

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FIRE ABOARD THE *SPIRIT OF BOSTON*
NEAR THE BOSTON SPORTS DISTRICT
IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS ON
MARCH 24, 2023

* Accident No.: DCA23FM022

* * * * *

Interview of: JESSICA FRIEDMAN, Assistant Server
City Cruises

Boston, Massachusetts

Friday,
April 7, 2023

APPEARANCES:

KEITH FAWCETT, Marine Accident Investigator
First District Formal Investigation Team
United States Coast Guard

ERIC DENLEY, Counsel
City Cruises

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Jessica Friedman:

By Mr. Fawcett

6

I N T E R V I E W

(10:30 a.m.)

1 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you so much for being here.

2 MS. FRIEDMAN: Oh, you're welcome.

3 MR. FAWCETT: This is a tape recorder.

4 MS. FRIEDMAN: (Indiscernible).

5 MR. FAWCETT: Okay. So do you have any questions?

6 Mr. Denley has talked to you. Do you have any questions before we
7 start?

8 MS. FRIEDMAN: No. I'm ready to go.

9 MR. FAWCETT: All right. So if you will acknowledge that we
10 are taping this interview, just say I understand we're being
11 taped.

12 MS. FRIEDMAN: I understand we're being taped.

13 MR. FAWCETT: Okay. So the Coast Guard and the National
14 Transportation Safety Board are doing a joint investigation to
15 understand what happened that night. And we're here on April 7,
16 2023, at -- shortly after 10:30 with Ms. Jessica Friedman at the
17 City Cruises Office. And I'll tell you who I am. My name is
18 Keith Fawcett, F-a-w-c-e-t-t. Thank you.

19 MS. FRIEDMAN: Welcome.

20 MR. FAWCETT: I'm a marine accident investigator with the
21 U.S. Coast Guard. And then on the phone here could you announce
22 for the Coast Guard who is present on the interview?

23 MS. FRIEDMAN: (No audible response.)

1 MR. FAWCETT: Okay. We also have the National Transportation
2 Safety Board, and that's Mr. Brian Young, and he will -- I'm not
3 sure if he'll be on the interview, but we'll provide this
4 interview to Mr., Mr. Young. He may, he may join us.

5 MS. FRIEDMAN: Okay.

6 MR. FAWCETT: So if you'll spell -- say your name, and spell
7 your last name.

8 MS. FRIEDMAN: Jessica Friedman, F-r-i-e-d-m-a-n.

9 MR. FAWCETT: And then you're sitting here with Mr. Denley.
10 Mr. Denley, would you announce your name for the record?

11 MR. DENLEY: Yes. Eric Denley, D-e-n-l-e-y, counsel for City
12 Cruises.

13 MR. FAWCETT: Okay. So we're interviewing you today. If you
14 remember anything different, you want to change anything you said
15 today, you can tell Mr. Denley, and then we're going to make a
16 report.

17 MS. FRIEDMAN: Okay.

18 MR. FAWCETT: And our purpose of our report is to make
19 recommendations so we don't have another fire. And if you see the
20 report, and you say, hey, this isn't right, let Mr. Denley know,
21 and he'll let us know.

22 MS. FRIEDMAN: Okay.

23 MR. FAWCETT: And then without any further ado, I'll begin.

24 MS. FRIEDMAN: Okay.

25 INTERVIEW OF JESSICA FRIEDMAN

1 BY MR. FAWCETT:

2 Q. So how long have you worked for City Cruises?

3 A. 15 years.

4 Q. And then what job have you -- what jobs have you done

5 A. I am a server assistant. I'm also the SA trainer for the
6 *Odyssey*.

7 Q. And that's SA is server assistant?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And how long, just approximately, have you worked on the
10 *Spirit of Boston*?

11 A. Same amount of time.

12 Q. Okay. So now I want to just talk about that accident day
13 which was March 24, 2023, and just tell me a little about what you
14 did that day.

15 A. Okay.

16 Q. And then we'll talk about when you knew the -- there might be
17 a fire.

18 A. Okay. We were cleaning up. I was putting away the salt and
19 the pepper and the drink menus, and all of a sudden my friend
20 Sharon smelled smoke, and before I knew it the whole boat was
21 engulfed in flames.

22 Q. You need tissues or anything?

23 A. No.

24 Q. You okay?

25 A. I'm fine.

1 Q. And then Sharon is who?

2 A. Sharon Bell. She's another SA. She smelled the smoke before
3 I even knew there was a fire.

4 Q. And then what did she say to you?

5 A. She said fire. And then CC jumped up, yelled everybody get
6 off the boat, and we all ran off the boat, and someone called 911.

7 Q. And CC is that Ms. Griffin?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. So did you smell the smoke?

10 A. No. I did not smell the smoke. I did not even know there
11 was a fire. Seemed like a normal reset. We were just about done
12 downstairs.

13 Q. So the tables have those little candles on them.

14 A. We took the candles off.

15 Q. And where did --

16 A. The candles were back in the bus station. We had not used
17 them because -- we had blown out the candles right before we even
18 started resetting.

19 Q. So I'm not -- I don't know what a bus station is, but let me
20 -- I know of a thing called a wait station.

21 A. Um-hmm.

22 Q. Is that the bus station?

23 A. Yeah. It's to keep the coffee, the silverware, and the salt
24 and pepper, extra drink menus. And the dishes go from that deck
25 back to the kitchen.

- 1 Q. So you said you put the candles --
- 2 A. Away.
- 3 Q. -- back there.
- 4 A. Yeah, but they were all blown out.
- 5 Q. Okay. Do you look and see how much liquid's in them?
- 6 A. Yes, I do.
- 7 Q. And what do you do if one is completely empty?
- 8 A. Throw it out, and get a new one.
- 9 Q. And where do you throw it?
- 10 A. In the trash.
- 11 Q. And then the bus station, wait station --
- 12 A. Yes.
- 13 Q. -- is that the trash can you throw them in?
- 14 A. Yes. And make sure they're all empty.
- 15 Q. And they're all -- and there's no --
- 16 A. Liquid in them, no.
- 17 Q. So --
- 18 A. The full ones are kept separate.
- 19 Q. So the trash can if I --
- 20 A. The trash was already taken out by then.
- 21 Q. But if I were to say there's a trash can back in the bus
- 22 station on the left side --
- 23 A. Yes, next to the linen.
- 24 Q. -- do you throw the empty candles into that trash can?
- 25 A. No, not in the linen bin.

- 1 Q. No, no. Trash can.
- 2 A. Yes.
- 3 Q. And the trash had already been removed?
- 4 A. Yes.
- 5 Q. Do you remember who removed it?
- 6 A. No.
- 7 Q. No I don't mean the person, but was it a marine guy, one of
8 the vessel crew, or was it a hospitality person?
- 9 A. I think it was one of the hospitality people. And then
10 before I knew it the fire started.
- 11 Q. There's a Sterno -- Sterno cans are used to heat the food.
- 12 A. Yes. Those were already burned out.
- 13 Q. And where do they -- if they're empty do you throw them out?
- 14 A. Yes.
- 15 Q. Not you, but does someone throw them out?
- 16 A. Yes. The galley guys throw those out.
- 17 Q. And did you see any of those thrown out that night?
- 18 A. No.
- 19 Q. And the one that's -- there's a coffee pot in there, right?
- 20 A. Yeah. We didn't make any -- we didn't make -- there is a
21 coffee pot in there.
- 22 Q. So did you -- were you back in the -- I'll call it the
23 galley. That's the bus station.
- 24 A. Yeah.
- 25 Q. And the cold prep and everything. So there's smoke. Sharon

1 Bell --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- Henry says --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. -- everybody get out.

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. She said there's smoke?

8 A. Said she smelled something burning.

9 Q. Okay. And then Ms. Griffin, the restaurant manager, CC --

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. -- said everybody out?

12 A. Everybody out. She was like everybody get off the boat right

13 now. One of them called 911, and then before I knew it the Boston

14 Fire Department had shown up, and they were putting out the fire.

15 Q. Did you smell smoke?

16 A. No. I did not smell smoke.

17 Q. And did you look into the bus station, the wait station, did

18 you ever see fire?

19 A. No. I did not see fire until I got off the boat.

20 Q. So now you've run off the boat, you get down on the dock --

21 A. Yes, and --

22 Q. -- it's cold isn't it?

23 A. Oh, it was cold.

24 Q. And did any of the people that worked with you say anything

25 about seeing the start of the fire?

- 1 A. No. We were all pretty shook up.
- 2 Q. Did anybody say, I could have put the fire out with a, with a
3 fire extinguisher?
- 4 A. I think my friend Louis said that.
- 5 Q. Who is Louis?
- 6 A. He's one of the servers.
- 7 Q. He's not an SA? He's a server?
- 8 A. No. He's a server. He's a server.
- 9 Q. So Louis. And do you remember what he said?
- 10 A. He said do we have a fire extinguisher somewhere? And that
11 that's -- put out the fire. And I was like maybe we should just
12 wait for the professionals to come.
- 13 Q. So you've been, you've been with the company a pretty long
14 time.
- 15 A. Yes, I have.
- 16 Q. At any time in all of that time with the company has anybody
17 talked to you about what you're supposed to do if there is a fire?
- 18 A. Run off the boat or try to put it out with a fire
19 extinguisher, let the marine crew handle that. Usually have the
20 marine crew handle the fire.
- 21 Q. Okay. And then when you're onboard --
- 22 A. Yes.
- 23 Q. -- let's first take the crew is there, you know, the
24 passengers are going --
- 25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- the crew walks around and does their securing of the
2 vessel, and they walk off the vessel. Who then is responsible for
3 your safety?

4 A. They are.

5 Q. Okay. So they walk off. They're gone now.

6 A. The marine crew?

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. Usually the managers are in charge by then.

9 Q. And do you know if you, if you, if you think they're in
10 charge of your safety?

11 A. Yes, they are. And they're (indiscernible) on the boat.

12 Q. Has anyone ever shown you -- there's a red bag. It's a big
13 red bag color of your blouse, and it says fire blanket.

14 A. I've seen it.

15 Q. Has anybody told you what that's for?

16 A. To put on someone if they're on fire.

17 Q. Right. I know what that, that's -- but has someone in the
18 vessel --

19 A. Yeah, we have -- we do safety checks all the time.

20 Q. Tell me what a safety check is?

21 A. Someone from the marine crew will come around and help --
22 shows us how to put on our lifejackets, where the fire
23 extinguishers are, make sure -- where everything is
24 (indiscernible) a fire.

25 Q. And do they tell you that if there's a fire, and there's a

1 fire extinguisher close use it?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And do you remember who told you that?

4 A. Captain Thayer.

5 Q. Captain Thayer. And I know that this, you know, this
6 accident, you know, it's pretty traumatic but do you know --

7 A. Oh, it was.

8 Q. -- do you know how long ago Captain Thayer told you this is
9 -- this is Thayer Harris?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. When was the last, when did the -- when did he tell you to
12 use a fire extinguisher?

13 A. Our last safety meeting we -- before the season started.

14 Q. And when was that? You don't have to give me a date. Was it
15 couple months ago?

16 A. Couple of months ago.

17 Q. And do they do that, like, before every real season gets
18 started do they have that kind of talk with you?

19 A. They do. Just make sure that another fire doesn't happen
20 again.

21 Q. What do you, what do you mean again? I mean, do they, do
22 they talk to you about another fire so they say we don't want
23 another fire to happen again?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And what, what was that fire?

- 1 A. One outside on May 29th. That was another boat.
- 2 Q. Okay. Would it -- if I said *Spirit of Norfolk* --
- 3 A. Yes.
- 4 Q. -- in Virginia --
- 5 A. Yes, I know about that.
- 6 Q. And did they -- Captain Thayer said we don't want another
- 7 fire like that to happen again or something like that?
- 8 A. Something like that.
- 9 Q. And were you -- were most of the people on the boat on the
- 10 day of the accident --
- 11 A. Yes.
- 12 Q. -- did they have that meeting that pre-season meeting?
- 13 A. No. That was a different boat.
- 14 Q. Okay.
- 15 A. Did it on the *Odyssey*.
- 16 Q. Did you ever have a meeting like that on the *Spirit of*
- 17 *Boston*?
- 18 A. Not to my knowledge. I'm not usually on the *Spirit*.
- 19 Q. Did you say you're not usually?
- 20 A. Yeah, usually I'm -- usually I go there if they need me to go
- 21 there. I'm mainly on the *Odyssey*.
- 22 Q. And the fire blanket you mentioned is used if someone --
- 23 A. Yes.
- 24 Q. -- were to catch fire? Did they ever tell you in a safety
- 25 meeting that if you saw a small fire you could just throw the

- 1 blanket over it?
- 2 A. Yes, they have.
- 3 Q. And then did they tell you that if you saw a small fire you
4 should use a fire extinguisher?
- 5 A. Yes. If it was a big fire tell the marine crew, and we'll
6 get off the boat like the dickens.
- 7 Q. Did you get off the boat like the dickens?
- 8 A. We did. It was (indiscernible) it was extremely scary that
9 night, and but the fire department got there right away, and we
10 all went home.
- 11 Q. And how fast would you say --
- 12 A. They got there?
- 13 Q. No. I'm going to ask that. That's a good question.
- 14 A. Thank you.
- 15 Q. But how fast did they account for everybody? Like either the
16 restaurant manager or somebody go, all right, everybody's here.
- 17 A. Yes, they counted me, my fellow workers, and the DJ.
- 18 Q. And how quickly did they do that?
- 19 A. As soon as we got off the boat.
- 20 Q. And then what did -- who was in charge on the dock?
- 21 A. Captain Dan and the fire department.
- 22 Q. I mean before they got there. Like, was it Ms. Griffin?
- 23 A. Yes.
- 24 Q. Did she -- was she the boss on the dock --
- 25 A. Yes.

- 1 Q. -- and she said stand back and out of the way?
- 2 A. Yes. She did. Everybody was really, really calm.
- 3 Q. And then at some point --
- 4 A. Bob and (indiscernible) came back, came up, came.
- 5 Q. And now at some point you went back because you got your
- 6 purse, your keys, your --
- 7 A. Yes.
- 8 Q. -- coat and all that. Did they let you go back onboard?
- 9 A. Yes, they did. And thank God my stuff was not burned because
- 10 I don't have any -- my family is out of state, and I had nobody to
- 11 let me in my house.
- 12 Q. Understand.
- 13 A. Thank you.
- 14 Q. So can you just, like, as it, as -- yourself personally --
- 15 A. Yes.
- 16 Q. -- can you just walk onto the boat without having your
- 17 supervisor there?
- 18 A. Yes.
- 19 Q. When you go to work in the, you know, in the morning or the
- 20 afternoon?
- 21 A. Yeah.
- 22 Q. You just walk on?
- 23 A. We just walk on because the galley guys are usually there
- 24 before anybody, and the marine crews usually there doing routine
- 25 stuff getting ready for the cruise.

1 Q. Can you ever go on the boat if a restaurant manager -- say
2 there's no marine crew, can you --

3 A. There's usually --

4 MR. DENLEY: Objection. Calls for speculation.

5 MR. FAWCETT: Well I mean --

6 MR. DENLEY: You can say what would normally happen.

7 MS. FRIEDMAN: If no one's there, we can't get on because the
8 boat is locked.

9 BY MR. FAWCETT:

10 Q. Understand. But do you know who unlocks the boat? Does the
11 restaurant manager have a key?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. That day did you hear an alarm, a sound of an alarm?

14 A. Yes, I did. The fire alarm went off as soon as the smoke
15 came up.

16 Q. And how did, and how does a fire alarm sound? Is it a --
17 like a, like a siren or is it a buzzer?

18 A. It sounded like a siren. It was pretty, pretty loud.

19 Q. And did it just keep going the whole time?

20 A. It did 'til the fire department came.

21 Q. And then at some point it shut off?

22 A. It shut off once they put out the fire, and they let us back
23 on the boat to get our stuff, and it looked like Armageddon.

24 Q. Did they let you down on the -- where was your stuff?

25 A. In the locker room.

- 1 Q. Where is that? Is t
- 2 A. Down at the bottom where the dry storage is, and the
- 3 refrigerators that keep the cream and the milk in.
- 4 Q. Is that below --
- 5 A. Um-hmm.
- 6 Q. -- the deck? So as you're walking around that night doing
- 7 your job as a server assistant --
- 8 A. Yes.
- 9 Q. -- did you see any birthday parties going on or celebrations
- 10 where they had candles?
- 11 A. I didn't see any birthday parties.
- 12 Q. If I wanted to have a birthday party on the vessel, would --
- 13 could I make arrangements to get, like, birthday candle, and a,
- 14 you know --
- 15 A. Yes, we can.
- 16 Q. Talk about those candles.
- 17 A. They're usually like those really small little candles.
- 18 Q. Wax?
- 19 A. Wax.
- 20 Q. They're not the kind where you can't blow them out?
- 21 A. Oh, no. We don't allow those.
- 22 Q. And then passenger smoking.
- 23 A. That is not allowed.
- 24 Q. If a crew person was going to smoke is that okay?
- 25 A. Yes. You could smoke outside.

- 1 Q. Now outside where passengers can see you?
- 2 A. No.
- 3 Q. So would it be you go back behind the galley there's a little
- 4 --
- 5 A. Yes.
- 6 Q. -- it's a porch kind of thing?
- 7 A. Yes. But I do not smoke.
- 8 Q. Have you seen people back there smoking?
- 9 A. Yes. But usually not -- usually away from customers.
- 10 Q. Do you know if anybody -- have you seen people -- you don't
- 11 have to name names, but smoke cigarettes?
- 12 A. Yes, I have.
- 13 Q. Have you seen anybody use -- you know those electronic
- 14 cigarettes they call them vape?
- 15 A. Oh, those things, I've seen people use those.
- 16 Q. Back there?
- 17 A. Um-hmm.
- 18 Q. And then do you have any idea -- I know you don't -- do you
- 19 usually go back there?
- 20 A. Not usually. To take out the trash mainly.
- 21 Q. Do you see where they throw their cigarette butts? Is it
- 22 kind of nasty? Do you ever see them, like, on the deck?
- 23 A. I see them throw them in the ocean.
- 24 Q. Okay. Have you seen them put them in a, like, an ashtray or
- 25 a bucket or --

- 1 A. No.
- 2 Q. You've been very helpful. I just want to --
- 3 A. Thank you.
- 4 Q. -- I don't have much more. I just want to make sure that --
- 5 A. No problem. Anything I can do to help.
- 6 Q. Thank you.
- 7 A. You're welcome.
- 8 Q. So once you dump the trash, you take them out of the, the
- 9 wait station on the --
- 10 A. We put them in the --
- 11 Q. -- on the first deck?
- 12 A. Yeah. We put them in the bin, and then they -- one of the
- 13 galley guys will take them out.
- 14 Q. And they'll put them back there where people smoke?
- 15 A. Yes, yes.
- 16 Q. And then do you have any idea how that gets -- how they get
- 17 rid of that? I'm not the galley. I mean, how that trash goes
- 18 ashore?
- 19 A. On the *Odyssey*, we take it to the hotel. I don't know where
- 20 they take it on the *Spirit*.
- 21 Q. And then do you remember -- on a ship usually they come into
- 22 the dock, the passengers get off --
- 23 A. Yes.
- 24 Q. -- the ship's generators are running, and then they shift
- 25 over, the power blinks over and it --

1 A. Oh.

2 Q. -- comes back on, and you're on shore power.

3 A. Shore power.

4 Q. Yeah. Do you remember how that went that night?

5 A. Yeah. Captain Dan said lights out, and it went perfectly
6 smoothly, and then he left. And then CC called him back to come
7 back.

8 Q. And that is because of the fire?

9 A. Because of the fire.

10 Q. Did you -- do you think you breathed in any smoke?

11 A. No. I got off before any smoke came up. Nobody had to go to
12 the hospital. It was a blessing.

13 MR. FAWCETT: Mr. Young, are you on the line, colleagues?

14 Let me just take a quick look here, and make sure I don't
15 miss anything.

16 MS. FRIEDMAN: Okay.

17 MR. DENLEY: Did good.

18 MS. FRIEDMAN: Thank you. I'm used to -- I've been
19 practicing this all morning.

20 BY MR. FAWCETT:

21 Q. Did -- without naming names --

22 A. Thank you.

23 Q. -- the people that work with you on the first deck --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. -- including the galley --

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. -- does anybody there that you're aware of have like a
3 physical disability? In other words do they have trouble walking
4 --
- 5 A. No.
- 6 Q. -- or climbing stairs?
- 7 A. No. The galley guys are already gone by then.
- 8 Q. Okay. But how about, how about the serving staff that you're
9 aware of?
- 10 A. No. They don't have no disabilities.
- 11 Q. And then did you see the disk jockey run back aboard?
12 His name is Oscar Nunez.
- 13 A. He went back to get his stuff.
- 14 Q. Right. So he left. He ran out of the vessel --
- 15 A. He went back to get his DJ equipment.
- 16 Q. And then you're pretty good on details.
- 17 A. Thanks.
- 18 Q. -- can you estimate how long he -- it was before he came back
19 to land?
- 20 A. About five minutes.
- 21 Q. Five minutes.
- 22 A. I would have -- this may sound crazy, but I would have just
23 left the stuff.
- 24 Q. So it was -- in your opinion based on what you know was it
25 longer than a minute?

1 A. Seemed like it, but everybody got off safe and sound, and
2 nobody had to go to the hospital which is a blessing in disguise.

3 Q. So you were aware of last year the *Spirit of Norfolk* fire?

4 A. Yes. (Indiscernible) told us about that.

5 Q. And then there was a pre-season safety briefing on the
6 *Odyssey*. On the *Spirit of Boston* or the *Odyssey*, did anything
7 change related to fire safety? And here's what I mean by fire
8 safety. Like, did anything change about stopping a fire from
9 starting?

10 A. No.

11 MR. DENLEY: Objection. Calls for speculation.

12 BY MR. FAWCETT:

13 Q. That you're aware of?

14 A. Not that I'm aware of.

15 Q. Now you're aware of in the *Odyssey* --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. -- they had a safety meeting. And just to be clear they
18 didn't on the *Spirit of Boston*?

19 A. Not to my knowledge.

20 Q. And then how many times just estimate in this -- since the
21 summer of last year about how many times have you worked on the
22 *Spirit of Boston*?

23 A. Three or four.

24 Q. And then this year?

25 A. Just until the *Odyssey* came back.

1 Q. And that would be -- how many times this year would it have
2 been since the season started?

3 A. About -- I worked Valentine's Day. So close to about four.

4 Q. To be clear, I just want to thank you, you -- I'm sorry for
5 what you went through --

6 A. You're welcome.

7 Q. -- trying to prevent this, and you've been very good about
8 answering our questions.

9 A. You're welcome.

10 MR. FAWCETT: And, Mr. Denley.

11 MR. DENLEY: I don't have any further questions.

12 Thank you so much.

13 MS. FRIEDMAN: Oh, you're welcome. Oh, you're welcome.

14 MR. FAWCETT: Let me just finish up here. The time is 10:58.

15 We've concluded our interview with Ms. Friedman.

16 MS. FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

17 MR. FAWCETT: And we thank you very much.

18 MS. FRIEDMAN: Oh, you're welcome.

19 (Whereupon, at 10:58 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

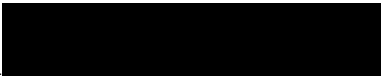
IN THE MATTER OF: FIRE ABOARD THE *SPIRIT OF BOSTON*
NEAR THE BOSTON SPORTS DISTRICT
IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
ON MARCH 24, 2023
Interview of Jessica Friedman

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA23FM022

PLACE: Boston, Massachusetts

DATE: April 7, 2023

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.



Katherine Motley
Transcriber