

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 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: JASON CALLEN, ROADMASTER  
Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad

Via Telephone

Tuesday,  
September 28, 2021

APPEARANCES:

TROY LLOYD, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

STEPHEN JENNER, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

RYAN RINGELMAN, General Director of Assisted Safety  
BNSF Railway Company

ROBERT NAGEL, Senior Manager of Capital Construction  
Amtrak

MATTHEW HAMMOND, Chief Engineer of The North Region  
BNSF Railway Company

ROY MORRISON, Director of Safety  
Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees

TODD ANDERSON, Track Safety Inspector  
Federal Railroad Administration

QUINN LIGON, Track Safety Inspector  
Federal Railroad Administration

BLAIN LUCK, Rail Integrity Specialist  
Federal Railroad Administration

ZANE SAMPSON, Vice General Chairman  
Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees

AARON RATLEDGE, AVP Operating Practices and Rules,  
Transportation Safety.

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Jason Callen:	
By Mr. Lloyd	6, 12, 24, 33, 39, 42
By Mr. Ligon	9, 17, 29, 36, 40
By Mr. Morrison	10, 18, 30
By Mr. Hammond	11, 19, 30, 37, 41, 44
By Mr. Jenner	11, 23, 38
By Mr. Luck	15, 21, 28, 35
By Mr. Anderson	17, 29, 41
By Mr. Nagel	21
By Mr. Ringelman	23, 37

I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. LLOYD: We are on the record. Good morning, everyone.  
3 My name is Troy Lloyd with the National Transportation Safety  
4 Board. Today is September 28th, 2021, and we are conducting an  
5 interview with Mr. Jason Callen. We are interviewing Mr. Jason  
6 Callen, who works for the Burlington Northern and Sante Fe  
7 Railroad as a Roadmaster. So, you're the roadmaster for that  
8 Highline subdivision, correct?

9 MR. CALLEN: That is correct.

10 MR. LLOYD: This interview is in connection with an accident  
11 that occurred on September 25th, 2021, where Amtrak train number  
12 7, derailed in the Highline subdivision track. The accident  
13 occurred in Joplin, Montana, when a BNSF single main track located  
14 on the Highline subdivision, the NTSB accident reference number is  
15 RRD21MR017. We've got to say the MR stands for major report.  
16 Usually that's when we have a Board member launch.

17 During these interviews, we're not to assign fault, blame or  
18 liability or anything like that, we're here to gather the facts,  
19 so we can move forward with the investigation. NTSB cannot offer  
20 any guarantee to confidentiality or immunity. Not pull from legal  
21 certificate actions to transfer or talk to you about. Once we're  
22 done it will go into public docket. You will receive a copy of  
23 that transcript so you can go through it. You'll be able to make  
24 corrections within the radis (sic.) sheet.

25 You're entitled to one representative, you don't have

1 anything, so. The left chair is vacant, right?

2 MR. CALLEN: Right.

3 MR. LLOYD: Right? So, again before we start, we'll go  
4 around the room. I'm going to introduce myself again. My name is  
5 Troy Lloyd. The spelling of my last name is Lloyd, with the NTSB,  
6 I'm a Track Group Chairman.

7 MR. JENNER: Stephen Jenner, S-T-E-P-H-E-N J-E-N-N-E-R. I'm  
8 a Human Performance Investigator with the NTSB.

9 MR. RINGELMAN: I'm Ryan Ringelman, R-Y-A-N R-I-N-G-E-L-M-A-  
10 N. General Director of System Safety, BNSF Railroad.

11 MR. NAGEL: Robert Nagel, N-A-G-E-L, Amtrak Senior Manager of  
12 Capital Construction.

13 MR. HAMMOND: Matthew Hammond, H-A-M-M-O-N-D. I'm with BNSF  
14 Railway. I'm the AVP, Chief Engineer of the North Region.

15 MR. MORRISON: Roy Morrison, M-O-R-R-I-S-O-N. Brotherhood of  
16 Maintenance of Way Director of Safety.

17 MR. ANDERSON: Todd Anderson, BNSF Track Safety Inspector.  
18 Last name A-N-D-E-R-S-O-N.

19 MR. LIGON: Quinn Ligon, FRA Track Safety Inspector, last  
20 name L-I-G-O-N.

21 MR. LUCK: Blain Luck, Federal Railroad Administration Rail  
22 Integrity Specialist. Last name, L-U-C-K.

23 MR. RATLEDGE: Aaron Ratledge, AVP Operating Practices and  
24 Rules, Transportation Safety. R-A-T-L-E-D-G-E.

25 MR. CALLEN: Jason Callen, BNSF Railway Roadmaster. C-A-L-L-

1 E-N.

2 MR. LLOYD: All right, Jason, thanks for being here. Like I  
3 said, we're here to do an interview, just to gather facts. We had  
4 a derailment with you being the Roadmaster, so we have everyone  
5 who will want to talk to you.

6 MR. CALLEN: Right.

7 MR. LLOYD: Okay.

8 INTERVIEW OF JASON CALLEN

9 BY MR. LLOYD:

10 Q. So, tell me, start out with a little bit of history about  
11 yourself. Tell me about Jason Callen's railroad career, when was  
12 he -- when did he get hired, and how did he get up through the  
13 ranks as a Roadmaster? That's some pretty good stuff.

14 A. All right

15 Q. Talk to me about that.

16 A. So, I was hired 6/6/2005 on the Chicago division. I worked  
17 for -- started out pretty fast getting my foreman seniority. In  
18 2007 I became an assistant Roadmaster on an undercutter, I did  
19 that for 14 months. Ended up getting divorced, got custody of my  
20 kids, went back home to raise my kids. My kids are now grown, so  
21 in May of 2020, I started out as an assistant Roadmaster on a  
22 construction gang. Prior to that I was Track Inspector on  
23 Marceline set for eight years. Then, I believe that I started my  
24 role, I showed up in Shelby, Montana on this job of July 19th,  
25 2021, so.

1 Q. What date was that?

2 A. July 19th.

3 Q. Of this year?

4 A. 2021.

5 Q. Being a Roadmaster for this line?

6 A. This area, yeah.

7 Q. July of 2021. So, tell me Jason, how does one go from  
8 getting hired in 6/6/2005 and achieving the rank of a Roadmaster?  
9 What do you got to do to get that far?

10 A. Well, I believe, you know, knowing track standards and  
11 knowing where to find the information, getting knowledge about  
12 that. Being a track inspector for eight years. I love to lead  
13 people, it's very near and dear to my heart. I enjoy people a  
14 lot, and so the only way I could further that is to become -- go  
15 to management and take that role and responsibility of that.

16 Q. So, that Roadmaster in general, has to know, do you guys have  
17 section foremans, that sort of the duties of what that Surfacing  
18 foremans doing, how those -- how that Tie Forman's doing? You've  
19 got to sort of have a --

20 A. Understanding of the outcome there.

21 Q. Knowledge and understanding of all the disciplines that  
22 you're going to be looking at. You're going to be inspecting all  
23 that stuff, right?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. So, describe to me oversight. Do you have any type of

1 oversight that you have to do? Safety oversight?

2 A. As far as safety?

3 Q. Yeah. So, what I'm asking, do the Safety -- so, you have the  
4 Track Inspector, but the one who's the -- you are probably pretty  
5 much connected tightly with the Track Inspector guy right?

6 A. That is correct.

7 Q. So, what's the safety oversight with him? Are you going out  
8 and checking behind? He's making sure he's sufficient at his job,  
9 he's trained, he's finding the defects before the wheel does?

10 A. Right. Of course, I've not been on this territory very long,  
11 so I tried to start getting an understanding of the territory, you  
12 know, the -- where the control signals are, you know, the track  
13 lay, the you know, trying to know where I'm at and get to know my  
14 track inspector and what he's capable of doing. Making sure  
15 there's no deficiencies there. I've been with Mr. Johnson, we've  
16 rode together three times across the Highline since I've been  
17 here, just in joint inspections. I spent a little bit of time  
18 with the tie gang when the tie gang was here. They had a  
19 Roadmaster, sister Roadmaster on it, so I was trying to focus. My  
20 focus was on trying to get the other projects within their  
21 windows, crossing projects and switch panels and stuff done.

22 Q. You ever do any foot walking? Do you ever get down on the  
23 ground and walk rather than being six feet high in the truck?  
24 Down on the ground putting boots on, looking at some stuff.

25 A. I have, yeah. Yeah. Some of the stuff, the tie gang had



1 done back east when they first started, I was checking their stuff  
2 out, and.

3 Q. Gotcha. So, did you ever do any inspections of, you know, in  
4 this derailment area? We had a welding gang come through that had  
5 adjusted some rails. And we had a tie gang that came through and  
6 did some outer phase tire renewal, and we had a service team  
7 activated. Did you look at that line to see how it was, how the  
8 finished product, while they were even out there looking at the  
9 leading up to that finished product? Were you ever out there with  
10 the guys?

11 A. Not at that location.

12 Q. Okay. Have you been out to that location since the ties and  
13 surfacing and stuff has been completed?

14 A. On the rail.

15 Q. High rail.

16 A. High rail, yes.

17 Q. Nothing boots on the ground walking through there, dropping a  
18 roller, things of that nature?

19 A. Yeah, yeah.

20 Q. Okay. That's all I have for now. I'm good. Blain?

21 MR. LUCK: I'll let these guys start this time.

22 BY MR. LIGON:

23 Q. Jason, I understand you started here on July 19th, you said,  
24 is that correct?

25 A. That is correct.

1 Q. Yeah. So, the tie program that we talk about in this curve  
2 10-14 happened during your time here obviously?

3 A. That is correct.

4 Q. Okay. Are you aware of any other kind of activity that's  
5 been out there since then, or since that tie gang and the  
6 surfacing that occurred after on September 2nd? Has there been  
7 any concerns or issues that you've been made aware of?

8 A. No. No, there's not. No, not at all.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Not after the surfacing.

11 Q. Okay. That's all I have right now.

12 MR. LLOYD: Yeah, you guys kind of answered all my questions.

13 Thank you.

14 BY MR. MORRISON:

15 Q. Just a quick question. Prior to July 19th, did you have any  
16 experience in this area before?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Okay. And what -- you said you had been over that piece of  
19 track in a high rail truck, do you recall the last time you were  
20 over there?

21 A. Yes. That would have been last Thursday.

22 Q. Last Thursday, what was the date?

23 MR. LLOYD: What was that question?

24 MR. MORRISON: When the last time he would have crossed that  
25 area in the high rail truck. He said that was last Thursday.

1 That's all I have, thank you.

2 MR. LLOYD: (Indiscernible) 23rd. That was the last time you  
3 patrolled up there, okay.

4 BY MR. HAMMOND:

5 Q. I don't have a lot, but I just have a couple clarifications  
6 to ask. So, as a Roadmaster, are there some formal qualifications  
7 that you hold in order to have that job?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. From a training perspective, do you mind telling us what  
10 those are? I think you kind of alluded to them earlier, but I'd  
11 just like you to --

12 A. Tier three for FRE tier three qualification, and of course we  
13 have to do CWR annually, spec rules, that's all I can think of  
14 right now.

15 MR. HAMMOND: All right, thank you sir. No other questions.

16 MR. NAGEL: Robert Nagel with Amtrak. I have no questions at  
17 this time.

18 MR. RINGELMAN: No questions.

19 BY MR. JENNER:

20 Q. How many hours do you typically work in a day?

21 A. It definitely depends on the day, but I would say, you know,  
22 average day is 12, 12 to 16 hours probably most days. It  
23 definitely depends on the day, but I would say very few eight-hour  
24 days.

25 Q. Okay. Do you find that overly taking on you?

1 A. No. I'm, you know, I've been with the railroad for 16 years,  
2 and that's pretty much the railroad life. That's kind of normal.

3 Q. I understand. And so, you were just getting to learn the  
4 territory as you mentioned.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Had you heard -- had anyone mentioned to anything unusual  
7 about any particular areas in your territory that were reason for  
8 concern?

9 A. Just some stabilization problems that are further down the  
10 line, and they were being taken care of by some stabilization work  
11 now. But other than just if it rains, the mud, you know, the mud,  
12 it doesn't rain much in Montana it seemed like, so the mud's  
13 really not an issue. But no real chronic spots that aren't being  
14 taken care of here, you know, one's done and one's getting ready  
15 to take place, so.

16 Q. Right. So, I think you just answered it, but the curve where  
17 the accident occurred, do I understand that you hadn't heard  
18 anything particular about that prior to the accident?

19 A. No, no, definitely to the curve, no.

20 MR. JENNER: Very good, thank you.

21 BY MR. LLOYD:

22 Q. The inspection date on the 23rd, Thursday the 23rd, the high  
23 rail, did -- how did you travel? Were you going traveling  
24 eastbound, westbound, how was your going?

25 A. Yeah, traveling from west to east.

1 Q. Okay. So, you went and reviewed the control point going into  
2 that curve?

3 A. Going into the curve, yeah.

4 Q. Okay, going into the curve 10-14. Did you notice anything  
5 unusual in there in the -- how would you rate the surface and the  
6 alignment going through that curve?

7 A. I did not note anything out of the ordinary, you know. We  
8 stopped and looked at the joints as we went by, but as far as any  
9 surface irregularity or anything like that, there was none noted.

10 Q. What joints are you talking about?

11 A. There's two joints in the low side of the curve.

12 Q. Where the 19-6 plug road is, right? The joint that you're  
13 talking about at the derail.

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. So, how would you rate the ballast section going up  
16 through that curve low and high, how would you rate the ballast  
17 section?

18 A. As far as the amount of ballast?

19 Q. Yeah. Did you think it was sufficient? Do you think it was  
20 shy on the shores? Do you think the curve ballast is sufficient?

21 A. I believe the ballast, I mean we could have probably used a  
22 little bit more shoulder, but it was -- I feel like there was  
23 sufficient ballast.

24 Q. Okay. So, prior to the tie gang going through, prior to the  
25 surfacing gang coming through, was that ballast section a little

1 bit better before they came through ripping and tearing, lifting  
2 the line? I mean, was it a little bit better, or do you think  
3 they might have used some of that ballast to put the track back in  
4 place? Could you see a difference prior to until you went through  
5 -- had you been through, and you haven't been through it since the  
6 23rd? So, you haven't seen -- you haven't looked at that since  
7 the derailment, right? You haven't been through that track. You  
8 went through it the 23rd?

9 A. Right.

10 Q. That's the last time you went through it?

11 A. That's correct.

12 Q. Okay. My mistake, all right. You said you're learning this  
13 line. Has anybody taken you by the hand going, hey man you know,  
14 I've been there, done that? I'm going to ride with you, give you  
15 a little bit of lessons with the line, maybe ride with FRA. I  
16 mean, who's helping you out through this?

17 A. My foremans have, you know, kind of helped me, and then also  
18 Greg. Greg Johnson the Track Inspector.

19 Q. So, when you rode through there the 23rd, any rough rides?  
20 Did you feel anything that was rough?

21 A. No.

22 Q. And when you got out and you looked at the joint --

23 A. I was actually driving the truck, and I just opened the door  
24 and looked down at the joints from the truck.

25 Q. Okay. So, anything out of the ordinary?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Did you see -- was there any surface deviation? Could you  
3 tell if anything was pumping?

4 A. No. It didn't like it.

5 Q. Anything like that? Joints looked good?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. All the bolts were in.

9 Q All the bolts were in? Did you notice any of the -- when you  
10 looked, did you -- and since prior to the 23rd, have you walked,  
11 foot walked that Highline area within the drama of the footprint?  
12 Have you got out and put some boots on the ground in that section?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Okay. Have you -- when you looked out that door, did you  
15 notice any I would say, movement of the track cup, you get the  
16 cupping at the end of the ties, it shows track movement, anything?

17 A. Right.

18 Q. Did you notice anything like that?

19 A. No.

20 MR. LLOYD: Okay. I'm good. Blain?

21 BY MR. LUCK:

22 Q. I know you're new to this territory, which is a bit of a  
23 disadvantage, but you've been around 16 years, so you probably  
24 know the processes of a couple of these questions. So, when  
25 there's any maintenance work in CWR, and a lot of it I'll be

1 referencing to the curve in question. They take their  
2 measurements, and what they did, that rail, took out rail  
3 whatever, and then they plug into the system.

4 A. Right.

5 Q. Do you get made aware of that? Do you get a report that gets  
6 kicked back to you? Does it generate a work order for the guys  
7 after so many days? Can you explain to me that process and your  
8 knowledge to that CWR management?

9 A. I'm not familiar with the curve stake, if that regenerates a  
10 report, I've not gotten a report, so I don't know if it does.

11 Q. Okay, next question. Do you verify match marks? Say for  
12 example, the welders were just out there, do you sometimes just  
13 stop and drop a tape to verify stuff, or a plug rail? Do you do  
14 any kind of follow up?

15 A. Not every location, but I do.

16 Q. Have you done it on your territory here since you've been  
17 here?

18 A. Yes, yes.

19 Q. And you did not do it, or you did do it?

20 A. No. No, I didn't.

21 Q. Do you know why the plug rail was put in? Was it a rail  
22 defect?

23 A. The plug rail --

24 Q. Was it a broken rail?

25 A. It was lost weld.



1 Q. That was the blowout weld that had the leaker?

2 A. Yes. Wait, the plug rail that's in the curve?

3 Q. The one that is currently, well was in the curve at the time  
4 of the accident. Why was that plug rail placed?

5 A. I'm not for sure, that's I'm guessing a rail defect, but I  
6 could get that information.

7 Q. And you said you high railed through that last Thursday?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Were you alone?

10 A. No, I was with Greg Johnson.

11 Q. Was there a sorter in place at the time you guys high railed  
12 through?

13 A. No.

14 MR. LUCK: I guess no further questions. You've only been  
15 here a couple months, so.

16 BY MR. LIGON:

17 Q. I think we're stacking questions on top of you, but I need to  
18 for my clarification, if nothing else. There were no other issues  
19 or concerns that you were made aware of out on that curve in the  
20 time that you've been here, is that correct?

21 A. That's correct.

22 MR. LIGON: Okay. I don't have anything else right now.

23 BY MR. ANDERSON:

24 Q. Jason, September 23rd, you were with your Track Inspector?

25 A. That's correct.

1 Q. And was that considered a FRA track inspection, or?

2 A. That is correct.

3 Q. Now, since we started these interviews, we've heard this talk  
4 of tier two and tier three FRA qualifications. Now is that a, how  
5 will I word this, is this -- it's not an FRA requirement be tier  
6 two, tier three, like other railroads are, they're FRA qualified  
7 or their not. So, as far as who qualifies the employees, railroad  
8 employers be tier two and tier three?

9 A. The MEC. I can't think of what their -- MEC.

10 Q. The MEC?

11 A. Yeah.

12 MR. ANDERSON: Okay, that's all I have.

13 BY MR. MORRISON:

14 Q. So, how -- were you notified the TPO at five couldn't do the  
15 surfacing on that crew -- on that curve when the final needed  
16 done?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. So, that was you that made the call to send out your  
19 surfacing crew on September 2nd?

20 A. Yes, yes.

21 Q. And after your surfacing crew worked the curve, to the best  
22 of your knowledge, do you remember if they asked you, or requested  
23 more ballast for that curve?

24 A. They did not ask, or they didn't say anything to me.

25 MR. MORRISON: Okay. That's all I have. Thank you.

1 BY MR. HAMMOND:

2 Q. Jason, several questions. Most of these are just  
3 clarifications. So, I think we've established you rode through  
4 this segment on 9/23, you were with your track inspector, correct?

5 A. That's correct.

6 Q. And as you're going through that, you're doing an evaluation  
7 of your own, correct?

8 A. That's correct.

9 Q. And in your opinion, when you looked at the ballast section  
10 through that area, was there anything that caused you concern or  
11 was it adequate in your opinion?

12 A. It was adequate in my opinion.

13 Q. Okay, thank you. Earlier, there was a question from Mr. Luck  
14 about CWR reports, and I heard you talking about curved stakes.  
15 I've like to dive into that little bit more. So, not just around  
16 curved stakes, but if one of your employees goes out and makes an  
17 adjustment in CWR, that does the ads rail, do you get notified of  
18 that?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And does it give you action that you have to take as a  
21 result?

22 A. Yes, it does.

23 Q. Up to and including protecting a condition, depending on the  
24 severity?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. But if adjustment are made that do not add rail, or I guess a  
2 better way of saying it, if an adjustment's made that maintains  
3 the neutral temperature of the rail within our standards, then  
4 would you be notified of that?

5 A. No.

6 Q. In other words, as long it's reported and the neutral  
7 temperature is in our range, nothing required from you?

8 A. That's correct.

9 Q. Okay. And then, I'd like to circle back to curved stakes.  
10 So, this is more clarification. You mentioned reports from a  
11 mobile app, so you're not necessarily getting information fed to  
12 you from a mobile app report?

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. But you do have curved stakes, and you're familiar with the  
15 curve staking process and how we monitor curves?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Thank you. Now, I like to go to the tier one, tier two, tier  
18 three qualification metric, and those are BNSF terms is that  
19 correct?

20 A. That is correct.

21 Q. All right. Now, BNSF is governed by the 213 CFR, are you  
22 familiar with the 213?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. And so, would it be fair to say that there is a level of  
25 requirement to do track maintenance in the 213?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. You have to be qualified to a certain point?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And that's mandated by the Federal Railroad Administration.

5 A. That's correct.

6 Q. And then, would you say that tier one and tier two represent  
7 additional training beyond what's required in that?

8 A. That is correct.

9 Q. Okay. And you are tier three trained?

10 A. I am tier three.

11 Q. Thank you, sir. I have another note, but I can't read my  
12 handwriting.

13 MR. HAMMOND: That'll be all for now.

14 BY MR. NAGEL:

15 Q. I do have a question that came up while we were talking. Was  
16 there any, in the last five days leading up to the derailment, was  
17 there any special inspections that you had your inspector send  
18 out, or had to do, leading up the time of the incident?

19 A. No. No special inspection.

20 BY MR. LUCK:

21 Q. Is part of your job here, are you required to do operations  
22 test on your folks?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Have you performed any operation tests on your folks in the  
25 time that you've been here?

- 1 A. Yes, I have.
- 2 Q. Have you performed one on, or who have you performed on?
- 3 Have you done a number of them, or enough that you can summarize
- 4 it here for us, or?
- 5 A. I don't have an exact number, but I have done operations
- 6 tests since I've been on the job.
- 7 Q. Have you operations tested your Track Inspector?
- 8 A. Yes.
- 9 Q. Were there any failures, or?
- 10 A. No, no failures.
- 11 Q. Have you done your Thermite Welders? The ones that have
- 12 specifically been doing recent work in that curve?
- 13 A. No.
- 14 Q. Okay. And then, so the MEC certifies you for your tier three
- 15 qualification?
- 16 A. That's correct.
- 17 Q. And that's -- does it sound accurate if I say it's the
- 18 Manager of Engineer Certification?
- 19 A. That's correct.
- 20 Q. When were you tier three qualified? Was it -- how many years
- 21 back, however you say?
- 22 A. I'm not for sure what year that they, we got that --
- 23 Q. Approximation, five years? Ten years?
- 24 A. Let's see, I think five years.
- 25 Q. Have you been ops tested, that you know of?

1 A. I don't have any idea. I mean, in my career?

2 Q. Has anybody ever done an operations test on you?

3 A. In my career, yes.

4 Q. Have you ever had a failure?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Could you provide to us what the failure was for?

7 A. Wearing a wedding ring.

8 Mr. LUCK: No more questions.

9 BY MR. RINGELMAN:

10 Q. Do you know, when you do operations testing, is there  
11 somewhere that goes in a notebook, or a database, or?

12 A. It goes in a database.

13 Q. So, the operations testing that you performed, we can provide  
14 to NTSB, FRA, or they might already have that. Is that a fair  
15 assessment?

16 A. That is correct. A fair assessment.

17 Q. How about training, whether you remember which day you were  
18 tier three certified, is there a record of that that could be  
19 provided?

20 A. There is a record.

21 Q. Thank you very much.

22 A. Okay.

23 BY MR. JENNER:

24 Q. On September 23rd, you discussed you were on a high rail  
25 doing an inspection. Are there occasions where inspectors will

1 walk the track rather than being on a high rail?

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Okay. When -- can you walk me through when the decision is  
4 made for a high rail versus walking?

5 A. If you see something that you need to get out and look at. A  
6 lot of times, we walk switches, you know, frogs and switch points,  
7 make sure there's nothing, you know. Just things that need an  
8 extra eye on them that you can't see from inside the cabin.

9 Q. Okay. So, if I understand it, it's you will walk it only if  
10 something gets your attention while you're on the high rail?

11 A. That's correct.

12 Q. Okay. In your experience, are curves like this more  
13 susceptible to things that would prompt you to get out and walk?  
14 If that question makes sense at all. Let me rephrase it. Do you  
15 find more problems around curves than in tangent track?

16 A. I mean, I wouldn't say that there's more problems that you  
17 find in curves, it's probably just, you know, average across the  
18 whole thing, you know. Nothing -- it just depends.

19 MR. JENNER: Very good. Thank you.

20 BY MR. LLOYD:

21 Q. Special inspections, talk to about that. What does that mean  
22 to me? Why would we do a special inspection? What initiates  
23 that?

24 A. Temperature could, rain, maybe tonnage, you know, if you have  
25 a lot of per say, tonnage across something. You mean, just I



1 don't know, other than like weather, weather related. You know, a  
2 special inspection, just.

3 Q. So, like today it's I think 70, whatever, a special  
4 inspection today because of the weather?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Okay. So, what would initiate weather? What temperature  
7 would they look at when they go, I've got to put my troops out for  
8 special inspection?

9 A. We have engineering instructions that we go by for that.

10 Q. You know what that temperature is when you've got to start  
11 your heat inspections?

12 A. It's the engineering instructions.

13 Q. So, you don't know off hand what that --

14 A. Not what that temperature is. Yeah.

15 Q. You said you've been here since July, performed a number of  
16 inspections, I'm sure?

17 A. Heat inspections?

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. Are these usually high rail? Is there special curves, you  
21 know, where you maybe want to get out and walk by foot, where  
22 there's problem areas? You may have found some areas, you just  
23 keep an eye on, when you might want to get off and see what's  
24 going on here, is that -- have you done that?

25 A. I have not.

- 1 Q. Okay. Have you performed special inspections yourself?
- 2 A. Not on the Highline.
- 3 Q. You have or have not?
- 4 A. Not on the Highline.
- 5 Q. Okay, you have not since July when you took over?
- 6 A. Yeah.
- 7 Q. Your inspectors have?
- 8 A. Yes.
- 9 Q. Is there a report that they fill out, or is there a report  
10 that goes on a database that, hey I did a special inspection due  
11 to heat? I performed the inspection from point A to point B?
- 12 A. Yes.
- 13 Q. Is there a form they complete?
- 14 A. Yes, yes.
- 15 Q. Do you get that?
- 16 A. It's in the inspection report about inspections.
- 17 Q. Okay. So, that's something we would be able to get, right  
18 Ryan, Matt? Okay. And the engineering instruction state when  
19 that special instruction will be initiated.
- 20 A. The temperature threshold.
- 21 Q. All right. Let's talk track geometry, car inspections. I  
22 know you've been on this job since July. You've taken over this  
23 track, but the track jumper car goes through, do you get on there  
24 and ride to see what that track jumper car is picking up? Able to  
25 the view the strip charts and all that?

- 1 A. There's been one, we ride man cars, and there has been one  
2 manned car since I've been here.
- 3 Q. Okay. Have you been on it?
- 4 A. Yes.
- 5 Q. When was that? Would there be a report function for that?
- 6 A. Yeah.
- 7 Q. Okay. Did it go through the derailment footprint?
- 8 A. Yes.
- 9 Q. Do you remember anything off hand that would key in, going  
10 hey, you know, we got this hit, or hey we might want to back up  
11 and look at this? Do you remember anything?
- 12 A. Not off the top of my head. The report would show.
- 13 Q. Yeah, you think -- so it's been since July -- between July  
14 and now that you've rode that car. Do you remember how many times  
15 that car has been through that segment?
- 16 A. Not off the top of my head.
- 17 Q. Okay. So, sometimes that car can go through, and you're out  
18 high railing someone else when that car would go through, but you  
19 would get those reports of what this car picked up?
- 20 A. Yeah.
- 21 Q. Okay. Since the 23rd, how many times do you think since July  
22 -- I know you only go to July -- that you've high railed through  
23 this area, you did an inspection?
- 24 A. Three.
- 25 Q. Three?

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Okay, so since the day you've taken over this line, up to  
3 today, three times. All high rail, no nothing boots on the  
4 ground? What about interlocking, boots on the ground in the  
5 interlocking of the CP?

6 A. Not for sure about if it was that one, I mean we did walk  
7 some, but yeah.

8 MR. LLOYD: Okay, okay. Good. Blain?

9 BY MR. LUCK:

10 Q. I'm going to make this short and sweet and not bad, I  
11 promise. Are you CWR qualified?

12 A. I am.

13 Q. When were you -- when was the last CWR training you went  
14 through?

15 A. This year. I don't know the exact day, but we can get that  
16 information.

17 Q. Who gave you the training?

18 A. ADMP. Dan Townsend.

19 Q. Dan Townsend?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. And is your training, that's called the Track stability  
22 training? Is that what's that called?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. And you've -- are you aware of all your guys being trained,  
25 or do you know of any of your direct reports that are not trained?

1 A. I would have to look that information up.

2 MR. LUCK: And that would be another report we would like, is  
3 the CWR qualified people for the subdivision, if that's all right.

4 BY MR. LIGON:

5 Q. Jason, in BNSF, who all is able to be tier one, tier two,  
6 tier three qualified? Can other employees be -- have that  
7 qualification even if their jobs don't require it?

8 A. If they would like to be.

9 Q. Okay. So, for instance, a truck driver, a section truck  
10 driver or something, could have that qualification, could have  
11 that ranking, or is there anyone, or anybody that you -- that  
12 would have been through there for any other reason, not inspecting  
13 necessarily, but doing maintenance work on one end or the other  
14 that may have high railed through, or been able to do an  
15 inspection that would be able to provide any information, in  
16 between when you were last over it and the current time, that  
17 you're aware of?

18 A. None that I'm aware of.

19 Q. So, no other activities out there that you're aware of by any  
20 of the --

21 A. Not that I'm aware of.

22 MR. LUCK: Okay, I don't have any other questions.

23 BY MR. ANDERSON:

24 Q. Walking -- your being a BNSF EI or BNSF engineering  
25 instructions, is there anything in there that mentions walking

1 your curve?

2 A. Yes, they have to be walked, annually I believe, but I'd have  
3 to refer to that.

4 MR. ANDERSON: That was my next question. Okay. That's all  
5 I have for right now.

6 BY MR. MORRISON:

7 Q. Jason, just to make sure I can understand what your world  
8 looks like, can you kind of run through how big a responsibility  
9 it is, and roughly how many crews you have, and like where the  
10 derailment is in your areas, in the middle, or one of the ends?

11 A. Okay. So, my territory goes from 10-91.8 to 10-88.8 on the  
12 Highline, and I also have milepost 67 to milepost 99 out of Great  
13 Falls, and all of the Sweet Grass sub.

14 Q. How big is the Sweet Grass sub?

15 MR. LLOYD: Sweet Grass is between 67 and 99, that's all the  
16 Black Falls. Sweet Grass was at a different mile marker.

17 MR. CALLEN: Sweet Grass goes from 102 to 136ish, 38, to the  
18 border.

19 BY MR. MORRISON:

20 Q. Thank you.

21 A. And I have a section in Cutbank, a section in Shelby, and  
22 section in Chester. And the derailment was closer to the section  
23 at Chester.

24 MR. MORRISON: Okay. That's all I have.

25 BY MR. HAMMOND:

1 Q. Jason, I'll start with the question about your territory in  
2 the Highline. I may have misheard you, but I thought what I heard  
3 you say was 10-91 to 10-88? I think there's maybe an 11 in there  
4 somewhere. Can you help me understand what the milepost range on  
5 the Highline sub is?

6 A. Milepost range on the Highline sub is 10-91.8 to 9-88.8.

7 Q. Thank you for that. All right, well I deciphered the note I  
8 couldn't read earlier, and it's around the surfacing, with the tie  
9 gang and the local division crew at the derailment location. So,  
10 to your knowledge, did the tie gang have a surfacing crew that  
11 surfaced through this area?

12 A. Yes. They did the night they put ties in.

13 Q. And why did you have your crew, your local crew, follow up  
14 behind them?

15 A. To finalize the curve.

16 Q. So, in your opinion, would that be just a matter of routine  
17 maintenance follow up versus an issue?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. You deal with maintenance follow up items frequently every  
20 day, right?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. So, would you classify this as one of those items that you  
23 have to keep track of?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Okay. Special inspections, you referenced the EI. Would the

1 EI give a specific heat threshold for the Highline sub, or does it  
2 give discretion to management on the division?

3 A. To the Highline.

4 Q. Does the EI tell you when the Highline sub needs to have a  
5 heat inspection done, or does it give guidance for providing that  
6 temperature?

7 A. Repeat that one more time?

8 Q. I'll ask it a different way. If we open up the EI, and we  
9 looked in our requirement for a heat threshold, would it give us a  
10 temperature that the Highline has to have a heat patrol done, or  
11 does it say that the division engineer and the general director  
12 will set a threshold for that?

13 A. The divisions you're in, the manage will set the threshold.

14 Q. Thank you.

15 A. All right.

16 Q. Next question, let switch to geometry cars. So, you  
17 mentioned that you were on a manned geometry car one time, and you  
18 rode across your territory, is that correct?

19 A. That's correct.

20 Q. And we have -- is there other types of geometry car  
21 platforms?

22 A. Yes, where they have unmanned geo car platforms as well.

23 Q. And I know there's records of that, so I'm not asking you to  
24 tell me a specific amount of times that's come across because we  
25 can look that up, but how often, just generally, do you typically



1 see that unmanned come through?

2 A. Usually, every week or two.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Quite frequently.

5 Q. And if it has an exception, something that requires a slow  
6 order or immediate inspection, do you get notified of that?

7 A. I do.

8 Q. Okay. Now, my last question for now is around the high  
9 railing. So, earlier I heard you say that you've high railed  
10 three times. My question is, is when you say three, is that three  
11 times you have completely traversed your territory in its'  
12 entirety?

13 A. That's correct.

14 Q. Have you high railed more than three times on your territory  
15 since you've been here?

16 A. Yes, parts.

17 Q. Probably, would it be fair to say too many to count?

18 A. Right.

19 Q. But the three is in reference to a full --

20 A. Full inspection, yeah.

21 MR. HAMMOND: Okay, thank you. No further questions.

22 MR. NAGEL: I have no further questions at this time.

23 MR. RINGELMAN: No further questions.

24 BY MR. LLOYD:

25 Q. I think about a buck 70 of track miles you have. Right? Do

1 you have an assistant?

2 A. No.

3 Q. It's just you by yourself? How many foremen do you have  
4 total, to help you with about a buck 70 worth of track?

5 A. How many foremen?

6 Q. Yeah. How many -- what's your force at count that's helping  
7 you keep your line maintained?

8 A. 26.

9 Q. So, 26 people, buck 70 track, what's that, a couple loading  
10 gangs, a section foreman, how is it broken down?

11 A. I have two welding gangs, three sections, two surfacing  
12 gangs, three track inspectors.

13 Q. How much are your track inspectors probably looking at in a  
14 day? How many miles do think they're track traveling?

15 A. They probably all have about 50 miles each that they're  
16 responsible for.

17 Q. So, they're high railing about 50 miles a day? So, this  
18 track here that we have that's inspected by the Inspector, what's  
19 the requirements that he's hitting his track on inspection?

20 A. Twice weekly.

21 Q. He's in twice weekly? Like one day on a roller or something,  
22 so he's hitting it on a Monday and coming back whenever, he's  
23 hitting it twice weekly?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Okay, okay. Pretty with normal Track Inspector on that, is

1 that his normal duties? So, you've got a Track Inspector that's  
2 just assigned to hat Highline alone?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. So, that's his segment? Does he have any other segment to  
5 do?

6 A. No.

7 Q. No? So, full boat, you've got a full gang. All your  
8 inspectors are full? You don't have any vacancies or anything  
9 like that, or?

10 A. Not right now.

11 Q. Not right now? Good then. I think that's a lot, 50 miles.  
12 What can I achieve as a Track Inspector that's sort of, going out  
13 to sign the line on, I guarantee the safe passage of trains on  
14 this railroad? 50 miles in a truck. I mean, I'm asking how  
15 sufficient is an inspection of 50 miles? Are you seeing  
16 everything you need to see? Are you seeing a cupping in the ties,  
17 are you seeing the movement swings? Let me ask you that?

18 A. I believe that's sufficient

19 BY MR. LUCK:

20 Q. One last final. You've been across your territory. Do you  
21 know roughly how many greasers you have on your territory?

22 MR. LLOYD: How many what, Blain?

23 BY MR. LUCK:

24 Q. Greasers, rail greasers. In track rail greasers.

25 A. Not without looking at the track chart and counting them.

1 Q. Does your Track Inspector, or is your truck equipped with  
2 greasers?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Neither one?

5 A. No, neither.

6 Q. Did you happen to notice or take any exception to, you know,  
7 the curve at 10-14, as to what the rail wear currently is?

8 A. No.

9 Q. So, do you know if there's a greaser in close proximity to  
10 that curve or not?

11 A. Not sure.

12 MR. LUCK: Okay, no further questions.

13 BY MR. LIGON:

14 Q. Kind of bouncing off of a question that was asked previously.  
15 Since you have been here, have your Track Inspectors covered more  
16 than an assigned territory? Is that common? Does it happen?

17 A. It happens from time to time, yeah.

18 Q. Okay. Since you've been here, has there been any prolonged  
19 vacancies. I mean, I understand there's sometimes during bid  
20 cycles there are vacancies. Has there been any prolonged in the  
21 time that you've been here?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Is this one of the territories that maybe the Track Inspector  
24 goes somewhere else, or you had to use another Track Inspector for  
25 this assigned territory? And what is the assigned territory for

1 this area? What is the Track Inspector that's assigned there,  
2 what's his duties? His area that is assigned, his or hers.

3 A. Off the top of my head, I can't give you an exact milepost  
4 where they split at.

5 Q. Roughly? Does he go down on -- you said you had Great Falls  
6 sub, Sweet Grass sub, do they do any inspection there typically,  
7 when they're assigned over here?

8 A. As long as I don't have a vacancy over there. I believe that  
9 they split at Devon, which is I think that's where the Track  
10 Inspector splits.

11 Q. East of Shelby.

12 A. East of Shelby, yes.

13 MR. LIGON: That's all I have right now.

14 MR. MORRISON: I don't have any questions.

15 BY MR. HAMMOND:

16 Q. Do you have a base for greasers?

17 A. Yes, there is.

18 Q. Rail lubricators?

19 A. There is.

20 Q. Thank you.

21 MR. HAMMOND: No further questions.

22 MR. NAGEL: No further questions.

23 BY MR. RINGELMAN:

24 Q. Just to clarify and so I understand. We were talking about  
25 rail wear specific to that curve, and you said no, you didn't

1 recognize it. You didn't recognize or take an exception, is that  
2 fair?

3 A. That's correct.

4 Q. If there were an exception, or your track inspector saw  
5 something, would that be something that you all would talk about?

6 A. That is correct.

7 Q. Okay. I just wanted to -- no, I didn't know this rail wear  
8 was, you didn't take exception to what you saw?

9 A. And also, the geometry car takes measures of the rail.

10 MR. RINGELMAN: Very good, thank you.

11 BY MR. JENNER:

12 Q. Just one question. When you were on the high rail  
13 inspecting, what's the average speed that you traveled?

14 A. It just depends on the location.

15 Q. Okay, what would be the slowest speed, and what would be the  
16 highest speed?

17 A. The slowest speed would be zero, and you can go up to 45, but  
18 that's usually uncommon. Usually it's, you know, in the 10, 15,  
19 25 mile an hour range, you know, so you don't -- you know,  
20 whatever you're comfortable with looking at the track.

21 Q. Okay. So, what would determine how fast you go or how slow  
22 you go?

23 A. Just depending on what you need to look at.

24 Q. Okay. Can you elaborate on that? Like if you need to look  
25 at something, then you go slow, and you need to look at something

1 else then you go fast? What do you need to look at that  
2 determines how fast or slow that you go?

3 A. It just depends, you know, I mean like, if you're in tangent,  
4 you, you know, sometimes can go a little bit faster because, you  
5 know, you're not going around a curve. I mean, it just you know,  
6 it depends on the Inspector, and you know. I always like to go  
7 pretty slow just so I can look at everything.

8 Q. Sure. And then, around a curve like where the incident  
9 occurred, how fast might you go?

10 A. It just depends. I mean, probably 20.

11 Q. So, 20?

12 A. Yeah, 15-20.

13 MR. JENNER: Very good. Thank you.

14 MR. LUCK: I keep saying it's final, final, it's just like  
15 drinking beer. It's final, final, right?

16 MR. LLOYD: Yeah, just one more, right?

17 BY MR. LLOYD:

18 Q. Do you have or know if you have any out of face rail projects  
19 planned?

20 A. Out of face rail for this year?

21 Q. Well, for this year or even looking ahead next year or the  
22 following year. I mean, anything in the immediate future, you  
23 know you're getting to rail?

24 A. No, no. Not in the immediate future.

25 Q. Okay. So, and who determines that? Is that the -- who

1 determines that? Let me ask you that. Would it be an MRP or a  
2 division engineer? Who determines when you get your rail?

3 A. I believe it's based off of data from the geometry car.

4 Q. Service failures?

5 A. Yeah, service failures or --

6 Q. A bunch of car (indiscernible)? Do you have any grinding  
7 trains scheduled that you know of?

8 A. There has been a grinding train through since I've been here.

9 Q. In the last two months, there's been --

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. Did they do any grinding on that curve that you are aware of?

12 A. Not for sure.

13 MR. LUCK: Okay. No further questions.

14 BY MR. LIGON:

15 Q. Earlier in the questioning was, is there a requirement for  
16 curve inspection, I think reference to the engineering  
17 instructions that BNSF has. Are you aware of when the last  
18 inspection occurred on that curve?

19 A. I am not.

20 Q. And that's probably in a database.

21 A. That is, yeah.

22 Q. Okay. And could you describe what there -- is there any  
23 specific things that are requirements during that inspection that  
24 they're looking for, or is it a generalized inspection required on  
25 foot? Is there --



1 A. It's required on foot.

2 Q. It is required on foot? And any specific?

3 A. Checking for broken sleuth spikes, checking anchors, checking  
4 rail movement, checking rail wear, checking curve stakes,  
5 ballasts.

6 Q Ballasts.

7 A. Yeah. Just the whole, you know, just the whole everything  
8 has to -- on foot.

9 Q. Is that reported in your track inspection reporting system,  
10 or is that --

11 A. Yes.

12 MR. LIGON: Okay. I have no further questions.

13 BY MR. ANDERSON:

14 Q. Referring to that BNSF EI or the BNSF engineering  
15 instructions, does it say in there that after any track renewal  
16 such as ties, surfacing, that a qualified employee will walk the  
17 tracks, or inspect the work that was performed?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Is he required to protect or report any deviations that  
20 don't meet your standards, or the FRA standards?

21 A. Yes, yes.

22 MR. ANDERSON: Okay, I have no further questions there.

23 BY MR. HAMMOND:

24 Q. Jason, are you aware of a group in Fort Worth that manages  
25 the rail grinding program?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Do you believe there's a database that can keep track of  
3 what's been ground?

4 A. Yes.

5 MR. HAMMOND: No further questions.

6 BY MR. LLOYD:

7 Q. When you do an inspection, do you do a report yourself?

8 A. The Track Inspector does.

9 Q. What about when you go out and you're patrolling, do you do a  
10 report?

11 A. No.

12 Q. So, you just go out, and everything's sort of up here, and  
13 you go back and remember, go man, I've got to get some people out  
14 here? How do you remember where you have --

15 A. Well, I'm not doing an FRA inspection, I'm just more of  
16 trying to put a work plan together for future projects.

17 Q. Is it a report that you fill out for each time you put the  
18 high rail down, and you're inspecting track, is there a report  
19 that you do that goes into a database that may not FRA required,  
20 but that's how you're keeping track of this is what I found, man.  
21 I had to open my door up to look at some things, do you keep track  
22 of that?

23 A. No.

24 Q. So, you're not writing down, you're not putting anything in  
25 the computer or anything like that?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Okay. What initiated the tie work? Did you have anything to  
3 do with the initiation of the tie work? Did you say hey man,  
4 we've got some bad ties out here, or was that probably planned  
5 prior to you even taking this over?

6 A. That was prior, planned prior to me taking over. We have a  
7 tie program that --

8 Q. You knew they were coming in?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Oh yeah?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. You walked it before and say, yeah it's -- how was the ties  
13 prior to them going through and replacing some stuff? How did the  
14 ties look?

15 A. I'm not sure.

16 Q. Not sure? Do you ever do any -- since you're taking care of  
17 this line, have you done any inspections with FRA?

18 A. No.

19 Q. So, you haven't done any inspections with FRA? All right.  
20 I'm good, I'm done. Blain? You don't want to skip and poke  
21 around at something again?

22 MR. LUCK: No. That's my final, final.

23 MR. LLOYD: Okay.

24 MR. LLOYD: Todd?

25 MR. ANDERSON: No, I think I'm good, Jason. Thank you.

1 MR. LLOYD: Roy?

2 BY MR. HAMMOND:

3 Q. I have a couple, Jason. So, earlier when you said you rode  
4 on the 23rd.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. There was mention that that was an FRA inspection. I'd like  
7 clarification. Were you referring to the inspector you were with  
8 that was doing the FRA inspection?

9 A. Yes, yeah. The inspector did the FRA inspection.

10 Q. And you were riding with that inspector?

11 A. Yeah, I was with him.

12 Q. And is there a requirement for you to do a track inspector  
13 evaluation?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Do you enter those?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. So, is there a record of your track inspector evaluation?

18 A. There should be, yeah.

19 Q. And if you're unable to do a certain amount, is there a  
20 requirement for riding over your territory in lieu of a track  
21 inspector evaluation?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And is there a record of those when that happens?

24 A. Yes.

25 MR. HAMMOND: That's all I have.

1 MR. LLOYD: I'm good. Aaron? What you got? Come on.

2 MR. RATLEDGE: It's all good.

3 MR. LLOYD: All right then. We went around the horn. That's  
4 it, right? One, two, three. We're off the record.

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 Jason Callen

ACCIDENT NO.:                RRD21MR017

PLACE:                         Via Telephone

DATE:                         September 28, 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.

\_\_\_\_\_

Kyrsten Henrichs  
Transcriber