

MEMORIAL:

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"It was a horrible thing. I'm a sympathetic man anyway but it was just about as much as I could stand," said Ivan B. Willis, a life-long Escalante resident who assisted in the original rescue efforts.

An employee of the Bureau of Land Management, Willis was out in the mountains near Carcass Wash at the time of the accident.

Another rescuer who was transporting injured Scouts met Willis along the road and told him about the tragedy. The person asked Willis to go out and help with the wreckage.

Willis said he assumed the other person had all of the injured so he didn't expect to see more people at the accident site. Unfortunately, he was wrong.

"I saw the doctor (at the site) and his white uniform was just saturated with blood. He said he had stopped all the bleeding but didn't have any painkillers," Willis remembered.

After bringing another doctor and nurse to the scene, Willis assisted with the remaining transportation needs.

Willis and many of the other rescuers from Escalante, Panquitch and surrounding towns were among the crowd that gathered at the newly constructed sandstone monument — designed and built by Salt Lake stone mason Kenny Jorgensen and his wife Teri.

Located directly across from the embankment where the truck went over, the monument gives a brief outline of the accident's details and then lists all those who lost their lives.

"Never until this day have we had the opportunity to thank the people from Escalante and Panquitch and surrounding areas for

their efforts," Heal said.

Heal said he and fellow survivor Lee Colvin decided to pursue the monument idea after visiting the site three years ago. As their dream worked its way into reality since that time, they feared it might bring up old memories many would rather keep hidden.

"In doing so, it's been a healing process for many of us. The feeling of tragedy has changed now to peace...and it will always be that way," Heal added.

Many of the accident victims' family members echoed Heals feelings. As she wiped away tears rolling down her cheeks, one woman said, "I think it's bad for me but I needed to do it."

Fay Miller, mother of victim Randy Wayne Miller, said the dedication gave her time to see a lot of old friends and thank the people who had worked so hard to rescue the Scouts.

Miller's husband had a heart attack at the same time as the accident so that left the mother little time to grieve for her son.

"It's been hard for me. I think it's wonderful they thought this much of him to do it," Miller said.

"I've been anxious to go; I think the ones that are gone will be here in spirit."

William Christensen, brother of victim Gary Lynn Christensen, said he and his brother had spent many summers in the Escalante area as children because of having family in the area.

However, he had not returned to the wash since the accident — not even during the eight years he lived in Escalante.

"I tried a dozen times, but I'd get so far down and I'd have to go back," Christensen said, choking back his emotion.

Christensen said five of the boys who died lived within a block of each other so their death devastated the whole neighborhood.