

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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*ROBERT CENAC* AND *MR. DAWG* COLLIDE  
WITH HOUMA TWIN SPAN BRIDGE, IN  
HOUMA, LOUISIANA ON MARCH 6, 2022

\* Accident No.: DCA22FM012

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: ALFRED P. CENAC III, Sales and Operations  
Caillou Island Towing

United States Coast Guard  
Marine Safety Unit  
Houma, Louisiana

Thursday,  
March 17, 2022

APPEARANCES:

MARCEL L. MUISE, Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

DEREK JOHNSTON, Human Performance Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

LT [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
United States Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit  
Houma, Louisiana

CWO [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Investigating Officer  
United States Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit  
Houma, Louisiana

MILES THOMAS  
(On behalf of Mr. Cenac)

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I N T E R V I E W

(12:34 p.m. CDT)

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2  
3 LT [REDACTED] Good afternoon. This is LT [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with  
4 Marine Safety Unit Houma investigations. The date is March 17,  
5 2022. We are currently located at Marine Safety Unit Houma in  
6 Louisiana. The time is 12:34.

7 The purpose for this recording is to conduct an interview  
8 relating to the investigation in the bridge allision, Houma Twin-  
9 Span bridge, by the crane barge *Mr. Dawg*, which was in tow by the  
10 towing vessel *Robert Cenac* on March 6, 2022. This interview is  
11 with Alfred Paul Cenac II. And if I could just go ahead and have  
12 everybody identify themselves, please.

13 MR. MUISE: This is Marcel Muise, with the National  
14 Transportation Safety Board.

15 MR. JOHNSTON: Derek Johnston, National Transportation Safety  
16 Board.

17 MR. CENAC: Al Cenac, with Caillou Island Towing.

18 CWO [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard investigations,  
19 Houma.

20 MR. THOMAS: Miles Thomas. I represent Mr. Cenac. For  
21 clarification, I think he's the third.

22 LT [REDACTED] Thank you. And again, with your consent, I'd like  
23 to record.

24 MR. CENAC: Yes, ma'am.

25 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

## 1 INTERVIEW OF ALFRED P. CENAC III

2 BY LT [REDACTED]

3 Q. Can we start by just kind of giving me a little background.  
4 So, if you can tell me about yourself and how you started working  
5 with the company.

6 A. So, I'm 25 years old. Whenever I graduated high school, in  
7 2016, my dad -- I mean, we had been in the marine industry, our  
8 whole family, for, I mean, generations. Multiple generations.  
9 So, just kind of born into it. Always been around it. You know,  
10 always wanted to be in the industry. And graduated high school,  
11 like I said, 2016, and I went straight to work for my dad doing  
12 shipyard work, you know, maintenance on boats, and kind of just  
13 worked my way up the ladder, getting into the office, and did  
14 sales. I still do sales to this day. And just kind of being a  
15 jack of all trades, to be honest with you. You know, we're, we're  
16 not a huge company, and kind of do sales, do operations, kind of  
17 all around. You know, I'm just trying -- I'm trying to learn the  
18 whole -- you know, the whole side of the company. Like, the whole  
19 marine industry.

20 Q. Okay. And as operations officer, what does your job entail?

21 A. Like, as you mean an officer, like I -- I'm not, I'm not a  
22 head of operations.

23 Q. Do you take duty calls or --

24 A. I do.

25 Q. Okay. So --

1 A. I do take duty calls.

2 Q. So, what -- if you had to -- without that title, what would  
3 you say you do, aside from sales? Like, what would the other  
4 stuff be? Just kind of paint me a picture.

5 A. Like my whole job?

6 Q. Uh-huh.

7 A. Like, I'm in boots today. You know, some days I'm in the  
8 back chipping and grinding on boats, painting, doing maintenance  
9 on them, working on engines. Other days I'm in meetings in  
10 Houston. I take calls, sometimes, you know, if somebody calls my  
11 phone obviously -- I'm my dad's son. You know, a lot of people  
12 call us, you know. They need jobs. They need bids. I'll give  
13 them numbers, or I'll go to my guys in operations and they'll give  
14 numbers. They'll send emails out.

15 I'm just kind of -- I'm all around, to be honest with you.  
16 I, I really don't have, like, a specific job title. I'm kind of  
17 all over. I do take duty calls. I take calls. I take calls a  
18 week at a time. And that would be, you know, sending traffic  
19 reports, AM, PM, you know, if -- kind of managing the fleet, I  
20 guess you'd say.

21 Q. Okay. So, have you ever been underway on any of these  
22 vessels before?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. Any of the towing vessels? Okay.

25 A. I've rode them.

1 Q. And when did you start doing that?

2 A. I mean, like I've never pulled shifts, you know. Like, I've  
3 never spent weeks on the boat. But I've hopped on boats. I mean,  
4 I'm on them every day. If they're behind our office, I'm, I'm on  
5 them. You know, I'm talking to the crews, I'm, I'm going through  
6 them. If they are working at -- in our fleet, you know, I'll,  
7 I'll ride along with them. You know, just to go check our  
8 captains, you know, make sure they're operating the boat how we  
9 would want them to operate the boat. Never -- you know, I've  
10 never pulled time on the boat, if you're asking that.

11 Q. Okay. And if vessels have issues with, like, crew members on  
12 board or with maybe something that breaks down, is that something  
13 that you would -- may field a call for?

14 A. Crew members, like as personnel, we have, we have a personnel  
15 lady who works with us. And she takes care of all that.  
16 Maintenance, if something goes wrong, they're going to call, you  
17 know, our operations, of course. Tell them what's going on,  
18 either -- if I'm on call that week, I'll handle it. I'll send a  
19 mechanic to the boat or I'll do whatever is best in that, you  
20 know, I guess, position. If I have to go on the boat, go fix it,  
21 I'll, I'll go do it, you know. It's just --

22 Q. And you had mentioned kind of like if you're on call that  
23 week. So, do you share this responsibility with anybody else?

24 A. Yes, ma'am. There's three of us that would do it. It would  
25 be myself, Michael Arcement, and Ted Wazone (ph.).

1 Q. And who is the last person?

2 A. Ted. Ted Wazone.

3 Q. Okay. So, is -- Mike, is he your safety officer, you would  
4 call him?

5 A. Yes, ma'am.

6 Q. Okay. Okay. And if you could kind of go into how you may be  
7 involved with the incident.

8 A. So, as to, like, specific dates, off the top of my head, I  
9 wouldn't know. But on that Saturday, I believe it was, like,  
10 around 8:00 that night, 7:50 that night -- or maybe a little  
11 earlier -- Rene Ritchie with Sea Level reached out, called me. I  
12 guess he seen the boat on AIS, or him and my dad had talked.  
13 We're all close friends. And he had -- he called me to see if the  
14 *Robert Cenac* was available at that time. I said yes, it is.

15 He then -- he wanted me to go to Loop Facility, and come from  
16 Loop Facility to go to their jobsite location. I was told that  
17 we were going to meet up with the *Vickie Lynn*, I believe was the  
18 other motor vessel. That they had a track line to go to the  
19 jobsite to that, to that specific location. With the past  
20 hurricane all that marsh had moved. Things had got silted in.  
21 So, I told Rene, I said, Rene, I said, let me call Mike. I said  
22 he, he has a good friend who works for Loop Facility. I said, let  
23 me call him, just to clarify that we can even get behind there or  
24 get into those waterways, without no issues, before even confirm  
25 that I'd take the job. And he's like yeah. So, he told me what I



1 would be bringing, if, if, if it was -- you know, he told me two  
2 barges, at that time.

3         So, I had called Mike. And I confirmed with him that he was  
4 with his friend, that works behind there, like I said, and they  
5 had told them that, you know, the waterways were open, everything  
6 was good, that we could navigate back there. So, I then called  
7 Rene back and I said, yes, what exactly will we be taking to  
8 location. From point A to point B. And he said we'll be taking  
9 the *Mr. Dawg*, it was a crane barge, and I forget the, the number  
10 of the barge. It was a little deck barge, with some I-beams on  
11 it, I believe. And I asked him, I said, okay -- I said, is the  
12 crane in a cradle. And he told me there was no cradle on the  
13 barge. And then I asked him, I said, is the boom lowered. And as  
14 he told me, he said, yes, he said, it is lowered below the spuds.  
15 I said how high is the spuds. And 50 foot, which that's pretty  
16 standard on that size spud barge. And that's -- I mean, I said  
17 yes. I said we'll, we'll take the job and we'll go, you know,  
18 we'll go to the facility. And that's pretty much how it kind of  
19 led up, you know.

20 Q. Okay. So, when you get job requests that come in, it sounds  
21 like it's verbal, that you would usually get them.

22 A. A lot of times. It's, it's all over the phone. You know, a  
23 quick call, hey, man, you know, I need this, I need that. And  
24 we're just kind of running off of that, you know. A lot of times,  
25 like I said, I'm, I'm all over the place. I'm not sitting behind

1 a computer for my whole workday. So, a lot of times these guys --  
2 and me knowing this guy, I have a working relationship with him,  
3 I've done jobs with him in the previous -- you know, he just  
4 picked the phone up and called me, you know. And it, it was all  
5 verbal. I mean, probably 95 percent of it.

6 Q. So, once the job is completed is there anything as far as the  
7 paperwork-wise that gets documented on it?

8 A. Oh, yeah. I mean, there's, there's boat logs. I mean, for  
9 sure, like on the boat side they take, you know, logs in  
10 everything they do. You know, we have emails back and going forth  
11 of, you know, prices or, you know, fuel that we owed, you know. I  
12 mean, there, there is communication like that, yes, ma'am.

13 Q. Okay. Have you had many jobs where you had to take a crane  
14 barge from one location to the other?

15 A. Yes, ma'am.

16 Q. It's pretty common?

17 A. It's -- in, in our industry, yes. It's not an everyday  
18 thing, but it is very common. You know, the construction side of  
19 it.

20 LT [REDACTED] Okay. Okay. Is there any questions that you guys  
21 have right now?

22 MR. MUISE: No, not right now.

23 MR. JOHNSTON: No -- yeah.

24 LT [REDACTED] [REDACTED] is there --

25 CWO [REDACTED] Yeah.

1 BY CWO [REDACTED]

2 Q. On the emails that -- I know most of it was verbal, and  
3 everything.

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. But in the emails, was there any specification as stating  
6 that the height or that the boom was lowered? The position of the  
7 crane or any of that, at that point?

8 A. At this, at this point in time, no, sir. It was all over  
9 phone call. And I had -- I mean, I've -- like I said, I asked him  
10 first of all -- whenever you move a crane, first thing is, is a  
11 cradle. Is it, is it in its bed. You know, I mean, that's,  
12 that's kind of -- everybody goes to that, you know. At this point  
13 in time, that barge did not have a cradle on it. So, my next  
14 question was where is the boom. Is it below the spuds. And I was  
15 told yes, the crane, the crane boom is lowered below the spuds.  
16 And this is at 9, you know -- 8, 8:30, 9:00, by the time I had  
17 went back and talked and made sure everything was good to go, and  
18 all the waterways were navigable. You know, I mean, so that --  
19 9:30, so it's kind of playing phone tag back and forth, you know.

20 Q. Yeah. So, after everything occurred -- after the phone  
21 calls, did you ever receive anything from the -- their company  
22 stating that the crane was lowered?

23 A. Not in black and white. Not in text messages, not in emails.

24 Q. No? Okay.

25 A. No, sir.

1 Q. All right. Thank you.

2 BY LT [REDACTED]

3 Q. Okay. So, decided to go ahead and do the job.

4 A. Uh-huh.

5 Q. Okay. And then if you don't mind continuing on with --

6 A. So, I called Travis Tate, which he was on shift at that  
7 point. I told him that we need to go to Eagle dry dock, pick up  
8 the *Mr. Dawg* and the dead barge. I told him, I said, make sure  
9 that the boom, you know, it -- make sure that it's, it's lowered.  
10 You know, make -- obviously. And, he pulled up on it. He -- they  
11 were shifting bars around. They had to make tow. So, that took,  
12 you know -- I think it took about an hour, hour and a half,  
13 something like that. And whenever they got to it, I asked him  
14 again -- I called him back. Me and him talked back and forth a  
15 few times. And he said, look, he said -- at the end of it he  
16 said, look, before -- he said I'm about to take off with it. The  
17 spuds are 50 foot. The crane boom looks to be right at the top of  
18 the, at the top of the spuds. He said could you just confirm to  
19 make sure how high the crane boom is. I said okay. So, I --  
20 that's whenever I reached out and I texted Rene Ritchie at this  
21 point. I have a text message -- yeah, you, you have my text  
22 messages, I believe. I don't know exactly what I said, but I was  
23 asking him, hey, Rene, can you get back with me, the captain is  
24 saying that the boom is right at the top of the spuds. We are --  
25 I, I just want to confirm the height of the crane boom. And I

1 never received a text message back. This was, I think, at about  
2 11:00, I'd say. And at -- like, me and Travis talked, you know,  
3 back and forth. And he said look, he said, the spuds are at 50  
4 foot and I'm, you know -- at this point, he said, I, I feel  
5 comfortable that we're good to go, you know. The, the boom looks  
6 to be right at the top of them, and I think we're good, you know.  
7 He was, he was comfortable with it. And then we proceeded on.

8 Q. So, if he said he wasn't sure about whether or not it was --  
9 you know, the height was going to be okay, what would your company  
10 policy be to move forward from there?

11 A. What, what are you asking?

12 Q. So, like, if he said I'll -- I'm not sure if this is going to  
13 have enough clearance to go through the bridge, what would you --  
14 what would be your process? Is there a written --

15 A. Stop.

16 Q. -- a written process in place?

17 A. Yeah. I, I can't tell you, like, off the top of my head. I  
18 don't know. But I can get with Mike and he could refer you to,  
19 you know, our company policy. At the end of the day, he's the  
20 captain of the vessel. If he, if he doesn't feel comfortable,  
21 he's going to shut it down. He's going to stop. You know, that's  
22 his stop-work authority.

23 Q. Right. But I guess my question is from there if he is to  
24 pose that response to you, what would you do with that  
25 information? Like, what -- as your -- you know, in your position,

1 what would you do? Are you reaching out to the company again, or  
2 are you going out to go look at the jobsite?

3 A. I'm reaching out to the company, try to get an answer, you  
4 know.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Best I can.

7 Q. Okay. All right. If you don't mind just continuing on.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have to step away right quick.

9 LT [REDACTED] Sure.

10 MR. CENAC: They -- so, they took off, and they went. And  
11 they felt comfortable that they could -- you know, that the height  
12 was right, you know, off of -- off the information that I provided  
13 them, from my customer, Rene Ritchie. They thought that they were  
14 good to go. And I think at -- right at midnight, we had an  
15 allision. And we hit the Houma Twin Span.

16 BY LT [REDACTED]

17 Q. Okay. And when were you notified about the allision?

18 A. I'm pretty sure as soon as it happened.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. I mean like minutes, or probably seconds. I mean, it  
21 happened and they called me. And I immediately called Mike. You  
22 know, we had to notify everybody what was going on, the Coast  
23 Guard -- so, our Coast Guard, everyone else.

24 Q. Okay. Who handles the drug and alcohol testing for your --

25 A. Mike Arcement.

1 Q. Mike does?

2 A. Yes, ma'am.

3 LT [REDACTED] Okay. Any questions from anybody?

4 BY MR. MUISE:

5 Q. I have a few about your management system. Are -- do you --  
6 are you involved with all the Coast Guard inspections on the  
7 boats, and -- or ABS inspections, or --

8 A. I'm around them. I'm, I'm not, like, the lead role play.  
9 Mike is.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Mike does all of our audits, all of our vetting through Coast  
12 Guard or whatever at the company.

13 Q. Are you familiar with the company's management system?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Safety management system. Do you know, is it based on  
16 somebody else's? Is it something you developed inhouse, or, or  
17 inherited from another company or --

18 A. Man --

19 LT [REDACTED] If you don't know, that's okay.

20 BY MR. MUISE:

21 Q. Yeah, just -- that's fine. That's okay.

22 A. Off the top of my head, I, I really --

23 Q. So, are you guys part of any industry groups, like American  
24 Waterways Operators or --

25 A. Oh, yes, sir.

1 Q. You are? Okay. Because they have a template that --

2 A. Uh-huh.

3 Q. -- a lot of people use.

4 A. We work, we work for, you know, the Kirbys. We, we work with  
5 Sea River. We work for all the majors in the oil field, you know.  
6 So, we, we have a pretty stout, you know, safety management  
7 system.

8 Q. Did those clients vet your, your management system?

9 A. Yes, sir. They vet our management system. They vet our  
10 boats. They, they vet everything. I actually have one I'm  
11 getting to TMSA level 2. We have a big vetting, I believe, next  
12 month.

13 Q. Okay. In that management system, is there voice planning  
14 procedures?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Is there anything in there about accepting jobs for different  
17 size cargoes? You know, beam, beam on barges and will it fit  
18 through a bridge, or maximum draft or --

19 A. I mean, it, it does have those questions, yes, sir.

20 Q. It does? Okay.

21 A. I mean, not like they -- it doesn't -- I mean --

22 Q. I guess, in there does it say whose responsibility it is to  
23 determine if this is safe to go through? I mean, where is that --  
24 how does that information flow from the client through somebody  
25 else to the captain?



1 A. I mean, I'm not going to put my guys at risk to go do  
2 something. I mean, if a job is risky, I'm obviously not going to  
3 do it. You know, at, at the end of the day, the captain, he has  
4 say-so. If he doesn't feel comfortable, he's going to shut it  
5 down, you know. But, I, I am not -- I'm not going to send my boat  
6 to go do a risky job. You know, I, I -- that's not the way we  
7 operate. I'll pass on something before I'm going to go --

8 Q. Sure. I guess I'm, I'm looking for, like, the details of the  
9 job itself. How does that, how does that information get to the  
10 captain? Like if you're picking up a red flag --

11 A. Through the operations --

12 Q. -- or whatever, whatever the job is, how does the details of  
13 -- for safety issues with the particular job, how does that --

14 A. I mean, that --

15 Q. -- information get from the client to the captain?

16 A. Customer calls us, as in our company operations. And then we  
17 relay that information that the customer has given us. We relay  
18 that to the boat, if we accept the job.

19 Q. Okay. That's really all I had. Is -- again, and I'm asking  
20 about auditing, and I understand you're not the guy to talk to.  
21 But, is there ISM certificates on the boats as well? ISM is an  
22 international version of a safety management system.

23 A. To be honest --

24 Q. That some, that some towing companies use. It's not  
25 required, but --

1 A. To be honest with you, I don't want to say yea or nay because  
2 I honestly don't know. Like, off the top of my head, you know.  
3 I, I, I could find out for you.

4 MR. MUISE: Okay. That's all I have. Thanks.

5 BY MR. JOHNSTON:

6 Q. Let's see. As far as training for the operation captains, do  
7 they receive any training specific to bridge transit? Say, how to  
8 calculate air draft and air clearance going under a bridge.

9 A. Well, yeah. I mean, they, they, you know -- yes.

10 Q. Okay. So, they -- okay. What else was I -- so, I -- what I  
11 was curious was the -- so, the crew on the, the *Robert Cenac* the  
12 night of the, the allision, were they, were they kind of in an on-  
13 call stance? Were they, were they waiting for a job?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Can you explain to me how, how the -- is it, maybe, like the  
16 dispatch or the crewing works when they're sitting around waiting  
17 for a job.

18 A. So, we had no work for the boat at that particular time. The  
19 boat was tied up behind our office, on Bayou Lacarpe. And they  
20 were on standby. They were a 24-hour boat. You know, they were  
21 standing by for us to call them with the job.

22 Q. Does the company have a fatigue management in the SMS? Does  
23 it address fatigue?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. What does it say?

- 1 A. The exact words I couldn't tell you.
- 2 Q. Okay.
- 3 A. Like I said, I could get it to you.
- 4 Q. Yeah, okay. You've got it. Yeah.
- 5 A. But, yes -- no, they have, you know, to make sure that
- 6 they're ready for watch, you know, for sure.
- 7 Q. Okay. And does it structure -- does it say, you know, we're
- 8 going to structure watches in this, in this sense -- hours on,
- 9 hours off.
- 10 A. Yeah.
- 11 Q. Minimum rest between and all the --
- 12 A. Well, they, they -- you know, they either work 12 and 12 or
- 13 6, 6, 6, and 6.
- 14 Q. Right. Okay. Is, is there a -- you -- so, they said -- you,
- 15 you were talking to Travis and he said make sure the -- this may
- 16 be a silly question, but he says make sure the boom on the crane
- 17 is lowered.
- 18 A. Uh-huh.
- 19 Q. Is there a policy that says -- you know, at what point is the
- 20 boom lowered and you say that's low enough. Is, is there a policy
- 21 that says the boom has to be lowered to a certain amount?
- 22 A. I mean, if --
- 23 Q. Before accepting the --
- 24 A. My thing is, is if the customer -- if the customer tells me
- 25 that the spuds are 50 foot --

1 Q. Right.

2 A. -- and if the boom is lower than 50 foot, if it's below the  
3 spuds --

4 Q. Right.

5 A. -- I should have no issues.

6 Q. Okay. That's what --

7 A. And, and --

8 MR. JOHNSTON: That's all I got, too. Yeah.

9 BY LT [REDACTED]

10 Q. Okay. When you say the -- I'm sorry to cut in real quick.  
11 The 12 and 12 and 6 and 6, do your deckhands usually work the 12  
12 and 12? And your masters and mates are 6 and 6? Or --

13 A. Each boat it's different, to be honest with you. Some boats  
14 are, like, on the Caillou Island side, some boats work 12-hour  
15 shifts. On the house, on that side, when they push red flag  
16 barges, they're working 6 and 6, you know. Or 6, 6, 6, 6.

17 LT [REDACTED] Okay. Thank you.

18 BY MR. MUISE:

19 Q. A lot of -- well, all of our reports are going to end up  
20 going to people to review them and everything that don't know the  
21 industry.

22 A. Uh-huh.

23 Q. And one of the terms that they may be a little confused on is  
24 boom. Can you explain what you mean when you say boom?

25 A. Like, on the, on the crane, the boom of the crane. It -- you

1 know, I don't really --

2 Q. So, when you're referring to the height of the boom, are you  
3 referring to the crane all the way lifted and the, the tip? Or  
4 the next pulley on the crane, where it's, where it's actually  
5 functional? That -- if somebody were to ask, oh, they said the  
6 boom was 10 feet high --

7 A. Right.

8 Q. -- is that the entire --

9 A. Yes, whenever --

10 Q. -- crane --

11 A. -- whenever I'm saying boom, the total length of the boom,  
12 right. So, that the furthest length that's going to be -- you  
13 know, that's, I, I guess, at your furthest point, you know. And  
14 that's --

15 Q. The tip of the arm.

16 A. Yes. Correct. The tip of the boom.

17 MR. MUISE: Got it.

18 LT [REDACTED] Okay. I don't have any further questions at this  
19 time.

20 MR. MUISE: I do not.

21 LT [REDACTED] Okay. Current time is 12:55, and we are ending the  
22 interview.

23 (Whereupon, at 12:55 p.m. CDT, the interview was concluded.)

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:            *ROBERT CENAC AND MR. DAWG COLLIDE  
WITH HOUMA TWIN SPAN BRIDGE, IN  
HOUMA, LOUISIANA ON MARCH 6, 2022*  
Interview of Alfred P. Cenac III

ACCIDENT NO.:                DCA22FM012

PLACE:                         United States Marine Safety Unit,  
Houma, Louisiana

DATE:                          March 17, 2022

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.



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Jane W. Gilliam  
Transcriber