

## **Interview Transcripts**

(Number of pages excluding this cover sheet – 53)

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

DOCKET NO: HWY-00-FH-001  
INTERVIEW OF: Deborah Lyons  
DATE: October 26, 1999  
LOCATION: Elementary School  
School 18  
Albany, New York  
EXAMINER: Hank Hughes

This interview is conducted in conjunction with NTSB investigation HWY-00-FH-001. A school bus accident that occurred on Thursday, October 21, 1999, at approximately 10:30 eastern daylight time on Route 7 at Zicha Road, outside Albany, New York.

## 1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. HUGHES: Ma'am, would you please state  
3 your full name?

4 MS. LYONS: Deborah Lyons.

5 MR. HUGHES: And can I have a mailing address  
6 for your?

7 MS. LYONS: [REDACTED] Troy, New York  
8 12180.

9 MR. HUGHES: Do you know the phone number at  
10 the school here?

11 MS. LYONS: [REDACTED].

12 MR. HUGHES: And that is area 518, is that  
13 correct?

14 MS. LYONS: Right.

15 MR. HUGHES: We understand that you are  
16 employed by the Albany School District, is that  
17 correct?

18 MS. LYONS: Right.

19 MR. HUGHES: And what's your position with  
20 the school district?

21 MS. LYONS: Elementary teacher, second grade.

22 MR. HUGHES: Okay. I understand that, on  
23 October 21st, you were one of the staff members that  
24 participated in a field trip to the Pumpkin Patch, is

1 that correct?

2 MS. LYONS: That's correct.

3 MR. HUGHES: Okay. What I'd like you to do  
4 is talk about what you remember from before the  
5 accident, when you were loading up the bus, getting the  
6 kids on -- I understand there were two classes, yours  
7 and Mrs. Fowler's (ph) --

8 MS. LYONS: Right.

9 MR. HUGHES: -- and just, in your own words,  
10 talk us through what you remember about getting  
11 everybody ready to go.

12 MS. LYONS: Okay. Mrs. Fowler's class was  
13 first so, when they loaded the bus outside the school,  
14 they all moved to the back of the bus and we started by  
15 putting two children in each and Mrs. Fowler had one  
16 chaperon, Mrs. Hernandez (ph) sat way in the back and  
17 then the next couple seats were filled with her  
18 children and then her man chaperone, I forget his name,  
19 Rick something, then he sat back there also. I believe  
20 he was on the passenger side of the bus. And then she  
21 sat, Mrs. Fowler sat on the driver's side of the bus,  
22 towards the back, with her husband right in front of  
23 her and then my class starting filling up the seats  
24 towards the front and I sat two seats behind the driver

1 with one child and right across from me was Ms. von  
2 Dollen with two children in that seat and then there  
3 was a couple more seats of my children and then two of  
4 my chaperones sat together on the bus driver's side,  
5 towards the middle of the bus. So the chaperones were  
6 all interspersed throughout the bus and then we all  
7 checked seat belts. We all put seat belts on the kids,  
8 tightened them -- they are very loose -- they are big  
9 seat belts and we went through and made sure that all  
10 the kids had their seat belts on. The lunches and all  
11 our paraphernalia we needed were put in the back of the  
12 bus. Then the first thing we did is the bus driver  
13 asked us for a map. He was confused in how to get to  
14 the Pumpkin Patch. So I had one with me and so Mrs.  
15 Fowler's husband, Mark, went up and showed him the map  
16 to show him how to get there and went over it with him  
17 there and then he started going through the city and we  
18 were confused because we thought we were going to get  
19 on 787, the way Mark had told him, but he said, no, he  
20 was going to get on, I guess it was I-88 or whatever,  
21 going through the city. So he took us through and got  
22 us on, it was 85, to get there. But then, when we were  
23 on I-88, going towards --, he pulled off at one point  
24 because he didn't know where to go. He didn't know how

1 to get the rest of the way. So Mark went up, again,  
2 and asked him to get the map out and he would go over  
3 it with him again. And, at that time, we were really  
4 concerned because we were all saying, why did they send  
5 us a bus driver that doesn't know the way to Pumpkin  
6 Patch. Everybody should the way to Pumpkin Patch and  
7 it turned out we were just one exit away, but it was a  
8 long ways between exits. We were stopped right before  
9 Exit 23 and we had to go on to, I think it was 24.

10 MR. HUGHES: Uh-huh.

11 MS. LYONS: And then we all said, well, this  
12 is the exit here and he says, I know, I know, I know  
13 the way now and he took the right-hand ramp. When he  
14 got up to the top of the ramp, he did stop there and  
15 then he took the right off the ramp going towards the  
16 Pumpkin Patch and then, when he got to where it was red  
17 -- I mean he had picked up speed and then, when he got  
18 to where it was red, he slowed down a little bit, but  
19 then he just kept right on going through it. I was  
20 seated here, facing Ms. von Dollen --

21 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

22 MS. LYONS: -- who was right there, right  
23 across from me, in the second seat.

24 MR. HUGHES: Okay, you indicated you were in

1 the second seat back. --

2 MS. LYONS: Second seat back.

3 MR. HUGHES: -- on the left side?

4 MS. LYONS: Yeah, and I was in the aisle  
5 seat.

6 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

7 MS. LYONS: And Ms. von Dollen was in the  
8 aisle seat on the passenger's side and I was looking  
9 over her head and I could see, when we were going  
10 through it, my first thought is, he just went through  
11 the red light. I didn't say a word. I didn't say a  
12 word. It just seemed to happen so fast and then I sat  
13 the truck coming and I just remembered my relief when  
14 the front of the bus was past the line of the truck. I  
15 thought we made it and then I heard the crash and we,  
16 obviously, hadn't made it, but you could see -- I mean,  
17 they were all looking. It seemed like a lot of the  
18 kids -- everybody was looking right at the truck coming  
19 and then I just remember we were spinning around and  
20 then, well, I know Dawn -- we both thought we were  
21 going to tip over. When we landed in the grass, the  
22 bus was wobbling and it felt like you were going to tip  
23 over. Then it stopped and the first thing I remember  
24 is the bus driver saying was get the kids off the bus.

1 Then it was trying to get all these seat belts --

2 MR. HUGHES: Uh-huh.

3 MS. LYONS: -- off of hysterical little kids.

4 Do you want me to go on?

5 MR. HUGHES: Yeah.

6 MS. LYONS: We just started to get the seat  
7 belts off them because we were towards the front. I  
8 got off with the kids right in the beginning, getting  
9 the kids off and rounded off -- our kids seemed -- they  
10 were all able to walk off so they all got off and we  
11 took them over to the grassy area and we kind of  
12 huddled them all together and then, as they were taking  
13 kids off who were bleeding, I ran back on because I had  
14 a bag with me that had all the first-aid kits in it.

15 MR. HUGHES: All right, where did you keep  
16 that?

17 MS. LYONS: It was on the seat right next to  
18 me.

19 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

20 MS. LYONS: And also the children's medicines  
21 in it for my class. I went back on and get that and,  
22 as they're pulling kids off, I know Rick, the dad went  
23 with us and Mark. They were carrying kids off who were  
24 bleeding and we laid them down --



1 MR. HUGHES: It's okay. All right.

2 MS. LYONS: Then we just passed out gloves  
3 to the grown-ups. We passed out gloves and I had like  
4 four first-aid kits in there so we were just ripping  
5 all the gauze open and we're trying to just hold it on  
6 the kids who are really bleeding and then we had the  
7 other kids who were sitting with the kids just trying  
8 to calm them down. They were just rubbing them, their  
9 backs and just holding them down and a lot of my kids,  
10 they just had small bumps and little bloody noses and  
11 stuff. They were all in a little bunch and then they  
12 started to wander away from the bunch and, as we were  
13 pulling Ms. Fowler's kids off, and some of them are  
14 pretty bad, it was making the other kids who were okay  
15 hysterical.

16 MR. HUGHES: Right.

17 MS. LYONS: So we were trying to get them  
18 away and there's one little girl running around  
19 screaming, little Christina, she was bleeding around  
20 her face and she was hysterical and we were so afraid  
21 she was in shock and that she was going to run out into  
22 the road and, at this time, there were passengers  
23 stopping.

24 MR. HUGHES: Right.

1 MS. LYONS: And they were helping and we just  
2 kept passing out gauze. We just ripped open all four  
3 bags and we're just trying to hold it on people and I  
4 took a look at Sue Fowler and put tons of gauze on her  
5 forehead to keep it from bleeding. She was very  
6 confused, just saying why are we here, what are we doing  
7 here; Debbie, I don't know where we are, I don't know  
8 what's going on. And Mark was on the bus, her husband,  
9 and he was leaning over a seat. I couldn't see.  
10 There's children back there --

11 MR. HUGHES: Uh-huh.

12 MS. LYONS: -- and I told him should go see  
13 to her because she was really hysterical. So he went  
14 out with her and then it was just mass confusion of  
15 trying to get the kids who were in shock covered. We  
16 grabbed all the kids coats we could find and we're just  
17 covering kids up trying to just stop bleeding on some  
18 of them.

19 MR. HUGHES: Right.

20 MS. LYONS: And next thing, some policeman --  
21 when the policemen arrived, they -- we started talking  
22 to them. I went right over to them and I said -- I  
23 told them, you need to call our school, you need to let  
24 them what happened and gave them the phone number and

1 one of them said, why don't you go back to the car and  
2 make the phone call. I gave them Ken Choffee's (ph)  
3 name to get a hold of him right away and then we just  
4 went back to the kids and one policeman said, we need  
5 to get these kids out of here. The ones that were okay  
6 and asked me if I could just round them up. Then they  
7 had pulled over a bus from -- with a woman driver on it  
8 and they said, we need to get these kids warm, we need  
9 to get them away from the other kids so we can figure  
10 out who's hurt and who's not. So we rounded up all the  
11 kids that seemed to be okay and walked them around the  
12 bus, around the front of the bus and around this side.  
13 There was somebody lying under the bus and I still  
14 don't know who that was. It was an adult. I don't  
15 know where they came from and how they got under there.  
16 We walked around it and they put us on the -- bus and  
17 she warmed it up and we had all eighteen -- when we got  
18 on, I had all eighteen of my children on there and  
19 seven or eight of Mrs. Fowler's kids. The state  
20 policeman got on -- I think he was a state policeman --  
21 that wanted all their names and they had their name  
22 tags so he was copying all their names down off their  
23 name tags we went through the list. We double checked  
24 that list and then more kids were coming on and some of

1 -- there was two little girls in the front that they  
2 put on this bus. One of them was this little  
3 Christina, who was hysterical and she was just  
4 screaming and carrying on and I said, if these are the  
5 well kids on this bus, get her off because she needs to  
6 be seen. She was hysterical -- the same outside. So  
7 they carried her off and the little girl next to her  
8 had a head injury and she threw up and they took her  
9 off. And then they were trying to assess the kids who  
10 are on it to make sure nobody else was serious --

11 MR. HUGHES: Right.

12 MS. LYONS: -- and needed to be seen and then  
13 we sat there for quite awhile and they kept bringing  
14 more kids on as they checked them out on the site.  
15 Then another bus came. Another bus pulled up next to  
16 us and they told us we have to get off this bus and get  
17 on the other bus and so we went over onto the other  
18 bus. By then, we had more of Mrs. Fowler's kids and  
19 they were screaming. They wouldn't go towards the back  
20 of the bus. They all wanted to sit in the front.

21 MR. HUGHES: Uh-huh.

22 MS. LYONS: And because I was the only  
23 teacher there -- I had the Americorp girl with me.  
24 She's seventeen or eighteen years old. She helps me

1 out and she was one of my chaperones. She was on it  
2 too. They all wanted to sit with us and they wanted to  
3 sit in the front. We sat on this bus for a long time  
4 and they just kept bringing more and more kids and then  
5 they came and double-checked our lists again and  
6 brought the kids teddy bears. A dear officer came in  
7 with some teddy bears to calm the kids down. Oh gosh,  
8 it seems like we were on it quite awhile while they  
9 assessed the rest of the children. And then a couple  
10 of nurses or EMTs, I guess, I'm not sure what they  
11 were, they got on with us, told us we were going to a  
12 hospital nearby and, at that point, I was really  
13 concerned because Dawn -- I had seen Dawn and when we  
14 were switching buses and we stopped to talk to each  
15 other for a minute, but they told us we had to split up  
16 and I needed to stay with the kids on the bus. She  
17 went back over -- oh, I know, some policemen wanted to  
18 take her statement there.

19 MR. HUGHES: Uh-huh.

20 MS. LYONS: And then she was real concerned  
21 because -- then our bus took off without her and I was  
22 concerned because she was with me and I wanted her to  
23 stay with me and my other chaperone, Debbie Clark (ph),  
24 wasn't with me either. So they just took us through --

1 we went through the intersection and on to the  
2 hospital. And then we got to the hospital, a couple  
3 more nurses got on the bus and they took -- well, I  
4 have -- they wanted one kid at a time to come up and  
5 talk to them and they were asking questions; what their  
6 name was, where they lived, how old they were, what  
7 their birth date was, just -- they said they were just  
8 trying to assess, you know, who was seriously hurt or  
9 whatever. So I had Mrs. Fowler's kids come first  
10 because those were the ones that were more -- they were  
11 hurt worse than my kids. So they went up one at a time  
12 and they were telling her all the information. It took  
13 a long time. They had a whole row of wheelchairs there  
14 with people and one at a time they got off and got into  
15 a wheelchair and were taken inside. Then a police  
16 officer called me off and told me he wanted to talk to  
17 me by myself, but they said, wait until all the kids  
18 get off and I told them I needed to really stay with  
19 the kids because there was no other --

20 MR. HUGHES: Sure.

21 MS. LYONS: -- one there, but he said, well  
22 they're just taking them right into ambulatory care and  
23 if you just stay with me here then you can go in with  
24 them. So we stayed out in some waiting room and he

1 took down my statement and then I went in the waiting  
2 room with the other kids. They had given me a bracelet  
3 too. They had to admit all of us. Then we just went  
4 into different examining rooms and they had four or  
5 five kids in each room, about five rooms. So I went  
6 from room to room to make sure the kids knew I was  
7 there and just to talk to them all. They were all on  
8 the floor coloring and playing with the wheelchairs.  
9 They seemed to be okay. They're pretty good. Then I  
10 went into the waiting room. They put me in and then a  
11 little while later, Dawn came in so she was brought  
12 later on and then Mike Kelly (ph) from our school  
13 showed up.

14 MR. HUGHES: Right.

15 MS. LYONS: We, basically, stayed in those  
16 rooms until we were all checked. The doctor came in  
17 each room and checked out each kid and then they were  
18 taken down to a conference room. Dawn and I were the  
19 last ones to get checked because we kept leaving the  
20 room.

21 MR. HUGHES: Right.

22 MS. LYONS: And going to check on the kids  
23 and making phone calls to school and our families.  
24 Then we went down to the conference room. They had our

1 kids in the billing office, all on different computers,  
2 playing with them and they had a big conference room  
3 with kids all around a table feeding them hamburgers,  
4 hot dogs, watching videos and just playing and we sat  
5 down there for the rest of the afternoon till 5:30 with  
6 them until they were picked up.

7 MR. HUGHES: Thanks.

8 MS. LYONS: Your welcome.

9 MR. HUGHES: This is very informative and  
10 detailed. We appreciate it. I had a couple follow-up  
11 questions. With regard to the bus, did you have any  
12 equipment other than the medical bags? Did you have  
13 food or drinks or anything?

14 MS. LYONS: Right. There's a big school  
15 cooler.

16 MR. HUGHES: Right.

17 MS. LYONS: It's an orange cooler that had  
18 drinks in it and then I had a laundry basket with the  
19 box lunches the kids brought.

20 MR. HUGHES: Right.

21 MS. LYONS: And that was right here between  
22 the seats and the cooler was next to it and then -- oh,  
23 there's a box, just a cardboard box, with all the bags  
24 of school lunches in it right next to that.



1 MR. HUGHES: Okay, and would that have been  
2 stored behind the seats --

3 MS. LYONS: Behind the seats.

4 MR. HUGHES: -- or in the aisle.

5 MS. LYONS: No, they were right behind the  
6 seats back here.

7 MR. HUGHES: Okay. I think Michelle and I  
8 saw them the other day. Do me a favor. In order to  
9 help us reconstruct who was where on the bus, would you  
10 be so kind as to write in the names where you remember  
11 where people were seated? You know, you had a lot of  
12 people to think about, so we understand you won't  
13 remember all of them, but to the best of your ability,  
14 if you could do that, we would appreciate it.

15 MS. LYONS: Okay, what I remember.

16 MR. HUGHES: Michelle, did you have any  
17 questions you wanted to ask?

18 MICHELLE: No. Thank you.

19 MR. HUGHES: Marion?

20 MS. EDITH: Marion Edith with the New York  
21 City Education Department. Do you remember if any of  
22 the children stood up during the trip at all?

23 MS. LYONS: I don't remember any children  
24 standing up during the trip.

1 MS. EDITH: How would you classify their  
2 behavior during the trip? How would you say they were?

3 MS. LYONS: They were very good. They were  
4 quiet. It was a long ride. Some of them were falling  
5 asleep. Some had fallen asleep. These two little  
6 girls -- I just -- I remember they were sitting there  
7 because, at one point, I turned around to see because  
8 they were giggling and this little girl, Francesca, is  
9 usually so quiet and I turned to look -- that's why I  
10 remember it was her in the seat and said, Frankie, is  
11 that you because she was really goofing around with  
12 Maggie. I thought that was funny. Typical, they  
13 weren't real loud. They weren't real quiet. They  
14 weren't singing. Some of them, as we were leaving  
15 school, they started to sing Old MacDonald and I said,  
16 no, were not going to sing on the way; we're going to  
17 sing on the way back. It's too early in the morning to  
18 sing. I do remember saying that because they were  
19 going to start and then once they start, it was just  
20 too early. I don't remember anything really loud.

21 MS. EDITH: Did you have any opportunity at  
22 all to see the driver at all, like before the trip  
23 or --

24 MS. LYONS: Just as we were getting on the

1 bus, I made a comment to Mark. I said, Oh, God, I've  
2 had this guy before. We run a summer art program out  
3 in the school district I'm in and he drove. We always  
4 use Kennebec (ph) and he drove us to a tour down on the  
5 Hudson River and we were late for our tour because he  
6 took forever going down the highway, which was 55; he  
7 was going 45 and I was telling Mark the story that I  
8 was sitting right behind him and I was looking at the  
9 speed limit and I said, we're never going to make our  
10 tour, he's not even driving the speed limit. Everyone  
11 was passing us and the kids are getting bored and I  
12 made a comment to step on it and he floored the bus and  
13 I said, you know, I don't know why they sent us him. I  
14 said he was too old two years ago and now look at him  
15 and I can't believe he's here. I said there's another  
16 guy named Dave that I always have requested for our  
17 summer art camp and it was too bad we didn't get Dave.  
18 I had just made that comment to Mark.

19 MS. BORSHE (ph): I'm Donna Borshe and I'm  
20 also working with Marion. You had said that the driver  
21 didn't go from the school out to the thruway? He went  
22 through the City?

23 MS. LYONS: Right. He took back roads --  
24 well, he took roads through the city over to where you

1 get -- I don't -- I haven't lived in Albany so long I  
2 don't remember exactly which streets he went on. He  
3 got on, what is that I-85 that goes to I-88?

4 MS. BORSHE: Uh-huh.

5 MS. LYONS: He went through the city that way  
6 and Dawn and I were speaking, why didn't he just get on  
7 the thruway. We were confused why he didn't just get  
8 on the thruway and someone did ask me that. Either  
9 Debbie Clark or Dawn asked him and he said, no, I go  
10 this way. He goes, I know where I'm going to get on.  
11 He knew he had to get to I-88.

12 MS. BORSHE: During that time, did you get an  
13 opportunity to watch how he was driving and reacting to  
14 the things around him?

15 MS. LYONS: No, not really.

16 MS. BORSHE: As Marion had asked, the  
17 demeanor, the atmosphere on the bus was kind of on the  
18 quiet side?

19 MS. LYONS: Yeah.

20 MS. BORSHE: So the kids were somewhat  
21 excited about going to the trip, but do you think that  
22 possibly, is it possible that the atmosphere of the  
23 bus, the environment with the kids could have been a  
24 distraction to the driver?

1 MS. LYONS: No, because they -- if they had  
2 gotten really loud, I would have noticed it. I would  
3 have said something because I said right off the bat, I  
4 had said to Dawn, when they started to sing, no, we're  
5 not going to sing. We're not going to do that on the  
6 way there. I said, we'll do it on the way back. She  
7 and I -- she wasn't -- Dawn wasn't sitting there,  
8 originally, when we started out. She was back in the  
9 middle of the bus and Joanie was sitting up next to me,  
10 but Dawn and me needed to go over some plans that we're  
11 making and she had a book with her that we wanted to go  
12 through to decide what we're going to during the winter  
13 months for activities. So she switched sits with  
14 Joanie and sat up with me. Now a couple times during  
15 the trip, Debbie Clark had come up when he was confused  
16 about which way to go and she had come up to talk to us  
17 because she was discussing, why is he going through  
18 town like this when he could have gotten right on the  
19 thruway and gone a different way. She and Mark had  
20 come up when he was confused about which exit to get  
21 off.

22 MS. BORSHE: So he asked for directions right  
23 at the beginning, before you left the school?

24 MS. LYONS: Right and the Pumpkin Patch had

1 sent out a hand-out, which had directions and a little  
2 map on it in the corner and I gave that to Mark and he  
3 gave it to the guy. So when he stopped and he said he  
4 didn't know which exit to get off, I said, well, I  
5 don't have the map, Mark, he's got it up there. So he  
6 went up and pulled it out and looked at it again and so  
7 Mark explained to him and then once he got off, he knew  
8 right where it was. Plus, there's the big orange sign.

9 MS. BORSHE: Thank you.

10 MR. HUGHES: Debbie, we really appreciate you  
11 taking the time and you have been very helpful. Is  
12 there anything we haven't talked about that you would  
13 like to discuss that you think is important?

14 MS. LYONS: The police had asked us if he was  
15 wearing glasses when we were at the hospital and I had  
16 no idea. I couldn't remember if he had them on or had  
17 them off.

18 MR. HUGHES: Okay. Did you notice anything  
19 at all about his general demeanor during or prior to  
20 the trip, the bus driver's?

21 MS. LYONS: No, not really. Nothing out of  
22 the ordinary.

23 MR. HUGHES: Okay. Anything else?

24 MS. LYONS: No.

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Official Reporter

Dated: OCTOBER 26, 1999

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

DOCKET NO: HWY-00-FH-001  
INTERVIEW OF: Dawn Marie Von Dollen  
DATE: October 26, 1999  
LOCATION: Elementary School  
School 18  
Albany, New York  
EXAMINER: Hank Hughes

This interview is conducted in conjunction with NTSB investigation HWY-00-FH-001. A school bus accident that occurred on Thursday, October 21, 1999, at approximately 10:30 eastern daylight time on Route 7 at Zicha Road, outside Albany, New York.



1 PROCEEDINGS

2 MR. HUGHES: Ma'am, would you please tell me  
3 what your full name is and spell your last name?

4 MS. VON DOLLEN: Sure. My name is Dawn Marie  
5 Von Dollen. V-as in Victor-O-N capital D-O-L-L-E-N.

6 MR. HUGHES: May I call you Dawn?

7 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yes.

8 MR. HUGHES: Okay. Can I have the mailing  
9 address for you, Dawn?

10 MS. VON DOLLEN: Sure. It's [REDACTED]

11 [REDACTED]

12 Albany, New York 12208.

13 MR. HUGHES: Can I have a phone number at the  
14 school here for you, if you know it?

15 MS. VON DOLLEN: I think it's [REDACTED] I  
16 believe it is.

17 MR. HUGHES: And that's area code 518.

18 MS. VON DOLLEN: 518, uh-huh.

19 MR. HUGHES: Thank you very much. I  
20 understand that you are employed by the Albany School  
21 District, is that correct?

22 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yes.

23 MR. HUGHES: And what's your position?

24 MS. VON DOLLEN: I am the special education

1 teacher in the classroom.

2 MR. HUGHES: And I understand that you were  
3 one of the staff members that participated in the field  
4 trip the day of the accident.

5 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yes, yes.

6 MR. HUGHES: Can you tell you me what  
7 happened?

8 MS. VON DOLLEN: We were getting off the exit  
9 and I'm not sure if he knew where he was going or not.  
10 That I can't determine. We were going through and one  
11 of the chaperones said to me, he's not stopping and he  
12 went through the stop sign and then the dump truck came  
13 at us and hit. We spun around and then we ended up  
14 facing the other -- we were on the other side of the  
15 road facing the other direction and then, at first, it  
16 seemed like everybody was quiet and then the bus driver  
17 got out of the bus, came back in and said, we have to  
18 get the kids off the bus. And then we started getting  
19 the kids off the bus and then somebody said, there's  
20 blood back here. So then we tried to get the kids off,  
21 as many as we could and bandage up the ones that we  
22 could and somebody called for a paramedic and the  
23 ambulance and everybody came shortly thereafter. It  
24 was just kind of a mess. We kind of separated the kids

1 that were okay into one group on the lawn and the kids  
2 that were hurting we just bounced around from child to  
3 child trying to help them the best that we could with  
4 the supplies that we had. We had our nurse's kit that  
5 we bring on field trips so we had some gauze and some  
6 Band-Aids and things like that. I escorted one of the  
7 teachers off the bus that was bleeding, but she  
8 couldn't remember where we were going or what happened.  
9 She just knew that her kids were hurt and she didn't  
10 know what to do.

11 MR. HUGHES: Do you remember who that teacher  
12 was?

13 MS. VON DOLLEN: Sue Fowler (ph).

14 -MR. HUGHES: Okay. Can we go back to a  
15 little bit before the trip started? What was the  
16 nature of the field trip?

17 MS. VON DOLLEN: We were on our way to the  
18 pumpkin patch. It's a trip we take every year. We go  
19 and pick pumpkins and go on a hay ride. I mean, most  
20 of the inner city kids don't get to see these types of  
21 things and it's really fun and we talk about it after  
22 and we write about it and do all the follow-up  
23 activities with and they get to take a pumpkin, a gourd  
24 and, I'm sorry, squash, I think it's squash and Indian

1 corn. They get to take some things home with them. We  
2 eat lunch and have a nice day.

3 MR. HUGHES: Do you get to drink some apple  
4 cider?

5 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah. Usually, we get  
6 donuts and cider for the kids.

7 MR. HUGHES: Oh, that's nice. When you were  
8 getting ready to start the trip, you boarded the buses  
9 here at school?

10 MS. VON DOLLEN: Uh-huh.

11 MR. HUGHES: And would that be out in front  
12 of the school?

13 MS. VON DOLLEN: We were over here.

14 MR. HUGHES: Number 3 and 4 doors? I think  
15 they got the doors marked.

16 MS. VON DOLLEN: We just went out by the door  
17 right by the office.

18 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

19 MS. VON DOLLEN: Not on this side, on the  
20 other side.

21 MR. HUGHES: I understand, yeah.

22 MS. VON DOLLEN: And Ms. Fowler's class went  
23 on first.

24 MR. HUGHES: Uh-huh.

1 MS. VON DOLLEN: Then our class went on  
2 second. We were loading up the back. We got on. We  
3 walked in. We went through the whole bus.

4 MR. HUGHES: Uh-huh.

5 MS. VON DOLLEN: And made sure all the kids'  
6 seat belts were buckled. Some of the kids had the  
7 buckles on really loose. I said, you need to tighten  
8 that up. I said, if we're in an accident, you're going  
9 to fall out.

10 MR. HUGHES: Right.

11 MS. VON DOLLEN: So they buckled them all in.  
12 We went up and down the aisles. The teachers weren't  
13 buckled. We weren't buckled in.

14 MR. HUGHES: Right.

15 MS. VON DOLLEN: We like to be able to move  
16 around in case we have to.

17 MR. HUGHES: Right.

18 MS. VON DOLLEN: So we sat on the bus. Do  
19 you want me to keep going or?

20 MR. HUGHES: Sure, you're doing fine.

21 MS. VON DOLLEN: Okay. I'm a little nervous.

22 MR. HUGHES: Don't be. We appreciate it.  
23 Just take your time.

24 MS. VON DOLLEN: So we all sat, ready to go,

1 we're on our way and what happened was we were on the  
2 highway and he wasn't sure -- he had our directions to  
3 the pumpkin patch -- I don't think he was sure what  
4 exit to get off at --

5 MR. HUGHES: Yeah.

6 MS. VON DOLLEN: -- so one mother, the one  
7 grandmother that was there was giving him directions  
8 because she had been up there before. So then we had  
9 to pull off to the side of the road because we thought  
10 we passed the exit, but we were supposed to get off  
11 Exit 23 --

12 MR. HUGHES: Uh-huh.

13 MS. VON DOLLEN: -- so then we got back on  
14 the highway and then we kept going and we got off the  
15 exit and then when we got through and the kids saw the  
16 pumpkin patch, and they're like, yeah, we're here. And  
17 I don't know if some of them got excited at that point  
18 and may have taken their buckle off like they thought  
19 they were there. You know how kids get. I don't know,  
20 but they were really excited. We said come on, we got  
21 to sit down, we're not there, take your time -- not  
22 take your time -- we're almost there and then we hit.

23 MR. HUGHES: Right. When you were getting on  
24 the bus, what I understand are, primarily, two classes,

1 Ms. Fowler's and Ms. Lyons' class?

2 MS. VON DOLLEN: Uh-huh.

3 MR. HUGHES: Did the kids sit by class on the  
4 bus?

5 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yes.

6 MR. HUGHES: Who sat where?

7 MS. VON DOLLEN: Mrs. Fowler's class sat in  
8 the back of the bus. Mrs. Lyons' and my class sat in  
9 the front. We were right where the bus hit -- I wish I  
10 had a picture to show you -- the bus hit probably right  
11 around here.

12 MR. HUGHES: Okay. You can use a pencil if  
13 you'd like and indicate where --

14 MS. VON DOLLEN: Somewhere around here.

15 MR. HUGHES: Okay, and --

16 MS. VON DOLLEN: This was like the cut-off to  
17 where our class was because I remember once we hit, one  
18 of the little boys in our class -- he stood up because  
19 he was sleeping at the time. He stood up and he just  
20 opened his eyes and he started to scream and he had  
21 glass in his hair.

22 MR. HUGHES: Okay, about what seat was he  
23 sitting?

24 MS. VON DOLLEN: He was around here. Like he

1 was right at that middle point where that shattered  
2 window was.

3 MR. HUGHES: Okay, all right, and you  
4 indicated, for the purpose of the interview, that it's  
5 the right side, rear portion of the bus, is that  
6 correct?

7 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yes. This is the side. I  
8 was on this side. I was sitting right here.

9 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

10 MS. VON DOLLEN: It was Douglas, Tyler and  
11 me.

12 MR. HUGHES: You can write their name in  
13 there, that would be fine.

14 MS. VON DOLLEN: And then Mrs. Lyons was  
15 right there.

16 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

17 MS. VON DOLLEN: I believe -- I'm trying to  
18 remember -- if Kim's grandmother, Debbie Clark, she was  
19 the other adult --

20 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

21 MS. VON DOLLEN: -- she was standing here,  
22 but I can't remember if she sat down because she said,  
23 he's not stopping and then I don't remember what  
24 happened to her after that.



1 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

2 MS. VON DOLLEN: I don't know if she sat or  
3 what she did.

4 MR. HUGHES: Okay. Why don't you draw a line  
5 out to the side and indicate that Ms. Clark was, at  
6 your last recollection, was at that --

7 MS. VON DOLLEN: You'd have to ask her.

8 MR. HUGHES: Sure, we will.

9

10 MS. ?: Sort of to give you a reference  
11 point, there's an emergency door. Do you know what  
12 door I'm talking about?

13 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yep, that's -- you know  
14 what's funny is that's where -- on this side -- this is  
15 wherever the emergency door was, around here  
16 somewhere --

17 MS. ?: Uh-huh.

18 MS. VON DOLLEN: -- I was sitting in that  
19 spot. Debbie and I were sitting in --

20 MR. HUGHES: In the fold-down seat or the one  
21 in front of it?

22 MS. VON DOLLEN: There was one that got  
23 squished. One of our Americorp (ph) was there. I  
24 switched seats with her because I wanted to talk to

1 Debbie about our plans for school.

2 MR. HUGHES: Uh-huh.

3 MS. VON DOLLEN: So I ended up moving up  
4 here, she moved back here and she ended up spraining  
5 her thumb. I don't know why. I don't know how.

6 MS. ?: There's an emergency --

7 MS. VON DOLLEN: Is this where the emergency  
8 door is?

9 MS. ?: Let's see. If we go -- right about  
10 here.

11 MS. VON DOLLEN: Oh, okay. Oh, wow.

12 MS. ?: Right there.

13 MS. VON DOLLEN: So right about here.

14 MS. ?: This is actually a longer bus than it  
15 is, so you just have to --

16 MS. VON DOLLEN: Oh, okay.

17 MS. ?: -- look at it -- and the seats are a  
18 little off-set.

19 MS. VON DOLLEN: All right. -- confused --

20 MS. ?: So, if you look at the door there,  
21 then that would be seat, about seat number five back on  
22 that side.

23 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah, we were about right  
24 there. Either this one or this one. I can't remember.

1 Then I moved up, Joanie moved back and then Debbie was  
2 wondering where he was going, because they're both  
3 Debbie's; Debbie Lyons is the teacher and Debbie Clark  
4 is the grandmother.

5 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

6 MS. VON DOLLEN: Debbie Clark was wondering  
7 where is he going. So then she came up here to us and  
8 we were trying to figure out what was going on.

9 MR. HUGHES: Right. Okay. Do you recall  
10 where any of the other adults were seated on the bus?

11 MS. VON DOLLEN: I believe Mrs. Hernandez  
12 (ph) who was severely hurt, I believe, she was in the  
13 very back. I'm not -- don't quote me on it because I'm  
14 not really sure. Mrs. Fowler was on this side.

15 MR. HUGHES: Okay. When you indicated that  
16 Mrs. Hernandez, you mean, the last seat on the bus?

17 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yes, the back-back.

18 MR. HUGHES: On which side?

19 MS. VON DOLLEN: You know what, I don't know.

20 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

21 MS. VON DOLLEN: I don't know that.

22 MR. HUGHES: All right, that's fine. I don't  
23 know is a good answer.

24 MS. VON DOLLEN: I just didn't think to pay

1 attention. Maybe they might remember. I know Mrs.  
2 Fowler was on this side because she got up --

3 MR. HUGHES: Okay, you indicated the right  
4 side back.

5 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah. We were --

6 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

7 MS. VON DOLLEN: -- her and I were both on  
8 the side that got hit.

9 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

10 MS. VON DOLLEN: Her husband, I'm not sure.  
11 He might have been on this side, I don't know. You'd  
12 have to ask him that.

13 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

14 MS. VON DOLLEN: I don't remember.

15 MR. HUGHES: Anybody else?

16 MS. ?: Were you sitting -- was Ms. Lyons  
17 sitting with a young girl named Kimmie (ph).

18 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yep, Kimmie --. And I don't  
19 know if I hit Tyler or what because his shoulder was  
20 sore. I don't remember what happened. I remember  
21 banging my face and then after that I don't know.

22 MS. ?: Did you bang your face on the seat in  
23 front of you?

24 MS. VON DOLLEN: I might have. I wear

1 glasses. These aren't the ones, they're broken. I  
2 wear glasses and I had the glass imprint right here and  
3 right here and lasted for most of the day so I must  
4 have went forward. I lost my headband. I lost  
5 everything. So I don't know what happened. I don't  
6 remember.

7 MR. HUGHES: Did you get any other injuries?

8 MS. VON DOLLEN: I have arm pain, back pain,  
9 numbness in my right arm, headaches.

10 MR. HUGHES: Did you have it checked out at  
11 the hospital?

12 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah.

13 MR. HUGHES: Are you okay?

14 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah, they gave me an anti-  
15 inflammatory and they said if it doesn't get better, to  
16 come back. The headache hasn't gone away though. I  
17 think it's just stress.

18 MR. HUGHES: That may well be. How are you  
19 feeling in that regard?

20 MS. VON DOLLEN: Tired, very tired.

21 MR. HUGHES: Have you had a chance to talk to  
22 anybody?

23 MS. VON DOLLEN: We talk to each other.  
24 Debbie and I talk to each other about it.

1 MR. HUGHES: That's good, that helps.

2 MS. VON DOLLEN: And everybody's been calling  
3 and worried and --

4 MR. HUGHES: Well, they care about you, I'm  
5 sure.

6 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah and I remember the one  
7 that was severely hurt, Bianca, she was in the very  
8 back and then it was Amanda, the one who got her legs  
9 broken. Both of her legs were broken.

10 MR. HUGHES: Right.

11 MS. VON DOLLEN: It went Bianca and then  
12 Amanda.

13 MR. HUGHES: Why don't you write that in.  
14 And that's on --

15 MS. VON DOLLEN: I believe.

16 MR. HUGHES: -- the right rear --

17 MS. VON DOLLEN: That's what I was told by  
18 them.

19 MR. HUGHES: Okay. We'll put it in as  
20 tentative.

21 MS. VON DOLLEN: See, if I saw the picture  
22 where the actual window was hit, I could tell you  
23 better who was where.

24 MR. HUGHES: Let me ask you this. I know

1 you, and you've already clearly said it, when you got  
2 on the bus, you and your colleagues went back and  
3 checked as far as seats and that sort of thing, you and  
4 the other teachers and chaperones checked the kids, as  
5 far as the seat belts -- in fact, the kids have said  
6 everybody came in checked, snugged them up and that  
7 sort of thing --

8 MS. VON DOLLEN: Uh-huh.

9 MR. HUGHES: -- is it possible that during  
10 the ride, the kids unbuckled, any of them?

11 MS. VON DOLLEN: That's possible. I can't  
12 say that they haven't, I mean, we always tell them,  
13 keep your seat -- I know our kids, most of them were  
14 buckled. They know better. I don't know, but I think  
15 some of them might have gotten excited when they saw  
16 the pumpkin patch sign and --

17 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

18 MS. VON DOLLEN: -- because I remember Kimmie  
19 stood up and I said, Kimmie, we're not there yet, sit  
20 down, sit down, we're almost there.

21 MR. HUGHES: Yeah.

22 MS. VON DOLLEN: But they see a -- they get  
23 excited.

24 MR. HUGHES: It's possible, they could have

1 unbuckled in anticipation of getting there?

2 MS. VON DOLLEN: Possible.

3 MR. HUGHES: Okay and, again, you know,  
4 it's --

5 MS. VON DOLLEN: I probably should have -- I  
6 didn't --

7 MR. HUGHES: You had a lot going through your  
8 mind, we understand. Do you have any specific  
9 recollection of the kids in the back of the bus, as far  
10 as seeing whether they had seat belts on when you left?

11 MS. VON DOLLEN: No and the sad part is I  
12 didn't even know these two were back there. When -- I  
13 thought we had gotten everybody off the bus and when  
14 the paramedics came, they had gotten them out, but I  
15 didn't know they were back there.

16 MR. HUGHES: Would Mr. Hernandez or Mrs. --  
17 would they have been the folks that helped those kids  
18 out.

19 MS. VON DOLLEN: The paramedics had to take  
20 them out, I believe.

21 MR. HUGHES: Yeah. I mean, as far as when  
22 they got on the bus, were they the chaperones that  
23 would have looked after the children in that area?

24 MS. VON DOLLEN: Probably. See, we each --



1       there were four of us. In Debbie's class, there was  
2       four of us so we divided them into groups.

3               MR. HUGHES: Uh-huh.

4               MS. VON DOLLEN: And then I'm sure Sue did  
5       the same thing. That's just standard. Each chaperone  
6       gets four or five kids to look after, however many  
7       there is. We only had eighteen kids that day.

8               MR. HUGHES: Right. You indicated when you  
9       went on the trip, you took a first-aid box?

10              MS. VON DOLLEN: Uh-huh.

11              MR. HUGHES: A first-aid kit --

12              MS. VON DOLLEN: Uh-huh.

13              MR. HUGHES: -- do you have any trained  
14       first-aiders who accompanied you?

15              MS. VON DOLLEN: Not to my knowledge.  
16       Debbie's sons are Boy Scouts.

17              MR. HUGHES: Well, that counts.

18              MS. VON DOLLEN: So that helps. Not to my  
19       knowledge. I'm not trained in it. I had a kid laying  
20       unconscious and they asked me if I knew CPR and I  
21       didn't. I didn't know what to do. They don't train us  
22       in that kind of thing, which maybe they should.

23              MR. HUGHES: Yeah.

24              MS. VON DOLLEN: I had no idea. You just,

1 you know, you say okay, just make sure they lay still  
2 and don't move so that's what we tried to do. A lot of  
3 head injuries though. A lot of the kids were bleeding  
4 from the head, a lot of headaches. We've had a lot of  
5 headaches today. All of us have had headaches and I  
6 don't even know if they bumped their head or not. I  
7 just think it's the whole stress thing.

8 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

9 MS. VON DOLLEN: A lot of broken legs. I  
10 think a lot of kids' legs got caught or something in  
11 between those seats, I don't know and a lot of bumps  
12 and bruises on the front.

13 MR. HUGHES: Had you ever ridden the bus with  
14 this driver before?

15 MS. VON DOLLEN: I haven't, but Debbie has  
16 and she can tell you a lot more on that.

17 MR. HUGHES: Debbie's last name is?

18 MS. VON DOLLEN: Lyon.

19 MR. HUGHES: Lyon, okay.

20 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah, she has before.

21 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

22 MS. VON DOLLEN: And just my opinion, I'm not  
23 really sure his age matters. I think it was an  
24 accident and accidents happen. Personally, I think if

1 they are going to hire bus drivers, they should know  
2 where they're going. I think that had something to do  
3 with it. I don't think he knew the route, but this is  
4 my opinion.

5 MR. HUGHES: Yeah.

6 MS. VON DOLLEN: Usually -- I know how I am.  
7 If I don't know where I'm going, I'm not careful.

8 MR. HUGHES: Yeah.

9 MS. VON DOLLEN: You know -- well, not that  
10 I'm not careful, but sometimes you don't recognize  
11 what's around you.

12 MR. HUGHES: Sure.

13 MS. VON DOLLEN: I don't know.

14 MR. HUGHES: Well, that's a very good point.  
15 In fact, one of the folks that Michelle and I worked  
16 with is looking at exactly that issue so you brought up  
17 a good point and it's something we are looking at and  
18 something we're going to do something about.

19 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah. I mean, part of me  
20 feels sorry for him just because it was an accident.

21 MR. HUGHES: Well, sure, sure and we're not  
22 blaming, placing blame on anybody, but the point is we  
23 have the safety of our most precious commodity, the  
24 kids and you so --

1 MS. VON DOLLEN: I know.

2 MR. HUGHES: -- we're looking at that  
3 seriously and I think you brought up a good point.  
4 Michelle, did you have anything you wanted to follow-up  
5 on?

6 MS. ?: You said that there was a young boy  
7 laying unconscious. Do you remember where he was?

8 MS. VON DOLLEN: Emanuel (ph), no.

9 MS. ?: That was Emanuel?

10 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah, Emanuel Holton (ph),  
11 or no, I'm sorry. I keep calling him Emanuel Holton,  
12 but he's in Sue Fowler's class.

13 MS. ?: Okay. Do you know where --

14 MS. VON DOLLEN: I didn't bring him off the  
15 bus. I just saw him on the ground. Someone else must  
16 have brought him off.

17 MR. HUGHES: Emanuel Holton, H-O-L-T-O-N?

18 MS. VON DOLLEN: Is it Holton, yeah.

19 MR. HUGHES: Yeah.

20 MS. VON DOLLEN: Okay.

21 MS. ?: And you're saying that he was just  
22 laying on the ground outside when you saw him?

23 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah. Someone, I think,  
24 brought him out though. I don't know who. We just

1 kind of walked all the kids off as much -- most of the  
2 kids -- in our class, all of the kids were able to walk  
3 off the bus. Some of them -- I had trouble lifting  
4 one, one little girl. I needed Mark Seger's (ph) help.  
5 He was able to do that. I know he said he got knocked  
6 out and was unconscious, but to my recollection, he  
7 popped up right away and was helping everybody so I  
8 don't know. I don't know how long he was out for and  
9 he has an injury on his leg so I don't know. It all  
10 just all kind of happened so fast.

11 MS. ?: Absolutely.

12 MS. VON DOLLEN: And most of the kids -- I  
13 don't really know her class that well so to know their  
14 names -- I knew their faces -- to see their faces, but  
15 Emanuel was laying on the ground and he was just  
16 unconscious.

17 MS. ?: Uh-huh.

18 MS. VON DOLLEN: And then the paramedics came  
19 over when they got there. I sat with him until then.

20 MS. ?: Okay and everybody went out the front  
21  
22 of the bus then?

23 MS. VON DOLLEN: Uh-huh.

24 MS. ?: Most of the --

1 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yep, everyone went out the  
2 front. We didn't even think to get the back open. It  
3 was like the front door was open and that's the way we  
4 went.

5 MS. ?: Did you have to unbuckle most of the  
6 children to get them out?

7 MS. VON DOLLEN: Uh-huh, because it was hard  
8 to unbuckle them.

9 MS. ?: Why was it hard to unbuckle them?

10 MS. VON DOLLEN: Well, just because everybody  
11 was scared and trying to get out.

12 MS. ?: Uh-huh.

13 MS. VON DOLLEN: I remember one of the  
14 buckles, they didn't fit together. I think it was like  
15 the wrong buckle. It wouldn't go in so I had to switch  
16 one kid into another seat buckle because the clasp  
17 wouldn't go in right. It kept on popping. I don't  
18 know if they were all made the same or certain ones,  
19 certain buckles fit into certain slots, I don't know  
20 that.

21 MS. ?: Uh-huh. And was that up in towards  
22 the front --

23 MS. VON DOLLEN: That was in the middle.  
24 That was in the middle somewhere. I'm trying to think.

1 It was in the beginning of our trip.

2 MS. ? : When you first put them in their  
3 seat?

4 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah. It was someone in the  
5 middle and I can't even tell you who right now or  
6 where.

7 MS. ? : Was it by the window or by the aisle  
8 or in the middle?

9 MS. VON DOLLEN: It was by the aisle.

10 MS. ? : So you switched the child then?

11 MS. VON DOLLEN: Uh-huh.

12 MS. ? : Okay.

13 MS. VON DOLLEN: Because he was saying, it  
14 keeps unbuckling. So I said, okay and we switched and  
15 that was that.

16 MS. ? : Oh, okay.

17 MS. VON DOLLEN: I wish I could remember  
18 more.

19 MS. ? : That's quite a bit that you've  
20 already told us.

21 MS. VON DOLLEN: A lot of the kids, some of  
22 the kids were sleeping though and I wonder maybe that's  
23 why they didn't get hurt. You know where I told --  
24 Elijah -- I think you interviewed -- already --

1 MS. ? : Uh-huh.

2 MS. VON DOLLEN: -- I know he was sleeping  
3 and I know Elijah was sitting right next to him,  
4 wherever his seat was. He could tell you.

5 MS. ? : Yeah, he was able to tell us. I  
6 think he said --

7 MS. VON DOLLEN: Most of them were in shock,  
8 I think.

9 MS. ? : Yeah, -- said he was sitting here and  
10 Elijah was sitting next to him.

11 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah, uh-huh.

12 MS. ? : And then he had --

13 MS. VON DOLLEN: Because I was sitting right  
14 here then. Then that's where I was sitting. I was  
15 sitting there. Is that where the emergency exit is?

16 MS. ? : Uh-huh. It should be, uh-huh. And  
17 then he said that you had moved up here.

18 MS. VON DOLLEN: Uh-huh.

19 MS. ? : Most of the kids had placed you two,  
20 you and Ms. Lyons --

21 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah, because we were  
22 talking throughout the whole trip and then we saw the  
23 truck coming.

24 MS. ? : So then you switched up here and --



1 MS. VON DOLLEN: Uh-huh.

2 MS. ?: -- Mrs. Clark switched back to where  
3 you were?

4 MS. VON DOLLEN: No. Mrs. Clark and I were  
5 sitting together.

6 MS. ?: Uh-huh.

7 MS. VON DOLLEN: Then I switched with and  
8 Joanie was up here, Joanie Edwards. She was our  
9 volunteer. She was sitting here. She moved back here  
10 so it was the two of them sitting. Then he didn't know  
11 where he was going, so Debbie came up and took over and  
12 that was that.

13 MS. ?: Oh, okay. So we would think that  
14 Joanie Edwards was sitting back here.

15 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah, Joanie was sitting  
16 where I was and she has a sprained thumb and we haven't  
17 talked to her since. She hasn't been in since so I  
18 don't know.

19 MR. HUGHES: Marion, do you want to introduce  
20 yourself? If you have any questions, feel free.

21 MS. EDICK (ph): Thank you for talking to us.

22 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah, sure.

23 MS. EDICK: My name is Marion Edick. I'm a -  
24 - Director of Pupil Transportation. I'm with the New

1 York State Education Department and the reason I'm here  
2 is similar to NTSB. What we do is we are responsible  
3 for developing the driver training programs that teach  
4 drivers how to drive a vehicle safely with children on  
5 it, about loading and unloading and crossing the kids  
6 safely, this sort of thing. And what we try to do when  
7 something unfortunate like this happens is we try to  
8 learn from it, what we can, so that we can revise our  
9 training program to make it better. So you pointed out  
10 something certainly that is a concern to us; the fact  
11 that the driver didn't appear to know where he was  
12 going.

13 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah, whether he did or not,  
14 I don't know that.

15 MS. EDICK: It didn't appear.

16 MS. VON DOLLEN: That's just my opinion.

17 MS. EDICK: And that's certainly a concern  
18 and that's something we'll look into. Do you have --  
19 you said or was it Mrs. Clark, as you were nearing the  
20 intersection, Mrs. Clark realized that the driver  
21 needed some sort of assistance so she went forward?

22 MS. VON DOLLEN: No-no, no-no. Before we got  
23 to the exit, he -- we weren't sure if we passed the  
24 exit --

1 MS. EDICK: Okay. Oh, gotcha. That's right.

2 MS. VON DOLLEN: -- she talked to him and  
3 made sure. Then we got off Exit 23 and came down the  
4 ramp and she was standing back with me --

5 MS. EDICK: Okay.

6 MS. VON DOLLEN: -- and then she said, he's  
7 not stopping and then I don't know what happened to  
8 her. I looked out the window and saw the truck and  
9 then I remember spinning, but I don't know what  
10 happened to her after that. You'd have to ask her. We  
11 gave a statement to the police because we had gotten  
12 separated from the bus of healthy children because we  
13 were taking a statement and her and I had to take a  
14 separate bus to the hospital after we got all the kids'  
15 belongings.

16 MS. EDICK: So the kids really seemed to be  
17 well behaved, would you say, during the trip?

18 MS. VON DOLLEN: Oh, yeah, yeah. We have a  
19 good group. We've moved up with these kids so Debbie  
20 and I had our class last year, the same class. We had  
21 them in first grade and we moved up to second. And  
22 Sue's class, to my knowledge, we didn't have a problem  
23 with them either. Everybody was having a good time,  
24 singing, you know, very excited.

1           MR. HUGHES: Is there anything we haven't  
2 discussed that you think is important that you might  
3 want to relate.

4           MS. VON DOLLEN: I just hope this doesn't  
5 affect other field trips, you know. Everybody's  
6 talking about how, oh, why did you go so far away.  
7 Well, these kids don't get to see those things and I  
8 think it's -- I know it's a terrible thing that  
9 happened and I wish it never did, but -- have you had a  
10 chance to talk to Sue Fowler or any of them yet or  
11 you're kind of waiting?

12           MR. HUGHES: No, not yet.

13           MS. VON DOLLEN: Because I know the  
14 newspapers have and everything. I don't know what  
15 happened to the bus driver after we hit. He came back  
16 and said, we have to get the kids off the bus and I  
17 don't remember seeing him again. I guess -- craziness.  
18 Were some of the seats smooshed (ph) together?

19           MR. HUGHES: Yes, in the back of the bus.  
20 The seats next to the rear most seats --

21           MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah, because I remember  
22 trying to get back there and I couldn't, but I didn't  
23 bother to go any further.

24           MR. HUGHES: Yeah, the right side of the rear

1 of the bus was caved in and when Michelle and I did the  
2 inspection of the bus the other day, we noticed there  
3 was one seat forward of the rear most seats was -- they  
4 were just about touching the back, maybe an inch apart.

5 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah.

6 MS. ?: In order for me to get back there, I  
7 had to climb up over the seat to get back there and it  
8 was --

9 MS. VON DOLLEN: Yeah, because I remember  
10 looking through the bus to get all the kids' things and  
11 I stopped and I don't even remember why I didn't go any  
12 further. Some of the coats were wet.

13 MR. HUGHES: Do you have any specific  
14 recollection of the emergency medical people or the  
15 fire and police department's activities?

16 MS. VON DOLLEN: Ah, they were wonderful.  
17 They, I mean, they were just amazing. They just went  
18 around and took care of everybody. I mean, they were  
19 even worried about us. They kept saying, are you okay.  
20 They responded quickly. They took care of the kids. I  
21 thought they were terrific. They were right on the  
22 scene. Maybe they weren't, but it felt like they were  
23 right there. I mean, it was a long time. It felt  
24 like, okay, where is everybody and then all of a sudden

1 everybody kept coming. And the other thing was my  
2 concern there was a bus driver, a woman, from another  
3 bus company, stopped to help us and she was told she  
4 was fired because her dispatcher said, if you pick up  
5 those kids, you're fired. Well, she did. The troopers  
6 wanted her assistance. She helped us out and they  
7 threatened to fire her. Well, I don't know what  
8 happened to her.

9 MR. HUGHES: Well, we have a man here who's  
10 trying to help in that regard from the Safety Board.

11 MS. VON DOLLEN: Because that's terrible. She  
12 shouldn't have lost her job for that and she still  
13 helped us out. She was great.

14 MR. HUGHES: Well, I think we're in the  
15 process of trying to right that wrong.

16 MS. VON DOLLEN: Okay, good, but there was a  
17 lot of people there. The police were very helpful.  
18 They took care of the kids. It's hard getting all  
19 their names and everything. The ones that were okay.

20 MR. HUGHES: Uh-huh.

21 MS. VON DOLLEN: We had trouble finding Sue  
22 Fowler's medication bag. Something I think we might do  
23 different. You know, keep it all in one spot where we  
24 all know where it is. Like we had our medications, but

1 she didn't have -- I didn't know where she put hers.

2 MR. HUGHES: Right. When you say medication,  
3 do you mean for her, as an individual, or her children?

4 MS. VON DOLLEN: Her children.

5 MR. HUGHES: Okay.

6 MS. VON DOLLEN: Their asthma medications or  
7 ADHD meds. We had all that, but I don't know where  
8 hers were, if they were in her bag or what. The police  
9 took us, Debbie and I, aside and took our statements.  
10 I don't know what happened to the bus driver or the  
11 truck driver for that matter. I don't remember seeing  
12 them. There was just so many people there and they  
13 were right on it. I mean they were so good with the  
14 kids and they were scared. The kids were so scared.

15 MR. HUGHES: Dawn, we appreciate you taking  
16 the time to talk to us.

17 (Whereupon, the interview concluded at 12:36 p.m.)

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceedings before: NTSB

In the Matter of: LIVE TAPES

were held as herein appears and that this is the original transcript thereof for the file of the Department, Commission, Administrative Law Judge or the Agency.

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Official Reporter

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