 to 30.

#### Bermuda Golf Set

**TUCKER'S TOWN, Bermuda** (AP)—The second annual Castle Harbour invitation golf tournament has been set for Jan. 30-Feb. 3. Players from the United States, Canada and Bermuda will compete with no handicap.

The Greeley Fire Department set up emergency equipment in the lobby of the Courthouse, while three members of American Red Cross offered assistance to the grief-stricken but hopeful parents.

#### Red Cross Gives Aid

Chairman of the Red Cross disaster committee is Mrs. Guy Benson, who lives at the Ennes Dairy, last stop on the route of the bus.

Mrs. Benson rushed to the old armory building to offer help, but was asked to go to the Courthouse. She, Marie Geisler and Louise Taylor were on duty at the Courthouse throughout the day.

#### Kiwanis Club Provides Lunch

The Kiwanis Club provided lunch for the parents at the Community Building, while a baby-sitting service was also set up at the Community Building.

O. D. Drake of the Delta district offered help in taking care of livestock Thursday evening.

Several Greeley ministers went to the courthouse to offer their help.

## Greeley School Dist. Extends Sympathy

"The entire Greeley community is stunned by the tragic school bus accident early this morning," Dr. Leslie Grimes, School District 6 Superintendent said Thursday afternoon.

"The sympathy of the members of the board of education, administration and teachers, as well as all citizens of the school district is extended to every family in the Auburn community."

"The total extent of the tragedy is not now known. Present information indicates that there are

### Light Snow Falls In South Colo.

**DENVER (AP)**—Light snow fell Thurs. in southwestern Colorado and highway officials advised motorists to use chains in traveling over mountain passes. Four inches of new snow fell at Wolf Creek Pass.

Snow flurries in some parts of the state were predicted for tonight.

Alamosa was the coldest point in Colorado today with 20 below zero, the U.S. Weather Bureau reported these conditions on mountain passes:

Loveland and Berthoud — clear, road snowpacked, sanded.

Wolf Creek — light snow, road snowpacked.

La Veta — overcast, snowpacked in spots, sanded.

Thursday morning as 16 youngsters injured in the train-school bus crash were brought there by ambulances and private cars.

#### 3 Appear To Be Critical

Three of the children appeared to be in critical condition, George Stout, assistant administrator of the hospital, reported at 11:30 a.m. Stout was unable to identify the three.

The youngsters suffered a wide variety of injuries, including concussions, fractures, contusions and abrasions. Thirteen had been admitted at the hospital, three had been treated and released.

#### Team of 30 Put on Cases

The children on their arrival at the hospital were rushed to the emergency room, where a team of about 30 doctors, nurses and assistants were on hand. After emergency treatment, the youngsters were taken to surgery, x-ray and other departments as their case required.

While the doctors and nurses performed their work with professional calm, the general scene

personnel scurrying about bringing up beds and equipment and news and radio people seeking information.

#### Switchboard Tied Up

So many telephone calls were received at the hospital, the switchboard frequently was completely tied up and it was impossible to call out.

Stout said the hospital was alerted about 8:30 a.m. that the accident had occurred and that the first injured children arrived about 8:40 a.m.

All the hospital's medical staff and nurses who were not already on duty were called and came in immediately. At one time about 9:15 a.m., 17 doctors were assisting in caring for the children, Henry Hill, administrator of the hospital, reported.

All the injured youngsters had been given emergency treatment within an hour and fifteen minutes after the first ones were brought in.

### Injury List

Children injured in the train-school bus accident and admitted at Weld County General Hospital were:

Nancy Alles, 11, father Herman Alles, Rt. 4, Greeley.

Cheryl Ann Brown, 13, father Morris Brown, Rt. 4.

Glen Ford, 11, parents James and Loretta Ford, Rt. 4.

Bruce Ford, 8, parents James and Loretta Ford.

Joy Freeman, 10, father Young G. Freeman, Rt. 4.

Jerry Hembry, 16, guardian Eldon Yetter, Rt. 4.

Luis Lozano, 10, father Simon Lozano, Rt. 4.

Alice Larson, 11, parents Arthur and Juanita Larson, Rt. 4.

William John Munson, 9, parents Raymond and Jean Munson, La Salle.

Vicki Viola Munson, 6, parents Raymond and Jean Munson.

Alan Dale Stromberger, 10, father Raymond Stromberger, Rt. 4.

Debra Stromberger, 7, father Raymond Stromberger.

Jacqueline White, 14, parents Don O. and Julia White, Rt. 1, La Salle.

Treated at the hospital and released were:

Ronald Geisick, father Manuel Geisick.

Gary Munson, parents Raymond and Jean Munson, La Salle.

Smith Freeman, 7, father Young G. Freeman, Rt. 4.

Most of the children hospitalized were reported as doing fairly well about 1 p.m.

It pulled out about 9:30 p.m. Howard Lowrey, driver of the school bus last year, was instrumental in helping identify the victims.

#### Blood Offered

Hospital officials reported a sufficient supply of blood and donors

### Christmas Card Found at Wreckage

A Christmas card lay near scattered wreckage where 20 children perished in a train-bus crash Thursday.

It read: "May your Christmas be merry," and was signed, "Henry, Irene and Fran."



**A GRIEF-STRICKEN MOTHER** and another woman lift a blanket to see if the body is that of a loved one. School papers and notebooks are scattered about the area. Several bodies were

the investigation got underway.

The investigation was scheduled to take place on the third floor of the Weld County Courthouse.

Inspectors from the Interstate Commerce Commission arrived in Greeley shortly afternoon on instructions from Washington, D.C.

The inspectors had taken the train crew off at Denver and returned them to Greeley.

Heading the investigation is Louis Straight, inspector from the Denver ICC office.

Ross Adamson, coroner, said he had not definitely decided whether or when an inquest would be held.

Box 242 B. Linda Walso, 13, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Allen Walso, Rt. 1, Box 119, La Salle.

Elaine White, 11, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Don O. White, Rt. 1, Box 120 La Salle.

Mary Lozano, 11, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Simon Rangel, Rt. 4, Box 258.

Gerald Baxter, 10, son of Mr. and Mrs. Vern R. Baxter Jr., Rt. 4, Box 267.

Melody Freeman, 8, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Young Freeman, Rt. 4, Box 233.

Mark Brantner, 6, son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Brantner, Rt. 4, Box 265.

**By JIM HITCH**  
"Farmers almost certainly are to be punished for the good job they do."

Dr. James Ralph, assistant secretary of agriculture, sounded this warning to 300 persons attending the annual Weld County Farmers Union farmer-businessmen banquet in Greeley Wednesday night.

George Carlson led the audience in community singing at the beginning of the evening. Accompanist was David Glackin.

The Rev. A. Eggerling of the Eaton Lutheran Church delivered the invocation.

Organ music was provided by Vickie Schwartz. An accordion solo was presented by Eddie Suppes.

Ralph was referring to prospects which indicate fewer farmers will be needed to produce the requirements of this nation in years to come.

"It is our job to minimize this punishment as much as possible," Ralph told the audience.

Outlining the plight faced by the American farmer Ralph reported, "A one per cent surplus of farm produce reduces a farmer's net income from eight to 15 per cent."

#### Believes in the Family Farm

He continued, "We think Farmers Union is a great organization because you have traditionally (Continued on Page 7)

## Grandma Moses, Famous Artist, Dies Wednesday

**HOOSICK FALLS, N.Y. (AP)**—Grandma Moses, who took up painting in her 70s and became one of the nation's best known artists, died Wednesday at the age of 101.

The witty, little artist who achieved worldwide fame late in life had been confined to a nursing home, the Hoosick Falls Health Center, since July.

#### 'Bright as a Button'

Despite her confinement and a doctor's orders against painting, she remained "bright as a button" most of the time, friends reported.

Her physician, Dr. Clayton Shaw, said Grandma died after being in an oxygen tent at the hospital most of the day.

Her death was peaceful, he said, but she had no last words because she had not been conscious during the day.

"She just passed away."

Grandma, whose full name was Mrs. Anna Mary Robertson Moses, became known to millions through her primitive paintings of rural life in upstate New York, which were reproduced on Christmas cards.

taken from the demolished bus and covered with blankets until ambulances could take them to a morgue at the old Armory on 8th Ave. Tribune photo by Jim Hitch.