

School Bus Plunges Into Icy Waters, Becomes Tomb for Driver and Young Charges

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FIRST CREEK, Wash., Nov. 27.—A little group of parents huddled in common misery on the shores of beautiful Lake Chelan today as divers resumed searching for a school bus which carried 15 children and its driver to death in the deep, cold waters.

The tragedy, which occurred yesterday during a snowstorm when the vehicle struck a boulder on the cliff-top country road and plunged into the lake, left four of the families childless.

Two children were lost in each of six families. Only five children were left alive in the entire, sprawling 25-mile creek rural area.

Despite the stunning accident, one of the worst in the history of Washington state, the Chelan schools continued classes.

Awaiting in grim silence the recovery of their children's bodies, a sharper grief assailed the bereaved couples. Authorities said that the ill-fated bus and its lifeless load might have sunk so deep into the almost bottomless lake that it might never be found.

Divers at Work
Four divers from Seattle and Grand Coulee dam were forced last night to abandon their search until today because temperatures dropped into the low 20's, while high winds and lack of sufficient emergency lighting hampered their work.

Boatmen and divers recovered one body, however. It was that of 15-year-old Henry Davis.

Ronnie Ayres, 13, drowned as he struggled toward shore in the frigid water. The other 14 victims, including Jack Randall, 26, the bus driver, were believed still trapped in the bus.

There were six survivors, Washington state highway police said. Had the schoolbound bus completed its circuit, it would have been carrying up to 80. Loss of life was lowered because many parents were driving their children to schools through the snowstorm.

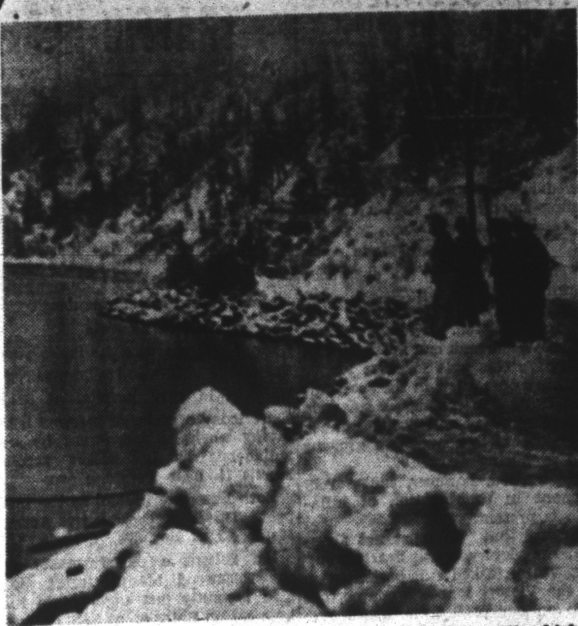
Mrs. Glenna Brown Heroine
The victims were students in the high school, junior high school and grade schools of nearby Chelan, Wash.

Heroine of the accident was Mrs. Glenna Brown, 37-year-old farm wife, who boarded the bus to keep a dentist appointment in Chelan. She saved several of the children by pushing them through broken windows as the bus rolled over in the lake and sank after floating momentarily.

"I can still hear the helpless cries and screaming of those children," Mrs. Brown said as she lay prostrate from her experience.

Donnie Mack, 13, said that he "nearly fainted" when the bus catapulted down the 15-foot cliff into the water.

"But the cold water brought me to and I headed for the first broken window," he said. "I got out before the water started coming in



Above photo shows where a school bus plunged from the highway into Lake Chelan, Wash., drowning 15 children and the driver.



A diver from Coulee Dam prepares to descend into the icy deep waters of Lake Chelan in an effort to locate the bus and the bodies.

fast, but when I saw my pal, Ronnie, down, I wished I was back in there. He can't swim, you know, and he headed out into the lake instead of into shore."

Divers, operating from a lake barge floated over the spot where the big bus disappeared, thought

once that they had located the sunken vehicle at the 65-foot level. But paint and broken glass on a ledge at the 144-foot level led them to believe the bus had dropped even deeper.

The steep sides of the lonely, rock-lined lake are slippery and un-

been making an effort to have the lakeside road improved where it passed the dangerous cliffs. There was no guardrail where the bus plunged into the lake.

All windows on one side of the bus apparently were smashed as it struck rock in rolling down the steep bank.

Randall, survivors said, frantically tried to break other windows to help his small charges escape as the vehicle filled with water and sank, almost immediately.

Several of the surviving children used emergency forest service telephones near the scene to summon aid. Within a few hours, the roads in the area were so jammed with cars of parents and relatives of the victims that state patrolmen and sheriff's deputies had to restore order.

Chelan, a community of 1700, has no hospital. The survivors were rushed to nearby homes.

Ted Brown, husband of the heroic woman passenger, said he and several other children were lost had

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