



**Crashworthiness- Survival Factors Investigation Attachment  
Passenger Interviews**

**Joplin, Montana  
RRD21MR017**

**(Pages)**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: \*

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FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT \*

NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA \* Accident No.: RRD21MR017

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 \*

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Interview of: GAYLE and ARCHIE AUCLAIR  
Passengers

Via Telephone

Monday,  
October 25, 2021

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Gayle and Archie Auclair

By Ms. Harley

4

I N T E R V I E W

(1:52 p.m. EDT)

1  
2  
3 MS. HARLEY: Again, my name is Sheryl Harley. H-a-r-l-e-y.  
4 I am the assistant investigator in charge with the National  
5 Transportation Safety Board out of Washington D.C. We're  
6 investigating the Amtrak derailment that occurred in Joplin,  
7 Montana, on September the 25th of 2021, at approximately 3:47 p.m.  
8 Today's date is October the 25th of 2021. And it's 1:52 p.m.  
9 Eastern Daylight Time.

10 For the record, on the phone with me, can you identify  
11 yourselves, please?

12 MS. AUCLAIR: My name is Gayle Auclair. That's spelled A-u-  
13 c-l-a-i-r. And --

14 MR. AUCLAIR: Archie Auclair. A-r-c-h-i-e.

15 MS. HARLEY: Thank you very much. I guess what I -- what  
16 we're doing is we're talking to all the passengers trying to get a  
17 sense of what was going on at the time of the accident. So I tell  
18 you, why don't we start from where you boarded the train, your  
19 first interaction with the crew, and then start from the day of  
20 the accident and kind of walk me through as much as you remember.

21 MS. AUCLAIR: Does it matter which one of us --

22 MS. HARLEY: No, it doesn't.

## INTERVIEW OF GAYLE AND ARCHIE AUCLAIR

23  
24 MS. AUCLAIR: (Indiscernible). Well, our train started in  
25 Albany, New York. And it took us to Chicago which was a 12-hour

1 trip. Then we boarded Chicago on Friday afternoon around 2:00, I  
2 think. I don't remember the exact time. And we were headed to  
3 Pasco, Washington. It was a stop. The Chicago train was going  
4 all the way to Seattle, Washington, I guess. But our stop was  
5 going to be Pasco. We ate dinner that night. Everything went  
6 well.

7 The first time we talked to our cabin gentleman, which I  
8 don't remember his name, was the minute we boarded the train. He  
9 came in and said hello to us and asked if we needed anything. He  
10 did mention that we are the last car on the train. We're taking  
11 up the tail end. Then he went off to greet other passengers.

12 We did meet a couple. They were celebrating their 50th  
13 anniversary. And they were in the cabin right next door to us.  
14 We were in C. I think they were in cabin B. They were sleepers.  
15 I guess that couple were the ones that were killed. And we got to  
16 know them in Chicago. And we traveled with them. And we saw them  
17 at dinner. Then we saw them at breakfast on Saturday morning.

18 We were freezing in our cabin. And I mentioned -- I asked  
19 her at breakfast -- we weren't seated together. They don't seat  
20 us anymore together but as I went by her, I said, did you -- were  
21 you freezing last night. And she says, oh, it was so cold. I  
22 brought a sweater coat with me and I wore that. And I wore  
23 everything I owned. And the same thing with us. We were just so  
24 cold. But beyond that, that was the only inconvenience we felt.  
25 That was the -- I think I saw her in the observation car, too. We

1 were leaving and they were just coming in to sit down. And I just  
2 said hi to her. Then we went back to our room.

3 So after lunch, we went back -- we did the observation  
4 probably -- I think we ate at noon. And we sat in the observation  
5 for probably a half hour because it was announced that morning  
6 that the train was crowded and there was one observation car. So  
7 they asked us to please limit our time there. So we stayed about  
8 a half hour and we went back to our room. So we were at our room  
9 about 2:00. And I was -- we made reservations for dinner.

10 And dinner ended up -- we were going to be eating at 7:00.  
11 So I said, well, let's stay here in our room until about 6.  
12 Because we had to walk five cars to the dining cars. I said at  
13 least the observation car is one car away from the dinning room.  
14 So we'll sit in the observation car from 6 to 7. And we'll go to  
15 our dinner reservation.

16 So we were in our room at the time of the accident. I was  
17 sitting in a chair in the chair that lets you look outside. And  
18 my husband was lying down on the bed. It was folded up. It  
19 looked like a couch if you know what a sleeper looks like. He was  
20 lying there. His head was facing the window. His head is on the  
21 window side. And I was on the window side. And all of a sudden  
22 -- I thought it was around 4:15. But anyway, we heard this loud  
23 unusual sound. Boo-boom. And it woke -- my husband looked up and  
24 I looked up and our eyes met.

25 And all of a sudden, we went da, da, da. And the rest of the

1 time, we -- I didn't talk but I was thinking, oh, my God. This is  
2 not happening. This can't be happening. And I just started  
3 flying from my chair to the wall of the bathroom. And it's a  
4 solid wall. So I ended up with two bruised knees and a bump on my  
5 head. And there's still a mark on my head. And my arm -- my  
6 shoulder -- there's no bruise on my shoulder but my whole arm is  
7 numb. I keep getting numb fuzzy feelings in my hand. My husband,  
8 he -- did you want to talk?

9 MR. AUCLAIR: Yes, I would like to. I was sitting -- I was  
10 laying on the couch. And when it happened, it happens so fast  
11 that it picked me up and turned me right around. And I slammed  
12 into the ceiling so hard. And I don't why it didn't knock me out.  
13 But I had an awful bruise on my head. And banged up on my chest,  
14 arms, legs, butt.

15 They rushed me to the hospital because I'm on blood thinners.  
16 And if you get hit in the head, you have to go to a doctor as soon  
17 as you can. So they rushed me to the hospital. And --

18 MS. AUCLAIR: I -- when I -- I got -- I just wanted to  
19 continue from that point on.

20 MS. HARLEY: Yes.

21 MS. AUCLAIR: When I got up from being thrown around, I got  
22 up and I kept saying to myself OMG, OMG. Oh, my God. Oh, my God.  
23 Oh, my God. And all the time I was trying to get him up. He was  
24 wedged between the sink and the couch. He ended up wedged in  
25 there. And of course, it flipped on its side. So the door to get



1 out of the cabin was our floor now. The top of the cabin was the  
2 vent that he hit his head on. And now the window is the top of  
3 the cabin.

4 I was trying to get him out. And I said, Archi, you got to  
5 move, you got to move. And he couldn't move right away. I was  
6 really nervous. But I don't think he blacked out. He doesn't  
7 think he did either. But he didn't answer me right away. But  
8 there's nothing to hang onto. Everything was slippery. There was  
9 no bars, nothing. You just -- so I pulled him and I said, you've  
10 got to get out, you got to wake up, you've got to move. And he  
11 started moving. And he tried -- it took him a while to get out of  
12 that situation. And he kept saying his head hurt. But I felt  
13 behind his head and his head wasn't bleeding. There was no crack.  
14 But when I pulled my hand out, it was dirty from the vent.

15 But anyway, so he finally got up. It probably took about  
16 five minutes to get him up where he could stand up straight. Then  
17 I was saying, there's no air in here. Everything was turned off.  
18 No electricity. And I'm claustrophobic anyway so I think of air  
19 all the time. And I said we got to get out of here. We got to  
20 open that window.

21 Just as we were saying that, someone was running across the  
22 top of the train or cabin. And I rapped on the window and he  
23 stopped. I said we need help to get out and he showed us how to  
24 pull that lever to open the window. And I kept pulling on it,  
25 pulling on it until the whole seal was gone. Then he said, watch

1 out, the window is going to fall on you. And that was heavy. We  
2 didn't realize it was a heavy window. So we survived that.

3 Then within -- so I was glad we had air. We got the window  
4 open. Then within, I don't know, five minutes, someone -- a  
5 contractor had a ladder and for some -- they got the ladder and  
6 they sent the ladder down to us. The ladder just skinned my face  
7 but that's another issue. And we climbed out. So we were on the  
8 top of the train now but really it was on the side. And we were  
9 able to look at the tracks. We were able to see everything at the  
10 end of the train because we were the last car.

11 And we saw bent rail, really, really bent. It wasn't just a  
12 curve. And we saw the ties. And the ties were just ripped. I  
13 don't know how the rail hung onto those ties. They were like  
14 toothpicks. But maybe that happens when a cabin tears them apart.  
15 I don't know.

16 So we said, oh, my, God, look at that mess. Then we were led  
17 down -- the fireman came and they brought their ladder. And we  
18 were able to get down the side of the train to the tracks. Then  
19 we had to walk the five cabins, five whatever on the rails. It  
20 was a fun walk. But anyway, we saw a lot of the damage to the  
21 tracks and it was quite awful that -- I don't know how those  
22 trains -- those tracks stayed on. If the train ripped it as it  
23 went off the tracks or if the tracks were like that. I don't  
24 know. But anyway, that's not my expert thing to do.

25 So we walked to the bus. They took our names as we got on

1 the bus. Within 15 minutes of the accident, maybe even 10, we saw  
2 -- we were in the middle of nowhere and we just saw cars and  
3 shuttles and ambulances, buses. Everyone came to our rescue. I  
4 heard there was four counties. And then I read in the paper there  
5 were eight counties that responded. And it was an amazing site to  
6 be in the middle of nowhere and see all these people come rushing  
7 to our aid.

8 So we got on the bus. It was a passenger bus that we got on.  
9 We were taken 12 miles to Chester, Montana, to the senior citizen  
10 senior. There, triage was happening. Rescue squads came.  
11 Emergency people were examining people to see the injuries and  
12 what were the worst injuries. I had the hit on my head and they  
13 said I should go also to the hospital. And I went with my  
14 husband. He was put on a gurney. And they monitored him.  
15 Everything was fine. Then on the ambulance, we were taken 40  
16 miles to Shelby, Montana Hospital.

17 We were both checked out. My husband had a body CAT scan. I  
18 don't know what other -- they took all his vitals. And checked  
19 his head for injuries and all the results came back. I think  
20 everything was okay. They did give him -- oh, gosh. Tetanus  
21 shot. And they released him. We were released about 11:00 at  
22 night. And I had an X-ray taken of my knee. My right knee. And  
23 I was checked for my head injury. They put me through all the  
24 tests of raising your arms, putting them together, following a  
25 finger. You know, having my eyes stay still but rolling them,

1 following the finger.

2 They did all my vitals. The doctor was concerned. My blood  
3 pressure was 98/60. He asked if that was normal. I said, no, not  
4 really. But I said, I don't feel bad. I feel pretty good. So  
5 they just made a note of it. And they did release me also. When  
6 we were released, outside there was a sheriff's car waiting for  
7 us. And they gave us a sheriff's escort to the Best Western Hotel  
8 in Shelby, Montana.

9 When we arrived there, there was Amtrak personnel there to  
10 greet us and to help us get registered. They didn't talk much  
11 about the accident then. The next day they did. They -- there  
12 was more -- there was I think four Amtrak employees there. And  
13 they were taking statements and trying to get us to our next  
14 location. I don't know -- Archie, you want to add to that or --

15 MR. AUCLAIR: No, that's about it. I mean, that's just about  
16 what happened. And I don't know why I wasn't knocked out. I  
17 never been hit that hard in my life.

18 MS. AUCLAIR: Your whole weight was --

19 MR. AUCLAIR: My whole weight hit the ceiling. It was very  
20 traumatizing to me. And it still is today. It's very hard to get  
21 to sleep at night thinking about it. But --

22 MS. AUCLAIR: You're never going to --

23 MR. AUCLAIR: We're going to make it.

24 MS. AUCLAIR: Never going to fly -- never going to ride a  
25 train again?

1 MR. AUCLAIR: No. I cannot ever ride a train again because I  
2 cannot get comfortable enough. I will never be comfortable  
3 enough.

4 MS. AUCLAIR: I think I can.

5 MR. AUCLAIR: We had to fly home. And I don't like to fly  
6 but I had to get home.

7 MS. AUCLAIR: Amtrak did pay for our trip home. We flew  
8 first class and that was more comfortable than back -- the seats  
9 were more comfortable and more -- Amtrak -- I lost all my luggage.  
10 My husband was able to get his out of the cabin. I lost all my  
11 medication. So Amtrak did say just save your receipts, get what  
12 you need, even buy a suitcase if you have to. And they were very  
13 accommodating. I saved all my receipts, send them to Amtrak.  
14 They did reimburse me. Also, my brother was going to meet us in  
15 Pasco, Washington, to take us to Nampa, Idaho. That's where our  
16 destination really was.

17 We were going to spend a month with my brother, Gary  
18 (indiscernible). And he drove from Pasco to Shelby. Told me to  
19 stay put, don't get on anything, he was coming to get me. So that  
20 was like 700 miles. And he drove to Shelby and he was there  
21 Sunday night about 7. He stayed overnight. Amtrak paid for his  
22 room, paid for his gas, paid for his room in Pasco. And then we  
23 left Shelby Monday to go to Idaho. And that involved another room  
24 stay because I think it was like 800 miles to Nampa from Shelby.  
25 So we stayed overnight and we -- Amtrak paid for our room, our

1 meals, our gas, everything was reimbursed by Amtrak. And we got  
2 to Nampa and I spent -- we spent three weeks there. We left my  
3 brother's house on the 20th of October. So we just got home last  
4 Thursday from this whole trip.

5 MS. HARLEY: Well, I know that one of the -- I know one of  
6 the things that's very important -- and part of our investigation  
7 also involves Amtrak emergency management. And one of the things  
8 that they're looking at is the service that's provided to the  
9 passengers when something like this happens. So I think it's  
10 important that they know that you were taken care of as best they  
11 could.

12 MS. AUCLAIR: Yes. No question as to what we spent. I have  
13 all the receipts still. They -- I sent an email. I copied them.  
14 And we sent them -- emailed to Amtrak. They just asked where my  
15 bank information -- they were going to give me gift cards but it  
16 did end up over \$2,000 with the rooms and the food and the gas, my  
17 shopping, my medication. That was the hardest thing. That was  
18 worse -- that took a week to get all my medication replaced. I  
19 was disappointed in my mail order company. But that's another  
20 thing. But they did not deal with it. I mean, it just -- it was  
21 an emergency refill I was looking for. And they knew all my  
22 medications. But anyway, I had to call the doctor and they had to  
23 issue new prescriptions. And it was very disappointing. It took  
24 a week to get them all.

25 MS. HARLEY: Yes.

1 MS. AUCLAIR: But anyway, Amtrak was really -- they paid  
2 everything. They -- I was very impressed. And you know, everyone  
3 is saying, yeah, of course they're going to pay -- you know, of  
4 course they're going to do it. But really, I think they went  
5 beyond. I mean, I don't know. You know, this is my first and my  
6 last time I'm ever involved in something like this.

7 But I was very appreciative of Amtrak. They were on the  
8 phone with me almost every day asking if I had everything, if I'm  
9 missing anything. Make a list of what's missing. They did send  
10 all my stuff back to Tupper Lake. I asked them to send it to  
11 Tupper. And I did get everything but a pair of shoes and a  
12 baseball hat. And that's -- everything else came back. Even my  
13 medication. Jackets, shoes, clothing. Everything was in my  
14 duffel bag.

15 So there was a jar of pickles that I was carrying. I laugh  
16 about it. I didn't get that back. It was a special gift from my  
17 brother. It's my mother's old recipe that I found finally after  
18 50 years. I found it. And I made it special for him. And it  
19 didn't make it to his house.

20 MS. HARLEY: Well, unfortunately, no. So can I go back a  
21 little bit if you don't mind?

22 MS. AUCLAIR: Yes.

23 MS. HARLEY: You were in, you say, Room C.

24 MS. AUCLAIR: Yes.

25 MS. HARLEY: As the train was going forward, is that on the

1 left or the right side?

2 MS. AUCLAIR: Well, they're all on the same side. They were  
3 all on the right side.

4 MS. HARLEY: They're all on the right side.

5 MS. AUCLAIR: Yes. Because then we had a hallway. You'd  
6 walk down to your room and there's a hallway and you could see  
7 outside the train. There was nothing on the other side of the  
8 train but a window that you could see it. And that hallway went  
9 to the next car.

10 MS. HARLEY: Got you.

11 MS. AUCLAIR: Which was a coach car. Right? It was a  
12 business class car or -- it was seats on both sides. So we walked  
13 through three of those. Then the observation car. Then another  
14 car. Then the dining car.

15 MS. HARLEY: Because I'm looking at multiple train cars.  
16 This was on the upper level or the lower level of that car?

17 MS. AUCLAIR: We were in the upper level.

18 MS. HARLEY: Upper level. Okay. I'm trying to kind of get  
19 oriented. So you have the door that goes out to the hallway.  
20 Then you have the window on the other side. And --

21 MS. AUCLAIR: Yes.

22 MS. HARLEY: Archie, you were on the couch where your head  
23 was towards the window. Is that correct?

24 MS. AUCLAIR: Yes. My feet were facing the door.

25 MS. HARLEY: The feet were facing the door and your head was



1 towards the window. And you, Gayle, you were sitting in the chair  
2 facing the window?

3 MS. AUCLAIR: Yeah. Well, the chair -- it -- my side was on  
4 the window. I mean, it's -- you face forward to the other side of  
5 the cabin, the chair. And then you can look out the window. So  
6 the window was on my right. But my husband is not -- after the  
7 accident, his feet were at the window, his head was at the door.

8 MR. AUCLAIR: It spun me right around. Soon as the accident  
9 happened, it spun me right in the air so fast that I couldn't  
10 believe it. That's when I hit the ceiling with my head. And my  
11 back --

12 MS. AUCLAIR: So he flipped.

13 MR. AUCLAIR: Yeah.

14 MS. HARLEY: Yeah.

15 MR. AUCLAIR: It's just like spinning right around right in  
16 the air.

17 MS. AUCLAIR: Crazy.

18 MS. HARLEY: Then you said you heard someone running across  
19 the top of the car. Did you ever figure out who that person was?  
20 Was it an Amtrak employee or another passenger?

21 MS. AUCLAIR: It was a passenger.

22 MS. HARLEY: It was another passenger.

23 MS. AUCLAIR: Yes. We did see a lot of the employees -- like  
24 dining car people. They were all over the place helping people.  
25 I did see our cabin guy running -- you know, helping people. I

1 don't know about all the cars. I know like four cars stayed on  
2 the track. There was the engineer, the baggage car, then the --

3 MR. AUCLAIR: The observatory car.

4 MS. AUCLAIR: No. Then the roomette car and then the  
5 observatory car. I thought there was four. But the observatory  
6 car is the one that flipped. Yeah.

7 MS. HARLEY: Then it was the passenger that had to explain to  
8 you how to pull the emergency strip to get the window?

9 MS. AUCLAIR: Yes. He helped us. He said twist or -- what  
10 did he say, Archie? You were the one that could reach it. I  
11 could barely reach it. We were --

12 MR. AUCLAIR: I knew how to get it out. I know how to get  
13 the rubber around the window out but I was having a tough time  
14 getting my hands into the lever to pull it down and get the gasket  
15 around the window out.

16 MS. HARLEY: Got it.

17 MR. AUCLAIR: But we finally got it. And the young guy was  
18 -- he was in our coach, too. The young guy that helped us. He  
19 was on top. And he grabbed the window. And I grabbed it. And we  
20 got it out of there because it was so heavy. It was unbelievable.  
21 And he was great. We talked to him quite a few times after that.

22 MS. AUCLAIR: But never got his name.

23 MR. AUCLAIR: Never got his name. He did tell me that he  
24 worked for I think it's the freight lines. He works on the cars,  
25 repairing stuff and everything. But that's all he told me. I

1 don't think he works for Amtrak.

2 MS. HARLEY: So he works on the -- he works for a freight  
3 railroad?

4 MR. AUCLAIR: I think that's -- yeah, I think that's what he  
5 said. He worked for the freight lines or some other organization.  
6 But he does work on train cars.

7 MS. HARLEY: Got it. You said that after the derailment, the  
8 lights went out and it was dark?

9 MS. AUCLAIR: Yes, yes. Everything -- you know, circulation,  
10 it all stopped. And we had the afternoon light so we weren't in  
11 total darkness. We could see.

12 MS. HARLEY: I know you said that you saw the -- several  
13 Amtrak employees were also assisting other people out. Are you  
14 aware of anybody else who may have had difficulties getting out of  
15 the train car or may have been trapped?

16 MS. AUCLAIR: We -- at the hotel -- it was sort of like a  
17 healing process to be in the hotel for even that 24 hours that we  
18 were because everyone had their own story. And we were all like  
19 talking about what we went through. My husband got to know this  
20 gentleman in the hospital. They were side by side. And he was  
21 quite a large man. And I'll let you finish, Archie.

22 MR. AUCLAIR: He was all cut up. His head. And he had a lot  
23 of problems, too. But they had a hard time to get him out of the  
24 car.

25 MS. AUCLAIR: He was in our car.

1 MR. AUCLAIR: He was in our car. But he could never -- you  
2 know, he couldn't go to the --

3 MS. AUCLAIR: Dining car.

4 MR. AUCLAIR: -- dining car to eat because he was too big and  
5 he couldn't move around too good. So his son would do everything  
6 for him. But he -- when he was in the hospital and he was -- he  
7 told me that they had such a hard time to get him out. They had  
8 to grab him and just pull on him to get him out. And he was  
9 screaming and --

10 MS. AUCLAIR: The -- seeing we were the last car, the last  
11 car had a door. You could see out the door. And that's how they  
12 pulled him out. He was still on the top. He was on the top. But  
13 they had to pull him out of the door. I don't know how that  
14 happened.

15 MR. AUCLAIR: He was wedged in there. They had to just  
16 manually pull him out of there just to get him out.

17 MS. AUCLAIR: His whole back was all scraped from the --

18 MR. AUCLAIR: He was in tough shape.

19 MS. AUCLAIR: That's what he said.

20 MS. HARLEY: And --

21 MS. AUCLAIR: We didn't see it.

22 MS. HARLEY: Was he in your hallway or was he in another part  
23 of the car?

24 MS. AUCLAIR: Well, we don't know. We know that he was in  
25 our car. I don't know how close to that doorway he was. Yeah.

1 MR. AUCLAIR: He was away from us. He was probably like I'd  
2 say in maybe the last sleeper compartment on that train.

3 MS. AUCLAIR: We wondered how he climbed the stairs to get up  
4 there because --

5 MR. AUCLAIR: Yeah.

6 MS. AUCLAIR: -- I'm big, too, and I had a hard time turning  
7 in that stairway, climbing it. But anyway, he was on the top.  
8 And towards the end. I don't know how many sleepers were in our  
9 car.

10 MR. AUCLAIR: There was quite a few on there.

11 MS. AUCLAIR: Yeah.

12 MS. HARLEY: So his --

13 MR. AUCLAIR: (Indiscernible).

14 MS. HARLEY: -- room -- was his room closest to where the --  
15 that open door was?

16 MS. AUCLAIR: Yes, that's what we assume.

17 MR. AUCLAIR: Our car was the last car. And then there  
18 wasn't another car hooked to that one. So they had to -- plenty  
19 of room to try to get him out of there. But like I say, it was  
20 hurting him.

21 MS. AUCLAIR: It was better than lifting him up --

22 MR. AUCLAIR: Yeah.

23 MS. AUCLAIR: -- in through the window. You know, they could  
24 just slide him out the door. Yeah. But yeah, I think that's the  
25 only one that I knew had bad injury.

1 MR. AUCLAIR: Difficult.

2 MS. AUCLAIR: Yeah, difficult. In our -- that I saw. There  
3 was other people. There was an elderly woman. They were -- human  
4 chair they had for her. She was so fragile. I don't know. She  
5 must have been 80 or 90. And I don't know where she came from.  
6 But I saw them carrying her. And there was another gentleman that  
7 couldn't walk anymore. And he -- they put a blanket down and he  
8 was laying on the side waiting for emergency people to get to him.  
9 As we were walking down, we saw this. But I don't know what car  
10 they were in or anything. The only contact we had was with this  
11 gentleman.

12 MS. HARLEY: You said that he was traveling with his son?

13 MS. AUCLAIR: Yes.

14 MR. AUCLAIR: Son and his --

15 MS. AUCLAIR: Wife.

16 MR. AUCLAIR: -- wife.

17 MS. HARLEY: Before the derailment, do you remember if the PA  
18 system was working in your car?

19 MS. AUCLAIR: It was very, very low. It would come on. And  
20 I could not hear what they were saying. They knew there was a  
21 problem. And they fixed it at one point. It got louder. Then I  
22 did I hear them saying, are you -- whoever the person was, they  
23 were asking him, can you hear us, can you get this information,  
24 are you -- can you hear it --

25 MR. AUCLAIR: Understand.

1 MS. AUCLAIR: -- and understand it. And that was clear. But  
2 then, before the accident, it was cut off again. It was just  
3 mumble. Then the train is loud itself. So it was -- yeah, we  
4 couldn't hear.

5 MS. HARLEY: When your car attendant came around and spoke to  
6 you, did he provide you with any kind of safety information like  
7 availability of a safety card or any kind of briefing?

8 MS. AUCLAIR: I don't remember.

9 MR. AUCLAIR: No.

10 MS. AUCLAIR: No. I couldn't find -- sometimes there's a  
11 map, too, that tells you where your stops are. That wasn't in the  
12 car either. I went over where the coffee machine was and there  
13 was a list taped to the wall of our different stops. And I made a  
14 list of it. And I (indiscernible) and I said, oh, our next stop  
15 is Shelby. And I knew that. And I said we're about 12 hours from  
16 Pasco. And we were supposed to get in Pasco at 5:30 in the  
17 morning. So when we were on the train from 2 something Friday  
18 afternoon until -- so we were on the train already 24, 26 hours.  
19 Yeah. I don't remember. Yeah.

20 MS. HARLEY: When the train actually came to a stop, as you  
21 said, the door out of your room was now basically the floor. And  
22 the window --

23 MS. AUCLAIR: Right. And it -- the door had a window and it  
24 was all broken. There was glass and -- my husband was laying on  
25 that. And I was really worried about that. But he didn't get cut

1 by that at all. Did you, Arch?

2 MR. AUCLAIR: No.

3 MS. AUCLAIR: No cuts from that. Which is great. That was  
4 good. But yeah, so the door is on -- is our floor now. And  
5 then --

6 MS. HARLEY: And the window you were looking out is now your  
7 ceiling. Did the window stay intact? Did it break during the  
8 derailment?

9 MS. AUCLAIR: Never did. No. It stayed intact. It was  
10 perfect.

11 MS. HARLEY: It stayed in its frame?

12 MS. AUCLAIR: Yes.

13 MS. HARLEY: So you said that within 10 or 15 minutes, you  
14 had -- rescuers were arriving, buses, and ambulances. Is that  
15 correct?

16 MS. AUCLAIR: Yes.

17 MS. HARLEY: Is there anything you think I should have asked  
18 you and I didn't ask you?

19 MR. AUCLAIR: Well, the people that got killed were in the  
20 observatory car. There was a man and his wife that we met in  
21 Chicago. Then there was a young guy. He was in -- they were --  
22 all three of them were in our sleeper. They were -- they went to  
23 the observatory car. When I laid on the couch, my wife was ready  
24 to go down to the observatory car. If she had went, she would  
25 have got killed.



1 MS. AUCLAIR: Well, I decided to wait until 6.

2 MR. AUCLAIR: But she decided to wait. And --

3 MS. AUCLAIR: It's just decisions you make, you look at them  
4 after and you say, wow, what if. But I can't dwell on that. You  
5 didn't ask about the speed or the tracks. I know I described it  
6 but was there anything you want to ask about those?

7 MS. HARLEY: So one of the things I'm going to ask you is,  
8 have you ever been on a train before?

9 MS. AUCLAIR: Yes, eight years ago.

10 MS. HARLEY: Eight years ago.

11 MS. AUCLAIR: We went and saw my brother again. But the  
12 couple that were killed -- I think it's -- it was their first  
13 time. I'm not sure. But they were celebrating their 50th  
14 anniversary. And they were going to Seattle to do the Pacific  
15 Coastline and that's -- eight years ago -- I said, oh, wow, I did  
16 that. We did it eight years ago. And we did the Pacific  
17 Coastline to San Francisco, then L.A. It was a wonderful trip.  
18 And we had no problems. I told her what we did and what a great  
19 trip it was. And they were all excited about doing it. But yes,  
20 we did it. Because I retired eight years ago and that was my  
21 retirement trip.

22 MR. AUCLAIR: I went -- also went out by myself to my  
23 brother-in-law's. And same track, same way. Didn't have any  
24 problems. I mean, we traveled on a train quite a bit.

25 MS. HARLEY: So there was --

1 MS. AUCLAIR: (Indiscernible) --

2 MS. HARLEY: -- nothing that you felt was unusual about the  
3 trip?

4 MS. AUCLAIR: No, no.

5 MR. AUCLAIR: No.

6 MS. HARLEY: And --

7 MS. AUCLAIR: When I --

8 MS. HARLEY: Go ahead.

9 MR. AUCLAIR: When I got out of the train up on the side of  
10 the train, I wanted to look at the tracks right off the bat. I  
11 didn't look at anything else. And that's -- to me, I don't know,  
12 I'm not a professional at this, but it looked like the ground just  
13 let go and slid over. And the tracks were all buckled. But it  
14 cut the ties like a big pair of scissors cut them right -- you  
15 know, almost in half. It was a mess. I don't know. I can't seem  
16 to get any answers for how -- what happened or -- I'm sure they  
17 know by now.

18 MS. HARLEY: Well, truthfully, we're -- the investigation  
19 actually is still in progress. So we actually don't have any  
20 answers right now. That's what we're trying to figure out. Go  
21 back to the first time you realized that something was wrong.  
22 Describe to me what that was like. What did you feel?

23 MS. AUCLAIR: It was just -- it was unbelievable. And it's  
24 -- I didn't -- we didn't say anything out loud to each other. Our  
25 eyes met when we heard this big boo-boom. It was just -- wasn't

1 normal. And then, we started going sideways. My head was going,  
2 oh, my God. This is not happening. This can't be happening. And  
3 I just -- I looked at my husband and I go, Archie. And our eyes  
4 met. And that's all we had time for. And everything was  
5 (indiscernible) and I was thrown.

6 And when I got up, I said, oh, my -- well, as I was going, I  
7 said, I'm dying today, I think I'm dying today. And when I got up  
8 -- and oh, my, God. Then I kept saying, oh, my God, oh, my God.  
9 I just kept saying it. I kept saying it probably for three  
10 minutes. I just was going, oh, my God, oh, my God. Trying to  
11 pull on my husband and getting him up. And I said, you're getting  
12 up. You're not going to die on me today. And this was all  
13 happening so fast. And I just -- it was just --

14 MS. HARLEY: Would you say -- is it --

15 MS. AUCLAIR: -- (indiscernible).

16 MS. HARLEY: -- accurate to say that the time when you  
17 thought that there was a problem until the time when the train  
18 actually flipped over, it was fairly quick?

19 MS. AUCLAIR: Within seconds. Yes.

20 MR. AUCLAIR: Within seconds.

21 MS. AUCLAIR: Everything happened probably in a minute,  
22 minute-and-a-half. I don't know. It was so quick. Within two  
23 minutes.

24 MR. AUCLAIR: To me it was seconds.

25 MS. AUCLAIR: Fast.

1 MR. AUCLAIR: Or seconds.

2 MS. AUCLAIR: Yeah, that was the -- between that sound and us  
3 flipping, that was within seconds. It was right away. It was --  
4 yeah, we just started sliding sideways. I remember seeing out the  
5 window -- the view was going sideways instead of back and forth.  
6 And then, I hit the wall. And I don't know how I hit because both  
7 knees were damaged and my head, in the front, was hit. Then my  
8 arm.

9 Of course, my left arm that slammed into the wall along with  
10 my knees, I just don't know how the body parts were hit. Because  
11 it doesn't make sense to me now to be the front of my head, my two  
12 knees, and my left shoulder. That's what's hurting. It was  
13 within -- yeah, within seconds. Then when I popped up, that's  
14 what took a little longer to get my husband out of his wedge.  
15 Because he couldn't grab onto anything. And he didn't want to  
16 lean against that broken glass that he was laying on.

17 MS. HARLEY: So what part of his body was wedged?

18 MS. AUCLAIR: His whole side.

19 MS. HARLEY: The side.

20 MR. AUCLAIR: My leg was wedged.

21 MS. AUCLAIR: Your leg.

22 MR. AUCLAIR: My leg was wedged into the sink part. And I  
23 couldn't get it. Of course, I didn't know where (indiscernible)  
24 until I realized. And my wife came down and she got my leg out of  
25 there. So then I could get up.

1 MS. AUCLAIR: And I felt the back of your head to tell you  
2 that you (indiscernible) --

3 MR. AUCLAIR: I was more worried that my head was split open.  
4 I probably would have bled to death right there.

5 MS. HARLEY: So was it your left leg your right leg that was  
6 wedged?

7 MR. AUCLAIR: My right leg.

8 MS. HARLEY: It was the right leg that was wedged in.

9 MR. AUCLAIR: Yeah.

10 MS. HARLEY: Well, thank you, both, for taking the time and  
11 talking to me. It's really important that we get some sense of  
12 what was going on and what happened to the passengers. One of the  
13 things that we look at is what we call survivability, which is  
14 what inside the car caused the injuries to the passengers. And  
15 perhaps if there's something that we can do to make it safer.

16 Again, I certainly do appreciate you taking the time to talk  
17 to me. I will make sure that we have your correct address so that  
18 you're notified whenever there is any kind of press release or any  
19 information released by us.

20 MS. AUCLAIR: I forgot what I was going to ask you. There  
21 was something I want to say. There, see. My mind is gone. Oh,  
22 my God. It's gone. I wanted to ask you something.

23 MS. HARLEY: Well, I tell you what. Why don't you take down  
24 my number. And as soon as you think of it, feel free to call me.

25 MS. AUCLAIR: Yeah, okay. Yeah. I'm still trying to think.

1 I'm still trying to think. Oh, my, gosh. It probably wasn't  
2 anything (indiscernible).

3 MS. HARLEY: Well, that's okay. Any question you have is  
4 worth asking. And we'll answer. So do you have a piece of paper  
5 and a pen to write down my number?

6 MS. AUCLAIR: Oh, yes, I've got it. I have your number.  
7 202-258-3960?

8 MS. HARLEY: That's correct.

9 MS. AUCLAIR: I've got it. I just -- you were wondering what  
10 you can do better to make it survivable in the cabin.

11 MS. HARLEY: Yes.

12 MS. AUCLAIR: Is to have something to hang onto. I mean, the  
13 wall is smooth. The walls of the bathroom is totally smooth.  
14 There's no handles. If we had a handle to grab onto, maybe we  
15 wouldn't have flown either. I don't know. But there's no handles  
16 anywhere. So that's something to think about (indiscernible) in a  
17 situation like that. But that's what I kept saying. There's no  
18 handles. There's nothing to grab onto to even get out to get up.  
19 Like my husband really had a hard time getting up. And I think if  
20 he had a handle, something not smooth, it would have been better.

21 MS. HARLEY: Got it. Well, we --

22 MS. AUCLAIR: But anyway --

23 MR. AUCLAIR: But the other thing, too, is when I hit the  
24 ceiling, my hands and my face were all black from the vent. Now,  
25 we're breathing that all the time. And that thing was jammed full

1 of -- I don't think it was ever cleaned.

2 MS. AUCLAIR: It was -- yeah, there was -- it was black.

3 MR. AUCLAIR: Dirt and soot. And --

4 MS. AUCLAIR: The air vent.

5 MR. AUCLAIR: The air vent.

6 MS. AUCLAIR: The air vent that was keeping us breathing.

7 MR. AUCLAIR: And we couldn't control the heat. We couldn't  
8 get any heat. We were freezing to death in there.

9 MS. HARLEY: Well, one of the things that happens is is that,  
10 as I said, Amtrak is also a part of this, looking at the emergency  
11 management. And certainly, they will have access to this  
12 interview. And certainly, that's -- I'm certain that's something  
13 that they're going to address.

14 MS. AUCLAIR: Right, good. Yes, because I was going to call  
15 and complain. I wanted a refund on my ticket. I didn't pay to  
16 freeze to death. But I didn't have to complain. I had enough to  
17 worry about. But anyway, that's how life treats you.

18 MS. HARLEY: Again, thank you, both. Well, have a good day.  
19 And --

20 MS. AUCLAIR: You, too.

21 MS. HARLEY: Somebody from our agency will be in touch with  
22 you. And I'll make sure we have the proper address for you.  
23 Okay?

24 MS. AUCLAIR: Yes. And send us a transcript.

25 MS. HARLEY: Yes, ma'am. And you also have my number, as

1 well. It will --

2 MS. AUCLAIR: Yeah.

3 MS. HARLEY: -- probably take at least 30 days to get the  
4 transcripts back because we're sending them out in bulk. But if  
5 you have not heard from me, please feel free to give me a call  
6 back. Okay?

7 MS. AUCLAIR: Okay.

8 MS. HARLEY: Thank you.

9 MS. AUCLAIR: (Indiscernible). Thank you.

10 MR. AUCLAIR: Thank you.

11 MS. HARLEY: Bye-bye.

12 MR. AUCLAIR: Bye.

13 MS. HARLEY: Interview is concluded at 2:40 p.m.

14 (Whereupon, at 2:40 p.m. EDT, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

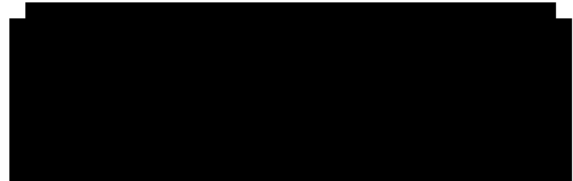
IN THE MATTER OF:            FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT  
                                      NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA  
                                      ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021  
                                      Interview of Gayle and Archie Auclair

ACCIDENT NO.:                RRD21MR017

PLACE:                         Via Telephone

DATE:                         October 25, 2021

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.



Katie Leach  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT \*

NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA \* Accident No.: RRD21MR017

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: SPENCER BROPHY

Passenger

Via Telephone

Tuesday,

November 23, 2021

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

KRIS SEVERSON, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe Center, Department of Transportation

KARI JACOBSEN, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe Center, Department of Transportation

I N D E X

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I N T E R V I E W

(11:01 a.m. EST)

1  
2  
3 MS. HARLEY: So, good morning. First of all, my name is  
4 Sheryl Harley, last name H-a-r-l-e-y. I'm the assistant  
5 investigator in charge with the National Transportation Safety  
6 Board. And as you know, we are investigating the Amtrak  
7 derailment that occurred in Joplin, Montana, on September the 25th  
8 of 2021, at approximately 3:47 p.m.

9 And, Mr. Brophy, can I ask you to identify yourself for the  
10 recording, sir?

11 MR. BROPHY: Yes. This is Spencer Brophy, one of the  
12 passengers in the fifth car from the back, right ahead of the  
13 stack (ph.) and the viewing car.

14 MS. HARLEY: Thank you, sir.

15 And also in this meeting are two members of the investigative  
16 team, and I'm going to ask them to identify themselves.

17 Kris?

18 MS. SEVERSON: Hello. My name is Kris Severson. I work for  
19 the U.S. Department of Transportation. My colleague, Kari, and I  
20 were at the accident investigation supporting the FRA and NTSB.  
21 We're mechanical engineers trying to understand how people got  
22 hurt in the accident so that we can try and make recommendations  
23 and remedies in the future. Thank you.

24 MS. HARLEY: Kari?

25 MS. JACOBSON: Hi there. And my name is Kari Jacobsen. And

1 thanks for taking the time to share your experience with us today.

2 MS. HARLEY: So, great.

3 INTERVIEW OF SPENCER BROPHY

4 BY MS. HARLEY:

5 Q. So, Mr. Brophy, I'm going to ask you to first tell us when  
6 you got on the train, where and when, and your first interaction  
7 with the crew. And then start on the accident day and just kind  
8 of walk us through what you experienced and what you saw, if you  
9 don't mind?

10 A. Okay, yes. So I got on at the start of the train in Chicago,  
11 basically the start of the trip and everything. I think two  
12 days -- you know, one day before, the 23rd. And for the most  
13 part, I think the first interaction I had with the crew was just  
14 when they were -- the conductor in my car when he came to, like,  
15 just check tickets and just let me on the train and everything.  
16 That was the first interaction. I didn't really interact with the  
17 crew much after that. I did go to the café car just to get some  
18 snacks every now and then. That's when I interacted with the café  
19 driver. Well, you get one dinner. And then I had, like, a  
20 breakfast the next morning and everything. And also, lastly, I  
21 think about 15 minutes or 10 minutes before the incident, I went  
22 down again and got a lunch or probably a dinner before the  
23 accident ultimately happened.

24 The day of the accident, I just remember waking up. We were  
25 getting into one of the stops in North Dakota. I don't have the

1 exact stop where it was. It was right before the Montana border  
2 when they were conducting maintenance. Sorry, give me one moment.  
3 Someone from my work came in.

4 (Pause)

5 MR. BROPHY: Sorry about that. Someone just came in from  
6 another office.

7 But, yeah, so the day of the accident, the maintenance -- I  
8 got off. I went around and just kind of walked around the town  
9 for about 20-or-so minutes and then came back to the train. It  
10 seemed like everything was going pretty well with just maintaining  
11 the train, making sure everything was up to the standard. I  
12 didn't notice anything off.

13 And then I got back on the train, and it was pretty smooth  
14 sailing from there up until the accident happened at 3 p.m. It  
15 was about nine hours after the maintenance that they conducted.  
16 That's really all I have memory-wise of it. It wasn't too many  
17 incidents in between. I was just reading a book and watching  
18 videos while just watching the scenery for basically those nine  
19 hours.

20 BY MS. HARLEY:

21 Q. So I'll tell you what -- what was your first indication that  
22 there was a problem with the train?

23 A. The first indication was as we were driving along there  
24 was -- it felt like we were coming around a turn just because  
25 we -- the momentum of the train kind of shifted to the left. And

1 that immediately kind of -- it didn't immediately trigger, like,  
2 an alarm with me, but you kind of looked outside and it was like  
3 there's no turn going on. And then it started to slam back down  
4 on the right. And that was basically when I noticed that there  
5 was something wrong because we started -- that started the  
6 derailment for my car. Then we started pushing off to the side,  
7 and so I just held on to the seat just to make sure until the  
8 train came to a stop.

9 Q. So you did say that you were in the fifth car, and that would  
10 be the car that was between the lounge car or the observation car  
11 and the dining car; is that correct?

12 A. Yes, yes, that was the car.

13 Q. And where were you seated in that train?

14 A. I think I was on the left side if you're looking straight  
15 ahead to the front of the car. And I was about -- I was in the  
16 middle of the car, maybe about three seats back from the staircase  
17 in the middle.

18 Q. Were you on the window or the aisle?

19 A. There wasn't anyone sitting with me, so I was in between. At  
20 the point of the accident, I was in the aisle seat.

21 Q. So after the train -- first of all, when the train came to a  
22 stop, did it come to an abrupt stop or did it seem to just kind of  
23 coast to a stop?

24 A. It seemed to coast to a stop. It was a good few seconds  
25 where it kind of -- it kept moving a little bit, even with the



1 kind of friction coming from the ground it was kicking up.

2 Q. And you said that your car remained upright; is that correct?

3 A. Yeah. It started to tilt a little bit. I think it was maybe  
4 about -- it was a few degrees kind of canted over, but it didn't  
5 fully tip over. We were just kind of on the -- a little bit on  
6 the side but still able to walk upright in the seat.

7 Q. Did you observe anyone in that rail car that was injured?

8 A. No, no, I didn't see anyone majorly injured. Some of the  
9 bags seemed to have fallen and they might have struck people, but  
10 there wasn't anyone who seemed to have any major injuries or,  
11 like, bleeding or had hurt any of their extremities.

12 Q. So you were actually -- you were on the top level of that  
13 car; is that correct?

14 A. Yes, yes, I was on the top level.

15 Q. Did you go to the lower level to check on any of the  
16 passengers there?

17 A. No, no, I didn't check any on the lower level.

18 Q. Were you aware of anyone on the lower level being injured?

19 A. No, no, I didn't hear anyone, and I didn't check, just  
20 because there were -- I think there were two passengers, I think  
21 the Hutchinson (ph.) family, that were in the seat ahead of me,  
22 and they, I think, went down and checked, and they came back up,  
23 and we kind of rendezvoused and kind of made a plan from there. I  
24 ended up, while they were doing that, I was actually -- I left the  
25 car and went out to check the café car behind us because that one

1 was completely tipped over. But, no, I didn't check down -- I  
2 didn't check below.

3 Q. You said the Hutchinson family were in front of you. Where  
4 were they located in front of you?

5 A. Same row as me, like, that same left side. And I think it  
6 was either three to five -- I think maybe it was maybe five seats  
7 in front of me.

8 Q. And the family, was that a male and female?

9 A. No, it was a father and son, a Navy veteran and a Marine  
10 veteran son.

11 Q. Who was sitting at the window, and who was sitting at the  
12 aisle?

13 A. I think it was the father was sitting in the window, and the  
14 son was sitting in the aisle, but I'm not 100 percent sure on  
15 that.

16 Q. So at this particular point, you said that you left your car  
17 and you went back to check on the passengers in the lounge and  
18 observation car. What did you do?

19 A. So my immediate action, my cell phone was, like, thrown, so I  
20 grabbed that. I had to find it quickly in one of the rows in  
21 front of me just so I could contact people afterwards. But after  
22 that, I went and you could -- I got outside the passageway, and  
23 you could kind of jump onto the car. And what I started doing was  
24 I was worried about the people in the lounge car, so I was kind  
25 of, like, banging on the windows just trying to see if I could get

1 any response and just trying to see what the situation was. At  
2 that point, I think all of the people in the lounge car had  
3 already mostly gotten out, but I didn't hear anything from there.

4 And then I started to hear from the café car. I heard both  
5 the -- I heard the voice of the café attendant and the -- I got to  
6 the point where the -- as the car was tipped over, the door that  
7 you would normally use to get in and out of the car was on its  
8 side. And there was a lot of gravel and that in there, and I was  
9 just talking to him just to see if he was in there and if he was  
10 all right and how many people were in there.

11 Q. So just to clarify, when you're talking about the café,  
12 you're talking about the lower level of the lounge car?

13 A. Yes, the lower level of the lounge car.

14 Q. And that was the door that was filled with gravel and on the  
15 side. Were you actually able to determine who was in that lower  
16 level café area?

17 A. Yeah. So after I went back in, I talked to the Hutchinson  
18 family. I told them that we needed to get, like, a ladder. And  
19 then I came back. I climbed down just to try and find out what  
20 was going on inside more clearly, because all I could hear was the  
21 café worker and that he needed help. Then, when I got in, I found  
22 out that there was a second -- there was a passenger that was  
23 trapped in there with him, and it was Mr. Surly (ph.), something  
24 like that. I don't remember his exact last name at the moment,  
25 but he was telling us just to let us know that his wife -- that he

1 was okay. And we, like, relayed it up, and they were shouting  
2 about it. But we identified that passenger that was in there with  
3 him. I don't remember his first name, though, at this time.

4 Q. Were either one of them injured, were you aware of?

5 A. They both said they were a little bloodied, but they felt  
6 like they were okay at the time. It was tough to say exactly how  
7 they were feeling just because of probably the shock and the  
8 adrenaline didn't really let them see everything. At the time,  
9 though, they didn't say they needed emergency care. But we still  
10 were trying to get them out as quickly as possible.

11 Q. And how did they ultimately get out of the lower level of  
12 that car?

13 A. So it was mostly blocked by gravel, and there was also one of  
14 the windows from the car was stuck in the gravel, pointed  
15 vertically, that was blocking us from getting access to the door  
16 in order to pry it open with anything. Because we tried to get,  
17 like, a crowbar and then remove it. So we had to move a lot of  
18 the gravel, and then we were able to shift the window back far  
19 enough to where someone could get to the side of it and have a  
20 good position to lift up -- there was a little metal -- I think it  
21 was the door, but it was a little metal kind of shutter that  
22 closed -- that was closed, that was preventing them from getting  
23 out. We got a little crowbar, pried it open. It didn't get  
24 opened that much, so we had to get -- we got, like, a little box,  
25 one of those little, like, boxes that you can, like, stand on or

1 carry, like, groceries. We put that in there, a little plastic  
2 box.

3 And then the passenger was able to kind of slide out. They  
4 were able to kind of lay on their back and come out. At that  
5 point, I think I was holding up one of the doors because there was  
6 one of the doors that was also from the side that was  
7 (indiscernible) and hit the people we had prying open the door.  
8 So I was holding that open. One of the other passengers kind of  
9 helped him out sliding below the door. And after he came out, the  
10 passenger took him -- I think that one was the Hutchinson son. He  
11 took him -- gone to the ladder and made sure he could get out.

12 I shifted forward and helped the Amtrak café attendant. I  
13 looked to help get him out, but it was a little bit harder for him  
14 to get out. It seemed like he -- this is just based on what I  
15 heard later that he had some kind of an arm injury because he  
16 wasn't able to push himself out. So with the help of the other  
17 passenger, I had to kind of grab his arm and his leg and pull him  
18 out in order to get him out. And then he was able to walk on his  
19 own to get to the ladder and get out of the car.

20 That whole process took about 30-or-so minutes. We were  
21 struggling to find a lot of tools and everything in order to get  
22 the gravel -- enough gravel clear. There was still a lot of it  
23 there, but we were able to get enough to kind of move stuff  
24 around.

25 Q. So I'm just trying to make sure I understand. So to gain

1 access to the lower level of that car, you actually used a ladder  
2 and you had to climb down. Once you got the injured people out,  
3 did they have to climb back up a ladder in order to finally get  
4 out of the car?

5 A. Yeah, yeah. So initially we didn't have a ladder, so I kind  
6 of lowered myself down. I was able to -- I climbed down without  
7 the ladder, and some of the other people followed down with me.  
8 There was another person, another passenger. I never caught his  
9 name. We were talking about just getting people out. We never  
10 exchanged names or anything. He had a belt buckle, jeans, and  
11 almost like a denim shirt. Kind of like a bluish shirt. Him and  
12 the Hutchinson son was coming down, and we were trying to clear  
13 them out, but they didn't get the ladder probably until 20-or-so  
14 minutes into the recovery. Because I think one of the -- either  
15 one of the 911 first responders or just one of the locals had a  
16 ladder in their truck, and that's eventually where we got it,  
17 because they were trying to find a ladder somewhere on the train,  
18 but I don't think we ever found one from there. Someone had an  
19 emergency toolkit, too. That's where we got most of the stuff,  
20 most of the equipment.

21 Q. And one more time: Can you give me what you thought the  
22 trapped passenger's name was again?

23 A. I think his last name was Surly or Surely (ph.).

24 Q. So after you assisted with those two passengers, what did you  
25 do next?

1 A. So we got those two out, and then the guy that had the belt  
2 buckle, he said we need to check the other side. I said I don't  
3 hear anyone. I briefly climbed up, and I kind of yelled out,  
4 "Hey, does anyone need help? Does anyone need help?" I didn't  
5 hear anything, so I climbed back down. And then he said, okay,  
6 let's just go check, and we kind of -- we didn't have the ladder.  
7 We had to kind of climb up again into -- from the bottom, climb up  
8 some of the stairs to get over it. And then as we were standing  
9 kind of on the top of the lounge car -- because we were on what  
10 would be the left side when it was standing up. But it was a  
11 pretty steep kind of fall down to the bottom, so we kind of slowly  
12 climbed down. I checked going towards the back of the car. The  
13 other passenger checked going towards the front of the car. We  
14 were just scanning just to see if anyone was trapped.

15 Approximately close to the end of the car I did see two legs  
16 sticking out underneath one of the windows that it seemed like had  
17 broken off. So I called to the other passenger. I said, "Hey,  
18 hey, we found someone." At that point, we had been told that  
19 there was just one person that were missing they were trying to  
20 find. So I was like, "Hey, hey, we found him. I can see him  
21 here."

22 At the time that I had found the body, it seemed -- I thought  
23 I saw him breathing, but I think it was just a bit of a breeze,  
24 because by the time the other passenger and then, I think, one of  
25 the Amtrak workers got there, when we moved the window off of him,

1 he was already gone. It seemed like he had probably died on  
2 impact.

3 Q. So you said the -- was it the entire window -- you know, the  
4 window is in two pieces. So it was an entire window that was on  
5 top of him?

6 A. I think it might have just been one of the half pieces, then.  
7 It was basically the entire panel that would have fit in a  
8 section. It was, like, the entire panel. And on top of that,  
9 there was -- I don't know if it was a motor or, like, a fan, but  
10 there was a piece of -- kind of like -- there was a piece of the  
11 train that had completely ripped off of the side of the wall, and  
12 it was also on top of him. It looked like a motor of some sort.  
13 I didn't -- I never really found out what part of the train it  
14 was. It looked like it had completely come out because a lot of  
15 the metal around it was kind of serrated. It wasn't like a clean  
16 removal. It looked like it had broken off completely.

17 Q. So how far back to the end of the car do you think you were  
18 when you saw this gentleman? Were you back by the tables? Were  
19 you where the lounge seats were? Give me a little bit more detail  
20 about where this victim was located.

21 A. So I think he was kind of past the tables, past the seats.  
22 He was -- it seemed like he was basically at the portion that was  
23 right before you would leave to exit the car. Like, it was either  
24 just one window or, like, a second window in front of the exit.  
25 It seemed like he had either just came into the car or he was



1 about to leave the car when the accident happened, because he was  
2 basically right there in that beginning, kind of, portion of the  
3 car in the back. So he was in the back part of the car, right as  
4 you enter, it looked like.

5 Q. And do you remember if he was face up or face down?

6 A. He was face up.

7 Q. He was face up. And he had that portion of a window on top  
8 of him. And on top of the window is where this motor was?

9 A. Yes, yes.

10 Q. So what did you do next?

11 A. So when it was me and the passenger, we were trying to get  
12 the window off of him just so we could see. So we cleared that  
13 and then we saw that the passenger was deceased. One of the  
14 Amtrak workers came up. He was just checking to verify it. And  
15 then he left to go get one of the sheriff's department to go and  
16 put a cover over him and, like, just make a pronouncement,  
17 basically.

18 While he was doing that, me and the passenger started working  
19 on lifting the motor. It was pretty hard just because, like I  
20 said, it came off pretty roughly, so we had to kind of maneuver it  
21 around just to make sure that none of us were going to get cut by  
22 it. Eventually, he ended up kind of on the ground, pushing  
23 upward, and I found a little portion I could grab on. We were  
24 able to lift it up, pushed it onto one of the sides just to rest  
25 it there a little bit, and then we made a second effort and pushed

1 it up and had it resting on the side, kind of in one of the middle  
2 panels of where the window would be.

3 After that, we stayed until the sheriff came and kind of put  
4 a cover over the body. And then the other passenger left  
5 eventually, and I stayed around just a little bit just -- I was  
6 waiting just for the sheriff. Said they were going to take the  
7 body. But then, eventually, some of the other passengers found me  
8 and said, hey, let's get out of here. They're wanting us to kind  
9 of all rally up at the site out there.

10 So after that, I climbed out of the back of the car, and then  
11 I went with the other passengers into the field to wait for the  
12 bus. That was about 50 minutes after the accident or about an  
13 hour after the accident.

14 Q. So my last questions, I think, to you are: Do you know,  
15 prior to the derailment, if the PA system in your car was working?

16 A. I think it was because I think the café car worker had given  
17 an announcement maybe a few hours or so just when he was going on  
18 a break. He had given it, like, an hour or so before the  
19 derailment or a few hours before the derailment. So it seemed  
20 like the PA system was working. But I don't know after the  
21 derailment. I didn't hear anything on the PA system afterwards.  
22 All I heard -- there was a bit of steam coming out, and then there  
23 was -- it seemed like there was a bit of a small fire that had  
24 (indiscernible) some of it. And, like, one of the fire alarms was  
25 going off because of that. But I didn't hear anything on the PA

1 system.

2 Q. So you said you heard a fire alarm. Was that in your car or  
3 you heard it from another car?

4 A. I think that was in my car just because I -- when I got out  
5 at the top of the car, I could see, kind of, smoke rising up from  
6 the bottom of it, and it seemed like it was coming from our cars.  
7 And that was where the alarm was sounding, too.

8 Q. After the derailment, were there any lights on in your car?  
9 Did you see, like, for example, the emergency lighting on the  
10 floor?

11 A. I think it was on, but I'm not 100 percent sure.

12 Q. And the last thing is that when you boarded the train or at  
13 any time during the trip, did anybody point out the safety cards  
14 that were available?

15 A. I don't think so. I don't remember ever seeing them.

16 Q. All right. So that's all of my questions. If you don't  
17 mind, I'm going to turn it over to some of my coworkers.

18 MS. HARLEY: Kris?

19 MS. SEVERSON: Okay, thank you.

20 BY MS. SEVERSON:

21 Q. I think I got a little bit disoriented in terms of where you  
22 were in the car. When you first enter the lounge car, did you  
23 enter from the top, which was formerly the left side, through the  
24 side door?

25 A. Yes. That's where I entered into it.

1 Q. So you entered into that car. And initially you were helping  
2 the café or the lounge car attendant and another passenger to get  
3 out from the bottom of that car; is that right?

4 A. Yes, yes. The portion of the car that the café worker was  
5 in, that part was completely blocked off, so we were trying to get  
6 him out of that part of the car.

7 Q. And so you -- I think you said you lowered yourself down  
8 through that side door into the area in the rear of the lounge car  
9 where he was to help him get out?

10 A. Yeah. There was a bit of -- there was a few, kind of,  
11 outcroppings that I was able to put my feet on, and I was able to  
12 just kind of move myself down that way.

13 Q. So were you helping -- were they buried when you got there --  
14 in ballast -- or were they -- like, how were they stuck, or were  
15 they stuck, or how did you help them get out?

16 A. So I don't know. It didn't seem like that they were buried  
17 inside the portion that they were in, but they were blocked by  
18 two, like, metal shutters or, like, a door that had gone shut, and  
19 it wasn't opening. And then there was a bunch of gravel or just  
20 rubble that was blocking access to that. And then there was a  
21 window panel that was also just shoved -- it was shoved vertically  
22 blocking -- basically stuck in the gravel, seemed like a foot in  
23 front of the door that was blocking their exit.

24 Q. So you helped clear the debris so they had a path to exit?

25 A. Yeah, yeah. We just had to -- we cleared enough of the

1 debris that we could get in. And I don't know if it was -- we  
2 had, like, a crowbar. We kind of opened it up a little bit, and  
3 then we snuck in -- I'm trying to get the -- it was like a  
4 mechanism where we could kind of lever off the door a little bit  
5 to kind of crank it up. And with that, we were able to kind of  
6 hold it for a little bit just so that they could slide out.

7 Q. And then once you cleared a path for them, they were able to  
8 get out on their own and then -- did you say by that time that  
9 they were cleared then there was a ladder so they could get up to  
10 that side door where you entered?

11 A. Yeah, yeah. I think we cleared that portion of the car at 30  
12 minutes after the accident. About 20 minutes after the accident  
13 is, I think, when some of the emergency service had started  
14 coming. And at that point, one of the other passengers that was  
15 on the outside -- I think it was the Hutchinson dad -- he was  
16 standing on top of the car. And what would happen was -- is he  
17 would relay stuff to him, and then he would shout it out to other  
18 people, and they would bring stuff to us. And they would -- like,  
19 when the passengers would like, hey, you know, need to ask us  
20 something, we'd relay it up, and then that's how we would kind of  
21 communicate. And that's how they brought the ladder there and  
22 then brought it down.

23 Q. And was anyone else with you besides the attendant and the  
24 passenger in the lower level? Any other helpers?

25 A. The son, the Hutchinson son, the Hutchinson family son, I

1 think it was Daniel Hutchinson. And then there was the other guy  
2 that I just -- I only recognize him by the belt buckle. I didn't  
3 ask for his name. I should have asked him for his name but I  
4 never did the entire, like, hour we were together. So there was  
5 about two of us. There were three of us at a time that were down  
6 there. Some of them would kind of rotate out just to get stuff.  
7 But, for the most part, those three of us were the main three in  
8 there.

9 Q. Then we switch to the point where you had identified the  
10 body. Were you still in the lower level when you identified him,  
11 or were you in the upper level at that point?

12 A. I was in the upper level of the car at that point.

13 Q. So maybe you could just walk us through again. I'm sorry if  
14 I didn't catch this the first time. So maybe what -- so you left  
15 the lower level, and then how did you enter the upper level?

16 A. So by the door there was that -- what would normally be the  
17 staircase to come down from the upper level of the lounge into the  
18 lower level. You couldn't, like, climb up normally, but I was  
19 able to kind of grab on to one of the parts. I was able to  
20 maneuver my leg up, and then I pulled myself up into part of the  
21 stair, and then I was able to kind of crawl over to overlook the  
22 lounge, basically, at the last stair portion when it was kind  
23 of -- you could stand on it, standing upright on it.

24 Q. So you were in the lower level helping. Once they were  
25 extricated, then you navigated the stairs, which was tricky

1 because the car was on its side, and that's how you got up to the  
2 upper level from the stairs?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And then you were able to look back and see -- and so you saw  
5 the deceased (indiscernible) legs from the stairs?

6 A. No, no. I didn't see it until I got down. It took me a  
7 little bit. I had to walk a bit of a distance until I saw him  
8 because it didn't seem like he was stuck in the car. Because he  
9 was stuck beneath the window panel and the motor, he was  
10 underneath the car, so you had to get to one of the window panels  
11 before you could see his legs sticking out because it was, like,  
12 beneath the car, if that makes sense.

13 Q. Near the rear. And so then, just to kind of reiterate what I  
14 think you said, so when you went back there -- so if he was in --  
15 like, if you had to guess how many windows, counting one from the  
16 rear to where he was, how many windows would you say he was?

17 A. He was two. No more than two.

18 Q. So about the second window from the rear of the car?

19 A. That's my guess, yeah.

20 Q. And I think you described that he was under the window. So  
21 he was outside of the car, the window was on top of him, and then  
22 the metal box motor was on top of the window?

23 A. Yeah. That's how I think I remember it because the window  
24 panel was covering, like, most of his arm. You know, there was  
25 kind of an overlap over most of his body, and the motor was on

1 kind of, like, his left arm, that area. It was kind of pinning  
2 him down on that side. But the window was on top of most of his  
3 upper part of the body.

4 Q. And the metal box frame, it sounded like it was stuck there.  
5 You described it as, like, a fan or a motor. You thought it had  
6 come from the side of the car?

7 A. Yeah, not the side; the outside of it. I think kind of when  
8 you open the door and you walk into the lounge and on the right  
9 side there's kind of, like, some seats and tables and stuff like  
10 that (indiscernible) on that. But then before you (indiscernible)  
11 that portion of the car leading to the staircase, it's kind of  
12 blocked off so that you can't really -- there's nothing really  
13 there. It seemed like it came from that kind of wall panel.

14 Q. But you pulled this metal box fan into the car, off of the  
15 window, so that you could -- so that someone could help get the  
16 body out? Is that right?

17 A. Yeah, yeah. We thought -- we were trying to clear it because  
18 we thought that they were going to kind of take the body to be  
19 able to, like, process it and everything. So, like, in the moment  
20 we were just trying -- at first, we started clearing the window  
21 off just because we didn't know if he was still alive or not, so  
22 we knew he would need to get taken for medical care. But then,  
23 after we found out he was deceased, we started just to move the  
24 metal just so they could remove the cadaver from the scene.

25 Q. Thank you for that clarification. The only other question I



1 have is going back to the beginning of the incident. You  
2 described the motion that you felt. Did you hear any noises at  
3 the time when you realized something was wrong?

4 A. Not when it initially started to sway. The only noise I  
5 heard was just when the car started derailing off and you could  
6 hear just the screech of, like, the car skidding off the rails.  
7 That was the only noise I really heard. I didn't hear anything  
8 besides that.

9 Q. That's it for me. Thank you very much.

10 MS. HARLEY: Thanks, Kris.

11 Kari?

12 MS. JACOBSON: Yeah, sure. Thank you.

13 BY MS. JACOBSEN:

14 Q. So you've already shared quite a bit. I won't take up too  
15 much time. Just to drill down a little deeper with the finding of  
16 the body and the window on top. Can you describe the condition,  
17 as best you remember, of the window once you removed the motor and  
18 that big metal box off of it?

19 A. So the window seemed mostly intact. It was just that it had  
20 come out of the -- it had broken off of the frame, but the panel  
21 itself seemed like it was still mostly intact.

22 Q. And I know this was a while ago now. Was it bent? Do you  
23 remember any of those details?

24 A. It didn't seem like it was bent, no.

25 Q. And to the best that you were aware, it was the window that

1 was originally there? It wasn't a window that shifted from  
2 somewhere else or anything like that?

3 A. No, no. It seemed like it was the window that was supposed  
4 to be in that panel kind of area, it seemed like, at least.

5 Q. I think those are all my questions. Thank you.

6 MS. HARLEY: Kris, do you have anything else? I don't.

7 MS. SEVERSON: No, I don't think so, but thank you very much.

8 MS. HARLEY: So, Mr. Brophy, this is usually the time in the  
9 interview when I ask the interviewee: Are there any questions you  
10 want to ask me or the team?

11 MR. BROPHY: I was just going to ask when do you kind of  
12 think that the final investigation is going to kind of finish up?  
13 Or how long is the process going to take?

14 MS. HARLEY: So usually an investigation like this takes  
15 about a year because we have to examine everything. So, as you  
16 can imagine, there are a lot of parts in this investigation. So  
17 it will probably be about a year. However, any time that we  
18 release any information to the public, we are required by law to  
19 notify the victims -- and that would be you as a passenger on the  
20 train -- that we are releasing information. So that's where Kim  
21 Frierson, who's the TDA assistant that you may have been talking  
22 to, comes in. Her job is to act as liaison between us and you and  
23 the investigation. So if you have any questions or any concerns,  
24 she should be the person you reach out to. You also have my  
25 information. Please feel free to use it.

1 So any other questions?

2 MS. SEVERSON: Sheryl?

3 MS. HARLEY: Yes, Kris?

4 MS. SEVERSON: I have one more question.

5 BY MS. SEVERSON:

6 Q. Could you describe the passenger that was with the attendant  
7 in the lower level lounge car in terms of, you know, age,  
8 clothing, hair color, anything? It would be really helpful to  
9 interview that person. And if you have any -- or could you  
10 identify him that might help us figure out who he was?

11 A. So he was kind of older, I think in his fifties, sixties.  
12 Probably sixties-ish range. I think grayish hair. I don't have  
13 that much more else to really identify him by because I probably  
14 only saw him for about 15 seconds when he got out. He was pulled  
15 out of the car. And then I took the forward part of the door as  
16 the other person carried them out -- or not carried him but  
17 assisted him out -- just because the rubble was uneven. So in the  
18 immediate time he came out, I didn't really see him much after  
19 that. And we couldn't see them while we were trying to clear the  
20 area, so I really don't know what he looks like.

21 Q. Do you remember a shirt color or anything, a hat?

22 A. I didn't see a hat. It looked like he kind of had, like, a  
23 black, brownish kind of jacket, but I'm not completely clear. It  
24 was pretty -- it was a little dark down there and very, kind of,  
25 dusty, so I didn't make out an exact kind of --

1 Q. Was he covered in dirt, soot, debris -- not soot, but  
2 ballast? Like, was he dirty?

3 A. It looked like he was, yeah.

4 BY MS. JACOBSON:

5 Q. And did you say that he was -- you said that he wanted to let  
6 his wife know he was okay. So did it seem like his wife was  
7 there? She had been on the train, also?

8 A. Yes, yes. She had been on the train, as well. And one of  
9 the other passengers, when we relayed it up, they were able to  
10 find her and let her know, so she was there.

11 MS. SEVERSON: I think that's it. Thank you.

12 MS. HARLEY: Mr. Brophy, again, thank you very much. And  
13 what I always tell the people we interview: If you think of  
14 something later on, no matter how small, please feel free to reach  
15 out to me and provide that information. Any information we can  
16 get from you is very important. So, thank you, sir.

17 MR. BROPHY: Okay, thank you. I will reach out if anything  
18 else comes to my mind.

19 MS. HARLEY: Okay. You have a good day, sir, and a happy  
20 holiday.

21 MR. BODEN: All right, thank you. You, as well.

22 MS. SEVERSON: Thank you.

23 MS. JACOBSON: Thank you so much.

24 MS. HARLEY: And a couple of things. I'm not quite sure I  
25 actually did this in the beginning. So today's date is November

1 the 23rd, 2021. The interview started at 11:01, and I'm  
2 concluding the interview at 11:43 a.m., Eastern Standard Time.

3 (Whereupon, at 11:43 a.m. EST, 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:            FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT  
                                      NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA  
                                      ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021  
                                      Interview of Spencer Brophy

ACCIDENT NO.:                RRD21MR017

PLACE:                         Via Telephone

DATE:                         November 23, 2021

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.



Angie Duray  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT \*

NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA \* Accident No.: RRD21MR017

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: IRVIN CAMPBELL, Passenger

XIAOFAN CAI, Passenger

Via Microsoft Teams

Thursday,  
October 11, 2021

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

KARINA JACOBSEN, Investigator  
Volpe National Transportation System Center

KRISTINE SEVERSON, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe National Transportation System Center

EMILY MCMICKLE, Emergency Management Department  
Amtrak



I N D E X

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By Ms. McMickle	26

I N T E R V I E W

(10:06 a.m.)

1  
2  
3 MS. HARLEY: So let me get started and do some administrative  
4 things. So, once again, my name is Sheryl Harley. I am the  
5 Assistant Investigator in charge in this accident investigation.

6 This is in regards to the Amtrak derailment that took place  
7 on Saturday, September the 25th of 2021 at about 3:47 p.m. in  
8 Joplin, Montana and it's NTSB Report Number or highway -- I'm  
9 sorry -- Investigation Number RRD21MR017, and with us on the call  
10 today is -- Mr. Campbell, would you identify yourself for the  
11 recording, please, sir?

12 MR. CAMPBELL: My name is Irvin Campbell.

13 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

14 MR. CAMPBELL: I was a passenger on the train.

15 MS. HARLEY: All right, and also on the call, I will ask  
16 Kari, please, introduce yourself.

17 MS. JACOBSEN: Hi, Mr. Campbell. My name is Kari Jacobsen  
18 and I work for the Volpe Center, which is a research institute  
19 under the US Department of Transportation, and Kris and myself are  
20 here in support of FRA investigating this accident and  
21 understanding what happened to make improvements.

22 MR. CAMPBELL: Hi.

23 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Kris?

24 MS. SEVERSON: Hi. I'm Kris Severson. Just to add to what  
25 Kari said, we were both out there at the accident investigating

1 the day after the accident and we're both mechanical engineers and  
2 we appreciate your help in understanding what happened and we're  
3 to understand causal mechanisms of injury and how future injuries  
4 can be prevented. Thank you.

5 MS. HARLEY: And also Emily, if you can introduce yourself,  
6 as well?

7 MS. MCMICKLE: Hi. Good morning. Emily McMickle with  
8 Amtrak's Emergency Management and I work on Amtrak's training and  
9 exercise programs to further prepare our employees to respond to  
10 incidents.

11 MS. HARLEY: Okay, and I'm not quite sure. I might've  
12 forgotten to do this that today's date is October the 11th, 2021  
13 and it's now 10:06 a.m. If I did it before, please forgive me. I  
14 didn't write it down.

15 INTERVIEW OF IRVIN CAMPBELL AND XIAOFAN CAI

16 MS. HARLEY: So, Mr. Campbell, what I'd like you do for me  
17 is, first of all, just tell me where you and your family boarded  
18 the train and your basic interaction with the Amtrak crew upon  
19 boarding the train, and then I would like you to talk about what  
20 happened on the day of the accident.

21 So just kind of walk us through it if you don't mind.

22 MR. CAMPBELL: Sure. Well, my wife works on the north side  
23 of Chicago, so we got -- we boarded in Glenview, Illinois because  
24 that was more convenient. We got on. There -- it was very  
25 smooth. They knew we were coming because I told them our name and

1 we were staying in the family bedroom on the first floor of the  
2 train.

3       And then the woman -- so we interacted -- I don't remember  
4 his name unfortunately, the -- with the sleeping car attendant.  
5 He was very nice, and then just after we boarded, the dining car  
6 attendant came to take the dinner reservations. Those two were  
7 the -- those are the only Amtrak staff I really remember  
8 interacting with was the sleeping car attendant and the dining car  
9 attendant.

10       And nothing out of the ordinary happened. I mean we were  
11 excited to be on the train. Can you hear me okay?

12       MS. HARLEY: Yes. I can hear you find.

13       MR. CAMPBELL: Okay. So, yeah, I mean there was nothing  
14 super out of the ordinary. We were excited to be on the train.  
15 It was moving on time. Baby was excited about everything.  
16 Everything's a new experience for her, you know.

17       So I mean, unless you have a question about --

18       MS. HARLEY: So --

19       MR. CAMPBELL: -- something specific, I don't really know  
20 what else to say.

21       MS. HARLEY: So can you tell me what you remember about the  
22 day of the accident?

23       MR. CAMPBELL: Okay. Yeah. We woke, got up. Mommy and baby  
24 slept in, so I got breakfast to go. Yeah, I mean I remember  
25 walking back and forth. Our car was maybe three cars from the

1 dining car and I remember walking back and forth a lot just  
2 because I like to walk and we would pick up meals and things and,  
3 you know, everything seemed fine.

4       What did we do? We went. We had breakfast. We went to the  
5 car with all the glass, you know, like the lounge car that  
6 everybody likes to look out the windows. So we were there, I  
7 think, around 11:00 -- maybe from 11:00 to 12:00 and everything  
8 seemed fine.

9       We were surprised that we could get a seat. I had heard  
10 that, you know, everyone always is sitting there and it's  
11 impossible to get a seat. But there were some seats open and we  
12 went back, got lunch to go. I was texting my friend. I remember  
13 he's had something he wanted to talk about.

14       And but, again, there was really nothing and then it was  
15 about -- we were sort of dozing off. I think my wife and  
16 daughter, they had taken a nap a little earlier. So they had  
17 woken up and then I was, like, just dozing off when, you know, the  
18 car started shaking.

19       But again, I mean there was -- there was nothing. There was  
20 nothing out of the ordinary until that happened as far as we know.

21       MS. HARLEY: Okay. So you said they -- the car started  
22 shaking. Is that what woke you up?

23       MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah. I was sort of half asleep and the car  
24 shakes. I mean, you know, like -- not shakes but, you know, even  
25 when you drive a car on the road, I mean that -- that's part of

1 what is sort of nice. It sort of, like, rocks you to sleep.

2 So at first, I didn't know exactly that anything was wrong.  
3 But it sort of -- it just kept shaking. It was, like, really bad  
4 turbulence on an airplane.

5 MS. HARLEY: So when did you actually realize that something  
6 was wrong?

7 MR. CAMPBELL: Well, honestly the thing that surprised me the  
8 most was how quickly the train stopped because I know it's really  
9 hard to stop a train. So if it had just been -- even we hit a  
10 semi-truck on a -- or a cow or something, I don't think we  
11 would've stopped that fast.

12 So what surprised me -- what alerted me, I think, was just  
13 how quickly we came to a stop and just the shaking. I mean our  
14 car didn't shake that much. I mean it didn't flip over at all.  
15 The wheels came off, I guess, in the front but I had -- we had no  
16 idea how serious the accident was until we actually left the train  
17 and saw how bad it was.

18 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Did you hear any kind of announcement  
19 over the PA system?

20 MR. CAMPBELL: Before the accident?

21 MS. HARLEY: Yes.

22 MR. CAMPBELL: Or -- no. The only PA announcement was after  
23 the train ground to a halt there was some smoke, I think, in the  
24 air or some dust and that set off some kind of fire alarm, like  
25 everybody get out of the train. A fire's been detected or

1 something.

2 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right.

3 MR. CAMPBELL: But and I think though -- I mean the -- sort  
4 or that hapless sleeping car attendant, I mean he had no idea what  
5 was going on. I think his first instinct was to tell everyone to  
6 stay on the train, but he didn't -- I mean he had no idea, and I  
7 don't even remember him saying that.

8 Somebody said that he said that. So I couldn't --

9 MS. HARLEY: Did you see the sleeping car attendant after the  
10 train had come to a stop?

11 MR. CAMPBELL: Yes. I would say about 10 seconds after the  
12 train came to a stop, I heard someone say, you know, is everyone  
13 all right, which was -- I mean it was I heard him say that,  
14 because his car, I think, was just across the hall from ours or  
15 something. So -- and I think everybody was.

16 I mean I think everyone in our car -- well, you guys would  
17 know, but I think the injuries were probably more in the back of  
18 the train. Our car just got shaking around a little bit.

19 MS. HARLEY: Okay and how did you exit the train?

20 MR. CAMPBELL: Well, this is -- we just exited out the front  
21 door. I guess one thing I just want to mention, it's just I don't  
22 know if you guys know, I was probably the most physically fit  
23 person because there was a lot of older people on the train. So  
24 they -- a couple of them were urging me open the emergency exit  
25 window, which I was happy to do because they didn't know what else

1 to do.

2 I think they hadn't gotten the door open yet, and I don't  
3 know how old those train cars are, but there's a rubber seal  
4 around the window and then the metal thing that you pull, and when  
5 I pulled it, the metal just crack -- sorry -- the rubber cracked.  
6 So that was one of the more scary things was, like, even the  
7 emergency exit seemed to be a little bit past its prime.

8 But fortunately, the other one worked. Like I -- when I  
9 opened the second one, then that one opened. But I would at  
10 least, you know, look at those emergency exit rubber seals.

11 MS. HARLEY: Do you remember what room that -- that occurred  
12 in where you had -- where you tried to get out, use the emergency  
13 exit?

14 MR. CAMPBELL: It was the one -- well, the orientation of the  
15 train. I mean we were in the family car and then it was as you're  
16 walking toward the exit from the family bedroom. It was the first  
17 one on the right. So it was like, our neighbor on the right.

18 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

19 MR. CAMPBELL: And, yeah, but like I said. I did get the  
20 second one open and I think someone might've actually gone out  
21 that window. But as it turns out, the door -- then they opened  
22 the door. So that was no longer necessary. People were just  
23 afraid there might be some kind of explosion. You know, they  
24 wanted to get out as fast as they could --

25 MS. HARLEY: Okay.



1 MR. CAMPBELL: -- I think.

2 MS. HARLEY: So and I just wanted to be clear. When you said  
3 the -- that the second window opened, are you talking about if you  
4 look at the window, you know the windows have two panes. There's  
5 a front and back. So when you say the second window open, are you  
6 saying it's the back -- there was a second pane of the same large  
7 window or did you go to a completely different window?

8 MR. CAMPBELL: I remember there being -- well, I guess maybe  
9 mirror image through on the computer, but there were two windows  
10 in this passenger's roomette --

11 MS. HARLEY: Yeah.

12 MR. CAMPBELL: -- and both of them had an emergency exit  
13 latch.

14 MS. HARLEY: Right.

15 MR. CAMPBELL: So the first one on the left, I opened it.  
16 The rubber cracked and it was useless. But from the second one,  
17 the rubber didn't crack and we got the window open.

18 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So the first one on the left was the one  
19 that had the cracked rubber. Okay. All right.

20 MR. CAMPBELL: Yes.

21 MS. HARLEY: At the time of your evacuation, was there  
22 lighting inside the car?

23 MR. CAMPBELL: As far as I can recall. I mean it was broad  
24 daylight. It was very sunny. I couldn't, you know, swear under  
25 oath that there was lighting. But as far as I can remember,

1 everything seemed to be normal.

2 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Hang on just one quick second, please.  
3 All right. I'm sorry. Hold on one second. Okay. The -- so we  
4 luckily have a backup recorder because one of them just failed.  
5 I'm sorry. Okay. So let's see. Did you -- were there any  
6 obstacles to your getting out of the car?

7 MR. CAMPBELL: Like physical obstacles?

8 MS. HARLEY: Yes.

9 MR. CAMPBELL: No. No. The -- I mean the car was a little  
10 bit titled, but not enough to inhibit us just walking out the  
11 front door.

12 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

13 MR. CAMPBELL: We didn't even know it had derailed. I guess  
14 it had ended up it was on the next set of tracks over, but it had  
15 ended up as such that it didn't even look like -- it was -- it  
16 looked like it was still on the tracks almost from our point of  
17 view.

18 MS. HARLEY: Okay, and --

19 MR. CAMPBELL: But no, we just got out.

20 MS. HARLEY: Okay, and you were assisted in the evacuation by  
21 the attendant in that car?

22 MR. CAMPBELL: He was there. He was -- but we got out pretty  
23 fast. I mean I don't know what -- I think he probably stayed in  
24 the car. There were probably passengers that needed assistance.  
25 I mean we're pretty young and able to just move around, so we were

1 fine.

2 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Out of curiosity, when you first boarded  
3 the train was there any kind of an announcement in regards to over  
4 the PA or were you told about any of the safety features on the  
5 car or were you notified of the blue safety card that was in your  
6 bedroom?

7 MR. CAMPBELL: I don't recall, but you know like on an  
8 airplane, you sort of tune that kind of thing out sometimes when  
9 they just mention it. The only thing I -- there's incessant  
10 reminders about wearing masks. They just were nonstop if you  
11 don't wear a mask, you'll get your name on a list. You'll never  
12 ride Amtrak again.

13 So I remember all the mask stuff but I don't remember a blue  
14 card. I remember looking at it. I mean they put it very  
15 prominently. They had a schedule and a thing and Sophie was  
16 playing with it. So I mean, I know that we definitely saw  
17 it --

18 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

19 MR. CAMPBELL: -- and so I mean, yeah, there -- that card was  
20 there.

21 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Did you, by any chance, you or your wife  
22 take any photographs or Sophie take any photographs?

23 MR. CAMPBELL: Of the train?

24 MS. HARLEY: Of --

25 MR. CAMPBELL: Pre or post-accident?

1 MS. HARLEY: Post.

2 MR. CAMPBELL: Yes, there were some.

3 MS. HARLEY: Okay. It --

4 MR. CAMPBELL: Yes, there were some.

5 MS. HARLEY: Yeah. Is it possible for you to send copies of  
6 that to me? Email them to me?

7 MR. CAMPBELL: Sure. Yeah. There's -- I mean there's one or  
8 two dozen. I mean it's the same general idea. Like all the ones  
9 you've seen already, it's going to be like that. But sure.

10 MS. HARLEY: Sure. I --

11 MR. CAMPBELL: (Indiscernible) of the tracks, you know, the  
12 tracks, the ties were all torn up and everything. So yeah, I --  
13 we'd be happy to pass that along.

14 MS. HARLEY: Appreciate that. Did either one of you call  
15 9-1-1?

16 MR. CAMPBELL: No.

17 MS. HARLEY: Okay, and --

18 MR. CAMPBELL: We called our family.

19 MS. HARLEY: Okay, and were either you, your wife or your  
20 child injured in the derailment?

21 MR. CAMPBELL: Mercifully, no, we were not.

22 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

23 MR. CAMPBELL: We were -- we were in bed. The family  
24 bedroom, I mean we were having a good time. We're going to  
25 recommend that I mean if anyone wants to take a train. I mean the

1 family bedroom really is a good value as far as that and the space  
2 and everything.

3 So, yeah, we were just sort of napping and playing and, no,  
4 we were not injured.

5 MS. HARLEY: Okay, and can I have your ages, please?

6 MR. CAMPBELL: Yes. I'm -- well, I turn 37 next week. So I  
7 don't know how you want to --

8 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

9 MR. CAMPBELL: -- evaluate that. My --

10 MS. HARLEY: All right.

11 MR. CAMPBELL: -- wife is 34 this year and Sophie is going on  
12 2.

13 MS. HARLEY: Going on 2. Good for her. Okay. Great. Thank  
14 you. Well, those are all the questions I had. I'm going to go  
15 ahead and turn it over to Kari to see if she has any additional  
16 questions.

17 MR. CAMPBELL: Sure. Thank you.

18 MS. HARLEY: Thank you.

19 MS. JACOBSEN: Hi there.

20 MR. CAMPBELL: Hi.

21 MS. HARLEY: No worries.

22 MR. CAMPBELL: We're going to be sort of in and out. There's  
23 a --

24 MS. HARLEY: Yeah. Feel free to handle whatever you need to  
25 there.

1 MR. CAMPBELL: Sure.

2 MS. HARLEY: I was just --

3 MR. CAMPBELL: Hold on.

4 MS. HARLEY: I was just curious to get a little bit more  
5 information about how the family room was set up at the time of  
6 the incident. You know, I know the beds go up and down and you  
7 said that you were making of the space.

8 Can you describe in a little more detail, like, where you  
9 were, where your wife was relative to the room and how it was set  
10 up?

11 MR. CAMPBELL: Relative to what? I'm sorry.

12 MS. HARLEY: To the room that you have --

13 MR. CAMPBELL: Oh.

14 MS. HARLEY: -- and how it was set up.

15 MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah. Well, I guess it's set up for four  
16 people to sleep in, but we -- Sophie's so small, we were only  
17 using the sleepers. Do you know how, like, there's sort of the  
18 long bed and then the short bed --

19 MS. HARLEY: Uh-huh.

20 MR. CAMPBELL: -- on the lower level? So my wife was just  
21 sleeping on the short one and I was sleeping on the long one and  
22 Sophie was sort of in-between us, and we -- I guess, in theory you  
23 would close the bed up during the day and sleep -- and just sit on  
24 the sofa but we just liked having the bed.

25 So the bed was out. That's how it was set up. I mean we had

1 some toys out and stuff, but --

2 MS. HARLEY: And then you said that when the derailment  
3 started to happen that you felt some shaking. Did anybody get  
4 jostled? You know, did you fall off the beds? What do you  
5 remember about any of the motions that you went through?

6 MR. CAMPBELL: I didn't -- well, let me ask my wife. When  
7 the train started to derail, did you -- I mean were you sitting  
8 down? You were sitting down, right?

9 MS. CAI: I was sitting down.

10 MR. CAMPBELL: Did you fall over or did you stay sitting up?

11 MS. CAI: I didn't fall over because I was, like, sitting  
12 against the wall and --

13 MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah. We were all sort of just sort of  
14 lounging around on the bed. So, like, she was sort of lying back,  
15 you know, the way you would on, like, a -- a beach chair.

16 MS. JACOBSEN: Uh-huh.

17 MR. CAMPBELL: So she didn't fall over because she was, you  
18 know, sort of bracing maybe against the --

19 MS. CAI: Yeah. We can (indiscernible).

20 MR. CAMPBELL: Oh, yeah, yeah. We can send you a picture.  
21 Yeah. We actually took some pictures of --

22 MS. CAI: The way the chairs --

23 MR. CAMPBELL: -- the way the bed was set up.

24 MS. CAI: Yeah.

25 MR. CAMPBELL: So I don't know if you can see this picture,

1 but she was -- the short bed is shorter than my wife is. So she  
2 was probably raising her feet against it. So she was in, like,  
3 the perfect train crash position I think. Yeah. I was sort of  
4 lying back.

5 So I would've been more horizontal. I mean if the train had  
6 slammed to a stop, I probably would've fallen on the floor, but it  
7 didn't. You know, I mean trains can't just stop immediately.  
8 So I --

9 MS. JACOBSEN: Uh-huh.

10 MR. CAMPBELL: I woke up. I sat up. I remember, you know,  
11 after about five seconds, I realized something was wrong but I had  
12 -- I had no idea what to do. I was thinking do we --

13 MS. CAI: Yeah.

14 MR. CAMPBELL: -- do we, you know, tense up. Do you go limp.  
15 Do you go near the window. Do you go on the floor. I mean and I  
16 just -- I had absolutely --

17 MS. CAI: Yeah. I --

18 MR. CAMPBELL: -- no idea.

19 MS. CAI: -- because the train was in the desert --

20 MR. CAMPBELL: The desert.

21 MS. CAI: -- the desert, so I -- so I was thinking maybe  
22 there was a storm, like --

23 MR. CAMPBELL: Like a boulder. Yeah, we were thinking did we  
24 hit --

25 MS. CAI: -- a storm like that.



1 MR. CAMPBELL: -- something, but then I just -- right. Short  
2 of hitting a boulder, I don't know what could stop a train that  
3 fast even --

4 MS. CAI: Well --

5 MR. CAMPBELL: -- if you hit a semi-truck.

6 MS. CAI: -- I thought there was a storm.

7 MR. CAMPBELL: Oh, a storm.

8 MS. CAI: A storm outside, and it was like that.

9 MR. CAMPBELL: Right. It sounded like there was a storm. I  
10 mean, like --

11 MS. CAI: Yeah. It like a storm.

12 MR. CAMPBELL: -- Sophie's reaction was the reaction she  
13 would have if there was a really loud thunderstorm. It was  
14 just --

15 MS. CAI: Yeah, because it was very --

16 MR. CAMPBELL: -- loud noise.

17 MS. CAI: -- it was very loud --

18 MR. CAMPBELL: -- that's Mommy and Daddy --

19 MS. CAI: -- and it feel like the --

20 MR. CAMPBELL: -- can't control.

21 MS. CAI: -- sand was flying. It's like that. So just  
22 because I took airplanes a lot before, something like that  
23 happened a lot. So I was not, like, super nervous because I  
24 thought that may be normal and --

25 MR. CAMPBELL: Right, because, yeah, Angela (ph.) was next to

1 the window, so she saw more of the dust get kicked then I would've

2 --

3 MS. CAI: Yeah. The dust was --

4 MR. CAMPBELL: -- because I was sort of in the middle and I  
5 was napping. So, right, she must've -- right. It maybe looked  
6 like a --

7 MS. CAI: Yeah.

8 MR. CAMPBELL: -- like a dust storm or something.

9 MS. CAI: Like a dust storm.

10 MR. CAMPBELL: Well, everything --

11 MS. CAI: That --

12 MR. CAMPBELL: -- there was dusty.

13 MS. CAI: -- that (indiscernible) like that.

14 MR. CAMPBELL: I couldn't believe it. Like, I'd never been  
15 anywhere that dusty. When the truck --

16 MS. CAI: Yeah.

17 MR. CAMPBELL: -- like a truck driving, you can see it from a  
18 mile away just from the dust that it --

19 MS. CAI: Yeah, because we also --

20 MR. CAMPBELL: -- or more than a mile away.

21 MS. CAI: -- that kind of stuff sometime happen in the  
22 desert, so I didn't feel very surprised.

23 MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah. We've both taken trains in, like, inner  
24 Mongolia in China and it sort of -- it just felt like that was  
25 where we were.

1 MS. CAI: So I was not in panic. That's because I thought  
2 that was a -- like a storm, like a desert --

3 MR. CAMPBELL: Like a routine --

4 MS. CAI: -- like a routine.

5 MR. CAMPBELL: -- thing.

6 MS. CAI: -- and I didn't think about it was, like, a derail.

7 MR. CAMPBELL: A derail. Well, yeah, because --

8 MS. CAI: I just --

9 MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah. You had no idea from --

10 MS. CAI: -- thought that --

11 MR. CAMPBELL: -- from our point of view, we just came to a  
12 stop. We had no --

13 MS. CAI: Yeah.

14 MR. CAMPBELL: -- idea there'd been a derailment.

15 MS. CAI: Because in my opinion, that was, like -- it's,  
16 like, it's impossible that that kind of thing would happen. I  
17 didn't think about, you know, what that kind of things because  
18 then otherwise I would be more nervous.

19 MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah. The train statistically is very safe.  
20 So we did not even --

21 MS. CAI: Yeah.

22 MR. CAMPBELL: -- consider --

23 MS. CAI: Yeah. In my opinion --

24 MR. CAMPBELL: -- a fatal --

25 MS. CAI: -- trains -- trains are --

1 MR. CAMPBELL: -- derailment.

2 MS. CAI: -- the -- is the most -- it's the safest  
3 (indiscernible).

4 MR. CAMPBELL: Right. That was part of the reason why we  
5 took a train. I mean we were debating whether air travel or train  
6 travel was safer and we decided --

7 MS. CAI: Yeah.

8 MR. CAMPBELL: -- to go with train travel.

9 MS. CAI: So -- and Sophie was also, like -- so when the --  
10 when everything was everything, Sophie, like, also stopped and  
11 kept crying and she was, like, observing what was happening, and  
12 then -- and then she, like, like, cried for, like, the -- a couple  
13 minutes and then she just stopped when the train stopped.

14 MS. JACOBSEN: Okay. Thank you.

15 MR. CAMPBELL: I hope that answers your question.

16 MS. CAI: Yeah.

17 MS. JACOBSEN: Yeah. No, it's all very helpful. Kris, did  
18 you have questions next?

19 MS. SEVERSON: Yeah. I have one question about how you  
20 exited. You said you exited through the front door. How did you  
21 get to the front door, because you were on the lower level and  
22 isn't the front door on the upper level?

23 MR. CAMPBELL: Well, no, like the door that you would exit  
24 the train normally.

25 MS. SEVERSON: The side door from the side of the car?

1 MR. CAMPBELL: Yes. When I said the front door, I mean,  
2 like, the main entrance. So it is a -- yes, technically -- sorry.

3 MS. SEVERSON: Okay.

4 MR. CAMPBELL: The side door. We exited from the side door  
5 on the right side as we were --

6 MS. SEVERSON: As you --

7 MR. CAMPBELL: -- although as we -- as, I guess, it was  
8 technically on the left side of the train though, right, because  
9 we would've been talking backwards I think.

10 MS. SEVERSON: Right. So if you --

11 MR. CAMPBELL: So --

12 MS. SEVERSON: -- so that you were on the leading end of the  
13 train where your room was and so if you had to walk towards the  
14 center, you'd be walking backwards with respect --

15 MR. CAMPBELL: Right.

16 MS. SEVERSON: -- to the direction of travel. So then from  
17 your perspective, walking backwards it was the door on your right?

18 MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah. So it would've been on the -- the  
19 south.

20 MS. SEVERSON: South side. Got it.

21 MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah.

22 MS. SEVERSON: Okay.

23 MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah. We just walked out. It was -- that was  
24 no -- this -- some of the people really were antsy and so I opened  
25 the emergency exit. But we were a little bit less impatient I'd

1 say.

2 MS. SEVERSON: Okay, and I guess were there other people on  
3 the lower level with you exiting, as well, or -- and was it all  
4 sort of -- sounds sort of organized and calm for the exits for  
5 everybody?

6 MR. CAMPBELL: I mean I don't think there were that many  
7 people on that level, right? There's maybe -- there's the  
8 attendant and maybe half a dozen more people. I mean it was, you  
9 know, that was the other thing that they say about the Amtrak.  
10 They say if you have a bedroom, then you can get your own  
11 bathroom.

12 But the fact is, there's so few people in the family bedroom  
13 area that the number of people really was never an issue. So,  
14 yeah, I mean there weren't that many people. There was no mad --  
15 you know, people didn't get trampled or anything. There just  
16 weren't enough people.

17 MS. SEVERSON: Okay. Okay. That's it for me. Thank you.

18 MS. CAI: (Indiscernible) other room or the bathroom.

19 MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah. We're very thankful we were in our room  
20 and not in the bathroom or something, because --

21 MS. CAI: The shower room.

22 MR. CAMPBELL: -- or taking a shower.

23 MS. CAI: (Indiscernible).

24 MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah. But, yeah, we were in the best -- the  
25 best possible. I mean we were just sort of lounging on the bed.

1 I mean it -- we're very thankful for that.

2 MS. CAI: (Indiscernible).

3 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So Emily, did you have any questions that  
4 you wanted to put to Mr. Campbell and his wife?

5 MS. MCMICKLE: No, I did not. The questions regarding the  
6 crew announcements and instructions, those were some of the more  
7 concerning in how they assisted with the emergency and evacuation.  
8 So I think I hear Mr. Campbell saying it may -- he may -- the  
9 attendant may have been working with some others that were not as  
10 enabled as the Campbell family.

11 So I think those are the big ones I had, so thank you for  
12 that.

13 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

14 MR. CAMPBELL: Sure. Yeah.

15 MS. HARLEY: And --

16 MR. CAMPBELL: Right. I think that in general, I mean there  
17 was sort of a -- a triage -- I mean all of the -- the people that  
18 were able to move around sort of ended up going someplace, because  
19 we don't -- I don't remember seeing anyone injured or hurt or  
20 anything and probably all the crew were helping those people.

21 So the uninjured ones were sort of left to fend for  
22 themselves until all the local people came though. I mean the --  
23 the outpouring of local, you know, Good Samaritans from the --  
24 just the healthcare workers and the church people and the school  
25 people.

1 I mean it was -- it was overwhelming how helpful they were.  
2 So, right, since we were able to move around, we were just taken  
3 away from the scene pretty fast.

4 MS. HARLEY: So --

5 MS. MCMICKLE: That was -- thank you for that, Mr. Campbell.  
6 I did have a question as you were going through that was who --  
7 once you were out of the train and you were safe, who was the  
8 first person you talked to? Was it one of the local responders or  
9 was it a member of the Amtrak crew that kind of had -- took your  
10 name and kind of directed you to a safe location away from the  
11 train car?

12 MR. CAMPBELL: I mean I'm not 100 percent sure, but I don't  
13 think -- I think the Amtrak people basically stayed with the train  
14 except for the crew that were just basically fellow survivors. I  
15 don't -- I don't -- I think it was basically the sheriff or  
16 whoever and then just the local -- the local people as far as I'm  
17 aware.

18 MS. MCMICKLE: Okay. Thank you.

19 MS. HARLEY: So I do have a real quick two follow up  
20 questions. How many passengers walked out of that exit with you?  
21 Do you know?

22 MR. CAMPBELL: You know, I -- that wasn't really what --  
23 important to me at that point. We were --

24 MS. HARLEY: Right.

25 MR. CAMPBELL: -- just trying to get our lives assured.



1 MS. HARLEY: Right.

2 MR. CAMPBELL: But I -- no, I couldn't say at all. I mean  
3 not a whole lot though because I don't think that many --  
4 I --

5 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

6 MR. CAMPBELL: -- and, see, we -- we were not the first to  
7 exit. We hung back in the room just because we had a baby and  
8 everything. Like, if I'd been alone, I probably would've just  
9 dashed out as fast as I could. But probably by the time we got  
10 out, most of the people had already gotten out.

11 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Was the door already open when you go to  
12 the door?

13 MR. CAMPBELL: The -- you mean --

14 MS. HARLEY: The exit --

15 MR. CAMPBELL: -- at the side?

16 MS. HARLEY: Yeah. The side door?

17 MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah. Yeah, oh, yeah. Yeah.

18 MS. HARLEY: It was already open?

19 MR. CAMPBELL: And I'm -- I'm certain people had already  
20 exited.

21 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

22 MR. CAMPBELL: And then people were sort of wandering. I  
23 mean nobody really knew where to go. I guess the more curious  
24 people sort of went back down the train to look at the damage, but  
25 we -- we just stayed back.

1 MS. HARLEY: Okay, and then my --

2 MR. CAMPBELL: (Indiscernible).

3 MS. HARLEY: -- my last real quick question. When you were  
4 walking out that door, was there a trash receptacle by that door?

5 MR. CAMPBELL: I don't recall.

6 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

7 MR. CAMPBELL: I couldn't say either way. Do you mean the  
8 one that was in -- put there for people to use or --

9 MS. HARLEY: Yes.

10 MR. CAMPBELL: -- just one that had gotten knocked out?

11 MS. HARLEY: No.

12 MR. CAMPBELL: No. I don't -- maybe it's in the pictures. I  
13 mean we didn't -- you know, we're -- we'd be happy to send you  
14 some pictures that we have.

15 MS. HARLEY: Yeah. If you --

16 MR. CAMPBELL: But I --

17 MS. HARLEY: If you can also send pictures actually before of  
18 just of the -- of that car before the derailment, as well, I  
19 appreciate that. If you can just email them?

20 MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah.

21 MS. HARLEY: Great.

22 MR. CAMPBELL: Sure. I mean, yeah, they're just random  
23 pictures that we thought would be cute, you know --

24 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

25 MR. CAMPBELL: -- (indiscernible) and stuff. Yeah. People

1 were taking water. I think the main thing I remember there were  
2 all the water bottles because people -- that was the first thing  
3 people thought of to take out. But I couldn't say I remember a  
4 trash receptacle.

5 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right. Does anyone else have any  
6 other questions?

7 All right, and, Mr. Campbell, do either you or your wife have  
8 any questions for us?

9 MR. CAMPBELL: Well, just a minute.

10 (Pause)

11 MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah. I mean, yeah, we're lucky to be here.  
12 We're very thankful that things went well for us. We hope things  
13 go well for you and for everyone that are still having ongoing  
14 issues. I mean our biggest issue right now is getting our  
15 expenses reimbursed, but I know that doesn't really concern you  
16 guys directly. So I -- we don't need to worry about that.

17 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So --

18 MS. CAI: (Indiscernible).

19 MR. CAMPBELL: And then, yeah, I mean these are just details  
20 on our end. Like, one of the suitcases, I guess, was  
21 unidentifiable. So we're going to have to wait until that gets  
22 put into the system and we claim it --

23 MS. HARLEY: Right.

24 MR. CAMPBELL: -- but that's what's on our minds --

25 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

1 MR. CAMPBELL: -- as far as the accident, and just as -- I  
2 mean we're as eager as anyone else to know what happened. So, you  
3 know, as soon as you guys find out, do you want to pass along any  
4 of --

5 MS. HARLEY: Well, we --

6 MR. CAMPBELL: -- preliminary --

7 MS. HARLEY: -- well, just to let you know, we -- we  
8 certainly do, when we finish our investigation, it is, in fact --  
9 it goes on public record and it is available on a public website.  
10 I will tell you the investigation is going to take over a year  
11 because we've got a lot of things we're going to have to look at.

12 But any kind of updates that we provide, we will notify you  
13 first before we actually notify the public. It's actually a  
14 requirement by law for us to do it that way and, again --

15 MR. CAMPBELL: Sure.

16 MS. HARLEY: -- if you have not heard from our TDA specialist  
17 within the next week or so, please give me a call back. We're  
18 trying to verify that we've got the most up to date information on  
19 everyone and that you are contacted by this agency so that you  
20 actually have your contact with us.

21 MR. CAMPBELL: Okay.

22 MS. HARLEY: If you think of anything later on, please feel  
23 free to give me a call.

24 MR. CAMPBELL: Sure.

25 MS. HARLEY: No matter how --

1 MR. CAMPBELL: (Indiscernible)?

2 MS. HARLEY: No matter how small.

3 MR. CAMPBELL: Okay. Sure.

4 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

5 MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah. Just one. Are -- we're just curious.

6 Are the -- is the Empire builder back on schedule now?

7 MS. HARLEY: I know that they actually did run a train a  
8 couple of days later back through there, so yes.

9 MR. CAMPBELL: So it's back up then?

10 MS. HARLEY: Yes.

11 MR. CAMPBELL: Well, great.

12 MS. HARLEY: Yeah. I'm sorry, Kris?

13 MS. SEVERSON: I had one more question. You said that the  
14 car -- that you were surprised at how quickly the train stopped.  
15 Do you have any sense of timing from when -- like, when the car  
16 started to slow down to when it came to a stop? Like, seconds,  
17 minutes?

18 MR. CAMPBELL: I mean it's a little hard to be --

19 MS. SEVERSON: Sure.

20 MR. CAMPBELL: -- objective.

21 MS. SEVERSON: Sure.

22 MR. CAMPBELL: I would say probably 30 seconds. It -- I  
23 don't mean that it literally came to a screeching halt. I just --  
24 based on what I know about trains, it seemed interest -- It seemed  
25 surprising how quickly, because I know, like, the wheel, there's

1 only, like, a tiny bit of contact, you know, with the wheel.

2 So it sort of had to be something other than just slamming  
3 the brakes on. So then -- I mean as it turns out, it was dragging  
4 cars along the ground, but, yeah, just because from our point of  
5 view, I mean, we didn't know it was a derailment.

6 We didn't know that anything had had happened except there  
7 was some turbulence, and so, yeah, just to me the most -- the  
8 thing that alarmed me more than anything else was just how  
9 relatively quickly it stopped.

10 MS. SEVERSON: Okay. Thank you.

11 MS. HARLEY: All right.

12 MS. SEVERSON: That's it.

13 MS. HARLEY: Well, once again, Mr. Campbell, thank you very,  
14 very much for helping us participating in our investigation.  
15 Again, if you have --

16 MR. CAMPBELL: Sure.

17 MS. HARLEY: -- any questions or any concerns, we'll make  
18 sure that you have our contact and outside of that, anyone have  
19 anything else they want to say?

20 All right. Thank you, sir. I appreciate it. Good luck to  
21 you and your family.

22 MR. CAMPBELL: Thank you so much.

23 MS. HARLEY: Bye to Sophie.

24 MR. CAMPBELL: (Indiscernible). Bye.

25 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

1 MR. CAMPBELL: Bye.

2 MS. SEVERSON: Thank you.

3 MR. CAMPBELL: Bye.

4 MS. SEVERSON: Thank you.

5 MS. HARLEY: Thank you. Okay.

6 MS. JACOBSEN: Thank you.

7 MS. SEVERSON: Okay. I'll sign off too and --

8 MS. HARLEY: Yeah.

9 MS. SEVERSON: -- see you in a bit then, Sheryl?

10 MS. HARLEY: Yep. Absolutely.

11 MS. SEVERSON: Thank you.

12 MS. HARLEY: All righty. Bye.

13 MS. SEVERSON: Bye.

14 MS. HARLEY: Interview concluded at 10:36 a.m.

15 (Whereupon, at 10:36 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:            FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT  
                                      NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA  
                                      ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021  
                                      Interview of Irvin Campbell  
                                      & Xiaofan Cai

ACCIDENT NO.:                RRD21MR017

PLACE:                         Via Microsoft Teams

DATE:                         October 11, 2021

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.



---

Lisa Smith  
Transcriber



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT \*

NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA \* Accident No.: RRD21MR017

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: APIWIT BENJAMIN CHULAWAN

Passenger

Via Telephone

Tuesday,  
November 9, 2021

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

KRIS SEVERSON, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe Center, Department of Transportation

KARI JACOBSEN, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe Center, Department of Transportation

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I N T E R V I E W

(3:31 p.m. EST)

1  
2  
3 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So I'm going to start by -- so my name is  
4 Sheryl Harley. Last name H-a-r-l-e-y, and I'm the assistant  
5 investigator in charge with the National Transportation Safety  
6 Board. And we're investigating the Amtrak derailment that in  
7 Joplin, Montana that occurred on September the 25th of 2021, at  
8 approximately 3:47 p.m.

9 And do you mind, sir, identifying yourself for the record and  
10 the recording, please?

11 MR. CHULAWAN: Sure, my name is Apiwit Benjamin Chulawan, a  
12 passenger on the same train that was (indiscernible).

13 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And also on this call are members of the  
14 investigative team, and I'm going to ask them to introduce  
15 themselves. Kris:

16 MS. SEVERSON: Hello, my name is Kris Severson. I work for  
17 the U.S. Department of Transportation with Kari. We are  
18 mechanical engineers and we were out at the accident and site  
19 investigating. We're trying to figure out how people got hurt and  
20 how we can use that information to either update regulations or  
21 make safety improvements in the future. Thank you.

22 MS. HARLEY: Kari?

23 MS. JACOBSEN: Yeah, hi. I'm Kari Jacobsen. What Kris said,  
24 and thanks for taking the time to talk to us today.

25 MR. CHULAWAN: Sure.

1 MS. HARLEY: So, thank you, sir.

2 INTERVIEW OF APUWIT BENJAMINE CHULAWAN

3 BY MS. HARLEY:

4 Q. So to get started, I'll tell you what, what I'd like you to  
5 do, if you don't mind, is to start from when and where you boarded  
6 the train, and your first interaction with the crew, and then I'd  
7 like you to kind of start with the day of the accident and kind of  
8 walk me through the events as you remember them.

9 A. Sure. So I boarded the train in Columbus, Wisconsin and  
10 destination would be Seattle, Washington. Let me see, my first  
11 interaction with the crew, there was a man, a Caucasian male, I  
12 think shorter than I was, who took my ticket, registered --  
13 basically just registered my ticket, checked where I was going to  
14 and then put me at the front of my car, so I was in the car  
15 directly behind the dining car, directly in front of the  
16 observation car. I don't know what number that is in the sequence  
17 of -- can't remember right now, but that was my car. So that was  
18 the first interaction with crew.

19 Let me see, so that was the first part. Did that answer the  
20 first part of your question?

21 Q. Yes.

22 A. So the day of the accident, let me see. So at that time of  
23 course we were in Montana. So I was sitting in my seat in the car  
24 I just mentioned. I was about to go back to the observation car,  
25 but decided to just sit down for a little while longer.

1           Let me see, so when I first start to feel when the incident  
2 occurred, definitely felt like very strong turbulence at first  
3 propagating around the train. I wasn't quite sure what it was at  
4 the time. I'm not sure if I'm misremembering it or this is  
5 actually the case. What it felt like at first was a shock wave  
6 propagating through the train at the front, kind of going through  
7 the train and then getting stronger as the shock wave continued.  
8 That's how I think it happened or how I remember it. So the shock  
9 wave went through. Maybe the shock wave came back up from the  
10 back of the train to the front, and then I remember hearing a loud  
11 screeching sound which I believed at that time to be the  
12 observation car dragging the rest of the front half of the train  
13 as it was going forward while the latter, the rear three cars at  
14 some point detached completely.

15           So that's what I kind of recall from when the incident  
16 actually happened. Yeah. Any questions there? I can keep going  
17 on with what happened directly after this.

18 Q.    Yeah, why don't you go ahead and just keep moving forward?

19 A.    Okay. So when the train came to a halt, I looked in front of  
20 me. So I was still in my seat. I, of course, could feel the car  
21 tilt over to the right side. I'm told that some people behind me  
22 did actually fall out of their seats. I didn't get a chance to  
23 witness that because I was looking forward in the direction of the  
24 motion of the train.

25           I did see as or as the train stopped the same crew member who

1 helped me scan in my ticket and helped me find my seat. That was  
2 in the dining car at the time. He definitely was thrown about  
3 within the dining car, but he got up and he was ambulatory, so I  
4 wasn't too worried about it at first.

5       And then I looked behind me -- so after I got up, you know I  
6 was like, okay, I'm in one piece, had pretty much all my luggage  
7 still there with me. I got up, looked behind and I realized I  
8 could not see the rear couple of cars. I just saw open air. Of  
9 course, later on I realized that the reason was the observation  
10 car had slipped down on the right side of the bank. I didn't  
11 realize that at first. I was definitely confused. Looked behind.

12       There was an elderly couple who was there right behind me.  
13 They were okay thankfully. People were of course a bit shaken up,  
14 so we started to evacuate the car from there. I was on the second  
15 floor of the car. And I exited on the left side of the car and  
16 looked to my left and I see the fallen over observation car and  
17 off in the distance the three other I believe sleeper cars that  
18 were on their right side. So I realized how bad the situation  
19 was.

20       First I helped -- I guess I worked with the elderly couple to  
21 help find a seat because they had trouble walking. I went back  
22 inside the car and grabbed my backpack and my luggage because I  
23 had a first aid kit inside of it, then went out to kind of look at  
24 the situation.

25       So for background I was trained in first aid back in college,

1 and then I served part-time in the National Guard so I have some  
2 experience with triaging casualties, and (indiscernible), so at  
3 that point I started trying to help out as best I can. At this  
4 point, any able bodied passengers who were in the cars that fell  
5 over started to try and break open the windows to get other  
6 passengers out, and then anybody else who was not in a car that  
7 was fallen over and was able bodied, or at least some of them,  
8 also started to help in those efforts. So that was the next need  
9 action.

10 So after I got my bearings, got my bag with the first aid  
11 kit, I walked outside, started to look for casualties or people  
12 who were hurt. Ran around to the rear side of the observation car  
13 and then observed who I later found out to be Zack Schneider  
14 (ph.), his body. Mostly -- well, really, his arm hanging out of  
15 the rear observation car or rear of the observation car. I  
16 remember at first I was like, whoa, is that really an arm? I was  
17 like wow, I can't believe it's that serious. So first -- I guess  
18 second impression at that point. So I found that, saw how serious  
19 it was.

20 At that point I was joined by a woman named Julie who was  
21 also trained in first aid at some point in time, so we both  
22 started looking for people who were hurt together to see if we  
23 could treat them. So Julie and I moved down towards the right  
24 side of the car, on the right side of the observation car, facing  
25 direction of motion.



1           And that's where we found the first majorly injured person, a  
2 person also named Ben, and he was dragged out of the observation  
3 car, and he had a very major injury. He had his skull cracked  
4 open from front to back. At that point, Julie and I kind of  
5 assessed we could not help him given the nature of his wound, but  
6 at that point ambulances had already started to arrive, and so  
7 they began to start picking up people who were hurt.

8           And throughout the day or throughout that time, I wandered --  
9 not wandered, I guess, ran back and forth between the front half  
10 of the train, left to right sides trying to find people who were  
11 hurt and bring them over towards the ambulances. No other --  
12 well, there was another person with apparently a severe head  
13 injury or looked like to be. He had bleeding from the head. I  
14 didn't know his name, but by that time the ambulances were already  
15 arriving so they had took him immediately.

16           The same crew member who I found inside the dining car or saw  
17 was shaken about the dining car had some sort of back injury, I  
18 think fractured maybe a rib or maybe something in his hand. I  
19 can't recall. I guided him over to the ambulance (indiscernible)  
20 points and then that is most of the first series of events.

21           After I finished up at some point I ran back to the rear  
22 three cars and helped to extract a woman who was trapped in the  
23 rear most sleeper car, so, of course, the sleeper car was on its  
24 right side. We used some sort of tarp inside the ambulance to  
25 pull her out, and then she had loaded up onto the stretcher and

1 put into an ambulance. So that's the main events I can recall  
2 from the incidents.

3 Also at some point, I'm not sure what I saw, but at one point  
4 I was moving between the two halves of the train and I'm not sure  
5 if I saw a second body or maybe a broken seat or maybe just debris  
6 in the area between the two trains, and I don't know where the  
7 bodies actually were. I don't know what the actual confirmation  
8 would be. I thought I saw like some sort of broken debris or it  
9 could have been a human body. It looked like it was -- I want to  
10 say I saw like yellow like seat foam, like seating foam or it's  
11 like a seat. I don't know what you call it. I didn't know if it  
12 was that or, you know, a human tissue, fat tissue, and I saw a  
13 light which could have been, I don't know, like the steel on the  
14 seats or it could have been human bone cartilage.

15 I honestly don't know. I don't know where the bodies of  
16 Marjorie or Donald ended up at or landed at. I didn't know if  
17 that was the case or not or it was just, you know, my mind going  
18 kind of crazy at the site of the incidents, but I do recall seeing  
19 something like that between the two cars, but I don't know if that  
20 was the case or not.

21 Yeah, I think that's mostly as I recall it before we went to  
22 the shelters.

23 Q. Okay. Okay. So let me start back a little bit. So when you  
24 boarded the train, you got on and you were placed in the coach car  
25 that was between the dining car and the observation car, is that

1 correct?

2 A. Right.

3 Q. And you said that you were put to the front of the car. Do  
4 you remember what row you were in?

5 A. I think second from the front.

6 Q. You were in the second row from the front. Right side or  
7 left side?

8 A. Left side.

9 Q. Okay. Second row from the front, and you were on the left  
10 side. Was there anyone in front of you?

11 A. At one point, yes, but I can't recall at the time of the  
12 incident.

13 Q. Okay. So at the time of the derailment, do you remember any  
14 of the -- were there other passengers around you?

15 A. Yes, there were.

16 Q. Okay. Was there someone across from you?

17 A. Yes, her name was Kat.

18 Q. Kat?

19 A. Yeah, I believe spelled K-a-t if I recall correctly. I do  
20 have her contact information as well.

21 Q. Great. If you could like email that to me. So she was  
22 sitting across from you. Was she on the aisle seat or at the  
23 window?

24 A. She was at the window.

25 Q. Was she alone?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay. Okay. Outside of Kat, was there anybody else that you  
3 recall?

4 A. Yes, there was an elderly couple behind me of African  
5 descent. I don't know their names, but I did help them get off  
6 the train initially. Yeah, unfortunately I don't know their  
7 names.

8 Q. Okay. And outside that couple, did you see anybody else in  
9 that car?

10 A. Directly next to me, no, but, yes, there were a lot of other  
11 people in the car.

12 Q. Okay. So would you say that the car was -- and I know it's  
13 very hard since you were at the front of the car -- would you say  
14 the car was about half full or would you say the car was full,  
15 half full?

16 A. I would say half full's good. Like anywhere between 40 to 60  
17 percent full I suppose if I had to give a range, I guess.

18 Q. Okay. Were most of the people sitting in your area which is  
19 towards the front of the car or were they sitting behind you?

20 A. Well, since I was close to the front of the car, it's kind  
21 of --

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. -- so they would all be behind me.

24 Q. Yeah. Okay. So when the derailment occurred, explain to me  
25 again once the motion of the train stopped, how was the car you

1 were in situated?

2 A. It was definitely tilted to the right side. I want to say at  
3 least 20 degrees off center to the right side if I had to guess.

4 Also, I apologize, the woman's name is Kitty, not Kat. Kitty  
5 Lothbrok, L-o-t-h-b-r-o-k.

6 Q. Okay. L-o-t-h-b-r-o-k?

7 A. Correct.

8 Q. Okay. Kitty. Okay.

9 A. Yeah. Just as a heads up, if you want to reach out to her, I  
10 know she is taking the incident pretty hard still.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. She -- actually, never mind. She's still taking it kind of  
13 hard still, so --

14 Q. What we'll do is -- I'm not quite sure if you've talked to  
15 our Transportation Disaster Assistance Specialist yet, Kim.

16 That's her job to kind of help walk people through this kind of  
17 trauma, so we'll get with her and then we'll see if we can reach  
18 out to Kitty, but we'll do it gently, so don't worry about that.

19 Okay. So the car was tilted to the right, and you said that  
20 you're on the top level of the car, is that correct?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Okay. And how did you get out of the car again?

23 A. So I went down to the lower level of the car, and then I  
24 exited on the left side of the car. Yeah.

25 Q. Okay. Did you exit through a window or through the door?

1 A. The door.

2 Q. Okay. Is that the door that's located in the middle of the  
3 car?

4 A. I believe so, yes.

5 Q. Okay. And when did you actually see your injured car  
6 attendant? After you got out of the train?

7 A. Well, when I first got up I could see him getting up off the  
8 floor of the dining car after he got shaken about, and then I saw  
9 him on like my second pass of trying to evaluate for casualties,  
10 so I went to the right side of the car first, and then I went back  
11 to the left side (indiscernible) first, and then I saw him kind of  
12 hunched over. I think he was sitting on like the step of the  
13 train car. I saw him like clenching his chest like this. That's  
14 when I saw him.

15 Q. Okay. And I know you said that you had helped that elderly  
16 couple out of the train. Did you see anyone else that was injured  
17 in that train car?

18 A. In our train car? There was one person who said he had a --  
19 at one point he had a small bleeding wound, but when I did a blood  
20 sweep, I didn't see much coming out so I assumed it was arterial.  
21 There was one other person. He was with his father. Don't know  
22 their names. He said he had blood at one point, but I didn't find  
23 anything, so I told him to go to the ambulances.

24 Q. Okay. All right. And approximately how long do you think it  
25 took for the first ambulance to arrive on the scene?

1 A. Yeah, I would say at the max 30 minutes, maybe closer to 20 I  
2 would say. It was very rapid. They did an excellent job.

3 Q. Okay. All right. Okay. And you said that after you got --  
4 you came back in, you grabbed your first aid kit, and then you  
5 went to which car first?

6 A. Same car -- well, I guess the observation car really which is  
7 right next to ours. I went to the right side of the car first in  
8 the direction of the train's motion. That was the first place I  
9 went to.

10 Q. Okay. Did you actually enter the car?

11 A. No, I did not need to. There were a lot of people currently  
12 working that situation, so --

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. -- too many hands in one area.

15 Q. Got you. Were you aware of anybody being trapped in that  
16 car?

17 A. Not direct -- trapped in that car? Not exactly. I let the  
18 people who were in that car, like who were actually needed to go  
19 out, let them do that. I wasn't focused on that honestly. I was  
20 more focused on treating injuries.

21 Q. Okay. All right. Okay. So after the derailment, were --  
22 did the -- were there any lights in your car?

23 A. I honestly couldn't speak to that. I wouldn't recall.

24 Q. Okay. When you boarded the train, did the car attendant give  
25 you or any of the passengers in your car instructions, for

1 example, the location of a safety card?

2 A. I don't believe so, but I saw it in plain sight in front of  
3 me.

4 Q. Okay. All right. Do you know if the PA system was working  
5 in your car?

6 A. It was. They announced it before, usually for saying like  
7 dining cars are taking people at this point.

8 Q. All right. So you said that you went back to the observation  
9 car and you said that you saw an arm. You said it was hanging out  
10 of the car?

11 A. So not hanging out, but like underneath the car, crushed by  
12 the car.

13 Q. Okay. All right.

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay. All right. And then you said you went back to the  
16 last three uncoupled cars, is that correct?

17 A. Um-hum. That's right.

18 Q. And you helped extricate a woman that was trapped. Do you  
19 remember what room she was trapped in?

20 A. No, I was inside of there. I couldn't tell you which room  
21 she was in.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I knew that she was -- I'm pretty positive she was the last  
24 woman to be extricated from that rear car.

25 Q. Okay.



1 A. The firefighters who were also there may know more --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- but at that point I was just an extra hand.

4 Q. Okay. All right. I'll tell you what, I'm going to stop  
5 there and I'm going to ask my colleague, Kris, to -- if she has  
6 any questions.

7 MS. SEVERSON: Thank you.

8 BY MS. SEVERSON:

9 Q. I guess if we could pick up at the beginning when you first  
10 noticed something was wrong. You described feeling turbulence.  
11 Do you think it was like a vertical turbulence or lateral side-to-  
12 side motion?

13 A. I would definitely say lateral side-to-side motion.

14 Q. Okay. And do you --

15 A. And at some point -- oh, sorry.

16 Q. No, go ahead.

17 A. I think at some point of course there was a jump when the  
18 train off -- or the car went off the track if I recall right, but  
19 mostly it was a lateral side-to-side.

20 Q. Okay. And did you -- so you felt motion before you heard  
21 noise or unusual noise would you say?

22 A. I believe so, yeah.

23 Q. So the motion, the lateral motion or turbulence was your  
24 first indication that something was going wrong.

25 A. Um-hum.

1 Q. And then --

2 A. It got progressively worse.

3 Q. Got worse, and then you described a screeching sound. Did  
4 that occur after the turbulent feeling or --

5 A. Midway through the turbulence, yeah, and it was concurrent  
6 because at that point it was -- I'm pretty sure the observation  
7 car towing the front half of the car.

8 Q. Um-hum.

9 A. Or the train.

10 Q. Could you tell if like the front or the rear of your car had  
11 derailed or both?

12 A. I could definitely feel the jump and the tilt to the right,  
13 so at that point I would have -- I put two and two together and,  
14 oh, it derailed. Did that answer your question?

15 Q. Yeah. Yup. So you didn't hear like a loud like bang or  
16 sound. It was more like a constant screeching, is that right?

17 A. That's what I recall, yeah.

18 Q. Okay. Great. Then I'm going to move -- did you -- when you  
19 were out on the right side of the lounge car or the north side of  
20 the lounge car, did -- and you described seeing Zack Schneider's  
21 arm, did you see any other people, either bodies or injured people  
22 outside that car?

23 A. I mentioned Ben who was riding the observation car with  
24 people who were actively working that area. He was the one with  
25 the cracked skull, front to back, and the other person who was

1 also injured, he had blood coming from his head, but he was fully  
2 conscious. Ben was also fully conscious, but other than that, I  
3 think the rest were somewhat ambulatory, so I didn't see them as  
4 -- prominently as Ben and the other individual with the head  
5 injuries.

6 Q. All right. Did you describe -- did you say that you heard  
7 someone in the bottom of the lounge car or were aware of someone  
8 in the bottom of the lounge car?

9 A. Oh, like someone being trapped there?

10 Q. Um-hum.

11 A. No, I don't think I was looking for that specifically. I  
12 don't recall that specifically either.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. At that point --

15 Q. You were never --

16 A. -- I was never --

17 Q. Sorry, you were never on top of the lounge car?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Okay. And then I think the last question is about the woman  
20 in the last sleeper car. Did you say you helped drag her out  
21 using a tarp?

22 A. Yeah, the ambulance crew or the firefighters called it a  
23 taco. I'm not sure why that's the case, but it's like an orange  
24 tarp, so whoever was -- the firefighter who was ever closest  
25 inside there with her had to slide a tarp underneath her to get

1 her out of the seat because she was sideways. I think they put a  
2 neck brace on her and then he and another person lifted her up, so  
3 there were four of us in the car if I recall right. The first two  
4 helped lift her up out of the sideways sleeper car seat, and then  
5 they passed her along to us. We were like closer towards the end  
6 of the car, and we passed her off to the people who had the  
7 stretcher outside.

8 Q. Okay. So this is when she was trapped inside her room and  
9 she needed to be assisted out on this taco and you helped her, and  
10 you exited -- helped her exit through the rear exit of the car, is  
11 that right?

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. Okay. Did you notice anything else in the car that made it  
14 difficult to get her out?

15 A. I wasn't right outside of her room. I mean, when the car was  
16 flipped over, you had like bedding and everything else thrown  
17 about inside the car, but otherwise nothing else I can really, you  
18 know, say that was abnormal, unusual.

19 Q. Okay. I think that's it for me. Thank you.

20 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Kari?

21 BY MS. JACOBSEN:

22 Q. So just to follow up on that, and so it sounds like she was  
23 in the back half of the car? If either -- by the back door?

24 A. Yeah, back half or midway through, but definitely not the  
25 front part. And even then if she were towards the front of that

1 rear car, there's no way we could navigate through the rest of the  
2 other two toppled cars to get out that way.

3 Q. And -- okay, so you never saw what her room looked like. You  
4 said that -- you did say they had to pull her out of her room.  
5 Does that mean that she was on the right side of the car, on the  
6 side that had fallen against the ground?

7 A. That's right. She's on the right side of the train.

8 Q. Okay. Yeah. It's just helpful for us to have a sense of  
9 about which roomette she was in to narrow it down. Okay. And  
10 then did you go in any -- it sounds like you just went in the back  
11 of that car to help that extraction. Did you go -- you didn't go  
12 through any of the other cars? You were mostly just helping  
13 people outside?

14 A. That's right. Um-hum.

15 Q. Okay. All right. Thank you. You've been very helpful. I  
16 think that's it for my questions. I'll pass it back to Sheryl.

17 BY MS. HARLEY:

18 Q. Okay. I've got -- just got a strange question for you. Your  
19 first aid kit, was it something that had your name on it?

20 A. No.

21 Q. No?

22 A. It's a generic first aid kit.

23 Q. Okay. Did you have a bag that had -- that was -- that --  
24 camo? It was camouflage in color and had your name on it?

25 A. Okay. So I did have a toiletry kit.

- 1 Q. Yeah.
- 2 A. Yeah, it was black, but it had a -- it's called DCU  
3 camouflage pattern, army camouflage pattern.
- 4 Q. Yeah.
- 5 A. Name tape on it?
- 6 Q. Yes.
- 7 A. With the last name Chulawan, yes.
- 8 Q. Yes. Okay. And you said that you never -- outside of that  
9 last sleeper car, you did not go into the middle, either the first  
10 uncoupled or the middle car at all?
- 11 A. That's correct, I did not.
- 12 Q. You did not. Okay. All right. Okay. I was just wondering  
13 because we actually found that toilet kit in one of those cars, so  
14 I was just wondering if you had -- but I didn't open it so I don't  
15 know what was in it. I was wondering if that was your first aid  
16 kit. Okay. All right. When you were in the -- that rear sleeper  
17 car, did you by any chance see any members of the Amtrak crew  
18 there?
- 19 A. I'm sorry, I'm still a little bit -- you said you saw the  
20 toiletry kit in the rear three cars?
- 21 Q. Yes.
- 22 A. Wow. I have no idea how it would go back that far.
- 23 Q. I have no idea. Maybe someone picked it up. I was just  
24 wondering if you had been in the car because it -- that was where  
25 it was located.

1 A. That's incredible considering the fact that I recall having  
2 that toiletry kit with me in my seat.

3 Q. Do you know -- I know you said that you were up front and did  
4 you actually have it in the seat with you? Did you have it in the  
5 luggage bin? Where exactly was your property at the time?

6 A. Yeah, as I recall it, I had gone down at some point to use  
7 the bathroom and brought as much goop with me, and then I went  
8 back and brought it back with me to my seat knowing that I'd  
9 forget it somehow? That's weird, but I thought I had it by me in  
10 my seat at -- in my original car.

11 Q. Okay. All right. That's fine. By the way, you should be  
12 notified by -- did you get a notification from Amtrak in regards  
13 to property?

14 A. I did, yes.

15 Q. Okay. All right. And did you recover that from them?

16 A. I did, yes.

17 Q. Okay. All right. Okay. And going back to my other  
18 question, at the time that you were in the rear car, did you see  
19 any employees from Amtrak?

20 A. Not -- no, I don't think so.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. I think most of the Amtrak staff was too shaken up really to  
23 provide much help. They had difficulties also trying to organize  
24 a head count as well. I think that they just took it very hard.

25 Yeah. I think most people who were on the scene were people who

1 were able bodied passengers unfortunately.

2 Q. Okay. Hold on a quick second. I think there was one other  
3 question I wanted to ask. Okay. So the -- I know that you said  
4 that you saw the car attendant, the injured car attendant who was  
5 in the diner. Did you see any other injured Amtrak employees?

6 A. I saw other Amtrak employees. I don't know about injured  
7 folks. The other day an investigator called me on behalf of one  
8 of the Amtrak employees who was also there and I saw walking  
9 about, but I think he was too shell shocked to provide much help.  
10 A taller man, African descent. I think his name was Terrance or  
11 so with a T. I can't honestly recall.

12 Q. All right. All right. Okay.

13 MS. HARLEY: Actually I think those are the questions I had  
14 and I will ask Kris or Kari if they had any additional follow up  
15 questions.

16 BY MS. SEVERSON:

17 Q. Just one minor question. In your car, did you notice  
18 anything about the condition of the seats?

19 A. So -- yeah, I noticed that some seats as I moved -- after the  
20 derailment happened, I noticed some seats like mine were still  
21 stable in place. Some seats came out of place, like the bolts had  
22 failed when they fell out. Not enough to I think fall over and  
23 hit somebody else on the right side of the car for example, but  
24 some were loose for sure, enough to shake someone out of their  
25 seat probably.



1 Q. Okay. But when -- I guess when you were exiting you didn't  
2 observe anybody that was, you know, had been injured or wasn't  
3 able -- you helped the elderly couple behind you, but you don't  
4 think that -- you didn't see anyone in your car that was injured  
5 by the movement of the seats or the turbulence of the car, is that  
6 right?

7 A. Well, I didn't observe initially, but after talking with some  
8 other folks who were in the same car as me, I did find out two  
9 people who did have injuries in the same car, they were towards  
10 the rear of the car and they were so close to the observation car,  
11 but they were in their seats as far as I know.

12 There's a woman who's named -- or her name is Dawn Peterson  
13 Hawkinson {ph.} who was in the rear of my car. She had some form  
14 of injury. I think she actually fell out of her seat. She's also  
15 pursuing legal action. Yeah, she lost her shoes on the train.  
16 She had some sort of -- yeah, she said she was hobbling about, had  
17 to go to the hospital to be treated for minor injuries. I think  
18 that was one woman who was in my car that got injured.

19 There was another person who's also a National Guard officer.  
20 His name's Spencer Brophy, B-r-o-p-h-y, Spencer, Spencer. He also  
21 had a small injury he didn't notice at first. I'm looking at the  
22 chat mail I have with him. Let's see, he hurt his leg in some  
23 fashion. Maybe he pulled a muscle that he couldn't tell at first  
24 given the adrenalin. He was helping take out of the observation  
25 car. He was one of the first or was one of the people who found

1 Zach Schneider who was crushed, I believe, by some sort of debris  
2 inside the train, so he may have more details about that.

3 Q. Great. Thank you very much.

4 A. It was a calf strain.

5 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

6 MS. SEVERESON: Thank you.

7 BY MS. HARLEY:

8 Q. And to just follow up on that real quick. You said Dawn was  
9 in your car. Did Spencer say what car he was in?

10 A. He was in my car as well.

11 Q. He was in your car as well? Was he also the -- one of the  
12 injured people you were saying that was in the rear of your car?

13 A. Yes, but he didn't know he was injured at first.

14 Q. Okay. Okay. All right. And I'm just going to follow up on  
15 the conversation with Kris about the seat movement. When -- so I  
16 guess what we're -- what I'm looking to find is did you observe  
17 any of the seats that seemed to have been rotated out of position?

18 A. Yes, because of -- like I again mentioned like it seemed like  
19 some of the seat -- like my seat, for example, was still in place,  
20 but some seats did definitely come loose and rotated.

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. Enough I'm sure to shake someone out of their seat.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. But never -- they weren't completely loose. They didn't like  
25 just fall out.

1 Q. Okay. All right. I just wanted to make sure that -- okay.  
2 And do you remember if the seats were on the top level with you or  
3 on the lower level of the car?

4 A. I don't quite understand the question. Are you asking --

5 Q. So the seats that actually rotated, do you remember where you  
6 saw them? Were they on the top level, upper level, or were they  
7 on the bottom level?

8 A. The top level. I didn't get a good look at the seats in the  
9 bottom level though.

10 Q. Okay. Great.

11 MS. HARLEY: I think that is everything I have. Anyone else?  
12 So this is the time where I always allow people to ask me  
13 questions. So do you have any questions for me, Ben?

14 MR. CHULAWAN: I'm not sure if you can disclose any of this  
15 information, but I'm still trying to figure out what I saw between  
16 those two cars. Do you happen to know if any of the other two  
17 bodies happened to land between the front half and the back half  
18 of the train? Were they isolated in the rear half?

19 MS. HARLEY: I can tell you that, yes, that's -- they did.

20 MR. CHULAWAN: Oh, they did.

21 MS. HARLEY: Yeah.

22 MR. CHULAWAN: So it was a body I saw between the two trains.

23 MS. HARLEY: Yeah.

24 MR. CHULAWAN: Yeah, I was always wondering about that  
25 unfortunate -- were they both or just one?

1 MS. HARLEY: There was one deceased individual that was  
2 actually between the two central portions of the train, the two  
3 halves of the train.

4 MR. CHULAWAN: Okay. I think you already know, then, that it  
5 was done because people mentioned that he was in transit between  
6 the two trains, so -- yeah, unfortunately.

7 MS. HARLEY: Yeah. Okay. So, again, thank you very much.

8 BY MS. SEVERSON:

9 Q. I'm sorry, could you just pick up -- you said people had said  
10 that Donald was in transit between two cars when that happened?

11 A. People had mentioned that they saw an older man in -- or at  
12 least a man walking between the two trains when that accident  
13 happened, so I don't know if that was actually true or not, so if  
14 there was actually a body between the two cars after the incident.  
15 It probably was Donald, then.

16 BY MS. JACOBSEN:

17 Q. Do you have any idea who may have said that they saw someone  
18 going between cars at the time?

19 A. I couldn't recall who said it at that time.

20 Q. Okay. Thank you.

21 MS. HARLEY: All right. Anything else?

22 MR. CHULAWAN: No, nothing else. I know that all the  
23 patients are in stable condition or were in stable condition aside  
24 from the one who lost or broke I think a vertebrae. Yeah, I  
25 always wonder about the condition of Ben, but I don't know if they

1 (indiscernible) to him or vice versa. I know you probably can't  
2 do the other way around, or is that possible?

3 MS. HARLEY: I'm sorry, you -- as far as what? I missed what  
4 you were saying.

5 MR. CHULAWAN: Yeah, I'm sorry, Julie and I were wondering  
6 about Ben's status, the other Ben --

7 MS. HARLEY: Right.

8 MR. CHULAWAN: -- not myself. We were wondering if we can  
9 give him our contact information. Amtrak did not seem that they  
10 could do that. Is that possible from the NTSB's side? If he  
11 wanted to reach out to us. We just want to hear about him, how he  
12 did.

13 MS. HARLEY: So I'll tell you that we've talked to Ben and  
14 what I can do is -- because I'm not quite sure how to answer your  
15 question, if that's something that we can do, but one of the  
16 things again that we can do is have Kim, our TDA specialist, reach  
17 out to him and see if it's okay to have information forwarded to  
18 him. And if he's agreeable to it, then we will facilitate that.  
19 We have no problem doing it. I just don't know --

20 MR. CHULAWAN: Okay.

21 MS. HARLEY: -- how they do it initially, so -- okay?

22 MR. CHULAWAN: Got it.

23 MS. HARLEY: All right.

24 MR. CHULAWAN: Okay.

25 MS. HARLEY: So thank you very much. I appreciate you taking

1 the time and talking to us and what I always tell people if you  
2 think of anything else, please feel free to give me a call. You  
3 can also call Kim at any time. Oh, I know what I meant to ask  
4 you, did you -- you didn't by any chance take any photographs, did  
5 you?

6 MR. CHULAWAN: No. I tried to preserve the privacy of people  
7 that were there.

8 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right. Great. I appreciate that.  
9 Okay. Well, thank you very much again. I appreciate you taking  
10 the time and talking to us, okay?

11 MR. CHULAWAN: Thank you.

12 MS. HARLEY: All right. You stay safe. Okay.

13 MR. CHULAWAN: Take care, everybody.

14 MS. HARLEY: Bye-bye.

15 MS. SEVERSON: Thank you so much.

16 MR. CHULAWAN: Bye.

17 MS. HARLEY: Let's see, interview terminated at 4:12 p.m.

18 (Whereupon, at 4:12 p.m. EST, the interview was concluded.)  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT  
NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA  
ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021  
Interview of Apiwit Benjamin Chulawan

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD21MR017

PLACE: Via Telephone

DATE: November 9, 2021

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.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
LOIS D. RUSH  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT \*

NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA \* Accident No.: RRD21MR017

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: ROBERT "BOB" CRAIG  
Passenger

Via Microsoft Teams

Friday,  
October 15, 2021



APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

KRIS SEVERSON, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe Center, Department of Transportation

KARI JACOBSEN, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe Center, Department of Transportation

MARY CARLSON BIS, Senior Director of Emergency  
Management  
Amtrak

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:01 a.m. EDT)

1  
2  
3 MS. HARLEY: So, again, my name is Sheryl Harley, I am the  
4 Assistant Investigator-in-Charge with the National Transportation  
5 Safety Board. And today we are here, were are going to be  
6 discussing the Amtrak derailment that occurred in in Joplin,  
7 Montana, on September the 25th of 2021 at about 3:47 p.m.

8 So this is -- the NTSB Investigation number is RRD21MR017.  
9 And today is October the 15th of 2021, and it's 10:01 a.m., and  
10 that will be Eastern Daylight Time.

11 MS. HARLEY: And if you can please identify yourself for the  
12 record, sir?

13 MR. CRAIG: Sure. My name is Robert Craig.

14 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And Mr. Craig, you were a passenger on  
15 that derailed train, is that correct?

16 MR. CRAIG: Yes. I was a passenger with my wife, Wendy  
17 Gross.

18 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So in addition to myself there are also  
19 other members of the investigative team on this call, and I'm  
20 going to ask them to identify themselves. We'll start with Chris.

21 MS. SEVERSON: Hi there. Thank you for taking the time. My  
22 name is Kris Severson, I work for the Volpe National  
23 Transportation System Center, part of the US DOT. I'm a  
24 Mechanical Engineer, along with my colleague, Kari. And we were  
25 on site to investigate in support of the FRA and NTSB, to try to

1 identify how people were hurt and how current regulations and  
2 standards, how effective they are at preventing injuries and  
3 accidents like this one, and identify improvements where they can  
4 be made. So, thank you.

5 MR. CRAIG: Sure.

6 MS. JACOBSEN: And, hi, I'm Kari Jacobsen. What Kris said  
7 applies to me. Thank you so much for taking the time.

8 MS. HARLEY: And also, Mary?

9 MS. CARLSON BIS: Yes. Good morning, Mary Carlson Bis, I'm  
10 the Senior Director of Emergency Management at Amtrak.

11 INTERVIEW OF ROBERT CRAIG

12 BY MS. HARLEY:

13 Q. Okay. So Mr. Craig, what I'm going to ask you to do, if you  
14 don't mind, is just to go back initially, when you first boarded  
15 the train. If you can tell me the location you boarded the train  
16 and your first interaction with the crew.

17 And then at that particular point I would like to go to the  
18 day of the accident. And just kind of walk me through what  
19 occurred and what you experienced. Okay?

20 A. Sure. So we got on the train in Chicago on Friday, whatever  
21 that date was. The first -- well, other than the Amtrak personnel  
22 inside the terminal when we were boarding the train, outside a  
23 train car we interacted with somebody before we got in the car.

24 Then we got on the car. We were in the car behind the  
25 observation car, so I think that was the third car from the back

1 of the train. Maybe at that time there was another car on there.  
2 There was some discussion it was a deadhead car maybe.

3 We were sitting on the upper level of the car on the left-  
4 hand side, just in front of the stairway. So about the mid point  
5 of the car.

6 We spent most of our time, in the 24 hours until the  
7 accident, back and forth from there and the observation car. So  
8 I'll jump to Saturday, day of.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. We spent most of our time in the observation car. For the  
11 morning we sat in the front of the car, in the seats that were  
12 facing windows. For a period of time I think we were sitting next  
13 to the couple that died in the accident. So we were there for a  
14 few hours.

15 And at some point around noon, maybe a little after, we  
16 decided to move back and sit in the back of the observation car at  
17 a table. So we were sitting at a table, second from the back of  
18 the car on the right-hand side.

19 We were working there for a while, then made a decision to  
20 stay there, and so just before the accident Wendy and I were both  
21 sitting at that table on the right-hand side. I was against the  
22 window, she was next to me to my left, we were both facing  
23 forward.

24 I don't have a clear recollection of the very start of the  
25 accident. What I first remember is a realization that we were

1 leaning to the right side, and at that moment I thought, okay,  
2 this is -- we're going through a switch or something. That, wow,  
3 the train is wobbling a lot. My first thought was we were way  
4 over but we're going to come back over. As it kept tipping I  
5 realized, okay, we are going to swing pretty hard, so I put my arm  
6 around my wife, who was to my left and bear-hugged her.

7 I think I closed my eyes, because I don't recall seeing the  
8 dirt/dust or anything like that. I just recall the continued  
9 tipping until we hit the ground. And at the time we hit the  
10 ground, my shoulder was against the window. And what I remember  
11 most is being dragged on the ground, feeling the rocks, dirt,  
12 everything, underneath the window, sliding past, but the window  
13 was there kind of acting as a sled as we slid.

14 I don't recall anything, you know, real specific in those  
15 moments. I do remember opening my eyes and seeing dirt, rocks,  
16 everything flying through the car, so I closed my eyes again.

17 So really the first clear memories I have is when we stopped.  
18 Realized that we were on the side. Realized that -- we were kind  
19 of held in by the table. And so then it was get ourselves unwound  
20 from the table so that we can stand up.

21 When I did stand up I was standing on the window. The window  
22 was still unbroken. It wasn't in the frame, it was on the inside  
23 of the car at a bit of an angle. So it was wobbly, but it was  
24 stable enough to stand on.

25 My wife was above me. Helped her get down. There were a few

1 other people around me. There was somebody in the table to the  
2 left of us, so he was above us. Somehow he held on and stayed  
3 gripping the table, so that we helped him climb down.

4 There was somebody in front of us, a younger man. He also  
5 was at a table, also kind of extracted himself and he was standing  
6 there. And then a brakeman was two tables in front of us, and he  
7 was -- the same situation. He had kind of extracted himself and  
8 was standing, all about the same time, at least when we started to  
9 look around and see what was happening.

10 My first thought was, okay, whatever the situation was, if we  
11 don't have our cell phones we don't have a lot of options. And so  
12 started looking around for cell phones for ourselves. Started to  
13 gather up some of the things that I knew would be important to the  
14 people around me, laptops and things like that.

15 At that point the brakeman, who is further up in the car,  
16 started telling everybody to get out of the car. He was telling  
17 everybody to go to the back of the car.

18 I really didn't have any visibility in front of him. So I  
19 made an assumption that there was nobody who needed help in the  
20 front of the car, as he was telling all of us to go to the back.

21 There were a few people in front of me. Fortunately, you  
22 know, the car's on the side, the door had fallen open, so we  
23 didn't have to do anything to open the door. There was an older  
24 woman in front of me. It took her a while to understand how she  
25 could get herself out. Somebody else might have gone out before

1 her and I at that point. That was maybe before I got to that  
2 point.

3 So as this woman in front of me was trying to get out there  
4 was a -- I would say there was a fiberglass garbage can, maybe  
5 four feet high, that was laying on its side, and we used that to  
6 help her climb up in order to climb out.

7 At that point, right around that point, one, maybe two people  
8 outside of the car had come around. One was an Amtrak person, and  
9 was outside of the car talking to us and coaching how to get out  
10 of the car. And telling us, all right, come over on our right-  
11 hand side, his left-hand side.

12 The way the car was sitting, that was going out on the wheel  
13 side of the door would have been the shallower jump down to the  
14 ground, but then he also said there's something over on the other  
15 side. I don't remember if he said it was a body. Certainly  
16 that's what I thought at the moment.

17 Let me back up a moment, though. As we were starting to move  
18 to the back of the car and Wendy, my wife had been in front of me,  
19 and she was moving to the back I thought, all right, I better take  
20 one last look around.

21 The window that I had been leaning against was inside the  
22 car, it was out of the frame, it was angled slightly. So I was  
23 able to get a handle under it and I thought, well, I better lift  
24 it up and just see if there's anything under the window. When I  
25 lifted it up that's when I thought I saw a dead body. All I saw



1 were legs and feet. Quite honestly, it's the first time I've ever  
2 seen, so I wasn't entirely I was seeing what I thought I was  
3 seeing, but I certainly at that moment, was certain that it was a  
4 body and that person was absolutely dead. There was no chance  
5 that they could be alive. And so we just continued to move out of  
6 the car.

7 Wendy went out in front of me, then I climbed out. The  
8 brakeman was standing there inside the car, helping everybody get  
9 out. I don't know anybody behind me. Once I was out of the car  
10 we were moving away from the car. I don't know what happened  
11 after that, though.

12 But as we got out of the car we started to make our way up  
13 the tracks. And the first thing I noticed, as soon as we got out  
14 of the car as we're walking up to the tracks, was the backhoe that  
15 was parked right next to the tracks. Like noticeably close to the  
16 tracks. So close at first I thought, did we hit this backhoe.  
17 And then the second thought was, will this be something we can use  
18 to help, you know, in the process. So I went up to it to see if  
19 it was locked. It was locked. And so moved on.

20 We started to walk, and that's when we noticed that the other  
21 cars had broken off from the rest of the train, we were a few  
22 hundred yards back, so we started walking back that direction.  
23 You know, about 50 yards Wendy thought she saw something she  
24 thought might have been a body part. And so, to avoid, you know,  
25 her getting upset, we headed down the hill toward the field, to

1 just kind of gather ourselves.

2 From that point then we started to notice people were  
3 starting to get out of the cars behind us, the three cars that had  
4 fallen and broken off from the train, and headed back there to  
5 start helping.

6 Oh, just before we went back to start helping, that's when I  
7 called 9-1-1. So we were able to get a cell signal, was able to  
8 call 9-1-1, reported it. The operator didn't seem to be aware of  
9 the accident previously. Gave her the information that I had, and  
10 then I lost cell coverage right after that. After making the 9-1-  
11 1 call, that's when we headed back to the other cars to start  
12 helping people who were trying to get out of the cars.

13 I'll pause there.

14 Q. Okay, all right. So let me go back a little bit.

15 So initially you and your wife were sitting in the car  
16 directly behind the observation car. And just to kind of get an  
17 idea of where you were sitting. You were on the upper level, you  
18 were on the left side of the car as the train was heading forward,  
19 and you were in front of the stairs; is that correct?

20 A. Yeah. I think we were the second row in front of the stairs,  
21 and you're correct, on the left-hand side upper deck.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I believe it was two rows in. There was one person sitting  
24 in the row behind us.

25 Q. Okay. Can you describe the person that was sitting behind

1 you?

2 A. Yes. Because we saw him in the observation car on Saturday,  
3 and then we helped him after the accident occurred. He was a, I  
4 would say 40-ish man. I know he was Oregon, just from overhearing  
5 his conversations. He was alone.

6 He spent all the time I saw him in the coach car in a seat,  
7 except for a few hours on Saturday noon-ish time, where he was  
8 sitting in the observation car at a table, kiddie-corner from us  
9 and having a long conversation with a -- well, I would say an  
10 Amish gentleman, I don't know what the deal, really what he was,  
11 but, who left the train before the accident.

12 I really didn't have any interactions with him before the  
13 accident. The only time I really interacted with him was after  
14 the accident. He had still been in the coach car. He, apparently  
15 with some help, somebody must have helped him get out of the car  
16 and he was sitting on top of the car. He was holding his arm like  
17 had a broken collar bone, maybe a broken wrist, or rib, ribs, and  
18 he was just sitting there kind of distraught because he was making  
19 a journey, he was bringing back the ashes of his best friend or  
20 something.

21 He was distraught because those ashes were in the car and he  
22 didn't want to leave without them. With the help of a few other  
23 people we helped him climb --

24 MS. HARLEY: I'm sorry.

25 MS. SEVERSON: We just lost audio.

1 MS. HARLEY: Mr. Craig, I think your audio went out.

2 MS. SEVERSON: It doesn't show he's muted.

3 MS. HARLEY: No.

4 MS. SEVERSON: That's strange.

5 MS. CARLSON BIS: Yeah, strange, because I can hear you guys.

6 MS. HARLEY: Okay. That's good.

7 MS. JACOBSEN: Was it maybe raining where he was? Did you  
8 hear rain in the background or something?

9 MS. SEVERSON: It sounded like a washing machine or  
10 something, like.

11 MR. CRAIG: Can you hear me now?

12 MS. HARLEY: Oh, yes, sir, we can. Awesome. Okay. Great.

13 BY MS. HARLEY:

14 Q. So you had the gentleman with the ashes. Do you remember  
15 anybody else in that coach car prior to you moving to the  
16 observation car?

17 A. Vaguely. I remember some people who were sitting in the  
18 front of the car. I can't say I can describe them, other than  
19 there was, on the right side of the car was more heavysset  
20 gentleman, probably a little older than my age, so maybe 60.  
21 Somebody I believe was his wife was sitting on the left-hand side.

22 Q. When you say "the left-hand side," are you saying across the  
23 aisle or was sitting in the left seat, or the seat to the left of  
24 him?

25 A. Aisle.

1 Q. She was across the aisle?

2 A. (No audible response.)

3 Q. Did you enter the coach -- you entered the coach car after  
4 the derailment?

5 A. Yes. So after the derailment, when we went back to the coach  
6 car there were already people in the coach car because there was a  
7 woman at the front of the car, it could have been the same person  
8 that I remembered from the front of the car, I don't know. But  
9 there was a woman at the front of the car, who in the accident had  
10 been apparently thrown against the window and then slid in between  
11 the side of the car and the seats. She was, you know, she was in  
12 obvious pain. She was moaning and sometimes screaming.

13 So there were three or four people in the car trying to  
14 assist, trying to get those chairs moved so that they could  
15 extract her. And they struggled with that, we weren't able to  
16 really do anything until the first responders showed up.

17 So I was outside of the car that entire time and trying to  
18 assist. So as soon as the first responders showed up we got a  
19 backboard and we brought that in, so the axes and stuff to try to  
20 lever the seat enough to move. It didn't move. It was only when  
21 a truck showed up with jaws of life that we were able to take that  
22 over and they were able to cut that seat out.

23 At that point there were so many people around, I was  
24 somewhere else --

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. -- helping. So I didn't see. From that point on, from when  
2 they had the jaws of life that I brought over, I didn't see the  
3 rest of it until she was out of the car and everybody else was out  
4 of the car.

5 Q. Got it.

6 A. I did go in the car later to get personal belongings and  
7 stuff out.

8 Q. Okay. But they did have to cut the seat out in order to  
9 extricate her?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. Okay. So when you were in the observation car after the  
12 derailment, were the lights on? Could you see?

13 A. Well, it was daylight. It was 4:00 in the afternoon. I  
14 don't think the lights are on. I don't recall seeing any lights  
15 on. But we could see fine, other than the dust.

16 Q. Okay. When you went back to the coach car, was there any  
17 lights on in the coach car?

18 A. No. No, there wasn't.

19 Q. When you first boarded the train, did you speak to any Amtrak  
20 employee or was there any announcement over the PA regarding  
21 things like a safety briefing or to point you to, for example, a  
22 safety card to tell you what to do in the case of an emergency?

23 A. There were announcements. I'll be quite honest. I don't  
24 remember any part of the announcements that were about safety  
25 briefings. It could have been, but I didn't notice that.

1           What I did notice was a lot of repeated messages about COVID  
2 protocols and mask requirements, and that was repeated often.

3 Q.    Okay.

4 A.    But I don't recall any safety briefing.  There might have  
5 been one.  Quite honestly, the audio in that coach car was not  
6 good.  So it was sometimes hard to understand what was being said.  
7 So they might've said it, but if they did I didn't recall it.

8 Q.    Okay.  When you were in the seats in the coach car, did you  
9 happen to notice if there was any kind of pamphlets or anything in  
10 the seat in front of you?  You know how the seats have that  
11 seatback pocket.  Did you notice any kind of paperwork in there?

12 A.    I don't recall clearly.  If I had to say I would say there  
13 probably was a placard in there, but I don't recall.

14 Q.    Okay.  Okay.  Let's see.  So going back to the observation  
15 car prior to the derailment.  So you and your wife are in the  
16 second table on the right side.  Was there someone seated at the  
17 table behind you?

18 A.    There had been previously because earlier, maybe an hour  
19 earlier, I was sitting facing backwards on the opposite side of  
20 the table from my wife.  And there were people sitting at that  
21 table that -- I then switched over and we were sitting side-by-  
22 side and I was facing forward, so I wasn't seeing who was sitting  
23 at that rear table.

24           After the accident there was a woman behind us, who I assumed  
25 was sitting at that table.  It was not the same people I had seen

1 previously sitting there, this was a different person.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. So she could've been at the right side table, she could've  
4 been at the left side table. But she was the older woman who was  
5 having a hard time climbing out. I assumed that if she was on the  
6 left-hand table she would have been injured. So I believe she was  
7 sitting behind us.

8 Q. Okay. So across from you was the young man that you said  
9 that you had to help down. Was there somebody sitting directly in  
10 front of you on the right side?

11 A. There was. I don't know his name, I call him Minnesota. I  
12 saw him later. He was in a -- I know that he was in a group of  
13 three, three men, or three people, maybe his sister and his dad,  
14 maybe in his 20's, had a red like polar jacket. That's how I  
15 remember him. He was working on his laptop while we were sitting  
16 at the table behind him.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. He appeared uninjured after the accident. I can't recall  
19 much else.

20 Q. Okay. In front of him was the brakeman, the Amtrak employee?

21 A. Yep. He had been sitting at that -- it would've been the  
22 first -- it would be the table in the middle of the car, the last  
23 table toward the front. He had been sitting there almost the  
24 entire day, and he was at the table during the accident. Yeah.

25 And the first memory I have of him, he had already extracted



1 himself from the table and was on the ground or standing up.

2 Q. So I'm going to try to share my screen. It's going to be a  
3 diagram of the car. So the -- can you see that?

4 A. I can.

5 Q. Okay. So the next to the last diagram is kind of a top-down  
6 showing the upper level of the observation car. So when you talk  
7 about the Amtrak employee, he was sitting at that last table  
8 before you get to the observation seats that are facing outward;  
9 is that correct?

10 A. Let's see.

11 Q. So the left side of the diagram would be the front of the  
12 train, as heading westward. Okay?

13 A. Right. So he would have been on the upper side of the  
14 diagram. And actually if you just move your cursor over and then  
15 we can confirm -- that table. He was sitting facing forward.

16 Q. Okay. And you were sitting right here?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Okay. And then the young man that was able to hold on, was  
19 sitting here?

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. Okay. Can you tell me where the couple was that, that  
22 unfortunately died in the crash, where they were seated?

23 A. Okay. If you move to the front of the car, on the right-hand  
24 side, Wendy and I were sitting in two of the seats that are marked  
25 with Xs.

1 Q. You were sitting here?

2 A. Yeah. This is earlier on Saturday.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Probably before noon. Wendy and I were sitting in those two  
5 seats. The couple that I'm thinking of, were sitting in the first  
6 two seats to the front of the car.

7 Q. Here?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. They had been sitting there earlier on Saturday, and there  
11 was an individual gentleman from Seattle sitting in the seat  
12 facing them. So the third seat back from the front of the car.

13 Q. The third seat back?

14 A. Nope -- yep. There, yeah.

15 Q. Right here?

16 A. Well, one of those two.

17 Q. One of those two seats, okay.

18 A. So that would be Saturday morning. That's how I knew of  
19 them. They were sitting there for a good hour-and-a-half talking  
20 while Wendy and I were sitting there side-by-side.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. After we left those seats and moved to the back, I never saw  
23 them again. I didn't see them in the accident. I didn't see them  
24 after the accident. It was only after it was announced who the  
25 deceased were that I realized those were the same people that we

1 had been sitting with earlier on Saturday.

2 Q. Do you remember anyone else that was sitting in that car?

3 A There was an older gentleman by himself that was in the car  
4 most of the day while we were there. I don't know if he was there  
5 during the accident. The only way I recognize him is he had a  
6 Schneider Trucking jacket, so it was a black jacket with orange  
7 lettering, Schneider from Green Bay.

8 He had often been sitting by himself in the fifth seat back  
9 on the right-hand side. So it's the last individual seat with an  
10 X on it.

11 Q. Right here?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Again, that was earlier Saturday when we were sitting in  
15 those two seats up front. That's the last I saw him.

16 I do remember two other men who were sitting in the table  
17 opposite of the brakeman. There was a older man and what appeared  
18 to be his son. His son might have been in his 30's, the older man  
19 might have been in his 50's.

20 They were sitting there after lunch. They had lunch and they  
21 sat there for quite a while and they talked quite a bit with the  
22 brakeman, enough that I was able to identify that the brakeman's  
23 nickname was either -- I think it was B.J., maybe M.J. or  
24 something like that.

25 I saw them after the accident. They were outside in the

1 field. They appeared unhurt. I don't know if they were in the  
2 observation car. I don't think they were because I would have  
3 seen them in the accident, and I didn't see them during the  
4 accident, I only saw them afterwards.

5 Q. Okay. And, lastly, do you know if there was anybody in the  
6 lower level of that car?

7 A. Well, that was my biggest concern after the accident, is that  
8 the Amtrak employee who staffed the Café car, Richard, I was  
9 concerned he had been there. It was -- he had been on break  
10 somewhere around that time. I wasn't sure if he was back from  
11 break. That was one of my big regrets in the accident is, it  
12 wasn't until much later that I started to think, oh, that was a  
13 hidden compartment where somebody could have been.

14 This was an hour later and people had been all over these  
15 cars, and so I assumed that the people who had been around the  
16 observation car probably had already gone and looked there. But  
17 it was not something I thought of at the moment, or I would've  
18 been on top of the car to search.

19 Q. Got it. And my last question is going to be, did you take  
20 any photographs after the derailment?

21 A. I took three, they're all from a distance. They were all  
22 from 100 yards, 200 yards away of the observation car and the  
23 three cars that broke off the back. They're all from the outside.  
24 And it was after all the -- most of the rescue efforts were done.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Honestly, I thought it would be offensive to take pictures  
2 while we were in the middle of everything.

3 Q. I --

4 A. I think the pictures that others have shared online are  
5 clearer and show more detail than the ones I took.

6 Q. Okay. Well, we normally just ask people if they could  
7 provide us their pictures, especially considering that it's  
8 immediately following the derailment as everything was sitting.  
9 So if you could just email me copies, if you don't mind. I  
10 certainly do appreciate that. Okay?

11 A. Yep. No problem.

12 MS. HARLEY: All right. Well, that ends my questions and  
13 I'll turn it over to Kris.

14 MR. CRAIG: Okay.

15 BY MS. SEVERSON:

16 Q. Thank you again very much for all the information. I just  
17 have a question relating to the window. And just to clarify. You  
18 fell on the window, you described that you felt like you were  
19 sliding on a sled sort of and you could feel the ground going  
20 underneath you.

21 When it came to a rest at some point, when you identified  
22 what you thought was legs and a body underneath, were you able to  
23 lift up the window?

24 Was it -- it sounds like it was near the original location,  
25 but displaced. And you said a slight angle. Were you able to

1 lift it up and out away from the car or was it still attached or  
2 wedged at any point?

3 A. It was, for the most part, out of the frame. It was sitting  
4 on the inside of the car at an angle. So I was able to lift it.  
5 I think I maybe lifted it a foot or so. So this would have been  
6 the top edge of the window that I grabbed ahold of to lift it. It  
7 might've been attached at some point, but it was certainly loose  
8 enough I couldn't have just gotten it completely out of the way if  
9 that was necessary. But once I saw the deceased I just set the  
10 window back in place.

11 MS. SEVERSON: Okay. Thank you. That's interesting. I  
12 think that's all I have. You've been very thorough with  
13 everything. Thank you.

14 BY MS. JACOBSEN:

15 Q. So I just had one question to clarify. You said that you  
16 remember the back door of the car that you were in, the  
17 observation car, being open and that you believed that it had come  
18 open during the accident.

19 Was anyone else back there? Is there any chance that the  
20 brakeman went back to open it? Had he already gone past you to  
21 that section of the car?

22 A. Yeah. By the time I got there the brakeman was standing  
23 there. It is possible he opened it. I don't know.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. My observation later, while we were in the back cars, the

1 back three cars, there was a lot of activity trying to extract a  
2 couple injured people out of the second from the last car.

3 Another person and I, I don't know if he was a first  
4 responder or a passenger, but in order to get more access to that  
5 middle car, we climbed through the car -- the coach car I had been  
6 in. We climbed to the back of that and tried to open the door to  
7 that middle car, and that door was closed and it was not going to  
8 open. In the accident things had twisted enough that that door  
9 was wedged shut.

10 I don't know if the observation car door opened just because  
11 of the fall. I assume so, mainly because I think it would have  
12 been jammed. And we didn't have any tools in order to get it to  
13 move.

14 When we were trying to open that door into the second to the  
15 last car, we had axes and everything, we were trying to wedge  
16 things. We could not move anything. So I would have been  
17 surprised if the observation door was closed and it easily opened  
18 without any tools. But, I don't know, I wasn't there.

19 MS. SEVERSON: Okay. Thank you. Those are all my questions.

20 MS. HARLEY: Mary, did you have any other questions?

21 MS. CARLSON BIS: No, Sheryl, I don't have any other  
22 questions.

23 I just wanted to take a minute to thank you, Bob, for  
24 everything that you did during the accident in an effort to help  
25 others. Thank you for that.

1 MR. CRAIG: Yeah.

2 BY MS. HARLEY:

3 Q. And I just have two real quick follow-up questions. That  
4 fiberglass trash can. Prior to the derailment, it was not  
5 actually where it was afterwards. Was it in the back of the car,  
6 do you remember, before the derailment?

7 A. It was -- after the derailment it was laying on the window in  
8 the far back. It obviously hadn't been anywhere in that place  
9 because it would have been sitting on the table. So it came from  
10 somewhere. I don't ever recall that that garbage can had been  
11 anywhere, that it would have been visible at the back of the car.

12 My assumption was that in the middle of the car there were  
13 some -- it was a large metal trash receptacle. My assumption was  
14 that that had fallen and being -- as we dragged and everything,  
15 all the debris was flying, that that flew to the back of the car.

16 Q. Okay. The other question was, that as you were moving  
17 towards that back door, was there anything in the aisle way, well,  
18 basically the side of the car in that aisle way, that would have  
19 blocked your access? Was there any object that was obstructing  
20 your ability to get to that door at the end of the car?

21 A. I don't recall it at all. In fact, that was one of the  
22 things that I was thinking as we had a lot of room to move, you  
23 know, it was easy access to the back of the car. That trash can  
24 was probably the one obstacle, and we tried to use it as a step  
25 but it was not real strong, so it wasn't very good for that. But,



1 no, I don't recall anything else in the way.

2 I know Wendy had mentioned you asked about a metal box or  
3 something. I don't recall any metal box back there.

4 Q. Okay. And then the last thing I'm going to ask you is, I  
5 understand that you have an app on your phone. Prior to the  
6 derailment you actually noticed the speed of the car, is that  
7 correct, the speed of the train?

8 A. Yeah. It wasn't near the time of the accident, it was just  
9 at random times --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- I was wondering how fast we were going. So I would pull  
12 up the speedometer app. And pretty consistently I think it was --  
13 I only do it when I thought, wow, we're going pretty fast, I  
14 wonder how fast we're going. And it was consistently like 78, 79  
15 miles an hour.

16 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right. Thank you. So that's all the  
17 questions I had.

18 Did anybody else have any additional?

19 (No audible response.)

20 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So at this particular point, this is when  
21 we allow you to ask us questions. Do you have any questions for  
22 us?

23 MR. CRAIG: I don't because the questions I've asked I know  
24 are things you can't answer yet.

25 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

1 MR. CRAIG: And it's just the natural curiosity. Like what  
2 if we would have been sitting in those seats. So, I don't need to  
3 ask those questions. So I don't think I have any.

4 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So as I explained to your wife, that  
5 probably in the next week or two the preliminary report will come  
6 out and we are required to notify you ahead of time before we  
7 notify the public of that. So you will be notified. It will be  
8 available on our public website.

9 I will also -- I think I already gave it to your wife, but I  
10 will also make sure that you have the name of the Transportation  
11 Disaster Assistant Specialist, who's in charge of -- basically  
12 she's going to be your liaison between the investigative team and  
13 yourself. If you have any questions, please feel free to call  
14 her. You have my number. Please feel free to call me as well.  
15 Okay?

16 MR. CRAIG: There was one thing that just occurred to me.  
17 Right? Back to, as I was describing coming out of the car and the  
18 accident. It's not so much a question.

19 But my first thought, when I saw that backhoe was, that  
20 backhoe is literally two feet away from the tracks. And I guess  
21 my question is, has that been considered as any factor in the  
22 accident?

23 BY MS. HARLEY:

24 Q. For real quick. The backhoe, on what side of the train was  
25 it on; was it on the right or left side?

1 A. If we're orienting to the direction the train was heading --

2 Q. Yes.

3 A. It would have been the left-hand side of the tracks. So  
4 opposite the side the car was (indiscernible).

5 Q. Okay. Was it on that service road adjacent to the track  
6 there? Is that what you're saying?

7 A. No. No, it was not on the service road, because the service  
8 road was significant lower in elevation. This was up on the  
9 elevated area, right next to the tracks. You know, as I say, it  
10 literally felt like it was within a couple feet of the tracks.

11 Q. Were there any construction workers or workers for the  
12 railroad, and I'm talking about BNSF that was on the scene at that  
13 time, that you remember?

14 A. No. After the accident, we came out, I don't think there was  
15 anyone around for a good ten minutes, other than people who had  
16 been on the train.

17 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So to answer your question. This is the  
18 first time I've heard about that backhoe. But we will certainly  
19 give that to the operations team to look at. So you're actually  
20 the first person that's told us about that. But we will certainly  
21 look into it. Okay?

22 MR. CRAIG: Okay.

23 MS. HARLEY: All right. Well, thank you very much. And  
24 again, I appreciate you and your wife taking so much time out to  
25 help us with this. This is very, very helpful and very, very

1 important.

2       So, again, if you have any other questions you have our  
3 number. Okay?

4       MR. CRAIG: Okay.

5       MS. HARLEY: All right. Thank you very much, sir. Have a  
6 wonderful day.

7       MR. CRAIG: All right. Bye.

8       MS. HARLEY: And the interview is going to be terminated at  
9 10:45 a.m.

10       (Whereupon, at 10:45 a.m. EDT, 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:            FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT  
                                      NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA  
                                      ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021  
                                      Interview of Robert Craig

ACCIDENT NO.:                RRD21MR017

PLACE:                         Via Microsoft Teams

DATE:                          October 15, 2021

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.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gretchen L. Schultz  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT \*

NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA \* Accident No.: RRD21MR017

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: BRIANNA DANIELS, Passenger  
Amtrak

Via Zoom videoconference

Tuesday,  
October 19, 2021

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Assistant Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

KRISTINE (KRIS) SEVERSON, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe Center

KARINA (KARI) JACOBSEN,  
Volpe Center

SUSAN GRIFFIN,  
Amtrak

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:33 a.m. EDT)

1  
2  
3 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So, once again, my name is Sheryl Harley.  
4 I'm the Assistant Investigator in charge. I'm looking into the  
5 Amtrak derailment that occurred in Joplin, Montana on September  
6 the 25th, 2021 at approximately 3:47 p.m. Today's date is October  
7 the 19th of 2021 and it is now 10:33 a.m., and that would be  
8 Eastern Daylight Time.

9 In addition to myself, there are also members of the  
10 investigative team that are on this call, and before I start,  
11 first of all, Ms. Daniels, can you identify yourself for the  
12 record, please?

13 MS. DANIELS: Sure. My name is Brianna Daniels.

14 MS. HARLEY: Okay, and also members of the team. Kris?

15 MS. SEVERSON: Hello. I'm Kris Severson. I'm a mechanical  
16 engineer with the US Department of Transportation. I'm supporting  
17 FRA in this investigation. Were -- Kari and I were out on site  
18 trying to understand how people got hurt, so your interview is  
19 very helpful for us. Thank you.

20 MS. JACOBSEN: Hi there. I'm Kari Jacobsen. I work with  
21 Kris and what she said applies, so thanks for taking the time to  
22 talk to us.

23 MS. GRIFFIN: Hi. My name is Susan Griffin with Amtrak  
24 Emergency Management. We prepare for any emergency, so all of the  
25 information that you share will also be used in our continuing

1 training and response. Thank you very much.

2 INTERVIEW OF BRIANNA DANIELS

3 BY MS. HARLEY:

4 Q. So I guess how we're going to do this, if you don't mind, I'm  
5 going to ask you to start from when you boarded the train and your  
6 first contact with the crew. Then I want you to start talking  
7 about the day of the accident and just kind of walk me through as  
8 much as you can remember, okay?

9 A. Okay. All right. So we actually came from Cleveland, but  
10 when we boarded the train in Chicago we had already been on the  
11 train then and just switched trains in Chicago. So when we  
12 boarded the train, I can remember getting on.

13 I remember meeting with a member of the crew. She was kind  
14 of directing us on where we could sit. We had some pleasantries.  
15 You know, it was a -- it was a nice -- a nice ride. We got on on  
16 Friday. I'm not sure what the time was exactly, but it -- but it  
17 was on time, and it was Friday afternoon and we were on the train  
18 for several hours that day.

19 Slept on the train that night. Saturday, we had a couple  
20 different stops. I remember we had a couple stops that we were  
21 able to actually get off the train and kind of stretch our legs,  
22 which was really nice. Everything was very normal. There was  
23 nothing out of -- out of normal with what I've experienced on  
24 trains before.

25 Everything was pretty much the usual. I do remember

1 Saturday, when we -- when we got into Havre, that's kind of where  
2 I really had to remember some odd things happening and it wasn't  
3 necessarily anything with the train, but there were a couple odd  
4 things that I don't remember being on trains before.

5       And my experiences on trains is really just I've kind of been  
6 one that goes between Cleveland and Chicago. I've been on that  
7 one quite a few times. But I can remember that day, there was a  
8 couple on the train that were drinking heavily, so there was some  
9 of that kind of stuff going on and there was a couple things that  
10 I noticed, and it's not -- it's not really about the train, I  
11 guess. It was just kind of what was going on that day that kind  
12 of sticks out in my memory.

13       So I remember us stopping in Havre and that was one of the  
14 stops that we could get off and we could kind of walk around in  
15 town there for a little bit. I don't remember how long the stop  
16 was, maybe 20 minutes or so, and I can remember coming back to the  
17 train and there were a few members of the crew that were standing  
18 outside of the train talking.

19       And there had been a couple on the train a few rows back from  
20 us that had been drinking, I mentioned, and I can remember that --  
21 I believe it was the conductor who kind of yelled at the guy a  
22 little bit because he was trying to take more beer onto the train  
23 and he said, "No, no, no, no, no. That's going to stay here," and  
24 there was a -- they had a little exchange outside of the train  
25 there, which I hadn't really seen that before.

1 I'm, like, so that was kind of -- that was kind of different,  
2 but I haven't been on a train that was on for this long either in  
3 the past. So I kind of saw that -- that exchange and, you know,  
4 the passenger was a little bit angry and got on and, you know,  
5 there was some of that, which I have not seen before on the train.

6 And then even a little while after, after we got back on  
7 after Havre, I think, there was an announcement about reminding  
8 people not to smoke on the train and reminding people not to smoke  
9 any illegal substances on the train. There -- so there was a lot  
10 of that kind of going on, which was -- or that sticks out in my  
11 mind only because I've never those announcements on the train  
12 because I don't think it's ever been necessary.

13 So there was a little bit of people partying kind of thing on  
14 the train a little bit, I think, and that -- that just sticks into  
15 my mind because I've not seen that before. So that's kind of what  
16 was going on that day, and I remember getting back on the train,  
17 after we were in Havre, and we went back to our seats for a couple  
18 of minutes.

19 And we were planning on going over to the observation car  
20 just to hang out. We'd been -- we were doing that a lot. We  
21 weren't -- we weren't staying in our seats so much. We were  
22 trying to stay in the observation car a bit more just to kind of  
23 walk around and have a little bit more normal daytime kind of wake  
24 up rather than -- rather than trying to stay in our seats the  
25 whole time.

1           And we went to the observation car, my partner and I, and  
2 there was a -- there was another man who we didn't know, but we  
3 saw him on the train and he came over and actually sat near us in  
4 the observation car. His name was Ted, and he came over to us  
5 because he saw that my partner had a -- had a t-shirt with a band  
6 on it that he knew. So he kind of came over and he sat near us on  
7 the observation car.

8           And I had my messenger bag with me and I had a little crochet  
9 project that I was working on that I kept bringing back to the  
10 observation car, because the light was really nice, and my partner  
11 had a deck of cards and a book that he brought with him and we  
12 were going to sit there and maybe play some card games.

13           So we were sitting in the observation car at that point and  
14 we were sitting on the left-hand side of the car kind of towards  
15 the front of the observation car. So I was sitting there. My  
16 partner was sitting to the right of me. There was a little table  
17 between us, and then on my left was my bag was next to me and then  
18 a couple seats down was this other guy, Ted, who came and was  
19 talking to us.

20           And that's around when the accident happened. So we were  
21 sitting there. We were kind of chatting and just, you know, just  
22 normal, and it just, it -- all of a sudden the train kind of  
23 jugged very hard left and then to the right and I -- I don't know  
24 if that's the right word for it.

25           It just -- it just was a very harsh shift to the left and to

1 the right, whereas if you were standing, you definitely would've  
2 been knocked over. It was a hard enough shift that it definitely  
3 would've knocked somebody down. We were sitting, but it was  
4 definitely startling and I remember everybody on the train, or at  
5 least in the observation car, getting very quiet.

6 It was kind of one of these, like, kind of shocked moments  
7 where you're kind of, like, well, that's kind of strange. Like,  
8 what's going on and everyone's kind of looking, like, what  
9 happened and I mean this was all happening very quickly, and then  
10 it kind of did that again.

11 It kind of did that -- that really hard shift to the left and  
12 right, and at that point, you know, my partner, Allan (ph.), was  
13 sitting next to me and he yelled. He said -- he said, "Hold on.  
14 The train's going to tip," and I don't remember anybody else  
15 saying anything.

16 Everybody was pretty quiet. I think we were all kind of a  
17 little bit shocked as to what we were experiencing, and I had -- I  
18 only remember hearing him say that and I remember at that point  
19 just holding onto my seat bottom as tightly as possible, and I saw  
20 him just be thrown across the car, just up in the air, just flew  
21 across the car to the other side of the train car where the  
22 windows are.

23 And I had kind of turned and I was looking over my right-hand  
24 shoulder and I watched -- I watched that happen, and then that's  
25 the last thing I remember. I lost consciousness at that point.

1 So -- and I don't know exactly what happened after that. I don't  
2 know.

3 That also kind of bothers me that I can't remember whether or  
4 not the train was tipping at that point or if it was just shifting  
5 really hard to the right and that's kind of what threw him. I'm  
6 not -- I'm not positive. My equilibrium was not quite right, I  
7 guess.

8 So -- but anyway, so I had looked and I saw him kind of fly  
9 across the car and I was looking to the right and holding onto my  
10 seat and I assume that's when the tipping over, but I don't  
11 remember, at that point, what happened. So the next thing I  
12 remember, the train was no longer moving.

13 The train -- the observation car was on its side. I was  
14 sitting somewhere else. I was sitting on what was now the floor  
15 of the car, which is the windows, with one of the windows broken  
16 out. I was just sitting as a bag sitting with me on my left. I'm  
17 not sure how. But I, you know, one of my shoes was off. I'd lost  
18 my phone, that kind of thing, and -- I'm sorry. Do you have a  
19 question?

20 Q. Yeah. For a split second there, I guess it's me. My audio  
21 went out. So I'm going to tell you what I'm going to do to kind  
22 of make it better. I'm going to turn off my camera and just keep  
23 going.

24 A. Oh, sure. Okay. Okay. So I suddenly -- I can't even say  
25 necessarily that I woke up. I suddenly just became aware, again,

1 because I was sitting up, and I kind of looked around me. A lot  
2 of people were already down at the other end of the car going  
3 towards the door to try to get out.

4 And the -- I think guessed that he was the conductor. He was  
5 calling for people to go down there. Now I didn't because my  
6 partner was actually injured, so he was -- he was then over my  
7 left shoulder several feet behind me lying down on the glass  
8 window, obviously in pain and there was another man there trying  
9 to help him.

10 So they were yelling for us to come down there and, of  
11 course, you know, we couldn't because he was injured. So I  
12 started yelling and the man that was helping my partner was --  
13 started yelling for help and then we were able to get out off of  
14 the train through the broken window that I was kind of sitting at.

15 So there was about a -- I don't know, two or three gap from  
16 the broken window where you can kind of crawl out. So we all kind  
17 of dropped down through that window and got out rather than trying  
18 to climb, you know, past all these windows that may have been  
19 broken since we were kind of far away from the other end of the  
20 train car.

21 So then -- so I got out first and then two men came and  
22 helped Allan get out and then we walked across the short little  
23 field there to the -- to the access road, and on the other side of  
24 the access road was a slight hill and we went and sat over there.

25 They kind of propped Allan up because he had some broken ribs



1 and couldn't sit up very easily on his own, and he sat there. We  
2 waited for the ambulances. I did walk around and take some  
3 pictures. I called, you know, parents to let them know what had  
4 happened and then we got on the ambulance and went to the medical  
5 center there in Chester.

6 Is that kind of where you want me to stop or you want me to  
7 keep going continue with what happened or?

8 Q. Yeah. Why don't you go ahead and keep on going?

9 A. Okay. So we were kind of lucky enough that where we were in  
10 the observation car was kind of, like, right where the ambulances  
11 were coming in down that access road, so Allan got to be one of  
12 the first people on the ambulance, along with another man, and  
13 then I rode in the front and we went to that Chester -- I don't  
14 know what it's call but it was a medical center there in Chester.

15 We were there for several hours. They did take some scans of  
16 my neck and shoulder where I was -- I was feeling a little sore  
17 there, and they kind of generally kind of checked us over  
18 physically to make sure that we didn't have any other injuries as  
19 we were kind of still in shock.

20 Allan was inside being worked on and he ended up being  
21 airlifted to Benefis in Great Falls. One of the nurses was nice  
22 enough to -- she kind of shuttled me and a couple other passengers  
23 that weren't injured but our spouses were, she shuttled us over to  
24 Great Falls so that we could meet up with our spouses later that  
25 evening.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And we did stop at -- I guess there were some belongings that  
3 they brought into that local high school area, that gym, she did  
4 take us over there to get those before taking us, but that's  
5 generally what happened.

6 Then, you know, I spent the night -- well, I wasn't admitted  
7 to the hospital, but Allan was. So I spent the night kind of  
8 there in the room with him before getting a hotel and things like  
9 that and we ended up being there for quite a number of days after  
10 the accident.

11 Q. And Allan required a medical air transport to get home,  
12 correct?

13 A. Oh, yes. Yes.

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. And I came back with him on that.

16 Q. Okay. And I'm sorry, what day did you actually return home?

17 A. Let me tell you. It was not quite two weeks after the  
18 accident. So it was -- let's see. We got home on, I believe,  
19 October 7th in the late afternoon, early evening.

20 Q. Okay. All right. So if -- I'm going ask a couple of follow  
21 up questions if you don't mind. When you boarded the train, what  
22 was your original train car that you were in?

23 A. We were in the car immediately behind the observation car.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. So when we -- when we got on, she kind of told us, you know,

1 you can take any of these seats up here in the -- in these cars.

2 So we walked forward to get on that -- get on there.

3 Q. Okay, and this rowdy, intoxicated couple, where were they  
4 compared to where you were?

5 A. So in that train car where the stairs are located -- and this  
6 is why we kept seeing kind of what was going on with them is,  
7 there was a stairway to go -- to go down to go out of the car or  
8 down to the restrooms there. When you got to the top of the  
9 stairs and made a left, which would've been going back to our  
10 seats, we had to pass by their seats.

11 So they were maybe a couple of rows ahead of that stairway.  
12 It was a young couple and you could just see that they were --  
13 they were making a huge mess. It was just they were just kind of  
14 -- they were making a mess in their seats and they were a little  
15 obnoxious.

16 You know, they were cursing and things like that. So there  
17 were also some announcements about, you know, making sure that  
18 people are using okay language and so that was a little bit  
19 strange. That I've not seen before when I've been on the train.

20 Q. Okay. So if I came up the stairs and, as you say, I go to  
21 the left and that would be --

22 A. Turn left.

23 Q. I'll be heading in the same direction as the train would be  
24 heading, is that correct?

25 A. Correct.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Were they on the left or the right side?

4 A. The right.

5 Q. They were on the right?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And where were you and Allan originally seated?

8 A. So we stayed in the same seats the whole time once we picked  
9 them when we got on. We were probably five rows up from there. I  
10 could be wrong, but I want to say our seats were, like, 18 and 19  
11 on -- in the train car.

12 Q. Okay, 18 or 19?

13 A. Yeah, and we were -- we were on the right-hand side, same  
14 side as that couple.

15 Q. Okay. In addition to that couple, do you remember anyone  
16 else in that train car?

17 A. Yes. So on the left-hand side of where that couple was  
18 sitting, there was a man that was traveling by himself and I  
19 remember because he was on even when we were -- he was on the  
20 train even in Cleveland when we were -- when we got on, and he was  
21 quiet. He was kind of by himself. He wasn't, you know, bothering  
22 anyone but I think he was chatting with them a little bit.

23 But I remember him because he had an outburst on the train at  
24 one point. He was seemingly a very quiet kind of just by himself  
25 kind of a guy, but there was a problem when we were getting into

1 Chicago where the train -- so it was a different train before we  
2 got on in Chicago.

3 So the train that we got on in Cleveland, he was already on  
4 it going to Chicago and then we were all switching. We just  
5 happened to notice that he was the same -- the same guy. The  
6 train was stopped before we got all the way into Chicago.

7 It was a few miles until we were getting into the station and  
8 the train was stopped and the announcement came on and told us  
9 that there was some truck that had run into the overpass. So they  
10 had to -- they were waiting to have somebody come and look at it  
11 to make sure that it was safe to go over it.

12 So we were stuck there for a little bit, and it was weird  
13 because he had this really loud outburst. I don't remember  
14 exactly what he said but he just -- I mean he cussed and he said,  
15 you know -- he -- I think he said the F word and it was just kind  
16 of strange.

17 It was like this man who was -- he was quiet the whole time  
18 and just suddenly yelling. Like, he was very upset that we were  
19 going to be late is what it was. It ended up not mattering  
20 because obviously we all got on the train in Chicago at the same  
21 place.

22 We didn't know that he was going to be on that same train,  
23 but we were -- we were right near him when we were on the train  
24 from Cleveland to Chicago and then he ended up being in the same  
25 car when we got on in Chicago.

1 Q. Did you see this gentleman after the derailment?

2 A. You know, I don't remember. I don't remember a lot of people  
3 after the derailment. You know, I -- my memory of who I saw and  
4 -- and what was going on after the derailment is a little bit  
5 fuzzy and I'm not sure why. People were pretty spread out though  
6 too. So, you know, there was two men that came and helped Allan.

7 And, you know, the derailment, when we derailed, we were in  
8 the observation car. We weren't at our seats and the observation  
9 car was detached from the cars behind it, so it -- I don't know  
10 where they were. I don't think that they were on the observation  
11 car at the same time as us, so they would've been in another car  
12 probably, and I did not walk down to that car.

13 I wanted to and by the time I was going to, the ambulances  
14 were coming to, you know, come and get us. So I didn't actually  
15 walk down there. So I don't know that I saw a lot of people from  
16 those cars at all. Most of the people that I saw would've been on  
17 the observation car or maybe in the car in front of us.

18 Q. Okay. Do you remember anybody else in your original car?

19 A. No, not really. I mean I remember there were people there.  
20 I don't remember the specific people other than those three.  
21 Nobody that stands out to me.

22 Q. Okay. That's fine. So now I'm going to -- so let's switch  
23 over to the observation car, and what I'm going to try to do first  
24 is I'm going try to put up a diagram of the observation car so you  
25 can actually see it, and wait a minute. Hang on one second. Let

1 me do this.

2 And then, let's see, now let's see if it'll come up. Yeah.  
3 All right. Just a sec. Okay. All righty. So can you see that  
4 diagram?

5 A. Oh, yes, now I can.

6 Q. Okay. Can you see where my cursor is?

7 A. It's blinking.

8 Q. Yeah. Okay.

9 A. (Indiscernible.)

10 Q. Okay. Okay. So where it's over -- where it's over, this is  
11 the upper level of the observation car, okay?

12 A. Hang on one second. I'm going to move this to my larger  
13 monitor so I can see a little bit better.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Okay. Sorry. Yes.

16 Q. Okay. So this is the upper level of the observation car. So  
17 this is the back end of it and these are the tables and this is  
18 the front end and this would be the direction in which the train  
19 was traveling. Can you give me an idea of where you were seated?

20 A. Yes. So we were towards the front of the car. So yeah. So  
21 I don't -- I can't show you my cursor.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. So we're -- we were all the way towards the front of the car,  
24 not in those very first two seats with the Xs on them.

25 Q. Okay.

- 1 A. We were in the ones right after that.
- 2 Q. These right here?
- 3 A. Allan -- yes. Allan and I had the table between us.
- 4 Q. Okay.
- 5 A. Because we would've been sitting there, and then I believe
- 6 Ted, the guy that I mentioned was sitting in the single seat off
- 7 to the -- to the side there to the right. Yeah.
- 8 Q. So this is where Ted was seated?
- 9 A. Yes.
- 10 Q. And were you seated here?
- 11 A. Yes.
- 12 Q. And then Allan was seated here?
- 13 A. Yes.
- 14 Q. Okay. All right. So in addition to Ted, do you remember
- 15 anyone else being in that car?
- 16 A. No. No. Not while I was in the car. Later on, there was --
- 17 yeah, after the derailment, there was a woman that came up to me
- 18 and told me that, you know, she was sitting near us but I don't
- 19 remember seeing her.
- 20 Q. Did she give you a name?
- 21 A. Yes. Her name was Morgan.
- 22 Q. Okay, and Morgan said --
- 23 A. She said (indiscernible).
- 24 Q. She said that she was in the car?
- 25 A. Yes. She said she was in the car sitting somewhere near us.



1 I'm not sure exactly where, because she came up to me after the  
2 derailment and was trying to help me and Allan kind of get off the  
3 train -- well, or walk away from the train and she said -- she  
4 said, "Yeah," she's, like, "I was sitting right near you."

5 She's, like, "I remember because I was hearing you talk to  
6 Ted," or she didn't know his name was Ted, but she said, "I saw  
7 you talking to a man that you obviously didn't know," and she's,  
8 like, I just remember thinking, like, oh, how nice these people  
9 are just kind of chatting and you know, it was a nice, friendly  
10 atmosphere there in the observation car. People were kind of  
11 chatting and it was nice. Yeah.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So, yeah, she saw me.

14 Q. Okay. So after the derailment, you said that Allan had been  
15 thrown to the opposite side of the car. Do you have some sense of  
16 where he may have landed?

17 A. I don't know that. I remember seeing him and kind of seeing  
18 him kind of -- I don't remember him -- seeing him kind of, like,  
19 hit anything other than the wall, but I'm not sure whether he did  
20 hit a seat or anything like that. I mean it was like he was up in  
21 the air, like, just flying in the middle of the air.

22 It was -- it was very, very bizarre and I think he hit just  
23 the windows or the wall there, but I don't remember specifically  
24 what he hit. I don't remember noticing that. Just looking at him  
25 and noticing how strange that was is kind of all I remember.

1 Q. Okay, and you said something about a broken window. Was  
2 Allan lying on a broken window?

3 A. No. My -- where I was not -- kind of imagine if the  
4 observation car was on its side. I'm not sure if I was directly  
5 across from where I was sitting or if I was -- I'm not sure which  
6 window it would've been.

7 But when I kind of became aware, I was sitting on either the  
8 glass or one of the pieces that kind of goes between the two  
9 windows, and the window was either pushed out or completely broken  
10 out where my legs were hanging down through. Allan was -- and I  
11 was facing the rear of the observation car at that point. So it  
12 had tipped over. I was facing the back with my legs kind of  
13 through one of the windows, yeah, and it was -- the window was  
14 gone. I don't know if it was -- if it was initially broken or if  
15 it was pushed out. I don't know because I wasn't -- I wasn't  
16 really awake before that.

17 And I remember turning and looking over my left shoulder and  
18 it was -- I mean it was a good at least, I would say, six or eight  
19 feet away from me behind me where Allan was laying and he was  
20 laying on a glass window and it was not broken out.

21 But I do know that there were pieces of it that were broken  
22 because when we were trying to move him out, I got out first and I  
23 looked under the train car to kind of see and I could see where he  
24 was laying and I could see pieces of glass starting to fall  
25 underneath him and I started yelling that they needed to get off

1 that glass.

2 Q. Okay. So was Allan actually still in the train or was he  
3 underneath the train when you came to or when you realized --

4 A. He was still -- he still on the train. He was --

5 Q. He was still on the train.

6 A. He was lying across glass windows.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. (Squeaking sound.) I'm sorry. My dogs.

9 Q. No problem. Okay. All right. So moving on. So in addition  
10 to the announcements that you heard when -- about the no smoking  
11 and the no cursing, do you remember any other announcements being  
12 made by the crew, anything in regards to things, like, a safety  
13 briefing or anything to advise you of the presence of the safety  
14 cards? Anything about in case of an emergency?

15 A. Not that stand out to me, but they may have. I might -- it  
16 just wouldn't stand out in my mind because I typically do hear  
17 those announcements. I will say when we first boarded the train  
18 in Chicago, I remember a lot of the announcements were really  
19 quiet and it was very difficult to hear them.

20 And I -- and I remember that because I was just, like, I have  
21 -- it's a good thing I don't need any of these stops because I  
22 can't -- I can't hear what they're saying. So I mean they may  
23 very well have. I'm sure that they probably did say something  
24 about the safety cards, but I'm not positive when they did that.

25 If it was first when we got on the train or at some point

1 while we were on. That -- yeah, it doesn't stand out in my mind  
2 because they do usually do that. But, yes, I'm sure they probably  
3 did.

4 Q. Okay. Do you remember seeing the safety cards in your -- in  
5 your pockets of your seat?

6 A. Yes. Where we -- where our seats were located, yes. Not in  
7 the observation car though.

8 Q. Got it. Okay. After the derailment were the lights on in  
9 the observation car?

10 A. I have no idea. Because it was daylight -- because it was  
11 daylight, there was a lot of light in. We didn't have any trouble  
12 seeing. I don't know whether the lights were actually on.

13 Q. Okay. So you said that you remember that the conductor  
14 inside the observation car was instructing people to exit the car  
15 from the rear.

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. Do you remember if the door was open or if he had to instruct  
18 people how to open the door to get out?

19 A. He was standing there at the door with it open, like, kind of  
20 halfway in kind of climbing and trying to help people.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. So I believe the door was already open when I was awake.

23 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Okay. Okay. I think that's all the  
24 questions that I have. I'm going to turn this over to Kris.

25 MS. SEVERSON: Okay. Thank you.

1 BY MS. SEVERSON:

2 Q. I'm just trying to understand a little bit better, you know,  
3 where you were and where you have -- where you may have hit, and I  
4 think I have a pretty good clear picture. Like, you were sitting  
5 with your legs hanging through an open window on the side wall,  
6 what was the side wall, facing the rear of the car and Allan was  
7 behind you towards the front of the car.

8 And you said he was on a window. Do you think it was the  
9 curved window that is kind of at the roofline that kind of spans  
10 the roof and the side wall or was it the big observation window in  
11 the side wall that you were -- would've been looking through when  
12 you were riding?

13 A. I am -- I am not positive on that, but I'm not even positive  
14 which one I was sitting at actually. I was sitting -- I was  
15 sitting there and I remember because I turned towards my left and,  
16 you know, we weren't that close to the ceiling of the car but I'm  
17 not sure how -- I mean I was -- I would've been at least a few  
18 feet away from what was the ceiling of the car.

19 But I don't know exactly which window it was. He was not  
20 towards the -- towards the ceiling though. I mean he was at least  
21 a few feet from the ceiling. I don't know which window it was  
22 though.

23 Q. And was he conscious when you kind of regained awareness?

24 A. Yes. Yes.

25 Q. And so then did you help him get up into the window where you

1 were that was open below you?

2 A. No. I didn't really move from that spot. I was -- I think I  
3 was just kind of afraid to move because of the glass windows, but  
4 there was a man over there helping him. So I didn't feel like I  
5 needed to go over there and he was just laying there kind of  
6 obviously in pain, kind of -- kind of holding himself.

7 And I know that the man that was with him, I don't -- I don't  
8 know the man's name, but he was -- he was trying to help him get  
9 up and they were having trouble with that and that's when I  
10 started yelling for the conductor who was down at the other end.  
11 He, you know -- he was yelling at us to come down there and  
12 obviously we couldn't.

13 So we were yelling back that we needed help and then another  
14 man came, but I'm not sure where he came from, whether he was on  
15 the train still or whether he got back on the train. That I don't  
16 -- I'm not sure. So then another man came and helped him. So I  
17 never moved from that spot.

18 I kind of turned around, looked at him. I did kind of have  
19 to reach around because I lost a shoe and lost my -- well, I  
20 didn't find my phone. Somebody else found it. But I found, you  
21 know -- found some things, but I didn't go very far from that spot  
22 where I was sitting.

23 Q. Right, and the other man that came to help wasn't Ted that  
24 you'd been talking to earlier?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Somebody else?

2 A. No. I don't know what happened to Ted.

3 Q. Okay. So it sounds like you exited through the hole that you  
4 were -- your legs were dangling over. You exited there and then  
5 did this other unknown man help Allan through that same hole that  
6 you went through?

7 A. Yes. They helped him over to where that hole was and then  
8 Allan actually kind of had to get a little bit on his own. They  
9 tried to help him kind of down through the hole and then he had to  
10 kind of shuffle down underneath the car to get out and then they  
11 got out too and they helped him walk across the grass.

12 Q. Okay, and in terms of your injuries, you -- in the -- it  
13 sounds like maybe you had a head injury, but did you get -- did  
14 they diagnose a concussion or --

15 A. Yes. Yes. So initially, I didn't know that I had a head  
16 injury. They didn't tell me that I did at the time and I just  
17 knew that my shoulder and my neck were bothering me, so they did  
18 those scans.

19 Several days later, Allan was still at the hospital and we  
20 had a -- a case manager there who I mentioned I was getting really  
21 bad headaches and I wasn't really sleeping and she told -- she  
22 instructed me to walk down their walk-in clinic there and I did  
23 that and they told me that I probably did have a head injury.  
24 They didn't do any more x-rays at that time.

25 But they kind of advised me, you know, no excessive screen

1 time and they gave me some muscle relaxers to help. They kind of  
2 -- they did come check over my body because I had -- I had a lot  
3 of bruises and I had a hematoma on my right hip.

4 It wasn't until I got home to Cleveland that I went to the  
5 doctor again and they told me that I probably did have a  
6 concussion and I got a CT scan and I have some more appointments  
7 to go to. I'll hopefully find out more.

8 MS. SEVERSON: Okay. I think that's it for me now. Thank  
9 you.

10 MS. HARLEY: Kari?

11 BY MS. JACOBSEN:

12 Q. Do you remember your body position that you were in at the  
13 time of the accident? You said that you were sitting in the seat.  
14 Can you just describe it more?

15 A. Sure. Yeah. So I was sitting in the seat. My legs weren't  
16 crossed or anything like that. I was sitting because I had -- I  
17 was working on this crochet project out of a magazine, so I was  
18 kind of -- I kind of had things in my lap, which I set down once  
19 the train started kind of moving strangely.

20 And I just took my hands and I just -- I just grabbed onto  
21 the seat bottom just as hard as I -- as I could. I just kind of  
22 -- I think I probably, you know, was forward a little bit, maybe  
23 not completely against the back of the seat kind of bracing.

24 MS. JACOBSEN: Okay. Thank you. I think those are my  
25 questions for the moment.



1 MS. DANIELS: Okay.

2 MS. JACOBSEN: I'll pass it back to anybody else that has  
3 some.

4 MS. SEVERSON: I'm just -- that's interesting.

5 BY MS. SEVERSON:

6 Q. So you were kind of in a tucked position holding onto your  
7 seat and then did you say the next thing you remember is sitting  
8 on the open window or beside it?

9 A. Well, yeah, so I did that and I kind of was holding on. I'm  
10 doing it as if you can see my body position. So I'm sitting and  
11 I'm just kind of holding on and then at -- when I was bracing,  
12 that's when I saw Allan kind of fly and I did kind of do this and  
13 look over my right shoulder.

14 And I think that's probably where my neck and shoulder  
15 injuries have kind of come from is that I was kind of twisted.  
16 Maybe when it tipped over and hit, I think that's kind of what  
17 happened there. So, yeah, I was twisted and then I don't remember  
18 anything.

19 Q. And when you found -- when you got consciousness awareness  
20 again and you saw Allan was he lying? How was he oriented? Like,  
21 were his feet towards the rear or --

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. -- front or --

24 A. Yes. Correct. Yeah. So he was laying kind of flat on his  
25 back with his head towards the front of the car and his feet

1 towards where I was towards the back.

2 Q. So he was kind of in line with the --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. -- longitudinal direction of the car?

5 A. Yes.

6 MS. SEVERSON: Okay. Thank you. That's it for now. Thank  
7 you.

8 MS. HARLEY: Susan, did you have any questions that you  
9 wanted to ask?

10 MS. GRIFFIN: I don't. We -- I don't have any questions,  
11 Brianna, but greatly appreciate that you came and are sharing all  
12 this with us so we can all learn. So really appreciate it. Thank  
13 you.

14 MS. HARLEY: Anything else? Anyone?

15 (No response).

16 BY MS. HARLEY:

17 Q. So, Brianna, I'm going to ask you, is there anything you  
18 think we should've asked you and we didn't?

19 A. No, I don't think so. I mean I tried to include whatever I  
20 thought might be -- might be helpful just in my description of  
21 what happened. Obviously, I'm not giving every single possible  
22 detail of what happened the entire time I was on the train, but  
23 just things that I thought were important.

24 You know, I -- obviously, I left some things out, you know.  
25 The detachment from the observation car and the other train cars I

1 thought -- I think is important, but I don't know. I mean  
2 obviously I think you know that. But, no. I think you've asked  
3 everything that that makes sense to ask that I would know.

4 Q. I actually do have one question to ask you. When you got out  
5 of the train, when was the first time that you spoke to anyone  
6 from the train crew?

7 A. So, you know, I mentioned I did see the conductor actually  
8 helping people get out of the observation car. But other than  
9 him, I don't remember seeing any other crew and I'm not sure if  
10 they were just still on the train helping people. They may have  
11 been stuck.

12 I feel that maybe we were some of the first people to get  
13 out. There were people outside of the train when we -- when we  
14 got off the observation car, but not that many, and then we got on  
15 the first ambulance to leave. So we may have just not seen them  
16 because we kind of left first.

17 I know the person I'm calling the conductor, I heard somebody  
18 call him JP earlier during the train ride. I assume he's the  
19 conductor. But he was the one who I saw helping people. But, no,  
20 I didn't see any other crew members. It was mostly passengers  
21 helping each other -- or maybe it was people who lived in the  
22 area. I'm not sure.

23 Q. Okay, and how quickly did the emergency responders arrive?

24 A. Very quickly from when we got off the train. So there was a  
25 few minutes, you know -- it took us a few minutes to get off the

1 train.

2 Obviously, it took a while to get Allan off the train and  
3 then walk across this field, across the road, and then we kind of  
4 sat on the -- on the road. I had enough time to call his parents  
5 and I did walk around a little bit. I didn't initially have my  
6 phone, but I saw somebody had it pretty quickly.

7 I mean I think that they were there within a few minutes. I  
8 don't think it was very long at all before the ambulance was  
9 there. I was actually very impressed by that because I know I'm  
10 in the middle of nowhere. I kind of expected that we were going  
11 to be stuck there for a while and it really was not very long.

12 Q. Okay. All right, and did you and Allan actually forward the  
13 photographs to me already?

14 A. I don't think so because I only have a few on my phone.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. I don't think he was -- he wasn't taking any of the  
17 photographs. So no.

18 Q. Is it possible for you to email those to me? One of the  
19 things that we --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. We look at the photographs is because those are actually the  
22 first photographs of how things were on the scene. So that's kind  
23 of important to us.

24 A. Sure. Yeah.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. I only took a couple, but yeah.

2 Q. Okay. All right. Well, I certainly do appreciate it. So I  
3 think, unless anybody else has any further questions, I think  
4 that's it. Thank you very, very much. Again, talking to you is  
5 extremely important as we go through the process and we will be in  
6 touch and provide you with updates of where we are in the  
7 investigation.

8 And if any reports come out, we will certainly notify you and  
9 Allan, as well. You have any problems, you have my number so  
10 please feel free to reach out, okay?

11 A. Thank you so much. I'm very happy to be able to help.

12 MS. HARLEY: Thank you very, very much. You have a wonderful  
13 day.

14 MS. DANIELS: Thank you.

15 MS. SEVERSON: Thank you very much.

16 MS. JACOBSEN: (Indiscernible.)

17 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

18 MS. SEVERSON: Take care, Brianna.

19 MS. DANIELS: Thank you.

20 MS. JACOBSEN: Bye bye.

21 MS. DANIELS: Bye.

22 MS. HARLEY: Okay, and interview's going to be terminated at  
23 11:12 a.m. Eastern Daylight time.

24 (Whereupon, at 11:12 a.m. EDT, the interview was concluded.)

25



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT \*

NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA \* Accident No.: RRD21MR017

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: ALAN and SUSAN ELSERND  
Passengers

Via telephone

Sunday,  
October 17, 2021

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board



I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Alan and Susan Elsbernd:

By Ms. Harley

4

I N T E R V I E W

(11:43 a.m. EDT)

1 MS. HARLEY: So let me just go ahead then and we'll start.  
2  
3 So first of all I want to introduce myself again. My name is  
4 Sheryl Harley, last name is H-a-r-l-e-y. And I am the Assistant  
5 Investigator-in-Charge of the investigation into the Amtrak  
6 derailment in Joplin, Montana, and that occurred on September the  
7 25th of 2021 at approximately 3:47 p.m.

8 And today's date is October the 17th --

9 MR. ELSBERND: It was -- yeah, 3:47, yeah, it was just before  
10 -- right around 4:00 o'clock.

11 MS. HARLEY: Yeah. And today is October the 17th of 2021 and  
12 it is 11:43 a.m., and that's Eastern Daylight Time, and that would  
13 be 10:43 a.m. your time, correct?

14 MR. ELSBERND: Correct.

15 MS. HARLEY: Okay, great. And just for the recording, can  
16 you just identify yourself, who I'm speaking with?

17 MR. ELSBERND: Alan Elsbernd, A-l-a-n E-l-s-b-e-r-n-d.

18 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

19 MS. ELSBERND: Susan Elsbernd.

20 MS. HARLEY: Thank you very much.

21 MR. ELSBERND: That's S-u-s-a-n for Susan.

22 MS. HARLEY: S-u-s-a-n, great.

23 INTERVIEW OF ALAN and SUSAN ELSBERND

24 BY MS. HARLEY:

1 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So, once again, so what I'd like you to  
2 do, if you can, is to -- first of all, tell me where you actually  
3 boarded the train and your first --

4 MR. ELSBERND: La Crosse, Wisconsin.

5 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So that was in Wisconsin?

6 MR. ELSBERND: La Crosse, Wisconsin, yes.

7 One question at a time. Don't do multiple, otherwise we get  
8 confused here.

9 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Well, what I was going to do is just let  
10 you talk and I was just going to listen. So I just wanted to tell  
11 you that, just talk about your first contact with the crew, and  
12 then just walk me through the day of the accident. So I'm just  
13 going to listen while you tell me.

14 MR. ELSBERND: I don't know where to start with that, it  
15 would be easier with questions.

16 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

17 MR. ELSBERND: We got to the train station, probably an hour  
18 before we left. Went through with any of the -- you know, they  
19 had a COVID questionnaire which we went through. Tags, we put  
20 tags on most of the stuff that we were carrying. Sat there and  
21 waited, and about ten minutes before the train came through we  
22 went outside and watched it come in.

23 We had to walk toward the back in the train. That is where  
24 they told us to board. Crew said, go up the steps and find your  
25 seat, so we did. I was asked if I needed to know where anything

1 was on the train, whenever train personnel came by and asked,  
2 which came to be very helpful.

3 We dozed off while we were going through the night, you know.  
4 The next morning, I want to say it was around 9:00 o'clock we had  
5 a stop for an hour in some town. I don't remember which town it  
6 was. I'm thinking it was in North Dakota, but I don't remember  
7 for sure. I'm sure the train log would tell that.

8 It was a pleasant, relaxing ride until the sudden stop when  
9 it tipped over. We were kind of noticing that the car was  
10 wobbling back and forth quite a bit. It wasn't so bad when we got  
11 on, but it slowly wobbled more, and more and I noticed around noon  
12 that there were several of us, that as they went from one car to  
13 the other and they step onto that car ahead of us, that it would  
14 throw them enough that it would bang them against the door frame.

15 I had been in the car a couple of times. It was the  
16 concessions downstairs, which I went down to check out to see what  
17 it amounted to. I had sat towards the front part of that car,  
18 once or twice while we were on the journey. Which it seemed to  
19 ride fairly smooth.

20 But the back end, when you're trying to walk, the last time I  
21 was in there it was really hard to keep balanced. Susan was never  
22 in the car.

23 MS. ELSBERND: Not in the observation car.

24 MR. ELSBERND: She was never in the observation car. We were  
25 three feet back from the doorway going to the observation car.

1 But we were in the first car that unhooked.

2 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

3 MR. ELSBERND: And she was on what turned out to be the  
4 upper-hand side of the car when it tipped over, and I was across  
5 the aisle in the other seat. We were kind of relaxing and dozing  
6 off. You know, we had two seats to move around in, so then it was  
7 easier to relax.

8 She was sleeping at the time of the accident, and I was kind  
9 of half there, and when I heard the noise I -- it got my attention  
10 and I noticed the car starting to lean and the rest of the train  
11 taking off from our car. I remember saying, this isn't going to  
12 be good, and I kind of braced.

13 And as the train hit the ground, it was like any other kind  
14 of close call where it all flies along you. The glass and stuff  
15 didn't start moving and breaking until it was just about stopped.

16 I had a very sore shoulder and a sore wrist. After the  
17 accident I couldn't bring my hand up as far as my mouth on my  
18 right hand because the shoulder was so sore at first, but that's  
19 gotten less.

20 I don't know. I don't know what else to add to that at the  
21 moment.

22 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So I tell you what, let's go back a  
23 little bit. Do you remember what train car you were in?

24 MR. ELSBERND: I cannot remember the number on the car. It  
25 was the first one that unhooked, because the one ahead of us was

1 the viewing car.

2 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So you were right behind the lounge car,  
3 okay.

4 MS. ELSBERND: The observation car.

5 MR. ELSBERND: The observation car.

6 MS. HARLEY: Right, okay. So Susan, where were you seated?  
7 Do you know what row you were in and whether you were at the  
8 window or the aisle?

9 MS. ELSBERND: I was -- it was the third row back.

10 MR. ELSBERND: We were three seats back from the door.

11 MS. HARLEY: So you were in the third row --

12 MR. ELSBERND: I was on the right-hand side --

13 MS. ELSBERND: He was on the right-hand side and I was on the  
14 left-hand side.

15 MR. ELSBERND: Facing the front of the train.

16 MS. ELSBERND: Facing the front.

17 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

18 MS. ELSBERND: We were three seats back from the observation  
19 car.

20 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Were you sitting at the window or were  
21 you sitting on the aisle?

22 MS. ELSBERND: We were sitting at the window.

23 MR. ELSBERND: We were both kind of up against the window  
24 while we were riding. It just gave us room to stretch out.

25 MS. HARLEY: Okay, all right. And Susan, when the train

1 started to -- when it derailed and the car overturn, do you get  
2 some sense of how you were -- where you ended up?

3 MR. ELSBERND: She's woke up --

4 MS. ELSBERND: Can we take this off speaker so I can just  
5 talk to you directly?

6 MS. HARLEY: Yeah.

7 MR. ELSBERND: Then I'll put us back on after that.

8 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So you want me to stop the recording?

9 MS. ELSBERND: Hello? No. I just wanted to take it off  
10 speaker, off the speakerphone, off here, because it's going to be  
11 easier for me to hear you. I still have fluid behind my ears.

12 Okay. Would you ask the question again, please?

13 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So my question to you is going to be --  
14 so you're sitting at the third row back and you're sitting at the  
15 window and then the derailment occurs. Where do you end up?

16 MS. ELSBERND: I was sound asleep when it happened. So this  
17 is just things that my husband has told me. I guess I ended up  
18 flying eight feet in the air and hitting the luggage rack, and  
19 then I ended up stuck between two seats when I landed.

20 But prior to that I have to tell you, I've ridden Amtrak  
21 trains before from La Crosse to Chicago, and I have never seen a  
22 train car act like that before, where people couldn't get through  
23 from one car to the next. It just jostled them so much that they  
24 practically fell over.

25 I was afraid to go into the car. I didn't want to even go in

1 the observation car because it was acting so weird. So that's my  
2 memory of the whole thing.

3 My first memory is the EMT -- or actually it is the jaws of  
4 life cutting off the seat so I could get out, and the EMT rolling  
5 me onto the backboard. That's what I got hit by. I just have  
6 never seen a car act like that before. It's just back and forth,  
7 just really rough. So my feeling is something was wrong with that  
8 car.

9 MS. HARLEY: So my next question to you is, do you have some  
10 sense of how you were stuck? Were you stuck between the seat and  
11 the side of the car, the seat and the window? And were you stuck  
12 between the seat that the Fire Department had to cut away, or were  
13 you stuck in the seat behind it?

14 MS. ELSBERND: That, I don't know. Alan would have to tell  
15 you that because, like I said, the only thing I remember is them  
16 using the jaws of life to cut me out and then putting me on the  
17 backboard.

18 So we'll probably put this back on speaker for you.

19 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Alan, I'm back on speaker. So can you  
20 tell me --

21 MS. ELSBERND: You can ask Alan about that, with the jaws of  
22 life.

23 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So can you tell me which row of seats  
24 Susan was wedged between?

25 MR. ELSBERND: I think they took the second seat because she



1 was kind of under the seat ahead of where we're at.

2 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So you were in the third row --

3 MR. ELSBERND: Correct.

4 MS. HARLEY: -- so she was underneath the second row seat?

5 MR. ELSBERND: I think so. I'm not exactly sure. I didn't  
6 take enough pictures when I was there, so my memory's a little  
7 cloudy of where things wound up. I've got one of her laying after  
8 the accident when the paramedic is touching her, a couple of the  
9 cars ahead, or one of the head -- cars ahead and one of the car we  
10 were in, but that's about it.

11 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

12 MR. ELSBERND: That wasn't my focus at the time. I was more  
13 concerned about her.

14 MS. HARLEY: I certainly understand that. And this is also a  
15 question you may not be able to answer. Were there any other  
16 passengers in that car with you prior to the derailment?

17 MR. ELSBERND: Yes. And I had to watch so that they didn't  
18 step on her on the way out, because the first ones were -- that  
19 were coming through they were trying to be careful so that they  
20 didn't step on her and they were catching her wrist and stuff like  
21 that. And I finally said, don't step on her, and I stopped them  
22 from going, then they slid off on the baggage rail, the overhead,  
23 so that they didn't step on her and hurt her more.

24 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So they were exiting out of the front of  
25 the car where the door would be?

1 MR. ELSBERND: Correct, yes. Somebody came from the outside  
2 and got the door open to get out of the car.

3 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Do you know if that was an Amtrak  
4 employee?

5 MR. ELSBERND: No, I don't know for sure.

6 MS. HARLEY: Okay, all right. And how long do you think it  
7 took the emergency responders to get to the scene?

8 MR. ELSBERND: It didn't seem very long. I'm guessing maybe  
9 ten minutes.

10 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

11 MR. ELSBERND: I think they were working on the observation  
12 car before I realized they were even there.

13 MS. ELSBERND: He read that there was a young man who was  
14 late for a wedding who stopped at the crossing, you know, the  
15 cross roads, and watched and saw the whole thing happen. And he  
16 called 9-1-1, and they were there within minutes. It didn't seem  
17 like very long. It seemed like seconds to me to get there.

18 MR. ELSBERND: The response -- the response from what limited  
19 they had there was pretty good.

20 MS. ELSBERND: It was very good. The EMGs [sic], it was all  
21 just right there.

22 MR. ELSBERND: And they said they was EMS and EMTs and stuff  
23 that came from 200 miles.

24 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And, Susan, I know this is --

25 MR. ELSBERND: And I can't verify that, but that's what I was

1 told.

2 MS. HARLEY: Okay. I know this is going to be difficult.  
3 But Susan, can you tell me what injuries you sustained?

4 MS. ELSBERND: I guess --

5 MR. ELSBERND: Hang on just a second, I'll get the list.

6 MS. ELSBERND: He has an actual list of what my injuries are.

7 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

8 MS. ELSBERND: So he can tell you.

9 (Pause)

10 MR. ELSBERND: On this particular page: Polytrauma, T-7  
11 fracture, T-1 end plate compression fracture, T-11 fracture,  
12 possible epiderma vertebral at this level. Lower right  
13 hemithorax, right side rib fractures 9 and 10, left side rib  
14 fractures 7 through 9.

15 (Indiscernible) spinoius process fractures, s-p-i-n-o-u-s,  
16 process fractures, T-9 through 12, scalp hematoma, bilateral  
17 radius fractures. So that's just the one page.

18 I'm not sure if there's anything on any of the other ones.

19 MS. ELSBERND: I think that's all of it.

20 MS. HARLEY: And you were taken to Benefis, is that correct?

21 MS. ELSBERND: Yes.

22 MR. ELSBERND: Correct.

23 No evidence of displacement fracture, line does not appear --  
24 it says evidence of displacement, is what it says.

25 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

1 MR. ELSBERND: So it was fractures, not breaks, is what I  
2 understand --

3 MS. ELSBERND: I'm in a neck brace and they've got a plastic  
4 body, like body cast that I have to wear, and I have two soft  
5 casts on my arms.

6 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And how were you transported to the  
7 hospital; by ground or by air?

8 MR. ELSBERND: By air. It's helicopter.

9 MS. ELSBERND: No.

10 MR. ELSBERND: No. To the hospital was by ambulance.

11 MS. ELSBERND: It -- look, may I?

12 MR. ELSBERND: Okay.

13 MS. ELSBERND: They took me by ambulance for triage, and then  
14 I was air lifted to Benefis by MedFlight helicopter.

15 MR. ELSBERND: I think she was taken to Chester.

16 MS. ELSBERND: Chester.

17 MS. HARLEY: Okay, all right.

18 MR. ELSBERND: For treatment.

19 MS. HARLEY: So that would be --

20 MR. ELSBERND: And when the ambulance driver made the  
21 comment, he says it was a matter of time before there was an  
22 accident here, and he said it wasn't a matter of if, it was a  
23 matter of when.

24 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

25 MR. ELSBERND: I don't know what the ambulance driver's name

1 was or where he was from.

2 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

3 MR. ELSBERND: And he says they're constantly working on that  
4 section of the line.

5 MS. HARLEY: Okay. After the derailment, were the lights on  
6 or off in the car?

7 MS. ELSBERND: I don't know.

8 MR. ELSBERND: Don't remember.

9 MS. ELSBERND: I don't know.

10 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

11 MR. ELSBERND: Once this is -- I have to go back and look at  
12 the picture, but I think they were off. It had to do its own  
13 (indiscernible) if I'm not mistaken.

14 MS. HARLEY: Is it possible for you to email me the pictures  
15 so I can also see them?

16 MR. ELSBERND: Okay. What's the number to email? The same  
17 number?

18 MS. HARLEY: So if you want to -- well, you can either send  
19 it to me by text with the number or you can email me --

20 MR. ELSBERND: I'd have to do a text because I don't know how  
21 to email.

22 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

23 MR. ELSBERND: The only picture I have inside was with her  
24 laying on the floor with the paramedics over here.

25 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Yeah, so go ahead and text that to me,

1 same number.

2 MR. ELSBERND: Okay. I can do that after we're done.

3 MS. HARLEY: That's perfect. The other thing is, do you  
4 remember any kind of announcements coming over the PA system?

5 MR. ELSBERND: There was none. There wasn't no way to put  
6 the announcements over the PA system, we was disconnected from the  
7 rest of the train.

8 MS. HARLEY: Do you remember any PA announcements before the  
9 derailment?

10 MR. ELSBERND: There wouldn't have been time.

11 MS. ELSBERND: No.

12 MR. ELSBERND: It's an accident. You don't have time.

13 MS. ELSBERND: No, there were no announcements.

14 MR. ELSBERND: When we went to the triage there was the one  
15 attendant from the train was in the ambulance with us, and I heard  
16 later she had a broken arm. I don't know what her name was. It  
17 was a girl -- it was a lady.

18 MS. HARLEY: okay. Was she the attendant in your train?

19 MS. ELSBERND: Yes.

20 MR. ELSBERND: She had been through several times, yes.

21 MS. ELSBERND: She was the attendant for our train.

22 MR. ELSBERND: And she said she was going to -- well, she had  
23 said at one point that she was going to be on the train all the  
24 way through where we were supposed to get off, at Spokane.

25 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So when I was talking about the PA

1 system, I was also talking when you first got on the train, do you  
2 remember the PA system working?

3 MR. ELSBERND: It was working then, yes.

4 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

5 MR. ELSBERND: You couldn't always understand it, but it was  
6 working.

7 MS. HARLEY: Okay, all right. So during the derailment or  
8 afterwards, were you aware of any of the seats in the train car  
9 moving, like they started to spin?

10 MR. ELSBERND: No, none of -- no, I wasn't sure.

11 MS. HARLEY: All right. After the derailment --

12 MR. ELSBERND: Is that the seat that I'm in [sic]?

13 MS. HARLEY: After the derailment, what was your first  
14 contact with the Amtrak crew?

15 MR. ELSBERND: I don't know if there was any. I don't know  
16 who the people were after the fact.

17 MS. HARLEY: Okay. When you boarded the train --

18 MR. ELSBERND: Like I said, I don't know if it was an Amtrak  
19 employee that got the door open or not. I kind of helped him  
20 slide it.

21 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So after -- let me see. So when you  
22 boarded the train, was there an announcement or did any of the  
23 Amtrak employees tell you about any of the emergency procedures or  
24 the safety card that was located in your train?

25 MS. ELSBERND: No.

1 MR. ELSBERND: I don't recall hearing it.

2 MS. ELSBERND: No. No, there was no announcement. There was  
3 no --

4 MR. ELSBERND: I think I still got the safety card in some of  
5 our stuff.

6 MS. ELSBERND: There was no announcement about the safety.

7 MR. ELSBERND: Somehow it got thrown into one of our pieces  
8 of luggage or whatever.

9 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So you were not informed that there was a  
10 safety card and to read it?

11 MS. ELSBERND: No.

12 MR. ELSBERND: I don't remember hearing the announcement.

13 MS. ELSBERND: No.

14 MS. HARLEY: And at the location where -- Susan, where you  
15 were trapped, was the window next to you, was it still in place?

16 MS. ELSBERND: I don't know.

17 MR. ELSBERND: According to the picture it moved just a  
18 little bit.

19 MS. ELSBERND: I don't know. I --

20 MR. ELSBERND: I'd have to go back to the picture and look at  
21 it. I wished that I'd of took more pictures.

22 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

23 MS. ELSBERND: I don't recall anything prior to the EMT with  
24 the jaws of life cutting the seat out. I don't recall anything  
25 because I was so sound asleep.



1 MR. ELSBERND: She was sound asleep and when she woke up she  
2 was, what happened? And I think she asked the questions three or  
3 four times.

4 MS. ELSBERND: I was disoriented.

5 MR. ELSBERND: She was very disoriented. And she'd ask the  
6 question and then a couple minutes later she'd ask it again and  
7 what happened, and I said, we were in a train accident, the train  
8 tipped over. And, how did that happen? And I says, I don't know.  
9 And she asked it three or four times for sure.

10 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And do you have some sense of how long it  
11 took the Fire Department to cut her free from where she was  
12 wedged?

13 MR. ELSBERND: No, I don't.

14 MS. ELSBERND: It wasn't very long.

15 MR. ELSBERND: Maybe a half an hour after the accident until  
16 they got the jaws working and stuff, because they had to fire up  
17 the engine and get hoses hooked up and stuff.

18 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And the other thing is, you said that she  
19 was actually wedged underneath the seat?

20 MR. ELSBERND: I don't know if she was wedged so much as they  
21 needed the room so they could put her on the board so they didn't  
22 make more injuries.

23 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

24 MR. ELSBERND: She was wedged between the seats, which I  
25 worked her leg loose. Her leg was stuffed between the two seats.

1 And I worked that loose because it was putting a lot of pressure  
2 on her and that she was screaming in pain.

3 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right. Let's see what else. And  
4 just going back. You said around 12:00 o'clock you began to  
5 notice that the ride got --

6 MR. ELSBERND: As the day progressed we noticed it getting  
7 worse. But I was thinking it was probably around noon that I  
8 noticed that they were getting thrown pretty good as they come  
9 through.

10 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Have you ever been on this train before?

11 MR. ELSBERND: No.

12 MS. HARLEY: No. Okay.

13 MS. ELSBERND: I have been on trains from La Crosse to  
14 Chicago many times, but I've never seen a train car act like that.  
15 Never. Many times I've been on the La Crosse to Chicago train and  
16 never seen one act like that, just back and forth bouncing.

17 MR. ELSBERND: This was my first time on the train, but she's  
18 been on it before.

19 MS. ELSBERND: I've been on several trains and never seen a  
20 car act like that.

21 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And --

22 MS. ELSBERND: I didn't go up into it because I was afraid of  
23 it.

24 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So they put you on a backboard. How did  
25 they finally get you out of that train car?

1 MR. ELSBERND: They carried her out on a backboard.

2 MS. HARLEY: Did they carry her through that open door in the  
3 front of the car?

4 MR. ELSBERND: Correct.

5 MS. HARLEY: Okay, all right. And just an idea. Do you have  
6 some sense of exactly how many people were in the train car, or  
7 that moved by you after the derailment?

8 MR. ELSBERND: I'm thinking there was at least eight or ten  
9 that went by. I don't know, I did not count.

10 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

11 MS. ELSBERND: I have no idea.

12 MR. ELSBERND: It might have been a dozen even, I don't know.  
13 It was at least eight or ten, there might have been more.

14 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And are you aware of any other passengers  
15 that were in that car that were also trapped or had to be  
16 extricated by the Fire Department?

17 MR. ELSBERND: No, I am not aware of anybody else. I don't -  
18 - that was not my focus. My focus was Susan.

19 MS. HARLEY: I understand. Okay. So is there anything you  
20 think I should have asked you and I didn't?

21 MR. ELSBERND: At the present time I can't think of anything.

22 MS. ELSBERND: No.

23 MS. HARLEY: Okay, all right.

24 MR. ELSBERND: And that's not to say that I won't down the  
25 line, but at the present time nothing is coming to mind.

1 MS. HARLEY: Okay, all right. So what I always tell people  
2 is, is that number one, if you think of anything, please feel free  
3 to give me a call and let me know.

4 Have you been contacted by our TDA Specialist? That's our  
5 Transportation Disaster Assistant Specialist, Mr. Kim Frierson?

6 MR. ELSBERND: I haven't been by her. I've had a Lisa Taylor  
7 when I was out there and I've had a -- oh, I can't think of her  
8 name right now. I've got it in my phone book or phone thing,  
9 Amtrak representative. This is all I've been contacted by.

10 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So as part of the --

11 MR. ELSBERND: (Indiscernible) we get manage (indiscernible)  
12 where they're trying to keep us happy.

13 MS. HARLEY: Yeah. So part of the NTSB investigation, we are  
14 required by Congress to provide what we call a TDA Specialist to  
15 the family. That's kind of the liaison between you and the  
16 investigators in the accident. And if you have any questions or  
17 concerns you can contact the TDA Specialist. And also, that  
18 Specialist will let you know any time any kind of documents or any  
19 reports that we release or going to be released, they will let you  
20 know ahead of time.

21 So I guess my question is, is it easier for the Specialist to  
22 get in touch with you by mail or by email?

23 MR. ELSBERND: Can they text it to me?

24 MS. HARLEY: Well, they're going to need to provide you with  
25 documents and they're not going to be able to text a document.

1 MR. ELSBERND: Email is probably going to be easiest.

2 MS. HARLEY: Okay. What's your email?

3 MR. ELSBERND: Mine is [REDACTED]

4 MS. HARLEY: [REDACTED]

5 MR. ELSBERND: I believe so.

6 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

7 MR. ELSBERND: I don't know what hers is.

8 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So yours is [REDACTED] --

9 MR. ELSBERND: Al. Al, not Alan, Al.

10 MS. HARLEY: Oh. [REDACTED]

11 MR. ELSBERND: I believe so.

12 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So if you have not heard from her in the  
13 next week or so, please give me a call because it's very  
14 important. The preliminary report is about to be released and we  
15 are required to notify all the victims before we release it to the  
16 public. So I need to make sure that we're in communication with  
17 you.

18 MR. ELSBERND: Yeah. Because after the accident at the hotel  
19 I had talked with a guy that used to be in the recovery department  
20 or putting trains back on the track to get them out of the  
21 accident site. And he said something, they mentioned that it was  
22 too worn, that the rails would have warped and he said it wasn't  
23 worn enough to make more. He had worked that area.

24 MS. HARLEY: Do you know who that gentleman was?

25 MR. ELSBERND: No. He was staying at the -- oh, what the

1 hell is the hotel is that -- Great Falls Inn? It's right behind  
2 the hospital there.

3 MS. HARLEY: Okay, all right.

4 MR. ELSBERND: Because it moved up to where they were parking  
5 all their supply vehicles for Benefis.

6 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

7 MR. ELSBERND: You know, it was actually on two sides of the  
8 street. The street was on two sides. I think it was Great Falls  
9 Inn.

10 MS. HARLEY: Okay, all right. We'll find that.

11 Okay. Well, do you have any questions for me right now?

12 MR. ELSBERND: Who was the Specialist that I was supposed to  
13 get in contact with me?

14 MS. HARLEY: Her first name is Kim, K-i-m, and her last name  
15 is Frierson, F-r-i-e-r-s-o-n.

16 MR. ELSBERND: F-r-i-e-r-s-o-n?

17 MS. HARLEY: S-o-n.

18 MR. ELSBERND: Okay. And she should be calling me or being  
19 in contact?

20 MS. HARLEY: That's correct.

21 MR. ELSBERND: I don't check my email very often.

22 Do you want to give them yours or no?

23 MS. HARLEY: Would you rather her to actually send it to your  
24 home address?

25 MR. ELSBERND: Well --

1 MS. ELSBERND: I would prefer email.

2 MR. ELSBERND: You would prefer email so we have the hard  
3 copy?

4 MS. ELSBERND: Email.

5 MR. ELSBERND: You can email us and you can send the hard  
6 copy too. We've got a mailman that doesn't always get stuff here.

7 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

8 MR. ELSBERND: He gests funny or he starts opening envelopes,  
9 and I've said something and I can't get him to stop.

10 MR. ELSBERND: I would like it emailed.

11 MS. HARLEY: Okay. I tell you what, can you confirm your  
12 mailing address, please?

13 MS. ELSBERND: Yes.

14 MR. ELSBERND: [REDACTED]  
15 [REDACTED]

16 MS. HARLEY: [REDACTED] Just a second. And can you spell the  
17 street name for me?

18 MR. ELSBERND: The street name?

19 MS. HARLEY: Yeah. [REDACTED]

20 MS. ELSBERND: [REDACTED]

21 MR. ELSBERND: [REDACTED]

22 MS. HARLEY: [REDACTED]

23 MS. ELSBERND: [REDACTED]

24 MR. ELSBERND: [REDACTED]

25 MS. HARLEY: Got it.

1 MS. ELSBERND: [REDACTED].

2 MR. ELSBERND: [REDACTED]

3 MS. HARLEY: [REDACTED]

4 MS. ELSBERND: Yes.

5 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Got it. I will forward all this  
6 information to Kim and she should be in contact with you. Okay?

7 MS. ELSBERND: Okay.

8 MR. ELSBERND: Yeah. This is the easiest ever to catch me  
9 at.

10 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Well, thank you both for taking the time  
11 to talk to me. I know this was very traumatic.

12 MR. ELSBERND: So we can find a good time, so we have the  
13 time to talk, yeah.

14 MS. HARLEY: Well, I certainly do --

15 MR. ELSBERND: Because there's people coming over to see her  
16 this afternoon, and I'll be back out of the house trying to get  
17 some more stuff done.

18 MS. HARLEY: Well, I tell you what, thank you very much and  
19 both of you have a good day. Okay?

20 MR. ELSBERND: I'll forward that one picture of where she  
21 landed, and that's about all I can really give you, that I haven't  
22 seen on the news or otherwise anyway.

23 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Well, anything that you can give us, it's  
24 very important. Because one of the things that we're looking at  
25 is the safety of the passengers inside a train car. When it



1 derails, we look at how a passenger is injured and what inside the  
2 car injured the passenger. And that way we can potentially make  
3 safety recommendations to make it safer, and that's what we're  
4 looking at.

5 MR. ELSBERND: Because she had a gash in her forehead, and I  
6 think it caught a knob. The picture I send you, the blood you see  
7 was all from here.

8 MS. HARLEY: Okay, all right. So, thank you again, sir.

9 MS. ELSBERND: All right. Thank you.

10 MR. ELSBERND: All right. Till then.

11 MS. HARLEY: Bye.

12 MR. ELSBERND: Bye.

13 MS. HARLEY: And interview is concluded at 12:17 p.m., that's  
14 Eastern Daylight Time.

15 (Whereupon, at 12:17 p.m. EDT, interview concluded.)  
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF:            FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT  
                                      NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA  
                                      ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021  
                                      Interview of Alan and Susan Elsbernd

ACCIDENT NO.:                RRD21MR017

PLACE:                        Via telephone

DATE:                         October 17, 2021

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.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gretchen L. Schultz  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT \*

NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA \* Accident No.: RRD21MR017

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: MARA EVANS, Amtrak Passenger

KELLY WISNESKI, Amtrak Passenger

Via telephone

Monday,

October 11, 2021

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

KARINA JACOBSEN, Investigator  
Volpe National Transportation System Center

KRISTINE SEVERSON, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe National Transportation System Center

MARY CARLSON BIS, Sr. Director of Emergency Management  
Amtrak

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Mara Evans and Kelly Wisneski:

By Ms. Harley

6

I N T E R V I E W

(5:05 p.m.)

1  
2  
3 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. So, let's go ahead and get started.  
4 So, once again, my name is Sheryl Harley and I am the assistant  
5 investigator in charge of this accident investigation involving  
6 the Amtrak derailment in Joplin, Montana that occurred on  
7 September the 25th, 2021 at approximately 3:47 p.m. So, this is  
8 going to be in regards to NTSB Investigation RRD21MR017.

9 And ladies, if I can ask you to identify yourselves, please  
10 for the recording?

11 MS. EVANS: Yep, I'm Mara Evans (ph.), I was on the train.

12 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, my name is Kelly Wisneski, I was also a  
13 passenger on the train.

14 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And in addition to you two ladies, we  
15 also have members of the investigative team.

16 So, Kris, would you want to start?

17 MS. SEVERSON: Hi there, my name is Kris Severson. I am a  
18 mechanical engineer at the Volpe National Transportation System  
19 Center part of the U.S. Department of Transportation and my  
20 colleague, Kari (ph.), and I were out at the accident site  
21 investigating. We try to identify how people were hurt in the  
22 train and use that to guide some of our research to try to find  
23 ways to mitigate these hazards and also update safety standards  
24 and regulations to make improvements where we can. Thank you for  
25 doing this interview with us.

1 MS. WISNESKI: No problem.

2 MS. EVANS: For sure.

3 MS. HARLEY: Kari?

4 MS. JACOBSEN: Hi there. Kari Jacobsen, I work with Kris,  
5 and we were out at the accident a couple weeks ago. I just want  
6 to thank you for taking the time to share your experience with us.  
7 It really helps us try and understand what happened and piece  
8 everything together. So, thanks.

9 MS. EVANS: For sure.

10 MS. HARLEY: And Mary, would you like to introduce yourself?

11 MS. CARLSON-BIS: Sure. My name is Mary Carlson-Bis, I'm the  
12 senior director of emergency management at Amtrak. I lead  
13 Amtrak's Incident Response Team and we're having some severe  
14 weather here in Chicago right now so I'm going to turn the camera  
15 off and keep my notes. I'm on both lines.

16 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

17 MS. SEVERSON: Yeah, we're also in Chicago, so depending on  
18 the weather, might have to make some type of run for it.

19 MS. HARLEY: Okay. I'm not quite sure if I've done this, so  
20 okay today is October the 11th again, 2021, and it's 5:05 p.m. and  
21 that would be Eastern Daylight Time. And it's 4:05, is that  
22 correct, in Chicago?

23 MS. SEVERSON: Yep.

24 MS. JACOBSEN: Yeah.

25 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right, got it right.

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INTERVIEW OF MARA EVANS AND KELLY WISNESKI

BY MS. HARLEY:

MS. HARLEY: So, ladies, what I'd like you to do if you don't mind is to start with when you boarded the train and your initial contact with the train crew? And then kind of walk us through the day of the accident of what you were doing and then through the accident sequence and what you experienced?

MS. EVANS: For sure. So, we boarded the train at Union Station in Chicago, we briefly went into the little, like, roomette waiting room area, like, the --

MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, the lounge.

MS. EVANS: The business class lounge thing and then boarded the train from there with the other roomette guests. So, we interacted with, I guess, the ticket person.

MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, there were a couple different crew members. I don't know if they were just at Union Station or if they were on the train as well. But yeah, a couple different people helped us get into lines, get our tickets immediately before getting on the train. I think we saw Tashi (ph.)?

MS. EVANS: Yeah.

MS. WISNESKI: Tashi was there.

MS. EVANS: We on the train, Tashi was our --

MS. WISNESKI: Attendant.

MS. EVANS: Attendant. So, we saw him. So, he came by and



1 introduced himself.

2 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah. I think we saw Tashi immediately upon  
3 boarding the train. He showed us, like --

4 MS. EVANS: Where to put our bags.

5 MS. WISNESKI: Directed us where to go and where to put our  
6 bags and then he came by probably within the first hour or two.

7 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

8 MS. WISNESKI: Just knocked on our door, introduced himself,  
9 yeah, I don't really remember.

10 MS. EVANS: Yeah, pretty much.

11 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, I think he told us about dinner and  
12 where to get coffee, that kind of thing.

13 MS. EVANS: Yeah, and then the woman who -- I don't remember  
14 -- I think her name was Heather -- who was doing dinner  
15 reservations came by so we did that and then we walked around a  
16 little bit. We went and sat in the observation car for a minute  
17 and then we went back to our room and watched Fast and the Furious  
18 8. Not the best of the Fast and the Furious franchise, but that's  
19 not the point here. And then we went to dinner, I think we were,  
20 like, at 8:00 for dinner and Tashi had put our bed down while we  
21 were at dinner, and then we went back and hung out for a little  
22 bit. We were waiting for our friends Mike and Megan to get on in  
23 Minneapolis, so they came -- they got on, what, around 10:00?

24 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, I think they got on pretty much -- I  
25 think it was around on schedule. So, that was the plan was -- we

1 had booked the tickets at the same time as our friends Megan and  
2 Mike and so, we were automatically assigned rooms next to each  
3 other. So, we were right across the hall from Megan and Mike.

4 MS. EVANS: Yeah, we were across from each other.

5 MS. WISNESKI: I think we were in room five or room six.

6 MS. EVANS: Room five and they were in room six, I think?

7 MS. WISNESKI: And we were in what I believe was the first  
8 passenger car on the train.

9 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

10 MS. WISNESKI: I think right behind the two -- I think we  
11 were in 2730?

12 MS. EVANS: That sounds right.

13 MS. WISNESKI: I think we were in the first passenger --  
14 like, the Seattle coach -- the Seattle sleeper car that was, I  
15 think, the first sleeper car on the train behind what I think were  
16 the two locomotive trains and maybe the baggage car or the  
17 attendants' car or something like that.

18 MS. EVANS: Yeah, something -- yeah. So, then we -- they got  
19 on, we had, like, some wine with them. We hung out in the  
20 observation car until probably around, like, 1:00 a.m. and then  
21 went back and went to sleep and then we woke up probably around,  
22 like, what, 7:30?

23 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, 7:00, 7:30 and got breakfast.

24 MS. EVANS: Yeah, because we wanted to get off in Minot,  
25 North Dakota.

1 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah.

2 MS. EVANS: So, we had breakfast, got off in Minot, got back  
3 onto the train, we kind of went into our separate rooms and napped  
4 for a little -- like just hung out. We did that holding game my  
5 mom gave us and then we went and had -- we made a lunch  
6 reservation, so we went and had lunch and then after lunch we went  
7 to the observation car probably around -- we left the observation  
8 car --

9 MS. WISNESKI: 1:00 or 2:00?

10 MS. EVANS: Yeah, probably around 2:00. I think we were  
11 there for about an hour and we left around 3:00 and went back and  
12 we had decided to go take a nap in our rooms, which was incredibly  
13 lucky. So, we -- at the time of the derailment, we'd been in our  
14 rooms for probably like 45 to 30 minutes and were just kind of  
15 hanging out there, like, napping.

16 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, napping.

17 MS. EVANS: Listening to a podcast.

18 MS. WISNESKI: We had, like, partially shifted the, like,  
19 roomette so that the seats --

20 MS. EVANS: The seats were kind of down.

21 MS. WISNESKI: They were, like, partially down.

22 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

23 MS. WISNESKI: So, we were -- both of us were almost  
24 horizontal and basically, you know, sleeping, unconscious when the  
25 train derailed.

1 MS. EVANS: Yeah. So, then we started -- when the train  
2 derailed, I guess it kind of felt like a lot of jostling.

3 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, it felt like airplane turbulence.

4 MS. EVANS: Yeah, like, pretty bad airplane turbulence and we  
5 didn't know what was going on. Kelly's backpack was on one of the  
6 hooks above her seat and I was worried it was going to fall on her  
7 head, but it didn't, so that was good and then we came to a sudden  
8 stop and --

9 MS. WISNESKI: The power went out.

10 MS. EVANS: The power went out, the -- one of the dining car  
11 ran by, she -- I don't know what her name is, but she has red hair  
12 -- and told us -- I think he had just gotten --

13 MS. WISNESKI: I thought it was Heather?

14 MS. EVANS: No, Heather was the other one that I saw with the  
15 short hair -- the short, blonde hair.

16 MS. WISNESKI: Well, it was one of the dining car attendants  
17 that ran back towards the back of the train.

18 MS. EVANS: Yeah, towards the back of the train, so, like,  
19 headed towards where the cars had separated and was like stay in  
20 your rooms. Sorry, my phone is trying to organize trivia and I  
21 don't know how to turn off the message notifications. So, we  
22 stayed in our room for a little bit and then we started seeing  
23 ambulances. We were on the side with the service road, so we  
24 could see --

25 MS. WISNESKI: We were on the north side of the train.

1 MS. EVANS: Yeah, the north side of the train, so we could  
2 see ambulances going by and cars going by. And then we started  
3 seeing people outside and people were -- in our car were starting  
4 to go out into the hall to try and figure out what was going on,  
5 to talk to the other passengers just to get some idea of what had  
6 happened because we didn't have any idea.

7 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, we could definitely see down to the back  
8 of the train out the window to the back of our car, we could see  
9 --

10 MS. EVANS: Yeah, like, between where the cars connected,  
11 those doors.

12 MS. WISNESKI: Right. We could see that the car behind us  
13 was clearly askew.

14 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

15 MS. WISNESKI: So, we -- there were, like -- there were  
16 definitely a couple of clues that something had gone very wrong.

17 MS. EVANS: Pretty wrong because initially it kind of seemed  
18 like oh, this isn't that -- like, from our perspective, it hadn't  
19 seemed like a huge deal.

20 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, it felt like maybe there was -- you  
21 know, my first --

22 MS. EVANS: The train had come to a sudden stop.

23 MS. WISNESKI: My first guess was, you know, we had come to a  
24 sudden stop, maybe there was something on the tracks ahead and we  
25 had to take --

1 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

2 MS. WISNESKI: We had to make an immediate stop -- you know,  
3 a stop so hard that we were like -- you know, a really  
4 uncomfortably hard stop.

5 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

6 MS. WISNESKI: Like, we were definitely jostled around our  
7 roomette.

8 MS. EVANS: At one point I think I was kind of worried that  
9 we were going to tip over.

10 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, there was definitely jostling side to  
11 side and it felt like maybe the car or the car behind us was kind  
12 of, like, hitting the ties. It was definitely kind of really  
13 bumpy as we made that sudden stop.

14 MS. EVANS: Yeah, and swaying.

15 MS. WISNESKI: And swaying, yeah. So, there were -- we had a  
16 couple of clues that, like --

17 MS. EVANS: Things weren't as they should be.

18 MS. WISNESKI: You know, maybe we had derailed or something  
19 was happening and that was that there were people -- other  
20 passengers or -- I don't think they were crew members, I think  
21 they were other passengers that were --

22 MS. EVANS: Out and about.

23 MS. WISNESKI: That were out and about, you know, that we  
24 could see on the sides of the cars. Pretty soon, I think we saw  
25 ambulances or other, like, service vehicles that were coming to

1 help with, you know, we didn't know at the time, but whatever was  
2 happening. Clearly, the crew members -- there was something very  
3 unusual going on with the way that they reacted and were clearly  
4 going to help with some -- whatever the severe situation was  
5 towards the back of the train.

6 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

7 MS. WISNESKI: And then we saw through the window at the back  
8 of the car that the car behind us were very askew and still mostly  
9 upright, but, you know, not on the same tracks that we were on.

10 MS. EVANS: I will say I thought the crew did a good job  
11 trying to keep people calm.

12 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah. They kept us kind of in the dark.

13 MS. EVANS: Yeah, kind of in the dark. But I doubt that they  
14 knew exactly what was happening yet either.

15 MS. WISNESKI: Right, and we were probably not the car that,  
16 like, needed to be informed of everything that was going on.  
17 Everyone in our car, I think, was able to exit the car with very  
18 minor injuries.

19 MS. EVANS: Yeah, like, I think Brandon had hit his elbow  
20 pretty hard and you have a bruise on your back.

21 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah.

22 MS. EVANS: I had, like, a small bruise on my leg, but no  
23 major injuries from us.

24 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah.

25 MS. EVANS: And then we -- it seemed kind of apparent that,

1 like -- basically, as soon as it happened we were both kind of  
2 like we should pack up all of our stuff that's in the car.

3 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah.

4 MS. EVANS: Because we didn't know what was going on and we  
5 wanted to make sure that we had, like, our ID's, and passports,  
6 and vaccination cards, and all of that stuff. So, we packed  
7 everything up into our bags -- into our -- like, our backpacks and  
8 were kind of ready to go and they had told us that evacuation was  
9 the last possible --

10 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, there was -- I don't remember which crew  
11 member it was, but there was definitely a crew member that was  
12 still around the car and maybe Tashi was as well?

13 MS. EVANS: I think Tashi was down on the bottom floor. I  
14 think that the woman -- the short haired woman from the dining car  
15 was there.

16 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, the short haired woman from the dining  
17 car was there and she was the one that said don't worry,  
18 evacuation of the cars is the last possible resort. And we were  
19 -- at that point, we were kind of like --

20 MS. EVANS: There are people outside.

21 MS. WISNESKI: It feels like we're at that resort now.

22 MS. EVANS: Yeah. So, then we also were, like, able -- we  
23 were like oh, great, if we're going to get off the train, we  
24 should go to the bathroom and, like, go get water in our water  
25 bottles. So, we did all of those things and then they were like



1 all right, we are evacuating and we were pretty near --

2 MS. WISNESKI: And that was maybe 20 minutes, 15 minutes  
3 after -- you know, after we had derailed was when we were probably  
4 evacuating, I would say.

5 MS. EVANS: Yeah. So, then we were near the back of the car,  
6 so most of the other passengers in our car evacuated before us and  
7 then we were, like, going down the stairs and we were able to grab  
8 our -- we asked if we could grab our luggage and one of the Amtrak  
9 employees said we could if we did it quickly. So, we grabbed our  
10 suitcases and were able to get out of there.

11 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah. So, we exited the train on the south  
12 side and that was when -- well, it wasn't really until we got off  
13 the train that it was really clear what had happened.

14 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

15 MS. WISNESKI: Or at least -- maybe not clear what had  
16 happened, but clear that we were derailed.

17 MS. EVANS: Yeah, because we couldn't see the three cars that  
18 were detached yet. We didn't know there were three cars until we  
19 were actually on the bus, leaving the field.

20 MS. WISNESKI: Right. So, we got off on the south side, I  
21 think it was the -- a prep cook?

22 MS. EVANS: Yeah, a prep cook, a line cook was like --

23 MS. WISNESKI: Was directing people.

24 MS. EVANS: Because they also kept telling us we were going  
25 to do a head count.

1 MS. WISNESKI: Right. They told us to get off the train  
2 because we were doing a head count and then we would get back on  
3 the train, which made no sense to us.

4 MS. EVANS: And then we would probably get back on the train,  
5 which we were like that seems unlikely.

6 MS. WISNESKI: But yeah, so we brought our stuff with us, got  
7 off the train on the south side. I think it was a line cook that  
8 directed us where to go just -- and told us everyone was gathering  
9 together on the north side of the tracks.

10 MS. EVANS: The thing I remember about being on the south  
11 side of the tracks too is there were, like, springs and stuff  
12 around which I wasn't sure if that was just, like, normal debris,  
13 or if that was from the train.

14 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, that's true. So, we walked east around  
15 the cars that were derailed and then got on the south side of the  
16 tracks.

17 MS. EVANS: Helped some other people to get down who weren't  
18 -- like, we were by far one of the youngest besides maybe  
19 children.

20 MS. WISNESKI: We were one of the youngest groups of people  
21 in the car.

22 MS. EVANS: So, we were helping some older folks to get  
23 across the tracks and --

24 MS. WISNESKI: -- down onto the service road.

25 MS. EVANS: -- down onto the service road.

1 MS. WISNESKI: And -- yeah, and from there it was just really  
2 chaotic, but there wasn't really -- I think we were probably some  
3 of the last people to evacuate, so I think some of the more  
4 emergent injuries or fatalities had already been dealt with or  
5 were already sort of being taken care of. So, it -- I mean, our  
6 immediate reaction was, like, how can we help, what can we do as  
7 we very young people who, you know, had very minor injuries. It  
8 was pretty chaotic and there wasn't really all that much to do  
9 besides just make sure that we were sort of out of the way of any  
10 cars, or emergency vehicles who needed to use the service road to  
11 get to more emergent cases, or just, you know, help --

12 MS. EVANS: Help other people.

13 MS. WISNESKI: Kind of make sure that other people didn't  
14 have any trouble getting over the tracks or carrying their luggage  
15 around.

16 MS. EVANS: Or were -- there was that woman who was  
17 hysterically crying, I tried to calm her down.

18 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, some people were definitely in --

19 MS. EVANS: There was very different states of shock.

20 MS. WISNESKI: Very visible shock, yeah. We were all  
21 probably in shock. Yeah, then it was probably 45 minutes, an hour  
22 before the first wave of busses and shuttles came.

23 MS. EVANS: Yeah, because we were just standing there for a  
24 long time.

25 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, so they -- so, it wasn't until maybe 10

1 or 15 minutes after those busses and shuttles came that there was  
2 someone that was actually like okay, let's get -- not a head  
3 count, but let's get like a --

4 MS. EVANS: You had to sign out before you got on the busses.

5 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, let's get a list of people that are here  
6 and let's get their contact information.

7 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

8 MS. WISNESKI: That was one of my first thoughts was like I  
9 feel like this should be happening and it didn't happen until  
10 right before people were getting on the shuttles on the busses.  
11 They said -- that was really the only clear directions was where  
12 to gather after we got off the train and that before you got on a  
13 shuttle or a bus to go to Chester -- they made it clear that we  
14 were going -- we were probably going to a town called Chester and  
15 that you needed to give this single, individual with a safety vest  
16 on your name, and your number, and maybe your date of birth before  
17 getting on the shuttle or bus.

18 MS. EVANS: Maybe your number, I don't remember what they  
19 asked us for.

20 MS. WISNESKI: And that was a pretty good system, you know,  
21 emergency management wise for a while. But then as soon there  
22 were like multiple shuttles and multiple busses and people -- I  
23 don't know if they were in charge or just temporarily in charge --  
24 people that put themselves in charge started, you know, trying to  
25 triage people and get them into cars and busses by level of

1 emergency.

2 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

3 MS. WISNESKI: You know, after the most emergent people were  
4 in ambulances, they started to say --

5 MS. EVANS: Who is injured.

6 MS. WISNESKI: Okay, people that are injured, or people that  
7 are older, people that shouldn't be, you know, standing out here  
8 in 84 degrees, those people should be getting in the first wave of  
9 busses or should be in the first couple of busses in the second  
10 wave. That's when the system of the line that had started to form  
11 for the busses and --

12 MS. EVANS: Kind of fell apart.

13 MS. WISNESKI: That's when that kind of fell apart because  
14 there was sort of a line that had formed for it and so it was  
15 pretty orderly for people to give their contact information and  
16 their name and get on the bus, and then as soon as the --

17 MS. EVANS: The first bus left, it kind of went out the door  
18 because we also had to move into the field.

19 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, for the second wave it was -- yeah, we  
20 moved at a certain point because it was pretty dusty and we needed  
21 to make more room for vehicles and stuff to get by on the service  
22 road.

23 MS. EVANS: For more busses and vehicles, yeah. That was  
24 when that man who was, like, in his mid 60's was like no, I'm not  
25 young or, like, he was like no, I'm not old.

1 MS. WISNESKI: Right, yeah.

2 MS. EVANS: They were -- yeah, because we were like hey,  
3 like, you can go in front of us and he was like no, I'm not old  
4 and we were like we're in our mid 20's like --

5 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, you can go ahead of us.

6 MS. EVANS: Not -- yeah, we were like please go first. Not  
7 to be like ageist, it's just like --

8 MS. WISNESKI: The busses and the shuttles initially pulled  
9 into the field that was adjacent to the tracks.

10 MS. EVANS: And then they told us that they were worried  
11 about the muffler causing a fire in the field, which was a really  
12 fun thing to tell people after they had just gone through this.

13 MS. WISNESKI: It was really dry.

14 MS. EVANS: Yeah, it was really dry.

15 MS. WISNESKI: So, then they went back out of the field and  
16 they got on the service road itself.

17 MS. EVANS: Yeah, and then we were on the bus.

18 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, probably an hour-and-a-half after the  
19 derailment we were on the bus.

20 MS. EVANS: Yeah, probably that and then when were on the bus  
21 is when we realized that it was three cars, not two cars that had  
22 gotten detached and flipped over.

23 MS. WISNESKI: Right. As soon as we were pulling away  
24 farther from the accident.

25 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

1 MS. WISNESKI: And then we were taken to the senior center.

2 MS. EVANS: Yeah, and then there was also -- there were a  
3 bunch of different lists floating around of like --

4 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, we probably signed five different lists.

5 MS. EVANS: Yeah, and our friends, like, if they got a list,  
6 they sign our -- us for us as well.

7 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah.

8 MS. EVANS: Also, the weather -- just a quick update there is  
9 looking maybe bad, so if the tornado sirens go off, we will have  
10 to probably cut this short.

11 MS. HARLEY: Not a problem. So, are you two finished and I  
12 can ask a couple of follow-up questions before you have to run?

13 MS. EVANS: That might be the most concise thing.

14 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So -- all right, so question, when you  
15 got on the train, did the -- did anyone of the crew provide you  
16 with any information as far as emergency evacuation instructions,  
17 was there a PA announcement to tell you about the safety cards on  
18 the train, anything like that?

19 MS. EVANS: Not that I remember. I don't remember any  
20 announcement; we were just kind of going through what was in our  
21 car and the safety card was there. So, I remember looking over it  
22 and being like hah, we'll never need this.

23 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, I definitely remember reading the safety  
24 card at least once and you just kind of spend so much time out of  
25 windows that I was kind of curious how the windows came apart.

1 But I don't remember any announcement or, you know, words from any  
2 of the crew members about looking at the safety car.

3 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Do you know if the PA system was actually  
4 working in your car?

5 MS. WISNESKI: It was, but the volume kept going in and out.

6 MS. EVANS: Yeah, and there was a volume control in the car  
7 that didn't really seem to do anything.

8 MS. WISNESKI: It did a little bit, but it wasn't the most  
9 effective volume control.

10 MS. EVANS: Yeah, it wasn't the most effective, so we could  
11 hear most of the announcements but it would cut out kind of and we  
12 wouldn't always realize that an announcement was initially  
13 happening because it was pretty soft.

14 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah.

15 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right, you said that the lights went  
16 out in the car?

17 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

18 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, I think the lights went out and Mike, at  
19 one point, said that the toilet wasn't flushing, which we knew  
20 didn't really happen when the power was out.

21 MS. EVANS: Yeah, because the power had gone out previously,  
22 like, when we had done a stop or something, so we were kind of  
23 familiar with what was going on there.

24 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right, and by the way, when you were  
25 talking about Mike and Megan, you're talking about Mike Hoffer



1 (ph.) and Megan Vandervest (ph.), is that right?

2 MS. WISNESKI: Yep.

3 MS. HARLEY: Okay. I just wanted to make sure. So, go back  
4 to -- you said that a friend of yours, Brandon, was injured? Is  
5 this Brandon -- what is Brandon's last name?

6 MS. WISNESKI: It starts with an R.

7 MS. HARLEY: Randalls (ph.)?

8 MS. WISNESKI: Yes.

9 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

10 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So, when you left the car, was Brandon in  
11 the same car near you at the time?

12 MS. WISNESKI: He was -- yeah, he was closer to the back of  
13 the car by a few rooms. I had noticed that he -- when we were  
14 leaving Union Station -- he has very distinct pink hair and I had  
15 noticed that he was by himself and then when we were getting off  
16 of the car, he had mentioned that he had, like, hit his elbow and  
17 then he again was by -- yeah, he had, like, scraped his elbow.  
18 So, we had noticed that he was by himself and I was basically like  
19 I wouldn't want to be by myself and go through this and, like, not  
20 be able to talk to people about it. So, I was like do you want to  
21 come, like, be part of our little group, so that was how we met  
22 him.

23 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And can you estimate how many passengers  
24 were in the car with you that evacuated with you?

25 MS. WISNESKI: I feel like most of the rooms in our car were

1 full if not all of them.

2 MS. EVANS: Yeah, I think so.

3 MS. WISNESKI: And maybe there's ten roomettes, eight  
4 roomettes?

5 MS. EVANS: Yeah, something like that.

6 MS. WISNESKI: So, I would -- I really can't speak to the  
7 bottom level of the train, but on the top level of the train there  
8 were probably --

9 MS. EVANS: 20 to 30 people?

10 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, 20 people from the top of the train ish  
11 (sic) that evacuated with us, so maybe 30 -- estimate 30 total  
12 from the car.

13 MS. HARLEY: And everyone evacuated through the same train  
14 car door that you did -- loading door that you did?

15 MS. EVANS: I believe so, yeah.

16 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, from what I saw, I think we exited from  
17 the south door that was in the center of the car.

18 MS. EVANS: Yeah, like, we had to -- we went down the stairs  
19 there because we couldn't go back to where the car behind us had,  
20 like, derailed.

21 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And you said that there was an Amtrak  
22 employee pretty much there most of the time with the passengers in  
23 that car?

24 MS. EVANS: I believe so.

25 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah. I think -- I mean, it -- yeah, it felt

1 like most of them -- if there were any of them that were, you  
2 know, in our same car ahead of us, most of them had gone back to  
3 assist with again, whatever was happening. But I do think that at  
4 least Tashi was always sort of in the car, if not a second person  
5 and there were -- there was two or three people that were helping  
6 with the evacuation in the car itself whether that was, like,  
7 right inside of the door that we were exiting or helping people  
8 down from the outside of the car.

9 MS. EVANS: Yeah. I remember -- the people that I remember  
10 seeing while we were on the car before we were evacuating were the  
11 short-haired woman from the dining car who had taken our dinner  
12 reservation and Tashi. But I don't know, like, if they stayed  
13 there the entire time because we were kind of just by our rooms  
14 which were a bit down the hall.

15 MS. WISNESKI: Right.

16 MS. HARLEY: So, I gather since you actually didn't know what  
17 was going on, neither one of you called 911, is that correct?

18 MS. EVANS: No.

19 MS. WISNESKI: No.

20 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

21 MS. WISNESKI: We did not.

22 MS. EVANS: Neither of us -- because we were talking to a  
23 woman who had been in the observation car when we were on the bus  
24 to the senior center and she was like that was my immediate  
25 reaction and it had not occurred to either of us.

1 MS. WISNESKI: Right. Probably just because we were like we  
2 don't know this is an emergency.

3 MS. EVANS: We didn't know what was going on, so we didn't  
4 know it was, like, a full-on emergency because we had just again,  
5 felt, like, that pretty hard-core jostling and swaying, but not  
6 the rest of it.

7 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And do you know the name of the woman you  
8 talked to on the bus that was in the observation car?

9 MS. EVANS: I think Morgan?

10 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah.

11 MS. EVANS: Yeah, Morgan.

12 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right, and did either one of you take  
13 photographs by any chance?

14 MS. WISNESKI: We both did.

15 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Is it possible that you can email me a  
16 copy of those photographs?

17 MS. EVANS: Yeah, we can do that.

18 MS. HARLEY: Awesome. Okay, and last thing I always ask  
19 people and people always ask me why, well, I'm going to ask what  
20 your ages are because one of the things that we do is we kind of  
21 do like a demographic workup. We look at ages, and sexes, and  
22 also the type of injuries that were received. And so, Mara, how  
23 old are you?

24 MS. EVANS: I'm 26.

25 MS. HARLEY: Kelly?

1 MS. WISNESKI: I'm 25 and also, the Morgan that we talked to  
2 was Morgan Grosso, G R O S S O.

3 MS. HARLEY: Morgan Grosso, and she said she was on the  
4 observation car?

5 MS. EVANS: Yeah, her and her husband were in the observation  
6 car and we also had talked to Zach, who had found the other Zach,  
7 who had passed away.

8 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And -- okay, and you don't know what that  
9 Zach's name was?

10 MS. EVANS: I don't know what his last name is, no.

11 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right, and okay, let's see -- and  
12 neither one of you went to the hospital there?

13 MS. EVANS: No.

14 MS. WISNESKI: No.

15 MS. HARLEY: No? Did either one of you have to go to the  
16 hospital later on?

17 MS. EVANS: No.

18 MS. WISNESKI: No.

19 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right, and that's -- I'm finished  
20 with my questions.

21 Kari, if you want to start?

22 MS. JACOBSEN: I don't have any further questions. But thank  
23 you for sharing your experience and what you remember from the  
24 accident.

25 MS. HARLEY: Okay, thank you.

1 Kris?

2 MS. WISNESKI: Yep.

3 MS. SEVERSON: Yeah, you've already answered all the  
4 questions that I would normally ask, so I don't have anything  
5 further. Thank you for doing this.

6 MS. HARLEY: Okay, Mary, was there anything that you wanted  
7 to ask?

8 MS. CARLSON-BIS: No, I don't think so. I just wanted to  
9 thank you for helping people evacuate safely. I appreciate that.

10 MS. WISNESKI: Yep.

11 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So, ladies, once again, I really do  
12 appreciate -- we really do appreciate you taking time to do this.  
13 This is very important and it kind of helps us in our  
14 investigation. So, what I always tell people is that you will be  
15 -- if you haven't already, you will be contacted by the  
16 transportation disaster assistance specialists with the NTSB.  
17 That person is going to be your liaison between yourself and the  
18 investigative team. If you have any questions or concerns, please  
19 reach out. You have my information; you can also call me as well.

20 So, what's going to happen within the next couple of weeks,  
21 there's going to be a preliminary report that comes out and by law  
22 we're required to notify the passengers, the victims in any kind  
23 of an accident first before we notify the public. So, you will be  
24 notified and the report will come out on the [www.NTSB.gov](http://www.NTSB.gov). It's a  
25 public website and it's going to be a basic report because it's

1 not going to go too in depth into the investigation right now  
2 because the truth is, we're just starting and the investigation  
3 could take well over a year, which it usually does. Okay?

4 MS. EVANS: Okay.

5 MS. HARLEY: But if you have any other questions, you  
6 certainly have our contact information and once again, thank you  
7 very much for your time. And I guess we'll talk to Megan and Mike  
8 sometime, all right? So, do you have any questions for us?

9 MS. EVANS: I guess when that report potentially comes out in  
10 a year, you'll notify us as well, not just when the preliminary  
11 report comes out?

12 MS. HARLEY: Absolutely. Any time any information is  
13 released from this agency, we're required to reach out to the  
14 individuals that were involved in the accident first so it doesn't  
15 come out as a surprise. And by the way, do you think there are  
16 any questions that we should've asked and we didn't ask you?

17 MS. WISNESKI: I don't think so.

18 MS. EVANS: I don't think so. I think the only thing --  
19 like, I know that this is something that happens quite rarely, the  
20 only thing -- and, like, this isn't so much for you -- the NTSB,  
21 it's more for Amtrak. Like, we weren't contacted for 48 hours by  
22 Amtrak about what had happened. So, I think in the future, like,  
23 if this is -- I mean, a derailment is going to happen again, it's  
24 statistically likely, like, just having more of a process in place  
25 because it felt a lot like there was not a huge one. And I'm

1 sorry, I don't mean to, like, call you out in this call, but  
2 that's just been my experience.

3 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah. I guess if there were other questions I  
4 would've asked, it would've been about like the response on site  
5 immediately afterwards, who was -- you know, who -- what  
6 directions we got and who got directions from? Who was collecting  
7 information from us and what information was collected as well as  
8 what medical attention we received from the authorities both on  
9 site and at the second location that we were taken to?

10 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

11 MS. WISNESKI: Just because there -- again, that process --  
12 of course it's an emergency, nobody plans for that to happen. But  
13 there definitely seemed to be some lack of procedures and just I -  
14 - you know, I could definitely see so many ways that that could've  
15 been improved in the moment. I would like to see that the part of  
16 the result of this is not only obviously increased safety  
17 procedures so that it doesn't happen in the first place, but also  
18 better procedures for actually how to deal with it, and make sure  
19 that people are okay, and make sure that there's not panic due to  
20 confusion and lack of information in the aftermath as well.

21 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

22 MS. HARLEY: So, I mean -- so, those are good points, so my  
23 question is please feel free, let me know. I'm here to listen, so  
24 start with your first point. Who actually bothered to get your  
25 information and check you out on the scene?



1 MS. WISNESKI: I don't even really know who they were.

2 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

3 MS. WISNESKI: There was no introduction as to who people  
4 were. Essentially if anyone had --

5 MS. EVANS: A vest on.

6 MS. WISNESKI: -- a vest on or just a loud enough voice, they  
7 were a figure of authority in this situation. A clipboard, also a  
8 great indicator of authority in this situation as well.

9 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

10 MS. WISNESKI: So, she definitely had a safety vest on, so I  
11 assumed that she was some sort of authority. No idea if she was,  
12 like, a train person or -- I felt like she wasn't on the train. I  
13 felt like she was a medical authority or just, like, a local  
14 authority from the nearby area.

15 MS. EVANS: Yeah. I guess the thing is, like, maybe just  
16 people who have nametags identifying who they are and who they  
17 work for would be great because, like, we had truly no clue who  
18 these people were that we were talking to.

19 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, right.

20 MS. EVANS: They just had bright yellow vests and we were  
21 like that seems like someone who knows what's going on.

22 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah. So, there was definitely -- like, I  
23 feel like the people that were most quote, unquote in charge of  
24 the situation were anyone with some sort of medical expertise.  
25 Like, we were really mostly listening to anyone that was saying

1 like hey, this person is injured and on the ground, can we have  
2 someone, you know, help carry them to an ambulance or help carry  
3 them somewhere else. There really didn't seem to be any sort of,  
4 like, authority other than just, like, the medical professionals  
5 that were there on site.

6 MS. EVANS: Yeah, and I don't know, like -- the last Amtrak  
7 crew member that I remember talking to is that, like, line cook  
8 guy who told us where to go. I don't know -- like, the other --  
9 the Amtrak -- the crew had gone through this situation as well and  
10 I do think they handled it well, like, getting us off of the train  
11 and keeping us calm while we were on the train and all of that.  
12 But I don't know what happened to them after that. So --

13 MS. WISNESKI: Well, and I also think it was evident that  
14 they weren't, like, with the people that they didn't necessarily  
15 need to be with.

16 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

17 MS. WISNESKI: Like, it was evident that, like, the people  
18 that we recognized of the crew, Tashi, and the dining car  
19 attendants that we recognized as well as all of the other crew  
20 that we didn't recognize were, like, helping the medical  
21 professionals.

22 MS. EVANS: Trying to help as much as possible.

23 MS. WISNESKI: Or were helping -- you know, helping elsewhere  
24 where, like, we weren't. But that just meant that for -- I would  
25 say at least 50 percent, if not the majority of the passengers

1 that were, like, able to walk and, like, minorly injured, that  
2 there was just not --

3 MS. EVANS: It was confusion.

4 MS. WISNESKI: There was just confusion.

5 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

6 MS. WISNESKI: There was no information.

7 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

8 MS. WISNESKI: It felt weird that once we got to the senior  
9 center that there was -- there were an abundance of people just  
10 going around and asking are you okay. But there wasn't really a  
11 thorough -- any sort of, like, thorough medical inspection other  
12 than that. They really just, like, let us leave --

13 MS. EVANS: Without looking at us.

14 MS. WISNESKI: Without, you know, saying, like, hey, these  
15 are actually the vitals that I'm going to check for right now,  
16 which was fine with us because we felt fine. But we were also,  
17 you know --

18 MS. EVANS: Yeah. Or even doing -- like, I've had a number  
19 of concussions, like, when I've them I've just been -- not during  
20 this -- but just been, like, confused about what's going on and  
21 have seemed okay to a lot of people, but have actually not been  
22 doing okay. So, like, potentially having some of, like, kind of  
23 standardized thing where it's like all right, we'll have you --  
24 like, I know in rural Montana, the response that the town gave was  
25 incredible.

1 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah.

2 MS. EVANS: But, like, just having some type of emergency  
3 person, like, check everyone out before they can leave might be a  
4 solid move.

5 MS. WISNESKI: Right, and I think a clear points of contact  
6 for, like, collecting information -- it feels like there should've  
7 been someone that was in charge of, like, collecting information  
8 as people evacuated or, like, within the first half hour of when  
9 people were evacuated because a lot of us were really just  
10 standing there. And then there was, like, an abundance of lists  
11 being passed around later on, but they were all asking for  
12 different pieces of information. They were all pretty  
13 disorganized, there was no, like, consistent way that people were  
14 sort of collecting names, and numbers, and dates of birth or  
15 whatever and there really wasn't even a place to collect those  
16 pieces of information.

17 MS. EVANS: And it wasn't clear if you had, like, actually  
18 gotten all of the lists, that was the other thing.

19 MS. WISNESKI: Right.

20 MS. EVANS: Like, there was not like oh, there's five things  
21 that you need to sign. Here are the five things. It was just,  
22 like, I don't know how many pieces of paper we signed. One police  
23 officer tried to get us to fill out, like, a car crash report,  
24 which was well meaning, but that was not had happened.

25 MS. WISNESKI: Right.

1 MS. EVANS: Like, it had, like, a make and model on it and  
2 I'm like it's a train. Yeah. So, I guess just more -- like,  
3 maybe having a consistent medical checkout because we were also  
4 unclear, like, if and when we could leave the senior center.

5 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah.

6 MS. EVANS: Because we had -- Megan's cousin came to get us,  
7 which was great, but, like, we didn't know at what point we could  
8 be released or anything like that.

9 MS. WISNESKI: Right.

10 MS. EVANS: Until eventually they were just like you can go  
11 whenever if you have somewhere to go.

12 MS. WISNESKI: Right.

13 MS. EVANS: Yeah. So, I guess again, just more of, like, a  
14 procedure.

15 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah, it would be great.

16 MS. HARLEY: So, just to let you know, all of this is  
17 extremely important because one of the things that we also look at  
18 is the emergency response and that's also important. It is very  
19 important that the -- not only do the responders arrive on the  
20 scene in a timely manner, but also that the operation that they  
21 are conducting is -- also has to be effective and efficient. And  
22 it certainly has to take into account and also account for the  
23 health and welfare of the individuals involved. So, this is  
24 something that we do actually bring back to the first responders  
25 and it is actually part of an after-action report that they

1 generate among themselves as to what do we do the next time, how  
2 do we make it better? So, all your comments I will be passing  
3 onto the emergency responders and it's very important and thank  
4 you. Anything else?

5 MS. EVANS: I guess the only other thing would be, like, I  
6 guess the response from Amtrak. But I don't know you -- if that's  
7 a separate call that we'll have later or if that's something to  
8 address on this call?

9 MS. HARLEY: As far as what? I'm sorry.

10 MS. EVANS: Just like in the next -- like, that Amtrak -- we  
11 didn't hear anything in the next 48 hours. Our family care  
12 liaisons have switched a couple-few times.

13 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah.

14 MS. EVANS: The -- like, we didn't find out about the  
15 conference call that Amtrak was holding with the NTSB until  
16 probably, like, 15 -- ten, 15 minutes before it was happening.

17 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah.

18 MS. EVANS: And, like, we found out because Brandon texted  
19 us. Like, it was a very unclear -- it was very unclear, like, how  
20 contact was being established, like, everyone -- with the four of  
21 us because we stayed together after, we drove to Seattle together,  
22 and were together for a week. So, the four of us had pretty  
23 different experiences with the car liaisons. Like, my person --  
24 initial person just texted me and then somebody else called me the  
25 next day and she was like I'm your family car liaison now, and

1 then, like, send me an email after and then I emailed her again --  
2 or she emailed me again and was like JK (sic), now it's this guy  
3 Bruce, and then it was like JK, it's now this other person, Kathy.  
4 That just kept changing, so I guess just -- and, like, my person  
5 also texted me, your people called you.

6 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah.

7 MS. EVANS: It was just a wide variety of contact.

8 MS. WISNESKI: There's been a lot of very different  
9 communication methods and a lot of mixed messages that have been  
10 going on in the week since. And I'm pretty confident that we've  
11 gotten, like, 95 percent of the information we've been supposed to  
12 get because we had our group of four people and we also, like,  
13 exchanged contact information with several of the other  
14 passengers. But if I were a single individual, I'm pretty  
15 confident that I wouldn't have received half the information that  
16 I've been able to receive.

17 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

18 MS. HARLEY: Well, I'll tell you as far as the NTSB's  
19 concerned, that's something that we have to look at for ourselves  
20 as far as being able to communicate more effectively with the  
21 victims because that is in fact a mandate by congress, what we are  
22 required to do. And it is something that we will bring up to the  
23 head of our TDA and we will look at it and try to do a better job.

24 MS. EVANS: Awesome. Yeah, I think again, just more  
25 standardized contacts would be key.

1 MS. WISNESKI: Yeah.

2 MS. HARLEY: All right.

3 MS. CARLSON-BIS: And I can speak on that too just on the  
4 Amtrak side, right, because part of my responsibility is to  
5 prepare and train those family care liaisons, our incident  
6 response team. My team delivers the train to first responders, so  
7 it's really good feedback and I appreciate you sharing it and  
8 giving us the details because that's really valuable feedback that  
9 we can take and incorporate into how we communicate with folks and  
10 the timeliness of that.

11 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

12 MS. CARLSON-BIS: So, you know, thank you for that.

13 MS. EVANS: Yeah, and I think with that just -- like, when  
14 Amtrak did reach out in the days after, just having sympathy for  
15 the people who went through this -- like, somebody just texting me  
16 about it, like that's not really what I was looking for because it  
17 just didn't feel like they cared as much necessarily. Like,  
18 obviously, we were on the phone with the CEO of Amtrak, so they  
19 did, but, like, on an individual basis, like showing that empathy  
20 is -- yeah. Because people have just been through a pretty  
21 traumatic thing.

22 MS. CARLSON-BIS: No, I appreciate that and I will definitely  
23 read that into our feedback because you all deserve better, you  
24 have been through something traumatic.

25 MS. EVANS: Yeah.



1 MS. HARLEY: Well, ladies, once again, thank you very much  
2 and I appreciate you taking the time. And again, if you haven't  
3 heard from your TDA specialist from the NTSB, please reach out to  
4 me. I know she's trying to get in touch with everybody and she's  
5 going through the list, but if you haven't heard from her in the  
6 next week, you have my information, okay?

7 MS. EVANS: And we'll email you the pictures as well that we  
8 took.

9 MS. HARLEY: Perfect. Thank you very much again. Thank you  
10 and again, I'm very sorry this happened to you and I think you're  
11 going to help us make it safer for other people. So, once again  
12 -- so, you have a wonderful day and if you have to run, run and  
13 hide as quickly as possible.

14 MS. EVANS: I think it's a little bit better now, so  
15 hopefully we're out of the worst of the tornado potential.

16 MS. HARLEY: All right. Okay, well you have a good day.

17 MS. EVANS: You too.

18 MS. WISNESKI: You too. By everyone.

19 MS. CARLSON-BIS: Thank you very much, buh-bye.

20 MS. JACOBSEN: Thanks.

21 MS. SEVERSON: Thanks, buh-bye.

22 MS. HARLEY: And the interview concluded at 5:49.

23 (Whereupon, at 5:49 p.m., 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:            FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT  
                                      NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA  
                                      ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021  
                                      Interview of Mara Evans  
                                      & Kelly Wisneski

ACCIDENT NO.:                RRD21MR017

PLACE:                        Via telephone

DATE:                         October 11, 2021

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.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Carolyn Hanna  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT \*

NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA \* Accident No.: RRD21MR017

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: SHARON FLACK, Passenger

JOHN NASH, Passenger

Via telephone

Wednesday,  
October 6, 2021

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Sharon Flack and John Nash:

By Ms. Harley

4

I N T E R V I E W

(1:31 p.m.)

1  
2  
3 MS. HARLEY: So let me start off by telling you, once again,  
4 that my name is Sheryl Harley and I'm the Assistant Investigator  
5 in charge looking into the Amtrak derailment that occurred in  
6 Joplin, Montana on September the 25th at approximately 3:47 p.m.  
7 It is NTSB Investigation Number RRD21MR017, and I am speaking with  
8 -- if you can just identify yourself for the recording?

9 MS. FLACK: Sharon Flack.

10 MR. NASH: And John Nash.

## INTERVIEW OF SHARON FLACK AND JOHN NASH

11  
12 MS. HARLEY: Okay, and I explained to you earlier, we are  
13 just looking at the events that led up to and during the accident,  
14 and what we'd like you to do is, if you can, just kind of talk us  
15 through. Start from when you boarded the train and then just kind  
16 of walk your way through to the -- through the accident, okay?

17 MS. FLACK: Okay.

18 MR. NASH: We boarded in Minot.

19 MS. FLACK: We boarded in Minot. I think it was for like 9  
20 o'clock we were going and we were -- we had a couple pieces of  
21 luggage. We put them downstairs and then we went upstairs. We  
22 were in Car 611 and our seats were 9 and 10, just self-selected  
23 and that's on the -- the upper level, and what else?

24 MS. HARLEY: Oh.

25 MS. FLACK: I don't know what you --

1 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So did the -- so was the trip uneventful  
2 up to the point where the derailment occurred?

3 MS. FLACK: Well, they did have one long stop that I think  
4 was sort of unexpected.

5 MR. NASH: No.

6 MS. FLACK: What was that city?

7 MR. NASH: That's for refueling stop.

8 MS. FLACK: Oh, it was a refueling stop. Oh, that I guess --

9 MR. NASH: (Indiscernible).

10 MS. FLACK: Yeah. So it was -- it was uneventful.

11 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

12 MS. FLACK: Like the track moved. This is probably -- I tell  
13 everybody. This is probably the smoothest ride we had because we  
14 were out in the open and there wasn't a lot of bumps or anything.  
15 Don't you think so, John?

16 MR. NASH: Yeah. It was uneventful up until the time of the  
17 crash.

18 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

19 MR. NASH: (Indiscernible) --

20 MS. HARLEY: So why don't you --

21 MR. NASH: -- well --

22 MS. HARLEY: Why don't you start at that point? When did you  
23 notice that there was something wrong or something going on?

24 MR. NASH: When we were starting to go over.

25 MS. FLACK: I felt myself flying. I was sitting in the aisle

1 seat. John was in the window seat on the right side and that the  
2 -- yeah, the car went to the right on its side. So I felt myself  
3 flying and a loud noise, lots of noise, and I ended up in the seat  
4 -- not in a seat but how would you say my position were -- I  
5 was --

6 MR. NASH: You were kind of wedged between the seat and the  
7 ceiling --

8 MS. FLACK: -- yeah, of the --

9 MR. NASH: -- of the luggage area.

10 MS. FLACK: The luggage. There's a luggage holder above us  
11 and I was in, like, the row in front of me between the seat and  
12 the luggage compartment sort of laying on the window that was down  
13 on the gravel and I was --

14 MR. NASH: She was afraid of a neck injury, so she --

15 MS. FLACK: -- and --

16 MR. NASH: -- was not moved for --

17 MS. FLACK: Hours.

18 MR. NASH: -- probably 45 minutes until we got enough EMTs  
19 and such there.

20 MS. FLACK: My head and -- my head and neck were in an odd  
21 position and my face and my shoulder, everything hit on the right  
22 side because were thrown to the right. So what is -- explain your  
23 position, when you --

24 MR. NASH: Well, I was just slung up against the window. I  
25 was bruised by the armrest and slung up against the window, which



1 fortunately did not fail.

2 MS. FLACK: Yes. We were very thankful of that.

3 MS. HARLEY: So you said you were actually wedged between the  
4 seat and the upper -- where the luggage bin above that --

5 MS. FLACK: Yeah.

6 MS. HARLEY: And you were actually in the seat in front of  
7 the seat you were originally sitting in?

8 MS. FLACK: I think so.

9 MR. NASH: Like, against the -- between the back of the seat  
10 and the window.

11 MS. FLACK: Yeah. All -- all the seats, like, the cushions  
12 came off the seat so it was, like, whatever left is the plastic or  
13 the metal seat. I was in-between the row in front of me, up  
14 against the window in-between --

15 MR. NASH: She --

16 MS. FLACK: -- the luggage thing.

17 MR. NASH: She can forward you a photograph if you'd like.

18 MS. FLACK: Oh, yeah.

19 MS. HARLEY: That -- yes, please. I'll give you my email at  
20 the end and if you don't mind, I would appreciate that. So how  
21 did you get out of the car?

22 MR. NASH: I proceeded back to the stairway and kind of  
23 chimpanzeed my way up, pulled out an emergency window and climbed  
24 up on the side of the car. I made sure that Sharon still had  
25 feeling in her extremities, which she did, so I -- I didn't think

1 she was having spinal cord or neck injury. But she wasn't willing  
2 to move and that was how I encouraged her to stay, which mighty  
3 uncomfortable.

4 But I went up on the side of the car and most of the people  
5 in our car were older than us and the women did not want me to  
6 help them pull them up and there didn't appear to be any danger in  
7 staying in the car.

8 MS. FLACK: So --

9 MR. NASH: A roof exit on the car would've be terribly handy  
10 like they have on buses.

11 MS. FLACK: I was terribly scared. I was probably one -- on  
12 notch away from being in shock. I did not want to move. I didn't  
13 feel that I should move because I was having so much pain, I -- I  
14 didn't think I should move. But I could move my legs and my  
15 hands, but I didn't want to -- they did put a blanket under my  
16 head and waited there for quite a while.

17 John has more in indication of timeframe. But I just stayed  
18 there until the -- I think it was the fire department --

19 MR. NASH: Yeah. It was some form of EMTs.

20 MS. FLACK: -- and they put me on a backboard and then a --

21 MR. NASH: They put you in a stokes basket.

22 MS. FLACK: Oh, on a basket. A basket and then they pulled  
23 up --

24 MR. NASH: Through the window that I had opened.

25 MS. FLACK: Yeah.

1 MR. NASH: Well, I -- I had them open another one closer to  
2 you.

3 MS. FLACK: Yeah. The window that would've been on the other  
4 aisle's side was facing up and they took me. I don't -- I don't  
5 know what went on because I was so scared. But John does, so he  
6 knows what happened.

7 MR. NASH: They pulled her up through the window, carried her  
8 over to ladder and slid her down, and then she was put on a gurney  
9 and carried in an ambulance.

10 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

11 MS. FLACK: So --

12 MS. HARLEY: So did they actually have to cut you out from  
13 where you were or were they able to just simply move you from  
14 where you were?

15 MR. NASH: They attempted to cut us out -- or cut her out,  
16 but --

17 MS. FLACK: The Jaws of Life --

18 MR. NASH: -- they had the Jaws --

19 MS. FLACK: -- failed.

20 MR. NASH: -- of Life and they really --

21 MS. FLACK: They failed.

22 MR. NASH: -- mostly made a mess.

23 MS. FLACK: Then they used an ax they said.

24 MR. NASH: Yeah. They -- well --

25 MS. FLACK: It was a lot of noise. Scary.

1 MR. NASH: If there had been a roof exit, we could've avoided  
2 all of that but --

3 MS. FLACK: Then they put a blanket over me and they crashed  
4 the window that was above me that they eventually took me out of.

5 MR. NASH: Well, they're plexiglass.

6 MS. FLACK: Well, I don't. But --

7 MR. NASH: Not glass.

8 MS. FLACK: Well -- yeah. That's my understanding of it.

9 MR. NASH: Yeah.

10 MS. FLACK: Okay.

11 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So -- okay.

12 MR. NASH: I don't think the local volunteer rescue people  
13 had any experience or training when it comes to passenger car.

14 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

15 MS. FLACK: But everybody was very willing to help us.

16 MR. NASH: Oh, yeah.

17 MS. FLACK: People on the street stopped and came over here  
18 to help. I mean they were very supportive. So but I wasn't  
19 touched because I was -- I wanted to stay there until I got  
20 something to help me out.

21 MR. NASH: They got a speed collar on her and put her in a  
22 stokes.

23 MS. FLACK: Yeah.

24 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So sitting in the car, you're in seat  
25 number 9 and 10. Was there someone sitting directly in front of

1 you?

2 MS. FLACK: In front of John, yes.

3 MR. NASH: There she was --

4 MS. FLACK: Uh-huh.

5 MR. NASH: -- directly in front of me.

6 MS. FLACK: Yes.

7 MR. NASH: He's the one that -- he stayed with Sharon and  
8 took pictures.

9 MS. FLACK: And just told me I'll be all right.

10 MR. NASH: Because there really wasn't a good way for him to  
11 get out of there or a way for me to get up there.

12 MS. FLACK: Yeah.

13 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So was there anyone seated across from  
14 you that you remember?

15 MR. NASH: There was, but he had gone up to the observation  
16 car.

17 MS. FLACK: Yeah. He was in the big accident.

18 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right.

19 MR. NASH: He -- we did run into him the next day and he was  
20 not injured, so -- other than beat up but --

21 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right. In front of the gentleman  
22 that was in front of you, John, was there someone sitting --  
23 seated in that seat do you know?

24 MR. NASH: I couldn't tell you.

25 MS. FLACK: I don't think so. It was --

1 MR. NASH: There -- I think there was only eight of us in --

2 MS. FLACK: Yeah.

3 MR. NASH: -- the car.

4 MS. FLACK: Very small amount.

5 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Was there anybody seated directly behind  
6 you?

7 MS. FLACK: No.

8 MS. HARLEY: No? Okay. When the accident occurred was there  
9 lighting in the car?

10 MR. NASH: There was.

11 MS. FLACK: Yes.

12 MS. HARLEY: So the car-- was the power on in the car or was  
13 it the emergency lighting --

14 MR. NASH: No.

15 MS. HARLEY: -- on the floor?

16 MR. NASH: It was emergency lighting because we were  
17 completely separated from the rest of the train.

18 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

19 MR. NASH: That back three cars were more than 100 feet away  
20 from the rest of the train.

21 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right. So you said that there were  
22 only eight people in the car. Were they mostly in the front area  
23 where you were or were they in the back side of the car? Do you  
24 know?

25 MS. FLACK: Back behind the stairwell. The stairwell's in

1 the middle and most of them were towards the back and they were  
2 older ladies, and then we had the --

3 MR. NASH: The --

4 MS. FLACK: -- the conductor --

5 MR. NASH: -- the --

6 MS. FLACK: -- the lady.

7 MR. NASH: -- conductor or --

8 MS. FLACK: -- from the (indiscernible).

9 MR. NASH: -- whatever she's called was at her room and she  
10 broke her arm in that car, which she was in the very back of that  
11 car.

12 MS. FLACK: Yeah. She was --

13 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

14 MS. FLACK: -- sitting on the left side. So she probably  
15 thrown to the right.

16 MR. NASH: Well, I -- she was in a room. She wasn't out.

17 MS. FLACK: Well, I didn't see here.

18 MR. NASH: Okay. (Indiscernible).

19 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right. Okay. Did you, by any  
20 chance, see any of the seats moving as far as, like, turning or  
21 rotating?

22 MS. FLACK: No.

23 MR. NASH: There was a seat above Sharon that would've been  
24 on the opposite side and probably back then that appeared to be  
25 hanging loose.

1 MS. FLACK: Oh.

2 MR. NASH: It was -- it was still attached on one side, but  
3 the other side seemed to be hanging down. I pushed on it to make  
4 sure there was no danger of it falling and it was secure enough to  
5 where I wasn't worried about that.

6 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

7 MS. FLACK: (Indiscernible).

8 MR. NASH: Yeah.

9 MS. FLACK: Okay.

10 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

11 MS. FLACK: But the one -- the ones that we were seated in  
12 were bolted. They didn't move. Just the cushions were off.  
13 That's what I remember is the cushions being, like, on the  
14 -- when I -- yeah. Like, the seat backs and the bottoms of the  
15 seats.

16 MS. HARLEY: Okay. When you got on the train, were you given  
17 any kind of, like, a pre-trip safety briefing or explain how to  
18 get out of the car in case of an emergency?

19 MS. FLACK: No.

20 MR. NASH: The only mention was to read the card in the  
21 compartment, you know, the pouch in front of you.

22 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Okay.

23 MR. NASH: And that, I'm not sure if it was on that  
24 particular train because this was our fourth or fifth train.

25 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Okay. All right. Okay. Let's see.



1 Let's see, and just to -- Sharon, just to describe your injuries  
2 again that you received?

3 MS. FLACK: They did a CT scan and I did not have any  
4 indications of a concussion, I guess, so we were sent to the  
5 hotel. Afterwards, I -- well, I still have a black, bright eye.  
6 It did -- the whole right side of my face was swollen and all the  
7 way from --

8 MR. NASH: Still?

9 MS. FLACK: Yeah.

10 MR. NASH: (Indiscernible).

11 MS. FLACK: My cheek, my temple, up higher over my ear, it  
12 was all black and blue. My left eye sustained some blackening for  
13 a few days. I still, you know -- what day is it? But I still  
14 have my eye was -- the next day, my right eye was swollen shut, so  
15 it was closed.

16 I couldn't open my eyelids because the swelling was all over  
17 my eye, and then it's still dark underneath my eye and I really  
18 need to go to the eye doctor to make sure that I have good vision  
19 in my right side. But I haven't made that appointment yet.

20 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

21 MS. FLACK: But the black and blue, it sort of drained down  
22 into my jaw area. It's on my jawbone right now where it's -- I  
23 guess it's the swelling went down and it reposition to a lower  
24 spot on my face. So --

25 MS. HARLEY: And, John --

1 MS. FLACK: -- (indiscernible) --

2 MS. HARLEY: -- your injuries?

3 MR. NASH: I -- skin and elbow and had a bruise where the --  
4 where I had hit the armrest on my right side and that was pretty  
5 much it.

6 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

7 MR. NASH: They did a perfunctory test in the ER and  
8 determined that I was fine. So --

9 MS. FLACK: So we --

10 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

11 MS. FLACK: -- were just -- it was several days of feeling  
12 like you'd been run over by the train and --

13 MR. NASH: We stayed in Shelby for, I think, three days  
14 because Sharon wasn't up to traveling.

15 MS. FLACK: Yeah, and they offered me pain -- higher level  
16 than Tylenol, but I didn't want to take it because I'm afraid of  
17 those things. So I was just on Tylenol and John was on Tylenol.

18 MS. HARLEY: Okay, and I'm sorry. Sharon, what hospital did  
19 you go to?

20 MS. FLACK: I don't know.

21 MR. NASH: It was --

22 MS. FLACK: I've got to think.

23 MR. NASH: -- the hospital in Shelby. It's, like, Marias  
24 Valley?

25 MS. FLACK: Just got a -- just got a bill today. It's the

1 imaging company.

2 MR. NASH: Oh, that's just the imaging company though  
3 (indiscernible).

4 MS. FLACK: I don't know the name of it, but it's the only  
5 hospital in Shelby.

6 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

7 MS. FLACK: And they were -- they were excellent there. I  
8 mean all their people that was off for the weekend, they came in  
9 and helped with the overflow of people because it was a lot of  
10 people in there.

11 MS. HARLEY: And you said that Amtrak also provided you with  
12 assistance while you were there?

13 MR. NASH: Amtrak has been extremely cooperative.

14 MS. FLACK: Yes.

15 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

16 MS. FLACK: John said this bill -- the name of it says Marias  
17 Medical Center ER.

18 MR. NASH: That's the town, M-A-R-I-A-S.

19 MS. HARLEY: Got it.

20 MS. FLACK: Oh.

21 MS. HARLEY: Marias. Okay.

22 MS. FLACK: Okay. I thought I was so close.

23 MS. HARLEY: Marias. Okay. All right. Okay. So I guess  
24 the last thing I'm going to ask you is, is there something you  
25 think I should've asked you but I didn't ask you about what

1 happened?

2 MR. NASH: I can't imagine what it would be.

3 MS. FLACK: No. I can't think of anything right now, but  
4 maybe I'll save your phone number in case something comes up.

5 MS. HARLEY: Absolutely. So the one thing I always tell  
6 people is please keep my number and if you think of anything, feel  
7 free to use it. Feel free to call it at any time, okay? I -- you  
8 know, it may come to you a little bit later on and that's fine.

9 Please feel free and reach out and if there's anyone else  
10 that you come in contact with, like another passenger, please feel  
11 free to give that number -- my number to them, as well.

12 MS. FLACK: Okay.

13 MS. HARLEY: I will -- if you have an email address, I can  
14 email -- I can send you an email and then you can email back that  
15 photograph to me if that's helpful?

16 MS. FLACK: Yeah.

17 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

18 MS. FLACK: My email is S, like Sharon, Flack, F-L-A-C-K,

19

20 MS. HARLEY: So that's

21 MS. FLACK: Correct.

22 MS. HARLEY: Awesome. Okay. So, again, thank you both for  
23 cooperating and participating in this interview. Again, if you  
24 think of anything, please feel free to call me. If you have any  
25 other concerns, please let me know, and what will happen is, our

1 Transportation Disaster Assistance Specialist will be in touch  
2 with you. They will keep you informed as to what's going on in  
3 our investigation and when any information is being released by  
4 the NTSB, and --

5 MS. FLACK: Okay.

6 MS. HARLEY: -- do you have any other questions for me?

7 MS. FLACK: Can you spell your last name?

8 MS. HARLEY: Absolutely. My last name is like the  
9 motorcycle, H-A-R-L-E-Y.

10 MS. FLACK: That's what I was thinking.

11 MR. NASH: You're with the NTSB (indiscernible)?

12 MS. HARLEY: Yes. I'm with the NTSB. Right.

13 MR. NASH: Yeah.

14 MS. FLACK: Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you for  
15 calling.

16 MS. HARLEY: Thank you very much for helping me out here.  
17 Okay. You have a wonderful day.

18 MS. FLACK: You too. Thanks.

19 MS. HARLEY: All right. Bye bye.

20 MS. HARLEY: Let's see, and just to reiterate that this is  
21 Wednesday. It's October the 6th, 2021. The interview started at  
22 1:31 p.m. and is now over at 1:53 p.m.

23 (Whereupon, at 1:53 p.m., 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:            FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT  
                                      NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA  
                                      ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021  
                                      Interview of Sharon Flack  
                                      & John Nash

ACCIDENT NO.:                RRD21MR017

PLACE:                        Via telephone

DATE:                         October 6, 2021

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.



---

Lisa Smith  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT \*

NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA \* Accident No.: RRD21MR017

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: WAYNE FREED

Passenger

Via Telephone

Monday,

November 8, 2021

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

KRIS SEVERSON, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe Center, Department of Transportation

KARI JACOBSEN, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe Center, Department of Transportation



I N D E X

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I N T E R V I E W

(1:31 p.m. EST)

1  
2  
3 MS. HARLEY: So good afternoon, everyone. So my name is  
4 Sheryl Harley, and I'm the assistant investigator in charge with  
5 the National Transportation Safety Board. And today we're talking  
6 about the Amtrak derailment that occurred in Joplin, Montana, on  
7 September the 25th of 2021, at about 3:47 p.m. Today's date is  
8 November the 8th of 2021, and it's 1:31 p.m., and that's Eastern  
9 Standard Time.

10 On the phone with me -- Mr. Freed, can you identify yourself  
11 for the tape, please?

12 MR. FREED: Yes. My name is Wayne Freed. It's W-a-y-n-e, F-  
13 r-e-e-d.

14 MS. HARLEY: Thank you very much, sir.

15 And also on the call are two investigators that are part of  
16 the investigative team, and I'm going to ask them to identify  
17 themselves.

18 Kari?

19 MS. JACOBSEN: Hi, Mr. Freed. My name is Karina Jacobsen,  
20 and I work for the U.S. Department of Transportation. My  
21 colleague, Kris, and I are here representing the Federal Railroad  
22 Administration, and we participated with NTSB out at the  
23 investigation site and have been participating in the interviews.  
24 Our purpose is to help understand what you went through and use  
25 that to try and make things better, make some safety improvements.

1 So thanks for taking the time to talk to us.

2 MR. FREED: Sure. You're welcome.

3 MS. HARLEY: Kris?

4 MS. SEVERSON: Hello, this is Kris Severson. Everything Kari  
5 said applies to me, as well. And thank you for talking to us.

6 INTERVIEW OF WAYNE FREED

7 BY MS. HARLEY:

8 Q. So, Mr. Freed, to get started, if you don't mind, why don't  
9 you start with where and when you boarded the train, your first  
10 interactions with the crew, and then kind of go to the accident  
11 day and just kind of walk me through everything you remember.

12 A. Okay. Well, I boarded at Chicago, and my original intention  
13 was to go to Portland, but the Portland sleeper was sold out,  
14 which I think was the last car on the train, and so as a fallback  
15 plan, I decided to take a sleeper up in the transition sleeper,  
16 which is the first sleeper up at the front end of the train.  
17 That's for the crew. It's in the front half of the car  
18 (indiscernible) back half of the car. And that car goes to  
19 Seattle. And so my plan was to go to Seattle and overnight there  
20 and see some stuff, and then I was going to go down to Portland.  
21 I actually was going to go down to Chiloquin, Oregon, but Portland  
22 was the original destination that I would have switched on to the  
23 *Coast Starlight*.

24 And so, consequently, I was in the transition sleeper, and,  
25 you know, I spent the day in the lounge car. So I had just gone

1 back to the lounge car -- or back to my sleeper to get my charger  
2 for my phone, and I just returned back to the lounge car where I  
3 had been for several hours already, and that's when the derailment  
4 occurred.

5 As far as the interaction with the crew goes, I guess I  
6 interacted with the crew pretty much right from Chicago. I had  
7 already, you know, had one night on the train and had a real nice  
8 meal. And this, of course, was the second day out. And I had had  
9 breakfast and lunch on the train and I had just signed up for  
10 dinner on the train because the accident, as you said, happened a  
11 little before 4:00. And everything was normal.

12 I should say -- you know, I haven't said this to anybody  
13 else, and I don't know if it's even important -- and at the time,  
14 you know, I just thought it was ridiculous for me to say anything  
15 to anybody. But I've ridden the Amtrak for 40 years, and I've  
16 been in lounge cars, the Superliner lounge cars, probably over 100  
17 times, and so I'm familiar with the sounds they make. And I even  
18 have videos, some videos that I shot inside the car, although it's  
19 not very (indiscernible). The front truck on that -- the lead  
20 truck on the lounge car was making a grinding noise all the way  
21 from the day we -- from the minute we left Chicago. And, you  
22 know, I thought that was unusual because at the other end of the  
23 car it was normal, but at the front end of the car it was grinding  
24 like steel -- like metal on metal kind of grinding noise. But,  
25 you know, the crew was through the train all day for 24 hours. In

1 fact, I think the conductor was even riding in the lounge car at  
2 one time, so I thought it was kind of ridiculous for me to walk up  
3 to a train crew and -- you know. So I never said anything about  
4 it.

5 And I don't know if that's even a factor, but I will say  
6 that, you know, I've ridden in a lounge car many, many times,  
7 many, many times, and I never heard that sound before. So I  
8 just -- I would just throw that out there. But they might want to  
9 take a special close look. They probably certainly already have.  
10 But something was different about the lead truck on the sightseer  
11 lounge car.

12 Anyway, my experience was I had come back to my seat, and I  
13 was sitting -- as you enter from the front of the train, I think  
14 on the left side there's -- I think, if I remember correctly,  
15 there's double seats at the corner. That would be the very front  
16 of the car. And then there's another set of double seats, and  
17 then there's two single seats. And I believe I was in the second  
18 single seat. So as you're entering from the front of the train,  
19 that would be on the left side. And I had only been back there  
20 just a very, very short time. Maybe a couple of minutes. And  
21 then I heard this -- the actual accident itself. I heard this --

22 Are you there?

23 Q. Yes.

24 A. Oh, okay. Oh, I see. I'm getting into the call. Let me  
25 just stop that. Sorry.

1           Okay. I was sitting in the seat and everything was fine.  
2 The B&S (ph.) track was smooth as silk, as it usually is. And  
3 then, all of a sudden, there was this loud, metallic bang that was  
4 very pronounced. And then right after that, you could hear the  
5 sound of the ballast scraping on the bottom of the car, so I knew  
6 that we were off the rails. And then, soon after that, the car  
7 started to tip to the right looking forward from my seat towards  
8 the locomotives. The car started to tip to the right and slowly.  
9 You know, and we were going at a good clip. I think they said we  
10 were going at 78. And so the train was still moving at a good  
11 clip, but the car -- unfortunately, the tipping of the car to the  
12 right side was slow, so it gave you time to think about that.

13           And I kept thinking, well, you know, as the car was starting  
14 to slow down because we were off the rails, I kept thinking, well,  
15 it certainly won't tip much farther, you know, and it won't tip  
16 much farther. Because, you know, I've never been in a derailment,  
17 but I've seen pictures of them. And, you know, usually the cars  
18 stop upright. They're a little tipped, they're a little cockeyed,  
19 but they don't tip over. But it kept tipping farther and farther  
20 and farther and finally got to about 45 degrees, and at that point  
21 I realized it wasn't stopping; it was going to go all the way over  
22 on its side.

23           So at that point, I stood up and grabbed the table. It's like  
24 a little coffee table kind of thing they have next to the single  
25 chairs in the lounge car. And I grabbed onto that, and so the car

1 continued to tip, and so I wound up in a position where the car is  
2 now over on its side and the -- I'm hanging in a vertical  
3 position, just kind of bear-hugging this table with my legs  
4 dangling straight down. And below me, about -- you know, now it's  
5 the bottom. Now it's the floor of the car, but that actually is  
6 the side of the car. It was windows. And those were all breaking  
7 out because of the ballast.

8         So, one by one, they're all breaking out. And that worried  
9 me intensely because I thought -- what I was worried is that we  
10 were going to hit something. I thought if we hit -- we're still  
11 sliding down to the ballast, and if we hit something big and it  
12 stops the train really suddenly or whips it around, I thought I'm  
13 going to fall. I won't be able to hold on. I'm going to fall  
14 down through that hole which is where the windows were, and I'm  
15 going to wind up between the train and the ballast, which is, of  
16 course, not a good place to wind up. So I was concerned about  
17 that. So I just held on for my dear life.

18         And it seemed like two minutes until the train stopped, but  
19 it really wasn't. I'd say it was probably about 15 seconds,  
20 probably. And then, you know, all the windows had broken out on  
21 that side of the car, so all this dust came in because it's very  
22 dusty out in the west, and that was almost like a fog. That  
23 immediately came in the car and fogged up everything. You could  
24 still see, but it was just -- got all over everything. It was  
25 just dusty all over everything.

1           And then there were people who had -- well, I crawled down.  
2 I crawled down. At that point, once the train stopped, I crawled  
3 down by pushing my foot over on the ceiling of the car -- which is  
4 now the side of the car because it was, you know, laying on its  
5 side -- and I crawled down to the window level, and then I  
6 actually -- it was really weird. I actually stepped onto the  
7 ballast. So now I'm standing on the ballast, you know, and the  
8 window is around my knee, you know, because that's broken out  
9 where the window was, and now I'm still in the car.

10           And at that point, I was helping some other people. There  
11 was this -- I was lucky, in a way. I mean, I was on the side of  
12 the car that when the car tipped over on its side, I was on the  
13 downside. So, you know, I wound up about 2 feet off the side of  
14 the car because I was dangling. But the people that were less  
15 lucky were the people that were on the other side of the car, you  
16 know, looking forward. I was on the right side of the car looking  
17 forward, but they would have been on the left side of the car  
18 looking forward, and so they wound up about 8 or 10 feet up in the  
19 air and fell all the way down, you know, to the bottom.

20           And there were some people -- one gentleman especially that I  
21 remember -- I don't know his name, but he was laying there, and me  
22 and another guy gave him some assistance. He mostly was just kind  
23 of shocked, I think, from falling down, and he looked worse than  
24 he was. He was bleeding from his mouth. In fact, he told us that  
25 he had actually just -- he had bit his tongue, and that's why the



1 blood was coming out of his mouth. So, you know, we assisted him  
2 a little bit, and then eventually we made our escape by going out  
3 that window. We were lucky that when the train rolled over, it  
4 wasn't flush to the ground because it was kind of on an  
5 embankment, and so there was about 2 feet of space where you could  
6 duck through the side window and just now you're outside the  
7 train, and then you can walk down the embankment.

8       The upper windows, those ones that are like the skylight  
9 windows, those did not break out because those were still off the  
10 ground even after it laid over on its side. But the side windows  
11 were pretty much all broken out and the frames and everything were  
12 just ripped away. And so we got out of there, and then we helped  
13 some people.

14       Most of the people were like me. I mean, they weren't really  
15 seriously injured. I just had some bruises on my right side  
16 because I slammed against the table a couple of times when the car  
17 was kind of shaking around. But, you know, I could still walk and  
18 I was fine.

19       And I thought I had lost my phone. I had just plugged my  
20 phone in to the lounge car outlet, which was why I had gone back  
21 to the sleeper to get the cord. And the accident happened about a  
22 minute or two after that. So I remember as I was dangling from  
23 the table, I looked down and I see my phone swinging around by its  
24 cord. And, you know, directly below that is this smashed-out  
25 windows with the ballast going by. And then the next time I

1 looked down, the phone was gone. All I could see was the cord.  
2 And I thought, well, I'll never see that phone again. But,  
3 miraculously, once I get off the train, there was a lady outside,  
4 and she had also gone out through the window, and she said did  
5 anybody lose their phone. And I said, well, I did. There was  
6 probably half a dozen other people who had lost their phones, too.  
7 And it was my phone. I couldn't believe it. So I actually got my  
8 phone back and it still worked.

9       And so at that point, then, I looked around and my car was  
10 the first car that had rolled over completely on its side. That's  
11 the sightseer lounge car. The car ahead of us was a coach car,  
12 and that had derailed also, but it was tipping that nearly 45  
13 degrees. And then the car ahead of that was the dining car. And  
14 if I remember correctly, I think that just the rear truck of that  
15 car derailed. Not the front truck, although it stayed upright.  
16 And then the sleepers were ahead of that, of which there were two  
17 regular sleepers and the transition sleeper and the locomotives  
18 and the baggage car. They all stayed on the rails. But  
19 everything behind the lounge car was separated, and those last  
20 three cars were about a quarter mile back the track.

21       And so, in the beginning, once I got off the train, I was --  
22 walked around to see what people needed, and people needed water,  
23 and they also wanted first aid kits. And so I ran the first aid  
24 kit back to the three cars that were laid over on their side,  
25 which I think that was the -- if I remember right, that was -- the

1 first two cars were coaches and the second was the Portland  
2 sleeper that I had tried so hard to get into that was sold out, so  
3 I couldn't do that. And they told us to -- they said they needed  
4 a medic right away.

5 When the ambulances arrived, which wasn't for about 15  
6 minutes -- and they told us not to go any farther because there  
7 were -- well, they didn't say, but there was stuff back there that  
8 they didn't want us to see. I think those were the people that  
9 got ejected from the train.

10 And so I spent probably ten minutes just running water around  
11 to people. The Amtrak crew was real good at getting that. And  
12 then I walked back up to our car, and I yelled that I -- that they  
13 wanted a first aid kit back there. So one of the Amtrak crew did  
14 get me a first aid kit, and I unwrapped the plastic and ran that  
15 back to the people that were helping people back in the latter  
16 part of the train, the part that was way back the tracks.

17 And then, other than that, you know, I guess there's not a  
18 whole lot more to say. I guess it's like a surreal thing. But,  
19 you know, there were people that had been driving down the highway  
20 and saw the accident happen, just motorists, and they actually  
21 saw -- I think they actually saw the actual derailment from the  
22 highway. And so they arrived pretty quickly and started to help.  
23 And then, you know, we were out in the middle of nowhere. We were  
24 deep into the site. You know what I mean? I mean, it's pretty,  
25 but it's just wheat fields to the horizon. And fortunately the

1 weather was good. It was a blue sky.

2 But the ambulances, you could hear the ambulances in about  
3 ten minutes. You could hear the sirens coming. And then there  
4 was quite the response. I was amazed how quick the response was.  
5 But, you know, considering what a remote area we were in, you  
6 know -- there were, I think, initially two ambulances, and  
7 eventually there was a bunch more. And then, after they got the  
8 injured people away, then they put us on a bus. They had a bus  
9 there later. This was quite a bit later. Maybe 45 minutes later.  
10 And then they took us to the triage center. I had five x-rays  
11 taken just because they wanted to be sure that I -- you know, a  
12 lot of people said you should have the x-ray taken if you're not  
13 sure just because it might feel okay now, but tomorrow is when  
14 you're going to really feel it, you know.

15 And Amtrak was great. I mean, they took us to the triage  
16 center and, you know, I think there were 15 people that were  
17 admitted to the hospital. I think I heard that figure. And they  
18 even went around and there were the -- they took us -- well, the  
19 problem was Joplin, where the derailment happened, is literally in  
20 the middle of nowhere. I mean, the closest town is, like, 20  
21 miles away, and it doesn't even have any stores. I mean, it's not  
22 really a town. It's more of an interstate with a gas station and  
23 a little tiny motel and a casino, you know.

24 But anyway, they took us there, and they had a little --  
25 like, not really a hospital, but it was -- they did have nurses.

1 It's like an urgent care kind of thing. And they took us there  
2 and treated us very well. They had -- they even canvassed  
3 everybody and checked about prescription drugs. Because, you  
4 know, I take a little bit of high blood pressure medication, and,  
5 you know, I had already taken it that day, but I didn't realize we  
6 weren't going to be getting our luggage back. I actually probably  
7 -- you know, I really wasn't injured that bad. I just had some  
8 bruises. I would have continued on my way, but of course because  
9 of the investigation, we couldn't get any of our luggage back. So  
10 I had to cancel my whole trip.

11 But as far as Amtrak, I was made -- I mean, we didn't get  
12 into the hotel that night until really late. By the time we got  
13 to the hotel -- they finally put us into two groups because there  
14 was such a big, huge group trying to check into this little hotel.  
15 It was (indiscernible). And for some reason, probably because it  
16 was totally unexpected, and I think it was like one guy on duty in  
17 the hotel and he was totally overwhelmed, the line was living in a  
18 rate of about -- it was crazy slow. Like, three people an hour.  
19 At that rate, I don't think we even would have gotten in there  
20 until the next day.

21 So they finally broke the group in half and took the second  
22 group over to another motel which was about another 25 minutes  
23 miles away, and so we checked into there. By the time I got to  
24 bed, it was about 3:30, and then they said that they wanted to  
25 meet with us. Amtrak wanted to have a representative there. They

1 were going to have there that morning at 8:00 and meet with  
2 everybody. So that was a short night. But to my amazement,  
3 Amtrak did have a national rep there the next morning in the lobby  
4 and also a helper. I don't know what the other -- I think the  
5 other person might have been a local ticket agent for Amtrak  
6 but -- and they were very, very helpful and paid for all the stuff  
7 that we didn't have.

8 We didn't have anything. I had slippers on. I didn't even  
9 have shoes on. I actually had to wear the slippers all the way  
10 back and for two days. I flew home back to New York state, where  
11 I'm at. Because my shoes were in my car and they wouldn't let me  
12 go in there and get them. So I always put my slippers on when I'm  
13 going to be on the train all day. So, basically, I guess that's  
14 pretty much my story.

15 Q. Thank you very much. So I'm going to go back and just go  
16 over a few things. So how long were you in the observation car,  
17 the lounge car, prior to the derailment?

18 A. Well, I'd been in there most of the morning, so I'd been in  
19 there probably at least three hours. And then I had lunch, and  
20 then I went back to the lounge car, and then I was in there  
21 probably another several hours until about -- I guess around 3  
22 or -- actually, probably about 3:30. I knew we were getting  
23 pretty close to Glacier National Park. And then I noticed my  
24 phone -- the battery was getting low, so I thought, oh man, I  
25 don't want to be in a situation where just when we get to the

1 pretty part of the route, that's when I run out of battery power  
2 for my phone. So I went back to my sleeper only for five  
3 minutes -- not even that, probably -- just to get the cord. And  
4 then I came right back to the lounge car. I didn't want to lose  
5 my seat. And the accident happened very soon after that. Like I  
6 said, I had just plugged my phone in just a very few minutes --

7       And, basically, I travel on Amtrak a lot in upper western  
8 trains. That's where I spent the day. I spend the day in a  
9 lounge car. The only time I'm not there is at night when I sleep.  
10 And then, you know, when I go for meals. But, you know, it's a  
11 beautiful place to see. And that's what -- you know, there's a  
12 lot of interesting people there, too. I get in great  
13 conversations with people there that are doing the same thing as  
14 me.

15 Q. Yeah. So I'm going to try to kind of focus in on where you  
16 were sitting. So as you come out of the car in front and you  
17 enter the lounge car, you would be on the left side, which is  
18 actually the right side as the train is moving forward. And  
19 explain to me again exactly what seat you were in.

20 A. That's exactly right what you just said. As you come to  
21 seat, as you enter from the front, you know, walking now towards  
22 the rear of the train -- so my seat would be on the left side.  
23 But you're right, it would be the right side if you're looking  
24 forward. If I remember correctly, and I'm pretty sure -- as a  
25 matter of fact, I think I have pictures of this that I had taken

1 earlier in the day. First of all, when you first enter on the  
2 left side, there's this double seat. And the lounge seats are  
3 either twos or ones.

4 Q. Yes.

5 A. And there's a mix of them. I think there's a double seat on  
6 the left, first of all, and then I think there's a second double  
7 seat, so that would be a total of four seats, and that's followed  
8 by two individuals seats, separate ones, with the coffee table in  
9 between. And I was in either that fifth seat, which would be the  
10 first single one on the left, or the second one, and I think it  
11 was the -- I think I was in the first one. So it would be the  
12 fifth counting from the corner of when you first enter from the  
13 front. It would be seat number five on the left.

14 Q. It would be the seat number five which is that first single  
15 seat is --

16 A. Yes. So there's two there, and then there's a plastic  
17 partition, and then there's more seats on the other side as you go  
18 further back into the car. And I think I was not next to the  
19 partition; I think I was in the seat next to that one. So the one  
20 next to the partition would be number six, and I was number five.  
21 (Indiscernible) behind the six.

22 Q. So the partition you were talking about would actually be  
23 behind you; is that correct? If you're facing forward and you  
24 said --

25 A. Oh, yes.



1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. If I'm facing forward, yes.

3 Q. The partition would --

4 A. Yeah, it would be behind me. You don't really face forward.  
5 You kind of face -- you know, you're kind of just sitting  
6 perpendicular to the line of travel, but yeah.

7 Q. Yes.

8 A. If I was facing forward, then it would be behind me. That's  
9 correct.

10 Q. Behind you. Okay, great. So you were there basically in the  
11 same seat all day, and you were talking about that grinding sound  
12 that you heard in the front trucks. Did you have some sense  
13 that -- I mean, was it actually -- was it that loud? How did you  
14 hear it?

15 A. I noticed it when I first came in to the car just because,  
16 you know, I'm used to talking with people in the car, and it  
17 actually was loud enough that -- I mean, it wasn't very discreet.  
18 It was loud enough that you had to raise your voice so the person  
19 next to you could hear. And then another thing I noticed --  
20 because I always explore the train. I actually walk all the way  
21 to the back of the train when I travel to take pictures. When  
22 it's really scenic, I take pictures out through the window, and  
23 the door is in the very back of the train, so I can get the  
24 engineer's view in reverse, you know. And so I had actually  
25 walked back through the train a number of times. And when you

1 come back into the lounge car from the back of the train, it would  
2 be normal noise level, you know. I know it's -- you know, there's  
3 always noise in the train but, I mean, that would be the normal  
4 sound. But then when you walk back up to the front of the car,  
5 that's when it would get noisier. So that's how I knew that it  
6 was the front truck. The back truck was normal. The lead truck  
7 was making the sounds so --

8 But I actually thought about it. I thought maybe I should  
9 say something to somebody. But I thought, you know, I'm going to  
10 look like a fool because the crew has walked through the train all  
11 day long for a day, 24 hours. They know the -- I mean, they know  
12 the sounds of the train more than me. So I didn't say anything.  
13 But I don't know. And I don't even know if it's even a factor.

14 Q. So I'm going to --

15 A. And I actually have it in some -- I shot some videos in the  
16 lounge car. I actually have it recorded, but it's not -- in the  
17 recording in my phone. It's not real easy to -- I mean, you can  
18 pick it out, but it's not as loud as it was.

19 Q. So I would like if you could -- if it's possible for you to  
20 email me your photographs and also that recording, and we'll see  
21 if we can kind of enhance it and see if we can pick it out, if you  
22 don't mind?

23 A. Sure. Can I text it to you? I haven't had good luck with  
24 emails with my phone. It always seems to come back and it says  
25 that this file is too big.

1 Q. Sure.

2 A. But can I text it?

3 Q. Yeah, yeah. You can try to text it.

4 The other thing I want to do, if you don't mind -- and this  
5 may not be something you can do, but I want you to think about  
6 entering the lounge car from the rear. And as you're talking  
7 through, how far forward in the lounge car would you have to be to  
8 hear that front truck? Would you be at the tables in the rear?  
9 Or would you have to be at the lounge seat before you start  
10 hearing the noise?

11 A. I would think that the tables at the rear would be probably  
12 too far back. You know, I would think that you'd have to be at  
13 least past the stairwell. That's the middle of the car, you know,  
14 that goes down to the lounge. You would have to be at least to  
15 there and you would start to hear it. But where it's most  
16 pronounced is in the first probably, you know, forward 25 feet of  
17 the car, 30 feet of the car, because that's where you're over the  
18 truck, you know. That's where it was the loudest. And I tend to  
19 sit there just because I like the single seats. I don't like the  
20 tables. You know, that's at the other end. And so I never sit at  
21 the tables. I always like to sit in the lounge seats. So I tend  
22 to -- that's where I tend to be. I tend to be in the forward  
23 third of the car because that's where the seats are that I like  
24 the best.

25 Q. At the time of the derailment or after the derailment, were

1 you aware of anyone being trapped in the lower level of that car?  
2 A. No, I wasn't aware of that. But, you know, to be honest, I  
3 didn't actually -- for me to know what was going on down there, I  
4 would have had to crawled up and then crawled down the stairs  
5 which are sideways. And, yeah, I mean, after I was out of the  
6 train, I didn't think about that because the bad thing about that  
7 would be is they did not have the luxury of having a window to  
8 crawl out of that had space available. I'm pretty sure -- in  
9 fact, I'm almost positive, because I got a fairly good look at the  
10 car for a long time once I was out of it -- that those windows on  
11 the bottom level were completely covered by the ground. So the  
12 only way out of there would be to go up. And I don't know quite  
13 how you'd do that without a ladder. I mean, you'd have to --  
14 well, I mean, I guess you could crawl up the stairs. But  
15 remember, the stairs are flipped 90 degrees over, so I don't know.  
16 I wasn't aware of that. There was nobody to --

17 You know, I was interviewed by the media a couple times, and  
18 then they're always trying to get you to make sensational  
19 statements. And they're saying, well, was there a lot of  
20 screaming when the derailment happened? You know, stuff like  
21 that. And there was not, you know, and I said that. I said, you  
22 know, it was actually quiet. People were just, I think in most  
23 cases, deciding what they were going to try to latch onto. There  
24 wasn't screaming. I don't remember any screaming at all. But,  
25 no, I wasn't aware of that. I mean, I know that there were some

1 people down there. I mean, the car attendant was down there for  
2 sure. I don't know if he had any customers at the moment.

3 The fortunate thing about the lounge car was that there  
4 was -- earlier in the day -- in fact, I had been -- I had sat --  
5 because the lounge car was full. I don't think there was any  
6 seats at all. But in the late afternoon, it seems to me that  
7 older people especially, I think, maybe like to go back to their  
8 rooms or their seats and take a little nap before dinner. And  
9 that's about when this happened. So when I was in the lounge car  
10 when the derailment happened, I don't know exactly, but I don't  
11 think there were more than probably eight or ten people in the  
12 whole car, which was fortunate. But I'm sure the car attendant  
13 was probably downstairs.

14 We were afraid to go out the window initially. We were  
15 worried. I was very concerned that the car would continue to tip.  
16 Right now, it's at 90 degrees, and I thought if it tips any  
17 more -- I mean, I didn't know. We were on an embankment. I mean,  
18 it's possible that it could have -- we all kind of hesitated for a  
19 while. We said, well, maybe we should wait a minute before we go  
20 out this window because if the car continues to roll, it's going  
21 to squash us like bugs. So, you know, maybe we might want to not  
22 go out right away. There was no fire or anything like that, other  
23 than, you know, everybody was anxious to get out of there as soon  
24 as we could. But --

25 Q. So you hadn't gone downstairs in the café area at all, then?

1 A. No. I usually don't -- I always -- I travel with the  
2 sleeper, so I get my food in the dining car, so I usually don't go  
3 down there at all. So, no, I'm not -- I don't know what the  
4 situation was there. I'm sure it wasn't good.

5 Q. Do you remember if there was an Amtrak employee in the lounge  
6 car?

7 A. I don't remember. They would not have been where I was if  
8 there was one because they're never in the seats. If at all,  
9 they're back at the tables. But I honestly don't remember if  
10 there was -- sometimes I think the conductors ride in those  
11 tables, those big tables at the back end, but sometimes they  
12 don't. It just seems to vary on different trips. Sometimes  
13 they're up in their transition car. They have their little room  
14 there in the bottom of the transition car where they're at, you  
15 know, so -- no, I don't know. I just don't know. Sorry.

16 Q. Not a problem. So is it correct to say that the passengers  
17 self-extricated, then? They got out of the car on their own?

18 A. Well, yeah, the people that -- you know, the guy that had  
19 landed on the wall next to me, when I crawled down, he had helped.  
20 Not everybody could get out, but the people -- most of the people  
21 were like me. They were just kind of in shock and just bruised a  
22 little bit, and they went out through the window that I did. Not  
23 a lot. I mean, I think maybe -- I would say maybe three or four  
24 people. And that guy, the guy that had the bleeding mouth, he  
25 kind of got him dragged through there.

1 Q. Was that the window directly in front of your seat?

2 A. That was the window -- the window that broke? You mean how  
3 he got out?

4 Q. Yes.

5 A. Yeah. It was the window that was -- it wasn't the one  
6 directly below me, because the one directly below me had a bunch  
7 of jagged metal and stuff. I have pictures of that, too, from the  
8 outside. But it was the window right behind us. So the window  
9 directly in front of the number six seat, which was the one  
10 that -- the number six seat is next to that plastic partition, you  
11 know, that is like a sound barrier for -- but, you know, it's  
12 translucent so you can -- or transparent so you can see through  
13 it.

14 Q. Prior to the derailment, did the PA system work in the train?

15 A. That's always a sticky point because notoriously they work  
16 intermittently. They work sometimes and not others. I know it  
17 worked in my sleeping car. I'm trying to think if it was working  
18 in there. I think it -- well, I'm pretty sure it did, at least  
19 for the downstairs. I mean, that's a situation where -- I've been  
20 on a lot of trains where -- there was a lounge car guy who was  
21 downstairs. If he makes the announcement, you can hear it in the  
22 lounge car. But sometimes when the conductor -- or especially the  
23 dining car maître d', you know, a couple cars away -- when they  
24 make an announcement, you don't hear it. So whether or not it was  
25 working at that exact moment, I really -- I don't recall. I just

1 don't know. I'm sure it was. When the derailment happened, it  
2 wouldn't have worked (indiscernible). I shouldn't say because I  
3 don't really (indiscernible) stuff you're asking me.

4 Q. So I know that you said that there was a lot of dust that  
5 kind of fogged over the interior of the car. Did you see any  
6 lighting in the cars?

7 A. You mean, like, the floor lighting?

8 Q. Yes.

9 A. Those LEDs in the floor, that kind of thing?

10 Q. Yes.

11 A. I didn't see it. I mean, it may have been working. You  
12 know, I was down on the wall, so that would have been way up above  
13 my head, so, you know, I would have to crawl straight up to even  
14 take a look at that, so I don't know. No, I just don't know if  
15 that was working or not. I mean, we had very little relevance in  
16 this particular accident because, you know, this happened at  
17 beautiful, bright sunshine. I mean, the sun was just brilliant  
18 outside, so you would probably have to look pretty hard even to  
19 see it. I mean, yeah, that's kind of probably more valuable at  
20 night, probably, right, at lower light conditions, I think.

21 Q. And my last question is going to be: When you boarded the  
22 train, did the train crew give you any kind of a briefing which  
23 would include, also, the availability of a safety card?

24 A. Oh, yeah. I'm pretty sure they did that. They always --  
25 that's the first thing they do before you even -- you're just



1 pulling out of the station and they're -- yeah, they had that  
2 (indiscernible). I'm almost positive that they did that. They  
3 always do that. It goes on for quite a while.

4 Q. Those are all of my questions. If you don't mind, I'm going  
5 to turn it over to my colleagues.

6 MS. HARLEY: Kari?

7 MR. FREED: Sure.

8 BY MS. JACOBSON:

9 Q. Hi, Wayne. Thanks for taking the time to talk to us. I was  
10 wondering if you could describe a little bit more the dynamics you  
11 went through and what you did when the car started to tip over. I  
12 know you described it once, but now that we've, you know, figured  
13 out exactly where you were seated and everything, I'd love to hear  
14 you describe that again. You know, like what you held onto, what  
15 you stood on, what you were dangling above, all of that.

16 A. Well, what I like to do is I like to turn the single seat a  
17 little bit to the side so I'm riding in about a 30 degree  
18 position. You know, that's where you get the -- I like to look  
19 forward a little bit more than I like to look straight out to the  
20 side. So I usually sit there with my feet -- my slippers; not my  
21 shoes. But I had my slippers on. I put those in that tray that  
22 runs right along the bottom of the windows. And I think I  
23 probably had an advantage over some of the people because I've  
24 ridden the train so much and I've also ridden a lot of excursion  
25 trains which are, you know, not Amtrak. They're often very, very

1 slow operations and the track is sometimes not the best, you know,  
2 and the train rocks around a lot. So I've probably gotten too  
3 comfortable with the fact -- I just had it in my head that, you  
4 know, I've been on lots of little excursion trains around the  
5 country that -- obviously, I'm a rail fan. And, you know, they  
6 rock like crazy and they never derail. So I thought, here we are  
7 going, you know, 78 miles an hour on B&S Northern Transcontinental  
8 Track, it's beautiful stuff, and I thought this is the last time  
9 I'd have to think about derailment.

10 But anyway, when the car -- when it did derail, I think I  
11 probably had the advantage over some people because as soon as I  
12 heard the ballast on the bottom of the car, I knew we were off the  
13 track. And then when it started to tip, right away I put my feet  
14 down and I started to look around for something to grab onto.

15 And I know you guys are probably -- at least I think you're  
16 interested in things to consider modification to the cars to maybe  
17 make it nicer for people in a derailment. And I would think one  
18 of the things you might want to think about, maybe, would be a  
19 plastic transparent partition like the one that was -- you know,  
20 like the side ones which are -- you know, they're perpendicular to  
21 the track. But what I'm talking about is maybe you'd want to  
22 consider something that would actually be behind the seat, you  
23 know. Like, if the seat was basically perpendicular to the tracks  
24 so you're looking straight to the side, 90 degrees, this partition  
25 would stick up behind the chair. And the advantage to that, I

1 think, would be it could prevent some injuries when you're on the  
2 upside of the car. Now, I was on the downside of the car when it  
3 tipped so, in other words, I wound up hanging on to the table, and  
4 I was only about 2 feet from the windows that broke out straight  
5 below me. But the people that were on the other side of the car  
6 don't have that advantage, and when the car tips, they're going to  
7 wind up, like, being thrown backwards over their head, and then  
8 they're going to fall all the way down the whole width of the car  
9 which is now straight down. That's about 10 feet. And I think  
10 that's how a lot of the people got injured is they wound up  
11 falling all the way down to the windows on the other side. And if  
12 they had a partition behind them, I just wonder if that would have  
13 sort of prevented the fall? It would still be awkward, you know.

14 But, anyways, that's what I did is I got up and, as the car  
15 starts to tip, I started to think about what I could latch onto.  
16 And then I was worried about two things. I was worried about -- I  
17 latched onto the table. You know, fortunately, it was really  
18 securely bolted to the floor. And my one worry, I thought, oh, my  
19 gosh, if this table comes loose from the floor, both me and the  
20 table are going to fall down through that hole. That was one  
21 thing that was on my mind.

22 The other thing was that, fortunately, the train, once it  
23 tipped over, it came to a stop pretty quickly, but it did it  
24 smoothly. It wasn't a collision. It didn't, like, slam into  
25 something and stop immediately. That would have broken my grip,

1 and then I would have fallen down for sure. And I was worried  
2 about that, too, and I kept waiting for the impact. I had no idea  
3 what was happening. I mean, there had been this loud metal bang  
4 that started the whole thing, but I was just hoping we weren't  
5 going to, like, crash into a truck or some big object.

6 So I think I may have had the advantage over some of the  
7 people that aren't so used to trains that I pretty much realized  
8 what was happening and then spent my time looking for a handle to  
9 latch onto.

10 But I don't know, like I said, if any of your guys might want  
11 to consider plastic partitions behind the seats. I know that  
12 would make the walkway -- the hallway would get maybe a little  
13 claustrophobic. I mean, it wouldn't have to be everywhere. Maybe  
14 just where the seats are.

15 Or maybe better than that are poles, vertical poles, maybe,  
16 that would be a place to latch onto.

17 I know some of my -- I've talked -- you know, I've told this  
18 story to my friends a lot, and they bring up the idea of seatbelts  
19 which, I don't know, as a long-time train rider, I just -- that  
20 just sort of goes against my grain. But, I mean, that would help.  
21 If you were on the upside of the train when it tipped, you would  
22 wind up in a position now you're on your back but still in the  
23 seat. Then your seatbelt would probably keep you from falling.  
24 However, if you were where I was, you know, on the downside of the  
25 train when it tipped, now you're going to wind up just where

1 you're hanging by a seatbelt, looking straight down, and you  
2 probably aren't able to even release yourself from the seatbelt  
3 because, you know, when it's under pressure I don't think it's  
4 going to release. So, you know, I think it was probably better --  
5 on me, at least, it was probably better off not having a seatbelt  
6 because I could get into a position where I could latch on to  
7 something. So I don't know.

8       And then, of course, you can also say, well, what if you're  
9 90 years old and you don't have the strength to hold your body  
10 weight by your arms, you know? And maybe a seatbelt would be  
11 good. Or what if you're a three-year-old kid, you know? So I  
12 don't know. Those are things I just wanted to throw out.

13       I mean, I was lucky because I kind of figured out what was  
14 going on and I had something to latch onto. That was another  
15 thing. I think that there were people back at those tables -- you  
16 guys probably know, and maybe it's none of my business, but the  
17 talk was on the buses that one of the fatalities that occurred on  
18 the train was in my car, the back or the end, sitting at one of  
19 those big tables. I don't know if that's true or not. You guys  
20 probably know. But I was thinking about that, if that was true.  
21 I was fortunate because I had a lot more handles available. I had  
22 that little table to latch onto or I could have latched onto the  
23 back of my seat; whereas, if you're sitting in those table things,  
24 especially if you're sitting against the window and the train  
25 starts to go on its side, what are you going to grab? There's

1 nothing to grab. That table is huge. There's no coffee table.  
2 You can't grab onto the seat. And the person sitting next to you  
3 in the aisle seat is going to be using -- all their body weight is  
4 going to be trying to push you against the window, which is  
5 probably now break in half. And if you go through that window,  
6 you're probably going to be a fatality. Do you see what I'm  
7 getting at? I was lucky that I think I figured out the situation.  
8 But also, I had handles available; whereas, some people, I think,  
9 in other parts of the car maybe didn't. You know? So I don't  
10 know if that's valuable information, but whatever that's worth,  
11 there it is.

12 Q. Thank you.

13 MS. JACOBSON: I'm going to pass it over to Kris now and let  
14 her ask any questions she has.

15 MS. SEVERSON: Thank you.

16 BY MS. SEVERSON:

17 Q. Yeah, your information, your recall, is really very  
18 interesting and very helpful. It really gives us a good sense of  
19 what was going on in the train, and I think it's wonderful that  
20 you were, you know, so astute to be thinking ahead about what must  
21 be happening.

22 So you were hanging onto the table, the car came to a rest,  
23 and then you dropped down; is that right? You let go and dropped  
24 down?

25 A. Yeah, I kind of crawled down. I crawled down the ceiling and

1 I crawled down to the edge of the window, first of all, and then I  
2 stepped down through the window about another 2 feet down to the  
3 ballast, which was -- so now I'm standing on the ground, and the  
4 window frame is probably around my knee. And that's how I  
5 (indiscernible) before I helped people and eventually got out.

6 Q. Do you remember anybody -- so if you're facing the window, do  
7 you remember any other people that were sitting in the next kind  
8 of series of side-facing seats to your right, further back in the  
9 train?

10 A. I don't, sorry. Because, see, I don't even -- I'm looking,  
11 like, 45 degrees forward, so they would be sort of behind me. And  
12 also, sometimes I would have a conversation with somebody like  
13 that, but because of the plastic partition, there wasn't anybody  
14 next to me. So there was nobody -- I'm almost positive that there  
15 was nobody in the number six seat. I was in the five seat. And  
16 then there was the partition. And, see, that's what was  
17 preventing talking so --

18 Q. Sure, yeah, and divided.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. And then you described a grinding noise from the front truck.  
21 I don't know if you can describe it in any more detail? Like, was  
22 it continuous or intermittent? Anything more you can say about  
23 that?

24 A. No, it was continuous because I remember I noticed it when we  
25 first left the station. I had gotten my ticket scanned when I was

1 on the ground. So when we got up to my transition  
2 sleeper -- we're still in Chicago station now -- I asked the car  
3 attendant there, I said, I would love to take pictures leaving the  
4 station because I usually don't ride the *Empire Builder*; I usually  
5 ride the *Zephyr*. And I wanted to take pictures from the lounge  
6 car as we're leaving the station. I got some cool pictures of,  
7 like, the boats down on the Chicago River going by. And so what  
8 I'm getting at is I got to go back to the lounge car before we  
9 even left the station, and as soon as we started moving, I noticed  
10 the sound. I thought, well, that's different. You know, that's  
11 extra, extra noisy. Just sort of like a dry sound, like metal on  
12 metal kind of thing.

13 And as the train goes faster, it gets higher pitched. And  
14 when the train stops at a station stop, it stops completely. So,  
15 to me, that indicates it's something to do with the rotation of  
16 the wheels or bearings or something that rotates when the train is  
17 moving is making the sound, because when the train stops, there's  
18 no sound.

19 Q. Did you notice any more car body motion at the front versus  
20 the rear of the car? You know, more lateral motion or kind of  
21 dynamics at the front versus the rear?

22 A. Like the suspension or something? No, not at all.

23 Q. No, I was thinking more like lateral or I guess --

24 A. Oh, like left and right? No, I didn't notice that. I mean,  
25 I think I probably would have, too, because like I said, I've been



1 in those cars a zillion times and -- no, except the sound,  
2 everything seemed normal.

3 Q. So the ride quality was the same wherever you were in the  
4 train and seemed normal?

5 A. Yes. And where you noticed the sound the very most, by the  
6 way, is where -- of course, I went through there a lot because,  
7 you know, my sleeping car was up in the front of the train -- is  
8 when you're going -- passing through the door, you know, when  
9 you're entering the car or passing through the sliding door at the  
10 front. Now, you know, you're basically outside the train. You  
11 know, you can hear it. You can hear the track sound really good.  
12 And that's when you really notice it. So I'd say it would be  
13 possible to walk through the train and -- well, I mean, the  
14 normal -- the regular riders -- for somebody who's never ridden  
15 Amtrak before probably wouldn't even notice it. But it was very  
16 noticeable then.

17 So, I mean, I don't think a crewmember or anybody could walk  
18 through the train and not notice it. That's why I didn't give it  
19 much weight. I thought, well, my gosh, you know, they've been  
20 walking through the train for 24 hours, you know. Why should  
21 I -- I mean, they know the train more than me. That is something  
22 that -- you know, that's why I didn't report it. I thought this  
23 is going to be embarrassing, so I didn't --

24 Q. No, not at all. I'm glad you said something. We don't know  
25 if it means anything, but it's something to look at.

1 A. Yeah, sure.

2 Q. And then other than injured passengers or other passengers in  
3 your car, you described a man who bit his tongue and was bleeding  
4 from the mouth. You helped him out the same window. Do you have  
5 any other details about anybody else that you helped out or anyone  
6 that seemed injured and not able to self-extricate?

7 A. No. Mostly -- there was another guy, and I don't know his  
8 name, who actually was the guy who he pulled that guy out. I  
9 basically attended to him a little bit when he was in the car.  
10 And then I attended to him, also, once he was outside. I have a  
11 picture of him. Actually, he was outside the train just sitting  
12 on the dirt road, and I got him a bottle of water. But I don't  
13 know his name. And I know he did go to the hospital or he  
14 did -- well, he did go at least to the triage center because he  
15 was taken away in an ambulance. People were worried that he was  
16 going to, like, pass out. I didn't see any physical injuries on  
17 him, but, I mean, that doesn't mean anything at all. But I think  
18 he was kind of in shock a little bit. So we were talking to him.  
19 We kept talking to him because we wanted to make sure that he  
20 didn't, like, you know, go unconscious and nobody realized it  
21 because nobody was talking to him. So we kept trying to talk to  
22 him. He stayed conscious. And we said, you know, you're bleeding  
23 from your mouth pretty good. He said, well, that's just because I  
24 bit my tongue. So he was taken in an ambulance, but I don't know  
25 the gentleman's name.

1 I do have a picture. I can send a picture. It's not a very  
2 good picture. It's just an overall picture. I didn't take it of  
3 him. It's an overall picture of the situation, but he is sitting  
4 in the road with a bottle of water, and a lady is talking to him.

5 Q. Great. I guess one more thing. When you said that you  
6 walked from the rear to the front taking video -- yeah, I guess it  
7 would just be interesting to see if there's anything, like Sheryl  
8 said, from the audio that we could decipher or anything. That  
9 would be very helpful.

10 So other than that, that's all my questions. Thank you very  
11 much.

12 A. Sure. What my thought is -- the video shot that I -- it's  
13 just I walked up to the -- let's see. As you're facing forward in  
14 the lounge car, it would be the left front corner. And I turned  
15 around and shot video from there, which is a video of exactly  
16 where I was sitting for the accident. This video I'm talking  
17 about was taken in the morning. I think there's a lady sitting in  
18 that seat. And you can hear it in that video because I'm standing  
19 right -- I mean, I'm right at the very front of the car, so you  
20 can hear it. It's not quite as pronounced in the -- with the  
21 phone as it was in the car, but you can hear it, so --

22 Q. Okay, very good. All right, thank you.

23 MS. HARLEY: Great. Thank you.

24 MR. FREED: Sure.

25 BY MS. HARLEY:

1 Q. So I've got a couple of real quick follow-up questions. So  
2 you said this was the first time you were on the *Empire Builder*?

3 A. Oh, no, I've ridden that many, many times.

4 Q. Have you been through that area before?

5 A. Well, yeah, because I always take it to the west coast. I  
6 don't know anybody in Montana, so I always pass through.

7 Q. So the reason I'm asking is that -- did the ride feel any  
8 different, I mean, on the tracks? Did it feel any different than  
9 normal before the loud bang and the derailment?

10 A. No, not really. I mean, it seems to me that I was basically  
11 impressed by the track. I thought the track was smoother than  
12 normal, you know. And then I -- once I got off the train, you  
13 know, I mean, a whole bunch of us was there talking. There was a  
14 switch right there, and we wondered if that was the culprit, if  
15 the switch caused the accident. You know, the more I think about  
16 it -- and I've talked about it with other people -- I don't know  
17 if the switch even was involved. I mean, the train was off the  
18 track and it's sliding down the rails. Had it hit the switch, I'm  
19 sure the switch isn't going to help the situation at all. But on  
20 the other hand, because the back three cars were on their sides  
21 and (indiscernible) way back like thousands of feet back behind  
22 the switch, I have a hard time understanding how the switch could  
23 be the problem, you know. So I don't know. I don't know about  
24 that stuff, so I shouldn't say anything.

25 Q. So the last thing I'm going to do is I'm going to try to jog

1 your memory just a little bit, if this is possible. So just  
2 before the derailment, you went to your car, you picked up your  
3 charged for your cell phone, and you were walking back to your  
4 seat in the lounge car. As you walked through the door to enter  
5 the lounge car, is there someone to the left of you? That would  
6 be the right side going forward. But just as you walk in, is  
7 there someone at that first double table?

8 A. Well, there wouldn't be a table. No, the tables are at the  
9 back end of the car.

10 Q. Well, I mean -- I'm sorry, I mean the chairs. I mean where  
11 the double seats are.

12 A. Oh.

13 Q. When you walked through the door, did you -- was there  
14 somebody there?

15 A. Oh, man, I just -- see, I go back and forth a couple times a  
16 day, and I just don't remember. I want to say that there wasn't,  
17 because there weren't many people there, but I'm really not sure.  
18 I'm really not sure. I'm sorry.

19 Q. No, that's not a problem.

20 MS. HARLEY: So does anyone else have any questions?

21 MS. SEVERSON: I have one more question.

22 BY MS. SEVERSON:

23 Q. You said that initially you heard a loud bang, that  
24 (indiscernible) bang. Do you have any sense where it came from,  
25 whether it was in front of the car or behind the car or in the

1 car?

2 A. It was not in the car; it was outside the car. And it seemed  
3 to me like it was very close, like it was right at the front of  
4 our lounge car. It seemed to me like it could have even been  
5 involving that truck. I don't know. I mean, again, I'm  
6 conjecturing now, so I shouldn't be doing that. But it wasn't far  
7 away. I mean, it wasn't, like, from another car. It was very,  
8 very close, but it was not in the car. It was outside the car.  
9 And it was like metal on metal almost. If that's -- I don't know  
10 what would cause the metal on metal. I mean, I guess maybe  
11 something hitting the track. I don't know. But it was like a  
12 metallic bang.

13 Q. And you heard the sound before you felt, like, a change in  
14 your car body motion, right?

15 A. Oh, yeah. I mean, that was immediately followed by the  
16 ballast sound, so I'm real sure that they were associated with  
17 each other. Whatever that bang was, it resulted in us being off  
18 the track immediately, so I'm pretty sure that they were  
19 definitely connected.

20 Q. All right, that's it. Thank you.

21 MS. HARLEY: So, Mr. Freed, do you have any questions for us?

22 MR. FREED: Well, I'm curious. I don't know what you guys  
23 can say. I know they came out with that preliminary report, but I  
24 noticed the final one is not going to be for, like, eight or ten  
25 months. But is there anything else that you could say? I mean, I

1 get this question almost every day from friends saying, you know,  
2 whatever caused that accident? And I used to say, well, I think  
3 maybe it was the switch, but now, I don't know, the more I think  
4 about it, I don't know. I mean, do you guys have any more -- I  
5 know the train wasn't speeding. And the track, basically, was  
6 fine from Chicago. I mean, I thought that the ride was just  
7 smooth as all other tracks. Smoother than CSX at least. I know  
8 that one well. So I don't know. Are you guys able to say  
9 anything? Or maybe (indiscernible)?

10 MS. HARLEY: So I will tell you that the investigation is  
11 still ongoing. And, no, we actually have not been able to  
12 pinpoint the cause of the derailment. We're still doing the  
13 investigation. We're still looking at everything. We're  
14 certainly looking at the track. We're certainly looking at the  
15 train cars. And again, one of the reasons that we're talking to  
16 you and all the passengers is that you guys may have some  
17 information that may kind of help us point the direction we need  
18 to look in. And I certainly do appreciate you taking the time.  
19 Again, if you think of anything, no matter how small, feel free to  
20 either call me or email me or send me a text, whichever is easier  
21 for you. And you will probably be hearing from us as we go  
22 forward in the investigation. So you'll hear from our TDA  
23 specialists who will reach out to you anytime that we have some  
24 kind of update. Okay?

25 MR. FREED: That sounds good. I want to be sure to get that

1 text number to you. And also, I don't know if you can get to it,  
2 but if they can take a close look at that lead truck on the lounge  
3 car or even turn the wheels on that thing and listen, you're sure  
4 to hear the sound that I'm talking about. And if you compare that  
5 to any other truck on the train, it doesn't -- no other trucks  
6 make that sound. So there's something different about that truck.  
7 Whether that's a factor or not, I don't know, but I would suggest  
8 if they could do that to take an extra close look at that thing or  
9 turn the wheels or something. I don't know, but --

10 MS. HARLEY: Well, I will certainly pass that on to our  
11 mechanical guys who are actually doing just that. They are  
12 inspecting all the cars. We did it on the scene, and we're going  
13 to do a little bit further.

14 So again, if you can send me that video, and we'll try to see  
15 if we can either enhance it so we can hear -- and maybe we'll be  
16 able to show it to the mechanical guys, and they'll be able to  
17 figure out what that sound is. All right?

18 MR. FREED: Okay. And I could use the number 2 [REDACTED]  
19 That's the --

20 MS. HARLEY: No. Try this number: [REDACTED]

21 MR. FREED: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

22 MS. HARLEY: Correct.

23 MR. FREED: Okay. And you want mainly just the video of  
24 inside the lounge car?

25 MS. HARLEY: Yeah, the video. And if you have any other



1 photographs, please feel free to send that, as well.

2 MR. FREED: Okay. Yeah, I've got a couple of videos and  
3 probably about ten photographs, so I can --

4 MS. HARLEY: Great. Thank you. I appreciate it.

5 MR. FREED: All righty.

6 MS. HARLEY: All right. Thank you very much, sir. You have  
7 a good day.

8 MR. FREED: Thank you. You, too.

9 MS. SEVERSON: Thank you.

10 MR. FREED: Good luck.

11 MS. HARLEY: Bye-bye.

12 And interview concluded at 2:30 p.m.

13 (Whereupon, at 2:30 p.m. EST, the interview was concluded.)  
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

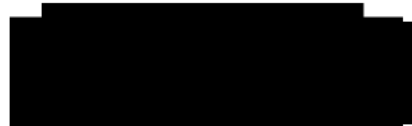
IN THE MATTER OF:            FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT  
                                      NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA  
                                      ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021  
                                      Interview of Wayne Freed

ACCIDENT NO.:                RRD21MR017

PLACE:                         Via Telephone

DATE:                         November 8, 2021

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.



Angie Duray  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT \*

NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA \* Accident No.: RRD21MR017

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: MARK GREENWOOD, Amtrak Passenger

DONNA EVANS, Amtrak Passenger

Via telephone

Friday,  
October 8, 2021

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

KARINA JACOBSEN, Investigator  
Volpe National Transportation System Center

KRISTINE SEVERSON, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe National Transportation System Center

MICHAEL LANGE, Engineering Technology & Automation  
Federal Railroad Administration

MARY CARLSON BIS, Sr. Director of Emergency Management  
Amtrak

I N D E X

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By Mr. Lange	33

I N T E R V I E W

(2:04 p.m. EDT)

1  
2  
3 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So good afternoon, everyone. So my name  
4 is Sheryl Harley. I am the Assistant Investigator in charge of  
5 the investigation into the Amtrak derailment in Joplin, Montana  
6 that occurred on September the 25th, 2021 at about 3:47 p.m. local  
7 time, and this is in regards to NTSB investigation number  
8 RRD21MR017.

9 Today is October the 8th of 2021, and it is 2:04 p.m. and  
10 this would be Eastern Daylight Time. In addition to myself, I  
11 would also ask Mr. Greenwood, Ms. Evans, can you identify yourself  
12 for the tape please?

13 MR. GREENWOOD: Hi, I'm Mark Greenwood.

14 MS. EVANS: And Donna Evans.

15 MS. HARLEY: So in addition, we also have our investigative  
16 team, and I'll ask -- introduce themselves, and I'll do it way --  
17 in order of where you appear on my, my camera. Kristine?

18 MS. SEVERSON: Hello, I am Kristine Severson. I work for the  
19 Volpe National Transportation System Center, which is part of the  
20 U.S. DOT. I'm a Mechanical Engineer, and we support the FRA and  
21 the NTSB in the -- on the forensics team for this investigation.  
22 Thank you for being here.

23 MS. HARLEY: Kari?

24 MS. JACOBSEN: Hi there. My name is Kari Jacobsen. I'm also  
25 with the Volpe Center with Kris, and we were all out at the

1 accident scene last week. And so we're just looking to interview  
2 you and help piece together what happened, so thanks for taking  
3 the time today.

4 MS. HARLEY: Mike?

5 MR. LANGE: Hey, good morning. Mike Lange with the Federal  
6 Railroad Administration, Engineering Technology and Automation  
7 Division. I was out there last week, also, with the team on the  
8 forensics side. Thank you for joining us.

9 MS. HARLEY: Mary?

10 MS. BIS: Good morning, I'm Mary Carlson Bis. I'm the Senior  
11 Director of Emergency Management at Amtrak. My apologies, I'm  
12 going to be off camera taking a call from -- inside the vehicle.  
13 I'm actually in Arizona right now, so I'm going to go off camera.  
14 I -- part of my role within the organization is to lead the Amtrak  
15 Incident Response Team.

16 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And I think that's everyone on the call.  
17 So I think that the, the best way to do -- to deal with this is to  
18 let you -- the two of you tell us the events as you saw it.

19 So the one thing I'm going to ask you to do for me is just  
20 simply just tell me when you boarded the train -- and where and  
21 when, and then just kind of walk me through the day of the  
22 accident. Okay?

23 MR. GREENWOOD: Okay. I'll start. We boarded the train in  
24 Chicago. I think it was about two in the afternoon, give or take.  
25 I forget what date that was in -- the 24th of September, and we

1 were headed to Spokane, Washington on a return trip. We had been  
2 in Chicago for a few days on vacation. And -- so that --

3 MS. EVANS: And we had taken Amtrak to Chicago from Spokane  
4 -- I couldn't remember the date.

5 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah.

6 MS. EVANS: But --

7 MR. GREENWOOD: The date --

8 MS. EVANS: Yeah, we spent three nights in Chicago, and then  
9 we were on our return back to Spokane when the incident occurred.

10 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So let's, let's move forward to the 25th  
11 of September, which would be the day of the accident. So just  
12 kind of walk me through that day, and where you were and what you  
13 observed.

14 MR. GREENWOOD: So we were in the very last car. We were  
15 likely the most rearward passengers on the entire train. We were  
16 in family sleeper unit number 15. There were no other passengers  
17 on that lower level of our car at that time. There had been --  
18 people had come and gone, but we were alone down there at the time  
19 of the accident.

20 The train -- the ride had been pretty uneventful up until the  
21 last couple hours before the incident, the crossings via switches  
22 and various crossings seemed to get rougher and rougher, and some  
23 -- I was -- frankly, I was somewhat amazed at some of the  
24 roughness at some of the crossings that we hadn't derailed.  
25 Before I was amazed that the train could stay on the rails.



1 (Indiscernible) --

2 MS. EVANS: Because they were violent jerks, like, side to  
3 side; not, like, an up and down. (Indiscernible), but all of a  
4 sudden, the train would be going pretty smooth, and then all of a  
5 sudden, it would hit a switch, and it'd just be like bang, bang,  
6 bang, bang. And we'd be, like, oh my God, and then you know, of  
7 course, we traveled on. But there were many areas that there were  
8 very rough like that.

9 MR. GREENWOOD: -- and said -- so then, when -- you know,  
10 when the accident happened, I was sitting up on the left side of  
11 the car facing forward, so I was at the left window as the train  
12 was moving forward.

13 I was sitting up in the seat with my feet up on the seat  
14 across from me. Donna was laying down on the, the couch with her  
15 head at the right window; she had her head on a pillow there.

16 MS. EVANS: We were trying to rest because we knew we got  
17 into Spokane at 1:30 in the morning, and then we had still an hour  
18 and a half drive from there to get to our house in Idaho. So we  
19 wouldn't be getting home until three in the morning, so we  
20 thought, well, we'll just rest in our, in our compartment here and  
21 just take it easy. And then that terrible thing happened that  
22 almost killed us.

23 MR. GREENWOOD: And then so I was -- Donna was napping or  
24 resting. I was sitting up; I was looking out the window. I  
25 perceived that we were rounding a right-hand curve -- relatively

1 gentle curve at speed. I, I had installed an app on my phone to,  
2 to log the speed on our trip out to Chicago because I was  
3 surprised at how fast we were going.

4 I should say that I'm a registered civil engineer, and my  
5 specialty is transportation engineering. So monitoring speed is,  
6 is a thing to me, so I was interested in how fast the train was  
7 going and, and surprised that it was going --

8 MS. EVANS: About 80.

9 MR. GREENWOOD: About 80, yeah. At times it would be 80.  
10 Mostly, it would show 78, 79 when, when we perceived it being at  
11 full speed. There were times it would slow down to 40 or 50 or 60  
12 for various crossings.

13 So anyway, as we were rounding this right-hand bend, the ride  
14 suddenly was as rough as it had been at other switches and  
15 crossings, but then, it just got more and more and more violent.  
16 And to the point where I looked over at Donna, and she was -- it,  
17 it appeared to me she was levitating off of the sofa there -- the  
18 couch. And at about that time, I realized I was levitating, as  
19 well, and it -- and then it got incredibly violent.

20 There were three huge cycles of, of the car banging side to  
21 side or up and down. At the time, I thought it was up and down  
22 that we were bouncing, say five feet in the air up and down, at  
23 least three cycles like that. Right after that, I very briefly  
24 realized I was flying across the room. I don't know what I hit,  
25 but I ended up in the hospital with a brain bleed, broken

1 (indiscernible), and bumps and bruises head to toe.

2 What I -- I believe I was knocked unconscious. When I woke  
3 up, I was dazed, and I felt Donna tapping my leg or hitting my  
4 leg. And I could hear her muffled scream. It turns out that, as  
5 the car had rolled over on its right side, that window by her head  
6 had broken out, and it acted as a giant scoop and just filled the  
7 car -- filled our compartment with the railroad ballast and sand  
8 and debris.

9 And she was buried; her head was completely buried and up to  
10 about to her waist was some kind of buried upside down were her --  
11 the upper half of her body was buried. The legs were exposed. I  
12 was able to, to brush the dirt away from her face, and she, she  
13 then, was walking --

14 MS. EVANS: I couldn't breathe; I was suffocating. Because  
15 Mark His had been, I'm assuming, knocked unconscious because it  
16 was very quiet, and I just remember all this dirt just flying in  
17 my face like a giant wave coming at me and just this big brown  
18 wave.

19 And I think I must have been screaming or starting to open my  
20 mouth to scream, and I think I put my hands above my face, which  
21 luckily, I did. Because my mouth was full of gravel and dirt and  
22 sand just, like, wide-open just shoved in there, so I couldn't  
23 make any noise. And I -- obviously, I couldn't breathe because I  
24 was, you know, under all this, all this gravel and rubble.

25 It was so, so heavy, so I was trying to, like, get my fingers

1 to my mouth to just scoop some of the dirt out of it so that I  
2 could make a sound to, you know, see where Mark was and see if,  
3 you know, he could help me. And so, I, I thought I was done.

4 I was on my last moment of breath when I, somehow, managed to  
5 get one arm out, and I was just flailing it around. And I caught  
6 him by the leg, and he was like, oh, what -- you know, what's  
7 going on? You know, I'm, like, oh, I can't breathe, you know.  
8 It's just -- it's like a squeak, you know.

9 And he grabbed my hand and tried to pull me out, but it was  
10 too heavy. You know, I wouldn't -- you know, I wasn't just going  
11 to be pulled out, so that's when he started digging around my face  
12 and, and cleared my, my face so that I could spit out all that  
13 gravel and sand and dirt. And, and then he was able to unbury the  
14 rest of me, and then we were, then we were trapped in our  
15 compartment.

16 And so, we had that, that nice -- we thought, oh, we'll have  
17 the big family compartment. It's going to be so much more, you  
18 know, "comfortable." But it's the whole length -- the width of  
19 the train, so now the train's on its side; the only way out is  
20 through a window above us maybe -- I'm guessing -- what, 11 or 12  
21 feet above us that we couldn't reach to get out.

22 So now we're literally trapped in our compartment covered in  
23 dirt and, and debris. We can't find our cell phones; everything's  
24 buried. Our, our luggage -- we keep our bags with us because we  
25 just bring, like, a carry-on each.

1 Both of our bags were completely buried, and I was digging in  
2 the rubble trying to find at least one phone so that we could, you  
3 know, contact our family and our, our loved ones or try to get  
4 help or somebody to get us out of the train. But we couldn't find  
5 anything.

6 I, somehow, found both of my shoes, and so, I put my shoes  
7 on, and Mark had his shoes on at the time of the accident, but one  
8 shoe had flown off; at which -- we couldn't find the other shoe  
9 anywhere. And so, I saw, like, a -- some light above us off to  
10 the side of, like, a narrow strip of light coming through, so I  
11 just told Mark, let's just forget everything. Let's just get out  
12 of here because -- I mean, it was so scary.

13 So I climbed up on something and got up through this little  
14 opening to get to the next -- I guess it was the next sleeper  
15 compartment that was more -- that I could reach the window if I  
16 crawled up through there. But I had to stand on top of another  
17 window below us, if that makes sense, since it's on its side, so  
18 there was a, a window below us, and then there was one above.

19 But I got across that window and climbed up on this little  
20 ledge, and then I was trying to take that rubber gasket off of the  
21 window above me. But it was really hard. I mean, I was a having  
22 a really hard time pulling it, so, so Mark crawled up through that  
23 little opening, and he was reaching up trying to help me.

24 And we got the gasket off, but then, he fell through that  
25 window below us, and so, now, he's fallen down to the bottom of

1 the train. And he's in this -- I'm looking down through the  
2 window, and it's, like, I just see his head looking up at me.  
3 I'm, like, oh my, God. Are you okay?.

4 So, so now, he's stuck below there. Now, I'm by myself up at  
5 the top trying to, you know, unjam -- the window was totally  
6 jammed, and I tried pulling it in and pushing it out, and it  
7 wouldn't budge. I even laid on my back and tried to kick the  
8 window out over my head, but I think it was supposed to come in.

9 MR. GREENWOOD: (Indiscernible).

10 MS. EVANS: But I didn't -- I had already tried pulling it  
11 in, and it wouldn't, it wouldn't come in. You know that little  
12 handle that's on the window? It's so tiny, and I was trying to  
13 pull it, and it just was stuck.

14 And so, that's when I saw somebody that was on -- out -- a  
15 good Samaritan was driving by in a truck, and he had a ladder in  
16 his truck, and he had gotten up to the side of our railcar. And  
17 he was looking down at my through the glass, and so, I started  
18 banging, you know, above me in to -- trying to yell, but I had no  
19 voice because my -- I had all -- so, so much dirt and everything  
20 in my lungs and --

21 So he was telling me, take this rubber gasket off, and I  
22 couldn't yell, so I just showed -- I reached over and showed him  
23 it's, you know, it's off, it's off. And so, then, he was able to  
24 eventually hit the window out, and he, he pulled me up onto the  
25 top of the train. And then and then he, he came into the car and

1 got Mark out, as well.

2       So it was, like, the worst experience I've ever had in my  
3 life. I thought I was dead. I was thinking about my grandson,  
4 that I'm never going to see him again, and I felt my body starting  
5 to just give up and just go limp right when -- thank God, Mark  
6 came to and saved my life.

7       MR. GREENWOOD: There's, there's one small detail that I  
8 remember just slightly different, that while we were still in our  
9 own railcar, the families that were -- I remember trying to reach  
10 up to that -- the window -- now, the, the window that's on the  
11 high side, and I could, I could touch the, the handle on the  
12 rubber gasket that pulls out.

13       But I didn't have the strength because my back hurt so bad; I  
14 just didn't have the strength to pull it. And Donna couldn't  
15 reach it to pull it, so that's when we decided to go to the, the  
16 next car over and so, the, the car's -- or the sleeper's adjacent  
17 to ours are the two -- are each the smallest where it's the -- up  
18 -- just a seat that makes into a small bed, and then above it is  
19 another small bed.

20       And so, that's -- we had crawled into the high side one --  
21 that's the one that we eventually got out of, and when I was  
22 trying to help Donna pull the, the gasket -- because of the -- the  
23 whole car was so full of dirt, I didn't know what I was standing  
24 on. I thought I was standing on solid ground; it turned out I was  
25 standing on a glass window.

1           And as I moved around, positioned myself, the -- apparently  
2 either I shuffled my feet and ended up with both feet on the glass  
3 or whatever, but that's when that gave way, and I found myself,  
4 now, in the -- that small sleeper on the low side. And then  
5 eventually -- but I think I, I probably scrambled about half  
6 (indiscernible) myself, and then the Good Samaritan pulled me the  
7 rest of the way out, out into the, the ground together.

8           I will say that the -- those emergency windows are -- they  
9 could be better. The difficulty in pulling --

10          MS. EVANS: Really --

11          MR. GREENWOOD: -- that gasket out is quite difficult, and  
12 then the window being jammed and I believe those windows pull in.  
13 Eventually when you get the gasket off, then the windows will pull  
14 in. In this case, if Donna would have been able to pull it in, it  
15 either would have hit her in the face, or hit me in the face --

16          MS. EVANS: It would have fallen down --

17          MR. GREENWOOD: -- because it --

18          MS. EVANS: -- and hit Mark down -- below.

19          MR. GREENWOOD: It would have been too heavy, so that design  
20 could be improved.

21          MS. HARLEY: Okay. So I'm going to at -- ask a couple of  
22 questions. So Mark --

23          UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible), you're on mute.

24          MS. HARLEY: Okay. And I'm talking to myself. Sorry about  
25 that. Okay. So I'm going to ask a couple of follow up questions.



1 Were you both transported to a hospital?

2 MS. EVANS: Yes.

3 MR. GREENWOOD: Yes.

4 MS. HARLEY: Yeah. Do you know what hospital you went to?

5 MS. EVANS: It was the Marias Healthcare Center in Shelby,  
6 Montana.

7 MS. HARLEY: Marias? Okay.

8 MS. EVANS: And we went via an ambulance.

9 MS. HARLEY: You went by ambulance? Okay.

10 MS. EVANS: Yeah, it took us initially to the Chester High  
11 School gym and then transported us from there to Shelby.

12 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right. And you said that there were  
13 no other passengers in that car. Were there any Amtrak employees  
14 in that car that you are aware of?

15 MR. GREENWOOD: I was talking about that. The lower level of  
16 our car's -- what, you know -- where we could see people. We had  
17 our door open because it was kind of hot. We were trying to get  
18 air in there, so that's how we knew that there -- as far as we  
19 know, there was nobody on the lower level of our car in --  
20 including any Amtrak employees.

21 MS. EVANS: But there were, there were passengers in the up  
22 -- the upper part of that car?

23 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

24 MS. EVANS: We heard a lady. She was yelling out to us.

25 MR. GREENWOOD: Oh, that's right. Yeah.

1 MS. EVANS: But, you know, we didn't see any Amtrak employees  
2 from the time that we had the incident to -- until the next day.  
3 We didn't see anybody at -- in Chester, nobody came to the  
4 hospital when we were admitted overnight at the medical -- the  
5 hospital in Shelby. Nobody from Amtrak contacted us there.

6 My son called the Amtrak hotline from Seattle and said my mom  
7 and step-dad are in the hospital. Nobody has contacted them with  
8 any information about where they should go or what to do. We  
9 didn't have our -- we didn't have a cell phone, we didn't have our  
10 iPad, we didn't have -- we had no way to contact anybody. We  
11 didn't have clothes. We didn't have a shower, a toothbrush.

12 You know, we didn't have one thing and not one Amtrak  
13 employee ever contacted us. So my son gave the hotline -- Amtrak  
14 hotline person the phone number for the hospital and the room  
15 number that we were in and said, please call them and tell them  
16 what to do, and nobody ever called. We spoke to the nurses and  
17 the doctors there, and they said, nope, there have been no Amtrak  
18 personnel here.

19 And so, when they discharged Mark, I stayed with him in his  
20 room. I was not admitted; I was treated in the ER and released,  
21 but I stayed in Mark's room and slept in a chair next to him  
22 because I was -- I mean, we were both so terrified.

23 So when we were released -- or discharged from the hospital  
24 the next morning, we didn't know -- I mean, we were in Shelby,  
25 Montana with no money, no ID, no nothing, and we had no idea where

1 to go. So we spoke to the nurse -- nurses, and they were so nice  
2 and they said, we'll let -- we'll call around and see if there's  
3 Amtrak staff somewhere for you.

4 And so, she did that -- she said, I think you're supposed to  
5 go to the Comfort Inn, and they called the sheriff's department to  
6 transport us. Nobody from Amtrak came and picked us up. We had  
7 the sheriff deputy come from Shelby, and he was so nice to drive  
8 us, and he said I'm not sure where, but I understand it could be  
9 the Comfort Inn. And I'm not going to leave you; I'm going to  
10 stay with you.

11 Well, he took us to the Comfort Inn, and the, the -- nobody  
12 there knew what we were talking about. The lady behind the  
13 counter was trying to get us to pay for a room or something, and  
14 we're like, no, we're not looking for a room; we're looking for  
15 our Amtrak support team, somebody to tell us how we're going to  
16 get home. And you know, we're injured, and we don't have  
17 anything.

18 And so, at that moment, the officer got an urgent call, and  
19 he had to leave. So now we're stranded at the Comfort Inn, and  
20 luckily, the, the nice gentleman who ran the shuttle there said  
21 I'll take you. I think I know where Amtrak is.

22 And he drove us, you know -- another ride, and drove us to  
23 the Best Western in Shelby, and, and there was -- I think there  
24 were two or three Amtrak personnel there who were very, very, very  
25 little help at all.

1 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So can you briefly describe the, the  
2 injuries that you sustained?

3 MR. GREENWOOD: Well, I'll start. So I had a -- I had --  
4 still have a sore wound on my head --

5 MS. EVANS: He has a head contusion, he had a brain bleed,  
6 concussion --

7 MR. GREENWOOD: -- broken vertebrae in my upper back, lower  
8 neck. I have cuts and bruises from head to toe.

9 (Crosstalk)

10 MS. EVANS: -- you really need to focus --

11 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah, continue to have concussion symptoms.  
12 I mean, we'll have brain fog, unable to focus, dizziness, and  
13 (indiscernible).

14 MS. EVANS: And I had -- my lungs were compromised because of  
15 all the, the dirt. I mean, I was literally coughing up, like,  
16 looked like silt, and the nurses kept asking me, are you a smoker?  
17 I'm like no; this is -- I -- my whole mouth was in -- what do you  
18 call it? Just full of dirt, just smashed in my mouth, and so, you  
19 know, (indiscernible). So I had -- I don't know what's wrong with  
20 my lungs, but it's full of -- I still have coughing and --

21 MR. GREENWOOD: She has ongoing wheeziness --

22 MS. EVANS: Yeah, and I'm dizzy. I'm very dizzy. I still  
23 have sand coming out of my (indiscernible) my ears. So we had --  
24 we do have doctor's appointments coming up, so we're going to be  
25 able to dig in. But --

1 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

2 MS. EVANS: Yeah, just dizziness, and my lungs are  
3 compromised, and you know, it's hard to focus, like, mentally on  
4 anything. (Indiscernible), but you know, the emotional impact of  
5 nearly dying and the flashbacks, and they're pretty intense.  
6 Really scary.

7 MS. HARLEY: When you boarded the train, were you provided  
8 with any kind of safety briefing or instructions, like --

9 MS. EVANS: No.

10 MS. HARLEY: -- the -- like the blue safety card that you  
11 should read in case of an emergency?

12 MR. GREENWOOD: No. And also, we couldn't hear any of the  
13 announcements in our car, even though there's a speaker here in  
14 our room. Even though there's a speaker there, it didn't work at  
15 all -- zero.

16 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

17 MR. GREENWOOD: We would have to -- that's another reason why  
18 we were opening -- keeping the door open is that we could barely  
19 hear announcements, but I don't know if they're being -- the  
20 speakers were in the hall or in other compartments.

21 And depending on who was making the announcement, we could,  
22 we could make out some of them, and some of them, we would look at  
23 each other and try to decipher what we'd just heard and really  
24 just have to hope it wasn't important.

25 MS. EVANS: Yeah, we had no idea. It was very garbled and

1 distant.

2 MR. GREENWOOD: And if I can go back, I -- when I was listing  
3 my injuries, I don't think I mentioned my back which has been  
4 really the worst of my ongoing injuries. See, my back was covered  
5 in bruises, and I can't -- I still can't turn my head. Driving  
6 is, is quite the, quite the chore. Every bump in the road cause  
7 me to wince, and I'm -- I can't really turn my head to check  
8 traffic very well so --

9 MS. EVANS: And your ribs, too.

10 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah, yeah, you know, ongoing rib pain.

11 MS. EVANS: Like, stabbing pain or in -- where he ah.

12 MS. HARLEY: Yeah.

13 MS. EVANS: You know, that was so awful.

14 MS. HARLEY: So one of the things I wanted to talk about, you  
15 were talking about a narrow strip of light. Well, let me back up.  
16 Was there sufficient lighting in the, in the car after the  
17 accident?

18 MS. EVANS: No.

19 MR. GREENWOOD: It, it was so full of dust and the, and the  
20 -- I think the soil there is very silty. So that -- the dust hung  
21 in the air for quite some time.

22 MS. EVANS: But there were no lights on.

23 MR. GREENWOOD: But there were no lights, no.

24 MS. EVANS: No.

25 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah, and it, it seemed like our one window

1 that was facing up to the sky seemed obscured, maybe, maybe the  
2 curtains were hanging and -- so as to block the light -- compared  
3 --

4 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

5 MR. GREENWOOD: And then also with the dust --

6 MS. EVANS: It was very dark.

7 MR. GREENWOOD: So even though our -- as far as I know, our  
8 compartment door stayed open, but it was still very dark.

9 MS. HARLEY: So the, the narrow strip of light that, Donna,  
10 you were talking about; where was that coming from?

11 MS. EVANS: It was, it was the next sleeper car's, I guess.  
12 When the train was on its side, there was a gap somehow, and I  
13 don't -- I really can't say what, what I was climbing on, but --

14 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

15 MS. EVANS: It did help me to climb up into the next  
16 compartment above us.

17 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

18 MS. EVANS: Or --

19 MS. HARLEY: So it's wasn't -- it wasn't the emergency  
20 lighting strip that you were looking at?

21 MS. EVANS: No, no. It was the -- it was a gap in, like,  
22 furniture or something.

23 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

24 MS. EVANS: In the wall, you know, in the, in the dividing  
25 walls or something.

1 MR. GREENWOOD: And I, I remember noticing -- earlier in the  
2 trip, I remember noticing the emergency strips in the, in the  
3 floor I believe it was, and it -- they looked familiar, similar to  
4 an airplane or whatnot. But then, after the crash, I, I didn't  
5 see any of that at all.

6 MS. EVANS: No. Our -- the last three -- and I know you know  
7 this, but, I mean, the last three cars that appeared disconnected  
8 from the train because we were way back there. And when we  
9 finally got off of the railcar, we had to walk quite a ways to  
10 find the rest of the train and find people.

11 MS. HARLEY: Okay --

12 MS. EVANS: But yeah, you know, I can't stress enough the  
13 lack of help that we got from Amtrak. We saw employees standing  
14 around -- you know, Amtrak staff that were on the train meaning  
15 that weren't injured, they were just standing around. Nobody was  
16 gathering us together and getting our names, making sure everybody  
17 was safely off the train.

18 There was no -- nobody checking to see how we were or telling  
19 us what we were going to do. It was all volunteer fire  
20 department, it was volunteer medics from the nearby towns that --

21 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah, it was just --

22 MS. EVANS: -- came and helped us. They're the ones that  
23 brought us food and water. Nobody from Amtrak gave us any food,  
24 no water, no hairbrush. I asked them for money for -- gas money  
25 to get home because we didn't have any money. They didn't give us



1 a dime. We had to drive seven hours to get home from --

2 MR. GREENWOOD: -- great --

3 MS. EVANS: -- Great Falls, after we were shuttled to Great  
4 Falls another two-hour shuttle -- terrifying shuttle ride where  
5 the driver was, like, looking at his phone half the time.

6 The, the Amtrak fellow in the -- Shelby who claimed was  
7 helping us when we first got to the hotel and found them, that --  
8 after we were discharged from the hospital -- he was like, hey,  
9 oh, we're taking care of you. And I'm like, what do you mean?  
10 And he goes, you know, we got you a room. Just go up there and  
11 just take a rest.

12 And I'm like you don't even know who we are. How are you  
13 taking care of us? You don't even know our names or -- he was  
14 like, nope, I've got you. Just come take -- I'm like, what? We  
15 don't want to take a rest. We want to go home. You know? And  
16 he's like, oh, okay. I got you. I'm working on it. I'm like,  
17 how are you working on it? You don't even know where we're going.

18 Oh, I should probably write that down, huh? And so he takes  
19 down our names and, like, scribbles down and I'm like, we need to  
20 get back to Idaho. Oh, and I said, we are not taking a train  
21 either, by the way, or a bus. We want a car rental. And he's  
22 like, oh yeah, no problem and just throws it in a stack of paper,  
23 and I understand the other people to deal with.

24 So we're like, we're just going to wait in the lobby. We're  
25 not going up to the room. We don't want to go rest. We want to

1 go home. You know? We don't have anything. We want -- we just  
2 want to go home and so he was like, kind of you know, helping some  
3 other people.

4 So we went back and checked with them on the situation with  
5 the car rental after, you know, an hour or two hours, and other  
6 passengers were having a similar, you know, problem there. You  
7 know? Being told they were going to be helped, and like, three  
8 hours later, they -- no one's even talking to them.

9 Nobody's giving us anything to eat. I mean, give me a break.  
10 No, no phones for us to use to contact our loved ones. They  
11 should have had phones there for us to call people, or laptops to  
12 e-mail people, or something. They should have had food, they  
13 should have had little (indiscernible), you know, with toothbrush  
14 and toothpaste.

15 Other passengers were getting them from the hotel, and the  
16 hotel was like, oh, that'll be 10 dollars please. You know? It  
17 -- really? Other people, like, at the Comfort Inn, they had to  
18 pay for their room, and they were asking for a receipt to submit  
19 to Amtrak. I'm like, oh my, God.

20 So, so the -- anyways, back to our thing -- so they finally  
21 got Mark to talk to an Amtrak employee in Sacramento or something.  
22 Is that where she was?

23 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah, they were trying to make the car rental  
24 arrangements out of Sacramento at first, and they had quite a bit  
25 of trouble with that.

1 MS. EVANS: Well, they told Mark, oh, all the cars are gone  
2 in the whole area. There's no -- there are no rental cars, and  
3 we're like, oh no. Oh my, God.

4 MR. GREENWOOD: But back, back to the immediate aftermath of  
5 the rescue (indiscernible) I was -- from our observation, a  
6 hundred percent locals --

7 MS. EVANS: Yep.

8 MR. GREENWOOD: -- volunteers, and local, you know, volunteer  
9 fire department people, local volunteer ambulance people --

10 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

11 MR. GREENWOOD: Like Donna said, we did see some Amtrak  
12 employees wandering the scene. And they appeared to be uninjured,  
13 but they were also not helping anybody. It was all --

14 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

15 MS. HARLEY: So the --

16 MS. EVANS: The local --

17 MS. HARLEY: The bystander that helped you, you don't know  
18 where he was from? Was he just someone locally, or was he with  
19 the railroad? Do you know who this individual was?

20 MS. EVANS: -- he --

21 MR. GREENWOOD: He was not with the railroad. He was a local  
22 -- my --

23 MS. EVANS: He was an off-duty --

24 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah, we --

25 MS. EVANS: -- sheriff.

1 MR. GREENWOOD: We suspect he may have been an off-duty  
2 deputy sheriff, but we only know that from just, just chatter  
3 amongst --

4 MS. EVANS: (Indiscernible) the lady who helped us walk on  
5 the tracks. So when we got down off of the train, a lady took my  
6 arm and helped me walk, and then somebody took Mark's arm Because  
7 it -- and he had one shoe, by the way -- and, and she was a --  
8 like, talking to me, and she said, by the way, I was not a  
9 passenger on the train. And I said, oh, well thank you so much  
10 for helping, and she said that she and her husband, an off-duty  
11 sheriff, and had seen -- had just been driving randomly by the  
12 tracks and saw the aftermath, and he just came over to help.

13 So I -- we believe that was her husband, that off-duty  
14 sheriff. It was not a, a -- an official from the railroad or, or  
15 Amtrak.

16 MS. HARLEY: Okay --

17 MS. EVANS: Though we didn't see anybody of that nature --

18 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

19 MS. EVANS: -- the entire --

20 MS. HARLEY: So if you don't mind, I'm going to ask you a  
21 very personal question. Can I get your ages?

22 MS. EVANS: Oh, sure. I'm --

23 MR. GREENWOOD: (Indiscernible) --

24 MS. EVANS: I'm 60.

25 MR. GREENWOOD: And I'm 61.

1 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Thank you very much. So just a -- just  
2 to explain why I ask about ages because a -- sometimes people  
3 wonder, is that we also look at the demographics when we look at  
4 the victims in an accident, and we do the -- their sex, their age,  
5 as well as where they are and what actually injured them. So we  
6 do that whole thing, which is why I wanted to know your ages.

7 The other thing is, are you aware of anybody who took  
8 photographs after the accident, or on the scene?

9 MS. EVANS: There were passengers with cell phones.

10 MR. GREENWOOD: We both lost our phones, so we didn't take  
11 any photos.

12 MS. EVANS: Yes, we didn't have anything.

13 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And this -- the last question is, were  
14 you actually contacted by the Transportation Disaster Assistance  
15 Specialist from the NTSB?

16 MS. EVANS: For this call?

17 MS. HARLEY: No not for this call. At the accident scene,  
18 where you --

19 MS. EVANS: No.

20 MS. HARLEY: The -- you were not in on the group conferences  
21 with the representatives.

22 MS. EVANS: (Indiscernible).

23 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah, we were on two conference calls --

24 MS. EVANS: Yes.

25 MR. GREENWOOD: A few days later. We got two minutes' notice

1 on the first call, which we thought was outrageous, and then on  
2 that first call, learned that there would be a second call.

3 MS. EVANS: Yeah --

4 MR. GREENWOOD: But it wasn't somebody from the NTSB to  
5 let --

6 MS. EVANS: No.

7 MR. GREENWOOD: -- that let us know. I believe it was an  
8 Amtrak --

9 MS. EVANS: It was a --

10 MR. GREENWOOD: -- customer care person.

11 MS. HARLEY: Right.

12 MS. EVANS: Yes.

13 MS. HARLEY: It should have been an Amtrak and -- but the --  
14 our TDA Specialist should have also been there. So it -- we have  
15 your address, and don't be surprised if you get a letter from us  
16 just simply explaining what's going on in our investigation.

17 So at this particular point, I'm done with my questions, and  
18 I'm going to turn it over to the rest of the investigative team.  
19 And I'll start with Kris.

20 MS. SEVERSON: Thank you. Thank you both so much for  
21 agreeing to speak with us and for all of your information. It's  
22 very helpful.

23 We like to try to figure out how people were injured. You  
24 know, look at the windows, how they were retained or not. In  
25 egress were people -- do you have issues getting out? But I'd

1 like to focus on that a little bit.

2 One question: how long do you think it was from the time of  
3 the accident until you were able to get off of the train?

4 MS. EVANS: It was about 45 minutes, I think.

5 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah, so I was finally able to call my  
6 daughter with a borrowed phone --

7 MS. EVANS: From a passenger.

8 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah, another passenger loaned us a phone,  
9 heard us fussing about not being -- letting our family know that  
10 were okay. And that call was almost an hour after -- it was -- it  
11 -- the accident was at 3:47, something like that -- 3:50.

12 That phone call was at about 4:50, and now -- so that's after  
13 we had extricated ourselves from the car, made it to -- we made it  
14 to the, the switching control box that was -- it was a raised  
15 area. That made it easier to sit down because I was afraid if I  
16 sat on the floor, I'd never get up again.

17 MS. EVANS: And it was hot --

18 MR. GREENWOOD: And --

19 MS. EVANS: -- and there was a little shade --

20 MR. GREENWOOD: There was a little bit of shade, and people  
21 were, were just -- so that was -- I had previously said it was,  
22 like, a quarter mile walk. I -- it wasn't quite a -- it was, it  
23 was several hundred feet to -- from where our car came to rest to  
24 that box.

25 So extricating ourselves from the car, getting down --

1 MS. EVANS: And just walking --

2 MR. GREENWOOD: And then walking there, and then almost  
3 immediately, being given a phone; that was almost an hour.

4 MS. SEVERSON: Okay. So you described getting help getting  
5 up through the window on the high side, and then how did you get  
6 off of the car?

7 MR. GREENWOOD: It was a -- locals had brought ladders, so  
8 quite a number of ladders around. I'm sure you've seen the photos  
9 of that --

10 MS. SEVERSON: Okay.

11 MR. GREENWOOD: And I remember somebody -- Donna went first,  
12 and people helped her -- you know, hands-on so she wouldn't slip  
13 off the car or slip off the ladder. And then the same with me.

14 MS. EVANS: They were local people helping us, and --

15 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah, and they were particularly helping me  
16 because I only had one shoe, they were, you know, basically  
17 grabbing my ankle, putting it on the rung -- you know, comfortable  
18 position.

19 MS. EVANS: Yeah, plus we were dazed and had things --

20 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah, we were still dazed --

21 MS. EVANS: The ladder was steep so --

22 MS. SEVERSON: Did you see anybody else exiting from the high  
23 side of the car with you? Just you?

24 And then if I can go back to before you got out, Mark, you  
25 said that you were standing on a surface; would that have been --



1 ultimately ended up being a window -- would that have been on the,  
2 the right-side wall?

3 Like, the -- if you, if you walk down the narrow vestibule  
4 between the rooms, it would have been the window to one of the  
5 right-side rooms, or the window in the door to one of those rooms  
6 that you were standing on do you think?

7 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah, it would have been on the left side of  
8 the train as it was traveling forward, so I -- that -- the left  
9 side ended up being the high side.

10 MS. SEVERSON: Right, so you entered the room at -- on the  
11 left side that was ahead of yours, and then you were standing on,  
12 on maybe the window inside that room?

13 MR. GREENWOOD: You're right, it would have been the one on  
14 the right side that I was standing on.

15 MS. EVANS: Yeah, it was probably the --

16 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah.

17 MS. EVANS: The window for the door.

18 MR. GREENWOOD: It was either the, either the window that's  
19 in the door or the window that's in the compartment.

20 MS. SEVERSON: On the right side? Because you -- your, your  
21 body wasn't entirely in the room at -- on the left hand, you were  
22 reaching up into it?

23 MR. GREENWOOD: Correct.

24 MS. SEVERSON: Okay. And then --

25 MR. GREENWOOD: (Indiscernible) -- in there -- her whole body

1 was in there, you know. She's trying to push up with her feet,  
2 pull down with her hands. I was trying to reach up in there  
3 (indiscernible), and then -- just held on --

4 MS. SEVERSON: And then and then the window -- or -- that you  
5 were standing on gave way, and you fell all the way down? Okay.  
6 And, and ultimately, you were not able to get the window out on  
7 the high side; the person from outside was able to pull the window  
8 out from the outside?

9 MS. EVANS: He pushed it in, and I grabbed it and --

10 MS. SEVERSON: Okay.

11 MS. EVANS: And then lowered it down to Mark.

12 MS. SEVERSON: Okay.

13 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

14 MS. SEVERSON: All right, thank you very much.

15 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

16 MS. SEVERSON: I don't think I have anything further right  
17 now.

18 MS. HARLEY: Kari?

19 MS. JACOBSEN: Yeah, sure. Thank you for giving us this  
20 opportunity to ask you all these questions. I, I know it's hard  
21 to, to go back to think it all through and to, to relive it. I'm  
22 really sorry for what you went through, and I just hope that you  
23 know that what we do with this investigation is all intended to  
24 make improvements to make things better, should it ever happen  
25 again.

1           And so some of what we're asking about are, are any of the  
2 people that you saw around and interacted with, along with your  
3 experience; I was curious on, on that lower -- on that car that  
4 you were on, at the very opposite end of it appeared to be one of  
5 the ADA rooms, and I was curious if at any point along your trip  
6 leading up to that day you had noticed it -- that car being  
7 occupied by anybody?

8           MS. EVANS: No, I didn't, I didn't see anybody using that  
9 one.

10          MR. GREENWOOD: On the way to Chicago, there had been  
11 (indiscernible) on the other train days earlier --

12          MS. EVANS: Yeah.

13          MR. GREENWOOD: There had been somebody in that opposite end  
14 from us. But on the way, on the day of the accident, I don't  
15 think anybody had ever been in that room -- or occupied that room.  
16 In fact, our porter had been -- he was moving -- he was starting  
17 to do the trash and whatnot, and I think he was putting the trash  
18 and, and you know, things that he was collecting up in that room.

19          MS. EVANS: Yeah Because I looked in there to see what it  
20 looked like, but yeah, there was nobody staying in there.

21          MS. JACOBSEN: Okay. Thank you, that's helpful. I, I didn't  
22 have any other questions.

23          MS. HARLEY: Okay. Mike?

24          MR. LANGE: Yeah, thank you all for taking us through the  
25 event. It's very helpful for us to understand what happened, and

1 hopefully prevent the next incident from happening.

2 I do have a question. I guess, the first one would be is  
3 this the first time you'd ever ridden Amtrak?

4 MS. EVANS: No.

5 MR. GREENWOOD: No.

6 MR. LANGE: Have you -- so you're, kind of -- you're kind of  
7 aware of what normally happened -- before some of these trips,  
8 were you aware of any announcements -- emergency announcements on  
9 your --

10 MS. EVANS: Never.

11 MR. LANGE: -- previous (indiscernible)?

12 MS. EVANS: No, no --

13 MR. GREENWOOD: Well, on trees trips?

14 MR. LANGE: Right, right.

15 MS. EVANS: There was never any safety briefing or  
16 announcements made. Not like -- I was just telling my mom -- you  
17 know, when you go on an airplane, you have a safety briefing there  
18 in the flight attendants give, and if you go on a cruise, you  
19 know, there's a mandatory safety meeting that you have to go up on  
20 the deck and see where all the life jackets are and the lifeboats  
21 and the emergency exits.

22 But on the train, there's nothing. Nothing.

23 MR. LANGE: When you, when you --

24 MS. EVANS: -- you just know.

25 MR. LANGE: Did get up (indiscernible) see the way I'm

1 holding this pamphlet here; did you notice --

2 (Crosstalk)

3 MS. EVANS: That was -- yeah, that was sitting there. Yes.

4 MR. LANGE: They were there? Okay. Did you notice any  
5 bulkhead signs, or did they show the evacuation routes, or -- but  
6 they -- and they might have been up in the bulkhead or near the  
7 door?

8 MS. EVANS: I don't recall.

9 MR. GREENWOOD: I didn't.

10 MR. LANGE: And you, you talked about the communication --  
11 the open PA -- do you -- and you -- did you ever hear any  
12 announcements prior to the (indiscernible) there at Joplin? Any  
13 of the train holster conductors talking about the emergency  
14 evacuation?

15 MS. EVANS: Oh, no.

16 MR. GREENWOOD: No.

17 MS. EVANS: No.

18 MR. LANGE: And did you -- who was the first person you  
19 communicated with after everything came to rest? Did you talk to  
20 any Amtrak employees in there? Who was your first point of  
21 contact?

22 MS. EVANS: Nobody -- there was no Amtrak employees. No.

23 MR. LANGE: Okay. Did you --

24 (Crosstalk)

25 MR. GREENWOOD: The first person that we communicated with

1 was the man who pulled us out. We didn't -- we had a conversation  
2 with him or anything.

3 MS. EVANS: Yeah, he was helping and --

4 MR. GREENWOOD: And then as Donna had already said a lady was  
5 helping her walk the tracks, walking from tie to tie Because the  
6 ballast was spread everywhere. It was the footing wasn't even --  
7 somebody was also helping me, and in fact, the lady that was  
8 helping Donna was kicking ballast off of the ties because she  
9 realized I didn't have a shoe. So they were making a path for me  
10 to walk.

11 So we talked to those ladies, but not -- again, they were  
12 volunteers, and it was just -- my conversation was me reassuring  
13 people, at the time, I'm okay (indiscernible), you know, kind of  
14 -- go help somebody who needs help.

15 MS. EVANS: -- but then --

16 MR. GREENWOOD: But they, they could see us -- we didn't  
17 realize it at the time --

18 MS. EVANS: We were a mess --

19 MR. GREENWOOD: We were filthy, covered in dirt and sand. So  
20 much so that the, the same lady who let us use her phone to call  
21 our family offered us -- she happened to have some, some baby  
22 wipes or wipes of some kind; she gave us each one, and even gave  
23 us each a hard candy to, to help get the, the dirt out of our  
24 mouths --

25 MS. EVANS: We looked like a coal miners where --

1 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah.

2 MS. EVANS: Just the whites of your eyes were showing and  
3 your faces are just totally covered in dirt. At least I could  
4 only see the whites of his eyes. It was crazy.

5 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah, the --

6 MS. EVANS: But then --

7 MR. GREENWOOD: -- (indiscernible) thing for her.

8 MS. EVANS: But as far as who we spoke with, like,  
9 immediately after -- what Mark said, but then, you know, as, you  
10 know, as the afternoon progressed, we were put on a little shuttle  
11 bus -- not Amtrak or anything, obviously -- out in the wheat  
12 field. And this lady drove us and, you know, some other -- like,  
13 maybe 10 or 15 other passengers in this little bus into Chester to  
14 the high school gym, is where we went.

15 And the people we were in contact with there were all the  
16 volunteer medics that showed up from town.

17 MR. GREENWOOD: And so the --

18 MS. EVANS: Then --

19 MR. GREENWOOD: -- conversation was all triage related. They  
20 were trying to assess us and see --

21 MS. EVANS: Yeah.

22 MR. GREENWOOD: What they needed to do and what they could  
23 do.

24 MS. EVANS: And then they put us on the ambulance, and so  
25 that's, you know --

1 MR. GREENWOOD: So Mr. Lange, is that -- are we answering  
2 your question?

3 MR. LANGE: Yeah, yeah you did. And thank you very much for  
4 elaborating. That's very helpful, appreciate it. That's all I  
5 had. Sheryl?

6 MS. HARLEY: Okay --

7 MR. LANGE: Thank you.

8 MS. HARLEY: Mary do you have anything? I'm still muted, I  
9 know. Mary? Do you have anything?

10 MS. SEVERSON: I was going to --

11 MS. BIS: (Indiscernible) --

12 MS. SEVERSON: Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

13 MS. BIS: Oh, no I was just going to send my thanks for your  
14 feedback and have captured the information that you shared and  
15 (indiscernible) apologies, of course, for the situation. Nothing  
16 else, Sheryl.

17 MS. HARLEY: Thank you. Kris, did you have something else?

18 MS. SEVERSON: Yeah, one more question. Do you have any  
19 sense of how far the car slid on its side or how long the car slid  
20 on its side?

21 MR. GREENWOOD: No.

22 MS. EVANS: It slid for a while.

23 MR. GREENWOOD: It was -- yeah, it was just such a loud  
24 bang --

25 MS. EVANS: Violent.



1 MR. GREENWOOD: -- huge, violent -- in -- and within --

2 MS. EVANS: It wasn't like, oh, the train just kind of  
3 flipped over and slid -- it was like, bam, bam. I mean, I felt  
4 like we were the whip at the back of the train. This car just  
5 violently going everywhere, and then just bang on its side, and  
6 then the -- then that's when the, the car started scraping up all  
7 that dirt and rubble and just buried me.

8 MS. SEVERSON: Mark, do you have a sense of falling onto  
9 Donna, if she was on the lower side -- or head was near the low  
10 end of the car?

11 MR. GREENWOOD: I did not fall on her. I feel like I was  
12 propelled -- so I'm on the left side of the car facing forward. I  
13 was propelled, you know, at about a 45-degree angle basically  
14 toward that hard corner inside the, the compartment, which I think  
15 is what caused most of my injuries.

16 MS. SEVERSON: Okay. Thank you.

17 MS. HARLEY: Does the team have anything else? Mark, Donna,  
18 do you have any questions for us?

19 MS. EVANS: We understand that the NTSB will have a  
20 preliminary report within 30 days of the accident.

21 MS. HARLEY: That, that is --

22 MS. EVANS: (Indiscernible).

23 MS. HARLEY: Yeah. That is correct and to let you know that  
24 we will notify you ahead of time before it's released, and that is  
25 where our TDA Specialist will, will be in contact. That TDA

1 Specialist is going to be your liaison between your -- yourself  
2 and the investigators in the investigation.

3 If you have any questions or any concerns, you can certainly  
4 reach out to her. Her name is Kim -- Kimberly Freeson (ph.). I  
5 am going to actually e-mail her and ask her to reach out to you to  
6 make sure you have all the contacts in -- information.

7 But the preliminary will come out within 30 days, and you  
8 will be notified before we actually release it. Okay?

9 MS. EVANS: Okay.

10 MS. HARLEY: So --

11 MS. EVANS: And, and how many, how many passengers are you  
12 interviewing?

13 MS. HARLEY: We're going to try to interview everyone.

14 MS. EVANS: Oh, good.

15 MS. HARLEY: As, as long as they agree to the interview, and  
16 it's up to them to decide whether or not they want to participate.  
17 We are going to interview everyone.

18 MS. EVANS: Okay. Good.

19 MS. HARLEY: Okay. By the way --

20 MR. GREENWOOD: Yeah --

21 MS. HARLEY: If you talk to any other passengers, please feel  
22 free to pass along my information to them as well.

23 MS. EVANS: Okay.

24 MS. HARLEY: I'm sorry, I cut you off, Mark.

25 MR. GREENWOOD: You had said that the report will be

1 released. Will be get a copy or do we have to request a copy, or  
2 how does that go?

3 MS. HARLEY: So the report is actually released on a public  
4 website --

5 MR. GREENWOOD: Oh.

6 MS. HARLEY: So that it -- so that you'll be able to get  
7 -- everyone can go in and, and get a copy of it.

8 MR. GREENWOOD: Okay, okay.

9 MS. HARLEY: So I guess, lastly, are there -- is there  
10 anything you think we should have asked you, and we failed to ask  
11 you?

12 MS. EVANS: No, I don't think so.

13 MR. GREENWOOD: Probably right after we hang up.

14 MS. HARLEY: And what I always tell people, if you think  
15 about something later on, please feel free to give me a call.  
16 Okay? Once again, I -- I'm really sorry that this happened to  
17 you. Thank you very much for participating in this investigative  
18 process, and we will certainly be in touch. And if you don't hear  
19 from us or if you don't hear from TDA, please feel free to reach  
20 out to me, and I'll make sure that someone is, is in contact.  
21 Okay?

22 MR. GREENWOOD: Okay.

23 MS. HARLEY: All right.

24 MR. GREENWOOD: (Indiscernible).

25 MS. EVANS: (Indiscernible).

1 MS. HARLEY: Thank you, thank you very much.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

3 MS. EVANS: Thank you.

4 MR. GREENWOOD: And you.

5 MS. EVANS: Okay.

6 MR. GREENWOOD: Bye.

7 MS. HARLEY: Bye-bye. And the interview will be terminated  
8 at 2:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time.

9 (Whereupon, at 2:59 p.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: FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT  
NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA  
ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021  
Interview of Mark Greenwood  
and Donna Evans

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD21MR017

PLACE: Via telephone

DATE: October 8, 2021

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.

  
Kali Haney  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT \*

NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA \* Accident No.: RRD21MR017

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: STEVE HALL

Passenger

Via Telephone

Monday,

October 25, 2021

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Steve Hall:

By Ms. Harley

4



I N T E R V I E W

(12:43 p.m. EDT)

1  
2  
3 MS. HARLEY: Mr. Hall, once again, my name is Sheryl Harley.  
4 I'm the assistant investigator in charge with the NTSB, and we are  
5 investigating the Amtrak derailment that occurred in Joplin,  
6 Montana, and that was on September the 25th of 2021, at about 3:47  
7 p.m. And today's date is October the 25th of 2021, and it's 12:43  
8 p.m., and that's Eastern Daylight Time.

9 And, for the recording, I'm going to ask you just to identify  
10 yourself for the record.

11 MR. HALL: My name is Steven Hall of Rockford, Illinois, and  
12 I'm the husband of Kayco (ph.) Hall, who was also on the train.

13 MS. HARLEY: Thank you very much, sir.

## INTERVIEW OF STEVE HALL

14  
15 BY MS. HARLEY:

16 Q. So I guess what I would like you to do is to tell me when you  
17 and your wife boarded the train, your first interaction with the  
18 crew, and then I would like you to go to the day of the accident  
19 and kind of walk me through the events as you remember them.

20 A. Yes. I guess our guy met us right at the door. I don't  
21 know -- what do you call -- I don't want to give -- I don't know  
22 what you'd call him. The conductor of our -- the guy running our  
23 car. We didn't know it was him at the time. He just checked us  
24 in. But then I meet his assistant who he was training. He gave  
25 us a very warm welcome shortly after. So we knew the two that --

1 we had two guys taking care of us, basically. And I would say, to  
2 his credit, he gave my wife his email address and phone number,  
3 and we did contact with him briefly; just said we were okay. So,  
4 anyway --

5 So the day of, it was -- I went down. I said -- we had a  
6 nice sleeper. We were in the second car behind the luggage or  
7 something. I think the second sleeper car. And my wife -- I  
8 wanted to -- you know, you can only stand around so long, and I  
9 said I was going to go have a happy hour beer, basically. We have  
10 5:30 dinner reservations, and I just -- I'm going to go have a  
11 beer. And I got a beer, and I was just sitting there in the  
12 dining car or the viewing car.

13 And I've traveled the world over in trains from the fast  
14 Japan and French ones to two months going around with India, got  
15 eight weeks in China trains, so I've been -- so I read all the  
16 horror stories. So when that thing first started swerving, I said  
17 just basically, "Oh, shit." And then, the next thing I remember,  
18 I think I was on all fours skidding across -- the Plains --  
19 looking at the Great Plains go under me -- under the big window,  
20 because we went over and we were on our side.

21 And then I remember I -- and this is the funny -- I thought I  
22 rolled between the windows because I was afraid that the window  
23 was going to break. And then if you look at the -- there's only,  
24 like, a foot sheet of metal between those two windows, the top  
25 windows and the side windows. So that's what I was telling my

1 friends all along. And then I put this little Facebook thing of  
2 these stock photos together that had been taken and were -- and in  
3 that car specifically. And so now I don't know where the hell I  
4 ended up, but the (indiscernible) on all fours going across the  
5 Great Plains and just wondering if this glass breaks; it's all  
6 over. And then, as I said, I thought I rolled, which would have  
7 been between. But if you look, it's only, like, a foot wide.

8 So that's the last I remember until two women were walking me  
9 across the side of the road and giving me water. And one woman  
10 I've connected with on the Facebook page. Said she was the one  
11 who did help -- was one of those two women. And she said that I  
12 didn't know that I had been in the viewing car, so there we go.

13 If you want to give me a question to expound on, but that's --

14 My wife, again, she was up front in the second car, 731, I  
15 think we were. She said she did -- it did take her about ten  
16 minutes to get out. Her door got locked. But eventually a couple  
17 guys pounded it out for her, and then she was obviously in shock  
18 wondering where I was. And everybody was so nice out there,  
19 everybody. I'm getting choked up now. I'm sorry. Everybody was  
20 so nice and took care of us.

21 Q. And don't worry about that.

22 A. Yep. Nope.

23 Q. So were you on the upper or lower level of the lounge or  
24 viewing car?

25 A. I was in the upper. You know, I went downstairs. You've got

1 to get your -- I see there is a place to sit downstairs, I guess,  
2 but, no, I was upstairs. Got my beer downstairs and came up.  
3 And, actually, I was about -- I had been up there. I was about  
4 three-quarters through my beer. I think I was going to get one  
5 more and take it back to our car, and then, oopsie daisy, no more.

6 Q. So do you remember if you were sitting at a table or were you  
7 sitting at one of the observation lounge chairs?

8 A. I wasn't at a table. I wasn't at a table. I might have  
9 been -- they have, like, the double -- kind of the love seat ones  
10 and they have the single ones. So I could have -- I don't know.  
11 I could have been in the love seat one, kind of, or I could have  
12 been in a single, I think. I don't --

13 Q. So your first -- you said that your first indication that  
14 something was wrong was --

15 A. I felt the weave. I felt the first weave.

16 Q. The weave?

17 A. And, you know, I just felt a weave, yeah. We were going back  
18 and forth. And, yeah, that's what I felt. And, you know, I've  
19 read -- all my train travel -- so you always are reading about  
20 these derail -- I do. I'm a world traveler, and so I'm always --  
21 many people commented, man, of all the places you've been and the  
22 shady forms of transportation, it happens in your own -- in your  
23 country on Amtrak. You know, so anyway, so I've always read -- so  
24 I just -- you know, basically, I'm sorry, I said, "Oh, shit." And  
25 it's just like -- yeah. We were going, what, 78 miles an hour, so

1 you felt that weave.

2 Q. Were you on the right side or the left side of the car?

3 A. You know, I can't -- I'm going to say it was on the right  
4 side because I went -- or, no -- you know, I went all the way  
5 over. I went from top to bottom. I was on the opposite side. My  
6 side ended up on the upside, so whatever side that -- you know?

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. I guess if we're going east to west, I would have been --  
9 that would have put me on the left side, looking forward, if  
10 you're looking forward. And I think it went over to -- it rolled  
11 to the right. I went all the way down and found myself on that  
12 window.

13 Q. And the window you found yourself on, do you remember if it  
14 was in the front of the car or in the back of the car?

15 A. I think I was in the rear half of the car. Yeah, I was  
16 definitely in the rear half of the car, probably right at two-  
17 thirds of the way back or something. I wasn't all the way back.  
18 I don't think. Yeah.

19 Q. So let's back up a little bit. Just before the derailment,  
20 do you remember anyone sitting around you?

21 A. No, I don't. And I've thought of this. And, you know, there  
22 was people there, but it wasn't crowded. You know, I had at least  
23 four seats all by myself, basically. I think they have, like, two  
24 singles and that love seat between them. So I had a section by  
25 myself, and I really -- I wasn't socializing with anybody. I was

1 just kind of in my own little world. So I don't really -- it was  
2 easy to find a seat and -- yeah.

3 Q. How long do you think you were in the car before the  
4 derailment?

5 A. At least 15 minutes, because, again, I bought a beer. And  
6 I'm going to say I had drank two-thirds to three-quarters of it.  
7 My first beer of the day, I was thirsty, it was beautiful, it was  
8 good to be alive. I was just -- I was living the dream. And,  
9 yeah, soaking up life and --

10 Q. And you said that after the train had gone over, you ended up  
11 on the windows, and you were afraid the window would break. Were  
12 you on the side windows, or were you on the windows that were on  
13 the roof? Do you remember?

14 A. I was on the side windows. We were down. We were on our  
15 side at that time is what I remember. We were on our side going  
16 across the prairie. I mean, still at 50 miles an hour, probably.  
17 I don't know. We were cruising. I just could see the Plains  
18 going right under me. This is what I remember. And then I  
19 remember rolling off, which I thought. You take another look and  
20 (indiscernible).

21 Q. So the window that was underneath you actually stayed intact?

22 A. Yes, until I got off it. It never broke, as far as I know.

23 Q. And then your next memory was being helped out of the car?

24 A. I remember rolling. I tried to roll off. And as I said, you  
25 know, that's where I thought I rolled and it must have looked

1 bigger at that time. Whatever. I tried to roll -- you know, get  
2 off that window. And then I don't remember anything until I was  
3 on two feet, walking -- you know, I was probably -- I don't know  
4 how they even got me out of the train. I don't know who got me  
5 out of that car, which window, or -- if you look at the pictures,  
6 they were pulling them out of the -- on top or so to speak,  
7 because it was rolled over, so I don't know. And then I do  
8 remember, you know, it was probably 5 yards away from the train by  
9 that time and the two women had me on either side of me, giving me  
10 Kleenexes and bottles of water.

11 Q. Did you say that you had the name of one of the women that  
12 were helping you?

13 A. Yes, I do.

14 Q. Do you remember her name?

15 A. Yeah. I think -- it's a weird name. Grosso, Morgan Grosso?

16 Q. Okay, Morgan Grosso, okay.

17 A. She said they were in that car, her and her husband. I can  
18 get that for you for sure. I call her my savior.

19 Q. And you don't remember the other woman; do you?

20 A. No, I don't. You know --

21 Q. Was that an Amtrak employee, do you know, the other woman?

22 A. I have no idea. You know, Morgan might know if you talk to  
23 her.

24 Q. Was there an Amtrak employee in that car?

25 A. You know, the guy down -- served me the beer.

1 Q. You don't remember an Amtrak employee on the second -- on the  
2 upper level?

3 A. I don't.

4 Q. So let's talk about -- do you remember at the time of the  
5 derailment whether the lights were on or off in the car?

6 A. So I've got her name here. It is Morgan with an A, and it's  
7 Grosso.

8 Q. Okay, Morgan Grosso.

9 A. And so she actually -- this is Morgan and Chris (ph.) and we  
10 were in the observation car. Here's -- we took ten minutes before  
11 the wreck. Tonight it might help jog some memories.

12 Q. So I'm also going to ask, if you don't mind -- I'll give you  
13 my email. I'm going to ask you if you can email me that so I can  
14 take a look at it, as well?

15 A. What's that?

16 Q. Did they email you a photograph?

17 A. No. Well, you know, actually, ma'am, this is kind of a  
18 private Facebook page for the people who wanted to join it. I  
19 think only about 40 people joined it.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. But, actually, I'm so glad I did because I found this lady  
22 through it. So it's really trying to just -- you know? It's  
23 mostly -- there's a bunch of people bitching and complaining. I  
24 didn't do that. So if you talk to Morgan and, you know, see what  
25 she says. I'm just going to --



1 Q. Okay. That's fine. I can do that.

2 A. Actually, I'm going to send her a personal message, and I'm  
3 going to say that I did drop her name in my investigation.

4 Q. It just so happened I'm waiting for Morgan and her husband,  
5 Chris, to call me back. I am going to interview them, as well.

6 So, let's see. Again, do you remember the lights being on?

7 A. You know, it was just a most beautiful day of the year.  
8 There wasn't a cloud in the sky. So I think they probably were,  
9 but you just didn't notice. It was just -- it couldn't have been  
10 more beautiful.

11 Q. Prior to the derailment, was the PA system in the train  
12 working?

13 A. You know, we never -- they always made announcements. We  
14 heard announcements throughout, but -- yeah, so I guess we  
15 heard -- you know, I heard them and for the first call for lunch,  
16 I remember that one, because we were the first -- we ate lunch  
17 early. So we heard the first call for lunch.

18 Q. And let's see. You said when you came on board, an Amtrak  
19 employee came to your room and provided you some information. Did  
20 he provide you information in regards to, like, a safety briefing  
21 or draw your attention to a safety card to read about emergency  
22 procedures?

23 A. I do not recall.

24 Q. And you said that your wife was actually trapped in her room  
25 for a period of time?

1 A. Yes. Her door, I guess, just jammed. You know, that car  
2 stayed up, but I think it did come partially off the -- maybe it's  
3 on. I don't know. They looked a little crooked up front, even,  
4 but they stayed up. I think, yeah, she might have jumped the  
5 tracks and that probably crimped her door or something.

6 Q. And again, I know we talked about this at the beginning. The  
7 injuries you sustained?

8 A. I had two broken ribs and I have six teeth -- I have to get a  
9 whole new crown and I have to get a wisdom tooth extracted that  
10 was cracked. And then, you know, I had four other teeth worked on  
11 already. She said some of those were just kind of cosmetic, but,  
12 boy, they did give me four different shots of Novocaine. And that  
13 one in the front lip -- front upper is no fun.

14 Q. Yeah, I can imagine. So I realize that you said you don't  
15 remember who was sitting around you. Do you actually remember a  
16 man who was an amputee in the car?

17 A. I do not.

18 Q. Someone that had prosthetic legs?

19 A. I do not. I was just kind of in my own world at that time.  
20 I'm a really -- you know, I love to travel and meet people, but  
21 for some reason that afternoon I just was kind of to myself.

22 Q. No problem. Do you have some sense of how long it took the  
23 emergency responders to get on the scene?

24 A. I don't have a clue. I don't have a clue. Again, you know,  
25 that goes right back to I don't remember anything from when I did

1 the roll, the supposed roll, and until they -- I was walking off  
2 the train.

3 Q. And you went to the hospital; is that correct?

4 A. I did.

5 Q. Which hospital did you go to?

6 A. Havre.

7 Q. Havre, okay.

8 A. Fifty miles away, and I was -- it turns out the broken ribs  
9 were in the back side, but they had me on, like, this -- you know,  
10 I was complaining. I said, "My back, my back," so then they think  
11 a broken back, so they put you on that backboard. Those ribs on  
12 that backboard are no fun.

13 Q. I can imagine. Was your wife injured at all?

14 A. No. Just worried about me.

15 Q. I can imagine. So after she was -- after she got out of the  
16 room, was she able to find you?

17 A. Yes. And that's what I was getting at. The people were just  
18 so, so, so helpful. And she said that a couple people -- I want  
19 to say even, you know, our conductor, our guy, our room guy, he  
20 might have -- I think he even went out of his way to help her.  
21 Yes, I know he did. That's one of the reasons she contacted him  
22 again, just to say thank you, thank you.

23 Q. Well, that was really nice to hear that he was concerned  
24 enough to give you guys his email to check up on you, so --

25 A. Yeah, yeah.

1 MS. HARLEY: So, let's see. So I think that's all the  
2 questions. Is there anything you think I should have asked you  
3 and I didn't?

4 MR. HALL: Nope. I don't -- no. I'm always here. I'm not  
5 going anywhere.

6 MS. HARLEY: So I always tell people the same thing: Please  
7 jot down my number, and if you have any --

8 MR. HALL: You know, let me -- I was going to do that,  
9 actually. Well, the confusion is, yeah, the way, I guess, --  
10 originally, the way I described that email I got about a meeting  
11 -- so, actually, it turns out -- you guys had the same number,  
12 314.

13 MS. HARLEY: So what I'm going to do is I'm going to give you  
14 my cell number. That's basically a 24-hour number. The 314 is  
15 our main -- is our office numbers.

16 MR. HALL: Okay. Just give me what you have. Go ahead.

17 MS. HARLEY: Okay. [REDACTED]

18 MR. HALL: And your name is?

19 MS. HARLEY: First name is Sheryl, S-h-e-r-y-l. Last name is  
20 Harley, H-a-r-l-e-y.

21 MR. HALL: Okay. Thank you very much, Sheryl.

22 MS. HARLEY: All right. Well, I appreciate you taking the  
23 time to talk to me, sir. Thank you.

24 MR. HALL: My pleasure. Good luck.

25 MS. HARLEY: Good luck to you and your wife. Thank you.

1 MR. HALL: Thank you. Bye.

2 MS. HARLEY: Bye.

3 Interview is terminated at 1:04 p.m.

4 (Whereupon, at 1:04 p.m. EDT, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

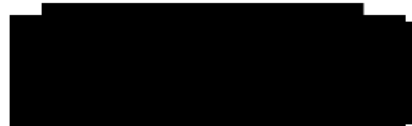
IN THE MATTER OF:            FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT  
                                      NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA  
                                      ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021  
                                      Interview of Steve Hall

ACCIDENT NO.:                RRD21MR017

PLACE:                         Via Telephone

DATE:                         October 25, 2021

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.

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the transcriber.

Angie Duray  
Transcriber



## NTSB RECORD OF CONVERSATION

**Investigator name:** Sheryl Harley, Investigator, Survival Factors Group  
**Investigators on call:** Kris Severson, Volpe; Kari Jacobsen, Volpe  
**Mode:** Rail

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**Date:** October 26, 2021, 11:24 a.m. EDT  
**Interview:** Steven Hall  
**NTSB Accident Number:** RRD21MR017

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**Narrative:** On Tuesday, October 26, 2021, at about 11:24 a.m. (EDT) Mr. Steven Hall called from [REDACTED] to speak with Investigator Harley. Mr. Hall advised that he wanted to correct some information that he had provided the day before to the investigator. After “sleeping on it”, Mr. Hall wanted to provide the additional information.

### **Interviewed: Steven Hall**

Mr. Hall advised that in his original statement, he believed that he was seated approximately 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the way back in the train car. After careful consideration, Mr. Hall advised that he was sitting closer to the front, estimating that he was in the front 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the car. Mr. Hall advised that he walked up the stairs after getting a beer from the employee downstairs and once at the top of the stairs, he turned left and found a seat on the left side.

### **(Follow up question about the presence of other passengers in the lower level of the car)**

Mr. Hall advised that he doesn't remember anyone other than the employee in the lower level of the train car. He advised that he went downstairs and returned to the upper level of the train car approximately 15-20 minutes prior to the derailment.

### **(Follow up question asked by investigator regarding any additional information about passengers on the upper level of the observation car. )**

Mr. Hall advised that he usually considers himself a social individual but, on that day, he has no memory of the other passengers around him. He didn't speak or interact with anyone. He vaguely thought that an elderly couple was seated on the upper level, possibly to the right but was not certain.



# NTSB RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Call terminated at 11:27 a.m.

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**End of Summary**



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT \*

NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA \* Accident No.: RRD21MR017

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: BRIAN and TINA HELMUTH  
Passengers

Via Microsoft Teams

Friday,  
October 15, 2021

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

KARI JACOBSEN, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe Center, Department of Transportation

I N D E X

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By Ms. Harley	4
By Ms. Jacobsen	14

I N T E R V I E W

(1:30 p.m. EDT)

1  
2  
3 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Good afternoon, everyone. So, my name is  
4 Sheryl Harley and I'm the Assistant Investigator-in-Charge  
5 regarding the Amtrak derailment in Joplin, Montana, that occurred  
6 on September the 25th at approximately 3:47 p.m.

7 And today's date is October the 15th of 2021, and it's  
8 1:30 p.m., and that would be 1:30 Eastern Daylight Time.

## INTERVIEW OF BRIAN AND TINA HELMUTH

9  
10 MS. HARLEY: So, Mr. and Mrs. Helmuth, can you identify  
11 yourself, officially, for the tape please?

12 MR. HELMUTH: Hello. My name is Brian Helmuth. We are in  
13 Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

14 MS. HELMUTH: And I'm Tina Helmuth.

15 MS. HARLEY: Thank you both for taking part, and at the last  
16 minute being able to allow us to interview you.

17 In addition to myself there is also a member of the  
18 investigative team that's present, and she'll introduce herself  
19 now.

20 MS. JACOBSEN: Hi there. My name is Kari Jacobsen and I'm a  
21 Mechanical Engineer from the Department of Transportation. I'm  
22 here in support of the Federal Railroad Administration's Joint  
23 Investigation with the NTSB, and all of the information that you  
24 provide helps us understand what happened in this incident and  
25 make safety improvements over time. So, thank you for taking the

1 time to talk to us.

2 MR. HELMUTH: No problem.

3 MS. HARLEY: So, to get started, what I'm going to ask you to  
4 do, if you don't mind, is to tell me when the two of you boarded  
5 the train, the location, and also your first contact with the  
6 train crew. And then I want you to start from there at the  
7 accident, and the accident date, and just kind of walk me through  
8 what happened that day.

9 MR. HELMUTH: So we boarded the train at Staples, Minnesota  
10 at approximately 1:30, was it like 1:26 maybe?

11 MS. HELMUTH: Yes, 1:26 a.m., about. Our first contact with  
12 crew was the conductor, who welcomed us onboard.

13 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So at the time of your boarding, did they  
14 provide you with any information about emergency placards to  
15 explain to you what would happen in case of emergency, like a  
16 safety briefing? Was there any kind of announcement made over the  
17 PA?

18 MR. HELMUTH: No.

19 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So why don't you start at -- so where  
20 were you staying in the train when you first boarded?

21 MR. HELMUTH: So when we first boarded we would have been in  
22 one of the sleeper cars.

23 Do you remember the number of that, Tina?

24 MS. HELMUTH: Yes. Car 730.

25 MS. HARLEY: Okay, all right.

1 MR. HELMUTH: And we would have been in Room 2.

2 MS. HARLEY: Room 2. Is that upper or lower level?

3 MR. HELMUTH: Upper.

4 MS. HARLEY: Upper? Okay. So I tell you what, why don't you  
5 start at the morning of the accident, and just kind of walk me  
6 through your day and what you did, and then what you observed.  
7 And just take me all the way through the accident.

8 MR. HELMUTH: So we got on in the middle of the night, so we  
9 went up to our room and slept until whatever time we got up in the  
10 morning. I don't remember when that was.

11 MS. HELMUTH: 6:15, 6:30, something like that.

12 MR. HELMUTH: And then we would have gone to breakfast in the  
13 dining car.

14 MS. HELMUTH: I'd say 7:00 o'clock we went to breakfast.  
15 Enjoyed the view out our window from our sleeper car until our  
16 first stop, roughly 9:00 o'clock, I don't remember. But that was  
17 almost an hour-long stop. We enjoyed the fresh air.

18 Again, we went back to our rooms, just look out the windows  
19 until lunch time.

20 There was another stop at 2:30?

21 MR. HELMUTH: Something like that.

22 MS. HELMUTH: About a 25 minute stop. We got out there, too.  
23 And that's when we went into the observation car, when we boarded  
24 the train again.

25 MR. HELMUTH: So then we would have been in the observation

1 car at the time of the derailment. Roughly in the middle of the  
2 car on the northern side of the car. Yeah, we would have been  
3 facing north.

4 MS. HELMUTH: There were no seats behind us. There was a  
5 couple of -- looked like recycling bin cabinets. That's what was  
6 behind us.

7 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So tell me when you first realized that  
8 there was something going on with the train.

9 MR. HELMUTH: Well, there was a large jolt of some sort, and  
10 one of the other passengers was like, we're derailing. And I was  
11 kind of like, well, the thought that went through my head was, no,  
12 we're not, we're on Amtrak, it's perfectly safe and this is really  
13 rare.

14 And then our car kind of obviously jumped off the tracks and  
15 was sitting on a slight angle, in which case we decided we  
16 definitely were derailed. And, you know, you could see the dust  
17 and that sort of thing going by.

18 So we were facing north and Tina would have been on my right.  
19 And somewhere in that process, before the train completely tipped  
20 over, it threw us up against the side glass windows.

21 And so -- feel free to insert things if my memory is  
22 different than yours, Tina, here. Because it was a lot of  
23 craziness.

24 And then we proceeded somewhere in there to tip all the way  
25 over on the side. And when we did that, Tina ended up on the left

1 side of me, or in front of me as we were now facing.

2 MS. HELMUTH: Yeah. I was thrown into the air again.

3 MR. HELMUTH: She was thrown into the air, up over my head.

4 And as the train came down on its side, we were on the window  
5 glass. And the window glass popped out of its frame and we were  
6 sliding along on the rocks and we could see the rocks -- at least  
7 I could see the rocks going under our feet.

8 And at that time the window glass was dropped out of the  
9 train, maybe two to three inches. So we were essentially surfing  
10 on top of the window glass, which was -- I don't know how those  
11 windows work, but it was still traveling the same speed as the  
12 train was.

13 And then that gap opened up wider to maybe ten inches or so,  
14 or maybe a foot. You know, it was all happening pretty fast and a  
15 lot of craziness going on there. And then my fear was that I  
16 would be sucked under the train and that it would -- that would be  
17 my end. And so I tucked into the fetal position when that  
18 happened, and about that time the glass was ripped out from under  
19 us and we hit the ground.

20 Kind of the crazy thing was, as soon as I realized that I was  
21 on the ground the train had stopped, and which is very fortunate.  
22 I think if that train would have continued to move it would have  
23 rolled over the side of that embankment and probably crushed us.

24 So, Tina your story may be similar to that, but.

25 MS. HELMUTH: Yeah. Pretty much the same. My impression



1 when we first knew that the car was going to tip, we were still on  
2 the rails but tipped at such an angle that I knew the car couldn't  
3 recover.

4 And then that first jolt that threw us into the windows, I  
5 think that's when it derailed, but we don't know. There was a  
6 violent drop that threw us from our seats to the windows.

7 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So what I'm going to do, first of all, if  
8 you don't mind is, I'm going to share my screen and it's going to  
9 be a schematic of the observation car.

10 MR. HELMUTH: Okay.

11 MS. HARLEY: And what you're going to be looking at is a top-  
12 down view of the car. So first of all, let me go ahead and do  
13 this.

14 So, can you see the schematic now?

15 MS. HELMUTH: Yes.

16 MR. HELMUTH: Yes, I can.

17 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So this one here is actually the top-down  
18 view of the upper level of that observation car. And over here to  
19 the left -- the left, which would be west, which would be the  
20 direction the train was heading.

21 MR. HELMUTH: Correct, yes.

22 MS. HARLEY: And this is the rear and these are the tables.  
23 Approximately where were you seated?

24 MR. HELMUTH: So it would have been --

25 MS. HELMUTH: I don't remember there being two, but.

1 MR. HELMUTH: There were two, and I think we were sitting in  
2 the second. Those little U-shaped chairs.

3 MS. HARLEY: Like these, here?

4 MR. HELMUTH: Yes, correct.

5 MS. HELMUTH: Yeah, that's --

6 MR. HELMUTH: I think we were sitting in -- maybe it was the  
7 first one. Yes, it was the first one.

8 MS. HARLEY: Right here?

9 MR. HELMUTH: Yes.

10 MS. HARLEY: Okay. The very first one. The most western of  
11 the U-shape.

12 MR. HELMUTH: Correct, correct.

13 MS. HARLEY: All right. And was anybody sitting next to you  
14 in this other one?

15 MR. HELMUTH: I think there was somebody in that one, but I  
16 don't remember.

17 MS. HELMUTH: I think so.

18 MR. HELMUTH: There were people kind of coming and going and  
19 I don't remember who all was in there at that time.

20 Tina, do you have memory?

21 MS. HELMUTH: Yeah. I saw a lady sitting on that side of us.  
22 She was knitting.

23 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Was this a younger or older woman?

24 MS. HELMUTH: An older woman.

25 MS. HARLEY: Older, okay. All right. Do you remember anyone

1 sitting in front of you?

2 MR. HELMUTH: To the west of us?

3 MS. HARLEY: Yes. In these seats here?

4 MR. HELMUTH: I believe there was. But, again, I don't  
5 really recall.

6 MS. HELMUTH: Yeah. In the first seat with the X, there was  
7 a man sitting there. I remember he was working on the laptop.  
8 I'm a people watcher, I take these things in.

9 MS. HARLEY: Very good. Okay. Is this an older man, younger  
10 man, do you know?

11 MS. HELMUTH: I would say mid-30's-ish.

12 MS. HARLEY: Okay, all right. Was there anyone else that you  
13 noticed?

14 MS. HELMUTH: Yeah. Across -- on the other side of the  
15 train, behind the seats with the X, right there, yes.

16 MS. HARLEY: Right here? Okay.

17 MS. HELMUTH: There was younger -- well, the guy was about  
18 our age. His girlfriend was a bit younger. They were having a  
19 conversation with another young man. It was just loud enough for  
20 me to overhear it, got my attention, so I looked at them.

21 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So that would be basically the first seat  
22 of four that's on the south side of the train.

23 MS. HELMUTH: Yes.

24 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

25 MS. HELMUTH: The people were sitting there.

1 MS. HARLEY: Do you remember if there was an Amtrak employee  
2 in the car?

3 MR. HELMUTH: At one time there was, but I don't know if he  
4 was there when the car tipped over or not. He would have been  
5 seated back at the tables, I believe.

6 MS. HARLEY: Do you remember which table he was sitting at?

7 MS. HELMUTH: No. I don't think I saw the man. I heard a  
8 walkie-talkie that kept going off, so I assume that's the  
9 employee. I don't know.

10 MR. HELMUTH: It would have been at the first or second table  
11 from the east end.

12 MS. HARLEY: So this is the east end. So one of these  
13 tables?

14 MR. HELMUTH: One of those two, I believe.

15 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

16 MR. HELMUTH: But I don't know if he was still there at the  
17 time of the derailment or not.

18 MS. HARLEY: Okay. When the train derailed, were the lights  
19 on in the car?

20 MS. HELMUTH: They were still on as it was tipping. I think  
21 initially, that first big bump that we got, that threw us into the  
22 windows, I think the lights were still on then. I can't be  
23 positive, but.

24 MR. HELMUTH: I don't have any memory of that.

25 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So essentially the two of you actually

1 exited the train because you actually dropped through the window  
2 opening?

3 MS. HELMUTH: Yes.

4 MR. HELMUTH: This is correct.

5 MS. HARLEY: Okay, all right.

6 MR. HELMUTH: And there was one other individual that would  
7 have been just to the east of us, on the ground as well when the  
8 train stopped. And I don't really know who that was or where they  
9 were seated on the train. It's just that they ended up kind of in  
10 the same neighborhood that we were in when the train stopped.

11 MS. HARLEY: Was this a male or female, do you know?

12 MR. HELMUTH: I don't know, but I believe -- I don't know for  
13 sure. But there was somebody in the vicinity of us who was  
14 injured pretty bad that had a prosthetic leg, and I believe that  
15 was the person, but I'm not a hundred percent sure of that.

16 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Did you see the gentleman with the  
17 prosthesis before the derailment?

18 MR. HELMUTH: Not that I remember.

19 MS. HARLEY: Okay. At the time of the derailment, I realize  
20 that you were out of the car when the train came to a stop. But  
21 did you hear any PA announcements?

22 MR. HELMUTH: No.

23 MS. HARLEY: All right. Let's see. I think I asked you if  
24 you were facing -- I'll tell you what. That's all I have for the  
25 moment.

1 Kari, did you have some questions you wanted to ask?

2 MS. JACOBSEN: Sure, yes. Let me see.

3 So you were sitting in the lounge seats at the time of the  
4 derailment, and then you said you got kind of thrown into the side  
5 of the train.

6 Do you have any recollection what parts of your body may have  
7 come into contact, and with what, as you got thrown to the side of  
8 the train?

9 MR. HELMUTH: For me it would have probably been my right  
10 side, right hip. But that's probably just because I had turned in  
11 the direction of where the dust was coming, so I was no longer  
12 straight, looking into the window, I would have been looking out  
13 westward a little bit. And so that would have been my experience,  
14 my right shoulder and right hip.

15 Tina, I don't know what your --

16 MS. HELMUTH: Yeah. I landed on my hands and knees both  
17 times that I would have had an impact. Roughly, basically on my  
18 hands and knees, that's what I remember.

19 My right leg, my inner thigh was bruised all the way up, just  
20 dark, dark. So something came into contact with me that I have no  
21 memory of.

22 As far as other things coming in contact. I saw one of those  
23 cabinets. I talked about those recycling cabinets, I saw one of  
24 them hit my husband on the left side, on his left side.

25 MS. JACOBSEN: Can you describe what the recycling cabinet

1 looks like? The color and built?

2 MS. HELMUTH: Blue, probably some lightweight metal or  
3 plastic. I'm not sure. I think they were blue, yeah.

4 MS. JACOBSEN: And you said that those had been sitting just  
5 behind you in the open space. They weren't like in a cabinet or  
6 something?

7 MR. HELMUTH: I'm not sure. They may have been in a cabinet.  
8 I don't know that. I don't remember -- I don't remember that  
9 recycling container hitting me. I'm sure it did. It just --

10 MS. HELMUTH: Yeah, it did.

11 MR. HELMUTH: -- it didn't stick in my memory.

12 MS. HELMUTH: Yeah. Taking everything that's happening and  
13 there's a sense of unreality that ...

14 MS. JACOBSEN: And this is why it's helpful to interview you  
15 both, is because --

16 MR. HELMUTH: Right.

17 MS. JACOBSEN: -- everyone remembers different parts of what  
18 happened.

19 And so then as you were riding out the derailment on the  
20 windows, were you both around the same window? Those windows,  
21 there seems to be two panels to each side of them. Were you both  
22 on the single window with the two panels? Do you have any  
23 recollection?

24 MR. HELMUTH: I think we were.

25 MS. HELMUTH: Yeah, I'm pretty sure.

1 MR. HELMUTH: I think she would have been on the westward  
2 side of that panel and I would have been on the eastward side of  
3 that panel, I think. I think that was the case.

4 MS. HELMUTH: I remember him being directly on my left, maybe  
5 slightly behind me. That's my memory. But, yes, I'm almost  
6 positive we would have been on the same --

7 MR. HELMUTH: Yes, I think so.

8 MS. HELMUTH: -- panel, the same window.

9 MS. JACOBSEN: And then you described, as the car was sliding  
10 around the ground you could see the ground. You said that there  
11 was a maybe two to three inch gap that you could see between the  
12 window and the ground, or if it had dropped down.

13 MR. HELMUTH: Yes. Between the window and the car.

14 MS. JACOBSEN: The window and the car. So was the window  
15 coming in or going out?

16 MR. HELMUTH: The window was going out into contact with the  
17 ground.

18 MS. JACOBSEN: Okay.

19 MR. HELMUTH: So the window would have been sliding on the  
20 ground and the body of the train would have been up, you know,  
21 two, three, four inches.

22 MS. JACOBSEN: Got it, yes. And then at some point the  
23 window slid further underneath the outside of the car and was  
24 gone?

25 MR. HELMUTH: Correct, yes.



1 MS. JACOBSEN: And then the ground was literally right there  
2 and you were on it. There wasn't a gap between the outside of the  
3 car and the ground. Because I know at some portions of the car  
4 and the way it landed, there was a gap that some people hopped  
5 down to get out.

6 MS. HELMUTH: We were --

7 MR. HELMUTH: There was a gap. When everything stopped we  
8 were on the ground and the car would've been, you know, enough  
9 space for our bodies and then some. So maybe two feet? I don't  
10 know. Two to three feet.

11 MS. HELMUTH: And so, I know you said this before, but to  
12 clarify. When you exited the car you went out through that window  
13 that had disappeared right underneath you?

14 MS. HELMUTH: Yes. We went out through the opening --

15 MR. HELMUTH: Right.

16 MS. HELMUTH: -- of that window.

17 MS. JACOBSEN: Okay.

18 MS. HELMUTH: And given our location, I'm sure we were one of  
19 the first people out of the train, because as soon as I knew the  
20 train stopped I just started crawling for daylight.

21 MS. JACOBSEN: Okay, thank you. Those are my questions for  
22 now. I'll pass it back to Sheryl.

23 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So first off, were both of you able to  
24 crawl out from under the car or were you assisted?

25 MR. HELMUTH: I think we both crawled out under our own

1 power.

2 MS. HELMUTH: Yes. When I got to my feet I realized that  
3 both of my knees had been injured to some degree. And I did need  
4 assistance walking down that bank, but I was able to crawl under  
5 my own power.

6 MS. HARLEY: Do you have some sense of how long it took  
7 emergency responders to get to the scene?

8 MR. HELMUTH: No. But it seemed really quick to me. 20  
9 minutes, half an hour? I don't know. Maybe not even that long.

10 MS. HELMUTH: Yeah. We were just kind of shocked by the  
11 whole situation and, yeah.

12 MS. HARLEY: Tina, can you tell me what injuries you  
13 sustained again, please?

14 MS. HELMUTH: My knees are injured. The right one was very  
15 bruised and swollen. But we're pretty sure that that's the extent  
16 of the injury, just bumps and bruises. My left knee, there is a  
17 problem with the ligament. I'm going to have to have an MRI, so I  
18 don't know the extent of that, but there is, there is some damage.

19 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And, Brian?

20 MR. HELMUTH: I have broken ribs on my left side, and I had a  
21 small pneumothorax on my right side.

22 MS. HARLEY: And, Brian, you were transported to a hospital;  
23 is that correct?

24 MR. HELMUTH: Yes.

25 MS. HARLEY: And which hospital was that?

1 MS. HELMUTH: Initially.

2 MR. HELMUTH: Initially, was it Chester?

3 MS. HELMUTH: Yes. Hospital in Chester. I think it's called  
4 Liberty.

5 MS. HARLEY: Liberty Medical Center?

6 MS. HELMUTH: I think so. I mean, there's only one hospital  
7 in Chester, so.

8 MS. HARLEY: Yes. Okay.

9 MR. HELMUTH: And then from there they checked me out and  
10 then they transported me to Great Falls.

11 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

12 MR. HELMUTH: The trauma center there.

13 MS. HARLEY: All right. Were you flown out or were you  
14 driven to Great Falls?

15 MR. HELMUTH: I was driven.

16 MS. HARLEY: You were driven. All right. So this may be a  
17 strange question. But, do either of you remember any object  
18 coming into the train car? Something that was not within the  
19 train car, but something that may have been outside coming in the  
20 train car during the time the derailment was occurring?

21 MS. HELMUTH: No, I don't remember anything like that.

22 MR. HELMUTH: I don't remember anything like that either.

23 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All righty, let me see. Did either one  
24 of you take photographs?

25 MR. HELMUTH: I have a few of right after the accident, when

1 we were sitting out on the side road there.

2 MS. HARLEY: So one of the reasons that we ask passengers if  
3 they would be willing to share their photographs, because the  
4 photographs you have were of what the scene looked like  
5 immediately following the derailment, without it being  
6 contaminated maybe by the first responders.

7 So if it's possible, I would really appreciate if you could  
8 email those to me.

9 MR. HELMUTH: Okay.

10 MS. HARLEY: The other thing is, did either one of you call  
11 9-1-1?

12 MS. HELMUTH: No.

13 MR. HELMUTH: No.

14 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So, since both of you were actually  
15 outside of the train when the train car came to a stop, you don't  
16 have any memory of the Amtrak employees, of movements or their  
17 actions following the derailment?

18 MR. HELMUTH: No.

19 MS. HELMUTH: No.

20 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Well, I think that's all for me.

21 Kari, do you have any follow up?

22 MS. JACOBSEN: No. I believe that's it for me.

23 Thank you for all the information you shared. It really  
24 helps us tremendously to be able to understand what it was like  
25 during it and what your individual experiences were.

1 I'm very happy you made it and that you're here to tell us.

2 MR. HELMUTH: Thank you.

3 MS. HARLEY: So one of the things that I do at this  
4 particular point is, I always ask my interviewees, is there  
5 something that you want to ask me?

6 MR. HELMUTH: You're probably not at liberty to say at this  
7 point. But do you know the cause of the derailment?

8 MS. HARLEY: I can definitely tell you, we absolutely don't  
9 know at this time. It's a little fast even for us, unfortunately.

10 But one of the things I did want to tell you is, in case you  
11 have not gotten notification from our Transportation Disaster  
12 Assistant Specialist, Ms. Kim Frierson, if you haven't heard from  
13 her. She's actually your liaison between yourself and the  
14 investigators in this accident.

15 If you have any questions, please feel free to go through  
16 her. You also have my number and you'll be able to go through me  
17 as well. What I will do, I will also email you her information in  
18 case you haven't received the letter. She's trying to email or  
19 send letters to everyone, based on the information we have.

20 MS. HELMUTH: Yes. She's emailed Brian.

21 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And so, is there anything else you think  
22 that I should have asked you and I failed to ask you?

23 MS. HELMUTH: I don't think so.

24 MR. HELMUTH: I don't think so.

25 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So if you think of anything, I don't care

1 how small it is, either please feel free to send me an email or  
2 give me a call.

3       Again, we really do appreciate all of your help in this.  
4 This is important. We're going to try to make this safer for  
5 everyone, and I certainly do appreciate it. Thank you. All  
6 right?

7       MR. HELMUTH: You're welcome.

8       MS. HARLEY: All right. Have a wonderful afternoon.

9       (Whereupon, the interview concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

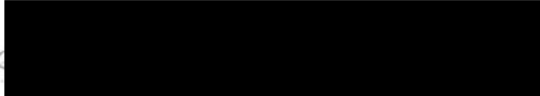
IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT  
NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA  
ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021  
Interview of Brian and Tina Helmuth

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD21MR017

PLACE: Via Microsoft Teams

DATE: October 15, 2021

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.

  
Gretchen L. Schultz  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT \*

NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA \* Accident No.: RRD21MR017

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: WENDY KRAUSE

Passenger

Via Telephone

Wednesday,  
October 13, 2021



APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

KRIS SEVERSON, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe Center, Department of Transportation

KARI JACOBSEN, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe Center, Department of Transportation

MARY CARLSON BIS, Senior Director of Emergency  
Management  
Amtrak

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I N T E R V I E W

(4:01 p.m. EDT)

1  
2  
3 MS. HARLEY: So let's get started. So good afternoon. My  
4 name is Sheryl Harley. H-a-r-l-e-y. I am the assistant  
5 investigator in charge with the National Transportation Safety  
6 Board. This is in regard to the Amtrak derailment that occurred  
7 on September the 25th of 2021, at approximately 3:47 p.m.

8 This will be NTSB number RRD21MR017. Today's date is  
9 October the 13th of 2021. And it is 4:01 p.m. And that's Eastern  
10 Daylight Time. And on the call with me is -- Ms. Krause, can I  
11 ask you to identify yourself for the record?

12 MS. KRAUSE: Sure. My name is Wendy Krause.

13 MS. HARLEY: And also on the call are several of my  
14 colleagues. I'll ask them to identify themselves. Kris?

15 MS. SEVERSON: Hello, Wendy. My name is Kris Severson. I  
16 work for the Volpe National Transportation System Center. It's  
17 part of the USDOT. And my colleague Kari and I were on site for  
18 the accident investigation in Montana looking through the cars and  
19 talking to passengers just to try to understand how people were  
20 hurt. And this information helps us to guide research to develop  
21 mitigation strategies and ultimately improve the standards and  
22 regulations for passenger safety. Thank you.

23 MS. HARLEY: And Kari?

24 MS. JACOBSEN: Hi, Wendy. My name is Kari Jacobsen. And  
25 basically, what Kris said -- we are here, I'll say in particular

1 since there aren't any other representatives, we conduct this work  
2 in support of the Federal Railroad Administration. So thank you  
3 for taking the time to share your experience with us.

4 MS. HARLEY: And Mary?

5 MS. CARLSON-BIS: Hi, good afternoon. My name is  
6 Mary Carlson-Bis. I'm the senior director of emergency management  
7 at Amtrak. And I manage the Amtrak incident response team.

8 INTERVIEW OF WENDY KRAUSE

9 BY MS. HARLEY:

10 Q. Thank you. So how we're going to start this, if you don't  
11 mind, Wendy, is start from when you boarded the train, the  
12 location, the approximate time if you can remember. And if you  
13 can just kind of walk us through your initial contact with the  
14 crew. Then the day of the accident, just kind of walk us through  
15 what happened, where you were seated, and who was with you. And  
16 just kind of walk us through what you say that day.

17 A. Sure. So my husband and I both live just a little bit south  
18 of Madison, Wisconsin. We actually drove to Milwaukee down on the  
19 Hiawatha in Milwaukee at about -- I think it was about 11-ish in  
20 the morning. Took the Hiawatha to Chicago and then boarded the  
21 Empire Builder in Chicago.

22 I think that was about 2, 2:30-ish if I remember without  
23 looking up my train tickets specifically. So we boarded. We were  
24 in -- we were sitting in the coach seat directly behind the  
25 observation car. And so, we had spent -- we had probably spent

1 most of the time on that Friday afternoon sitting in the  
2 observation car, chatting with other passengers, enjoying the  
3 scenery probably until it got dark. Then we moved back to our  
4 coach seats.

5 We were sitting two seats in front of where you go down the  
6 stairs to go downstairs to the bathroom. And then there's that  
7 other little part of the compartment down there. So that's where  
8 we were sitting. And we were sitting on the left-hand side of  
9 that coach car.

10 So we spent the night there in our seats in the coach car.  
11 Then in the morning -- it was probably around 7, 7:30-ish,  
12 definitely prior to 8, we moved back into the observation car. At  
13 that time, we were sitting on the right side of the observation  
14 car all the way up to the beginning, to the front of that car, in  
15 the seats that face the side of the car. So we were sitting in a  
16 pair of seats that are kind of like two seats together. And we  
17 were sitting there.

18 And we spent I would say probably the majority of our team  
19 sitting in those seats. We got off at period of times during the  
20 fresh air stops. So we got off and looked around a little bit.  
21 And then we'd get back on and we would go back into sit in the  
22 observation car.

23 Now, I don't remember exactly when we decided to move from  
24 those seats. I think it was probably around noon-ish. Maybe  
25 closer to 1. We decided to move back to the same side of the car,

1 still in the observation car, but all the way back. It was not  
2 the very last table in the back but the one right in front of it,  
3 again, on the right-hand side of the car. And we sat there -- oh,  
4 well, we sat there until the train derailed actually.

5 So -- and in fact, probably about 30 to 45 minutes before the  
6 derailment, my husband and I had talked about whether we wanted to  
7 move back up to the front where we were sitting in the morning.  
8 So back up to those chairs that face the side of the car. But we  
9 decided not to do that. Primarily because I was a little bit more  
10 comfortable just sitting in that seat where the table was.

11 So we stayed there. I know for certain that I had gone back  
12 to the coach car behind the observation car. Gone to the bathroom  
13 down there not more than 30 minutes before the derailment.  
14 Because I remember I was stowing some stuff in my backpack that  
15 was sitting back there in our coach seats. And had gotten a  
16 charger for my iPhone. I had plugged that in and then went back.

17 Now, my husband and I were initially sitting across from each  
18 other in the table. But the observation car was really cold.  
19 They must have been pumping a lot of fresh air through that car.  
20 And it was very cold. So we decided to sit side by side. And I  
21 had initially been sitting near the window because I'm a very  
22 small person. I'm about 5'2" and about 115 pounds. And my  
23 husband is about 6'3" and about 200 pounds. So normally, if we're  
24 going on a trip, I sit where I can see the window and he can see  
25 over the top of me and that works out very well.

1 But the car was cold. And there was some light coming  
2 through on the other side of the train, on the left side of the  
3 train. And so we just swapped seats because it was warmer for me  
4 sitting in the sunshine there. So I think we had been talking  
5 about this. These are all the little things that could have made  
6 our experience much different during the derailment. He had also  
7 talked about going down to the café and getting some drinks. And  
8 decided we would wait until I was ready. So he was -- he had not  
9 been down there. And had intended to go down there but had not  
10 gone down there.

11 So he's, again -- just to set the stage, he's sitting to the  
12 right of me, we're facing the front of the car. We're on the  
13 right side of the observation car. We have a second table from  
14 the rear. He is sitting next to the window and I am sitting next  
15 to him. So that's where we were sitting at the time of the  
16 derailment.

17 Do you want me to go on and then talk about what happened  
18 during that or are there other questions about just what I've said  
19 so far?

20 Q. No. Why don't you go ahead and walk me through it. I'm  
21 sorry. Just --

22 A. Hello?

23 Q. I'm sorry. I was on mute. No, no. Why don't you keep on  
24 going, Wendy. You're doing great.

25 A. So we were sitting there. And I remember experiencing what

1 felt very much like a hard bump. It was as if the car had hit a  
2 bump just as if you were in an automobile and you hit a bump on  
3 the road and it jostles your car. And very distinctly, we were  
4 bumped up and to the right. And I'm sure I thought, well, we're  
5 going to come back down. My thought hadn't gone past we're going  
6 to come back down. It hadn't gone to, boy, that was really odd,  
7 that shouldn't happen on the rail. But that's what I was  
8 thinking. We got bumped hard up and to the right.

9       Then instead of coming back to come back on and sit on the  
10 rail, we just kept going. And I don't know if it happened  
11 quickly. It felt like it happened much more slowly that we were  
12 tipping over. And we tipped over until we hit the ground. And my  
13 husband wraps his arms around me to protect me. And I ended up  
14 with a bruise on my left arm just below my shoulder where he was  
15 gripping me. So he was intent on making sure that I didn't go  
16 flying around in the car or didn't get bounced around in any way.

17       So we're on -- we're in the car. We're being dragged along  
18 on the ground. I could see the ground going by in those windows  
19 that we were laying on. And then of course the window in front of  
20 us. Because there was nobody sitting in front of us. The next  
21 person that was sitting on the right-hand side would have been the  
22 Amtrak -- whatever his role is. The Amtrak employee who was  
23 sitting in that car the entire time at his reserved table. But  
24 there was nobody in back of him. There was nobody in front of us.

25       So I could see the ground going by. Obviously, getting



1 filled with dirt, debris, and rocks, and things of that nature.  
2 And I was thinking very distinctly -- it's like, we're going to be  
3 in real trouble if this car rolls. Because we were going fast.  
4 My husband has an app on his phone that displays how fast the  
5 train is going because we've done train trips in Europe where they  
6 have high speed trains. So he likes to have fun with that app.

7 So he knew that we were going -- we weren't exceeding the  
8 speed. I think all the reports that we've seen in the press had  
9 indicated the speed the train was going. And that's exactly what  
10 he was seeing on the app. So we weren't in excess of that.  
11 Certainly, we were going -- you know, it wasn't slow or anything  
12 like that.

13 So we're dragging along. We're dragging around the ground.  
14 And I know my husband was desperately hoping that the window would  
15 hold. I was just really -- just thinking I hope we really don't  
16 roll. Now, we stopped. And I mean, there's dirt, there's dust,  
17 there's all kinds of stuff in the air. And he's asking me if I'm  
18 okay. And I said yeah. And so, we get up, we stand up.

19 And there had been a younger man -- you know, when you're on  
20 a train you kind of get to know people. You see the same people  
21 over and over again especially when they don't get off. And there  
22 had been a younger man who was working on his computer. And he  
23 must have been traveling with his mom because every once in a  
24 while, she would be sitting across from him in the table.

25 So he was sitting directly across the aisle from us. And he

1 was working on his computer. And I looked up. And he was still  
2 kind of wedged up in his seat above my head. And I looked up at  
3 him. And I asked him if he was okay and he said he was. And I  
4 don't know. Instinct kind of kicks over. And we stand up. We  
5 look around. We're determined that we're not hurt. I was shaking  
6 obviously. But we just start picking up things.

7 My husband found what he thought was iPhone and happened to  
8 be mine. I found what I thought was my iPhone, it had to be his.  
9 I found the young man's laptop. I found his bag and there was  
10 something else that I knew belonged to him. So I grabbed those  
11 things. And I kind of put them on top of the bench kind of area  
12 and let him, like, you're okay, it's -- we'll get out of your way,  
13 come down, and your things are here. Just want you to know your  
14 things are here.

15 And so, we kind of looked around just to try to get  
16 orientated. We looked up to the front. All I remember seeing was  
17 the Amtrak personnel. He's a bigger guy. For me, he probably  
18 blocked my view of much of the front of the train. My husband  
19 said he looked up there, as well. I do remember thinking that I  
20 saw some people standing. But I couldn't tell you that with any  
21 degree of certainty. He said that he looked up there and didn't  
22 really see anybody up in the front of the car at that time. But  
23 it could have just been the way he looked or maybe somebody was  
24 standing in his field of vision, as well.

25 So we pick up everything that we could that we knew belonged

1 to us. And helped the young man with his. Then we turned around  
2 to look to the back of the car. And saw that there were no cars  
3 behind us. At that time, I don't think we could see unless we  
4 started to look a little bit more closely that the rest of the  
5 coach cars that were directly behind the observation car were no  
6 longer attached to the observation car. And they were way, way in  
7 back of us.

8 I don't know if I could tell right away that they had also  
9 tipped over. But they definitely -- you could definitely tell  
10 there was nothing behind us or attached to our car. There was a  
11 man that -- one of the passengers appeared in the back in that  
12 opening. And he was asking people if they're all right. Now, the  
13 only people that were standing there at that time were myself, my  
14 husband who was not facing the back. I can tell you that. He was  
15 facing the other way.

16 Then there was -- there's this other person. I don't know  
17 where he came from. I don't know if he was sitting in the table  
18 behind us. I don't remember seeing him. So it's very possible --  
19 because there was a woman that was sitting there earlier. And  
20 it's very possible that she had left the observation car and then  
21 another man had come in. And he may have been sitting -- I'm not  
22 exactly sure who he was. But he was standing there.

23 Somehow, the Amtrak employee managed to fight his way in and  
24 kind of stand in that opening. Again, he is a larger man. And he  
25 was yelling at us to get out. Which I found a little -- not

1 humorous. Irritating. Because he was standing in the way and  
2 then he's yelling at us to get out. I'm not really sure why. I'm  
3 not sure if he thought it was going to roll or what he thought.  
4 But he was definitely not helpful and very -- just barking things  
5 at us.

6 And there was a little bit of glass that was laying there. I  
7 don't even know what you could call it. The car tipped over, I  
8 guess, it was whatever -- it was on the side of whatever -- the  
9 side of the train. Right. The inside of the train. So we had to  
10 climb up over that to get out. And there was a little bit of  
11 glass there. He didn't do anything to wipe the glass out or  
12 anything to make it any easier. He didn't offer me any assistance  
13 (indiscernible). He didn't offer me any assistance or anything  
14 like that. The other passenger didn't either (indiscernible).

15 But there was -- like I said, there was that other passenger  
16 that came to the back of the car on the outside of the train. And  
17 he said, there's a body under the left-hand side. He said get out  
18 on the right side. Don't look at the left side. Don't get out on  
19 the left side. Now, the left side would have been the natural  
20 place that we would have wanted to get out at because it was lower  
21 than the right side.

22 But so I know that I got out. And by the time I crawled up  
23 on there, there was an African-American -- rather a tall Amtrak  
24 employee. He had suddenly come up. And he assisted me out of the  
25 train car. And so, I walked a few feet away, was waiting for my

1 husband. Now, before I left that car, my husband was down at the  
2 window. The window was kind of -- it wasn't broken but it had  
3 like a crackly feel kind of look to it as in automobile glass  
4 would. They don't shatter. But they look kind of crackly. And  
5 he had looked down and he could tell that there was a body  
6 underneath that window. And he tried to open that window. He  
7 tried to lift it out. He couldn't do it. He told me -- I did not  
8 see the body. He told me it was very clear that that person was  
9 dead.

10 So he tried what he could. Then when he couldn't do  
11 anything, he exited that car. Then came to join me. So I don't -  
12 - I'm just going to stop there and then see if anybody has any  
13 questions.

14 Q. Great. Thank you, Wendy. So I'm going to start off. So I  
15 think I understand --

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sheryl, I think you're on mute if  
17 you're talking.

18 MS. HARLEY: Of course I am.

19 BY MS. HARLEY:

20 Q. Thank you, Wendy. I appreciate that. So you were sitting in  
21 the second to the last table on the right side facing forward.  
22 And I just want to verify. The table in front of you was empty,  
23 but the table in front of that was the Amtrak employee?

24 A. Yes, I believe there's not another table. And I believe  
25 that's the configuration. So yes, absolutely. There was nobody

1 sitting in front of us. And if there wasn't another table in  
2 between that table and his table, then yes, he was definitely  
3 sitting at the (indiscernible) table all day. All day he had been  
4 sitting there. He didn't really move unless we had a stop. Then  
5 he would get out and do whatever he had to do. But then he would  
6 come back and sit in that same place again.

7 Q. So across from you, you said was a young man who was  
8 traveling with his mother. But his mother wasn't in the train car  
9 at that time. Correct?

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. Did you see any other passengers that were at the tables?

12 A. So there had been -- the gentleman that was sitting -- in our  
13 coach car, there was a gentleman that was traveling by himself.  
14 And he was sitting directly behind us. Again, in our coach car,  
15 we were on the left-hand side. He was sitting that very -- I  
16 think the very last row just before you went down to the bathroom.  
17 I think. It was either that one or there's -- it was one up from  
18 that. But I thought it was the last one. Then we were sitting in  
19 front of him.

20 I noticed him because he was traveling with a cardboard box  
21 that was fairly large. And he was just a little odd. And he had  
22 been -- he had been speaking with one of the Amish guys for a  
23 large portion of that day. And they had been sitting directly in  
24 front of the young man that I said was directly across from us.  
25 So they had been sitting there for a long time. But that Amish --

1 the Amish guy got off at one of the stops. It was one of the  
2 fresh air stops, I think. Or maybe it was the stop after that.  
3 So at that time, he went back and sat in the coach car. And  
4 didn't come back in the observation car. And I know where he was  
5 during the accident because I helped him and I talked to him. And  
6 he had told me he was in the bathroom in that coach car at the  
7 time of the derailment. So I know he wasn't in the observation  
8 car.

9 Now, in front of that, there was -- there were two guys that  
10 had spent most of the day in the observation car. But I don't  
11 remember if they were still there at the time of the derailment or  
12 not. They had been kind of moving back and forth. And I just  
13 can't say with any degree of certainty -- I know what they look  
14 like but I don't -- they were probably -- they seemed to be two  
15 guys that were traveling together. They seemed to be somewhat in  
16 their either mid-30s or 40s. But I don't remember for sure if  
17 they were in the car at the time of the derailment or if they had  
18 gone down to the café car to get a drink or something, or if they  
19 had gone back to the coach or wherever they went. I don't -- I  
20 just don't remember.

21 There were, at times -- there's another set of seats that  
22 face the windows on the left-hand side just before you go  
23 downstairs to the care. And those at times had been -- there had  
24 been people in there. And at other times there hadn't been. But  
25 the only people that I can say for any degree of certainty was the

1 guy across the aisle from us and the Amtrak employee that was  
2 sitting at his table. Everybody else I'm pretty vague. I just  
3 can't remember for certain if they were there or if they weren't.

4 Q. Do you remember if after the derailment there was anyone that  
5 was trapped in the lower level of the observation car?

6 A. Well, that's a good question. Because we were worried about  
7 the employee down there that was serving in the café car. Right.  
8 And my husband had chatted him up and so he felt like he had  
9 gotten to know him. And he said to me after we got out of the car  
10 -- he said, I really want to go back and check on him and see if  
11 he's okay. There was no announcement that he took his break. But  
12 then again, we weren't really paying attention. So my husband  
13 felt very strongly that he was down there.

14 And just because of everything that would have been down  
15 there -- you know, he was worried that there was just a ton of  
16 opportunity for that poor guy to get kind of beat up down there.  
17 And we didn't find out until later that one of the other  
18 passengers from the observation car did go and check on him and  
19 that he was okay. But my husband had gotten kind of -- he got --  
20 he got kind of wrapped up with helping everybody else.

21 And he said to me later -- he said because when the EMS  
22 people got there, they didn't say that they needed any help with  
23 the observation car. He assumed either there was nobody that  
24 could be helped or anybody that had -- could be helped had already  
25 gotten the help. We're not sure if that was really the case at



1 the time. Because it's -- the information we got from other  
2 passengers (indiscernible) contradict that, to my understanding.  
3 But my husband feels very strongly that the Amtrak employee  
4 definitely was down there at the time of the derailment.

5 Q. The other passenger that you said that went and checked on  
6 him, did you by any chance get a name? Did he identify himself?

7 A. No. But he provided that information during one of the  
8 family meetings (indiscernible). So if that -- if those -- if the  
9 information that was shared on those calls, if that was documented  
10 in any way by either Amtrak or NTSB, you should have that  
11 information from the calls.

12 Q. I'm just trying to clarify this. I'm trying to put this as  
13 delicately as possible. So the gentleman that you said that  
14 suddenly appeared to the rear of the car had told you that there  
15 was a deceased individual to the left. That is a separate  
16 individual from the man that your husband saw?

17 A. My husband thinks it's the same person. He said he saw like  
18 some pants. And he felt very strongly that it was male. And  
19 although the passenger that was standing outside of the car didn't  
20 actually say that it was a male, for some reason I got the  
21 impression that that's what it was. That that's -- that was the  
22 gender of the body, that it was male. I'm not really sure why I  
23 thought that way. But my husband thinks it's the same person.

24 Q. It was the same person. And that person was underneath your  
25 window?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And you said that your window was -- it was cracked but it  
3 did not break completely out.

4 A. Right, it didn't. Yeah. My husband (indiscernible) if the  
5 window had been broken and it had disappeared, that our outcome  
6 would not be as -- you know, the few bruises that we got. Because  
7 that probably would have been a different experience if we didn't  
8 have that window to protect us.

9 Q. Yeah. And once again, you were helped out of which -- where  
10 were you helped out of?

11 A. So I pretty much crawled out what would be the back of the  
12 observation car. So you have to -- what would have been the side  
13 of the interior of the observation car is now what you have to  
14 crawl over. It almost feels like a bulkhead on a plane. Right.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. It's kind of a big square. Yeah. So you have to crawl over  
17 that and then kind of hop down.

18 Q. You went through the door?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Was the door open immediately after the derailment or did  
21 someone have to open it?

22 A. So no, it was open. I don't know if it was open and gone or  
23 if it was open -- it was completely open. Yeah. There was no  
24 door there at all.

25 Q. I'm going to go back a little bit. So when you first boarded

1 the train, were you provided with any kind of a safety briefing?  
2 Did the crew provide you with any information about what to do in  
3 an emergency or was there any kind of an announcement regarding  
4 things like the presence of safety cards in the cars or in the  
5 seats?

6 A. No, not at all.

7 Q. Do you know if the PA system was working?

8 A. The PA system was working. But it at times was not very  
9 clear. I know we had trouble understanding the PA, what was being  
10 -- it was better in the observation car. In the coach car, it was  
11 not great. It was either very low or scratchy or both. And it  
12 was a little difficult. But we didn't think too much of it. I  
13 know in the observation car, the announcements that we were  
14 looking to hear were when the next fresh air stop would be. And  
15 it was okay. But it wasn't great in those cars.

16 Q. After the derailment, were there any announcements over the  
17 PA?

18 A. No. No, there were no announcements. There was nothing.

19 Q. After the derailment, was there sufficient lighting? Could  
20 you see? Were the lights still on in the car?

21 A. We could see. You know, it was the afternoon and it was a  
22 sunny day. So I couldn't tell you if there were lights on in the  
23 car or not because there seemed to be plenty of natural light. It  
24 wasn't dark. I could see all the way up to the front of the  
25 observation car. The reason that I know this is because the

1 Amtrak employee was standing in my way. And I turned around and I  
2 was about to ask my husband if we could just go out -- if we could  
3 just go all the way through the observation car and go out the  
4 other door. The front of the observation car. The guy was just  
5 standing in my way and I couldn't get out. So I was about to give  
6 up on that and just go the other way. But he decided to actually  
7 move so I could get out. So I could see all the way up. It  
8 wasn't dark. It was full of dust. But it wasn't dark.

9 Q. So the Amtrak employee was standing between you and the rear  
10 door of the car. Not the front of the car?

11 A. Correct, correct. Somehow -- and I don't -- he must have  
12 moved behind me when I was picking up the stuff for the person  
13 that was sitting across the aisle from us. At some point, and I  
14 don't remember how he did it, he must have moved behind me. He  
15 must have moved behind my husband. Must have moved behind me.  
16 And he came to the rear and he stood there at the rear of the  
17 observation car. I think that's in the way. So I don't remember  
18 him coming behind me. But he obviously did because he didn't  
19 start there. And that's not where he was sitting. So --

20 Q. Do you remember what seats you were occupying in the coach  
21 car?

22 A. Yes. They were -- they would have been either the second --  
23 we were sitting on the left. Either the second seat from the  
24 stairs, in front of the stairs, or the third seat. I just don't  
25 remember if there was one more seat behind the guy that I helped,

1 you know, the guy with the box. I don't remember if he was  
2 sitting in the very last seat next to those stairs or if there was  
3 one more seat in back of him. But we were sitting directly in  
4 front of him on the left-hand side.

5 Q. Okay, great. Did either you or your husband take any  
6 photographs?

7 A. I did not. I did not. And I yelled at a couple of people  
8 for taking photographs. The reason is is that I knew there was at  
9 least deceased person in the observation car. I didn't feel that  
10 that was appropriate. There was a man in the coach car that -- so  
11 our car, right, our coach car that was however -- 100 yards or so  
12 back from the observation car at the time of the accident. There  
13 was somebody that was in that coach car. And they had crawled out  
14 the side door which would put them on the -- now on the top of the  
15 coach car.

16 And that guy was standing there and he was taking a picture  
17 like it's a selfie moment. And I got a little pissy with him.  
18 And I said, stop taking pictures, this is not really appropriate.  
19 There are people who didn't make it. Like, there's work to be  
20 done and helping people. There are plenty of injured people that  
21 needed assistance. This isn't an opportunity to stand on top of  
22 an Amtrak car right after a derailment and take a picture.

23 So I know that my husband took some pictures of the car  
24 because we had pictures that aren't -- didn't come from the AP  
25 wire. But they were at a distance. And they were -- they were at

1 a distance kind of after things had settled down and most of the  
2 people had gotten on the transport (indiscernible). And so, he  
3 did take a couple of those pictures. I'm not sure that they --  
4 they're helpful. But he does have a few.

5 Q. If it's possible if he could just email me the photographs.  
6 Because we would really like to see any photographs that were  
7 taken immediately following the derailment or what the passengers  
8 have.

9 A. Sure.

10 Q. I appreciate that. Did either you or your husband call 911?

11 A. My husband did. We were having trouble maintaining a signal  
12 out there. It was a little bit of like walking around and turn  
13 left, turn right, now I had a signal, now I don't. He said he  
14 called 911. I did not. Because he told me he already did and I  
15 -- there wasn't any point for me calling them, too.

16 Q. Did either of -- you or your husband actually sustain injury?  
17 I know you were talking about your arm being injured from your  
18 husband. But any other injuries?

19 A. He had a bit of a bruise and some soreness on his right --  
20 kind of like arm, chest area. But not anything serious at all.  
21 Not -- nothing that would even -- like even in the best of times  
22 of like getting checked out by the doctor or anything like that.  
23 So no, I mean, other than --

24 Q. Okay, so -- I'm sorry. I didn't mean to --

25 A. Oh, go ahead.

1 Q. -- interrupt you. So neither one of you --

2 A. (Indiscernible).

3 Q. -- went to the hospital?

4 A. Nope. No, we did not.

5 Q. The last thing -- and I have to explain this. Is that we ask  
6 people their ages because what we do is we look at what we call -  
7 -we do an injury analysis. And that's -- we look at the  
8 passengers, we look at their ages, we look at their sex, we look  
9 at where they were and the injuries they sustained. So can I get  
10 your age, please?

11 A. Sure. I'm 57.

12 Q. Fifty-seven. For the record, your husband is Robert Craig.  
13 Is that correct?

14 A. That's correct.

15 Q. And his age?

16 A. He's 54.

17 MS. HARLEY: Fifty-four. Okay, great. So I'm done with my  
18 questions. I'm going to turn it over to my other colleagues.  
19 Kris?

20 BY MS. SEVERSON:

21 Q. Yes. Just looking for the mute. Thank you so much. I  
22 appreciate that you have such a great recollection of what  
23 happened. A couple things I would like to ask about. You  
24 described that the younger gentleman who was seated on the table  
25 to the left of you was wedged or somewhere above you. And you

1 spoke to him. Can you describe what you think may have -- what he  
2 may have been wedged between and what his condition was? Like,  
3 did he seem injured or did you see him get out?

4 A. He didn't seem injured. I think he was wedged between the  
5 seat and the table. And it might have been that he was able to  
6 brace himself against the back of the bench seat and then the  
7 table itself so that he didn't fall. I'm not really sure how he  
8 managed to do that without falling. It's really a good thing that  
9 he didn't fall. He would have fell on me. And so I'm really  
10 grateful he didn't fall on me.

11 But yeah, I just remember looking up and a little bit  
12 surprised to see him up there. And he just kind of looked at me.  
13 And I said, are you okay. And he said, yep, I'm good. I'm like,  
14 okay, all right. I said, then I'm going to get out of your way so  
15 you can get down. And he dropped down fine. I didn't see him  
16 specifically get out. But then, you know, my expectation is that  
17 he got out very soon after I got out. But I didn't see him  
18 specifically leave the car itself.

19 Q. So maybe he wasn't wedged as in stuck, but was like pushing  
20 his --

21 A. Oh, no.

22 Q. -- legs and back to wedge himself --

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. -- in between. Okay, okay. So he wasn't --

25 A. Right.



1 Q. -- stuck wedged, but he was --

2 A. No.

3 Q. -- trying to wedge himself in there so he didn't fall.

4 A. Right.

5 Q. And then when it -- when the car came to a rest, it was safe,  
6 he just dropped down and was not injured, as far as you know.

7 A. Yep, that's correct.

8 Q. That makes more sense to me. Thank you. The window that you  
9 and your husband were lying on or came to rest on, you said it --  
10 I guess, was the window intact around the edges if you recall or  
11 was it partially dislodged or can you -- do you remember the  
12 state, condition of the window being intact or not?

13 A. It seemed to be partially dislodged in certain places because  
14 I know I watched my husband pick at the edge. He was trying to  
15 lift it up. And he seemed like he could get his fingers somewhat  
16 underneath it. But not all the way. But it definitely didn't  
17 want to move for him. It isn't the case of like it was -- it  
18 wasn't shattered or anything in a sense. But like, you should be  
19 able to just pick it apart or anything like that. It seemed to be  
20 somewhat intact and maybe mostly attached. He couldn't move it.  
21 I know that.

22 Q. Do you know which part he could get his fingers under? You  
23 know, top, bottom, left, right.

24 A. It would have been the top. It would have been the top and  
25 facing the front of the car.

1 Q. The top and the forward edge of -- leading edge of the  
2 window?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Thank you. When we inspected the car, there was a large,  
5 crushed metal box that appeared to have entered the car from  
6 outside near -- and we found it near the rear of the train. Do  
7 you recall having to get around that when you exited the train or  
8 any memory of it being in the train?

9 A. How large was it?

10 MS. JACOBSEN: It was probably -- I'm going to speak up since  
11 I'm about 5'2", as well. So relative to me, it probably went up  
12 to my knee or my thigh. And it was a lot of metal structure that  
13 was crushed is what we saw.

14 MS. SEVERSON: Kind of a two-foot cube roughly, do you think,  
15 Kari?

16 MS. JACOBSEN: Yeah. Maybe a little bigger.

17 MS. SEVERSON: Bigger?

18 MS. JACOBSEN: It was more rectangular. It wasn't quite a  
19 cube. It was longer.

20 MS. KRAUSE: Sure. There was something -- it's so funny.  
21 When you think about the car when it's supposed to be right-side  
22 up and then when it tips over, you're trying to remember, like,  
23 what is that.

24 BY MS. SEVERSON:

25 Q. Right. It's -- yep, it's confusing.

1 A. It is very confusing. I've thought about it a lot. There  
2 was something on the floor. But the floor being -- what was now  
3 the floor which would have been the side of the train. And I just  
4 -- I didn't look at it that close because I couldn't figure out if  
5 it was part of the car or if it was not part of the car. It was  
6 somewhat in the way. But it stopped being in the way once the guy  
7 said don't come out on the left-hand side. So I stopped kind of  
8 focusing on that. But there was just a lot of -- I don't want to  
9 say debris -- but things seemed to be very -- there seemed to be  
10 stuff around. And I couldn't figure out if it was part of the car  
11 or not part of the car.

12 And then the Amtrak employee was there. And then that other  
13 passenger was there. And everybody is kind of like crowding  
14 around. And there was a whole bunch of -- like I said, there was  
15 glass where you had to crawl out. But there were other things  
16 there, too. And I remember taking my jacket and like very  
17 carefully pushing the glass because I didn't want anybody else to  
18 crawl out over the glass like I was about to crawl out over the  
19 glass.

20 So I'm pushing the glass away. And it just seemed like there  
21 was something else there. And that would have been the side of  
22 the car. But I don't -- now it's just kind of a vague  
23 recollection. You know, it's kind of fuzzy now. When you think  
24 -- when you try to search back in your memory, there's just some  
25 kind of like gray (indiscernible). Now you can't really focus on

1 what those were anymore.

2 Q. There was also -- I'm sorry. I don't want to interrupt you.

3 A. No. No, go ahead.

4 Q. There was also a trash -- a fairly large trash can that was  
5 on the ground that we had to climb over. But we don't always know  
6 -- was it there as soon as the accident was over and the car  
7 stopped or did someone move it there. So that could have been  
8 what you were navigating around also.

9 I have one final question. Well, two. What was your  
10 destination? Where were you planning to get off?

11 A. Well, it's funny. So we had bought a USA rail pass. Our  
12 intention was, we were going to get off at Glacier that night,  
13 spend a couple of days -- so we were getting off at Whitefish,  
14 spend a couple of days at Glacier. Get back on at Whitefish,  
15 continue onto Portland. We would get off the Empire Builder  
16 there. Then we were supposed to get on the train that goes from  
17 Portland down to Emeryville. And so we were supposed to take the  
18 train down there after spending a few days in Portland.

19 Then my husband had a work event in San Francisco. So then  
20 -- that first week in October. Then we were supposed to get back  
21 on the California Zephyr on that Friday to -- from Emeryville to  
22 Glenwood Springs. Spend a couple of days in Glenwood Springs and  
23 then go back to Chicago. So we were making a loop kind of, taking  
24 the Empire Builder out and the California Zephyr back. So that's  
25 what our plans were.

1 Q. Thank you. Final question is you said that Robert had some  
2 minor bruising on his right arm, chest. Was it like on the front  
3 of his chest or the side of his chest?

4 A. No. I think it was mostly -- well, he said he felt a little  
5 bit of bruising. It probably would have been underneath his arm  
6 area so in the chest area underneath --

7 Q. On the side?

8 A. -- his arm? Yeah, on the side. But like I said, you know,  
9 it wasn't -- it was minor for him. Yeah.

10 MS. SEVERSON: Thank you very much. This has been very  
11 helpful. I appreciate your time.

12 MS. KRAUSE: Sure.

13 MS. HARLEY: Kari?

14 MS. JACOBSEN: Yeah, thank you.

15 BY MS. JACOBSEN:

16 Q. So to come back around to -- I'm going to ask a question that  
17 kind of goes back to where we were about debris. But maybe this  
18 is another way to ask it. So when you said that you exited out of  
19 the rear exit door, the main door that you would have been walking  
20 between the cars through, in order to get up to that kind of  
21 passageway that allows you to exit through that door, what do you  
22 remember about getting up there? Any -- can you kind of describe  
23 what you had to -- if you can remember at all, what you had to  
24 step on, or hold onto, or anything like that?

25 A. Oh. Yeah, I don't remember stepping on anything. Once I

1 cleared the glass out of the way, I pretty much just lifted myself  
2 up and then kind of almost like crawled up. Then -- so then, to  
3 get out, I basically just swung my legs around so that I could  
4 jump down on the ground. Like I said, by that point  
5 (indiscernible) Amtrak person, he was standing there to assist at  
6 that point. So I just crawled up on my own.

7 Q. So it sounds like at the time that you exited through there,  
8 there wasn't necessarily anything kind of precarious in your way  
9 that you had to step on or anything?

10 A. Not that I remember. No.

11 Q. If your recollection is that you could get yourself pretty --  
12 on your own.

13 A. Yeah, yeah. It was fairly easy to get up because I had to do  
14 it again. There was a person in that coach car that we were  
15 sitting in. And she couldn't get herself out. She couldn't lift  
16 herself out. So I crawled back into that coach car and I boosted  
17 her up so that she could essentially do what I did and crawl over  
18 so that -- I had to crawl out of that car, too. So it wasn't hard  
19 to get out of the cars for me having done it a couple of times.  
20 Probably did it more than two that day helping people get out of  
21 their cars. But -- yeah.

22 MS. JACOBSEN: Thanks. My next question -- Kris, did you  
23 want to -- did you have something you want to ask in there?

24 MS. SEVERSON: Sorry. No, my paper shuffling.

25 MS. JACOBSEN: Oh, okay. No, I just -- if you had a question

1 on that same vein, I wanted to let you go.

2 BY MS. JACOBSON:

3 Q. My other question is, at the time that the car -- you said  
4 that you remember the car tipping over and then you and your  
5 husband were riding out the period of time when the car was  
6 sliding against the ground. Can you describe your body positions  
7 as you were riding out that portion of the derailment?

8 A. Sure. So he -- so we're both sitting the seat. We're tipped  
9 over to the right. His right shoulder is laying on the window.  
10 I'm wrapped in his arms basically, laying on him, if you will.  
11 Then -- yeah, that's how we are. I mean, we were -- our legs our  
12 underneath the table. It's just (indiscernible) over to the  
13 right, with a table there. And that's exactly how we stayed. We  
14 didn't move around.

15 Q. Yeah. And that is part of what I was curious about is if we  
16 were still essentially seated at the table with your legs  
17 essentially under the tabletop. And it sounds like you were.

18 A. Yep.

19 Q. Let me check my last question. That should be it for me.  
20 Thank you very much for sharing your experience and everything you  
21 remember. We really appreciate it.

22 A. Sure. I hope it helps.

23 MS. JACOBSEN: It does.

24 MS. HARLEY: Mary, did you have any questions?

25 MS. CARLSON-BIS: I don't. Thank you, Sheryl. I just wanted

1 to say, thank you, Wendy, not only for sharing the situation and  
2 the feedback that you provided but also for the assistance that  
3 your provided to the other customers.

4 MS. KRAUSE: Yeah, yeah. You're welcome. I just did what  
5 anybody would do. So -- yeah, it's important to take care of  
6 others that didn't come out as unscathed as we did or needed some  
7 assistance. And there was plenty of people that needed that. So  
8 very happy to help.

9 BY MS. SEVERSON:

10 Q. Sorry. I thought of one more thing. In your statement, you  
11 had described -- I think you were back in the coach car maybe  
12 where your original seats were, that there was a woman on the  
13 floor who had cut her head and was bleeding and it looked like one  
14 of her legs was behind her. Can --

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Can you describe anymore about her and what her condition was  
17 and if she was stuck or anything about her?

18 A. Yeah. She -- oh, I couldn't figure out if she was badly hurt  
19 or if it was more the shock of it. But she was definitely  
20 screaming. Her husband was standing next to her. Didn't know  
21 what to do for her. And she was screaming. Nobody could calm her  
22 down. She had a cut in her head. It was bleeding. She was  
23 laying on the ground. She was -- not the ground. She was laying  
24 on the side that was now the side of that coach car.

25 And I remember that lady. She had been sitting towards the



1 front of that coach car for a while. I don't know if she was  
2 sitting in the very front or if she was sitting one seat behind.  
3 But she was laying with her head almost towards the front of that  
4 coach car. Her left leg was extended out in front of her and her  
5 right one was bent back but it didn't look at an odd angle to me  
6 when I looked at her. I mean, it didn't look -- it wasn't like an  
7 obvious, like that's not the way a limb bends kind of angle.

8 So it wasn't really clear to anybody. And nobody wanted to  
9 move her and force the issue until the EMS crew got there. Didn't  
10 -- we didn't know if she was -- if she had a broken leg or if she  
11 was just really badly shaken up and screaming. They took her out  
12 on a body board. I know that. Because my husband assisted with  
13 getting that body board into -- in there. And she was a heavier  
14 set woman. So it took a few gentlemen to get her out. And so  
15 that was her condition. I don't know --

16 Q. But did --

17 A. Go ahead.

18 Q. I'm sorry. Did it appear that she was stuck in place there?

19 A. So that's what nobody could figure out. Then -- so there was  
20 some effort when EMS got there of trying to figure out, could they  
21 remove the seat. And that was pretty much a hard no. Like nobody  
22 seemed to know -- nobody seemed to -- if there was a way to remove  
23 a seat from that Amtrak car, nobody knew how to do that. She was  
24 screaming the entire time which was difficult for them. Some  
25 people managed to take the cushions out. I'm not sure if that was

1 helpful or not.

2 I wasn't actually standing -- again, I'm short. I would have  
3 had to stand like almost right there (indiscernible) to see and I  
4 didn't want to do that. I didn't want to get in the way of EMS.  
5 So I couldn't see if they actually moved her leg before they put  
6 her on the body board or how exactly they got her on the body  
7 board. I was standing there when they lifted her up and out. But  
8 I don't -- there was a lot of concern whether she was wedged. And  
9 nobody knew if she was wedged. Nobody wanted to make that  
10 decision until EMS kind of like took responsibility for moving  
11 her.

12 Q. Then which exit did -- was she removed out of on the body  
13 board?

14 A. So she would have come out the front of that coach car.

15 Q. Okay. The front door.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Got it.

18 A. So most of the people in that coach car that were ambulatory,  
19 they exited out the side entrance which put them at the -- on top  
20 of the car. Because she was in the way. I don't know -- I never  
21 walked past that car to the other two cars behind it. So I don't  
22 know if people could get out that way or not. There was a lot of  
23 conversation and a lot of dialogue about is anybody stuck in those  
24 lower seats down there, you know, opposite of where -- at the rear  
25 of those cars, opposite of where the restrooms are. Is there

1 anybody stuck in there in any of those cars.

2 I had told EMS that I had just been down to the restroom in  
3 that coach car like -- you know like I said, not more than 30  
4 minutes before. And at that time, there was definitely one person  
5 sitting back there. But I didn't see anybody else. There was  
6 definitely one person back there. So I was just trying to help  
7 them kind of like do a head count or an expectation about that.  
8 But I don't know. It wasn't really obvious whether anybody could  
9 get out.

10 I know there was some struggles when there was some  
11 discussions about jaws of life and trying to cut into the cars to  
12 get some of the other people out of those cars. Which I don't  
13 think they actually ended up doing. But most of the people in  
14 that car, I think, got up off the side entrance. And then had to  
15 climb down the car.

16 Q. I'm sorry, again, to go -- keep going back. You talked about  
17 a person in the lounge car with a large box that was sitting  
18 behind you that seemed odd. Do you remember him and if he was  
19 injured or --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. -- if he had any issues getting out of the train?

22 A. Yeah, yeah. He was my rescue. So again, he was -- he and  
23 his box were sitting behind us in the coach car. So not the  
24 observation car. And I know from talking to him while we were  
25 involved in that accident -- he told me that he was in the

1 bathroom at the time of the derailment. And he was injured. And  
2 at first when he crawled out of the side entrance of the car and  
3 he was sitting on top of the car, he was obviously injured. And  
4 he wouldn't leave the top. He wouldn't leave the top of the car  
5 because he said he was carrying the ashes of his best friend that  
6 died in his arms.

7         So he was inconsolable. He wanted those ashes. Because he  
8 had been sitting behind us the entire time, at least since we had  
9 gotten on the train -- I don't -- I think he was on before us or  
10 maybe he had got on at Chicago, too. I don't -- I'm just not  
11 really sure. But I just remember him. And I remember his box.  
12 And he had a laptop. I remember his bag. I just remember that  
13 guy.

14         And so they finally were able to talk him down off the car.  
15 And they wanted to take him in the ambulance but he wouldn't go.  
16 And he wouldn't go because he wanted his -- he wanted those ashes.  
17 He wouldn't leave without those ashes. And I said, I'll go back  
18 in the car. And I know what his stuff looks like and I'll get it  
19 and I'll bring that out. Because I'm pretty sure -- I thought it  
20 was in the box. Turned out to be it was in the bag. But got the  
21 box, got the bag, got those things out for him.

22         And over the objections of the Amtrak employee that had to be  
23 sitting in the observation car. But this guy wasn't going to go.  
24 He was not going to go. He was not going to get in an ambulance  
25 until he had those ashes. So I went and got his ashes. I gave

1 them to him. He calmed down. I went and got an EMS person. And  
2 I said, he's ready to go if you have room. I heard you say you  
3 had room for one more. He's ready to go, can you take him, he  
4 needs to go.

5 Because he either had a broken collarbone or he had something  
6 going on with his wrist. He definitely had an injury that needed  
7 a doctor. And so, and then he went. So I don't know what to say.  
8 I mean, you feel good about getting that guy some help.

9 Q. Yeah. So he -- I got a little bit confused. He was sitting  
10 behind you at the table behind you in the lounge car but not --  
11 but at the time of the accident, he was in the bathroom?

12 A. No. He wasn't sitting behind us in the lounge car. He was  
13 sitting behind us in the coach car.

14 Q. In coach. Okay, in coach car.

15 A. Yes, yes.

16 Q. So during the accident, he was in the coach car bathroom?

17 A. Yes, he was. Yes.

18 MS. SEVERSON: That all makes sense. Thank you. I think  
19 that's it for me now.

20 BY MS. HARLEY:

21 Q. Mary, I've got just one other question. So I want you to  
22 think back. So you leave the observation car and you're going to  
23 the bathroom in the coach car. And as you walk through the door  
24 into the coach car, tell me what you see as you're walking  
25 backwards. Where do you see passengers seated? Are there

1 passengers in the front row on the left and the right as you enter  
2 that car?

3 A. There's definitely the woman that was hurt. And I can't  
4 remember if she was in the very first row on the right or if she  
5 was in the second row on the right. But I remember her because  
6 she had this blanket. And I remember that blanket which is stuff  
7 that you remember and you think -- so I know that she was sitting  
8 there. I don't remember -- her husband wasn't as memorable but I  
9 do remember her.

10 On the left-hand side -- I don't remember if there was  
11 somebody sitting in the first row. That coach car had really  
12 emptied out. It was full when we got on in Chicago or nearly full  
13 when we got on in Chicago. And a lot of those people seemed to  
14 have disembarked. And I remember -- you know, as you walk by -- I  
15 never walked all the way through to the end of that coach car. I  
16 always just stopped and went down to the bathroom.

17 But I remember I would look and see the destinations that  
18 people were going to. You know, were they going to PDX Portland,  
19 were they going to Seattle. There were a couple of people that  
20 were getting off at Whitefish like we were. But a lot of the  
21 people were kind of gone in that car.

22 And so, I don't -- I want to say on the left-hand side before  
23 you get to the stairs to go down to the restroom, I want to say  
24 only maybe two, maybe two rows had people in it. But that -- but  
25 at most. And I don't remember if there was anybody in the first

1 row. But I think there was somebody in the second row or vice  
2 versa. Then there was nobody and then there was another person.  
3 And then there was nobody and then there was some people in the  
4 back of the car. But that car was not full.

5 Q. Do you remember -- going back to the lady in the blanket.  
6 What was it about the blanket that you remembered?

7 A. That's a good question. It was just a really pretty blanket.  
8 It's always somewhat funny to watch people take pillows and  
9 blankets on the train. But yeah, I guess I just remember that  
10 blanket. And I remember kind of like seeing her -- it's like the  
11 couple -- the other couple that died, we didn't talk to them  
12 specifically, but they were sitting in the front of the  
13 observation car by us close enough that we heard her tell all the  
14 information about why they were on the train and how they were  
15 celebrating their anniversary, about their kids, where they lived,  
16 and all that kind of stuff. Like, you could hear all that stuff  
17 when people talk. And so, my husband said, oh, you remember them.  
18 They were sitting by us and she was talking about her son and  
19 stuff like that. So we do remember that couple.

20 Q. And you --

21 A. Just kind of like (indiscernible).

22 Q. And you remember them -- they were sitting there before the  
23 derailment?

24 A. My husband remembers them sitting by us on the right-hand  
25 side in the front of the observation car in the morning when we

1 were sitting there. Because we were not sitting in the very first  
2 seat on the right-hand side of the observation car. We were  
3 sitting in like -- I think like the next seat. But he remembers  
4 them. And they were sitting, I think, in the first seat there.  
5 But at one point in time, they -- I mean, a lot of people --  
6 people ebb and flow through that observation car.

7 I think we were the people that hung out there the most. But  
8 people get up, they go somewhere else, you know, go eat if they  
9 have a sleeper or whatever and they come back. I don't remember  
10 -- I can't say with any degree of certainty who was sitting in the  
11 front of that car in those seats at the time of the derailment. I  
12 just wasn't paying any attention anymore. People had kind of  
13 floated in and out most of the day. And I don't remember who was  
14 sitting there.

15 Q. So my very last question -- I promise this will be it -- is  
16 that the woman that was hurt in the coach car, she was on the  
17 right side if the train was going forward. Was she sitting at the  
18 window?

19 A. No, left.

20 Q. I'm sorry. On the left?

21 A. No. She was sitting on the left.

22 Q. She was on the --

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. She's on the left as you enter the coach car from the  
25 observation or she was on the left facing forward?



1 A. She was on the left facing forward.

2 Q. She was on the left facing forward. Was she in the window  
3 seat or on the aisle?

4 A. She was in the aisle.

5 Q. She was in the aisle. And when you saw her again, I  
6 understand that the car is now on its side, she was -- was she  
7 between the side of the car and the seat?

8 A. Yes. Yes, she was, which tells me she was in the second row  
9 because there was a seat in front of her.

10 Q. There was a seat in front of her.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. When you saw her? Okay, all right.

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Great. So at this particular point, I always give people  
15 that I interview the chance to ask me any questions that they  
16 have.

17 A. I think the only question my husband and I have is probably a  
18 question that you can't answer. But maybe I can ask it in such a  
19 way. We want to know -- were the windows (indiscernible) on the  
20 front of the observation car on the right-hand side, were -- and  
21 they busted out?

22 Q. So the answer to that question is that at this particular  
23 point, we're trying to figure that out. It's one of the reasons  
24 that we're getting photographs from all the passengers immediately  
25 following the derailment. So we're trying to figure out what

1 happened and whether the damage to the car was during the  
2 derailment or as part of the rescue operation. So right now, I  
3 don't really have the answer to that.

4       So -- but what I will tell you is -- and I will send you this  
5 information -- is that in every accident we investigate, we have  
6 what we call a transportation disaster assistant specialist. And  
7 their job is to act as liaison between you and the investigative  
8 team. So if you have any questions or concerns, you can reach out  
9 to them. Or you have my information. You can reach out to me.

10       In a couple of weeks from now, there's going to be a  
11 preliminary report, probably in the next week, will come out.  
12 It's going to be basic. It's not really going to talk a lot about  
13 the investigation. But it will certainly give you an idea of what  
14 we're looking at and what we're focused on. And just to answer  
15 basic questions.

16       As we go forward with the investigation, any information that  
17 we release, you will be notified first before we release it to the  
18 public. Okay?

19 A.    Okay.

20       MS. HARLEY: And if you have any questions or any concerns,  
21 you certainly have my number. And once again, thank you so much  
22 for helping us. We certainly do appreciate this.

23       MS. KRAUSE: Oh, you're welcome. I'm glad to help.

24       MS. HARLEY: Thank you.

25       MS. KRAUSE: Thank you.

1 MS. SEVERSON: Thank you very much.

2 MS. JACOBSEN: Thanks, Wendy.

3 MS. KRAUSE: Bye-bye.

4 MS. HARLEY: Bye-bye.

5 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

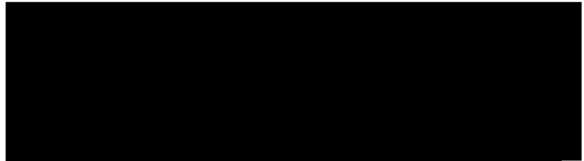
IN THE MATTER OF:            FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT  
                                      NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA  
                                      ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021  
                                      Interview of Wendy Krause

ACCIDENT NO.:                RRD21MR017

PLACE:                         Via Telephone

DATE:                          October 13, 2021

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.



---

Katie Leach  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT \*

NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA \* Accident No.: RRD21MR017

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: PAMELA JORDAN LONG

Passenger

Via Telephone

Wednesday,  
October 27, 2021

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Pamela Jordan Long:

By Ms. Harley

4

I N T E R V I E W

(3:21 p.m. EST)

1  
2  
3 MS. HARLEY: So, once again, my name is Sheryl Harley, and  
4 I'm the assistant investigator in charge in regards to the Amtrak  
5 derailment in Joplin, Montana, that occurred on September the 25th  
6 of 2021, at about 3:47 p.m.

7 And on the phone with me -- can you identify yourself for the  
8 recording, ma'am?

9 MS. LONG: Pamela Jordan Long.

10 MS. HARLEY: Ms. Long, thank you very much for returning my  
11 call. I certainly do appreciate you talking to me.

## INTERVIEW OF PAMELA JORDAN LONG

12  
13 BY MS. HARLEY:

14 Q. So I guess what I would like you to do, if you can just start  
15 where you boarded the train and your first interaction with the  
16 crew, and then kind of walk me through the day of the accident and  
17 anything that you remember. Okay?

18 A. Okay. We boarded the train in Chicago, and then we were on  
19 the train all the way to and through Montana until the accident.  
20 We had a compartment, a sleeper compartment, in the last car on  
21 the train.

22 Oh, my first interaction with the crew -- all of my  
23 interaction with the crew was positive the entire trip. We were  
24 greeted in Chicago, in Union Station, and then as we boarded. And  
25 the steward came in and introduced himself pretty quickly after we



1 got on board. The servers in the dining car were great. Yeah,  
2 all of the staff I was impressed by. They managed themselves  
3 really well.

4 I noted during the accident they stayed calm and got busy  
5 working on and making sure people were safe and getting people out  
6 and accounting for everybody.

7 We, like I said, were in the last car. I was sitting in the  
8 compartment reading, facing the direction the train was moving.  
9 We were in the upper level, on the side of the train that turned  
10 over and ended up on the ground. I was thrown from my seat  
11 forward and landed in the opposite seat in the corner. I was  
12 thrown head-first, and as the train cars skidded, I was scraped up  
13 quite a bit. I actually was trapped and pinned in. My head and  
14 my shoulders were caught on the upper bunk. And, yeah, I was just  
15 stuck there. Couldn't get myself out. I could move my limbs but  
16 I couldn't -- I was wedged in and couldn't get myself out.

17 I did notice before the -- as the accident was about to  
18 happen or happening, I looked up from my reading and noticed the  
19 train was leaning and then realized we were going to have an  
20 accident. It was kind of slow motion. And the next thing I knew,  
21 I was on the other side of the compartment. I do remember that I  
22 was on the opposite side of the compartment and that we were  
23 moving pretty quickly as the car was sliding on its side, and I  
24 felt the jolt when it came to a stop. And then, like I said, I  
25 was trapped there.

1           When I kind of got my wits about me, I realized I was going  
2 to need help getting out, so I heard voices outside of the train,  
3 and I yelled help or said help as loud as I could, and a voice  
4 outside the train said, "We hear you, ma'am. We're coming."

5           My husband was not in the compartment with me. He was  
6 actually in the restroom, in the car that we were in, and was in  
7 the restroom when the accident happened. So we were separated,  
8 and that was perhaps the most frightening thing for me. But he  
9 was able -- the steward actually pried the bathroom door open and  
10 he got out. And then he was able to crawl back and find me. And  
11 he asked for a crowbar.

12           Somebody from outside handed him a crowbar, and he was able  
13 to use that and lift the bunk, upper bunk off of me, and help me.  
14 After he cleared away some debris on my shoulder, I was able to  
15 slide out, and I was okay. I was pretty scraped up and hit my  
16 head pretty badly, and I was bleeding. I didn't know it. But I  
17 was able to sit up, and I could move all of my extremities, and I  
18 had enough wherewithal to realize we needed our shoes and our ID.

19           So we gathered a few of our belongings and, by then, people  
20 outside the train had opened the back door of that car and had  
21 laid blankets over the glass in the compartment doors. And my  
22 husband was able to help me get up on top of the doors so that I  
23 could crawl out the back of the train. And a couple of  
24 people -- I don't know who -- somebody lifted me down and sat me  
25 down on a blanket back there behind the train. And then my

1 husband came out shortly thereafter. We had a couple of carry-on  
2 bags, and he had those and brought those out and sat them down  
3 next to me. And he had a cut on his eye, but it had dried, and he  
4 just went about going back in and helping other people get out.  
5 And I just sat still.

6 And some volunteer firemen, I think, were some of the first  
7 to help on the scene. And so they came over -- somebody came over  
8 with a medical kit and asked me a couple of questions and looked  
9 at my eyes and took my blood pressure and decided I wasn't  
10 critical.

11 And then, a little bit later, the ambulances started to  
12 arrive. And the EMTs in the ambulances came, checked me out, did  
13 a more thorough exam, looked at my eyes, looked at my head, took  
14 my blood pressure, took my pulse, and saw that I was alert, and  
15 then I just waited.

16 And a little bit later, then one of the EMTs came over and  
17 said, well, we need to -- we really need to take you to the  
18 hospital because you hit your head. So they put me in a C-collar  
19 and put me in an ambulance and I rode -- I guess it was about an  
20 hour to Shelby, to the hospital, where the staff at that facility  
21 were amazing. Everybody was Johnny-on-the-spot, and they took  
22 really, really good care of us. They were very kind. And I was  
23 able to get a CT pretty quickly after I got to the hospital. They  
24 examined me pretty thoroughly, checked my back, checked my neck,  
25 checked me for internal injuries, checked my vitals, did some

1 blood work, and mainly -- and then started to clean up my scalp  
2 lacerations and abrasions on my shoulders and my face. And then  
3 we just needed to wait until the CAT scan was read by a  
4 radiologist in Kalispell.

5 And then, later, I was one of the last folks, I think, to be  
6 released from that hospital there in Shelby. And the folks in the  
7 town were great. A sheriff actually came to the hospital and took  
8 us over to the hotel that they had arranged for us to stay at.  
9 And then, the next morning, representatives for Amtrak were there  
10 to assist us and take care of what we needed.

11 Q. Great. So I'm just going to go back just a little bit. So  
12 you were in your room and, as you said, you were sitting on the  
13 seat. That was basically the seat that was opposite, and you were  
14 looking forward at the time?

15 A. Yes, yes.

16 Q. And when the train flipped over, you said your head and your  
17 shoulders had gotten wedged on the upper bunk; is that correct?

18 A. Yeah. I guess they actually -- I was caught, somehow,  
19 between the edge of the bunk and the window. I don't know how I  
20 got -- my head got in there. But if you can picture one of those  
21 train cars, I would have been in the opposite upper right-hand  
22 corner from where I was sitting. And then my neck was bent, and I  
23 was kind of hunched in, and my head was just kind of lodged in  
24 that little space. And, actually, my husband got me out by  
25 unlocking -- unlatching the bunk and pulling it down just

1 slightly, enough so that I had a little wiggle room and I could  
2 turn my head, and then I could wiggled out of there.

3 And it's pretty strange that, I don't know, I just happened  
4 to get thrown in to just the right spot somehow to get stuck  
5 there.

6 Q. And you said your husband --

7 A. I don't know at what point I hit my head. I don't know  
8 whether I hit it on the top -- maybe the bottom of the bunk as I  
9 started to fly across. Or maybe I hit it when the train came to a  
10 stop. I don't know. I mean, there's still kind of a knot back  
11 there. That's the only part of me that isn't completely healed  
12 yet.

13 Q. And you said your husband was downstairs at the restroom; is  
14 that correct?

15 A. Actually, he was in the restroom on the same -- on the upper  
16 level, just down the hall from our compartment.

17 Q. All right.

18 A. Unfortunately, I think the folks downstairs had the worst of  
19 it.

20 Q. And you said that the car attendant was the one who was able  
21 to get him out?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. So prior to the derailment, did you see the car attendant?

24 A. No.

25 Q. No, okay.

1 A. I mean -- what do you mean? Like, just a few minutes before  
2 or --

3 Q. I'm just trying to figure out if he was actually in the car  
4 at the time of the derailment or he entered the car after the  
5 derailment.

6 A. I'm pretty sure he was in the car, according to my husband,  
7 but we don't -- because his compartment where he took a break was,  
8 like, right behind where the restroom is. And he seemed to be  
9 there pretty quickly. I mean, he might have come back in from  
10 outside, but my husband had the impression that he was, like, kind  
11 of right there.

12 Q. And what injuries did your husband sustain?

13 A. He got a cut above his left eye. He needed six stitches.

14 Q. Do you remember whether the lights were still on in the car  
15 after the derailment?

16 A. I don't think so. And I know my husband said that it was  
17 completely black in the restroom, so he couldn't see anything, but  
18 he had a sense of where the door was and just kind of pushed  
19 himself up and pounded on it until the steward was able to pry it  
20 open.

21 But there was still light because the windows. Well, I guess  
22 it was dark a little bit, but I think the back door of the train  
23 car was opened rather quickly or pretty shortly after the train --  
24 the car stopped. Because light came in pretty shortly after I  
25 realized I was trapped there on the -- what was now the floor, the

1 side of the car.

2 Q. And do you remember what room number you were in?

3 A. Two or five. It seems to me one number was for the trip out  
4 and one was for the trip back.

5 Q. I tell you what, let's look at it this way. So as you were  
6 moving towards the back of the car to go out the door, was your  
7 room on the right or to the left?

8 A. On the left if I'm going out the back door of the train car.

9 Q. It was on the left. And how many rooms did you pass to get  
10 to the door?

11 A. Golly, I don't know.

12 Q. Don't know, okay. That's fine. We can figure it out.

13 A. I just kind of roll over some things. I am sorry. I don't  
14 know.

15 Q. That's not a problem. Do you remember seeing any other  
16 passengers that were injured or trapped?

17 A. I didn't see anyone trapped, but there were a couple of other  
18 injured passengers sitting on the blankets with me behind the  
19 train car. And then I rode in the ambulance with another lady who  
20 was pulled out after I was and -- because they had her on a  
21 backboard. And she actually rode in the ambulance on a gurney,  
22 and I sat in one of the jump seats.

23 But I don't -- I remember one of -- I think it was the  
24 brakeman had a problem with his arm. He was still out there  
25 helping people and trying to account for people. But I know that

1 his arm was injured.

2 And I guess that's probably about all I saw because I just  
3 sat still on the blanket until the EMTs were ready to take me to  
4 the hospital. I didn't move around or anything.

5 Q. Do you remember if you ever got the name of the woman that  
6 you rode in the ambulance with?

7 A. No.

8 Q. No?

9 A. I didn't.

10 Q. So we're also trying to place another passenger. Do you  
11 remember seeing a rather large male individual in your train car?

12 A. A young man? A younger man with dark hair and glasses? Yes.

13 Q. And do you know where he -- what room he was compared to  
14 yours?

15 A. He was behind us. And I remember because he was sitting on  
16 the blanket, also, with me. And I remember him saying that he had  
17 been actually in the hallway or just stepped out of his room when  
18 the accident happened and that he slid down the hallway. I  
19 remember him saying that. And I remember him because he didn't  
20 have any shoes on. And one of the other passengers, when he had  
21 gone back in, he actually -- his parents were sitting on a blanket  
22 behind me -- this third passenger -- and he had gone back in to  
23 get their medication. And he brought out the boots that belonged  
24 to this -- the bigger guy you're referring to.

25 Q. So the bigger guy was the son?



1 A. No. I think he was just another passenger, and the son was  
2 being kind. Because I think those folks were also in our car. I  
3 just don't know which compartment.

4 Q. Got it. Prior to the derailment, do you remember if the PA  
5 system was working?

6 A. Yeah, I think it was, because they -- I remember them saying  
7 something about dinner and people waiting. They wanted people to  
8 wait at the door of the dining car to be seated rather than just  
9 going in. That announcement did come sometime that day, I  
10 remember.

11 Q. When you first came to the sleeping car and your steward came  
12 in and introduced himself, did he also point out to you that there  
13 was a safety card in your room?

14 A. I don't remember that happening. I saw the safety card. I'm  
15 not sure we looked at it very carefully, but I remember seeing it.

16 Q. Do you have a sense of how long it took the emergency  
17 responders to arrive on the scene?

18 A. Well, you know, we were kind of out in the middle of nowhere.  
19 I can't honestly say I had a very good sense of time. I was  
20 actually at the hospital being attended to when one of the nurses  
21 said something about the accident happened about 4:00, so I knew  
22 that. I think it -- I know that it took almost an hour to ride to  
23 the hospital. I'm going to guess that it took some of these  
24 ambulances probably 45 minutes or longer to get there.

25 Now, there were some other more local people. Like, there

1 was a really nice guy in a pickup truck who saw the accident, I  
2 guess just as it was happening, and stopped and came over. And he  
3 had a ladder on the back of his pickup truck, and he just stopped  
4 to help, and I know that they used his ladder to get down into the  
5 cars to help get people out.

6 And then, again, there were some volunteer firemen -- I'm  
7 sure that's who they were -- that came first, and that didn't seem  
8 too long. But I can't say that I have a very good sense of time  
9 through all of this.

10 Q. And in addition to your car steward, did you see any other  
11 Amtrak personnel at your car?

12 A. During the trip?

13 Q. No.

14 A. Or after the accident?

15 Q. After the derailment.

16 A. Oh, yes, two of them: the brakeman and one of the servers  
17 from the dining car.

18 Q. Is there anything you think that I should have asked you but  
19 I forgot to ask you about this incident?

20 A. I'm not thinking of anything, and I'm also -- I'm trying to  
21 think how can we make this more safe for people. Well,  
22 interestingly, my husband and I were talking with some friends the  
23 other night, and I don't know how it would work, but it seems that  
24 emergency escape hatches on the top of the train might be a good  
25 idea because if you're in one of those rooms -- like, we just had

1 a sleeping compartment. There's a hallway. But in the rooms, you  
2 know, there's just a little narrow hallway between the entrance to  
3 the room and the family rooms and the side of the train. And if  
4 the train goes over on that side, it's almost impossible to get  
5 out of the train without going through the window, in which case  
6 somebody has to come down in and get you.

7 Q. Got you.

8 A. And do you see what I'm saying?

9 Q. Yeah. Yes, I actually do understand.

10 Well, thank you, thank you very, very much for talking to me.  
11 And if you have any questions or any concerns, please feel free to  
12 give me a call. You should be getting -- or you should be in  
13 contact with Kim Frierson from my agency.

14 MS. LONG: Uh-huh.

15 MS. HARLEY: Okay? And so she'll keep you apprised of what's  
16 going on in the investigation. And anytime we release any  
17 information to the public, we will let you know. Okay?

18 MS. LONG: Okay.

19 MS. HARLEY: All right?

20 MS. LONG: Yes. Thank you.

21 MS. HARLEY: Again, thank you very much for taking the time  
22 to speak to me, and I hope you and your husband feel better.  
23 Okay?

24 MS. LONG: Okay. Thank you very much.

25 MS. HARLEY: Thank you, ma'am. Bye-bye.

1 MS. LONG: Bye.

2 MS. HARLEY: And interview is concluded at 3:45.

3 (Whereupon, at 3:45 p.m. EST, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

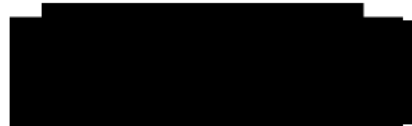
IN THE MATTER OF:            FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT  
                                      NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA  
                                      ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021  
                                      Interview of Pamela Jordan Long

ACCIDENT NO.:                RRD21MR017

PLACE:                         Via Telephone

DATE:                         October 27, 2021

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.



Angie Duray  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT \*

NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA \* Accident No.: RRD21MR017

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: GLENN and PEGGY MATTHEES  
Passengers

Via Telephone

Monday,  
November 8, 2021

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

KRIS SEVERSON, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe Center, Department of Transportation

KARI JACOBSEN, Mechanical Engineer  
Volpe Center, Department of Transportation

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Glenn and Peggy Matthees:

By Ms. Harley

5



I N T E R V I E W

(10:02 a.m. EST)

1  
2  
3 MS. HARLEY: For the recording, my name is Sheryl Harley.  
4 Last name spelled H-a-r-l-e-y. I'm the assistant investigator in  
5 charge with the National Transportation Safety Board out of  
6 Washington, D.C. As you know, we're investigating the Amtrak  
7 derailment that occurred in Joplin, Montana, on September the 25th  
8 of 2021, at approximately 3:47 p.m.

9 Today is November the 8th of 2021. And it's 10:02 a.m. And  
10 that would be Eastern Standard Time for us. I'm going to ask you  
11 to identify yourself for the recording.

12 MR. MATTHEES: Glenn Matthees.

13 MS. MATTHEES: Peggy Matthees.

14 MS. HARLEY: Also on this call are two of my colleagues and  
15 investigators. I'm going to ask them to identify themselves.  
16 Kari?

17 MS. JACOBSEN: Hi, there. My name is Kari Jacobsen and I  
18 work for the Volpe Transportation System Center which is part of  
19 the U.S. Department of Transportation. Kris and I are here  
20 representing the forensics team path of the FRA, the Federal  
21 Railroad Administration. And we were working with Sheryl. We've  
22 been working with her ever since at the investigation and since to  
23 try to reconstruct what happened to the passengers involved and  
24 get better understanding of what we could do to improve things.  
25 So we're just going to ask you a few questions. And we'd love to

1 hear about your experience. And thank you for taking the time to  
2 talk to us.

3 MS. HARLEY: Kris?

4 MS. SEVERSON: Pretty much the same that Kari described  
5 applies to me. We're both mechanical engineers. We were out at  
6 the site looking through the cars. And we're trying to understand  
7 how people got hurt in this accident. Thank you for your time.

8 INTERVIEW OF GLENN AND PEGGY MATTHEES

9 MS. HARLEY: To start off, I guess what I'm going to ask you  
10 to do is to tell me when you boarded the train for the first time  
11 and talk about -- a little bit about your interaction with the  
12 crew as you boarded. Then I want you to go to the day of the  
13 accident. And just kind of walk me through what you remember  
14 about that day.

15 MR. MATTHEES: We got on the train in St. Paul September 24th  
16 about 10:00 p.m. And people at the train station were very  
17 helpful. Helped us checked our baggage in so we didn't have to  
18 put them in the same car with us. So we had our baggage in the  
19 baggage car which we thought that was pretty neat.

20 They were helpful. Just had to wait for probably half an  
21 hour to get on the train which wasn't so bad. And they instructed  
22 which cars to go onto and gave us nice roomy seats. So that was  
23 very nice.

24 MS. MATTHEES: I don't think I have anything to add to that.  
25 We didn't really have a lot of interaction with the crew except

1 getting on and off the train. They would come down the aisles and  
2 they would check your ticket. But other than that, it was very  
3 little interaction.

4 MS. HARLEY: Go to the day of the accident and just kind of  
5 sort of walk me through everything that you remember about that  
6 day.

7 MR. MATTHEES: We just went down to the food car and got some  
8 coffee a couple of times and some doughnuts and sat in the  
9 observation car for a while. And just saw what was going on  
10 because we slept most of the night. And then -- yeah, trying to  
11 see the things in North Dakota. There isn't much to see. It was  
12 our first real train ride on the Empire Builder so we wanted to  
13 experience as much as we could.

14 The accident as far as I -- I was just sitting next to the  
15 window watching the scenery in our designated seats and listening  
16 to some music and looking out the window. And I saw the car just  
17 starting to lean over. I really didn't feel any big jolts or --  
18 even when the car disconnected from the train, I didn't feel that.  
19 I just felt that car starting to tip over. And -- oh, no, no.  
20 That's when -- and it wasn't slow motion. It was pretty fast.

21 MS. MATTHEES: I guess, as you know, we started in the  
22 morning with just some breakfast. We snacked along the way. And  
23 about -- yeah, about 3:00 or so, we -- I was doing some puzzle  
24 things, puzzle book. And he had a magazine. And we had gone up  
25 to the observation car for a while. I have family that live in

1 North Dakota so we were identifying places that some of my  
2 relatives had lived near. Just kind of to see what was there.

3 The typography there is just really nothing. It's really dry  
4 and dirty. And there's just nothing there. So we opened our  
5 books up and started to do -- you know, do that. And then, we  
6 started to feel -- well, I will back up and say, you know, there  
7 were people going up and down the aisle going to the dining car or  
8 to the observation car. You know, people would go back and forth.

9 I think that morning when we were sitting in the observation  
10 car, we were in there having our breakfast and then we got notice  
11 over the loud -- overhead speaker saying, you know, you can't stay  
12 in this car very long because we want other people to enjoy the  
13 opportunity to be in the observation car. And they were trying to  
14 keep people moving and apart. And that was good.

15 As far as the accident part, you know, like he was saying, we  
16 were both -- he was listening to something. I was reading  
17 something. And all at once, the car started to move a little bit.  
18 And it -- you know, as you go on a train, it does. But it just --  
19 it kept getting -- more swaying and more swaying. And as it got  
20 more swaying, I started to stand. I kind of stood up while it was  
21 swaying because I'm thinking, okay, I got to keep an upright  
22 position. So I was sort of standing up while the thing was going  
23 over. He was next to me sitting.

24 So when we finally ended up stopping, I literally was  
25 standing up in the car because just -- you could feel it coming.

1 And he was on the ground on the floor. And I can just say that he  
2 -- looking down at him, the window was all broken. But it wasn't  
3 broken through. It was kind of a shattered thing. His face was  
4 all bloody on the right side. And that's where he was laying.  
5 And I had one of those neck pillows. And I tried to put it under  
6 his face to -- you know, just for padding. And then he wanted to  
7 get up. And his arms were bothering him. You could see already  
8 that his wrist was swelling up.

9 So he stood up. We were going to help -- me and a lady  
10 behind me were going to help him get up. He didn't want any help  
11 because he was hurting. He wanted to do it himself so that we  
12 didn't hurt him some more. So he stood up next to me for about  
13 two seconds. Then he passed out back on the floor. Me and other  
14 lady helped him fall so he didn't hit any of the benches or the  
15 chairs. So he was -- he fell back on the floor.

16 I was scrambling. Thinking, okay, what's next. So I'm  
17 looking for my phone and the phone charger thinking, okay, we got  
18 to get out of here. We had our backpacks. About that time, the  
19 highway patrol guy had entered the one end of the car and was  
20 telling people: get out, get out, get out. The lady a couple of  
21 seats ahead of us was just screaming bloody murder because she was  
22 pinned under the seat. She could not get out. So it was like,  
23 okay, how do we get around here, how do we get out of here. So we  
24 crawled into -- crawled over the luggage rack.

25 So we were walking along the luggage rack space to get out

1 around her. And everybody behind us -- and I grabbed our two  
2 backpacks and our phones. And he was -- helped him get out  
3 because he was pretty unsteady. But we got out and the people  
4 around us -- the guy behind us was bloodied. He had a really  
5 bloodied face. He was holding his glasses when we were outside.

6 Well, then found out -- because he and this gentleman took  
7 the ambulance together. Had a broken shoulder. He was 80 some  
8 years old. Had a broken shoulder. So while we were sitting on  
9 the side of the track waiting for the EMTs and stuff, the older  
10 gentleman was standing bloodied. And I had some wipes in my  
11 backpack, some of those Clorox wipes or whatever you call them.  
12 And I gave it to the lady and said, can you help this gentleman  
13 wipe his face off and (indiscernible) glasses. So she stood with  
14 him for a while. She didn't look like she was injured that I  
15 could tell. I mean, she was standing. She might have been  
16 hurting.

17 Well, and then the EMTs came kind of down the road and did  
18 triage I guess you call it. Saying who needed to go where, who  
19 needed to get in the ambulance and who didn't. And they took my  
20 husband and this older gentleman and another guy. Three people in  
21 the ambulance. Nobody was in the stretcher because they couldn't  
22 get another person in there. I asked if I could go along and they  
23 let me ride along in the front seat.

24 It was about -- I don't know how long a drive it was to  
25 Chester. Like 20 minutes, 40 minutes. I don't remember. So the

1 driver along the way says, you know, check on the guys back there,  
2 see if they're okay. And I turned and I listened. And they were  
3 all chattering, talking. And I said, they're talking, so they  
4 must be okay. They were sharing experiences so they must be --  
5 you know, they were with it. They weren't unconscious or  
6 anything.

7 Well, and then we got to the little clinic. So I don't know  
8 if you want us to go into that part of it or -- questions before  
9 that?

10 MS. HARLEY: Sure. I tell you what. Why don't we -- before  
11 we go into the clinic, why don't we start back at the train. So  
12 what car were you in at the time the derailment occurred?

13 MR. MATTHEES: Second to the last.

14 MS. HARLEY: Second to the last.

15 MS. MATTHEES: Until that disconnected. Yeah.

16 MS. HARLEY: You were actually in the middle of those three  
17 uncoupled cars. Is that correct?

18 MS. MATTHEES: No. We were the first one of the uncoupled  
19 cars. I thought there were two uncoupled cars. There were three  
20 uncoupled cars?

21 MS. HARLEY: There were three uncoupled cars.

22 MS. MATTHEES: So we were in the first one to get out.

23 MS. HARLEY: Okay, you were in the first one. So I guess the  
24 easiest way to make sure that we're identifying the right car is -  
25 - directly in front of your car, was that the lounge car?

1 MR. MATTHEES: The observation car.

2 MS. HARLEY: The observation car was directly in front of  
3 yours?

4 MR. MATTHEES: Yes.

5 MS. HARLEY: So you were the first uncoupled. Where were you  
6 sitting? Do you remember what seat numbers or where you were  
7 seated?

8 MS. MATTHEES: We were sitting where the stairway comes up  
9 from the bathroom. Weren't we sitting just a couple -- a seat  
10 behind that?

11 MR. MATTHEES: A seat behind that.

12 MS. MATTHEES: You know, in the middle of the train where the  
13 seat -- the --

14 MR. MATTHEES: Will go downstairs --

15 MS. MATTHEES: -- stairs come up.

16 MR. MATTHEES: Bathrooms.

17 MS. HARLEY: So with the -- is the stairway on your left side  
18 or the right side?

19 MS. MATTHEES: Left.

20 MR. MATTHEES: Left side.

21 MS. MATTHEES: On the left.

22 MS. HARLEY: So you were actually -- you were sitting on the  
23 right side as the train was traveling forward?

24 MR. MATTHEES: Correct.

25 MS. MATTHEES: Correct.



1 MS. HARLEY: And Glenn, you were at the window. And you were  
2 sitting next to him at the aisle?

3 MS. MATTHEES: Correct.

4 MS. HARLEY: You said that there was somebody -- there was a  
5 woman behind you?

6 MS. MATTHEES: Think there was an older gentleman behind us.  
7 I think --

8 MR. MATTHEES: Eighty-six-year-old guy.

9 MS. MATTHEES: Then there was another woman, I think, behind  
10 him or across the aisle. You know, people were coming and going  
11 during the day at stops. I guess we didn't pay a lot attention.  
12 You doze off and on. Yeah.

13 MR. MATTHEES: So there was an older guy sitting across from  
14 the old guy. And he was pretty heavy duty. Then there was a lady  
15 sitting across from us that was saying prayers when we got out of  
16 the train.

17 MS. MATTHEES: Well, she was a younger gal. She was sitting  
18 right in front of the bulkhead where the stairwell goes down. So  
19 there was a young lady there all by herself. But when we all --  
20 we got out, she was sitting on the side with her head in her  
21 hands. And I said to her, are you okay. And she says, I'm  
22 praying. So yeah.

23 MS. HARLEY: So the young lady was sitting in front of you  
24 and she was directly across from the stairs. You --

25 MS. MATTHEES: No, no. She was sitting across from us.

1 MS. HARLEY: Oh, across from you.

2 MS. MATTHEES: Not at the stairs.

3 MS. HARLEY: Across from you. You had the 86-year-old male  
4 that was behind you. And across from him was another, you said,  
5 heavy-set year old -- heavy-set older male?

6 MR. MATTHEES: Yes.

7 MS. HARLEY: Is there anyone else -- you remember that there  
8 was a woman who was pinned underneath the train seat. Do you know  
9 how many rows in front of you you thought she was?

10 MR. MATTHEES: I think she was two.

11 MS. MATTHEES: Two, yeah. I think two.

12 MR. MATTHEES: Two. Because the lady helping her was in  
13 front of us.

14 MS. MATTHEES: Right. There was a lady in front of us that  
15 was right -- pretty much kind of across from the stairway. And  
16 she was on her computer most of the time. She was a bigger lady,  
17 bigger build lady. And then it was ahead of her was that lady.  
18 And we don't -- I can't tell you if there was somebody else with  
19 her. Was there another person with that second --

20 MR. MATTHEES: (Indiscernible).

21 MS. MATTHEES: I don't know if she was alone or not.

22 MS. HARLEY: You said that -- so just prior to the train car  
23 overturning, you actually stood up?

24 MS. MATTHEES: I could feel it. You know? And it felt -- as  
25 it kept going further and further, I just -- I guess the momentum

1 of my body said, you got to kind of stand up because you're going  
2 to go down.

3 MS. HARLEY: Did you brace yourself before the train actually  
4 finally went completely over on its side?

5 MS. MATTHEES: Well, I did have bruises on the bottom of my  
6 legs. And I did have a little bit of hip pain. So I'm assuming I  
7 did. I'm just assuming that I did. You know (indiscernible) you  
8 don't know what you're doing. You're just surviving.

9 MS. HARLEY: And sir, you actually hit the window. And you  
10 said the window cracked. Is that correct?

11 MS. MATTHEES: Like shattered but not broken out. Right?

12 MR. MATTHEES: Right. So I got road rash on the side of the  
13 face. But there wasn't really dirt coming in the window. So I  
14 don't know exactly how I got road rash.

15 MS. MATTHEES: (Indiscernible).

16 MS. HARLEY: Was the window still in its frame? Did it  
17 remain in the frame itself?

18 MR. MATTHEES: Yes. Thank God.

19 MS. HARLEY: In the frame. So at one particular point, you  
20 stood up and you momentarily lost consciousness. Do you know for  
21 approximately how long you lost consciousness for?

22 MR. MATTHEES: Wasn't more than five, ten seconds.

23 MS. MATTHEES: Yeah, it wasn't very long at all. You could  
24 just see his eyes go back and he fell back momentarily. And then  
25 he opened his eyes again.

1 MS. HARLEY: Then you said the highway patrol officer came  
2 in. Told everyone to evacuate. Sir, you were actually able to  
3 walk out of the train?

4 MR. MATTHEES: Yes. Yeah, if you would call it walk.  
5 Because it was more like crawling through the luggage racks. It  
6 was laying over.

7 MS. HARLEY: Yes. I understand. And how many people do you  
8 think actually were able to get out of the train? And I'm  
9 assuming you exited the train through the end of the car door. Is  
10 that correct?

11 MS. MATTHEES: Yeah.

12 MR. MATTHEES: Yeah.

13 MS. MATTHEES: There was a window or something broken out  
14 back there, I think. Or the back end. We had to get up over a  
15 ledge and go out.

16 MR. MATTHEES: It was the front of the car where it connected  
17 to the observation car.

18 MS. HARLEY: Yeah.

19 MR. MATTHEES: The end that we went out of.

20 MS. HARLEY: And that door was -- was it -- was the door  
21 already open or do you know if someone opened it?

22 MS. MATTHEES: It wasn't a door. It was a ledge. And we had  
23 to get up on the ledge and crawl through because they had to help  
24 me up and help you up on this ledge to get through. Well, I guess  
25 I have to think about it sideways. Because the car was sideways.

1 Yes, it was the door. It was the door. You know, I'm thinking if  
2 it was standing upright, it would have been a door.

3 MS. HARLEY: Again, how many people do you think were able to  
4 exit that door with you? Came out through that door?

5 MS. MATTHEES: In that car, everybody but the lady that was  
6 pinned.

7 MS. HARLEY: How many people do you think were in the car at  
8 the time?

9 MR. MATTHEES: Like 15 maybe. I'd say about 15. Because  
10 when we were at the hotel later, they -- we noticed some of the  
11 other people that were sitting behind us. And they were at the  
12 same hotel with us.

13 MS. MATTHEES: And I will say, you know, he was on his way  
14 out. The police officer had gotten around and was looking to make  
15 sure everybody was out. And he was behind me. And he was going  
16 to start coming out. Then he heard noise. And somebody was  
17 pounding from below. And said -- they thought there was somebody  
18 still trapped below. And I just -- I mean, we were told to get  
19 out. That's all I know about that piece. Sounded like there was  
20 still somebody below there.

21 MS. HARLEY: I tell you what. I'm going to stop there and  
22 I'm going to let me colleagues talk and then we'll go back to  
23 talking about the hospital and all that. Okay?

24 MR. MATTHEES: Yep.

25 MS. HARLEY: So Kari, why don't you go ahead.

1 MS. JACOBSEN: Hi, there. Let's see, Greg [sic], would you  
2 mind telling me a little bit more about the injuries you  
3 sustained?

4 MR. MATTHEES: I got a broken wrist.

5 MS. MATTHEES: And it's Glenn.

6 MR. MATTHEES: Glenn.

7 MS. MATTHEES: Glenn is his name.

8 MS. JACOBSEN: Excuse me. I'm sorry.

9 MS. MATTHEES: I saw you post it right on your notes. That's  
10 all.

11 MS. JACOBSEN: Yes, thank you very much. I apologize.

12 MR. MATTHEES: So I got a broken wrist and then road rash on  
13 the right side of my face. And my ribs are -- were bruised. And  
14 there's still -- I can't sleep on my sides because the ribs are  
15 still -- so --

16 MS. MATTHEES: He has pins, and plates, and screws in his arm  
17 now.

18 MR. MATTHEES: So they -- yeah, wrapped it up and -- says,  
19 well, check -- go to your doctor when you get home. Well, good  
20 thing I did because they didn't wrap it correctly. So they had to  
21 redo everything. And I don't know how I broke my wrist. I don't  
22 know if somebody fell on me or if I fell on it or --

23 MS. MATTHEES: Nobody --

24 MR. MATTHEES: I don't know how it happened.

25 MS. MATTHEES: Nobody fell on you. Nobody. He keeps telling

1 people I fell on him but I did not fall on him. I was standing  
2 upright.

3 MS. JACOBSEN: Peggy, what do you think that you were  
4 standing on? So if you remained standing when the car tipped  
5 over, what do you think you ended up standing on when the car came  
6 to rest?

7 MS. MATTHEES: Well, I think (indiscernible) shifted, I was  
8 on that wall where the window was. So my feet were just where his  
9 head was. So the window and then in the bottom of that wall. I  
10 think I was standing on that.

11 MS. JACOBSEN: That was a good move on your (indiscernible).

12 MS. MATTHEES: Well, who knows.

13 MS. JACOBSEN: Then you said that you had bruises on the  
14 bottom of your legs?

15 MS. MATTHEES: Yeah, I had some bruises on my leg. And I had  
16 -- my right hip bothered me for a while. But it's -- you know,  
17 it's been long enough that that's been better. And the doctor did  
18 check me out here so --

19 MS. JACOBSEN: Then Glenn, were there any head -- did you get  
20 diagnosed with any head injuries?

21 MR. MATTHEES: No. I just kept complaining I had a dent in  
22 my temple. So it bent my glasses. So there was -- I was bleeding  
23 on that side of the face. But just put save on it. They didn't  
24 even have to put a dressing on it. It wasn't that bad.

25 MS. MATTHEES: But he couldn't shave for like two weeks. He

1 was grizzly.

2 MS. JACOBSEN: I think those are my questions for now. I'm  
3 going to pass it to Kris to go next. Thank you very much.

4 MS. SEVERSON: Thank you. I have one question. Where were  
5 you planning to get off the train? Where was your scheduled stop?

6 MR. MATTHEES: Whitefish. We were going to do hiking in  
7 Glacier National Park. So we weren't that very far away.

8 MS. SEVERSON: Sounds great. In the car -- when you said  
9 that you had road rash on your face but you weren't sure -- was  
10 there any dirt or debris inside the car or on the window?

11 MR. MATTHEES: That I don't remember.

12 MS. SEVERSON: Like you don't remember -- or maybe Peggy, you  
13 don't remember seeing dirt on Glenn's face or anything?

14 MS. MATTHEES: I don't. You know, it was just -- it was red  
15 and really raw. And it didn't seem like the doctors cleaned  
16 anything out. So I assumed that there wasn't anything there.

17 MS. SEVERSON: Just trying to kind of understand like the  
18 condition of the window. You said that it was shattered but not  
19 displaced from the opening it sounds like?

20 MS. MATTHEES: Correct.

21 MR. MATTHEES: Correct.

22 MS. SEVERSON: I think that's all I have. Thank you.

23 MS. HARLEY: At this point, we're going to kind of move  
24 forward. How long do you think it took for the first emergency  
25 responder to get to you in the car?



1 MR. MATTHEES: I think it was the highway patrolman. And I  
2 said it was like five minutes.

3 MS. MATTHEES: He saw the accident happen. And he was right  
4 there.

5 MS. HARLEY: He said he saw the accident happen?

6 MS. MATTHEES: Yes.

7 MR. MATTHEES: Yeah.

8 MS. MATTHEES: Which is amazing because we're out in Montana  
9 and there is no one anywhere. And he happened to be driving by.  
10 It was a blessing for sure.

11 MS. HARLEY: As you said before -- so Glenn, you -- the 86-  
12 year-old man, you were talking to earlier, and another gentleman  
13 along with Peggy were taken to the clinic in Chester. Is that  
14 where you -- was that your final destination or were you actually  
15 transferred to a different hospital?

16 MR. MATTHEES: We -- that was the final --

17 MS. MATTHEES: Medical help.

18 MR. MATTHEES: -- medical help. Then they transferred us to  
19 Selby --

20 MS. MATTHEES: Shelby.

21 MR. MATTHEES: Shelby. For a hotel.

22 MS. HARLEY: Okay, okay. Great. I want to go back and ask a  
23 couple of things. You were talking about earlier when you were in  
24 the observation car, you could hear the PA system. When you were  
25 in that coach car, could you hear the PA system? This was before

1 the accident.

2 MR. MATTHEES: They would announce that supper is served --  
3 being served for people that wanted to -- that were in sleepers.  
4 That paid extra money. So we're looking at each other, oh, I  
5 didn't know that they were serving food, that you could sit down  
6 in a dining car. But -- so we did hear that at the night. Then  
7 first thing in the morning, they were announcing that was for  
8 people that had sleeper cars.

9 MS. MATTHEES: And they'd announce when the little café was  
10 open, open or closed.

11 MS. HARLEY: After the derailment, when you were in the car,  
12 do you remember if the lights were on?

13 MS. MATTHEES: I have no clue.

14 MS. HARLEY: Were you able to see in the car?

15 MS. MATTHEES: Oh, yes. It was --

16 MR. MATTHEES: Yeah.

17 MS. MATTHEES: Yeah. 4:00 in the afternoon.

18 MS. HARLEY: To your knowledge, most of the light was the  
19 natural light. Did you see any kind of floor lighting?

20 MR. MATTHEES: No.

21 MS. MATTHEES: I don't think so. The floor would have been  
22 here.

23 MS. HARLEY: When you boarded the train, did anyone make any  
24 announcements about the safety cards that were available to  
25 passengers in the seats?

1 MS. MATTHEES: Safety cart?

2 MR. MATTHEES: Card.

3 MS. HARLEY: The cards.

4 MS. MATTHEES: Oh, cards.

5 MR. MATTHEES: No, they didn't. So when we got on the train  
6 a couple days later, there was a lot more announcements about the  
7 safety card and -- that we're going to make smoke stops for people  
8 and that kind of thing. But yeah, they didn't announce much --  
9 well, probably because we were sleeping overnight and then they  
10 didn't do too many announcements. Then -- yeah, when we rode the  
11 train the next time, they were taking about legal stuff. That you  
12 couldn't smoke and -- in the cars.

13 MS. HARLEY: The -- did you see any Amtrak employees after  
14 the derailment?

15 MS. MATTHEES: When we were at the hotel, there were Amtrak  
16 employees there. But as far as on the site of the derailment, we  
17 wouldn't have known who they were. No. People in uniform or  
18 anything, no.

19 MS. HARLEY: No. I was wondering like through the -- through  
20 your coach car, did you happen to see your coach attendant after  
21 the derailment?

22 MS. MATTHEES: No.

23 MS. HARLEY: I'm going to turn it back to my colleagues.  
24 Kari, do you have any follow-up?

25 MS. JACOBSEN: No, I don't think I do. Thank you.

1 MS. HARLEY: Kris?

2 MS. SEVERSON: Quick question. And I know this may be hard  
3 to answer. But do you have any sense of how long the car slid on  
4 its side once it rolled over? Like did it come to a stop pretty  
5 quickly or did it continue to slide on the ground?

6 MS. MATTHEES: It didn't slide for very long. I didn't sense  
7 that it was for very long. Maybe a minute if that. Not even.

8 MS. SEVERSON: So once it was on its side, it continued to  
9 travel for maybe up to a minute? I know it's hard to --

10 MS. MATTHEES: Yeah.

11 MS. SEVERSON: -- judge time in those situations. But just  
12 trying to get a sense of -- if you can --

13 MS. MATTHEES: It didn't travel very long at all. No.

14 MS. SEVERSON: Did it feel like you were going very fast when  
15 it rolled over? I mean, I think -- were you kind of at speed  
16 maybe when it -- or did you feel that it was braking before you  
17 rolled over or decelerating?

18 MS. MATTHEES: There was only swaying. That's what I  
19 remember is swaying.

20 MS. SEVERSON: So lateral side-to-side swaying.

21 MS. MATTHEES: Yep.

22 MS. SEVERSON: But no sense of slowing down?

23 MS. MATTHEES: No.

24 MS. SEVERSON: Then it rolled over and, to the best of your  
25 knowledge, made --

1 MS. MATTHEES: Stopped.

2 MS. SEVERSON: Traveled for a minute on its side before it  
3 stopped?

4 MS. MATTHEES: Maybe.

5 MS. SEVERSON: I'm not going to hold you to that. I  
6 understand it's --

7 MS. MATTHEES: Please don't.

8 MS. SEVERSON: -- a rough approximation. So most of the  
9 deceleration was when the car was on its side.

10 MS. MATTHEES: I'd say so. Yeah.

11 MR. MATTHEES: Yeah, yep.

12 MS. MATTHEES: Yeah.

13 MS. SEVERSON: That's it for me. Thank you.

14 MS. HARLEY: Out of curiosity, you did say this was your  
15 first time on the Empire Builder. Have you been on any other  
16 Amtrak trains?

17 MS. MATTHEES: No.

18 MR. MATTHEES: No.

19 MS. HARLEY: So this was your first train ride?

20 MS. MATTHEES: Well, we've done little train -- you know,  
21 vacation travel stuff. We've done trains in England, in Europe.  
22 But here in the States, that's the first.

23 MS. HARLEY: That was your first.

24 MS. MATTHEES: That was our big retirement, let's go do this  
25 and have some fun. Yeah. Well --

1 MS. HARLEY: I understand. So at this particular point, do  
2 you have any questions for me?

3 MR. MATTHEES: We got a website that we could go onto that  
4 you guys are updating but so far there hasn't been any updates  
5 that I read in your website that was more than what I would read  
6 in the newspaper. I think the only thing that I noticed is that  
7 you guys mentioned cameras were on the train to look at the  
8 tracks. And I didn't see that in any of the newspaper articles  
9 that I read.

10 But otherwise, everything that is on your website has been  
11 reported in the papers. Because we wanted to know -- people keep  
12 asking me, well, the couple that passed away, which car were they  
13 in. And you know, how did they die, and all this other stuff.  
14 And we don't have any answers. And probably until your  
15 investigation is done, you can't help us out with that.

16 The other thing that we noticed when we came back -- we went  
17 to Seattle eventually. Then took the train back to St. Paul 34  
18 hours. And I saw three metal crosses next to the track probably  
19 within 10 miles of where the accident happened. So I've been  
20 trying to find out if that's memorial crosses or who put them up  
21 there or why. But nobody -- I contacted a couple newspapers and  
22 nobody has been able to answer that question. And I don't think  
23 you guys would have an idea on that either.

24 MS. HARLEY: So to start with your first question. We put  
25 out what's called a preliminary report. And absolutely correct.

1 The preliminary report is just that. It doesn't talk about the  
2 investigation. It just basically gives an overview of what  
3 happened and why we were -- why we're out there investigating. So  
4 you're absolutely right. There is not a lot of information going  
5 on -- involved in that.

6 As far as the investigation, I can tell you that the  
7 investigation is still moving forward. And we're still  
8 investigating. We have no clear sense of why the derailment has  
9 occurred. As we update the investigation, we do -- we would -- we  
10 have in investigations actually put out like updates for people.  
11 Again, we'll let you know if we're going to do that. As of right  
12 now, there aren't any updates. There's nothing I can tell you at  
13 this moment that you don't already know. As far as the crosses  
14 are concerned, that was the first time I've actually ever heard of  
15 that. So even I don't even know that.

16 MS. MATTHEES: Well, we were probably the only passengers  
17 that went back on that same rail within two weeks, I'll tell you.

18 MS. HARLEY: That's probably correct. So one of the things  
19 that happens and that the railroad does -- and it's actually part  
20 of federal regulations. They do what's known as a debrief. So  
21 they go back to the scene and they talk to the first responders  
22 and they do kind of a debrief on what happened and -- the  
23 emergency response.

24 And what -- and they sit down and talk about what they need  
25 to improve, the emergency response, and the safety issues. So

1 that is something that is coming up. And probably more  
2 information will be obtained at that particular point. Again, the  
3 only thing I can tell you is is that we will update things as we  
4 get -- as we come up with things. But right now, we really don't  
5 have a sense of why the derailment occurred. But you're  
6 absolutely right. Trains do in fact have onboard recorders. And  
7 we have confiscated those recorders to take a look at it to see  
8 what we can see.

9 Thank you again. I appreciate it. You have my information.  
10 If something comes to you later on and -- whether you think it's  
11 important or not, please reach out and give me a call. If you  
12 have not heard anything from us or any updates from our  
13 transportation disaster assistance specialist, who should be your  
14 liaison between yourself and the investigation, then please feel  
15 free to either reach out to her which -- Kim Frierson. You should  
16 have gotten some information from her. Or reach out to me. Okay?

17 MR. MATTHEES: We were very happy with the first responders.  
18 And thankfully it happened at 4:00 in the afternoon. And yeah, I  
19 was really pleased with the way the community pulled together.  
20 And guy was on top of the observation car calling his -- yeah, I  
21 need some ladders to get these people out of the car. And I was  
22 just -- gave me a peaceful feeling that humanity is still there.  
23 That people really do care. So that's one thing that I came away  
24 with.

25 MS. HARLEY: Well, that's very important. And certainly,



1 that's something that we let the community know.

2 MR. MATTHEES: Good.

3 MS. HARLEY: That that was very important to the survival of  
4 the people in the train. So thank you again. I appreciate it for  
5 taking your time. Again, give me a call if you have any other  
6 questions. All right?

7 MS. MATTHEES: Thank you.

8 MR. MATTHEES: Thank you.

9 MS. HARLEY: Thank you.

10 MS. JACOBSEN: (Indiscernible) Glenn and Peggy, thank you.

11 MS. MATTHEES: Bye.

12 MS. HARLEY: Bye-bye.

13 MR. MATTHEES: Bye.

14 MS. HARLEY: And I'm going to terminate the interview now at  
15 10:40 a.m.

16 (Whereupon, at 10:40 a.m. EST, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

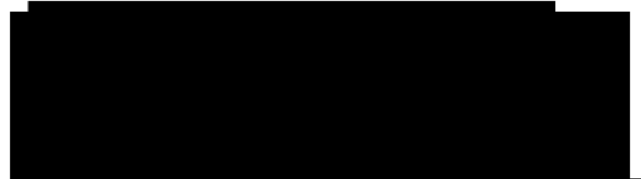
IN THE MATTER OF:            FATAL AMTRAK DERAILMENT  
                                      NEAR JOPLIN, MONTANA  
                                      ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021  
                                      Interview of Glenn and Peggy Matthees

ACCIDENT NO.:                RRD21MR017

PLACE:                         Via Telephone

DATE:                          November 8, 2021

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.



Katie Leach  
Transcriber