

Oakland students return home

By HOLLY D. REMY

Thirty-one bruised and tired Oakland University students returned to Michigan Monday, 31 hours after their chartered bus skidded on an icy highway and tipped over near Omaha.

Ten other students and two friends remained overnight Sunday in two eastern Nebraska hospitals. Two of the young persons were released Monday and another two Tuesday.

The group of 45 young persons, 43 of whom are members of OU's Ski Club and all of whom are from southeastern Michigan, were returning Sunday from a 10-day Colorado ski trip when their chartered Continental Trailways bus overturned on Interstate 80, about 10 miles west of Omaha.

Nebraska State Patrol Trooper Gordon Anville said the highway was ice-covered from freezing rain and that heavy fog had cut visibility to half a block.

Despite their injuries and lack of sleep, the skiers were happy to make it back to Michigan. They arrived at Detroit Metropolitan Airport at 2 p.m. after hopping from plane to plane. Their flight from Omaha connected with one in Minneapolis that took them to Chicago.

THE PLANE from Chicago was unable to land in Detroit because of dense fog, so it went to Kennedy International Airport in New York. The group's anticipated Detroit-bound flight never arrived at Kennedy, however. So the group traveled by bus to Newark Airport in New Jersey and caught a plane to Detroit. Continental Trailways paid for the group's airfare and treated the students to dinner Sunday night.

"We were getting pretty ticked off," said Tom Balames of Ulica. The sophomore ski club president added, "It feels good to be home. When the plane landed, we all just started screaming and clapping."

Parker Moore, OU director of residence halls and ski club advisor, said

some of the students hadn't slept since the accident.

"Most of them looked pretty good," Moore said. "Some had black eyes and a few were wearing neck braces, though. One student's leg started to hurt about 24 hours after the accident, and he came home in a wheelchair."

The student, Patrick Learnhain of Ulica, had a neck injury.

MOORE SAID he contacted parents of students on the trip after the accident. He said most parents talked to their children during the stopover at Kennedy airport.

No OU officials were on the trip. Although the ski club has office space on campus, the club receives no school funds and operates independently.

The trip was marked by beautiful weather and no injuries, said Moore. The group had made its own trip arrangements. Balames said he plans to talk to a lawyer this week about insurance for the injured students.

The accident occurred about 6:45 a.m. Sunday. Continental Trailways bus driver Nasir Hasan told investigating officers he was east-bound on I-80 in heavy fog when he saw a semi-trailer truck stopped ahead. He said the bus slid as he tried to dodge the truck.

The bus crossed the highway median and tipped over on the driver's side, Trooper Anville said.

Luggage was strewn across the road's snowy north shoulder, he added.

"Everyone acted calmly," Balames said. "They realized there was a problem. They said, 'Hey, we've got a bad situation here,' and so calmly got out of the bus."

"A friend and I helped the others who couldn't move."

ANVILLE SAID there were about a dozen other accidents on the same stretch of I-80 between 6-8 a.m. Sunday. Balames said he saw several cars in the highway median as he was taken to Midland's Community Hospi-

tal in Papillion, Neb., north of the accident scene.

Paramedics from five local volunteer rescue squads took 25 group members to area hospitals. A second Continental Trailways bus took the other 20 students to Midland's.

Twenty-nine were taken to Midland's, treated and released. Three others were treated and released at Bergan Mercy Hospital in Omaha; one was treated and released at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Lincoln, Neb.

Released from Midland's Monday were Debra Vanopdenbosch of Warren and David Drouillard of Union Lake. Drouillard is not an OU student.

Released from Midland's Tuesday were Jonathan Winsten of Southfield and Taschonal Darnell of St. Clair Shores.

Plans were completed Tuesday to

move Kathy Watson of Clarkston from St. Elizabeth's to Midland's so she could be with the rest of the hospitalized group. She suffered a fractured pelvis.

CHERYL EVANS of Sterling Heights and Mary Bourne of Birmingham were in intensive care Monday and were joined by their families. Each was in satisfactory condition.

Also in satisfactory condition Tuesday in Midland's were Roger Bick (lower back injury) of Birmingham, John Harris (neck injury and cuts) of New Baltimore, Charles Holzman (neck, back and shoulder injuries) of Southfield and Terri Slepka (neck, back and arm injuries) of Orchard Lake. A friend of the group, David Czerwinski of Auburn, also was in satisfactory condition with back and rib injuries.

Homeowners halt sidewalk issue

Farlington's attempt to construct a sidewalk on the south side of Grand River between Gill and Halstead were halted, recently, when members of the Chatham Hills homeowners association voted against financing their part of the project.

Safety factors and practicality were cited as the main reasons residents decided against the sidewalk, which would have run along the rear property line of some of the homes in the subdivision, according to Joseph Santoni, president of the homeowners association.

Usually, Farlington City Council avoids assessing residents for sidewalk improvements along the rear property line, according to City Mgr. Robert Deadman.

The city council tabled the project when Chatham Hills residents decided

against contributing \$8,000 toward the \$46,000 project.

Residents consider the sidewalks unnecessary, according to Santoni. "Everyone drives today," he said.

"THE SIDEWALK wouldn't be utilized," he said.

Other objections to the sidewalk centered around the problems of winter maintenance.

"Some felt they didn't want to be liable for removing the snow from the sidewalks," he said.

Because the sidewalk would be parallel to Grand River, some residents considered it unsafe.

"Cars go down the road at 50-55 miles an hour," Santoni said.



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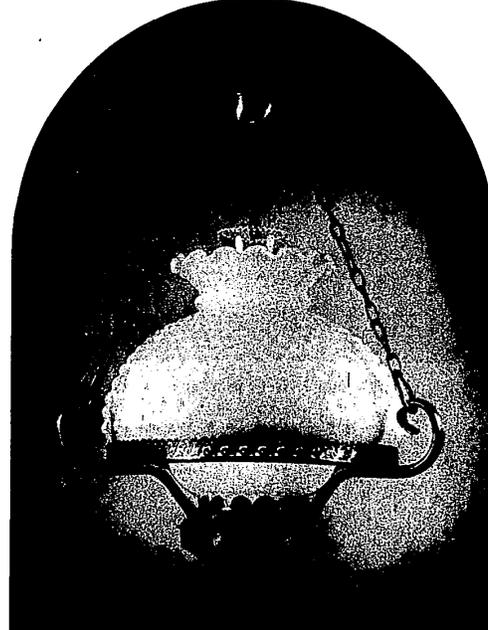
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