



**Survival Factors Factual Report Attachment:**

**Interview TVSC Retired School Bus Driver**

**Rochester, Indiana**

**HWY19MH003**

**(70 pages)**

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

PICKUP TRUCK AND SCHOOL BUS CRASH  
ROCHESTER, INDIANA  
OCTOBER 30, 2018

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\* Accident No.: HWY19MH003

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Interview of: MELINDA PRATT

Retired TVSC School Bus Driver

Via Telephone

Thursday,  
March 28, 2019

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E XITEMPAGE

Interview of Melinda Pratt:

By Ms. Harley

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(9:09 a.m.)

MS. HARLEY: Today is Thursday, March 28, 2019. It's 9:09 a.m. I am Investigator Sheryl Harley with the National Transportation Safety Board. I'm attempting to conduct a telephonic interview with Ms. Melinda Pratt, P-r-a-t-t, retired bus driver for the Tippecanoe Valley School Corporation. This is in regards to the Rochester, Indiana investigation HWY19MH003.

The number I will be calling will be [REDACTED] area code-[REDACTED].

(Dialing phone.)

MS. PRATT: Hello.

MS. HARLEY: Hello. May I speak to Mrs. Melinda Pratt please?

MS. PRATT: Speaking.

MS. HARLEY: Mrs. Pratt, my name is Sheryl Harley. I'm an investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board out of Washington, D.C.

MS. PRATT: Okay.

MS. HARLEY: Yeah, and we were in Rochester investigating the school bus crash involving the students over at the Meiser's Trailer Park.

MS. PRATT: Yes.

MS. HARLEY: And we were given your name. Apparently you were the former driver of that route, and that's why I'm calling you.

1 MS. PRATT: Okay.

2 INTERVIEW OF MELINDA PRATT

3 BY MS. HARLEY:

4 Q. So one of the things I wanted to talk to you about is that  
5 route, any problems that you've had on that route. And the school  
6 district also provided me with a report that your bus had actually  
7 been rear-ended back in 2015. Is that correct?

8 A. 2015. Yes, it was. I'm not exactly sure if that was the  
9 year or not, you know.

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. But that was -- yes, that happened.

12 Q. Right. So I guess what I want to know is -- I guess what I'm  
13 asking you to do for me is to kind of outline how long had you  
14 been on the route, any problems that you had as a bus driver  
15 servicing that route. How -- did you actually plan that route? I  
16 mean, is it one of the things where the bus drivers are allowed to  
17 plan out the route in which they pick up the kids or the order in  
18 which they pick up the kids?

19 A. When you -- I drove the route for 20 years. And when you  
20 inherit the route, you ride with the existing driver. Actually I  
21 had subbed that route for that driver prior to taking that --  
22 having been assigned that route. And it exists, you know, and  
23 they -- you ride with them and they tell you this is how this  
24 route -- this is how we run this route, you know, and like I say,  
25 I had substitute drove that route. So I knew how that route was

1 run, and then you just -- and when you take over, basically you do  
2 the same thing.

3 Now you make changes because you have different homes to stop  
4 at, different roads to go down because of students and that kind  
5 of thing. But to answer your question, basically, yes, you are --  
6 you're doing it on your own. You know, you decide how you run the  
7 route. We were always encouraged -- and, like I say, I had driven  
8 that route for 20 years. You're always encouraged to nevermind  
9 your mileage and your time. And, you know, of course, safety is  
10 always, you know, first priority in everything you do as a bus  
11 driver. You learn that when you go to the state safety meetings  
12 every year. But you are encouraged to no mind your mileage and  
13 your time.

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. But, you know, so yes. I guess the answer to your question  
16 is we were allowed to change things around as we saw fit. And  
17 occasionally -- and it didn't happen often, but occasionally a  
18 transportation director, which I was under several, would ride the  
19 route with you, observe, you know, observe I guess both you and  
20 just to familiarize themselves with the corporation and with the  
21 routes.

22 Q. Okay. So as you were -- so as you are going through and  
23 organizing your route, for example, and you want to make changes  
24 to your route, does the school corporation give you like a plan to  
25 follow how to do that or, or how do you decide? Is it strictly

1 according to the addition of students and how to do it to just  
2 minimize the amount of time on the road?

3 A. No, the school corporation did not have any involvement in  
4 it. You furnish the school corporation with a -- at that time,  
5 you gave the school corporation a map once a year. And that was  
6 the, you know, the first 6 weeks or so after school started, of  
7 how your route was run, you turned in a copy of that. And that  
8 was used for mileage and also student count, you turned in at the  
9 same time, along with the names of the students and what grade  
10 they were in. And when students were added and so forth, you were  
11 on -- you did it on your own.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Those maps were never updated throughout the year, unless the  
14 driver went in and said, hey, I'm driving an extra 5 miles now,  
15 because after so many miles per route, you were paid a little bit  
16 extra mileage. If you -- I never really got mileage often, but I  
17 think how it was, was over 25 miles in the morning or 25 miles in  
18 the afternoon that you were driving, noted miles, with students  
19 on, it was an extra -- I don't know, maybe 5 cents a mile or  
20 something. So if you changed your mileage, increased or decreased  
21 by any substantial amount, they wanted you to report that.

22 Q. Okay. All right. So I'm confused. So bus drivers --

23 A. It's very confusing.

24 Q. Bus drivers are paid also by mileage or --

25 A. We -- at Valley, how we're paid -- and like I say, I was a



1 driver that had driven for 20 years on that route, and at the time  
2 we started, you were paid a certain amount. I mean, it was a  
3 daily -- you were paid a daily amount. And then the way they had  
4 it was that if -- like each route wasn't paid a certain amount.  
5 Everybody was paid a set amount. And then if you had a route that  
6 was long and you were driving over 25 miles every morning, which  
7 obviously would take more time, then you were paid a little like  
8 extra for every mile over that 25 miles.

9 Q. Got it.

10 A. And when I left, they were still doing it that way, but I  
11 don't know for sure how much that per mile was. I'm not sure on  
12 that, whether that ever changed or not. At one time, it was like  
13 5 cents a mile. I -- when I was there, that's the way it started  
14 and somebody was grandfathered for it to continue that way.

15 Now over the years, things had changed where they started  
16 drivers in at a low rate and then increased gradually until they  
17 got to the full pay. But at the time I started, that's the way it  
18 was. So I was grandfathered at that. But I think the mileage  
19 thing was always that way.

20 Q. Okay. So when you inherited this bus route, did the bus ever  
21 turn into the mobile home park or did you always pick up on State  
22 Route 25?

23 A. We always picked up on State Route 25. It was that way when  
24 I subbed the route, and it was always that way. At one time --  
25 well, always. It was that we were to stay on the roads as much as

1 possible, stay off people's private property, turn around if we  
2 had to in their drives with their permission, and that kind of  
3 thing. And that trailer court was -- we were never encouraged to  
4 -- I was never encouraged to drive through that trailer court  
5 until about 2 years -- well, no, actually it was the year before  
6 the accident happened.

7 The school year before the accident happened, I was asked --  
8 I wasn't encouraged, I was asked, if I felt like it would be  
9 better to drive through that trailer court somehow, and my  
10 experience of driving over the years, taught me that that was not  
11 the right thing to do. Everything we had done in the corporation  
12 always said that's not the right thing -- that wouldn't be the  
13 best thing to do, and it was my personal decision with my  
14 experience that it also would not have been the safest thing to  
15 do.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And so that's, that's -- and I continued to do it the way  
18 that I did, and then when the driver took over for me, he  
19 obviously continued to do it the same way --

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. -- which wasn't very long. I -- he hadn't driven that route  
22 very long.

23 Q. So when did you retire?

24 A. April of last year, a year ago like the first week of April.  
25 I think like the 6th of April last year.

1 Q. So April 6 of 2018, right, that wasn't very long.

2 A. No, it wasn't very long.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Now he was not an inexperienced driver when he took over for  
5 me. He was new to that route and he had never subbed it or  
6 anything. So he was not like a new driver for Valley. He was an  
7 experienced driver, but he had just started driving that route --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- in April of last year.

10 Q. Okay. So what --

11 A. And he did ride with me for like 3 or 4 days because he did  
12 seem to me, and I encouraged the corporation -- well, the  
13 transportation director and the person over at the bus garage  
14 repeatedly, that when I retired, they really needed to have  
15 someone that -- and I know all drivers are supposed to be  
16 extremely careful. All drivers are to be, you know, very alert  
17 and on top of things and concerned about safety. All drivers  
18 should be that way. But I encouraged them before I retired,  
19 several times, it would be very important to have a driver that  
20 was very conscientious and alert and safety conscious because the  
21 entire route that was on State Route 25 was always -- it's  
22 dangerous. It's much more dangerous than it is on your county  
23 road routes. It just is.

24 And there are numerous places -- there were numerous places  
25 on that route that were places you just had to be really careful.

1 You had to be really careful. And honestly, that wasn't one of  
2 the worst ones.

3 Q. Okay. Yeah.

4 A. Because that's -- there's a lot of space in between those two  
5 curves. It was plenty of room for the -- when she came around  
6 that curve, she had all kinds of time to see the flashing lights  
7 of the bus stopped. She had plenty of time to recognize what was  
8 going on and to stop. So I never -- because the students have to  
9 cross, it's always -- it was always dangerous at any state road,  
10 but we were never told not to do that.

11 Q. So what's the -- how -- what's the procedure as far as, for  
12 example -- let's start from the beginning. So you're getting --  
13 you're pulling up to this stop number five, you're going to pull  
14 up to the mobile home park, walk me through how do you pull up to  
15 the park and how do you get the students across the road?

16 A. Well, it's basically the same as you -- you know, we're  
17 trained to do at the state safety meeting. But my procedure was  
18 always -- of course, you put on your ambers at a, you know, a  
19 reasonable time ahead. As an experienced driver, I would  
20 recognize that you have to be wise about when you put your ambers  
21 on and when you put your red lights on according to what was going  
22 on around you. That was always the thing you had to be the most  
23 aware of.

24 But you'd put on your ambers as you approached, and gradually  
25 move up. I would not move up to a stopping point, I would not

1 move up to a stopping point and stop the bus until I had allowed  
2 cars -- I would just kind of hold back and go slowly and allow  
3 cars that are coming toward you to kind of get through. And then,  
4 move on up to the actual stop where you're going to stop, and you  
5 don't pull your stop arm out as long as you still see cars  
6 approaching, and allow them to get through, unless you see they're  
7 at a distance where they're going to stop, and then you put your  
8 stop arm out. You make sure that everything around you, both  
9 behind you, in front of you, and from all sides has come to a  
10 complete stop, and it's a safe situation.

11 And then you motion your students across, which is very  
12 important to have good discipline, which I did, and have those  
13 students know exactly where they're to stand and stay until you  
14 turn on your interior light, when it's dark, and motion them  
15 across the road. That's my procedure. And that was on and off  
16 the highway.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Because if you set your stop arm out when you've got cars  
19 coming at you, then you are challenging them to decide whether to  
20 stop or not to stop, and whether they can stop, if they have time  
21 to stop, you know, and that's something that I try to not do. A  
22 lot of what a bus driver does, in my opinion, has to be judgment.  
23 So that was my procedure. Did that answer your question?

24 Q. Yes, it certainly did. One of the questions I have, the stop  
25 before that that's south of that, I guess that's stop number four.

1 A. It would depend on his route.

2 Q. Right.

3 A. Can you tell me a name of the student or the house --

4 Q. Well, the house was located at [REDACTED] I think State Route 25.

5 It's the school bus would come down -- was it East 400 North and

6 make the right onto State Route 25, and then there --

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. -- was a stop there at the 4400 Block of State Route 25.

9 A. Well, yes. The way I ran it, and obviously he was still  
10 doing that as well, was to travel 400 North out, and there were  
11 stops on that road as well, and then you would go out to State  
12 Route 25 --

13 Q. Um-hum.

14 A. -- stop there.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. Which that was a bad place in itself, just getting out on the  
17 highway. And, you know, especially if it was foggy or dark or  
18 whatever, but that's a bad place in itself getting on the highway,  
19 and that's the kind of thing I'm talking about when I say that the  
20 route was one you had to be very alert.

21 I would pull out into it -- I would head north. I know 25  
22 goes curvy --

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. -- but I say north. And I had several stops when I was  
25 driving throughout the years, a lot of times I had several stops

1 along those houses before I would get to that trailer court. The  
2 one that -- I'm guessing, if you think there was only one, I'm  
3 guessing that was probably Howards, which was up on the hill, kind  
4 of up on the hill and then you kind of proceed down the hill.  
5 Have you been there?

6 Q. Yes. I've been through, but truthfully I don't have a good  
7 sense of it.

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. I want to -- it was right at a point where the approaching  
10 traffic was coming off of another curve, and the student is a 6-  
11 year-old, crosses the road there, and I was just wondering about  
12 that stop.

13 A. Yeah, that would be a stop that I never had --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- because that would have been a kindergartener.

16 Q. Got it.

17 A. So I'm not really sure where you're talking about.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. But there are several houses along there, and over the years,  
20 I had students in those houses, and then there were years where I  
21 did not have students in those houses. At the time that I  
22 retired, the closest stop would have been to the south, and it's  
23 kind of up a -- the road kind of goes kind of uphill, not extreme,  
24 but it kind of goes up, and there's a stop at kind of the top of  
25 that hill. And I had a high school girl that got on there by

1 herself, and I know she was on the bus when the accident happened.  
2 So I know she rode. Now if there were any other students getting  
3 on between that stop and the accident, I did not have them when I  
4 retired.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. But over the years, there were some -- there were stops in  
7 those houses just before the trailer court. Just south of the  
8 trailer court. In fact, the very first house south of the trailer  
9 court, part of the time the last year I drove, I had a student --  
10 a high school student getting on there.

11 Q. Okay. And that's before I guess -- it looks like, I guess, a  
12 bridge or a roadway that goes up to the --

13 A. Oh, yes.

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. That road, yes. Okay. The student that I was getting last  
16 was south of that road coming in, that T road --

17 Q. Got it.

18 A. -- south of that.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Now, I'm guessing that anyone you're talking about had to  
21 have been north of that. But I don't know that for sure. I'm not  
22 sure where that 6-year-old would have been getting on along there.

23 Q. Yeah. So I guess actually, the route actually change almost  
24 every school year.

25 A. It would change three to four times during the school year.



1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Because especially -- well, no, that's not really right. I  
3 would say the students would change a lot because of trailer  
4 courts, and I had more than one, but, you know, kids move in and  
5 out a lot. But, yeah, you had changes throughout the year, and  
6 you definitely had a lot of changes at the beginning of the school  
7 year, but it didn't always change what roads you traveled. But it  
8 might change your stops, yes.

9 Q. I see what you're saying. So you may have more -- you may  
10 have more stops; you may have less stops, but it would be  
11 essentially the same route.

12 A. Yes, same area.

13 Q. Same area.

14 A. Yep.

15 Q. Okay. So the -- one of the questions is, did you actually  
16 service the route when you -- when it goes through Talma?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Okay. And at the time you serviced the route, I notice that  
19 now the speed limit reduces when you go through Talma. Was that  
20 the way it was when you serviced the route?

21 A. Yes, it's always, it's always been.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. It has always been as long as I remember as an adult. It --  
24 yes, the speed limit's pretty low through there, and there is a  
25 state trooper, with the last name of Meiser actually, that lives

1 in -- must live in that area, and he frequently sits in that area  
2 that time of day, that time of morning going through there or  
3 afternoon that you would be going through there. It wasn't  
4 unusual for him to sit in there to, you know, stop somebody every  
5 now and then and keep that traffic slowed down.

6 Q. Okay. So the -- one of the questions I also had, so did you  
7 encounter, while you were on your route, a lot of incidents where  
8 people were passing -- illegally passing your school bus? You  
9 were there, you were stopped, you had all your warning lights on,  
10 your stop arm was deployed, and they still were passing your bus?

11 A. That was not, that was not at all uncommon on -- all the way  
12 -- I got on 25 at 400 and I went all the way through Talma to 700.  
13 So I had that whole strip of highway to pick up anyone that was  
14 riding the bus, and that happened frequently, yes.

15 Q. Okay. So --

16 A. You know, and there again, that's why it's so important to  
17 have a driver that -- I'm not saying that he didn't. I'm just  
18 saying that it is important that you have a driver that has good  
19 discipline and awareness with your students because you have got  
20 to have your students trained. And I know the state warns this,  
21 because it's in our safety meetings all the time, and we have the  
22 national, you know, cross the road signal and, you know, hand  
23 signal for the driver and that kind of thing; they're aware. But  
24 it's very important that your students know where they're to stand  
25 and that they are absolutely to have eye contact with you and that

1 they're not to cross the road until you tell them to cross the  
2 road. And I had that with my students. And it is very important  
3 as a driver, for all drivers, but when you're on a highway, it's  
4 really important.

5 Q. All right. So did you -- so if something like that happened,  
6 did you report that to the bus garage that you had people that  
7 were passing your bus?

8 A. I did not. I did not even have -- if I happened to be going  
9 in there, to the bus garage right after it happened or something,  
10 just in conversation I may say to them, oh, my gosh, this truck  
11 ran the stop arm this morning and it makes me so mad, you know --

12 Q. Right.

13 A. -- or something. But as far as there being a procedure we  
14 were told to report those incidents to anyone, we were not told to  
15 do that.

16 Q. Okay. So there wasn't --

17 A. There were drivers that would come on the radio all the time  
18 and say -- and radio into the bus garage and say I just had, you  
19 know, a car run my stop arm. Actually I always felt like, why  
20 would you bother to do that? They tell them what direction  
21 they're running or what direction they're going and pointing it  
22 out, and say, hey, I just had somebody run my stop arm. And in my  
23 opinion, I'm like, what can they do about it?

24 Now if we were told to report it for records, that's  
25 different, but we were not.

1 Q. Okay. So you're not told to report it?

2 A. No.

3 Q. So you're unaware then of anybody actually forwarding the  
4 complaint either up the chain or to law enforcement about the  
5 drivers passing the buses?

6 A. No.

7 Q. Okay. All right. The -- so I -- so let's talk about -- now  
8 I have your, I guess your accident report from the school that the  
9 date of the accident was May 27 of 2015, and I guess you were, you  
10 were rear-ended. Is that correct?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. Can you kind of walk me through what happened that  
13 day?

14 A. Yes, I can. It was just your typical, typical morning. And  
15 at that time, I had several stops between 400 and the trailer  
16 court. I would have had one, two, three, four. I would have had  
17 four stops at least, and I had the typical traffic behind me,  
18 nothing excessive. Just the usual, and no one trying to -- you  
19 know, sometimes you had cars, you can see just anxious to get  
20 around you and they're trying to pass you. I didn't have anything  
21 like that. There was nothing unusual that stood out at all. I  
22 did have cars behind me, and they were making the stops properly  
23 behind me. I went past what we discussed to be that T road --

24 Q. Um-hum.

25 A. -- and I had already picked up three stops and had the same

1 cars behind me. Then I picked up the house that is just south of  
2 the trailer court. It's a small brick home. I stopped there, and  
3 I had the same vehicles behind me. And there isn't very much  
4 distance between that stop and then up to the trailer court stop,  
5 and I slowly -- you know, wouldn't have gone very fast, and moved  
6 up to the trailer court stop, and this car ran into the back end  
7 of me.

8 And I said -- the high school student that I had just picked  
9 up was sitting in the back seat. And it sounded like what it  
10 would sound like when a kid got in and they brought their trombone  
11 on and it -- like they took it and they like slammed it against --  
12 threw it in the seat and it would hit the side of the bus or  
13 something, you know.

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. And that's the kind of sound it sounded like. And I looked  
16 in the rearview mirror inside, at the students, and I said what  
17 was that? And the high school student that had just gotten on,  
18 stood up and looked out the back window and down, and he said, a  
19 car just ran into the back of you. And I could not see the car at  
20 all in any of my mirrors because, you know, it was directly behind  
21 me. If you've been in a bus, you know how that is.

22 Q. Um-hum.

23 A. And I'm like, are you kidding? And he's like, no, there's a  
24 car that ran into the back of you. And so I, you know, I had all  
25 the students move to the front of the bus. I'm like everybody up

1 here, you know. Is everybody okay? Everybody up here. They all  
2 moved up to the front, and they were all fine. I had one, I think  
3 it was an eighth grader at the time, I had one boy that said, I  
4 think I kind of hit my knee. Because he was tall, and he was  
5 sitting in the back as well, like the back couple seats. I think  
6 I hit my knee. So I think if you have the report in front of you,  
7 it might say that the paramedics that came out to that accident or  
8 the school nurse or both, like looked at his knee or something.

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. Checked his knee and said, you know, does it hurt, this,  
11 this, I think you're fine. And that was the only, that was the  
12 only student that --

13 Q. Right.

14 A. -- they looked at or that said that he had anything at all,  
15 and I can't see how anybody would have anything at all. A bus is  
16 like a tank, and it just -- that car just went underneath me.  
17 It's front end went underneath the bus and it went pretty far  
18 under.

19 Well, the lady had been following me, had been making the  
20 stops. So it wasn't like she had any speed up at all. For  
21 whatever reason, I don't -- I never knew what it was, whether it  
22 was I looked at my cell phone or I looked away -- for some reason,  
23 I was thinking at that time, I heard that some stuff on her front  
24 seat had fallen off and she reached over to get it. Basically she  
25 wasn't going very fast at all and it just went right up under.

1 You know, her car just fit right up under the bus, and she just  
2 got distracted and went under the bus. Because she had been  
3 stopping at the stops prior behind me. It's not like she came up  
4 and here's a bus stop.

5 Q. Right.

6 A. So she was distracted and basically just went under the back  
7 of the bus but not with any speed or anything. She was fine. She  
8 didn't -- her airbags deployed though, but she did not go to the  
9 hospital or anything either, and she was fine.

10 Q. Um-hum.

11 A. That was that incident. I don't know if that describes it as  
12 well or gives you the details that you're looking for.

13 Q. It certainly does. Did any of the parents actually voice  
14 concerns about the school bus stop being on the actual road?

15 A. Yes. At that trailer court?

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. Yes, they did.

18 Q. They did?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Do you know -- in addition to you, did they make any other  
21 complaints? Did they complain to the school or what was the  
22 procedure for them?

23 A. Whenever anyone complained to me, if it was about changing  
24 the route itself, to any degree, like it would have been in that  
25 situation, I always referred them to our transportation director.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. You know, I would say that's not a decision I can make, as  
3 far as coming through that private drive trailer court, I can't --  
4 I'm not going to make that decision, and I would refer them to the  
5 transportation director, which at the time of the accident, and  
6 when I retired as well, was Blaine Conley.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. And yes, yes, they did call him. I know they did because he  
9 discussed it with me afterwards. We talked about it.

10 Q. How many times did you discuss that with him?

11 A. That particular stop?

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. For that -- for the time that that parent complained, which  
14 actually was the mother of the students, of the twins and [REDACTED]  
15 that got killed, it was her.

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. And it was the year before. It was the very year that the  
18 accident happened. Well, the last year I drove. So it would have  
19 been within the same year, but it was not the same school year.

20 Q. So -- I'm sorry. So this was in 2018 or 2017? Was it before  
21 you -- the year you retired that she made the complaint or before  
22 that?

23 A. It was the year I retired.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Now was it before or after January 1st, I'm not sure. But it



1 was that school year. I do not have documentation of when that  
2 complaint was made by her, because when I retired I kept all my  
3 documentation for about 6 months --

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. -- and then decided, why am I keeping all of this? Because I  
6 had everything from the time I started driving. I had all my  
7 student lists and everything, and I decided, why am I keeping all  
8 of this, and I actually destroyed it all. But at that time, back  
9 then, I would have documented the date that that was, and how that  
10 all went, and how many times I discussed it with Blaine Conley.  
11 But I don't have that documentation any longer.

12 Q. Right.

13 A. But I do know that I spoke with him about it probably,  
14 probably three times.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Sorry for all the extra noise. I've got other phone in the  
17 house that are ringing and that kind of thing.

18 Q. Oh, I'm sorry.

19 A. I did talk with him about that particular complaint with that  
20 mother, we probably talked about it three different times, but it  
21 was all within maybe a 2-day span.

22 Q. Oh, okay. Do you know of any other parents that made a  
23 complaint?

24 A. For that particular stop?

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. Not really anything substantial. You know, you have parents  
2 that will say, man, this is just dangerous out here, you know,  
3 this is just dangerous out here, this is really, really bad, you  
4 know, and that kind of thing. You know, that was discussed. It  
5 became pretty -- I mean, I talked to my parents and my families  
6 pretty regular. You know, we all live in the same community, see  
7 them here or there. But as far as formal complaints of a parent  
8 calling and saying this needs to change, I don't like this, we  
9 need to do something about it, I don't really remember it  
10 happening with anyone else.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Ever.

13 Q. Okay. So there were never any formal complaints. Okay.

14 A. Not to me that I remember, that stand out in my mind.

15 Q. In addition --

16 A. But I know that she was very upset at the time. And she  
17 actually thought the situation was a lot different than it was  
18 when she complained. And she complained about what she thought  
19 had happened, which prompted her to complain at that time, hadn't  
20 even happened.

21 Q. I'm sorry. I don't understand. What did she think happened?

22 A. She thought that a vehicle ran my stop arm like at a high  
23 speed and almost hit -- went off the road and almost hit students,  
24 and I -- and that's what she thought happened, and I was blowing  
25 my horn because the students were on the road, and none of that

1 was right. None of that was right at all. I mean, whenever  
2 someone would run my stop arm, whether they were going fast or  
3 whether they were creeping, I blew my horn, and I mean I held it  
4 down. When I would recognize that someone was going to coast  
5 through my stop arm or drive through my stop arm, I would put my  
6 hand on the horn and I would keep it on there until they were well  
7 past. I wanted to make them aware that you just did something  
8 wrong, if you didn't recognize it. And that's what I did.

9 It was a Millie's Bread truck. It was not any kind of a  
10 dangerous -- it was not a bad situation at all, as I recognized  
11 it, because it's a very familiar situation to me that happened  
12 regularly. I stopped, and he started turning, like he was coming,  
13 and he just kept coming. He -- you know, I stopped and he came,  
14 you know, around the curve and everything had not stopped around  
15 me yet, and I just kept sitting there. And I did have my reds on,  
16 and I just kept sitting there and he just kept coming. And he  
17 might have only been going 40 mile an hour, and he drove straight  
18 through.

19 Q. So you hadn't signaled the kids to cross yet?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Because I saw him coming. And that was when it was daylight  
23 in the morning.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. It was daylight at that time. But I was holding the horn

1 down because I could tell he was just going to keep right on  
2 coming. Now was he going fast or anything, no. But the fact is,  
3 I sat there and waited and waited because he hadn't stopped yet.  
4 And he was the first vehicle coming toward me. There was no one  
5 else already stopped. So I was waiting on him to stop, and he was  
6 coming, but he wasn't coming very fast, so I just sat there and  
7 waited. And as he approached, I realized he wasn't going to stop,  
8 so I just laid on the horn. And the horn blew as he went all the  
9 way past.

10 After he got past, the vehicles that were behind him stopped.  
11 Everything was stopped around me. I motioned the kids across the  
12 road, and I'm sure when they got on, I said, can you believe that  
13 guy? He didn't even stop. He didn't even try to stop, you know.

14 And I knew that happened. I mean that's exactly how it  
15 happened. I really was not alarmed about it, and I didn't report  
16 it. I didn't, didn't really give it that much thought. It wasn't  
17 an unusual thing to happen.

18 And then I get a -- that afternoon, that afternoon, my  
19 transportation director came to me at the school. It was later in  
20 the afternoon, and he said to me, did you have a problem this  
21 morning at your stop -- at a stop? And I said, no. And he said,  
22 well, did you have someone run your stop arm this morning? And I  
23 said, yes; yes, I did. And he's like you did? And I'm like,  
24 yeah. And he said, I got a call from a parent that was very  
25 upset, says her kids almost got hit. And I'm like, no students

1 almost got hit, and I'm sure you're talking about Meiser's Trailer  
2 Court, and there was a Millie's Bread truck that drove through my  
3 stop arm, but the kids were way back away from the road. If you  
4 would have been over there, you know there's a chain link fence.

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. And when I drove, the students were to stay like right where  
7 that chain link fence was or back farther. They weren't supposed  
8 to be closer to the road than that --

9 Q. Right.

10 A. -- until I motioned them across. And the kids were standing  
11 way back there. Nobody had started coming across the road. They  
12 weren't even close to the road. But he drove through, and I blew  
13 my horn. Well, she was at home in her trailer, which you probably  
14 know where their trailer -- their home was located.

15 Q. Um-hum.

16 A. It's not even close to the highway. It's clear back there.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. So I don't know. She says she heard the horn, she thought  
19 her kids were getting hit. Well, I don't know if she did or maybe  
20 -- there's a mother that was always out there, and that  
21 consistently over the years was out there.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And maybe she talked to her about it, maybe she said, oh, it  
24 was a bad situation. There's a lot of drama that goes on between  
25 those households over there.

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. So I don't know where she got the impression that it was that  
3 bad, but it was not. It was not anything I even gave much thought  
4 to until he brought it to me that afternoon and said, hey, what  
5 happened over there, because I have a parent that's really upset.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And I'm like, well, she wasn't out there. She -- that's not  
8 a parent that was even out there. So she just -- I don't know  
9 where she got the idea that it was what happened, but that's not  
10 what happened. It wasn't a bad situation. And he said, but you  
11 do know, it was a Millie's Bread truck? And I said, yeah, I do.

12 Q. Well, what's the name of the company again?

13 A. Millie's, it's M-i-l-l-i-e, I think --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- s, Millie's Bread.

16 Q. Millie's. Okay.

17 A. And he said, well, that's pretty easy to track. I will  
18 contact them. I will contact them and make them aware that they  
19 have -- the driver that was in that area that morning ran your  
20 stop arm. They should know. They should know where their route  
21 drivers were.

22 And he came back to me, I don't know, a couple of weeks later  
23 maybe, and said, hey, I just wanted to let you know -- or maybe he  
24 called me, I don't know. I just wanted to let you know that  
25 Millie's got back to us on that complaint and assured us that they

1 were going to -- they knew who it would be, and the driver, the  
2 vehicle that was there in that area that morning, and that they  
3 were reprimanding him and that they were going to increase their  
4 safety in their company regarding those kinds of situations. You  
5 know, they were going to try to give it attention. And he did  
6 tell me that they did get back to him and tell them -- tell  
7 Mr. Conley to tell me that they said they were going to handle  
8 that.

9 Q. Right. But they didn't call the police?

10 A. Mr. Conley?

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. Not that I'm aware of.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. You'd have to ask him.

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. He never told me --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- that the police were involved, but he just -- he did tell  
19 me that they did --

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. -- confirm that they had received the information from him,  
22 and that they were not taking it lightly, I guess is the way that  
23 I summed it up.

24 Q. Got it. So explain to me, how were the kids taught what the  
25 proper procedure is to use the school bus as far as obeying the

1 drivers, waiting for the drivers to signal them across and what  
2 they're supposed to do? Do they learn that in the school or do  
3 the drivers kind of run over some rules with the kids?

4 A. The drivers. The drivers know they're responsible for the  
5 discipline on the bus and how they run their bus. Now I am aware  
6 that once a year, prior to school starting, when they have like  
7 the kindergarten roundup or whatever they do when they bring the  
8 kids into kindergarten the first time, that they've asked me  
9 before -- I have never done it, where you go and you take your bus  
10 in. They each have a couple of buses and bus drivers come in and  
11 they have the kindergarteners that are getting ready --

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. -- to start the school year, like get in the bus and sit, and  
14 they talk about sitting down, staying out of the aisle, not being  
15 loud, and how they load and that kind of thing.

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. And as far as I'm aware, that's the only educational teaching  
18 thing that's done with the students other than what the driver  
19 does themselves.

20 Q. Got you. Okay.

21 A. And they're required to do a -- which you know I'm sure -- an  
22 evacuation drill, spring and fall, I mean. And we are required to  
23 do that, and there's paperwork that we have to fill out indicating  
24 that we've done that and turn that into the transportation  
25 director. But other than that, that's it.



1 Q. Got it. So my question would be, you blow the horn to warn  
2 the drivers; that wouldn't mean anything to a child, correct? So  
3 suppose you have a child walking across the road, and you suddenly  
4 see a car that you didn't see before, is there any procedure where  
5 the kids know that if they hear the horn, they're supposed to seek  
6 safety? Or the horn wouldn't mean anything to the children?

7 A. Well, you know, that's up to an individual driver as well.  
8 With my students, honestly, and it's just the way I did things,  
9 and I was kind -- I think I was considered to be a driver that was  
10 kind of over the top with everything, which I'm not ashamed to say  
11 at all, as far as discipline and stuff.

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. Those kids, if they were coming across the road, that it was,  
14 it was okay to come across the road. Now I don't ever remember a  
15 time where I had a student on the road and I blew the horn at  
16 them.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I don't remember ever doing that. I think I probably would.  
19 I never had a situation. I substitute drove for 6 years. I  
20 subbed almost every route in the corporation for drivers for 6  
21 years, and then I started a permanent route of my own which was  
22 this route. And I don't ever remember a time that I felt like --  
23 where my heart was pounding, those students could have been hit,  
24 those students could have been hurt. I don't ever remember that  
25 happening. Do I remember a time where my heart would pound

1 because somebody would be coming -- I'd pull out, 400 especially,  
2 pull out on the highway at 400, and something would be coming  
3 around that curve and -- too fast and they would pass me, you  
4 know, and right after I took off from a stop or something like  
5 that, and it frightened me. Like my heart would pound and I  
6 think, oh, my God, something bad's really going to happen there,  
7 you know. Other than that, I never really had that situation.

8 I did have another accident that occurred on State Route 25  
9 years ago. I can't tell you what year it was, but it's been a  
10 long time. And I had a student walking to the front of the bus to  
11 get off the bus. He would have had to have crossed the road. And  
12 there around the curve came a vehicle, and I didn't like the way  
13 it looked, like it didn't even appear like it was going to get  
14 stopped. And I said -- they got to the front of the bus, and I  
15 always just put my arm across and grab the seat, you know, if I  
16 wanted to stop them, if I felt like, you know, they were coming up  
17 and they shouldn't have been or anything, and I put my arm across  
18 the seat, the walkway, and I said sit down right there in that  
19 front seat, sit right now. And he sat down. And that vehicle  
20 ended up hitting us. It had lost its brakes, and it ended up  
21 being a pretty bad accident, and it hit us in the front end.

22 Q. Oh.

23 A. But now, if I wouldn't have stopped that student and had them  
24 sit down, then, yeah, they would have been on the road and that  
25 could have been a close call.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. But I did the same thing with exiting the bus. Until  
3 everything was stopped around me, I didn't let them out the door.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. So I really didn't have a lot of close calls. I don't ever  
6 remember blowing my horn to try to alert students to anything.  
7 That was not something that I remember happening. It might have  
8 at some point, but I don't remember that happening.

9 Q. Do you have a lot of students that have to cross 25?

10 A. I had -- yeah, several. I would say several. I'm trying to  
11 think. Like toward the end of my route --

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. -- I -- like toward the end of time that I retired, I would  
14 have had -- on the highway? You want just the highway?

15 Q. Yeah, this is specifically on any roadway that had like a  
16 high speed, above 40 miles an hour. Did you have a lot of kids  
17 crossing roadways?

18 A. I'm trying to think. I don't, I don't know what a lot is.

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. And I don't know what you mean by a lot.

21 Q. Well --

22 A. I have -- the trailer court, by far, would have -- at times,  
23 I had as many as 15 kids over the years getting on in that one  
24 stop. And at one time I stopped at all three drives of that  
25 trailer court.

1 Q. Really?

2 A. It was full. That trailer court used to be full, and there  
3 were three drives. And at one time I stopped at all three drives.

4 Q. So do -- so is it fair to say that on your bus, you actually  
5 have kids all the way from kindergarten up to high school riding  
6 on one bus?

7 A. Yeah, that's absolutely the way it is.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. We haul kindergarteners through 12 -- K through 12.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Yeah, that is the way it was.

12 Q. Okay. All right.

13 A. And still is. I'm sure it's still the way they do it over  
14 here. Now, our corporation is huge. It's a very large mileage  
15 spread-out corporation.

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. And for us to run double routes for older students and  
18 younger students would be next to impossible. And as far as  
19 financially, it would be a nightmare. I mean, the fuel --

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. -- and that kind of thing. And I know -- I didn't -- it's a  
22 little hard for me to hear people constantly like, well, why  
23 didn't you run two routes, and why didn't you run it this way and  
24 then turn around and run it that way? And I'm like, how early do  
25 you want these students getting on? You know, to run that route

1 one way and then turn around and run it the other way, every  
2 route, to not have student crossing the road, you're going to -- I  
3 would have started having the students getting on my bus at  
4 quarter after 6, you know, because of the extra time it would  
5 take. How early do you want a kindergartener that lives right  
6 next door to me that rode my bus, a little kindergartener, how  
7 early do you want that student getting on the bus when they won't  
8 get off the bus until 8:25, you know. And, it's not feasible --

9 Q. Right.

10 A. -- in a lot of ways, and some of these things are not  
11 feasible. To me, the answer to every darn bit of these problems  
12 is your driver, the driver of the bus. That's the answer to all  
13 the problems in my opinion. The drivers have got to be trained.  
14 The drivers need to be made accountable. The drivers need a lot  
15 more instruction and attention and discipline. And that's my  
16 opinion is that in -- not just our corporation, but all,  
17 everywhere. I don't know about how other corporations handle  
18 things. I don't -- I never drove for any other corporation  
19 consistently. I did a few things for Rochester years ago when I  
20 first started driving, but the answer to all of it in my opinion  
21 is the driver.

22 Q. So you said you drove with Rochester. Did -- by the way, did  
23 Rochester schools actually have a route inside the trailer park,  
24 too?

25 A. Not that I'm aware of, no. I would say no.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. I suppose something could have been going on, during the day,  
3 you know, where they ran over there and picked up a special needs  
4 student or something like that, but I'm not aware of it. So my  
5 answer to that would be no.

6 Q. Okay. And I guess the other question is, is that how long  
7 did you drive for Rochester?

8 A. I didn't drive for them consistently. When I first got my  
9 license, in 1990, when I first got my license in 1990, my brother-  
10 in-law was the transportation director for Rochester schools, and  
11 I was not able to get a route at Valley. I live in Valley  
12 Corporation.

13 Q. Um-hum.

14 A. I was not able, and my three kids were going to school at  
15 Tippecanoe Valley at that time, and I was unable to get a route.  
16 At that time, the routes were very coveted positions. They came  
17 with insurance. They came with perks, and a very good daily pay  
18 for a bus driver, much better than the surrounding corporations.  
19 So they were very coveted positions. And so I drove for Rochester  
20 occasionally to help them out on extra curricular trips. I did  
21 run for them when a driver had to have surgery. Maybe I drove for  
22 them for 4 weeks or something like that at one time, but that was  
23 way back in the early '90s.

24 Q. Okay. So did -- do you actually remember if Rochester had  
25 any different, like, policies as far as the route and how routes

1 were planned out, or was it basically the same back then as Valley  
2 or do you know?

3 A. I don't know. I really don't know how they planned their  
4 routes. The only route I ran for them, which was my brother-in-  
5 law, the transportation director went out with me, basically ran  
6 the route and showed me, you know, how the route was ran so that I  
7 was familiar with it. They did what was necessary for me to know  
8 how to run that route and what roads, you know, it was on and that  
9 kind of thing. And that's all I knew, and I ran it.

10 Q. So at --

11 A. At that time I wasn't at any of their meetings. I wasn't at  
12 any of their training. I really, I really wasn't. I was just a  
13 substitute, and substitute drivers are in the situation where we  
14 call you and you hurry up and get here and, you know, unless it's  
15 a planned surgery or something, and then they have you ride with  
16 the driver and you are familiar with the route and you run it.  
17 That's the way it was back then, anyway. And that's the way it  
18 was when I retired.

19 Q. Um-hum.

20 A. This driver rode the road with me for 3 days because he chose  
21 to, and actually most drivers in our corporation probably wouldn't  
22 have even chose to do that. They would have said, okay, well,  
23 just basically tell me what time you get at the first stop, and  
24 then I'll get there and that student -- will that student be able  
25 to tell me where to go next and next, and then I'll figure it out.

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. Typically. Yeah, that's what they do. And, you know, when  
3 you get a call at 5 o'clock in the morning, as a substitute driver  
4 or something like that, that's exactly what you do, you know. You  
5 have no idea, and they say, hey, we need you, can you run over  
6 here and pick up a bus and here's where your first three stops  
7 are, in case the first two are absent, and then the kids kind of  
8 can help you from one stop to the next, because that's just the  
9 way it works. It's not something you can plan when somebody gets  
10 sick or hurt. So that's kind of how it works.

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. Or it used to. But like I said, I drove that route; that was  
13 my route. I drove that route, same route, year in and year out  
14 for 20 years. So I really don't know how they were handling the  
15 subbing and the new routes and that kind of thing, what our school  
16 was doing or any other school was doing. I know what I was doing,  
17 and I only made sure I was doing it the way that I felt  
18 comfortable with and what I thought was safe.

19 Q. So if you're on that route and you really had a safety  
20 concern, do you report it to the school to change or did you just  
21 change the route on your own without any input?

22 A. It would depend on what it was. It would depend on what the  
23 change would have been. If it would have been a change where I'm  
24 going to start running into a completely different area, like into  
25 someone else's area where another bus is also running that same



1 road --

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. -- to go down there and go around the block or turn around,  
4 something like that, or if I'm turning around in somebody's  
5 driveway that doesn't even have students or something, I would  
6 maybe -- I would probably talk to the bus garage about it.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. I would say, hey, I'm going to start running this whole --  
9 I'm going to start running this whole area differently. So if  
10 somebody calls and says why is this bus coming down my road, I've  
11 got two buses going past my house, something like that, I probably  
12 would have told the bus garage that.

13 Q. Um-hum.

14 A. But, yeah, it's up to the bus driver's discretion.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. If I was going to do something completely different, I would  
17 have reported it or asked, is it okay if I do this, you know.

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. If I would have decided that I was going to try to drive in  
20 that trailer court --

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. -- I definitely would have made the school aware that I was  
23 going to try to do that, and I would have actually talked to the  
24 transportation director and said, hey, you know, do you think this  
25 is the right thing to do? Is it okay if I do this? Because

1 you're on private property.

2 Q. Um-hum.

3 A. And I need to say, we kind of went away from it. You asked  
4 me if the transportation director talked with me about that  
5 situation when that mother called in and complained and really had  
6 no idea what happened that morning, but she had complained and he  
7 talked to me about that. We kind of got away from that.

8 Yeah, I probably talked to him three times about it. Well, I  
9 say that because he came to my bus and asked me about it, which I  
10 told you. And then that afternoon, which by the time I got to  
11 that trailer court in the afternoon, was probably somewhere  
12 between 4 and 4:30, and he was sitting in the -- he was sitting in  
13 the farthest south drive with his personal vehicle in that drive,  
14 the transportation director was.

15 Q. Um-hum.

16 A. So he had driven out there that afternoon to see the  
17 situation. He actually had followed up on that --

18 Q. I see.

19 A. -- and driven out there, and I was not aware that he was  
20 going to be there. But when I got to that stop and looked down  
21 the road, I waved and realized that was his truck sitting down  
22 there in the far drive obviously just to look at the situation and  
23 see what he thought.

24 Q. Um-hum.

25 A. And then he talked with me about it afterwards --

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. -- and asked me my opinion. He asked me my opinion, what I  
3 thought about -- in the afternoon, the students were getting off  
4 on the door side. So what he observed, they were getting off on  
5 the door side.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. So -- or the drive side.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. Not across the road to exit the bus. And he did talk with me  
10 about that then, you know, that night or the next morning or  
11 whatever, but he did ask my opinion whether I thought it would be  
12 something that we could do or should do as far as driving through  
13 that trailer court. He asked my opinion. So -- and that was  
14 probably the second time we discussed it, and then he came to me  
15 and asked me or told me that the Millie's Bread truck guy had been  
16 reported and actually they had responded. So that's probably the  
17 three times we had discussed it.

18 Q. Got it. I understand.

19 A. Now are you ready for me to tell you what I said? That's the  
20 next question, isn't it?

21 Q. Yes, it is, ma'am.

22 A. Of course, it's had me rethinking it, when the accident  
23 happened, and I still stand by what my decision was, was to stay  
24 on the road. I still feel like that was the best decision for the  
25 situation, and it wasn't like I had never thought about that

1 situation prior to that incident. I still say, for me, as a  
2 driver, if I was driving that bus, it was safest to be on that  
3 road.

4 And the reasons being, and this is what I told him, when he  
5 and I discussed it, that it's tight turns. There are tight turns  
6 in there for a school bus. You have students that come from  
7 numerous directions out of trailers. If you were to stop in  
8 there, in the mornings, it's pitch black, just like it was the  
9 morning the students were killed. How long would I have to sit  
10 there with my foot on the brake stopped before I would be sure  
11 that Suzie, that I never saw come out but ended up running back to  
12 get her bookbag or to potty, wasn't going to come running after  
13 the bus, and I would have no way of seeing her. There were no  
14 lights in that trailer court. None.

15 Q. Um-hum.

16 A. None, absolutely no lights, not even at the entrance, which I  
17 did ask about that, and had gone to numerous -- like over the  
18 years, to different transportation directors and said, you know,  
19 is there any way we can get some lights at that entryway of that  
20 trailer park. I can't see those kids out there. I can't see them  
21 when it's dark, maybe we can get lights there. Well, I don't know  
22 whose job that was, but that never happened.

23 Q. Right.

24 A. And I don't know if it was even feasible. It was private  
25 property.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. But I didn't -- I don't think I could have -- it would not  
3 have been the right choice. It was not the right choice for me.  
4 There are numerous reasons. Just as everybody thinks that's a bad  
5 place for a bus to be stopped on the highway, it's really a bad  
6 place for a bus to be pulling out of a drive on a highway, and you  
7 have no way of stopping traffic if somebody comes flying and --  
8 you know what I'm saying?

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. You've got a car coming from either way, or a truck, a semi.  
11 There's the big one, semis that are coming too fast and have  
12 trouble stopping, there's the big ones you've got to look out for,  
13 because they can't stop quickly. And so, you know, that was a big  
14 one.

15 But pulling out, pulling out there, I wasn't comfortable with  
16 that. Being in that trailer court in the dark, having students  
17 coming from behind the bus, in front of the bus. And, you know, I  
18 get the -- well, you could have had them all at one spot; you  
19 could have had them all standing in a group. Yeah, I had them all  
20 standing in a group the way I was doing it, and you still had the  
21 straggler that ran back or was running for the bus because they  
22 were late. You still had the little [REDACTED] that got on -- and it  
23 actually would have been [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], that, you  
24 know, that the older sister would get on and say, they're coming,  
25 they're coming, but, you know, he's crying and he has to get --

1 and that was [REDACTED] that would cry. And [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were  
2 very emotional little boys starting school, their kindergarten  
3 year; they really did struggle. And it's like, well, [REDACTED]  
4 crying or -- and it's not just them. It was other students as  
5 well that might -- I guess what I'm trying to get at is that you  
6 have a student that went back in to potty, you have a student that  
7 didn't get their book bag and the sister or brother or neighbor  
8 get on and say you have to wait on them, they went back, they went  
9 back to get their bookbag. You know, no matter what, you're going  
10 to have that. That's kids.

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. And I don't want to be stopped in a trailer court with kids  
13 coming out of trailers in different directions. I don't know  
14 who's sick that day. I don't know who's not going to be at the  
15 stop, and I don't have them in front of me where I can see them  
16 and watch them. And all the training I ever had, state training,  
17 and from training of other drivers like when I started -- I had a  
18 really good driver that trained me -- you stop back. You have the  
19 students where they are going to stay in their designated place in  
20 front of you, to your left or to your right. But they are in  
21 front of you and they are all in full view of you. You see them  
22 all. You see how many move across the road and, you know, if  
23 there's five over there, then you don't move the bus until there's  
24 five inside the bus and the door's shut.

25 And if you pull in a trailer court like that, you have no

1 idea how many kids are going to show up that morning, who's going  
2 to be absent and who's not, who's running late, how long I sit  
3 there in the pitch black before I took my foot off the brake,  
4 because I wouldn't take my foot off the brake anywhere until I  
5 knew there wasn't a student anywhere to be hit.

6 Q. So -- and I guess this brings a question. Then when you do  
7 your route, you're not sure until you arrive which kids are  
8 actually going to get on the bus?

9 A. Yeah, that's true.

10 Q. So how long do you wait?

11 A. Yeah, (indiscernible).

12 Q. So how long do you wait?

13 A. A reasonable length of time. There again, it's all on your  
14 driver. They need to be reasonable. They need to be practical.  
15 They need to have good common sense. You pull up -- especially  
16 trailer court situations. Then you have a situation where you've  
17 got five kids and they're all in the same family, two kids get on  
18 and you say, is [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] coming this morning? And they say,  
19 oh, no, mom's taking them. And then you pull away and leave.

20 If you pull up in front of a house and no students come out,  
21 you sit there fully stopped and all the traffic's stopped, and you  
22 blow your horn, and you wait, and you blow your horn, and you  
23 wait. And then you look and look and look. In most cases, you  
24 can see the house, and you're looking at the door. Are they  
25 coming out? Are they -- is there somebody motioning me on? And

1 you wait a reasonable length of time, and then you go on. But you  
2 don't move unless you know there's no student around you to run  
3 over.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. And you couldn't do that in that trailer court.

6 Q. Does it --

7 A. That is my biggest issue with the trailer court.

8 Q. Wasn't there a parent always there?

9 A. No, no. Now there was one mother that consistently over the  
10 years was probably out there 75 percent of the time. She was  
11 pretty consistent over the years as being there a very high  
12 percentage of the time. She stood way back. She basically would  
13 just stand out there, not even up at the road with the students  
14 usually. She would just stand back, and her -- at that time, when  
15 I retired, her one little school girl would get on the bus, then  
16 she'd saunter inside. But she -- I don't think she was there for  
17 just her girl. She felt like somebody should be out there for all  
18 the students, you know. I know she felt like somebody should be  
19 out there. So she would oversee things. She was out there the  
20 morning that it happened. I've spoken with her three or four  
21 times since the accident happened, and she was out there. But  
22 that didn't stop it.

23 Q. No. And you were talking about you were complaining about  
24 the lights in the trailer park.

25 A. Yes.



1 Q. And that had been going on for quite some time, you said?

2 A. Four years. There were no lights in that trailer park.

3 Q. And you can't see the students?

4 A. No, not when it's pitch black.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Not when it's really, really dark. It's very, very hard to  
7 see the students. You'd pull up, stop, and then make sure  
8 everything around you stopped, and you're just like peering out  
9 there into the dark. And, you know, some of them have reflective  
10 things on. I encourage the students to do that and stuff, and  
11 once you get -- it's just like coming into a dark room, it's  
12 really dark at first.

13 Q. Um-hum.

14 A. And then you look long enough, you know, you're there long  
15 enough, your eyes start adjusting, and then you can kind of see  
16 them out there. But then you turn on your interior lights and  
17 they can see you, and then motion them across. And if there are  
18 cars coming that are stopped -- if there are cars that are  
19 stopped, facing the bus, they have their headlights which does  
20 help you see the students.

21 What I had a problem with is a parent would not want their  
22 child standing out in the snow and rain, so they would drive their  
23 car up there to -- for their student to sit in and they have no  
24 idea -- and they had no idea, but their sitting there with their  
25 headlights on, absolutely would blind me so that I could not see

1 anything. You know, they would be sitting in the drive of the  
2 trailer court --

3 Q. Um-hum.

4 A. -- and they'd have their headlights on. So I'm looking  
5 directly into headlights to try to see the students. And they had  
6 no idea that was a problem, but that would happen occasionally,  
7 you know, in bad weather and stuff, and that made it more  
8 difficult, too.

9 Over the years, I did approach the -- I did end up having  
10 some kind of lights installed there. And I think probably I was  
11 told over and over again, I'm sure I was told, well, that's  
12 private property and we can't just have lights there.

13 And, the one time that I really felt like a situation was  
14 extremely -- was an extremely dangerous stop where students were  
15 crossing, I really was aggressive with the school about doing  
16 something. I didn't have a near accident, nothing happened, I  
17 just thought it was really a bad place, and that was on State  
18 Route 25 as well, much worse than Meiser's. And they said, well  
19 -- in fact, I encouraged the parents to take the students, and it  
20 wasn't feasible for them. They were good parents, but it wasn't  
21 feasible for them.

22 They finally got a "bus stop ahead" sign put up, and they  
23 told me at the time they had contacted the state or whoever, and  
24 they were going to put a sign up. And I went in -- and it's like,  
25 when? you know. It was like 3 months. When? It was the next

1 school year. When are they going to get this sign put up? And it  
2 finally did show up. Honestly, it was a year or more before it  
3 showed up. And they nailed it on a utility pole.

4 Now I'm not saying the school did this. This would have had  
5 to have been the state. And they ended up putting it on a utility  
6 pole, which I thought that was illegal because my husband works  
7 for REMC, and I don't think you're supposed to put things on  
8 utility poles. It was on a utility pole and it was far enough  
9 back off the roadway that I thought it was not effective. It  
10 wouldn't be effective in the way it was put up.

11 That, you know, I just -- I didn't feel like things like that  
12 were given enough attention as they needed.

13 Q. So where was this on State Route 25?

14 A. You know, I don't know the address, but if you travel the  
15 road enough -- do you know where Snipes Mobile Feed is?

16 Q. Yes, I do.

17 A. Good. All right. That's simple. The house straight across  
18 from it.

19 Q. Ah, okay. I actually know where that is.

20 A. The house straight across from it. The last one before you  
21 go around the curve onto the -- I actually had two houses there,  
22 but in the last few -- the last numerous years that I drove, those  
23 two kids had graduated and didn't ride the bus anymore. But I had  
24 little kids, little kids that got on at the last house before you  
25 go around that curve if you're headed north. The last house. It

1 is bad enough that the parent himself told me that the Postal  
2 Service refused to put a mailbox up there because it was too  
3 dangerous of a place for, it was too dangerous of a place for a  
4 mailman to stop.

5 Q. Oh.

6 A. They do not have a mailbox there, and that's what he told me  
7 when I started -- when his -- when those kids, when I first  
8 started picking up the kids at that house. And his name is Dave  
9 Spencer. And when I started -- I think it's Dave, right. It's  
10 Spencer anyway. When I first started driving, he told me that  
11 they couldn't get a mailbox put up there because they said it was  
12 too dangerous of a place for them to stop. And that was by far  
13 the worst stop -- the most dangerous stop on my route, on that  
14 strip of highway. That was the most dangerous spot.

15 Q. Got you.

16 A. Was that the place I had most people run my stop arm or have  
17 anything happen or, you know, the most times as far as stop arm  
18 runs? No, it wasn't. It really wasn't.

19 Q. Really?

20 A. But by far, it was the most dangerous place. I was very  
21 uncomfortable with that stop. The kids had to ride the bus. It  
22 was just -- it was a bad place. It was just -- and that stop in  
23 itself was probably the one that prompted me the most to say  
24 repeatedly to the transportation director, when I was preparing to  
25 retire, you've got to have somebody that's really on the ball.

1 That's by far the worst stop and, of course, I would have told him  
2 that when he trained.

3 Q. So do you file any -- I mean, I guess my question is, do the  
4 -- does the state -- does your transportation director actually  
5 keep like a file so he can look at it and say, oh, well, maybe we  
6 need to look at this school bus route because this stop here is  
7 making the driver uncomfortable?

8 A. I guess I can't answer that for sure. If you want my guess,  
9 from experience, or --

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. -- what I -- no, I would say no.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Do I think it should happen? Yes.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Do I think it was happening? No.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I can't know that for sure.

18 Q. Yeah. All right.

19 A. But that would be my guess.

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. My experience, my experience, I would say no.

22 Q. Okay. So I guess just to be clear, the drivers are given  
23 training through the state, and that training is how to safely  
24 service your route and the dos and don'ts. But the drivers really  
25 aren't taught by the state to actually know how to designate a

1 route, how to plan it out, how to do the risk assessments and how  
2 to do the periodic evaluations. Is that correct?

3 A. No.

4 Q. No.

5 A. That's correct.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. A state safety meeting, the Indiana State safety meeting,  
8 every driver can get what is called a yellow card, which is their  
9 certification. You get a new one every year.

10 Q. Um-hum.

11 A. You must attend one state safety meeting a year. And it's  
12 organized through your corporation and all drivers that are  
13 holding a yellow card have to attend that. And that's it.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. That's it. And it's basically videos. It also updates you  
16 on the different changes that have been made in the state, you  
17 know, article so and so, blah, blah, blah, all the different  
18 changes like that, that happened. You know what I'm talking  
19 about?

20 Q. Yes.

21 A. The legislative thing. We're updated on those things at that  
22 meeting. They show a lot of videos on incidents that have  
23 happened in that past year or in the past regarding stops,  
24 railroads, you know, just your typical safety things, and they --  
25 when new things come into play. Like I had always motioned kids

1 across the road, but that -- during the time I was driving, that  
2 changed where literally at the safety meeting they're saying, this  
3 is a universal crossing signal and everybody's to use it. So, you  
4 know, that's the -- like that meeting is where you're told those  
5 kind of things.

6 Q. Right. Does the --

7 A. The drivers basically, and I'm not saying that it's wrong,  
8 but the drivers are in control. The drivers are in control of  
9 their discipline. They're expected to handle it.

10 Now if you have a big problem, you go to an administrator and  
11 tell them what's going on, and then they decide how to or not to  
12 handle it. I always contacted parents directly myself before I  
13 would go to an administrator, and say, hey, this is what happened  
14 today, just want you to know, you know. I'd appreciate it if you  
15 would talk with your student about it, you know, and so, you know,  
16 if they'll try to do a little better, this is what I need to  
17 happen, this is why they are coming home tomorrow with a paper  
18 that's called a write-up. I will also maybe be giving that write-  
19 up to the office of the building that they are in, that kind of  
20 thing.

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. Totally up to the driver. Totally up to the driver, how to  
23 handle that, how much they let go, how strict they are, what they  
24 expect from their students, how they run their route. The driver  
25 has pretty much full responsibility. That's the way it's been in

1 the past. I don't know how it is now. I imagine a lot of things  
2 have changed. But it was the driver, and that's why the drivers  
3 were so important.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. I feel like it all starts and ends with the driver. That's  
6 what I was told and that's the way I was trained 20 years ago.  
7 But a lot of things changed when we started getting less money for  
8 our schools, when the transportation director budgets were cut, or  
9 the transportation department, I should say. When the  
10 transportation department budgets were cut, you know, and it  
11 started happening that we started in drivers that had less  
12 experience. We started using drivers that they go directly into a  
13 route instead of being in a situation where they're having to wait  
14 for a year or 2 or 6, to actually be prepared, to get that  
15 experience. We got to the place it's like get this driver  
16 licensed, get this driver licensed. And the minute they got the  
17 license, they set them in a seat and said go for it. Because the  
18 pay was dropped enough, the insurance was dropped, the perk was  
19 dropped, and we didn't have the quality drivers, in my opinion,  
20 that you needed.

21 And when all of that started, I had real good conversations  
22 with our -- with that transportation director, and he also ended  
23 up being the superintendent. That was Brett Boggs, and he was  
24 great. He was always there to listen and everything, but he's the  
25 one that implemented changing all of that. And at the time, I



1 told him, this is going to come back to bite us because you're not  
2 going to have the quality drivers that we've had in the past  
3 because they can't make enough money to actually be here and stay  
4 with the job. And you start having turnover, drivers don't stay,  
5 you struggle to get drivers. And I don't think it's just our  
6 corporation. Go by any school, they've got a sign out wanting  
7 drivers.

8 Q. Um-hum.

9 A. And I really feel like that's where the trouble began, from  
10 my standpoint, as far as the quality of the drivers we have in the  
11 state. Particularly, I can only speak to our corporation.

12 Q. All right.

13 A. Gradually they came to recognize that they couldn't get any  
14 drivers at all. We couldn't get drivers to fill our spots because  
15 we had people leaving -- you know, drive for a year, drive for 2  
16 years, and they'd leave to take a job somewhere else because they  
17 weren't making enough money. They couldn't stay. Then, you know,  
18 it's just too much of a turnover. And then what you get is  
19 drivers driving that don't have the experience that they should  
20 have and maybe not being someone that's responsible either because  
21 they're willing to take the job without any job without any  
22 insurance, and they're taking a job with lower pay. And the way  
23 they end up setting it up, it was numerous, numerous years that  
24 they would -- a driver that was starting would have to drive until  
25 they were up to full pay. What I call full pay was like what I

1 was making.

2 Q. Right.

3 A. And, you know, that's just prudent financial business, is  
4 what I was told, that the drivers had maybe had a pretty good gig  
5 for a long time, and things were going to change, and they did.

6 In my opinion, and I told him at the time, it will end up  
7 causing us trouble down the road because we won't have the quality  
8 drivers and we won't be able to get the drivers. Because you can  
9 look around the corporations around us that weren't paying as  
10 well, they weren't getting insurance and they couldn't keep good  
11 drivers. And we didn't have that problem until we started all  
12 that business.

13 Now is that our corporation's fault? Or does it go above  
14 that with our lacking -- lack of funds with the state and all that  
15 kind of thing, you know? I don't, I don't know those answers.

16 But everything goes back to the drivers in my personal  
17 opinion. I took a lot of responsibility on my shoulders. I took  
18 it very seriously, and I feel like anybody who's in that seat  
19 should be the same way no matter where they're driving or who  
20 they're driving for.

21 Q. So here's a question about your drivers then. So are the  
22 drivers in your corporation, I mean do they get together and talk  
23 about the problems and talk to the corporation about that -- the  
24 routing problems and what they feel are safety issues?

25 A. No, not in -- not while I was there. No.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. At one time -- we had two meetings a year. Two meetings a  
3 year: the state safety meeting, which was required by the state,  
4 and then there's pre-service meeting. Two days before school  
5 started, you had a meeting, you went in and they introduced you to  
6 the new administrators and you got to have lunch and you  
7 chitchatted with the drivers sitting at your table, and you talked  
8 about things like where we get our fuel and just stuff, you know.

9 Q. Right.

10 A. As far as, no, going over individual routes and that kind of  
11 thing.

12 Q. No.

13 A. Now if a driver said, hey, I don't like it because I have to  
14 -- my route's longer than everybody else's or something, they  
15 might hold up their hand and make that complaint at that time, but  
16 that's not what you're talking about.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. So, no, we did not.

19 Q. When Brett Boggs was the transportation director, he had a  
20 committee, and I was on it. He had a committee of maybe six --  
21 maybe not even that many, maybe three drivers, the bus mechanic,  
22 himself, and we met three or four times, maybe, total. And that  
23 was when we were trying to figure out things and he was talking to  
24 us about minimizing our fuel usage and how much we could get it  
25 down by changing things like, instead of every bus leaving the

1 high school/middle school campus and driving back and dropping  
2 their elementary students off at the respective elementaries, we  
3 would unload them, put them on one bus, and one bus would take  
4 those kids back to the elementaries, that kind of thing.

5 Conserving fuel, shuffling things around like that, we did as a  
6 committee, met and did that 1 year when he was first  
7 transportation director. But that wasn't really about safety in  
8 the routes.

9 Q. Right.

10 A. That was more about changing procedures in the corporation to  
11 minimize fuel usage and that kind of thing.

12 But in my opinion, every driver knew that if they had  
13 something they felt like they needed to talk about, it was their  
14 responsibility to go to the administrator and deal with them, as  
15 far as a student. And, you know, if you think something's wrong,  
16 in my opinion, you go and you tell somebody. And, you know,  
17 everybody had that opportunity to do that with the bus garage and  
18 the transportation director. Now would it fall on deaf ears? I  
19 don't know. Maybe. But you can do that. And then, you know,  
20 it's not like you were told you couldn't.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. And it all goes back to the driver.

23 Q. Right.

24 A. It's just -- that's just the bottom line in my opinion.

25 Accidents happen. That's exactly what they are, an accident. You

1 cannot keep all or any accidents from happening. You just can't.  
2 You have to do everything you can. You have to do everything you  
3 can.

4 Another reason -- and once again we moved on. But another  
5 reason that I was real uncomfortable with trying to go through  
6 that trailer court was, when you have -- which is not unusual in  
7 our state, you have delays; you have snow. You just have snow and  
8 don't have delays. Those drives, those lanes, those drives,  
9 whatever you want to call them through that trailer court weren't  
10 necessarily cleaned. And they definitely weren't necessarily  
11 cleaned, I'm sure, by 7 o'clock in the morning.

12 And when you -- and I have personally with my own vehicle, or  
13 observed when I was there on the road with the bus, when there's a  
14 lot of snow or they think there's going to be snow, they -- you  
15 know, people would not pull in their driveway, but kind of set it  
16 out where they could get out to go to work or whatever, or they  
17 didn't plow out their driveway, they didn't shovel it out, so they  
18 couldn't pull in their driveway, and so they'd just pull off.

19 Well, now what do you do with a bus in the dark, when you get  
20 down there and you've got cars and you can't get through?

21 Q. Got it.

22 A. You can't get through. When you can't get through because  
23 the snow is too deep, maybe you can't get through because there's  
24 a car parked where it shouldn't be. Now you're going to start  
25 backing. You're going to start backing because that's a big

1 number one rule of bus safety is never back. Don't back. You  
2 can't see what's behind you, especially in a trailer court, and  
3 you have no idea where people are going to be coming from, whether  
4 they're going to be adults, students or cars. Don't back.

5 So that was another thing. As an experienced driver, there  
6 were numerous things about going in that trailer court that I felt  
7 like would put me in a position that would make it less safe, less  
8 safe than what I was doing. I felt very confident and still do,  
9 that for me, the safest place was there on the highway where I  
10 would have the students visible, in front of me, and know where  
11 they were.

12 Q. Got it.

13 A. Yeah. So, yeah. I just -- it's just a -- it's horrible.  
14 It's just a horrible thing.

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. It was an accident. It's a horrible thing.

17 Q. Well, you know, I thank you for talking to me. It's -- at  
18 this particular point, we don't know. We're trying to figure out  
19 if there's some kind of suggestion, something we can recommend to  
20 make it safer. And one of the things is talking to the drivers  
21 and getting a sense of what's going on out there, and I appreciate  
22 you talking to me. Is there anything I didn't ask you that you  
23 think I should have?

24 A. Not really. Not, not really. I don't think so. Needless to  
25 say, you're not the first one I've talked to. I've had attorneys.

1 I've had private investigators. Yeah, like investigators for the  
2 attorneys that --

3 Q. Oh.

4 A. -- that the mom hired.

5 Q. Oh, for the families, yeah.

6 A. You know. But it has been a while, so I was kind of  
7 surprised when I got your call because it has been a while since  
8 I've heard anything from any of them.

9 Q. Yeah. Well, we had gotten -- well, actually it was  
10 interesting because some of your students would call you by your  
11 -- Mrs. Pratt, and other people would call you by your first name.  
12 So we were actually able to put it together when we got the crash  
13 report from the school district, and that's why it took so long to  
14 get to you.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. But --

17 A. I required my students to call me Mrs. Pratt.

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. I was taught that when I started driving, if you're -- like  
20 teachers are called -- are spoken to, you know, addressed that  
21 way, and I was taught from the get-go that it's a matter of  
22 respect and you need to establish that right from the beginning.  
23 But now, the parents -- some of the parents would call me  
24 Mrs. Pratt, and some of them would call me by my first name, you  
25 know. You drive that long and you have numerous students, you

1 kind of get to know a lot of the families pretty well, and they  
2 don't live very far from me either. So I can see how I would have  
3 been addressed both ways.

4 Q. Yeah. So, you know, speaking about the families, you have  
5 [REDACTED] and you have [REDACTED] and you have [REDACTED]. Would you say  
6 that these kids are pretty conscientious about the rules, that  
7 they are going to obey the driver? If the driver waves them to  
8 cross, they're going to wait for the driver to wave them across?  
9 Would that be fair to say?

10 A. That is very fair to say.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Along with everybody else that was at that stop.

13 Q. Right. Including [REDACTED]

14 A. I'm sorry.

15 Q. I'm sorry. Including [REDACTED]

16 A. I did not have [REDACTED]

17 Q. You didn't have [REDACTED]

18 A. [REDACTED] must have moved in after I was done.

19 Q. Oh, okay.

20 A. I did not, I did not -- I don't think I ever -- when the  
21 accident happened, I was like, I didn't have a [REDACTED] I didn't  
22 have a [REDACTED] that got on there while I was driving.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. He wasn't riding that I remember at all. He was totally in  
25 -- when I saw his picture, I was like, no, no, I just -- I did



1 not have him. And [REDACTED] was the other sister.

2 Q. Um-hum.

3 A. [REDACTED]

4 Q. Right.

5 A. -- and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] sister. And, yeah, they were --  
6 I did not have anyone at any stop that didn't follow my rules on  
7 that, because right at the beginning of the year -- I'm real  
8 strict and very verbal about my rules, and if you ever had that  
9 happen, you know, that they came across and you felt like just  
10 because everybody else did, they didn't really look -- and even  
11 the students -- I would say you look at me and I motion you  
12 across, but you also look for the traffic. They knew to look both  
13 -- do both. And I thought for the most part they always did.

14 If they didn't, once again, I'd put my arm across there, and  
15 when they stopped when they came to the top of the stairs, I'd be  
16 like, now did you look? Did you wait for me to motion you across?  
17 Did you look at me? Did you see me? Because -- well, no, but my  
18 brother, my brother went. Well, one day your brother might be  
19 absent, you know, and you're going to have to be the one that does  
20 it. And I was very strict about it, because I knew it was  
21 dangerous everywhere.

22 Q. Right.

23 A. It's just -- you've got to be consistent and you've got to be  
24 firm and -- I'm old school. I was just old school with it. I  
25 just was. And I don't know about the other drivers. I can't

1 speak for them, but it's just too important not to be.

2 Q. I agree.

3 A. I try to be fair with the kids, and I had relationships,  
4 professional relationships with the kids and with the families,  
5 and I felt really good about that, but I was still very strict. I  
6 wasn't their friend. You know, I wanted them to like me, but I  
7 needed them to respect me more and to respect my rules. And I  
8 think every driver needs to have that.

9 Q. I agree.

10 A. It's a tough one.

11 Q. All right.

12 A. And it's tough for the school corporation, you know, to hire  
13 because everybody's different, and that's what I've been told by  
14 particularly Mr. Conley and, and maybe even by the previous one,  
15 Brett Boggs, you know. I've been told not everybody does it the  
16 way you do it. Not every -- you know, some of the kids don't even  
17 want to ride on your shuttle bus because you're too strict. They  
18 try to go on other people's buses.

19 And, you know, and I'm like, well, if they're assigned to my  
20 bus, in my opinion, you make them ride my bus, and then they'll  
21 follow my rules. If you don't want them to have to follow my  
22 rules because they think I'm too strict and you want to have them  
23 ride a different bus, then go right ahead. But if they're on my  
24 bus, they're going to sit down, you know, and it's just -- so it's  
25 a tough call. And I was reminded of that pretty regular that, you

1 know, okay, just because that's the way you do it, not everybody  
2 does it that way, because you have to do it that way to be  
3 comfortable and it doesn't mean other drivers do. Different  
4 drivers are comfortable with different levels of chaos.

5 Q. Right.

6 A. And so -- and I -- you know, that was kind of hard for me.  
7 But they're right. They were right, and that's why I'm not an  
8 administrator because I'd expect everybody to do everything like I  
9 thought was best. I wouldn't be a good boss. But anyway, I can't  
10 think of anything that you haven't asked me.

11 Q. Well, I certainly do appreciate you talking to me. And do  
12 you have -- by any chance, did your phone capture my number?

13 A. No.

14 Q. No.

15 A. This is a landline phone --

16 Q. Oh, okay.

17 A. -- and I do not have caller ID.

18 Q. Okay. Can I give you my number, because one of the things  
19 that I ask people, if later on they think of something that they  
20 think is important -- because again we're talking about safety and  
21 we need a lot of help from the drivers, and we're talking to  
22 drivers in different school districts, actually, throughout the  
23 country, and also the different school districts within Indiana.  
24 So we really appreciate it. If there's another driver who wants  
25 to talk to me and give me suggestions, I am absolutely willing to

1 listen. Anything that you can come up with, and we can make it  
2 safer, I'm in.

3 A. Good, good. That's good, and I do have a pencil and I'm  
4 ready for your (indiscernible) --

5 Q. Okay. I will give -- no problem. My first name is Sheryl.  
6 That's S-h-e-r-y-l. Last name is Harley, like the motorcycle,  
7 H-a-r-l-e-y.

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. My office number is [REDACTED], and I'll also give you my  
10 cell: [REDACTED]. And again, I work for the National  
11 Transportation Safety Board in Washington. And you can give those  
12 numbers out to anyone that you feel that has -- that wants to talk  
13 and can make any suggestions. And that's what we're trying to do  
14 here.

15 A. All right, absolutely.

16 Q. All right. Thank you very much, Mrs. Pratt. I appreciate  
17 all of your time. I'm sorry if you had other things to do, and  
18 I've taken up way too much of your time.

19 A. No, there again, it's important. So --

20 Q. All right.

21 A. And I'm retired, so that's just fine. I appreciate the work  
22 you do.

23 Q. All right, ma'am. You have a wonderful day.

24 A. You, too. Bye-bye.

25 Q. All right. Bye-bye.

1 MS. HARLEY: Interview concluded at 10:50 a.m.

2 (Whereupon, at 10:50 a.m., 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:        PICKUP TRUCK AND SCHOOL BUS CRASH  
                             ROCHESTER, INDIANA  
                             OCTOBER 30, 2018  
                             Interview of Melinda Pratt  
                             Retired TVSC School Bus Driver

ACCIDENT NO.:            HWY19MH003

PLACE:                    Via Telephone

DATE:                     March 28, 2019

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