

THE CROSSING

In their words: The response from readers

The Crossing generated hundreds of e-mails and more than 700 postings on RockyTalk Live’s reader forum. What follows are a sampling of those reader reactions, published between Jan. 23, 2007, and March 14, 2007.

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My first question was, “Why?” Why revisit that morning more than 45 years ago? Was a piece of your heart on that bus that day?   
  
Whatever the reason, you have me hooked.   
  
You certainly have the eloquence and grace with which to retell the story with the dignity that it deserves. A tragic picture of how hundreds of lives can change in a flash. Thank you.

– Donna

This is an amazing story. The fact that 20 children from a rural community were killed in seconds on one morning makes this so sad. A whole community was leveled. My father was the principal at the school that these kids were being driven to. He had to ID many of the kids from their remains when the parents were unable to handle the task. He hasn't spoken much of this for 45 years. It impacts all who were touched by the tragedy - to this day.

– Ken

I have read today's chapter with compelling interest to try to understand why tragedies like these happen … and I just want to say with the sincerest of compassion, that my heart goes out to all those affected that day nearly nine months to the day before I was born in September 1962, to the families, townspeople, adults responsible on both sides of the tragedy, and most of all, to those innocent little schoolchildren whose only care in the world on that cold morning was to make it to school and stay warm. I have a good friend whose best friend was taken that morning; she was only eight years old at the time and still suffers survivors' remorse to this day. Let this be a reminder to each of us that no one knows whether or not this day will be our last; life is a precious gift that is best never taken for granted but entrusted daily to the Creator.

X – Dee

Excellent story and series. This is now an obscure piece of Colorado history that has left its mark on the community, state and nation. I'm sincerely pleased to see your tasteful and relevant series on this tragedy.   
  
I moved to east Greeley from the western slope many years after the accident. In an effort to learn about the area I would talk to the neighbors about the history of the rural neighborhood. This accident was always one of the first items they spoke of. One neighbor was a survivor of the accident. Another had children waiting for the very bus that was hit. Someone else had a sibling killed in the accident. Without a doubt it left an indelible mark on the community.   
  
Thank you

X – Roy Nichols

Judging from the posts that are already surfacing from people who were affected by this tragedy, this series is justified in its purpose, to examine the lifelong affects such an event can create. There are certain tragedies that have wounded our nation in years since and their coverage is hardly criticized or shrugged off, nor will it be 47 years from now. We don't need to revisit this story to gawk, to exploit, to hurt or to teach. We need to remember, to memorialize the victims, alive and dead. I believe that these writers are respecting history, affecting our lives and fulfilling the duty that all writing aspires to. Hard work and care has gone into this project and I believe it will shine through in the chapters to come. You can get your news anywhere, but there are few publications that will offer you such a perspective as this one.   
  
Those who think they already know what to expect, that they would rather read something else, or that they could get this from some other Denver publication should keep reading. They may be wrong.   
  
ANOTHER ANONYMOUS on Jan. 24, 5:12 p.m.   
  
i think it's really cool that you guys are doing this. my dad lost two sisters in this accident and one survived. i am seventeen years old and i think this is a good way to learn about something that was impactful on my dads life   
  
K on Jan. 25, 3:30 p.m.   
  
This is a powerful story that needs to be told as a reminder to each of us how incredibly important our friends and family are. Jobs are not. Clothes are not. What we drive or what we wear is not. What we weigh or how we wear our hair just does not matter. This story is a wonderful and tragic reminder of what we need to value. We all need to love our families. Love our friends. Do our jobs to live our lives, but not to become our lives.   
  
Thank you to the Rocky Mountain News and the Greeley Tribune for this truly painful and important story. May we never forget how precious and fragile life is. May God bless and keep every person involved in this horrific accident and its aftermath.   
  
GINGER on Jan. 27, 12:40 a.m.   
  
Thank you, Mr. Vaughan, for researching and writing this powerful story, and thank you, Rocky Mountain News, for printing it.   
  
I was a seventh grader in a small Christian school in Denver when the accident took place. I am the same age as some of the children involved. I do not remember hearing about the crash at the time. I am very moved by getting to read about it now. I hope it will be made available in book form. It's definitely something I want to keep. Even this early in the story, I am amazed by the courage of those who experienced this terrible tragedy.   
  
To those who are reading who are the survivors, whether you were on the bus or are relatives or friends of those who were, may God be very close to you. I know that this sort of pain never goes away.   
  
SUZANNE WOLFRAM on Jan. 27, 2:25 p.m. 

My family never blamed anyone for this accident. My parents always said it was Gods will and we are not to question God . Accidents are just that . If it is your time to go then God will take you. My grandma always told me God needed more angels because it was Christmas . And the kids who died where all angels now.   
  
All my Mom asks is that you learn from our pain and not let it happen again.   
  
MARY BRANTNER Jan. 26, 8:51 p.m.   
  
As one of the surviving victims of this tragedy I must compliment Kevin on his outstanding writing, and thoughtful presentation of this story. When Kevin first contacted me last fall, I wasn't sure I wanted to open old wounds, but felt that it was a story worth telling.   
  
Mary, my heart goes out to YOU. My first thoughts were of your Mother and Father, and the hardships they have endured. I know how hard this must be on your mom, and I know that she is thankful that you are there for her. That morning, your dad put me in his car, and I rode along as those seriously injured were rushed to the hospital. I will always remember that drive, and the courage of your dad that morning.   
  
You never really had a chance to know Mark, Kathy and John. All you know of them lies in old photographs, and the memories of those around you.   
  
Thank you, Mary, for standing strong and supporting this series.   
  
RANDY GEISICK Jan. 28, 9:28 p.m.

3The Crossing inspires, as its impact reverberates among Rocky readers.   
  
Thank you for this series. I lived in Weld County at the time of the accident, and I don't think there were many people there, at that time, who didn't know at least one of the families involved. To me this series is about what happened, and how the families coped and how they are living today, as well as talking about the childen and making them "real"and not just statistics. All these years later, I don't think it really matters whose fault it was, if indeed it was anyone's. There are many things, that if they had been different, the event might not have happened. The crossing could have been better designed so that oncoming trains could be seen better, for instance. To me, trying to place blame all these years later is not the purpose of this series.   
  
M. BENSON   
  
I was in 7th grade in East Denver at the time and remember this tragic event. This was the second disaster to occur in the area in 1961, the other being the United Airlines DC-8 crash at Stapleton in July, with a similiar loss of life. This is a great series,it illustrates how fragile and brief life can be. These children and their story deserve to be remembered.   
  
KEVIN   
  
You have captured the hearts on this one! How could anyone not take this story as a love story. My heart goes out to all those who were affected by this tragedy, then and now. My brother died of cancer almost 60 years ago. He was 17. My mother said something to me that I think is appropriate to these families. "As long as you talk about him and carry him in your heart, he is never truly gone." These children will live on. Thank you for a story that has captured Colorado.   
  
CONNIE   
  
For those that think this story is about a traffic accident, open your eyes! It is about how people survive the worst possible event imaginable, losing a child, or in the case of many of these families, more than one child. It is about how people heal in their own way and move on but never forgetting. It is about making people think how short life is and how a chain of events can change life forever. It is a glimpse into 20 souls who never got to experience what many of us take for granted. If more stories like this are written maybe there is hope.   
  
ROBERT GIFT