

DCA13MR002
Conrail - Shared Assets
Derailment/Hazardous Material Release
Paulsboro, New Jersey
November 30, 2012

NTSB - Interview of Conrail CSXT 8817 Train Engineer

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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CONRAIL DERAILMENT/HAZARDOUS

MATERIAL RELEASE

PAULSBORO, NEW JERSEY

NOVEMBER 30, 2012

Docket No.: DCA-13-MR-002

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Interview of: MARK MATHER

Conrail
Camden Yard Office
Camden, New Jersey

Saturday,
December 1, 2012

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: TED T. TURPIN
Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

TED T. TURPIN
National Transportation Safety Board
1515 West 190th Street
Gardena, California 90248

** PII **

** PII **

ROBERT TOMASZEWSKI
Operating Practices Inspector
Federal Railroad Administration

RYAN KEATING
Manager, Field Operations
Conrail

JOHN GAROFALO
Superintendent, Operations
Conrail

MEL WICHELMANN, JR.
TOM HEBERT
Safety Task Force
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET)

WILLIAM H. BATES
Safety Task Force
United Transportation Union (UTU)

RICHARD VOGT
Union Representative
BLET

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:35 a.m.)

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2
3 MR. TURPIN: My name is Ted Turpin, and we are
4 conducting interviews in connection with a Conrail derailment at
5 the Paulsboro movable bridge that happened at about 7:05 a.m.,
6 November 30th, 2013 [sic]. The NTSB Accident Number is DCA-13-MR-
7 004 [sic]. Today is December 1st, 2012, and it's about 9:35 a.m.
8 We're at the Camden Yard Office, and this interview is with Mark
9 Mather, the engineer on the train.

10 Okay. Mark, do you understand that this interview will
11 be recorded?

12 MR. MATHER: Yes, sir.

13 MR. TURPIN: All right. Would you please state your
14 name and spell it?

15 MR. MATHER: Yes. It's Mark Mather, M-a-t-h-e-r, and
16 Mark is spelled with a K.

17 MR. TURPIN: All right. Thank you. And next, we'll
18 continue around the room and have everybody.

19 MR. VOGT: Richard Vogt, BLEET, union rep.

20 MR. KEATING: Ryan Keating, Manager, Field Operations,
21 Conrail.

22 MR. TOMASZEWSKI: Bob Tomaszewski, OP Inspector, FRA.

23 MR. WICHELMANN: Mel Wichelmann, Jr., BLEET, Safety Task
24 Force.

25 MR. HEBERT: Tom Hebert, H-e-b-e-r-t, BLEET, Safety Task

1 Force.

2 MR. BATES: William H. Bates, UTU, Safety Task Force.

3 MR. GAROFOLO: John Garofolo, Conrail, Operating
4 Superintendent.

5 MR. TURPIN: Okay.

6 INTERVIEW OF MARK MATHER

7 BY MR. TURPIN:

8 Q. Mark, if you'd just -- basically just tell us what
9 happened.

10 A. Up until the bridge?

11 Q. Oh, first, you understand that this is being recorded
12 and I said that?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. Yeah, whenever you want to start. Just tell us what
15 happened.

16 A. I can start with the incident at the bridge there. We
17 came up to the bridge. The bridge itself was closed but it was
18 displaying a stop signal. At that point I keyed in the close
19 request on the radio, which is 1-3-7 and the star key. It had not
20 changed.

21 The conductor had left the engine to inspect the bridge
22 to make sure that the bridge was locked up, and when he came back
23 up, he said the bridge is lined and locked. And I said, well, we
24 didn't get the clear signal yet so let me pull up a little bit
25 farther, make sure I'm on the circuit. I keyed that request in

1 two or three more times. It still displayed the stop signal.

2 I talked to the dispatcher, Jon Havlicek, and told him
3 that the conductor had walked the bridge, it's lined, it's locked
4 for our movement, and I needed to get a 241 past that signal. He
5 gave us -- he repeated that to me, and I said, yes, sir. He gave
6 us the 241 permission past the stop signal.

7 I started out, you know, first notch, second notch, to
8 open up the train because the train was very long. The train was
9 almost a mile long.

10 We went over with the two engines and about six or seven
11 cars, and the engine went into an emergency, and when I looked
12 back in the rearview mirror, I saw the top of the Paulsboro Bridge
13 fall like a tree. Instead of going straight down, it went to the
14 side, and I said, oh, my God, the bridge is collapsing. As soon
15 as the bridge started to list to the one side, I saw the vapor
16 trail instantly. It came up, you know, almost automatic was the
17 vapors. So I called the dispatcher immediately with "Emergency,
18 Emergency, Emergency." I said the CA11 is in an emergency.
19 "Paulsboro movable bridge is coming down. CA11 is in an
20 emergency."

21 The conductor gathered up all of his paperwork. He had
22 all the dangerous paperwork. I took the dangerous paperwork that
23 I have here -- it shows the engine consist -- and we ran in
24 opposite directions, because there's two schools right there and I
25 didn't want anybody with their cars coming up towards that vapor

1 trail because I wasn't sure exactly how dangerous the chemicals or
2 the fumes were, but I knew they were dangerous enough that I had
3 to keep people away.

4 So we turned cars around at that scene until the police
5 came and the police got on the scene and they told us, "Listen,
6 you've got to go back and talk to my chief. He wants that train
7 out of here. He wants those engines out of here." So the
8 conductor went back, threw a quick handbrake on the first car. I
9 gave him a tap on the pin, and we took the engines back to
10 Paulsboro Yard office.

11 And in the interim there, the trainmaster came and he
12 received all the documents from the conductor, what we were
13 carrying, where the dangerous were positioned in the train.

14 Q. Okay. Who was the trainmaster?

15 A. Gary's last name I don't know.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Fillingame.

17 BY MR. TURPIN:

18 Q. Okay. All right. Good.

19 How far back from the signal the first time did you
20 stop?

21 A. I stopped -- you have to be almost on the circuit within
22 I'm going to say half a car length.

23 Q. Oh.

24 A. So it's going to be like within 25 feet that you have to
25 be on that signal. When I advanced the second time, I advanced no

1 more than I'm going to say 8 feet.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And this way here I'm sure that I'm on that circuit.

4 Q. Just crowded up against it a little bit.

5 A. Just a little bit, yeah, just a little bit. Now the
6 first time that I stopped, I was pretty confident that I was on
7 the circuit because I've been on the job for 14 months now --

8 Q. Uh-huh.

9 A. -- and I know right where it is. So I was pretty
10 confident and I just decided go a little bit farther, just nudge
11 it up to make sure that those wheels are touching. Because it has
12 worked in the past where we had a stop signal, the bridge is
13 closed, and we didn't get the signal to come clear so I entered
14 the code a few more times and then the signal would display a
15 clear confirming that everything was lined and locked normal.

16 Q. Okay. So when the conductor goes down there, what is he
17 looking for?

18 A. There's -- on the north side and the south side of that
19 bridge, either side of the rail has a splice bar that comes over.
20 It's like a faded orange color, and when that comes over, it
21 presses into the rail itself locking everything into place.

22 Q. So you can definitely tell when it's locked in?

23 A. You should, yes.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. You should.

1 Q. All right. Had you had a red here before?

2 A. I'm sorry?

3 Q. Have you had a red signal at this bridge before?

4 A. Yes, sir. It's been, it's been for I'm going to say the
5 last 3 months, it's something that's been reoccurring, and we've
6 been getting conflicting messages where the signal would turn
7 clear and the bridge would be lined and locked for our position,
8 but the audible message didn't come through, and as we went over
9 the bridge, maybe two or three car lengths, it would tell us that
10 the bridge failed to operate. So I'd call up the dispatcher right
11 away and I'd tell him, we have conflicting messages. We have the
12 bridge lined and locked. We have a clear signal, but instead of
13 telling us Paulsboro movable bridge is over out, which is audible
14 signal we should get, it tells us that the Paulsboro movable
15 bridge failed to operate. And it's been for like the last 3
16 months it's been reoccurring quite often.

17 Q. Okay. How often do you go over that bridge?

18 A. At least once a day. I go over it Wednesday, Thursday
19 and Friday, and usually I go over it twice a day on Saturday and
20 Sunday because Saturday and Sunday we do a roundtrip, the CA11.

21 Q. So 5 days a week and you make a double move over it on 2
22 of those days?

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. Do you ever get a red signal northbound?

25 A. I'm sure it's happened. I'm sure it's happened, yes.

1 Q. Which is more often, south or north?

2 A. The bridge actually in both directions, I get the --
3 I'll get a stop when the bridge is lined and locked closed.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Yeah, it's not uncommon in the last 3 months that a
6 conductor had to get off and walk the bridge to make sure things
7 were lined up. Because if we have a stop signal, that's when, you
8 know, he has to get down and take a look.

9 Q. Right. You got a ballpark figure on that, how often you
10 had to actually inspect it?

11 A. It's at least a half a dozen times I'm going to say over
12 the last 3 months.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. At least.

15 Q. And nothing was found? Was it ever found out of
16 alignment?

17 A. Yeah. Yes.

18 Q. That's what I should say.

19 A. About 4 weeks ago, a conductor walked the bridge and
20 when he got to the south end of the bridge, he told me that the
21 pins had not locked. They got a response from Paulsboro Yard
22 office to go into the cabinet and hit a reset button and try our
23 code a second time. At that point when that happened, the
24 conductor walked the bridge back to me, and as he walked back to
25 me, he said, yeah, everything lined and locked this time and the

1 signal did display clear at that point.

2 Q. After he had used the house itself?

3 A. Yeah, as he went into that access cabinet there --

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. -- and he tried from that point, yes.

6 Q. Okay. Now, do you report these to the dispatcher?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Have you ever seen signal people out there working on
9 it?

10 A. There have been people walking on -- working on the
11 bridge occasionally. I usually don't see them because we go
12 through Paulsboro kind of early in the morning. So we just report
13 it and --

14 Q. Okay. All right. I'm going to come back with some
15 questions in a minute but we'll go around the room if anybody has
16 anything?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have nothing.

18 MR. TURPIN: Bob?

19 MR. TOMASZEWSKI: No.

20 MR. TURPIN: Tom?

21 MR. HEBERT: I have nothing.

22 MR. TURPIN: I'm sorry. I keep -- you're way back there
23 hiding and I don't see you.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, no, I'm fine. Thank you.

25 MR. TURPIN: All right.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, I'm good.

2 MR. TURPIN: Willie.

3 MR. BATES: No, I don't think I have anything. He
4 described lined and locked. That was my main question.

5 BY MR. BATES:

6 Q. How would the conductor or anybody know that the bridge
7 is locked, and you described that, right --

8 A. There are those four splice bars that are there, and
9 they're a faded orange color, and they're separated from the
10 bridge as the bridge makes its swing. Once the rails line up to
11 each other, then those four bars come over and engage into the
12 rail.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And as I went over with my engines, you know, the ones
15 that are on my side, I can see. I can see that they're lined and
16 locked. They're not gapped or anything like that and yesterday
17 there was no gap in them. Everything was tight to the rail.

18 Q. Okay.

19 BY MR. GAROFOLO:

20 Q. And my only question was, you had said that about 4
21 weeks ago, somebody had went back into the box?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Explain that to me again.

24 A. At that point when he walked the bridge, the conductor,
25 he saw that they were still gapped, that those orange splice

1 plates didn't come tight to the rail.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. So at Paulsboro, Scottie got on the radio and said,
4 listen, you might have to hit the reset button in that box. So he
5 opened it up with his 102 key. And I haven't seen the inside of
6 the box. I don't know what the inner workings are.

7 Q. Box right on the bridge?

8 A. Correct. Well, it's not on the bridge. It would be on
9 the south side of the bridge.

10 Q. Yeah, right before the bridge.

11 A. Yes, sir. It's off of the bridge. It's not on the
12 bridge itself, but it's south of the bridge. And he opened up
13 that box with his 102 key, and I couldn't tell you what the inside
14 of the box looks like, but apparently there is a reset button
15 there that he hit. And when he hit that button, he said, "Try it
16 again, Mark," and I hit that 1-3-7 star code, and at that point,
17 he walked the bridge north back to the engines, and the green
18 signal had displayed for me at that point and everything was nice
19 and tight.

20 Q. Scottie was your conductor?

21 A. No, sir. Yesterday was Big Will.

22 Q. No, who was Scottie that -- when this happened, who's
23 Scottie?

24 A. David Burkel (ph.) --

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's the conductor on the PA10.

1 MR. MATHER: PA10.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Works (indiscernible) overtime.

3 BY MR. GAROFOLO:

4 Q. I mean, I mean, like I'm trying to get at whose idea was
5 it to go in the box? Who came up with that?

6 A. That was Scott when he was listening at the Paulsboro
7 office, and he told us how to --

8 Q. But who's Scott?

9 A. He's a conductor on the PA10.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Conductor of the (indiscernible)
11 at Paulsboro and probably head them on the radio trying to get the
12 bridge. Scott, the conductor on a different job, in Paulsboro
13 Yard told them over the radio to try to get the --

14 MR. MATHER: Right.

15 MR. GAROFOLO: To go into the box and reset it?

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

17 MR. GAROFOLO: Okay.

18 BY MR. TURPIN:

19 Q. It had worked for him in the past obviously.

20 A. Yeah, he's from Paulsboro so he's tried it before. If
21 the locks didn't come up tight --

22 Q. Yep.

23 A. -- then he's tried the reset button apparently because
24 he -- it fixed our problem that particular day.

25 Q. Okay.

1 BY MR. TURPIN: Okay, John?

2 BY MR. TURPIN:

3 Q. On the day of the accident, you said you pulled forward
4 and then repeated the code. Do you remember how many times you
5 did that?

6 A. I think I hit the code a total of three times.

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. Initially and then when the conductor came back up and
9 said that the bridge was lined and locked. I pulled up a little
10 bit and I hit the code two, three -- two times additionally to see
11 if it would display that clear.

12 Q. Yeah. It's always better to go on a green signal, huh?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. Do you know how fast you were going?

15 A. I just opened the train up from a complete stop. So as
16 the train was stretching, maybe 4 miles an hour, 3 miles an hour.

17 Q. When it went in emergency?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. It was probably about 4 miles an hour, because I made
21 the two engines and a couple of cars past the bridge.

22 Q. What's the speed on the bridge?

23 A. Ten miles an hour.

24 Q. All right. What time did you go on duty?

25 A. We went on duty at 3 a.m.

1 Q. And go ahead and walk through basically what you did?

2 A. 3 a.m. when we're on duty, I basically come in the lunch
3 room, see my conductor, good morning to him, changed the clothes,
4 kind of wait on our paperwork. When the paperwork comes, this is
5 the sheet that I'm interested in. It tells me everything in the
6 consist. And there's two copies: one for the engineer and one
7 for the conductor, and I usually mark up both copies, one for him,
8 one for me, and it tells me exactly who's getting what in our
9 train.

10 He gets his paperwork, goes over all the dangerous cars
11 in the train to find out if there's any shops or anything like
12 that, where the doubles are in the yard. I walk out to my engines
13 around 3:30 in the morning. I do my inspection of the engines,
14 you know, top and bottom, make sure everything's good. I do my
15 crew alerter box just to make sure that's good. Then we go down
16 to the west end and when we have permission to work, we start
17 making our doubles. We always get a marker armed and test it
18 before we're ready, you know, to pull over River Road so that we
19 don't foul things and find out that we have a marker that doesn't
20 work.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And then he makes all the doubles. There was three of
23 them this day because it was a long train, and then I pull forward
24 through CP Brown where I come to a stop and wait for him to get
25 back up to the head end.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And then once I have the Form D from the dispatcher, and
3 he displays the clear for us in CP Brown, then we head to -- out
4 with our train. We head south with the train.

5 Q. Was that your last control signal?

6 A. We have an approach at 5S and then we also have a signal
7 at CP Woodbury. Then at Leonard Lane, I'll get approach
8 restricting to the Paulsboro Bridge in the south direction and
9 then I'll have the signal there at Paulsboro movable bridge.

10 Q. Is it always approach restricting?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Is the bridge signal ever green?

13 A. Yes. It's -- when it's closed for the season, it is
14 green.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. But the rest of the time of the year, in default, it's
18 actually red and you have to --

19 A. It's going to be red and I have to stop and I have to
20 initiate that closing cycle with the code on the radio.

21 Q. Who -- how's the mechanism work? Who opens the bridge?

22 A. The bridge opens automatically. When the train passes
23 by the bridge --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. -- there's something, a circuitry that lets the bridge

1 know that, you know, the train has passed.

2 Q. Oh. So it's default is in the open position?

3 A. It's during marine traffic season --

4 Q. Uh-huh.

5 A. -- it's going to be in the open position, yes. So
6 you're always going to approach the bridge, always prepared to
7 stop because even if it's closed, you don't know if you'll have a
8 clear signal. So you're always prepared to stop at that bridge.

9 Q. How far out? You say you have to be on the circuit to
10 code in. Do you start it earlier to tell it to close?

11 A. No, you can't. You have to be stopped on that circuit
12 to close that bridge.

13 Q. Okay. And this day, the bridge wasn't actually open; it
14 was lined for you but it wasn't -- it was a red signal?

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. Okay. Had it been open during the week at all?

17 A. I'm sure it's been opened when the trains have gone over
18 it, yes, because it automatically should open when a train goes
19 over it.

20 Q. It should open.

21 A. Yeah, that would be the operation. It would be open.

22 Q. Okay. I think you told me you start on Tuesdays?

23 A. Our day starts on Tuesday, correct.

24 Q. 3 a.m.?

25 A. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Our day starts on Wednesday.

1 Monday and Tuesday is my rest day.

2 Q. Okay. All right. So let's work through the week here.

3 It was Friday. Let's back up. You started on Wednesday morning

4 3 a.m.?

5 A. 3 a.m. on Wednesday morning.

6 Q. And worked how long?

7 A. Maybe 10 hours, 10½ hours that day.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Probably closer to 10.

10 Q. Thursday?

11 A. Same thing.

12 Q. So let's say you were home by 3 or 4 in the afternoon,

13 Thursday afternoon?

14 A. Usually earlier than that. Yeah, usually I'm home at my

15 house probably about like 1:30 because I pick up my daughter at

16 school at 2:30.

17 Q. Okay. And when do you normally go to bed?

18 A. 7, 7 p.m.

19 Q. And you get up?

20 A. 1:30 in the morning.

21 Q. Okay. Did you feel rested?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Okay. Is that pretty much your routine through the

24 week?

25 A. Yeah, it's been that way. Yeah, by 7:00, that's my

1 curfew. That's when I go to bed, and all noise stops.

2 Q. All right. Thank you.

3 When did you start working for the railroad?

4 A. It'll be 10 years on March 2003.

5 Q. What did you start as -- doing?

6 A. Everybody kind of starts out like as a brakeman
7 trainee --

8 Q. Uh-huh.

9 A. -- where you get to be around the equipment and
10 conductors and engineers and kind of learn from the ground up.

11 Q. Yep. And when did you take promotion to engineer?

12 A. I went to engineer -- I got back the Tuesday before
13 Thanksgiving in 2003. So I would have left in October to go down
14 to Georgia for my engineer schooling.

15 Q. So the first year you were here you took the engineer
16 training?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. When did you start working actually certified engineer?

19 A. I guess it was about a year by the time they finished up
20 with not only the schooling but the training to go on and see
21 every job and --

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. -- you know, move around and meet the different
24 engineers and train from them. So it was about a year before I
25 became -- I got my license.

1 Q. About 2004 then --

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. -- when you got started?

4 A. It definitely was in 2004.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. And at that point when I got my license, you know, I
7 wasn't an engineer right away. I was an engineer but I was on the
8 ground as a conductor until there was room for me to become a
9 full-time engineer.

10 Q. Yep. All right. And 14 months on this job?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Okay.

13 MR. TURPIN: Anything else? Anybody else in the room
14 got anything?

15 MR. BATES: Just one other question.

16 BY MR. BATES:

17 Q. Going back to your statement about the bridge is locked
18 certain times of the year. Is there certain times of the year
19 that the bridge is locked at all times?

20 A. December 1st.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Today.

22 MR. MATHER: Today.

23 BY MR. BATES:

24 Q. December 1st. Until when?

25 A. Today -- it would be April 1st, right?

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: March 15th, April 1st in that
2 area. There's a marina down the creek. That's why it's open.
3 They close it December 1st and it opens March 15th. It could be
4 April 1st, in that area.

5 MR. BATES: Okay.

6 BY MR. TURPIN:

7 Q. And that's in your timetable?

8 A. The timetable I believe says November 1st.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The timetable. It's also in the
10 bulletin orders. When you get the bulletin orders, it'll say the
11 bridge is closed for the season or the bridge is in remote control
12 operation.

13 BY MR. TURPIN:

14 Q. Okay. What do you think the purpose of calling the
15 dispatcher is for the signal when it's red?

16 A. He has to talk me by it.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. There's no other way I can get by it. He's got to give
19 me the verbal permission that it's okay to go past his stop
20 signal.

21 Q. Right. Okay. All right. I think that's probably it.
22 I'll have -- I need your contact information here.

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. And I'll be able to -- oh, I'm sorry. I had one more,
25 too. When you guys notified the dispatcher of emergency and

1 contacted him and stuff, did either one of you use a cell phone to
2 call 911 or --

3 A. Not at that point, no.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. No, not at that point. Not until I knew I was going to
6 get clear of that train --

7 Q. Uh-huh.

8 A. -- and the cloud, did I want to contact him on the phone
9 because I wasn't going back up on that engine with all those fumes
10 and vapors.

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. Not until I was ordered by the local police, and I told
13 the trainmaster, I said, listen, they want us to move these
14 engines out of here because it's a source of ignition, and he said
15 do it.

16 Q. Yep.

17 A. Do it. Clear it. Clear that highway.

18 Q. Okay. Good. Thank you.

19 (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: CONRAIL DERAILMENT/HAZARDOUS
 MATERIAL RELEASE
 PAULSBORO, NEW JERSEY
 NOVEMBER 30, 2012
 Interview of Mark Mather

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-13-MR-002

PLACE: Camden, New Jersey

DATE: December 1, 2012

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.

Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber