Four Tops Consider Themselves Lucky?

Special To The Post
Theyre not in tip-top shape
following a highway accident
near Athens, Ga., last week,
but according to lead singer
Levi Stubbs, members of the
Four Tops are "lucky to be
alive."

The Tops-Stubbs, Obie Benson, Abdul Fakir and Lawrence Payton-were enroute to a college date in Columbia, S.C., when their chartered bus collided with a truck. All 13 persons on board the bus were injured.

"If you could see the damage done to that double-decker bus, it makes us look like we came out of the wreckage unscathed," said Stubbs.

According to the singer, the collision took place on a curve on U.S.-78.

"It was a two-lane highway," said Stubbs. "The truck was coming out of a turn

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and hit us head on."

The Four Tops suffered multiple injuries-Stubbs, lacerations in his right leg, as did Payton. Benson's jaw, thought to be fractured, was bruised. Fakir twisted his neck.

The group's bass player, Greg Coles, fractured his ankle. Pianist George Roundtree suffered cuts in the corner of his right eye.

On the more critical list are the Tops' drivers Doug Hockenberry and Larry Landry. Hockenberry, still in Athens General hospital, was thrown through the windshield, suffering a broken collarbone and fingers.

Landry, who drove down an embankment to avoid running over Hockenberry, was pinned beneath the wheel.

"He was in pretty bad shape," said Stubbs. "Duke and I tried to help him, but they had to cut him out of the bus. His teeth were knocked out. His legs crushed. And they told us he had internal injuries."

Landry was taken to St. Mary's hospital. "I consider it a miracle that we (The Tops) were able to walk away from the accident," said Stubbs. "Only an hour before, two trailer trucks collided on that same highway and one of the drivers was killed. A state trooper, on his way to the scene of our accident, swerved and slid into a tree, splitting his vehicle in half. They took him in the same ambulance with us to the hospital."

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