Docket No. SA-534

Exhibit No. 2-CH

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Washington, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF ANDY WENZEL, PG&E
(JAN-5-2011)

(30 Pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
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PIPELINE RUPTURE IN SAN BRUNO, CALIFORNIA	*	Docket No.: DCA-10-MP-008
	*	

Interview of: ANDY WENZEL

Marriott Hotel
San Francisco Airport
1800 Bayshore Highway
Burlingame, California 94010

Wednesday,
January 5, 2011

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: RAVINDRA CHHATRE
Investigator-in-Charge

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I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

MR. CHHATRE: Good afternoon, everyone. Today is Wednesday, January 5th, 2011. We are currently in Burlingame, California at the San Francisco Airport Marriott. We are meeting in regards to the investigation of the pipeline rupture in San Bruno, California that occurred on September 9th, 2010. The NTSB accident number for this investigation is DCA-10-MP-008.

My name is Ravi Chhatre. I am with the National Transportation Safety Board in Washington, D.C. and I'm the investigator-in-charge of this accident.

I'd like to start by notifying everyone present in this room that we are recording this interview for transcription at a later date. All parties will have a chance to review the transcripts when they are completed.

Also, I'd like to inform Mr. Andy Wenzel that you are permitted to have one other person with you during the interview. This person is of your choice, your supervisor, a friend, family member or, if you choose, nobody at all.

For the record please state your full name, the spelling of your name, contact information like email, telephone number, postal address, and whom you have chosen to be present with you during this interview.

MR. WENZEL: My name is Andy John Wenzel, A-N-D-Y, J-O-H-N, W-E-N-Z-E-L. Email address,-----@PGE.com., and I would like Dane as my representative here today.

MR. CHHATRE: Thank you for that. Now I'd like to go around the table. Everybody introduce themselves, their name, spelling, title, affiliation, email and phone number starting with the City.

MR. CALDWELL: City of San Bruno. My name is Geoff Caldwell. All my information's on the card.

MR. DAUBIN: Brian Daubin with PG&E. All the information is on the card provided

MR. FASSETT: Bob Fassett, PG&E. The information is on the card.

MS. JACKSON: Connie Jackson, City of San Bruno. My information is on the card.

MS. FABRY: Klara Fabry, City of San Bruno. The information is on the card.

MR. SHORI: Sunil Shori, California Public Utilities Commission. My information is on the card provided.

MR. KATCHMAR: Peter Katchmar, United States Department of Transportation, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, PHMSA, and my information's on the card.

MR. GUNTHER: Karl Gunther, NTSB. I'm the operations group chair. My email is karl.gunther@NTSB.gov. Phone, 202-314-6478.

MS. MAZZANTI: Debbie Mazzanti, IBEW, Local 1245, and my info is on the card.

MR. SPERRY: Joshua Sperry, Engineers and Scientists of

California, Local 20, IFPTE. My information is on my business card.

MR. NICHOLSON: Matthew Nicholson, NTSB, M-A-T-T-H-E-W, N-I-C-H-O-L-S-O-N, matthew.nicholson@NTSB.gov.

MR. CHHATRE: Ravindra Chhatre. I'm with the National Transportation Safety Board, Washington, D.C. My email is ravindra.chhatre@ntsb.gov.

MR. NARVELL: Rick Narvell, Human Performance Investigator for NTSB, Washington, D.C., 202-314-6422, narvell@NTSB.gov.

MR. JAQUES: Dane Jaques on behalf of the witness, and my information has been provided.

MR. CHHATRE: Do you want to go first or --

MR. GUNTHER: Yeah.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

INTERVIEW OF ANDY WENZEL

MR. GUNTHER: Mr. Wenzel, could you give your title --

MR. CHHATRE: Identify yourself.

MR. GUNTHER: Yeah, Karl Gunther, NTSB.

BY MR. GUNTHER:

Q. Mr. Wenzel, could you give your name -- or your job title and affiliation?

A. I'm a supervisor of Gas Control and Gas Systems Operations, PG&E.

Q. And can you give your formal education?

A. I have a two year degree from college, AA degree.
Q. Okay. And what are your duties?
A. I supervise the operations of gas control in San Francisco.
Q. Okay. And were you involved in preparing the gas control investigation document?
A. I was.
Q. Were you involved on the day of the accident?
A. I arrived after 8 p.m. on the day of the accident into the control room.
Q. Could you describe what you did?
A. When I arrived?
Q. Yeah.
A. I came into the control room and did a roundtable discussion with the senior transmission coordinator, a transmission coordinator and gas system operators on shift to determine what had taken place. I reviewed the operation maps that they had laid out. At that time we were aware of the location of the incident and sort of worked with the group in the control room to determine what process had taken place, what communications had taken place, and that we'd make the area -- confine the leak in the area, just typical gas operations, make sure that everyone in the control room was on the page -- on the same page with the activity that was taking place. Also determined if the -- at the time if the alternate location folks

were coming to San Francisco, which I had instructed them to do over the telephone, and so basically got up to speed with the operations at that time.

Q. Okay. No more questions.

MR. CALDWELL: Geoff Caldwell, City of San Bruno, no questions at this time.

MR. DAUBIN: No questions.

MR. FASSETT: No questions.

MS. JACKSON: Could you just explain -- Connie Jackson, City of San Bruno.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q. What does that mean, alternate location folks? People who were normal workplace or somewhere else were also called to San Francisco?

A. At the time of the incident we were going to transition to our alternate location which is a typical pattern, a quarterly drill that we operate at our local facility to make sure that it's functional. We were in transition during that day when the event took place and we thought it prudent -- I thought it prudent to bring the Operations folks back to San Francisco rather than fulfill that transition.

Q. And that alternate location practice is a drill of some type or it's a -- what is it?

A. It's a quarterly drill that we fulfill to make sure that in the event that our operations in San Francisco are unavailable

that we have an alternate site that we can go to that's fully redundant and fully functional.

Q. And that happened to be happening on that day?

A. The transition happened to be -- we'd just started the transition. It happened that day, yes.

Q. Thank you.

MS. FABRY: Klara Fabry. No questions at this time.

MR. SHORI: Sunil Shori, California PUC.

BY MR. SHORI:

Q. That transition, was that supposed to be a temporary transition? I was under the impression that it was a -- more of an equipment change and more of a permanency. So you're saying it was a temporary transition to the --

A. No. It's a temporary transition, usually takes place over two to four days on the average, and it was prescheduled prior to the event.

Q. Okay. Since the incident -- and, again, you helped prepare this report and, again, the title investigation and documentation report related to gas control?

A. Yes.

Q. Has there been any revision or any kind of updated reports beyond this one since the incident?

A. Not to my knowledge.

Q. Mr. Wenzel, were you involved or did you basically direct any of the pressure reduction on line 132 on the evening of

the incident?

A. I was present on the evening of the incident, but that was directed by Engineering.

Q. And did you have any discussions with any technicians or any of the staff down in the Milpitas terminal that evening?

A. I did not.

Q. Are there any reviews or investigations contemplated in terms of the response from the Gas Control personnel to the incident being considered or in development at this stage?

A. In regards to this event?

Q. In regard to the incident, yes.

A. We reviewed the incident within Gas Control and we felt that the response was -- actually had been done in a timely manner.

Q. Were there any reports generated for that review?

A. We have the normal report that you have there.

Q. This is it?

A. Right. It has not -- it's still open-ended. There is still -- you know, obviously the event has some details that need to be determined, what caused the event, so that document that you have is still open-ended.

Q. Okay. Thank you. I don't have any further questions.

MR. KATCHMAR: Peter Katchmar, U.S. DOT. No questions.

MR. GUNTHER: I have no questions.

MS. MAZZANTI: No questions.

MR. SPERRY: Joshua Sperry, Engineers and Scientists, Local 20.

BY MR. SPERRY:

Q. Do you have any professional certifications or licenses?

A. I have a -- no, I do not.

Q. Are you a former operator or transmission coordinator?

A. I am a -- I started in Gas Construction. I worked as a gas supply coordinator. That position is no longer a position in the company, but it was a similar position to a gas system operator, and then I was a transmission coordinator for a number of years. I was a transmission coordinator for a number of years.

Q. Okay. That's all my question.

MR. NICHOLSON: Matt Nicholson, NTSB.

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. About the transition that was happening that day, that was a transition from the control room in San Francisco to Brentwood, is that correct?

A. That's correct.

Q. And you said that takes four days?

A. No. I said that the transition -- once they transition to Brentwood, that they typically operate two to four days at that location and then they transition back.

Q. Okay.

A. Transition usually takes 30 minutes.

Q. Is that a seamless transfer in that the screens and

(indiscernible) points at San Francisco are also at Brentwood and you just move people or --

A. It's a fully redundant station at Brentwood.

Q. So there wouldn't have been any information during that transition on the 9th that would have interfered with the (indiscernible) operator's ability to decipher or see trends or alarms?

A. The information at Brentwood is identical to the information they're receiving at San Francisco.

Q. That's all. Thank you.

MR. CHHATRE: Ravi Chhatre, NTSB.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. What is your normal shift hours?

A. My normal shift hours, I would a nine -- nine-hour days, five days one week and then four days the next week with an eight-hour day at the end.

Q. Okay. What time you start and what time you finish?

A. I start at approximately 6:00.

Q. Okay. On the day of the accident were you on a nine-hour shift, eight-hour shift?

A. I was actually out of the area. I had just came into the Oakland Airport at about 7:00. I was attending a interconnect meeting with one of our affiliates, Questar Pipeline, and I'd just arrived at the airport when I received a call about the incident.

Q. Do you recall who called you?

A. The senior on shift, Mark Ceniceros.

Q. So you came directly from the San Francisco Airport to the office?

A. From the Oakland Airport.

Q. Oakland. Was the regular shift supervisor present when you arrived?

A. I'm the supervisor in Gas Control, so Fanyee Hong was filling in. Our manager was on vacation, so she was filling in. I believe she was in attendance. So we were sort of sharing the duties of that responsibility.

Q. So whoever was (indiscernible) temporarily Fanyee was present, is that correct?

A. Yes.

Q. That person was present at the time of the accident?

A. She was present, yes.

Q. During the briefing did she tell you what happened exactly what time or just give you a general overview?

A. I received my briefing actually more from the control room Operations folks, from the senior, the transmission coordinators and the TSOs.

Q. And when did that happen?

A. When I arrived approximately --

Q. Immediately?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. As a result of the accident did you guys have any

officially session, lessons learned or diagnostic or what happened, what, if anything, went wrong or nothing went wrong, it just happened, had a meeting?

A. Could you repeat the question?

Q. Sure. Since the accident until today did you have or a supervisor any meeting with the staff to discuss or find out what happened, did anything went wrong, like did we make any mistake or lessons learned from this incident?

A. We've had many discussions about the operations that took place that day. I don't think that in our conversations we felt that we did anything -- we would do anything different. I think the communication was good. Lessons learned? I think we're still reviewing that?

Q. You're still reviewing that. Between September 9th and as of today did you have a chance to look at the screen on September 9th, display of line 132?

A. I've looked at many different screens regarding line 132, yes.

Q. And did you look at the information in all your displays for line 132 on the day of the accident -- at the time of the accident?

A. At what location?

Q. The pressure at Martin Station.

A. I looked at the pressure at Martin Station. I don't believe there was a volume there, but yes, the pressure.

Q. And what about Milpitas?

A. My understanding was that Milpitas at that time -- the information that was being provided during the time of the event was unreliable, so I did not focus in on the Milpitas data.

Q. Okay. Did you look at any other station in between?

A. I looked at the operations of the peninsula, all the peninsula stations, a general overview of the whole system.

Q. And do you know what displays were showing on the screens at the time of the accident for line 132?

A. Do I know what displays they were looking at?

Q. Right.

A. I wasn't in the control room, so I don't know. I would just make assumptions.

Q. No, no. I thought you said earlier that you had many, many discussions with the people and you looked at some of the -- that data operation and volume in different locations?

A. I did.

Q. So I guess my question was did you also look at or discuss with the person who was monitoring the station at that time for line 132 as to what he was looking at at the time or you had no discussion?

A. I don't recall.

Q. Okay, that's fine. Looking at the pressure and volume display at Martin, do you feel the interpretation -- would you describe it any different than what was interpreted at that time

on September 9th?

MR. JAQUES: I think he said there's no volume. It was only pressure.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay, pressure.

MR. JAQUES: But he can correct that.

MR. CHHATRE: Sure.

MR. WENZEL: What -- please repeat the question.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. Okay. Looking at the pressure display at Martin at the time of the incident, the question is did you feel the actions taken and the interpretation done by the operator who was looking at the information was adequate, was it correct?

A. There were a lot of activities taking place at the time that -- of the pressure decrease at Martin Station. There was the -- obviously the event that took place at the Milpitas terminal where all of the lines that were tied together had exceeded the high-high alarm limits. I know that they were focusing on that aspect of the operation itself.

When the pressure came in on Martin Station I looked at it and it's a -- it's very uncommon to see a pipeline running between its operating pressure under its MAOP, and at the same -- the higher end, and at the same time seeing a pressure on the low-low level at Martin Station of a sudden decrease, and I think that initially the interpretation of what was taking place needed more supporting data. So the reaction at that point was one location,

the drop was sudden and it could have been attributed to (indiscernible) of communication. There wasn't initially, I think, enough supporting data to indicate what had taken place.

Q. And what kind of -- and maybe I'm not using the correct term, but you said that the data could be wrong? Did you say something about the (indiscernible)?

A. I said it was a sudden decrease in pressure, so that's not typical. So in the analysis of the operations they look for other supporting data to substantiate what they were seeing at Martin Station.

Q. Now in your experience with the SCADA system at line 132 what other things can cause such a sudden drop?

A. A communication error obviously would have taken place.

Q. Communication meaning the transducers are not giving the right information?

A. Correct, some piece of the communications, yes.

Q. And that could be at Martin Station? The communication could be the entire 132 system and where they were --

A. In this case I'm referring specifically to Martin Station, yes.

Q. Now when you say additional information needed, what additional information you were looking at (indiscernible) of the communication error?

A. Either some pressure indication upstream of Martin Station or downstream of Martin Station that would support what

was taking place at that location.

Q. Now with your SCADA system can you go back and look at some other stations between Martin and Milpitas and look at that pressure data?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you recall you looking at that or the operator at the time -- on duty at the time looked at it?

A. I'm sure the operator on duty at the time looked at it, but, as I mentioned, they're -- and I looked at it after the fact, and again there were pressures -- indications much higher upstream of Martin Station than what was occurring at Martin Station, so --

MR. DAUBIN: I'm sorry. Still on the record, but Ravi, are we talking about two different timeframes or are we talking about the same timeframe?

MR. CHHATRE: Same timeframe.

MR. DAUBIN: Okay, so -- but he was not there at the time of the event.

MR. CHHATRE: I understand. My question was did you look -- see, he went back and -- the statement was that he looked at the displays on that day afterwards, after the fact, and my question was did you look at not only Martin display, but any other places where you have the information coming between Martin and Wilpitas. Did you look at the station display, pressure drop?

MR. DAUBIN: So -- this is Brian Daubin with PG&E.

BY MR. DAUBIN:

Q. Andy, for my clarity, when you went back to review that data, do you see exactly as if it were playing in a video of what they're looking at or are you -- is the data just available and then you look at this -- whatever screen you want to look at is what you look at, but is there any way to tell what the operator was looking at at the time of the event?

A. No. I wasn't present.

MR. CHHATRE: Fine. That was not my question. I was not asking to guess what the operator was looking at. What I was asking you is when you went back days later and looked at the pressure drops at Martin, the question was did you look at that day's data at some other location between Martin and Wilpitas?

MR. DAUBIN: Okay.

MR. WENZEL: I stated earlier that -- at the time that Martin Station was in low-low pressure. I believe line 132 upstream of Martin Station was actually, if not in high-high pressure, near high pressure, so it was (indiscernible) upstream, yes.

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. But did you confirm that from the display or not? I'm not saying you had to. I'm just --

A. Yes, using the same system that the GSOs and TCCs -- the Scitech System, yes.

Q. Do those two data help you decide whether the communication error is there or not there or that is not enough?

A. That was not enough. In my opinion it was not enough at that time. If you're talking about the time that Martin was in low-low and the time upstream that I looked at that pressure, that was not enough information.

Q. So the initial information would have told you that there was a communication error or not?

A. Supporting data from other locations. If there was a flow volume at Martin Station, if the flow had changed patterns and the forward flow going to 0, that would have been supporting data that would have determined that perhaps you had an issue there.

Q. I guess the logical question is did you have a chance to look at the flow data at Martin?

A. There is no flow data at Martin.

Q. There is no flow data at Martin Station, okay. Besides a communication error what other possibilities are there for the sudden pressure drop?

A. Other than the event that took place, those are the only two.

Q. Only two?

A. It was dramatic, yes.

Q. In your tenure with PG&E in San Francisco as a supervisor have you seen in the past any sudden drop like that on line 132?

A. No.

Q. Have you seen that kind of sudden drop on other lines in the PG&E system in your tenure?

A. Yes.

Q. And those lines would be --

A. A similar circumstance where a line was struck and the pressure had fallen.

Q. It was ruptured?

A. Yes.

Q. I'm just trying to clarify this communication error. Have you seen in your tenure with PG&E either 132 or any other transmission line such a sudden pressure drop with -- the reason being communication error?

A. A sudden pressure drop attributed to a communication error?

Q. Correct.

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And can you give me an example? Well, just an analogy is fine.

A. I can't give you a specific example. We've seen sudden pressure drops where we've made comparisons to inlet or outlet pressures that didn't support the sudden pressure drop and attributed it to a communication error.

Q. Do you recall what kind of pressure drop was that?

A. Not off the top of my head.

Q. Okay. Was this of the same magnitude, pressure drop?

Was it percentages or absolute numbers?

A. The pressure could drop to 0, so similar magnitude, maybe even more severe.

Q. Okay. And how many times do you recall you have seen communication errors?

A. It's hard to say.

Q. Okay. More than you have seen with ruptures?

A. More communication errors, yes, than ruptures, yes.

Q. Thank you for the time. No more questions.

MR. NARVELL: No questions.

MR. CALDWELL: No questions.

MR. DAUBIN: No questions.

MR. FASSETT: No questions.

MR. SHORI: No questions.

MR. GUNTHER: No questions.

MS. MAZZANTI: No questions.

MR. SPERRY: No more questions.

MR. CHHATRE: Thank you so much. Oh, we've got one. I'm sorry. Not so fast. Excuse me.

MR. NICHOLSON: No, I just -- I wanted to follow up. This is Matt Nicholson.

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. Since we're talking about loss of communication, this is loss of communication to a device, right, that we're talking about, like a pressure transducer?

A. Yes.

Q. Does the SCADA tag on the screen, does it not change color or anything to reflect a loss of communication?

A. There are indications. It could be a loss of communication and tagged by a SCADA screen. Sometimes actually the communication or the information may not be necessarily tagged.

Q. And if you suspect a loss of communication wouldn't the operator immediately go with a demand scan in the course of pulling on that point to try and get a good reading?

A. I'm not sure if that's their typical protocol, the demand scan.

Q. Your -- okay. Can you clarify your position again for me? Are you a supervisor of Gas Control?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. So ultimately do the controllers report to you?

A. The gas system operators and the transmission coordinators, yes.

Q. They do, okay. And so you're saying you don't know if that's a procedure or not on a loss of communication to do a demand scan?

A. They do do demand scans, yes --

Q. Okay.

A. -- to try to restore communication.

Q. Okay. You mentioned distractions with San -- was it San

Ramon?

A. Brentwood?

Q. Is there -- I thought there were some distractions that day with issues at another station?

MR. CHHATRE: It was Brentwood.

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. Was it at Brentwood?

A. Yeah.

Q. I thought there was another issue on a separate station.

A. We were transitioning from San Francisco to Brentwood, but I don't recall --

MS. MAZZANTI: Point of clarification -- Debbie Mazzanti. Maybe what you're referring to was the testimony from Michael Valenti as he said he was dealing with the situation that happened at San Ramon.

MR. NICHOLSON: That could be it. I thought I heard the same thing.

MS. MAZZANTI: They're different situations.

BY MR. NICHOLSON:

Q. Exactly, they're different situations, but I thought I heard you say that that was maybe a distraction at the time.

A. I did not.

Q. You did not. You mentioned needed more supporting data to have concluded this was a rupture through SKADA?

A. In their initial analysis it was one station that had

one piece of data that indicated low-low pressures. All the inlet pipelines were indicating higher pressure, and so typically in an analysis the GSOs and TCs look for other supporting data in the vicinity of this information to then determine whether or not it's an actual event taking place.

Q. So where I was going with that was since you've identified that maybe they needed more supporting data, have steps been taken to add devices or instrumentation where you saw gaps?

A. I think at the time, unfortunately, the information on Milpitas terminal was unavailable to them. Had that information been available, that could have provided them more supporting data -- would have provided more supporting data.

Q. So the information was there, it was just not legible or discernible?

A. Right.

Q. Okay. That's all I have. Thank you.

MR. CHHATRE: Ravi Chhatre, NTSB. I just have one follow-up question on Matt Nicholson's comment that the --

BY MR. CHHATRE:

Q. I may not have the proper terminology or have it exactly right, but if there is a communication error, the answer I heard that the operators can demand the color change and try tore-establish the communication?

A. They can do what's called a demand scan.

Q. Demand scan. The question is did you check with them to

see if they did that, in (indiscernible), not that day?

A. I did not.

Q. If they would have -- and what does demand scan does or anytime you make a demand scan what are the responses?

A. I'm not a technician, but I think what it does is it sort of forces the communication to try to complete the process.

Q. Does it give some kind of a reading then or it does not?

A. The purpose is to try to restore the --

Q. Communication.

A. The communication, right.

Q. And if the communication is restored, what does that mean, and if they could not restore, what does that mean? If they restore the communication what does that tell the operator?

A. Well, it tells the operator that -- then it gives them real time data at that point.

Q. And then the pressure drop can be attributed to the communication error or it's not?

A. They can determine at that point that what they're seeing is not a communication issue or not specifically a communication issue. I don't know if it completely can determine from that whether or not there are other issues -- again, I'm not a technician -- that could display an inaccurate value.

Q. Okay. Does your protocol identify a situation like a sudden pressure drop what should be indicated process-wise? I thought your initial comment was the only possibility they can use

the sudden pressure drop as communication error are leak or rupture, and if the communication is established and it tells the operator that the real data that he's getting, he or she is getting, the data they got before through that company, then that data was not due to communication error. Wouldn't that help make a decision?

A. There are occasions in the system itself where data appears to be live data, but it's actually determined not to be live data. There's some error in the communication process and it doesn't necessarily alarm itself either. It could look like it's live data, but yet it's not.

Q. Now is that a communication error or it's a SCADA issue, like a hardware issue in the system?

A. We've had issues. I'm not sure whether it's one or the other.

Q. So when something like that happened in the past was any effort made to somehow diagnose it and correct it?

A. I'm sure there was. I can't cite specific examples.

Q. That's fine. That's all for me. Thank you much.

MR. CHHATRE: Okay. If not, thank you so much for coming. Appreciate your time.

MR. WENZEL: Thank you.

MR. CHHATRE: And off the record.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC COMPANY SEPTEMBER 9, 2010 ACCIDENT SAN BRUNO, CALIFORNIA Interview of Andy Wenzel
DOCKET NUMBER:	DCA-10-MP-008
PLACE:	Burlingame, California
DATE:	January 5, 2011

was held according to the record, and that this is the original, complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to the recording accomplished at the hearing.

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Cheryl L. Phipps
Transcriber