

Robert Leland Payton, Class of 1927.



Tragedy's Aftermath

On Highway 61 south of Memphis' city limits on Saturday there took place one of the worst automobile accidents this community has witnessed in a decade. Four persons were killed, two of them burned beyond recognition in their blazing car. Two others were injured in painful and serious degree.

A 21-year-old singer, Tommy Ray Tucker, now stands charged with second degree murder, drunken driving and leaving the scene of an accident. In due time these charges will be fully explored and if guilt is established the penalty will be rightfully and properly severe.

The immediate aspects of this ghastly crash are tragic and grievous, but, as we consider what took place, we should by all means ponder the fact that the aftermath of tragedy will continue in unavoidably heavy measure for years to come. In the death of Mr. and Mrs. William B. Wolfe the community lost two of the finest citizens. Young as they were, they had contributed greatly and gave every promise of even more substantial usefulness. The most poignant loss, however, came to their three sons and three daughters left orphaned.

Killed also in the crash and the fire that followed were R. Leland Payton and Mrs. Balche M. Franklin, both respected residents of this community. Two daughters and one son are left motherless in the Franklin home and a son and daughter must grow up without a father at the Payton's.

This utterly deplorable happening illustrates in graphic, touching fashion the reason for our insistent demands that every effort be made to create safe traffic.

Information from The Commercial Appeal, October 31, 1961.

Note: Tommy Tucker was later arrested and charged with involuntary manslaughter and driving under the influence of alcohol. He was sentenced the following May and Tommy served nine months of a one-year sentence.