

DCA11FR002
Collision - BNSF
Red Oak, Iowa
April 17, 2011

Interview
M of W Supervisor

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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BURLINGTON NORTHERN SANTA FE
COLLISION
RED OAK, IOWA
APRIL 17, 2011

Docket No.: DCA-11-FR-002

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Interview of: EVAN J. SNYDER

Shenandoah Inn
680 West Sheridan Avenue
Shenandoah, Iowa

Tuesday,
April 19, 2011

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: TED T. TURPIN
Operations Group Chairman

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I N T E R V I E W

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2 MR. TURPIN: My name is Ted Turpin, NTSB. This is April
3 19th, 2011. And we're investigating accident number DCA-11-FR-002
4 that occurred April 17th, 2011, approximately 7 a.m., the train
5 collision near Red Oak, Iowa at CP McPherson. And today we're
6 interviewing a maintenance-of-way employee that was one of the
7 first persons on scene named Mr. Snyder.

8 If you'd start by stating your name, title, and spell
9 it?

10 MR. SNYDER: Evan Snyder, E-v-a-n, S-n-y-d-e-r,
11 Assistant Roadmaster, RPO4 gang.

12 MR. TURPIN: Okay. Thank you. And you realize that
13 this is being recorded?

14 MR. SNYDER: Sure.

15 MR. TURPIN: Okay. And if we can go next to Mike?

16 MR. FLANIGON: Mike Flanigon with the National
17 Transportation Safety Board, Investigator-in-Charge on this
18 accident.

19 MR. JENNER: Steve Jenner with the NTSB. I'm Human
20 Performance Group Chairman.

21 MR. MOON: Stanley Moon (ph.), BNSF Superintendent of
22 Operations.

23 MR. JACKSON: Kimble Jackson, BLET.

24 MR. FIELDS: Carl Fields, F-i-e-l-d-s, Brotherhood of
25 Locomotive Engineers and Tradesmen, Safety Task Force.

1 MR. GIBSON: Jerry Gibson, G-i-b-s-o-n, United
2 Transportation Union, Safety Task Force.

3 MS. ANDERSON: Barb Anderson, A-n-d-e-r-s-o-n, FRA.

4 MR. CORUM: Mike Corum, C-o-r-u-m, Operating Practices,
5 FRA.

6 MR. TURPIN: Okay, very good.

7 MR. FLANIGON: I --

8 MR. TURPIN: Yes?

9 MR. FLANIGON: -- forgot to spell my name. F-l-a-n-i-g-
10 o-n.

11 MR. TURPIN: All right. Thank you.

12 INTERVIEW OF EVAN J. SNYDER

13 BY MR. TURPIN:

14 Q. Okay. We'll just start, Mr. Snyder, if you'll just tell
15 us what happened?

16 A. I was -- I left Lincoln, Nebraska from my home early
17 Sunday morning. I called the maintenance desk to see where the
18 train was. He told me it had been through Plattsmouth at about
19 5:45. He said step on it; you got to get up there to the Creston,
20 and I figured I would just barely beat it there.

21 He called me back a little bit later, probably around
22 7:30, and he told me that it was -- well, probably 7:45, because
23 he told me there was an incident with the train and it had been in
24 a rear-end collision at McPherson. And I put it into my GPS, and
25 I was about -- it came up and told me where it was, and I was only

1 about a mile and a half away from it at that point. Just by
2 chance, I had even stopped, pulled into that road to stop to put
3 it into my GPS, and it was on that road that it sent down.

4 So I came down. There was a gal at the crossing, at the
5 intersection there, waived me through. I figured she was going to
6 stop me, but she saw a BN pickup, so I drove on through. There
7 was tons of emergency vehicles there. Talked to a few guys, asked
8 them if I could drive down there and get a little closer so I
9 could look it over.

10 Got down there. They had most of the fire put out by
11 the time I was there. Everything was as you all probably saw it,
12 machines scattered around. The locomotive was still on fire, just
13 a little bit at the top. They were spraying foam on it. They
14 were putting the fire out on the Herzog clip car back behind. And
15 the number 2 engine was dumping diesel out of the tank, and he was
16 worried about that and that it had electrical power still going to
17 that motor, it looked like, because there was a light on, on the
18 side of it. And that's about all it was.

19 And then after that I probably had -- I had the
20 assistant foreman and foreman from RP23, whose machines were
21 actually hit -- they were following the train all the way from
22 Bridgeport to Creston, and they pulled up shortly after me and
23 started looking it over. That's about it.

24 You know, I introduced myself to -- I forget the guy's
25 name, the fire chief or whatever, and he told me they had it

1 pretty much controlled, that they were -- still assumed that the
2 bodies were inside the cab, couldn't get to them. They had walked
3 up and down the track a ways to see if anything had -- if they
4 bailed out or anything like that. At that point nobody knew, but
5 they assumed they were still in there, but told me they couldn't
6 get into it because of the cars still on top, so --

7 Q. Okay. Do you have a railroad radio in your --

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. -- vehicle? Were you able to hear any radio
10 conversations about the train?

11 A. I didn't have it at that point. It wasn't on. I was
12 just driving. You know, I usually shut it off when I'm driving
13 because I'm not listening for anything. I don't -- we don't
14 really operate on the road channel all that much unless we're
15 getting track and time on there or anything like that. But I
16 didn't ask Al Wright or Rick Teniente, the foreman and the
17 assistant foreman on 23, if they had heard anything on the radio.

18 Q. They were actually shadowing the train?

19 A. Right. And usually when you're following it, you'll --
20 you need to be there to brief the train crew at each location when
21 they put a new crew on it. So they probably last talked to them
22 at Lincoln. And then what I do, and what most people usually do,
23 is drive up to another station, you know, park, see it go by, look
24 it over, make sure everything's okay, go on to the next station.

25 Q. Okay. What's the Herzog clip car?

1 A. It is a contractor machine that -- instead of using BN
2 equipment, we have smaller machines that basically do the same
3 thing, but we have to deal with all the material, like the McKay
4 clips, the insulators that go between the clip and the rail and
5 the saddle. And this machine, what it does is it's got bins on
6 it, so we load all the material onto it -- clips and soaps, and
7 they come down into a chute. There's two operators on the bottom;
8 one facing forward. He inserts the soaps -- we call them soaps,
9 the insulators in between, and manipulates the rail in and out.
10 And then the back guy puts the clips on. And the machine will
11 come along, smack the soaps down in between the rail and the
12 saddle and then clip them on. So a continuous motion kind of
13 machine.

14 Q. Uh-huh. And that was the rear-most car?

15 A. That was the very back.

16 Q. And it's actually a railroad car or this machines on top
17 of that railcar?

18 A. It is -- it rolls itself. It's bigger than a boxcar.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And usually with contractor machines like that, I
21 usually tend to put them on the back of the consist just because I
22 don't, you know, have like a -- or even like a high-speed tamper
23 that -- it probably shouldn't have all that weight behind it,
24 pulling on it, so I'd rather put it on the back. I talked to
25 (indiscernible) and he told me that he could pull a consist of a

1 steel gang behind it. So that's why one was staged here and the
2 other was up here with my machines; my flats' Herzog, 23's flats'
3 Herzog.

4 Q. Oh. So this was two equipment trains --

5 A. Right.

6 Q. -- together, then?

7 A. Correct.

8 Q. Oh, okay.

9 A. And plus the empty flat cars that were supposed to go to
10 Enid, Oklahoma.

11 Q. Okay. All right. Thank you.

12 MR. TURPIN: Mike, do you have any questions?

13 BY MR. FLANIGON:

14 Q. Just a couple, Mr. Snyder. About what time would you
15 estimate you pulled up on scene?

16 A. Probably -- probably parked my truck on the highway
17 there about 7:40. Threw my boots on, talked to some guys, the
18 fire crews there about what happened. I was -- I drove down there
19 probably 7:50, 7:55 maybe.

20 Q. Okay, great.

21 A. Because I looked at my watch right away. And the
22 conductor on the train that was hit was back there, and I asked
23 him when he thought it happened. He said probably just about an
24 hour ago or just before 7:00, and I think it was about 6:58 or
25 something like that, so --

1 Q. And then second question, the clip car, is that a self-
2 propelled car?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. So it's got a -- some kind of tractive --

5 A. Right.

6 Q. Do you know offhand about how much fuel that carries?

7 A. I don't know. I would imagine probably -- most of those
8 big machines like that will take like a 500-gallon tank. But
9 that's just a guess.

10 Q. Okay. That's all. Thanks.

11 BY MR. JENNER:

12 Q. If you know, I was trying to see if anyone had some
13 insight about the source of the fuel for the fire --

14 A. Uh-huh.

15 Q. -- what was fueling the fire. Do you have any thoughts
16 about that?

17 A. You know, I didn't see it when it was burning. I would
18 assume from the -- I mean, if I had to guess -- well, I don't
19 know. Because when it was put out, the second motor was just
20 dumping fuel. It looked like -- there was just a corner of the
21 front of the tank busted off, and I don't know if it was a fill
22 cap that got scraped off or something. But it was dumping fuel
23 for at least probably an hour after I got there, and it was just
24 dumping and dumping and dumping. And they had foam all over
25 everything. I couldn't tell you on the front. You know, I assume

1 Herzog burned because of whatever fuel was in it ignited. But I
2 don't know on the motor.

3 Q. How did the emergency response look to you in terms of
4 the crews being able to get up the necessary equipment and then --

5 A. Pretty good. They had all their trucks right down
6 there. They had hoses all over the place. And, I mean, I was
7 surprised -- you know, I figured it would probably be burning
8 pretty good when I was told it was just 45 minutes ago or whenever
9 I got there, and it was basically out, besides up underneath the
10 top car that was up on top of it. It kept burning for a while up
11 there.

12 But they had -- I mean there was good access. You saw
13 down in there underneath, they had a truck down with Herzog
14 putting it out. I think they ran their hoses down the hill or
15 across -- over the bridge or something down to where the motor was
16 to get fire -- to get water on that. But they had pretty good
17 access and they had a lot of equipment there, so --

18 Q. Okay. I think you mentioned you had some conversations
19 with the fire emergency personnel?

20 A. Yeah. He asked me, know you, not knowing much about
21 locomotives, he asked me if there was like an emergency disconnect
22 for the power on that motor. Because we just saw a side like
23 walkway light illuminated there. And I said I don't know. I
24 mean, obviously it's got power going to it, but I do not know how
25 to shut it off.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. So -- and that was a concern of course because the
3 diesel was right there pooling up, so --

4 Q. Right.

5 A. That's basically all he talked to me about, and
6 explained to me that he couldn't get to the conductor and the
7 engineer because of the material, the cars and the machines up on
8 top. He said they wouldn't go in there until they were off, so --

9 Q. Right. Did you have some conversations with the crew
10 that was struck?

11 A. I talked to -- yeah, I had -- they were out of the
12 train. I let one of them, he went and sat in my truck to warm up.
13 I talked to the conductor more than the engineer. I just asked
14 them if they were okay and, you know -- or at least physically are
15 you all right, and they said, yeah, we're fine. And he just told
16 me -- I just asked him what happened and when he was -- if he was
17 all right and what he thought happened, you know. And he was like
18 I don't know, so -- I think he was kind of in shock too, so --

19 Q. Okay. Were you the first BNSF person on scene as far as
20 you know?

21 A. No, there was -- I think there was a track inspector. I
22 saw a signal maintainer or signal inspector truck there. And one
23 other vehicle. I think it was probably the first official there.
24 But besides me and those few guys, just the emergency personnel.

25 Q. Okay. Thank you. Just briefly about your background.

1 How long have you been in -- as a roadmaster?

2 A. Oh, as a roadmaster? I started last May as a temporary
3 exempt, and they made me full exempt in -- on July 1st. I ran a
4 undercutter gang for like a month in May, and then I took over a
5 super surfacing gang mid-June, and then this year I got promoted
6 to a steel gang, so --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Before that I was a scheduled employee. I just worked
9 summers as well as going to school, so --

10 Q. Okay. And how long with BNSF total?

11 A. I started in the summer of 2003, after my freshman year
12 in college, and worked the summer, and then would lose my
13 seniority and go back to school, and start over the next summer,
14 and the next summer, and --

15 Q. I think that's all I have. Thank you.

16 A. Okay.

17 MR. JACKSON: I don't have anything.

18 BY MR. FIELDS:

19 Q. Hi. Carl Fields, BLET. Just a couple of short
20 questions, if you would?

21 A. Sure.

22 Q. As far as the job briefings that you would hold with a
23 crew, have you done that personally yourself?

24 A. Well, with my crew?

25 Q. Well, with the train crew, (indiscernible) --

1 A. I didn't this time. My foremens [sic] would have talked
2 to them in Lincoln, I believe.

3 Q. But --

4 A. Or wherever the train left.

5 Q. -- anytime prior, have you done that?

6 A. I have before, yeah.

7 Q. And what would -- what did that entail, a general brief?

8 A. You know, usually -- we have a lot of -- I always
9 question -- ask them about what they get for their orders on it,
10 you know, if they got a speed restriction on it. And sometimes, a
11 lot of times they say no. And I say, well, it's maintenance-of-
12 way equipment, you know, 45 mile an hour is what we always went
13 with my super surfacing gang last year, and I would assume all
14 maintenance equipment would be 45 mile an hour, so -- you know, I
15 don't think there was a problem there because they were stopped
16 when they hit. But usually that.

17 I usually talk to the chief a lot, the chief dispatcher,
18 just to see, you know, if I'm waiting on a crew to get called,
19 when they're going to get called. I'll get on a green screen and
20 look up like a schedule inquiry on the train to see where it's --
21 where I know it's going to stop, where it's going to get a crew
22 change, where it's going to get refueled, stuff like that.

23 Usually with the train crew I just tell them, you know,
24 I'll be listening on the radio, what's your I.D. number, you know,
25 I've got your symbol, I'll probably call you once in a while on

1 the road channel and ask you where you're at so I can move up to
2 the next station and see where you're going to be.

3 Q. Okay. And -- excuse me. With the Herzog cars on the
4 rear-end --

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. -- they had hazardous materials; they had fuel and/or
7 propane?

8 A. They shouldn't have any propane on them.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. They -- the only things liquid on them is a diesel tank
11 and a water tank that they use that has anti-freeze mixed in with
12 it for lubricating the insulators when they're clipped on.

13 Q. So is that -- do you know if that's governed under like
14 a material trade exemption?

15 A. I have no idea.

16 Q. Okay. That's all I have. Thanks.

17 A. No problem.

18 BY MR. GIBSON:

19 Q. Jerry Gibson, United Transportation Union. The fuel in
20 the Herzog machine then --

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. -- is diesel?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Okay. And just to kind of piggyback off of Carl's
25 question, we saw acetylene tanks. We did see a propane tank that

1 was out there.

2 A. They're all propane. We don't use acetylene anymore.

3 Q. Okay. But those were on there, so are they listed on
4 any type of paperwork that's given to the crews that there's --

5 A. I don't know. You know, all those tanks that you see
6 are for our torch cutting and stuff like that. We've got oxygen
7 tanks we put on a little torch card. We've got propane tanks on
8 our tie plugger that they have a new attachment on it called a
9 BVH, which when we take the rail off, it uses a steel brush to
10 abrade the rail seat and uses a heater and a blower to blow off
11 the old goop, as we call it. So that's what those were from. And
12 then we usually have a 100-pound propane tank for torch cutting.

13 Q. I guess a better question would be are those emptied or
14 are they -- if they could be full when you're done using them and
15 they get loaded up and whatever's in them is in them and get
16 shipped?

17 A. Yeah, usually that's how it is, you know. They just get
18 left on where they're always on the machine. So I think we almost
19 always leave them on.

20 Q. Okay. And then you had said that when you -- you had
21 stated earlier that when you talked to the crews that the speed on
22 the trains are 45 or is it 55?

23 A. I always go 45 whenever I tell a crew that's hauling,
24 that's hauling maintenance-of-way equipment. That's what I've
25 been told before in the past. At least that's what I did with my

1 super surfacing gang. I had mechanics tell me, you know, the side
2 of the machines says 50 mile an hour max, but go 45, go 5 below
3 what the max is. So I would just always tell the train crews to
4 go 45.

5 Q. Okay. All right. That's all the questions from me.
6 Thank you.

7 A. No problem.

8 BY MS. ANDERSON:

9 Q. Barb Anderson.

10 A. Um-hum.

11 Q. You mentioned that there was a track inspector and a
12 signal maintainer there when you arrived?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Did you talk to them at all?

15 A. I did. From direction -- now that I think about it,
16 from my boss or one of my bosses -- I think it was Adam Miller or
17 Paul Farley, Jr., my ADMP or the division engineer, told me to
18 tell Tony Rebarger (ph.), is his name, to set up a Form B, an
19 emergency Form B and get track and time to cover the derailments.
20 I -- that's really all I talked to him about. I didn't know the
21 other guy at all, so --

22 Q. Okay. The signal maintainer, you didn't talk to him
23 then?

24 A. (No audible response.)

25 Q. Okay. Did Tony give you any idea about what happened or

1 did you talk about that?

2 A. I didn't talk to him really. He just --

3 Q. Just making sure he (indiscernible) --

4 A. I just told him to put in a Form B and he said okay,
5 I'll do it.

6 Q. Okay. And I just have a question, rest --

7 A. Um-hum.

8 Q. What kind of rest do you get?

9 A. Not a lot.

10 Q. That's what I thought.

11 A. You know, it's depending on -- you know, if it's just a
12 normal week and we're staying in the same place all the time, I'll
13 get, you know, 8 hours a night, whatever. You know, I go to bed
14 pretty early. There's not much to do at a motel, which is where
15 I'm at all the time, so I'd just rather go to bed.

16 If I'm moving a train, usually I'll split it with
17 somebody, you know, so -- I moved one -- my gang, my SC32 high-
18 speed surfacing gang last year from Pueblo, Colorado to like
19 Glasgow, Montana, and my foreman and I would take shifts. And
20 he'd go up, sleep and like -- I took it from Denver and he went up
21 to Cheyenne or Casper or something like that, and he'd sleep, get
22 a motel room. And then I'd run up to Billings and sleep there
23 while he brought it up there, and just kind of take turns.
24 Because it's -- you know, there's a lot of waiting. Trains can
25 sit for a long time and, you know, it's -- it's just really not a

1 good idea to do it yourself, unless it's a short like overnight
2 trip.

3 Q. Okay. So you were pretty rested on this --

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. -- particular day?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Did you -- some of this equipment's new to me. I
8 noticed there were a whole bunch of those little plastic --

9 A. Uh-huh. Insulators.

10 Q. Yeah, insulators --

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. -- laying all over underneath there.

13 A. Uh-huh.

14 Q. So the Herzog car is bright yellow?

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Okay. Does it have any reflective tape on the ends or
17 on the sides?

18 A. I don't know. I never really looked at mine that well.
19 I assume you guys are the ones doing the reenactment with our
20 other one tomorrow.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. So I guess you can look it over then. I don't know, as
23 far as reflective taping or anything, no.

24 Q. Okay. But they would be the same?

25 A. Right.

1 Q. Okay. We had some question whether -- yeah, okay.

2 A. Yeah, they're almost identical.

3 Q. That was what I was going to ask you --

4 A. Okay.

5 Q. -- if they were --

6 A. Yeah, the same machines.

7 Q. Okay. That's all I've got.

8 BY MR. CORUM:

9 Q. Mike Corum, FRA. A couple things. You made mentioned
10 earlier about the train placement.

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. You said that you felt comfortable putting a steel gang
13 behind one of those?

14 A. I asked my Herzog, their supervisor, what he'd done in
15 the past, and he said yeah, we've pulled through it. You know,
16 it's got a beam all the through it so it can take a load behind
17 it. But he said I wouldn't put a whole train on it, but I would
18 definitely allow for a steel gang consist of 10 cars behind it.
19 It can pull that no problem.

20 Q. Okay. So, you don't have any knowledge whether it's AAR
21 compliant in terms of freight car standards or anything?

22 A. No.

23 Q. And do you know if Herzog has anything, any special
24 instructions out about placement, trailing tonnage behind, or
25 anything?

1 A. Like I said, I just went off what he told me and --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- he had done in the past. So, we don't get any kind
4 of information on that, so -- at least not on my level.

5 Q. The last thing I've got, the ramp car just ahead of it.

6 A. Uh-huh.

7 Q. Can you describe to me how the -- the sequence of how
8 that ramp operates? In other words, which piece unfolds which
9 way?

10 A. Sure. Yeah, is it --

11 Q. Is it two piece, three piece, or --

12 A. Well, when it comes down, it kind of, you know -- when
13 it's up and it's in lock position, it's basically a square. It
14 comes down on one, and then the next piece folds out, the next
15 piece folds out, the next piece folds out, and it's all -- I
16 believe it's air-driven. I don't think it's hydraulic. I think
17 it has an air-powered motor on it that, you know, pneumatically
18 pushes it out. And it folds out pretty slow. It takes a while
19 for it to get down, so --

20 Q. Any type of locking mechanism that holds it up locked in
21 place for transport?

22 A. There should be one on it. I guess I've never really
23 looked at it. When we unload it, our mechanics are in charge of
24 that. Mechanics always deal with the Scorpion car. They hook air
25 up to it or whatever they do, get the motor turned on and make

1 sure it runs, and they lower it and raise it.

2 Q. And it's self-contained?

3 A. Right.

4 Q. You got a power unit on the car?

5 A. Uh-huh. It's in -- down in a box on the side of it.

6 Q. Okay.

7 MS. ANDERSON: So it kind of has --

8 BY MR. CORUM:

9 Q. Just like a piece of paper folding up?

10 A. Sure.

11 Q. You just unfold it and unfold it --

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. -- and unfold it?

14 A. It just rolls itself out.

15 Q. Okay. That's answered a lot right there.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. Thank you.

18 A. No problem.

19 BY MR. TURPIN:

20 Q. Well, you tweaked my curiosity. The Scorpion car is
21 the car used to load all the equipment?

22 A. Uh-huh.

23 Q. And from one end you just --

24 A. Right.

25 Q. -- bring everything on --

1 A. Right.

2 Q. -- from one end? Okay. So you always have a ramp with
3 you no matter where you are in any location?

4 A. If -- yeah, if a gang has their own flat cars, yeah.

5 Q. Okay. All right. Earlier you mentioned two other
6 maintenance-of-way employees riding and shadowing the train.

7 A. Uh-huh.

8 Q. Could I get those names again?

9 A. Alan Wright, A-l-a-n, W-r-i-g-h-t.

10 Q. Um-hum.

11 A. And Rick or Richard -- it's a hell of a last name --
12 Teniente, T-e-n-i-e-n-t-e. Yeah, that looks right.

13 Q. Okay. And do you recall how soon they showed up?

14 A. Probably 15 minutes after me, 15, 20 minutes after me.

15 Q. Okay. From the Lincoln direction?

16 A. Right.

17 Q. So they hadn't overshot the train and come back, you
18 don't think?

19 A. Well, I'm not sure. I didn't ask them. I can't say
20 that for sure.

21 Q. Okay. All right. Well, I think that's all I have.

22 A. Sure.

23 Q. Thank you.

24 MR. TURPIN: Anybody else have anything more?

25 All right. We appreciate you coming in.

1 MR. SNYDER: No problem.

2 MR. TURPIN: Thank you so much.

3 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: BURLINGTON NORTHERN SANTA FE
 COLLISION
 Interview of Evan J. Snyder

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-11-FR-002

PLACE: Shenandoah, I.A.

DATE: April 19, 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.

Kimberly A. Hawkins
Transcriber