



**Survival Factors Attachment-
Passenger Interviews**

Pala Mesa, California

HWY20FH003

(164 pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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CRASH OF A MEDIUM-SIZED BUS
NEAR PALA MESA, CALIFORNIA,
ON FEBRUARY 22, 2020

Accident No.: HWY20FH003

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Interview of: BENJAMIN BAZAN
Passenger

Oceanside area of California

Tuesday,
February 25, 2020

APPEARANCES:

BEREK DOWNING, Investigator
California Highway Patrol

RENE SANTIAGO, Interpreter
California Highway Patrol

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

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Interview of Benjamin Bazan:

By Mr. Downing

4

By Ms. Harley

10

I N T E R V I E W

(10:30 a.m.)

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3 MR. DOWNING: My name is Berek Downing. I'm an officer with
4 the California Highway Patrol, on the border MAIT team. And I'm
5 here with Rene Santiago and Sheryl Harley from NTSB. Rene
6 Santiago is a certified bilingual interpreter with the California
7 Highway Patrol. And I'm also here with Mr. Benjamin Bazan.

8 And if each of you could just introduce yourselves.

9 MR. BAZAN: Si, mi nombre es Benjamin Calderon Bazan.

10 MS. SANTIAGO: My name is Rene Santiago. I'm here to -- I
11 work for the California Highway Patrol, and I'm bilingual
12 certified.

13 (Whereupon, Officer Rene Santiago translated the proceedings
14 in the Spanish language for Mr. Bazan.)

15 MS. HARLEY: And for the record, I'm Sheryl Harley. I'm an
16 investigator with the NTSB. And I would also like to just go
17 ahead and give him my card.

INTERVIEW OF BENJAMIN BAZAN

18
19 BY MR. DOWNING:

20 Q. So what I would like you to do first, before I ask any
21 specific questions, is just kind of tell me the sequence of events
22 of what happened, and kind of make them shorter sentences so Rene
23 can translate, and we can take some notes. And then I will ask a
24 series of questions afterward.

25 A. So it started out as a regular day. It was raining, of

1 course. Everything was fine. They were on the 15 Southbound. He
2 did notice that the bus did go to the right -- or to the left, I'm
3 sorry, into the -- by the center median. Then it went over across
4 the lanes back to the right. Then it went back over to the center
5 median again. And when it went back to the right, that's when it
6 flipped. It started flipping over.

7 He said as soon as it happened, all he could do was just grab
8 a seat and get himself up and try to get out as soon as he could.
9 And he said that the bus didn't have any seatbelts for passengers.
10 Yeah, there was no -- he didn't notice any seatbelts.

11 Q. Have you used this bus before or the company before?

12 A. He said all the time. He's been traveling with that bus
13 company for 20 years, every now and then, but through the 20
14 years.

15 Q. Okay. Did you know the driver?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Had you ever seen that driver before?

18 A. He has before, and he's traveled with him before. Everything
19 was fine, yeah.

20 Q. And you said the times you've ridden with that driver he was
21 an okay driver at those times?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. I know you said you've been using the company on and off for
24 about 20 years. About how many times a year would you say you
25 used that bus company?

1 A. At least one time a year. It's at the end of the year; he'll
2 go down to Mexico.

3 Q. How would you describe the driver's driving ability that day?
4 How well did he drive?

5 A. He thinks that day that the bus was going a little too fast
6 for the weather conditions. He had to be at least going, he said
7 between 50 to 80 miles per hour.

8 Q. And is that because it was actively raining during that time?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Was he driving, like, was he driving fast in your opinion
11 during the whole trip or was it just prior to the collision?

12 A. He says he's -- just noticed that he was driving regular.
13 Not that he was speeding or anything. He didn't notice anything
14 out of the ordinary.

15 Q. What led you to think that he was driving too fast in the
16 rain?

17 A. Because it was wet out.

18 Q. It was wet. Did you notice anything about his driving just
19 prior to him going to the left and right and then rolling over?

20 A. That's the only thing that he noticed is that -- when it
21 started veering off to the left into the center median. He thinks
22 that, when he started to zig-zag, that's when he started losing
23 control of the vehicle in the rain.

24 Q. Did you have any -- did you talk to any other passengers
25 about the collision afterward?

1 A. No. He didn't speak with anybody after, not any other
2 passengers, nothing.

3 Q. Did you overhear -- did you hear any other passengers talking
4 about the crash?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Earlier you mentioned that you did not notice any seatbelts
7 in the vehicle. Is that true to the best of your knowledge?

8 A. No. He didn't see any seatbelts.

9 Q. Did the driver say anything about the use of seatbelts or any
10 sort of safety devices prior to leaving your -- to leaving when
11 you got picked up?

12 A. No. He didn't say anything prior to leaving or when he got
13 picked up. No mention of seatbelts or safety from the driver.

14 Q. Did you hear anybody else, any other passengers talking about
15 the driving, behavior of the driver?

16 INTERPRETER: No.

17 MR. DOWNING: What did he say?

18 INTERPRETER: "To tell the truth, no, I haven't heard
19 anything."

20 BY MR. DOWNING:

21 Q. When the collision started, when you started rolling over,
22 you said you grabbed onto a seat?

23 A. So he clutched the front seat and put his feet underneath it
24 so he wouldn't be turning.

25 Q. How did you get out of the bus after the crash?

1 A. There was a window that was broken. That's where he exited.

2 Q. So you stayed in the vehicle during the crash?

3 A. Yeah, he wasn't -- yeah, he stayed inside.

4 Q. Were you sitting on the left side or the right side of the
5 bus?

6 A. He was on the left-hand side if you're boarding the bus
7 looking in. So he was on the left-hand side. So for the driver
8 would be the right side?

9 MS. HARLEY: Was he on the same side as the driver or the
10 opposite?

11 (Simultaneous comments)

12 INTERPRETER: He's -- the passenger side.

13 BY MR. DOWNING:

14 Q. Were you sitting in the aisle seat or up against the window?

15 A. Where the window seat is.

16 Q. Was anyone sitting next to you?

17 A. Yes, there was.

18 Q. Do you know if it was a man or a woman?

19 A. It was a man, but he doesn't know the name of him -- doesn't
20 know his name or who he is.

21 Q. Would he be able to describe him a little bit?

22 A. He doesn't remember what he looked like.

23 Q. Okay. What injuries did you receive from the crash?

24 A. Back here. He said this half right here of his head up to
25 where his eye is, he was bruised, and then he's got a bruise on

1 his back -- lower right back. He was really swollen from the top
2 of his head over to the left side of his face.

3 Q. Do you know what your face or back may have hit?

4 A. So there was, like, a little bit of carry-on stuff. He had,
5 like, a little bag, but he doesn't really know what he hit his
6 head on.

7 Q. It's understandable. Probably be pretty hard to remember.

8 INTERPRETER: I'm thinking something projectile.

9 BY MR. DOWNING:

10 Q. Was he sitting towards the front of the bus, the middle of
11 the bus, or the back of the bus?

12 A. In the middle.

13 Q. Does he know about how many seats or rows back he was?

14 A. He doesn't remember, but he knows it was, like, right in the
15 middle of the bus.

16 Q. So he had a man sitting next to him?

17 INTERPRETER: Um-hmm.

18 BY MR. DOWNING:

19 Q. Do you know who was sitting in front of you?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Not if they're a man or a woman or --

22 A. He doesn't know.

23 Q. What about behind you, sir?

24 A. He said it was a mixture of many, but he doesn't know exactly
25 who was behind him.

1 Q. Okay. Where did you first get onto the bus?

2 A. In El Monte.

3 Q. Did you help any other passengers get off the bus?

4 A. No. He didn't know what to do after he crawled out.

5 Q. That's perfectly normal too. This might be my last question.

6 What do you believe was the cause of the crash?

7 A. He thinks it was because it was wet weather.

8 Q. And the speed of the bus or just the weather?

9 A. He thinks the speed that he was going could have possibly
10 contributed to it overturning.

11 Q. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the
12 crash?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Have you heard about it in the news? Have you read about it
15 in the news?

16 A. He did when he got home after the accident, after he came
17 home from the hospital, but it was pretty basic, you know, crash
18 happened on the 15 with a bus, but no details or anything.

19 MR. DOWNING: Mrs. Harley from NTSB, do you have any
20 questions?

21 MS. HARLEY: Sure. Just a couple.

22 BY MS. HARLEY:

23 Q. Before this trip, when was the last time that you rode with
24 this carrier, and where were you heading to?

25 A. The 6th of January he was coming back from Mexico. So that

1 was the last time. Yeah. So on January 6, 2020, was the last
2 time he had rode with that company, but he was coming back from
3 Mexico.

4 Q. Where in Mexico did he board the bus?

5 A. San Ysidro.

6 MR. DOWNING: So he crossed the border into San Ysidro and
7 gets on the bus.

8 MS. HARLEY: Then gets on the bus, okay.

9 INTERPRETER: Yes.

10 BY MS. HARLEY:

11 Q. So the bus doesn't go into Mexico. He meets the bus in the
12 United States?

13 A. No. It does not.

14 Q. Okay. Did he notice whether or not there was a rear door in
15 the --

16 A. No.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Yeah. The only exit and entry was when you get on the bus.

19 Q. Okay. Where do the passengers put their luggage when they
20 come on the bus?

21 A. (Untranslated).

22 MR. DOWNING: Storage containers in the bottom?

23 INTERPRETER: Yeah. He said some of them have the ones where
24 it's the underneath on the side of the bus, and then he said in
25 the back. I don't know if that's the back outside, like, the

1 outside storage area for the side of the bus.

2 BY MS. HARLEY:

3 Q. Or is it back on the inside of the bus?

4 A. It's inside.

5 Q. It's inside. Okay. All right. Okay. And what time did he
6 board the bus in El Monte?

7 A. 8:00 a.m.

8 Q. Okay. And he said that he had some kind of carry-on with
9 him?

10 A. Yes, he did.

11 Q. Okay. And where was that being stored prior to the crash?

12 A. He had it in his lap. Oh, it only had a jacket in it.

13 Q. Oh.

14 A. Like a sweater.

15 Q. Great. Prior to the crash, did he have a chance to look at
16 the driver?

17 A. No. He said he was relaxing. He had just woken up, and he
18 was on the bus, and he was just kind of taking it easy, but kind
19 of in his own world.

20 Q. So when the bus started to swerve, he couldn't tell whether
21 the driver was upright, paying attention, or if the driver had
22 maybe fallen asleep?

23 A. Yeah, he didn't -- he said at that moment, he was kind of
24 more concerned, oh, my God, what's going to happen. So he kind of
25 braced himself.

1 Q. Okay. When he boarded the bus, was there a child on the bus?

2 Did he see the child on the bus?

3 A. He said he didn't recognize a child. He doesn't pay
4 attention. Usually when he gets on the bus he gets on and takes a
5 seat. But no.

6 Q. When he boarded the bus, was the bus -- how full was the bus?

7 A. No. When he got on the bus there was hardly any passengers
8 on, but they were making their way on -- making stops and picking
9 people up.

10 Q. How many stops does the bus actually --

11 A. Four to five stops.

12 Q. Four to five?

13 INTERPRETER: Um-hmm.

14 BY MS. HARLEY:

15 Q. And between the time he boarded and the time of the crash,
16 how many stops did the bus make?

17 A. Three times.

18 Q. Okay. I think we already talked about that. He said he was
19 actually sitting next to a gentleman. Does he know what happened
20 to that gentleman after the crash?

21 A. No, he doesn't. He didn't see him again after that.

22 Q. Okay. So when he climbed out of the broken window, the bus
23 was on its side, is that correct?

24 A. It was actually overturned. So the wheels were up --

25 Q. The wheels were up?

1 INTERPRETER: Yeah.

2 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

3 BY MS. HARLEY:

4 Q. And when he climbed out of the bus, where did he eventually,
5 where did he eventually stand? Once he got out of the bus, where
6 did he go?

7 A. He said once he got out he went towards fire fighting
8 personnel.

9 INTERPRETER: He said he went up towards the personnel. I
10 don't know if they were down an embankment or not.

11 MR. DOWNING: Yeah, they were. That's why he went up.

12 BY MS. HARLEY:

13 Q. So the fire department was there when he got out of the bus?

14 A. Yeah. Right then and there. They had just arrived when he
15 was climbing out.

16 Q. Okay. Did you see the driver afterwards?

17 A. No.

18 MS. HARLEY: Okay. I think that's everything I needed.

19 MR. DOWNING: Yes. I don't have any further questions
20 either, sir. We may ask to speak to you again in the future. If
21 that is the case, are we able to do that as well?

22 INTERPRETER: He lives in Duarte. So I mean, if you were to
23 call on him -- he said he'd be glad to do over the phone because
24 he doesn't have transportation down here.

25 MR. DOWNING: Okay. Perfect. Do you have the more current

1 telephone number? I think the one you have is -- what's your
2 current telephone number or a good contact number?

3 INTERPRETER: He said his phone is here.

4 MR. DOWNING: I figured it might be because I tried calling
5 earlier.

6 INTERPRETER: Yeah. So they said that he could pick up the
7 phone.

8 MR. DOWNING: Yeah. We'll get Officer Alvarado.

9 INTERPRETER: When he gets his phone he can look and see --
10 (Simultaneous comments)

11 MR. DOWNING: Okay.

12 MS. HARLEY: I just wanted to explain to him, explain to him
13 that the National Transportation Safety Board, our job is to look
14 at the crash as far as safety is concerned. So part of what we do
15 is we will reach out to the victims of a crash, and we will keep
16 them informed of our investigation. So he may actually hear from
17 one of our transportation disaster assistant specialists.

18 INTERPRETER: Okay.

19 MS. HARLEY: They're just simply reaching out and making sure
20 that, if he has any questions in the future, he has a contact
21 number, and he'll be able to contact --

22 INTERPRETER: Okay.

23 MS. HARLEY: He'll be able to call the agency. And just let
24 him know, don't be surprised if he gets a call from somebody.

25 INTERPRETER: Okay.

1 MS. HARLEY: Okay. He doesn't have any questions for me?

2 MR. BAZAN: No.

3 INTERPRETER: He said you guys have to call and speak
4 Spanish.

5 (Laughter)

6 MS. HARLEY: We will arrange that.

7 MR. DOWNING: Any questions for the Highway Patrol at this
8 time?

9 MR. BAZAN: No.

10 INTERPRETER: I'm going to give him my name so -- in case he
11 has questions, then I can translate.

12 MR. DOWNING: I'm going to go ahead and stop recording this
13 interview.

14 (Whereupon, at 11:03 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

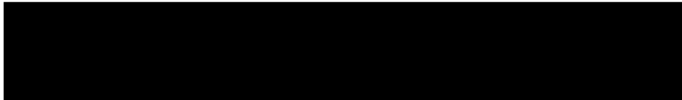
IN THE MATTER OF: CRASH OF A MEDIUM-SIZED BUS
NEAR PALA MESA, CALIFORNIA,
ON FEBRUARY 22, 2020
Interview of Benjamin Bazan

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY20FH003

PLACE: Oceanside area of California

DATE: February 25, 2020

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.


Katherine Motley
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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CRASH OF A MEDIUM-SIZED BUS
NEAR PALA MESA, CALIFORNIA,
ON FEBRUARY 22, 2020

Accident No.: HWY20FH003

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Interview of: NARCISO DIAZ
Passenger

Arco Gas Station
Bundy Canyon Road
Corona, California

Thursday,
February 27, 2020

APPEARANCES:

BEREK DOWNING, Investigator
California Highway Patrol

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

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I N T E R V I E W

(3:48 p.m.)

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3 MR. DOWNING: My name is Berek Downing with the California
4 Highway Patrol, and here with --

5 MS. HARLEY: Sheryl Harley. I'm with the National
6 Transportation Safety Board out of Washington, DC.

7 MR. DOWNING: And we're interviewing Mr. --

8 MR. DIAZ: Narciso Diaz.

9 MR. DOWNING: Narciso Diaz. All right. So it's a little bit
10 loud out here, but we're going to do our best with what we got.

11 MR. DIAZ: Yeah, okay.

INTERVIEW OF NARCISO DIAZ

12
13 BY MR. DOWNING:

14 Q. So have you used that bus company before?

15 A. No, never. That was the first time.

16 Q. The first time using the bus company?

17 A. Yes, sir, that was the first time.

18 Q. And where did the bus pick you up at?

19 A. At -- they call it -- by the -- I was -- by the Balgonia
20 (ph.) Road from Old Town. It's a gas station. I think that's a
21 Arco too.

22 Q. By Old Town and Country Road there?

23 A. Yeah, yes.

24 Q. At the Arco?

25 A. Yes, at the Arco.

1 Q. And where were you heading to that day?

2 A. I'm heading to Tijuana, Mexico.

3 Q. And the bus was going to drop you off in San Ysidro, or was
4 it going to cross --

5 A. He was going to cross the border. He was going to drop me by
6 the airport, Tijuana.

7 Q. When you got onto the bus, did the driver make any sort of
8 statements or any announcements?

9 A. No, not at all. No, no, no.

10 Q. When you first noticed the driver, was he in the bus already,
11 or was he outside?

12 A. He was in the bus.

13 Q. He was in the bus. In the driver's seat or somewhere else?

14 A. The driver's seat.

15 Q. When -- after you got on the bus, how many stops were there?
16 How many more stops were there before the crash happened?

17 A. None. Just --

18 Q. So you were the last --

19 A. I was the last one, I think.

20 Q. When you sat down on the bus, do you remember where you were
21 sitting or seated, or do you remember where you sat?

22 A. I was in the second seat on the, on the --

23 Q. So were you behind the chauffeur, or were you on the other
24 side?

25 A. I was behind -- two seats behind the driver.

- 1 Q. Two seats behind the driver?
- 2 A. Yeah.
- 3 Q. Were you in the aisle seat or the window seat?
- 4 A. At the aisle seat.
- 5 Q. Was anybody sitting in the window seat next to you?
- 6 A. Yeah. There was a old lady next to me.
- 7 Q. Do you remember what she was wearing or what she looked like?
- 8 A. I don't --
- 9 Q. Did she ever say what her name was by chance or anything?
- 10 A. No. No.
- 11 Q. Do you have a -- do you recall at all what -- at least, like,
- 12 what color shirt or --
- 13 A. I think that she was wearing a white -- was a white shirt.
- 14 Yeah, that was a white shirt.
- 15 Q. Wearing a white shirt?
- 16 A. Yeah.
- 17 Q. When you sat down in the second row, did you see who was
- 18 sitting in front of you?
- 19 A. No. No, I didn't --
- 20 Q. Do you know if they were men or women?
- 21 A. I believe there was a lady and a man. Yeah.
- 22 Q. What about behind you?
- 23 A. No idea. No. I didn't see those people get on.
- 24 Q. What about -- do you remember who was sitting to the right of
- 25 you?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Don't remember who was sitting to the right?

3 A. I don't remember, yeah.

4 Q. When you sat down, did you put on a seatbelt, or did you wear
5 a seatbelt or anything?

6 A. No. No, I -- I don't know. I didn't do that because I
7 don't -- I'm not sure if there is a seatbelt, because I don't
8 think nobody was wearing a seatbelt.

9 Q. So you're not sure --

10 A. I'm not --

11 Q. -- were seatbelts or not?

12 A. Yeah. I'm not sure.

13 Q. When you were driving down the road, were you able to see the
14 driver at all?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. What was the driver doing while you guys were driving down
17 the freeway?

18 A. He was on his wheels, and I believe that was --

19 Q. Just driving?

20 A. Just driving and -- yeah, just driving.

21 Q. Did you ever see the driver being distracted by any sort of
22 electronic device, like a phone or anything like that?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Was he listening to the radio?

25 A. I'm not sure.

- 1 Q. Not sure if the radio was on or not?
- 2 A. Not sure, yeah.
- 3 Q. Did you notice any signs on the seat or anywhere on the bus
4 that said you had -- like, any rules about the bus?
- 5 A. No.
- 6 Q. When the -- after the bus driver picked you up, and you guys
7 were driving down towards San Ysidro, how would you describe his
8 driving?
- 9 A. I think definitely he was speeding because he was going to
10 the fast lane.
- 11 Q. So he was in the fast lane?
- 12 A. Fast, yes.
- 13 Q. So from left to right, he was in the far left?
- 14 A. Yeah, yeah, the far left, yeah.
- 15 Q. So he was in the fast lane?
- 16 A. Yes.
- 17 Q. What made you think he was speeding?
- 18 A. Because you can notice that was speeding.
- 19 Q. You could notice?
- 20 A. Yeah. And then some lady yelled too, hey, you're going too
21 fast. Some lady. I didn't see the lady who -- was her. Just the
22 lady had yelled at the driver, and then --
- 23 Q. So a lady yelled at the driver --
- 24 A. Yeah.
- 25 Q. -- that he was going too fast?

1 A. He's going too fast, yeah. I just heard that. I didn't look
2 at who was the lady.

3 Q. Do you know about where that yell came from? Like, behind
4 your or to the side of you or just --

5 A. It's, like, behind me.

6 Q. Now, you said you thought the driver was going fast as well?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. How fast do you think he was driving?

9 A. I think it's the fast lane.

10 Q. What's that?

11 A. Everybody is going like this -- 80 or something. 80, 80.

12 Q. Up to 80 miles an hour?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. So --

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. What was the weather like during --

17 A. It was raining. It was raining.

18 Q. It was raining?

19 A. Yeah. It was raining.

20 Q. Before the driver -- before the bus, I should say, started
21 going side-to-side, how -- before the crash happened, when did
22 that lady yell at the driver that he was going too fast?

23 A. Like, like 10 minutes before the crash.

24 Q. The lady yelled --

25 A. Yeah.

- 1 Q. -- at about 10 minutes before the crash?
- 2 A. Yeah, 10 or 15 minutes before.
- 3 Q. Do you feel or do you believe that the driver slowed down at
4 all after that?
- 5 A. No.
- 6 Q. Did the driver say anything to the lady, or did he --
- 7 A. No.
- 8 Q. -- make any comments?
- 9 A. No, he didn't. He didn't answer he just --
- 10 Q. Didn't answer? Just kept going? So can you tell me about
11 when you noticed the bus was going -- about to crash?
- 12 A. About to crash, the last minute that I remember, he tried to
13 change the lane, goes to the middle lane, and then happened the
14 crash. Just I remember that we were down the, down the freeway
15 just --
- 16 Q. Now, when you said he was changing lanes to the middle lane,
17 was it, like, a smooth lane change, like how you would normally
18 change lanes where it's nice and smooth? Or did you, like, feel a
19 harder turn?
- 20 A. I feel, like, harder turn, because he was going too fast, and
21 then he tried to --
- 22 Q. Okay.
- 23 A. -- not hit another car.
- 24 Q. So you think he was trying to avoid hitting another car or --
25 what makes you think that?

1 A. Yeah. Because he was -- when he tried to change the lane,
2 and then go like --

3 Q. To the right?

4 A. -- to the right, and goes like -- and then, I don't know,
5 lose control or something.

6 Q. Okay. And when he lost control, what did you feel in the
7 bus?

8 A. Just, like, a couple of things, like (imitating noises).

9 Q. Do you know if you went right and then back to the left or
10 back to the --

11 A. No. I don't remember.

12 Q. Don't remember? But you know you went to the right?

13 A. Yeah. Went to the right, and then just -- yeah. That, that
14 happened. I don't remember anything about it.

15 Q. What were you doing when the bus started going to the right
16 before it rolled over?

17 A. Nothing. I would say sitting and watching the road. That
18 was raining.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Just sitting. Just -- not -- I'm not -- I didn't see my
21 phone at all. It's just --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I was just, like, sitting.

24 Q. Did you see any cars in front of you or anything?

25 A. Yeah. There was many cars, but the driver didn't hit any

- 1 car.
- 2 Q. He didn't hit any cars.
- 3 A. Just --
- 4 Q. So when the bus rolled over, during -- when the bus crashed,
5 were you -- did you stay in the bus, or were you thrown from the
6 bus?
- 7 A. I was in the bus.
- 8 Q. You were in the bus?
- 9 A. Yeah.
- 10 Q. Do you remember rolling over in the bus?
- 11 A. No. I just remember that I was, was rolling over and trying
12 to get out, get out of there. Try to help us -- each other, the
13 other people to get out -- try to get out. And I just remember
14 that. I didn't remember how that happened.
- 15 Q. How did -- do you remember how you got out of the bus?
- 16 A. Yeah.
- 17 Q. How did you get out of the bus?
- 18 A. I try to get out at the windows -- the windshield, get out
19 right there. I tried to help the lady was sitting next to me, and
20 I tried to help her get out, the lady.
- 21 Q. Did you try to help that lady get out of the bus before you
22 got out, or did you get out first and then try to --
- 23 A. No. We got out together.
- 24 Q. Okay. So you --
- 25 A. Yeah.

- 1 Q. -- helped you and another lady --
- 2 A. Yeah, I helped --
- 3 Q. -- get out of the bus?
- 4 A. Yeah.
- 5 Q. Okay. And was that the lady that was sitting next to you at
- 6 the beginning?
- 7 A. Yes.
- 8 Q. Okay.
- 9 A. That was the lady.
- 10 Q. And you guys got out of the bus through a -- the window or a
- 11 door?
- 12 A. At the window.
- 13 Q. The window.
- 14 A. The window.
- 15 Q. And was that window already broken out?
- 16 A. Oh, yeah. Yeah, I think that's what -- I got the -- what is
- 17 it called? That windshield, I cut this right here.
- 18 Q. Oh, yeah. Look at that.
- 19 A. Yeah. I think that's where I got it from.
- 20 Q. Now, if you can remember, was the window you and the lady
- 21 crawled out of, was it close to where you were sitting initially
- 22 or were you in a different spot?
- 23 A. No. We were on the front, was where that driver is. We were
- 24 on that side. Went upside down because of the --
- 25 Q. So you were closer to the front of the bus --

1 (Simultaneous comments)

2 MR. DIAZ: -- front of the bus.

3 MR. DOWNING: Okay. You were near the front of the bus.

4 BY MR. DOWNING:

5 Q. Did you help anybody else get out of the bus?

6 A. No. I tried to, but I -- no, I didn't do it. Just the lady.

7 Q. Just the lady. Did she -- did you and her talk about the
8 crash after it happened or --

9 A. No. Because they took me to the hospital right away, so I
10 don't know what happened to that lady too.

11 Q. Did you talk to anybody about the crash at the scene before
12 you went to the hospital?

13 A. No. Because I was in shock. I was just like --

14 Q. Did you see the driver after the crash?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. You did see the driver?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. And did he say or do anything that you remember?

19 A. No. No, I -- no.

20 Q. Do you know where the driver went after the crash?

21 A. Yeah, he was standing right there where the other peoples
22 are. They were standing right there like --

23 Q. He was standing there with other people?

24 A. Yeah, yeah.

25 Q. Did you know anybody else on that bus?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Didn't know anybody else on the bus. Okay. What do you
3 believe or what do you feel caused the crash?

4 A. I'm not sure. I think the weather maybe, or the driver was
5 speeding, or I don't know what could happen.

6 Q. So not sure --

7 A. Not sure.

8 Q. -- but maybe the weather and the driver speeding?

9 A. Yeah. Yeah, maybe that. Yeah, but I'm not sure what, what
10 happened right there.

11 Q. But not sure how it happened?

12 A. Not sure, yeah.

13 Q. But, just to clarify, you felt the bus was going fast?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Yes.

16 A. Yes.

17 MR. DOWNING: Okay. All right. Do you have any questions,
18 Ms. Harley?

19 MS. HARLEY: Yeah, I do.

20 BY MS. HARLEY:

21 Q. When you say you got out the front window, the window or the
22 windshield?

23 A. That windshield.

24 Q. You went out the front --

25 A. Yeah.

- 1 Q. You went right out the windshield of the bus?
- 2 A. Yeah, because --
- 3 Q. Okay.
- 4 A. -- we were just right, right there.
- 5 Q. You were right there.
- 6 A. Yeah.
- 7 Q. Okay. And the woman that was sitting next to you, the older
8 woman, can you describe her? Was she wearing a hat? Can you
9 describe her hair?
- 10 A. No, I didn't --
- 11 Q. No.
- 12 A. No.
- 13 Q. Did she have a cane?
- 14 A. No.
- 15 Q. Okay.
- 16 A. No.
- 17 Q. All right. What injuries did you sustain?
- 18 A. Just that my chest that -- with the windshield, and then I
19 got the back hurts but -- yeah, my back hurts, and my neck, my
20 neck.
- 21 Q. So the windshield cut you and --
- 22 A. Yeah.
- 23 Q. -- they put --
- 24 A. Yes.
- 25 Q. -- staples in there?

1 A. Yes.

2 MR. DOWNING: Yeah, looks like two staples.

3 MS. HARLEY: Yeah.

4 MR. DIAZ: Yeah, two staples.

5 MR. DOWNING: Upper left -- upper right chest.

6 BY MS. HARLEY:

7 Q. Okay. When you were on the bus, did you see a little boy?

8 A. No. No.

9 Q. All right.

10 A. I saw that little boy when we -- the ambulance pick us up,
11 and then they came with the little boy right here -- Island, I
12 think, Hospital.

13 BY MR. DOWNING:

14 Q. So you saw him later?

15 A. Yeah, I saw him later.

16 Q. At the hospital or the ambulance --

17 A. At the ambulance. Yeah, because we got our ride together.

18 Q. Were you --

19 MS. HARLEY: Oh, you rode with the little boy?

20 MR. DOWNING: You rode --

21 (Simultaneous comments)

22 MR. DIAZ: (Indiscernible).

23 MR. DOWNING: -- in the same ambulance with the little boy.
24 About five other people?

25 MR. DIAZ: Yes.

1 MR. DOWNING: Wow.

2 BY MS. HARLEY:

3 Q. So it was you, the little boy, and four other people?

4 A. That was the little boy and his mom and his dad and then
5 another guy and me. There were five people in that ambulance.

6 Q. Okay. So the driver was supposed to drive you to Tijuana, is
7 that right?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And drop you off at the airport?

10 A. Yeah, drop me off at the airport.

11 Q. Okay. And you bought your -- did you buy your ticket at
12 Temecula where you got on?

13 A. Yeah, yeah.

14 Q. So how much did that ticket cost you?

15 A. \$36.

16 Q. \$36?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. And is that what it costs to go one way to Tijuana?

19 A. I think so. That was my first time riding that bus.

20 Q. Oh, okay.

21 A. Yeah. I never used that bus.

22 Q. All right.

23 A. But, yeah, cost me \$36.

24 Q. Okay. All right. And I just want to check one thing. All
25 right. So you said there was a couple directly in front of you,

1 but you don't remember anybody on the other side?

2 A. No, no.

3 Q. Okay. All right. And did you see that -- what kind of
4 injuries the lady that was -- that you helped out of the bus had?

5 A. No.

6 Q. No?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Was she able to walk?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Yes. She walked.

12 Q. Okay. Did you see anybody else in the bus that was hurt? Do
13 you remember?

14 A. No. No.

15 MS. HARLEY: All right. I think that's it.

16 MR. DOWNING: Okay. Well, we really appreciate you talking
17 with us today.

18 MR. DIAZ: No problem. Thank you.

19 MR. DOWNING: Do you have any questions for me or the Highway
20 Patrol?

21 MR. DIAZ: No. No, I just --

22 MR. DOWNING: Okay.

23 MR. DIAZ: I don't know, but I hope that the driver can drive
24 more careful. I don't know. We don't know what happened, but --

25 MR. DOWNING: You just hope the driver could drive more

1 careful in the future?

2 MR. DIAZ: More careful in the future, yes.

3 MR. DOWNING: Okay.

4 MS. HARLEY: So just to let you know, my agency will send
5 you -- it basically is a letter trying to explain what we're
6 doing, and we'll keep you informed of what's going on.

7 MR. DIAZ: All right.

8 MS. HARLEY: If you have any questions -- I'm going to give
9 you my business card. If you have any questions --

10 MR. DIAZ: Okay.

11 MS. HARLEY: -- feel free to give me a call.

12 MR. DIAZ: All right.

13 MS. HARLEY: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

14 MR. DOWNING: All right. Thank you.

15 (Whereupon, at 4:14 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

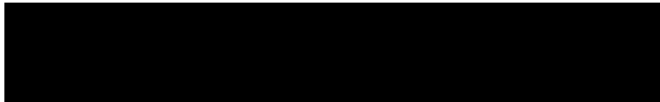
IN THE MATTER OF: CRASH OF A MEDIUM-SIZED BUS
NEAR PALA MESA, CALIFORNIA,
ON FEBRUARY 22, 2020
Interview of Narciso Diaz

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY20FH003

PLACE: Corona, California

DATE: February 27, 2020

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.


Katherine Motley
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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CRASH OF A MEDIUM-SIZED BUS
NEAR PALA MESA, CALIFORNIA,
ON FEBRUARY 22, 2020

Accident No.: HWY20FH003

* * * * *

Interview of: ANA GAMBOA
Passenger

Palomar Medical Center
Room 780
Escondido, California

Thursday,
February 27, 2020

APPEARANCES:

BEREK DOWNING, Investigator
California Highway Patrol

MITCHEL SANCHEZ, Interpreter
California Highway Patrol

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

ALEJANDRA GUZMAN, Social Worker
Palomar Medical Center

ESTOBAN MENDOZA, Husband of Passenger

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I N T E R V I E W

(12:18 p.m.)

1
2
3 MR. DOWNING: My name is Berek Downing. I'm an investigator
4 with the California Highway Patrol, and I'm being assisted today
5 by --

6 MR. SANCHEZ: I'm Officer Mitchel Sanchez. ID is 15766.

7 (Whereupon, Officer Mitchel Sanchez translated the
8 proceedings in the Spanish language for Ms. Gamboa and
9 Mr. Mendoza.)

10 MR. DOWNING: And --

11 MS. HARLEY: I'm Sheryl Harley. I'm with the National
12 Transportation Safety Board out of Washington, DC.

13 MR. DOWNING: We also have --

14 MS. GUZMAN: Alejandra Guzman, social worker at Palomar
15 Medical Center.

16 MR. DOWNING: And also with Ms. Gamboa today is her husband.

17 MR. MENDOZA: Estoban.

18 MR. DOWNING: Okay. So we're just here to ask some questions
19 about the accident.

INTERVIEW OF ANA GAMBOA

20
21 BY MR. DOWNING:

22 Q. How many times have you used this bus company?

23 A. Once or twice.

24 Q. And when was the last time you used this bus company? If she
25 knows.

1 A. So Saturday, the day of the accident. She doesn't remember
2 prior to that.

3 Q. The last time you used this bus company, was it the same
4 driver? Do you remember?

5 A. It was not the same driver.

6 Q. And where did you get onto the bus?

7 A. Riverside at MaxiFood. She comes from El Monte.

8 Q. When you got onto the bus, did the driver make any
9 announcements about safety?

10 A. No.

11 Q. How many stops did the bus make after you got onto it?

12 A. She was the last stop prior to the accident.

13 Q. Did you contact the driver at all? Did you talk to the
14 driver or anything?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Do you remember where you were seating or seated on the bus?

17 A. The first seat, door side. So the door to get on the bus,
18 she was in the very first seat.

19 Q. First seat by door?

20 INTERPRETER: Um-hmm.

21 BY MR. DOWNING:

22 Q. So that's the right side of the bus?

23 INTERPRETER: Correct.

24 BY MR. DOWNING:

25 Q. Do you remember if you were sitting in the aisle or up

1 against the window?

2 A. Aisle.

3 Q. Aisle seat. Was anybody seated next to you?

4 A. There was a lady next to her.

5 Q. Up against the window? Okay.

6 A. Yeah, same seat.

7 Q. Do you remember who was to the left of you?

8 A. So there was a -- in that first seat opposite her, there was
9 a gentleman, kind of short in statue -- stature, and then next to
10 him against the window was a lady. So male, male, female. So
11 sitting behind, sitting behind the driver.

12 Q. Were you awake during the entire trip?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. How would you describe the driving of the driver? How would
15 you describe his driving actions?

16 A. She says that he was driving in a irresponsible manner.

17 Q. How would you describe that?

18 A. He had dark sunglasses on and headphones. So from the point
19 she got on until the accident, she says that she thinks the driver
20 was driving very fast, and it was raining.

21 Q. If you had to guess his speed, what would you say it was?

22 A. About 100, 110 kilometers per hour.

23 MR. DOWNING: So that's like 60-ish?

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Um-hmm.

25 BY MR. DOWNING:

1 Q. You said he had headphones on. Could you hear his music?

2 A. She doesn't know if he was listening to music, but separately
3 he turned the music in the bus.

4 Q. So separately there was loud music in the bus too?

5 INTERPRETER: Yeah.

6 MS. GAMBOA: Yeah.

7 INTERPRETER: So, like, coming from the stereo, from the bus
8 itself.

9 BY MR. DOWNING:

10 Q. Do you know what kind of music it was?

11 A. It was in English. It was kind of rock type music.

12 Q. Would you mind just telling me what kind of happened just
13 prior to the crash?

14 A. They were in the far right lane. No, no. So they're in the
15 far left lane. Sorry. So they're in the number one lane. So all
16 of a sudden she felt that the bus started going, the bus started
17 going to the right, and they went off the road.

18 Q. Do you remember how many times you went side-to-side?

19 A. She said it just went to the right, just off the road.

20 Q. Were you wearing a seatbelt at the time of the crash?

21 A. There's no seatbelts. There's no seatbelts in the bus.

22 Q. Did you see the driver wearing a seatbelt?

23 A. Doesn't recall.

24 Q. When the bus started going over the side of the road, what
25 did you do? Did you hold onto anything or --

1 A. Said she committed herself to God and closed her eyes. She
2 doesn't remember exactly, but she thinks she might have, like,
3 grabbed onto something --

4 Q. Were you, were you ejected from the bus, or did you stay
5 inside the bus when it rolled over?

6 A. She didn't recall, but she does recall after the accident
7 that some people, I guess good Samaritans that had stopped, pulled
8 her out of the bus.

9 Q. She was pulled from the bus?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Did they pull you out of the door or out of a broken window?

12 A. She doesn't recall.

13 Q. After you were out of the bus, did you hear anybody talking
14 about the crash?

15 A. She -- from the time she was pulled out to the time she left
16 on the ambulance, she doesn't remember anybody talking about it.
17 She just remembers a little child, like, all bloody. Then when
18 she came to, she was here at the hospital.

19 Q. Where did you see the little boy?

20 A. So he was laying on the, he was laying on the floor at the
21 accident -- on the ground outside the bus. He was being attended
22 to by unknown person.

23 Q. You said about four or five?

24 A. Little boy.

25 Q. Do you feel that the bus driver was driving fast the entire

1 trip?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Did you know the lady you were sitting next to?

4 A. No.

5 Q. What do you believe was the cause of the crash?

6 A. The irresponsibility of the driver. So at the time of the --
7 she says because at the time of the accident it was actively
8 raining, and she says that the -- and also the music was very loud
9 inside the bus, and he was, in her opinion, speeding.

10 Q. Did you ever notice the driver on his phone?

11 A. She never saw him on the phone.

12 Q. At any point during the trip?

13 A. At no point.

14 Q. Prior to the crash, did anybody around you or the lady next
15 to you mention anything about the driving of the driver, his
16 driving?

17 A. Nobody else. She didn't hear anybody else make any comments.
18 No, nothing.

19 MR. DOWNING: I don't have any further questions at this
20 time, but Ms. Harley is going to ask some questions, if that's
21 okay. And she will explain why she's here.

22 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So just simply explain to her that we're
23 looking at the safety issues in the crash, and that's why we're
24 here. And we're looking to find out what happened to the
25 passengers on the bus.

1 INTERPRETER: So I explained what you said, and then her
2 comment was, yeah, I hope that they put seatbelts on those buses
3 because there's no seatbelts. And also that they shouldn't be
4 allowed to play, like, loud music and the drivers having
5 headphones on. So he had both ears covered by headphones. That
6 was, like, the larger type headphones that cover the -- over the
7 ears.

8 BY MS. HARLEY:

9 Q. So ask her if she remembered if the driver was upright and
10 looking forward the entire time while he was driving?

11 A. She doesn't remember.

12 Q. Okay. The woman that was sitting next to her, did she get on
13 the bus with her, or was she already on the bus?

14 A. She was already on the bus. She says that when she got on
15 -- so when -- her and the gentleman that sat on the seat opposite
16 her were the last two on the bus. It was the last stop. And when
17 they got on, the bus was already full.

18 Q. Does she remember what the woman next to her was wearing?
19 Could she describe it?

20 A. Short hair with, like, a beige colored, flowered shirt.
21 That's all she recalls.

22 Q. How old does she think the woman was?

23 A. About 50, early 50s.

24 Q. Okay. Did she recognize anyone else on the bus?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Let's see. All right. What was she wearing?

2 A. Gray pants, green blouse, boots, and then a black jacket.

3 MS. HARLEY: So just so she knows, explain to her the reason
4 I'm asking what she was wearing because a lot of the passengers
5 are describing other passengers by what they were wearing, and
6 that is why I was asking.

7 MR. DOWNING: Because we're trying to figure out exactly
8 where everybody was sitting.

9 BY MS. HARLEY:

10 Q. Does she know what time she boarded the bus?

11 A. Around 8 o'clock in the morning.

12 Q. Around 8 o'clock. And what was her destination?

13 A. So she was going to go to -- her final stop was in Tijuana,
14 crossing on the bus at the Tijuana.

15 Q. Was she getting off at San Ysidro, or did the bus go in --
16 does the bus go into Tijuana?

17 A. So somewhere around the border, and then from there a van
18 takes them into --

19 Q. Okay. And what time does the bus usually arrive at San
20 Ysidro?

21 A. Little after 10 in the morning.

22 Q. So I just want to make sure. So the bus is actually supposed
23 to be at San Ysidro after 10?

24 A. Yes. A little after 10.

25 Q. Did you hear the driver say anything about being late?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Does she remember who was sitting in the seat behind her? As
3 she got on the bus, did she see the people in the second row?

4 A. No, she didn't. Doesn't recall.

5 Q. Does she recall anybody else on the bus except for the two
6 that were across the aisle?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Okay. And my last question is if she can tell me what
9 injuries she sustained?

10 A. Some fractures in the neck, fractured left arm, some
11 -- so her legs, like, her upper legs, knees are bruised, and then
12 contusions on her face.

13 MS. HARLEY: So the last thing I want to tell her is, is
14 that what happens is that someone from my agency will probably,
15 probably be sending a letter, and just to explain to her once
16 again what we do, and that we will keep her informed of our
17 investigation, and make sure, if she has a problem, she can
18 actually give me a call. But we'll be letting her know how the
19 safety investigation is going. And just remind her that it's
20 actually separate from the investigation that you guys are
21 conducting.

22 Do either one of them have a question for me?

23 INTERPRETER: So they don't have anything. He just wants me
24 to leave my contact. I don't have any cards. I'll just write on
25 a piece of paper.

1 Do you know where all the stuff is?

2 MR. DOWNING: CHP Oceanside.

3 INTERPRETER: They have everything?

4 MR. DOWNING: They have what -- a lot of stuff.

5 INTERPRETER: The rest would be with the bus, right?

6 MR. DOWNING: Yeah. So I would call the CHP office first.

7 Ask to speak to the evidence officer.

8 INTERPRETER: Do we have the public number there?

9 MR. DOWNING: I could look it up real quick. And they have a
10 picture -- and they have pictures of all the property. So if you
11 describe what it is, they can look it up.

12 MS. HARLEY: I'm going to turn this off now.

13 (Whereupon, at 12:50 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

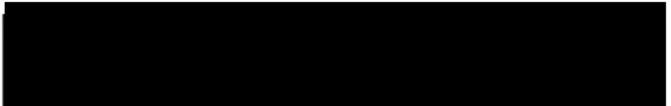
IN THE MATTER OF: CRASH OF A MEDIUM-SIZED BUS
 NEAR PALA MESA, CALIFORNIA,
 ON FEBRUARY 22, 2020
 Interview of Ana Gamboa

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY20FH003

PLACE: Escondido, California

DATE: February 27, 2020

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.


Katherine Motley
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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CRASH OF A MEDIUM-SIZED BUS
NEAR PALA MESA, CALIFORNIA,
ON FEBRUARY 22, 2020

Accident No.: HWY20FH003

* * * * *

Interview of: BENITA GARCIA
Passenger



Hemet, California

Thursday,
February 27, 2020

APPEARANCES:

BEREK DOWNING, Investigator
California Highway Patrol

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

CARLOS DELEON, Grandson of Passenger
(Interpreting)

PEDRO GARCIA

ARACELI, Daughter of Passenger

MERCY GARCIA, Daughter of Passenger

LUIS LOMELI, Investigator
BDJ Law Firm

I N D E X

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I N T E R V I E W

(5:03 p.m.)

1
2
3 MR. DOWNING: My name is Berek Downing with the California
4 Highway Patrol. I'm here with Ms. Benita. And providing
5 translation today will be --

6 MR. DELEON: Carlos DeLeon.

7 MR. DOWNING: Carlos DeLeon. And you are her?

8 MR. DELEON: Grandson.

9 MR. DOWNING: Grandson.

10 And also at the table is?

11 ARACELI: Araceli (ph.), her daughter.

12 MR. GARCIA: Pedro Garcia.

13 MR. DOWNING: Pedro Garcia.

14 MS. HARLEY: Sheryl Harley. I'm with the National
15 Transportation Safety Board out of Washington, DC.

16 MR. LOMELI: Luis Lomeli (ph.). I'm BDJ Law Firm.

17 MR. DOWNING: BDJ Law Firm?

18 MR. LOMELI: Yeah.

19 MS. M. GARCIA: Mercy (ph.) Garcia, daughter.

20 MR. DOWNING: Mercy Garcia, daughter. All right.

21 (Whereupon, Carlos DeLeon translated the proceedings in the
22 Spanish language for Ms. B. Garcia.)

INTERVIEW OF BENITA GARCIA

23
24 BY MR. DOWNING:

25 Q. Benita, have you ever used that bus company before?

1 A. 16 years using that bus company.

2 Q. Prior to this trip, when was the last time you used the
3 company?

4 A. A week before -- Thursday -- on Thursday.

5 Q. And was your destination the same place as Saturday?

6 A. So on Thursday, she was coming back from this side of town,
7 which is Baldwin Park.

8 Q. So Thursday she was coming --

9 INTERPRETER: Yeah.

10 MR. DOWNING: So coming back to Baldwin Park?

11 INTERPRETER: Yes.

12 BY MR. DOWNING:

13 Q. Was she coming from -- you were coming from San Ysidro or
14 Mexico at that time?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. And did you get on the bus down there in San Ysidro or on the
17 Mexico side?

18 A. San Ysidro.

19 Q. Have you ever driven with that driver on Saturday before?

20 A. Yeah, one time. One time before.

21 Q. And was -- the last time you had that driver, was that from
22 Baldwin Park to Mexico or from Mexico to Baldwin Park or --

23 A. So from San Ysidro to Baldwin Park.

24 Q. And that was the one on Thursday?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Oh, no, no. And when -- about how long ago was that with
2 that same driver?

3 A. Oh, it was Thursday. It was Thursday, yeah.

4 Q. How would you say he drove on the Thursday trip?

5 A. He was driving good she said.

6 INTERPRETER: So she got some --

7 ARACELI: She got confused.

8 INTERPRETER: Got confused a little bit. So it wasn't him on
9 Thursday --

10 MR. DOWNING: Okay.

11 INTERPRETER: -- to Baldwin Park.

12 MS. M. GARCIA: It's okay, mom.

13 MR. DOWNING: Yeah, it's fine. I understand it can be a
14 little confusing sometimes.

15 BY MR. DOWNING:

16 Q. But the last time you did drive with that driver, his driving
17 was okay?

18 A. Yeah. He seemed fine, which was a month, a month ago.

19 Q. Okay. Were you with anybody you knew on the bus?

20 A. She usually gets on the bus with the same people, but this
21 time it was just her.

22 Q. And on Saturday, were you picked up in Baldwin Park?

23 INTERPRETER: No. It was El Monte.

24 MR. DOWNING: El Monte.

25 BY MR. DOWNING:

1 Q. What time did you get on the bus in El Monte?

2 A. 8:10 in the morning.

3 Q. When you got onto the bus, did you see the driver?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Was he in the driver's seat, or was he outside the bus?

6 A. He was outside putting up the luggage, and he told them to
7 just board the bus.

8 Q. Did he tell people to board the bus in Spanish or English?

9 A. He use Spanish, but is hard to understand a little bit.
10 Hardly understood them.

11 Q. It'd be like me speaking. When the driver got back onto the
12 bus, did he make any sort of announcements in regards to safety?

13 A. He said, one, that he does -- the Spanish is not very good,
14 and second, that if they have any questions, they could go ahead
15 and call the office, and third, that if they need to go to the
16 restroom that their stop is going to be Temecula. They're
17 stopping in Temecula for a bathroom break.

18 Q. When you sat down, did you wear a seatbelt?

19 A. She said when she boards those buses they usually either
20 don't work or they don't have them. Everybody knows about the
21 seatbelt problem, so they just tend not to put them on like they
22 just don't have any.

23 Q. Do you remember where you were seated? Do you remember where
24 you sat?

25 A. The third row. On the driver's side. Third row, driver's

1 side.

2 Q. Were you sitting in the aisle or the window?

3 A. On the aisle.

4 Q. Was there anyone sitting next to you by the window?

5 A. She was by herself.

6 Q. Do you remember who was sitting in front of you?

7 A. She don't know them. She said there was people in front of
8 her, but she don't know who it is.

9 Q. Do you remember who was behind you?

10 A. She never really looked back.

11 Q. Okay. I know these questions kind of sound repetitive and --
12 but we're just trying to really narrow it down, so -- and it's
13 okay not to know. What about to the right of you?

14 A. There was a lady.

15 Q. Was she --

16 A. She was by herself.

17 Q. Okay. And was she in the aisle seat or the window seat?

18 A. She was closer to the window.

19 Q. Do you remember what she was wearing?

20 A. No, she doesn't remember that.

21 Q. How many stops did the bus make after you?

22 A. They did six stops. Six stops in total.

23 Q. Six stops total?

24 INTERPRETER: Yeah.

25 BY MR. DOWNING:

1 Q. Was your stop the first stop or a second stop or a third
2 stop? First stop?

3 A. Yeah, from El Monte.

4 Q. So she was picked up in El Monte?

5 INTERPRETER: Yeah.

6 BY MR. DOWNING:

7 Q. Do you remember how many people approximately got onto the
8 bus with you?

9 A. Seven people.

10 Q. Did any of those people include the -- a small child?

11 A. She said she don't know if it was that stop, but there was a
12 kid that was in that bus.

13 Q. Do you remember where the kid might have been -- which seat
14 he may have been in?

15 A. She don't remember exactly, but she does know the boy was
16 behind her somewhere on the right-hand side.

17 Q. How would you describe the driver's driving down the road?

18 A. From El Monte from Temecula, he was -- she says he was
19 driving pretty good. After Temecula, that's when she fell asleep.
20 And she noticed that, once she started reaching Temecula, it
21 started raining a little bit.

22 Q. So it just started raining right before you fell asleep?

23 A. Yeah. She said, yeah. It was really light rain.

24 Q. When did you know something was wrong? Or what did you
25 notice right before the crash happened?

1 A. She woke up because she felt the bus kind of losing control,
2 and the people started screaming.

3 Q. When you felt the bus lose control, what did you do?

4 A. She said that, once the bus started losing control, she
5 started swinging back and forth with the bus, and she don't
6 remember after a certain part because her head hit against
7 something that she don't recall, and she lost conscious. She just
8 remembers opening her eyes, and the bus was already tilting --
9 turning over.

10 Q. So you remember the bus tilting over onto its side?

11 A. She said she hit herself, and that's when she lost conscious,
12 once the bus was already kind of tilting.

13 Q. Do you remember where you hit on your body?

14 A. She don't remember exactly what side she hit. She just
15 remembers -- she remembers glass and --

16 Q. During the accident, were you thrown from the bus, or did you
17 stay inside the bus?

18 A. She was thrown from the bus. She says she woke up, and she
19 was on the ground. She said she tried to move her legs and see if
20 she can try to get up, and right when she looked to one side, she
21 noticed that the bus was still falling over.

22 Q. Was the bus to the left of you or to the right of you?

23 A. She just know that she came out the window.

24 Q. You saw the bus come to its final stopping position?

25 A. She said she did see his last flip.

1 Q. I know this is hard, but I do appreciate you talking to us.

2 After the crash, were you able to help anybody out of the bus?

3 A. Said she was in a lot of back pain, her right arm, so she
4 wasn't able to get up, and her first instinct was to start
5 screaming; that was her first instinct.

6 Q. What injuries did you receive?

7 A. She has two fractured -- she had two fractured ribs and a
8 fracture in her spine.

9 Q. Left ribs or right?

10 A. Right.

11 Q. And fractured back, fractured spine?

12 INTERPRETER: Yeah.

13 BY MR. DOWNING:

14 Q. Do you have any bruising or other cuts on your body?

15 INTERPRETER: Her back is bruised and her neck as well. And
16 her feet as well.

17 BY MR. DOWNING:

18 Q. Before going to the hospital, did you hear anybody talk about
19 the crash and what happened?

20 A. Just the fire department, police.

21 Q. Did you ever see the driver after the crash?

22 A. She said, yeah, he was out of the bus. He was picking up
23 bags -- his bag. He was picking up his bag and telling people
24 something.

25 Q. Was he speaking in English after that?

1 A. She didn't understand what he was saying.

2 Q. When you went to the hospital in the ambulance, were there
3 other people in the ambulance with you?

4 A. There was a female with her and then two males.

5 Q. Do you remember what the female was wearing by chance, the
6 lady?

7 A. She had a sweater over her head and a white blouse.

8 Q. What about the two hombres?

9 A. She couldn't really turn to see them.

10 Q. Do you remember a radio being on or any other noise within
11 the bus prior to the crash?

12 A. She said, yeah, the radio was on, but it wasn't the bus'
13 radio. It was his personal.

14 Q. His personal radio was on?

15 INTERPRETER: Personal radio.

16 BY MR. DOWNING:

17 Q. Was it loud, soft?

18 A. No. It was low.

19 Q. Just -- okay. Just low volume. What would you say was the
20 cause of the crash?

21 A. She doesn't know what reason, but she believes that he did
22 lose control.

23 MR. DOWNING: Ms. Harley, do you have any questions?

24 MS. HARLEY: Yeah. I'll make this quick.

25 BY MS. HARLEY:

1 Q. Ms. Garcia, my job in this is to look at the safety issues to
2 see if there's some safety improvement we can make to prevent this
3 from happening. So, as a result of that, my agency will be
4 reaching out to you and will let you know, as we go through our
5 investigation, about any safety issues. So we will keep you
6 informed; you'll probably get a letter from somebody from my
7 agency. And my card -- feel free to call if you have a question.

8 So my question is, does she feel that she can answer just a
9 couple more questions? I'll make them quick because I know she's
10 tired.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. All right. So she's used the company before. Has she ever
13 ridden on that particular bus before? Had she seen it?

14 A. It's never the same she said.

15 Q. Okay. When she was on the bus, did she see another employee
16 or another driver on the same bus with her?

17 A. Yes, they did have another employee.

18 Q. Does she know where that other driver was on the bus?

19 A. She said in the beginning he was sitting in front, and then,
20 after a couple stops, she doesn't remember exactly where he went.

21 Q. All right. So some of the passengers have described other
22 passengers, and so I'm going to ask her a very strange question.
23 Does she walk with a cane?

24 INTERPRETER: No, she doesn't.

25 MS. HARLEY: She doesn't.

1 BY MS. HARLEY:

2 Q. Did she see a woman with a cane get on the bus at the same
3 location she got on?

4 A. There was a lady in there that had a cane with her, but it
5 wasn't in her -- when she got on.

6 MS. HARLEY: Oh, it wasn't when she got on?

7 INTERPRETER: No.

8 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

9 BY MS. HARLEY:

10 Q. Does she know where that woman went to after she got on the
11 bus?

12 A. No. She don't remember.

13 Q. Okay. And I'm going to ask a very difficult question for
14 her. When she was ejected out of the bus, did she land face up or
15 was she laying on her stomach?

16 A. Sideways.

17 Q. Okay. All right. On her injured side, the right side?

18 A. Um-hmm.

19 Q. Okay. And one last question, and we'll be done. Did she see
20 anybody else get ejected out of the bus?

21 A. No.

22 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So, again, just make sure -- she has my
23 number. If there's any questions or concerns, please feel free to
24 give me a call, and we will keep in touch with her. If there is
25 -- if there are any questions, or if there's any kind of help she

1 may need, we actually reach out and kind of help put people in
2 touch with people, for example, someone to help her work through
3 this and kind of get her past this, because we realize it's very
4 traumatic.

5 INTERPRETER: Yeah.

6 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Does she have any questions for me?

7 MS. B. GARCIA: No. No questions.

8 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Tell her thank you. Thank her very, very
9 much. I know this is really exhausting.

10 MR. DOWNING: Do you have any questions for me about what we
11 do or the California Highway Patrol?

12 MS. B. GARCIA: No.

13 (Simultaneous comments.)

14 INTERPRETER: -- everybody boarded on the bus?

15 MR. DOWNING: Yes. Yes. We're trying to talk to everybody,
16 because we want to get as much of the story as we can before we
17 try to talk to, like, other drivers and witnesses and things like
18 that.

19 MS. HARLEY: So one of the things that we do is, we try to
20 put everybody back in their seats and then figure out how they got
21 injured, and then figure out if there's some way that we can make
22 sure that, when it happens again, they won't receive the same type
23 of injuries. Okay? All right. Thank you.

24 (Whereupon, at 5:38 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

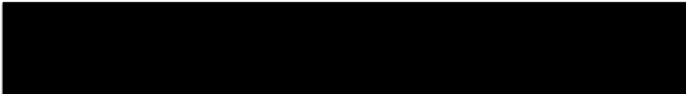
IN THE MATTER OF: CRASH OF A MEDIUM-SIZED BUS
 NEAR PALA MESA, CALIFORNIA,
 ON FEBRUARY 22, 2020
 Interview of Benita Garcia

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY20FH003

PLACE: Hemet, California

DATE: February 27, 2020

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.


Katherine Motley
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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CRASH OF A MEDIUM-SIZED BUS
NEAR PALA MESA, CALIFORNIA,
ON FEBRUARY 22, 2020

Accident No.: HWY20FH003

* * * * *

Interview of: JOSE OLIVARES
Passenger

Palomar Medical Center
Room 794
Escondido, California

Thursday,
February 27, 2020

APPEARANCES:

BEREK DOWNING, Investigator
California Highway Patrol

MITCHEL SANCHEZ, Interpreter
California Highway Patrol

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

ALEJANDRA GUZMAN, Social Worker
Palomar Medical Center

MARIA OLIVARES, Wife of Passenger

LUCIA MAGANA, Sister of Passenger

I N D E XITEMPAGE

Interview of Jose Olivares:

By Mr. Downing

4

By Ms. Harley

12

I N T E R V I E W

(12:55 p.m.)

1
2
3 MR. DOWNING: My name is Officer Berek Downing. I'm with
4 the California Highway Patrol, and I'm here today with --

5 MR. SANCHEZ: I'm Officer Mitchel Sanchez. ID 15766.

6 (Whereupon, Officer Mitchel Sanchez translated the
7 proceedings in the Spanish language for Mr. Olivares.)

8 MR. DOWNING: I'm also with --

9 MS. HARLEY: Sheryl Harley. I'm with the National
10 Transportation Safety Board in Washington, DC.

11 MR. DOWNING: We also have a social worker with the hospital.

12 MS. GUZMAN: Alejandra Guzman.

13 MR. DOWNING: And with us are --

14 MS. OLIVARES: Maria Olivares.

15 MS. MAGANA: Lucia (ph.) Magana.

16 MR. DOWNING: And you guys are?

17 MS. MAGANA: Her husband, my brother.

18 MR. DOWNING: Okay. Perfect.

19 INTERPRETER: Sister and wife.

20 MR. DOWNING: Okay. Perfect.

INTERVIEW OF JOSE OLIVARES

21
22 BY MR. DOWNING:

23 Q. How many times have you used this bus company in the past?

24 A. First time. First time getting on.

25 Q. And where did you get onto the bus?

1 A. In Riverside but doesn't remember.

2 INTERPRETER: She was a passenger too, right?

3 (Simultaneous comments)

4 BY MR. DOWNING:

5 Q. How many stops did the bus make after you got on?

6 A. So one more stop after him.

7 Q. Do you know where that stop was made?

8 A. He doesn't recall.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. He was saying he mentioned he thought it was in San Diego.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. But he says he's not familiar with the area.

13 Q. Okay. Do you remember what seat you were in?

14 A. About midway on the bus, would be passenger side or right
15 side of the bus, and sitting in the aisle seat.

16 Q. Was anyone seated next to you by the window?

17 A. There was another man sitting next to him. He says he
18 doesn't -- he did not know him.

19 Q. Remember what he was wearing by chance?

20 A. Tennis shoes, black pants, black jacket, and a ball cap. He
21 doesn't recall the color of the ball cap.

22 Q. Was it a Raider ball cap?

23 (Untranslated comments in Spanish)

24 Q. Only because the other older guy had a black Raider hat on.

25 Were you able to see the -- did you see the driver when you

1 got onto the bus?

2 A. So he remembers the driver. He was -- before he got on, the
3 driver was outside of the bus. He was loading luggage onto the
4 bus.

5 Q. Did the driver make any sort of safety announcements?

6 A. No. He did not make any safety statements.

7 Q. Did you notice any signs or other things mentioning safety
8 or --

9 A. No. He said no, there was none.

10 Q. Okay. Were you wearing a seatbelt?

11 A. He says there was a seatbelt, a lap belt. So he had a lap
12 belt on.

13 Q. Was there a shoulder belt that could have been used?

14 A. He didn't see like a shoulder belt at all, just the lap belt.

15 Q. Do you have any marks from that lap belt?

16 A. He says he doesn't. He says at the time that the bus started
17 to roll, he says he doesn't know if he maybe didn't put it on
18 right or the seatbelt failed, because he said he recalls bouncing
19 around inside the bus.

20 Q. How would you describe the driving of the driver?

21 A. In his opinion, he thinks that the bus was traveling at a
22 normal speed. The only thing was that it was raining. There was
23 periods of off-and-on rain as they were driving. And at the point
24 of the accident, he doesn't recall the wipers being on. So he
25 doesn't think that, at that exact moment, that it was raining.

1 Q. You remember what lane you were in starting from left to
2 right?

3 A. So far left lane. So what he remembers was the far left
4 lane.

5 Q. Far left lane. Do you remember if the bus was passing other
6 cars?

7 A. He doesn't remember.

8 Q. Was the man sitting next to you wearing his lap belt or any
9 other safety belt?

10 A. He doesn't remember.

11 Q. Do you remember who was sitting in front of you?

12 A. He thinks it was two ladies directly in front of him, but
13 he's not, he's not 100 percent sure. He says there was an -- the
14 lady or the person had an umbrella, and it was kind of blocking
15 his view, but he thinks it was a lady.

16 Q. Okay. I'm just going to look back to my -- some old notes
17 because it's kind of -- do you recall who was sitting to your
18 left?

19 A. He thinks like maybe a -- like a younger female, maybe around
20 25 years old. So, from what he recalls, that person had her feet
21 straddling the seat next to her because he said there was nobody
22 sitting in that seat.

23 Q. She was like sitting that way across both seats?

24 A. Sitting, yes, I guess -- um-hmm.

25 Q. Remember what she was wearing?

1 A. He doesn't recall the color. It was like a jacket and had a
2 hoodie, and she was wearing the hoodie. He doesn't recall though.

3 MS. HARLEY: I'm sorry. Where was this female?

4 MR. DOWNING: To the left of him.

5 INTERPRETER: To the left, in the seat across the aisle from
6 him.

7 BY MR. DOWNING:

8 Q. Do you recall where the boy was sitting on the bus?

9 A. Doesn't know what side of the bus, but he was definitely
10 behind him.

11 Q. Do you recall any other passengers wearing seatbelts?

12 A. He doesn't recall anybody else. So, after the last stop, and
13 they took off, the bus driver said -- he spoke broken Spanish, but
14 he told everybody, okay, this is the last stop before we get, you
15 know, before getting down here, and he told them that nobody could
16 get -- could move around on the bus.

17 Q. Did he say that in broken Spanish?

18 A. So in Spanish and English. So he just said it out loud to
19 the bus. He didn't use, like, a microphone or a speaker. So he
20 was already sitting -- the driver was sitting, and they were
21 starting to move when he made the announcement.

22 Q. Okay. Prior to the crash, what was the driver doing? Did
23 you ever see the driver doing anything?

24 A. So, prior to the accident, he didn't see any actions of the
25 driver. When they took off from the last stop, he did recall the

1 driver put his cell phone in, like, the cup holder.

2 Q. For a prior stop, you saw him put his phone in, like, a cup
3 holder?

4 A. In the very last stop. So the very last stop, when they left
5 and there was no more stops, he saw him put the phone in the cup
6 holder in the center console.

7 Q. Did the driver seem alert and awake throughout the trip?

8 A. He doesn't, he doesn't know. He didn't see him.

9 Q. Was the radio on?

10 A. There was music playing.

11 Q. Was it loud, soft?

12 A. So, where he was at, the music didn't seem very loud.

13 Q. Earlier you said normal speed. What do you feel normal speed
14 was?

15 A. So in his opinion, maybe like 75, 80 miles an hour. He says
16 the traffic was light. So, from what he could tell, as far as the
17 traffic and the speed -- because his vision was obscured to the
18 front, and then the gentleman sitting next to him, so he didn't
19 have --

20 Q. Did anyone around you make a comment about the driving of the
21 bus driver?

22 A. Nothing, no.

23 Q. Would you mind now telling me or describing to me what
24 happened when you felt the bus starting to move prior to the
25 crash?

1 A. So he was sitting in his chair, then he heard somebody
2 scream, and he says he straightened out in his seat, and at that
3 point realized that the bus was starting to go sideways -- or was
4 going sideways.

5 Q. Left or right?

6 A. To the right.

7 Q. Did you ever feel it go left, right, left? Did you feel it
8 go side-to-side several times?

9 A. So no fishtailing or nothing. It just started to slide to
10 the right.

11 INTERPRETER: So I asked him about, at the point where he
12 thinks that the bus started to roll, if he was already off the
13 highway or still on the highway. And he thinks that they were
14 already completely off the road at the point that it started to
15 overturn.

16 Yeah, so he thinks they were off the road when it -- he goes,
17 it happened so fast. So, from the time he hears the first scream
18 to the -- to when they start to roll, he said it was probably a
19 matter of seconds in his opinion.

20 BY MR. DOWNING:

21 Q. When you say you straightened out in your seat, what exactly
22 did you do?

23 A. He doesn't remember. He doesn't remember, and then when it
24 started to roll, he -- to him, it seemed like he was bouncing
25 around.

1 Q. Bouncing around. Were you thrown from the bus, or did you
2 stay inside the bus?

3 A. He ended up inside the bus.

4 Q. Do you remember how you got out of the bus?

5 A. He dragged himself out of the bus. Nobody helped him out.
6 He doesn't remember what window. He just recalls that it was a
7 window, and he crawled out on his hands and knees.

8 Q. Were you able to help anybody else out of the bus?

9 A. No. He's having a -- he was having difficulty breathing and
10 stuff, so he -- and then other people started to help him, and he
11 was unable to help anybody else.

12 Q. That's fine. I was just curious. Did you hear anybody --
13 did you talk to anybody about the crash after it happened when you
14 guys were all outside the bus?

15 A. He doesn't -- he remembers not talking to anybody else that
16 was on the bus. He just started, when the paramedics and the fire
17 department arrived, talking to them.

18 Q. Was it raining when you got out of the bus?

19 A. He says it was raining. Once he's outside the bus, at some
20 -- he doesn't recall if it was raining at the time of the
21 accident, but once he was outside, at some point, it started to
22 rain. Or he recalls that it was starting to rain.

23 Q. Did you ever see the driver after the crash?

24 A. He doesn't recall seeing him.

25 INTERPRETER: So I asked him, if he would have seen him,

1 would he have recognized him? And he says, he thinks he would
2 have recognized him if he would have seen him, but he doesn't
3 recall seeing him after the accident.

4 BY MR. DOWNING:

5 Q. What do you feel was the cause of the crash?

6 A. He has no idea what would have caused it. Or he has no
7 opinion one way or the other.

8 MR. DOWNING: Ms. Harley, do you have any questions?

9 MS. HARLEY: Yeah, just a couple of them.

10 BY MS. HARLEY:

11 Q. What was he wearing?

12 A. Black pants, black and white shirt -- so kind of like a shirt
13 similar to mine but black and white -- button-up shirt, and a
14 green vest, brown shoes, and a black hat.

15 Q. After the crash, did he see the man that he was sitting next
16 to?

17 A. So he recalls him next to him outside, and says that his hips
18 were -- he was complaining of pain to his hips.

19 MR. DOWNING: Jose was or the man that was --

20 INTERPRETER: -- that was sitting next to him.

21 MR. DOWNING: Oh, real quick. Would you just explain to him
22 what your aspect of this crash is?

23 MS. HARLEY: Oh, okay. Just to let him know that my agency
24 is looking into the safety issues, and one of the things that
25 we're looking into is what happened to the passengers on the bus.

1 BY MS. HARLEY:

2 Q. So can you ask him what injuries he sustained?

3 A. Eight fractured ribs, broken collarbone, left clavicle,
4 broken ribs, collapsed lung.

5 MR. DOWNING: Wow.

6 (Simultaneous comments)

7 INTERPRETER: So a fracture of, I guess, the scapula that
8 would be. Everything is on the left side.

9 BY MS. HARLEY:

10 Q. Left side, okay. Does he remember what time he boarded the
11 bus?

12 A. Like around 9:05, 9:10 in the morning.

13 Q. And where was he going to?

14 A. So he was going to -- I guess to the border, and then from
15 there, his understanding was he was going to get on a separate bus
16 that was going to take him to the Tijuana airport.

17 Q. Got it. What time was the bus that he was on due to arrive
18 down in San Ysidro?

19 A. They never told him, and he does not know.

20 Q. So, when he was on the bus, does he remember a young man who
21 was constantly talking? He may have been on a phone seated behind
22 him.

23 A. So he -- from what he recalls, he recalls that person talking
24 and would have been seated one or two seats behind the girl that
25 was -- so opposite of him, and one or two seats behind the girl

1 that he described having sat next --

2 MR. DOWNING: Behind the 25-year-old.

3 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

4 INTERPRETER: So he doesn't recall if the man was on a phone
5 or not, but he does recall that he was talking constantly.

6 BY MS. HARLEY:

7 Q. He said that the -- initially the driver was loading luggage
8 onto the bus. Was he doing that from the outside or was he
9 putting luggage on the inside?

10 A. So he says that there was a -- I guess a compartment on the
11 very back of the bus, and so he loaded them onto the bus. So from
12 what he recalls, it was from the outside loading them in, and it
13 didn't have access from the passenger side inside.

14 Q. Great. Okay. Does he remember the driver having anything
15 over his ears?

16 A. He doesn't -- he couldn't tell. He couldn't really see the
17 driver.

18 Q. Okay. So does he have any sense of how long it took the fire
19 department to get on the scene?

20 A. He doesn't recall exactly, but in his mind, in his opinion,
21 he says it seemed like it took a long time for them to get there.

22 MS. HARLEY: That's all, unless he has any questions for me.

23 MR. OLIVARES: No.

24 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And just explain to him that my agency
25 will probably be sending him a letter just to keep him informed of

1 what we're doing and only dealing with the safety investigation.

2 INTERPRETER: Is there any way we can give him a card or --

3 MS. HARLEY: Yes. I gave it to that young lady right there.

4 MR. DOWNING: I'm going to go ahead and turn off the
5 recording then.

6 Do you have any questions for me?

7 INTERPRETER: Do you have his -- what do you have for his
8 address?

9 MR. DOWNING: For his address? I'd have to look. Let me
10 pull it up on my phone.

11 INTERPRETER: It's in Riverside. So if they can send it --
12 they would want it mailed to her in Riverside.

13 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right. So I just need to get her
14 name and then the address.

15 MR. DOWNING: Let me pull up my e-mail real quick. I'm going
16 to go ahead and turn this off for now.

17 (Whereupon, at 1:38 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

18

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: CRASH OF A MEDIUM-SIZED BUS
 NEAR PALA MESA, CALIFORNIA,
 ON FEBRUARY 22, 2020
 Interview of Jose Olivares

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY20FH003

PLACE: Escondido, California

DATE: February 27, 2020

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.


Katherine Motley
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:


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CRASH OF A MEDIUM-SIZED BUS
NEAR PALA MESA, CALIFORNIA,
ON FEBRUARY 22, 2020

Accident No.: HWY20FH003

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Interview of: SANDRA INOCENTE
Passenger


La Puente, California

Wednesday,
February 26, 2020

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MR. CASTANEDA
California Highway Patrol, Southern Division

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Sandra Inocente:

By Mr. Castaneda

4

By Ms. Harley

24

I N T E R V I E W

(9:59 a.m.)

1
2
3 MR. CASTANEDA: Okay, so today is February 26 at
4 approximately 10:30 hours. We are at the home address of Sandra
5 Inocente. Myself, Officer Castaneda with the California Highway
6 Patrol, Southern Division MAIT. Also present is --

7 MS. HARLEY: Sheryl Harley. I am with the National
8 Transportation Safety Board out of Washington, DC.

9 MR. CASTANEDA: And we're going to be conducting an interview
10 of Sandra Inocente regarding Saturday's bus crash.

11 MS. INOCENTE: (Indiscernible).

12 MR. CASTANEDA: (Indiscernible) whenever (indiscernible) take
13 some time (indiscernible)

14 MS. INOCENTE: The thing is that I am (indiscernible).

INTERVIEW OF SANDRA INOCENTE

15
16 BY MR. CASTANEDA:

17 Q. So can you tell me what you remember about the accident,
18 starting from when you left the bus terminal?

19 A. My daughter's friend took me to Baldwin Park. I was supposed
20 to be there at 8:15; the bus had not arrived yet. I stayed there
21 a bit; it arrived afterwards, and I asked the man if I could get
22 in, and he said yes, so I entered the bus. I entered the bus and
23 there were people in it. The bus was coming from El Monte, and
24 there were people in there. I sat on the third row seat where the
25 driver was.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. I sat there all by my little self. And then he entered the
3 freeway -- we left that area and he drove on to the freeway. We
4 were doing fine; everything was fine. He was driving fine, all
5 good. So he got off; he said he was going to make a stop in
6 Pomona and I think Riverside. He was just going to make two
7 stops.

8 He told me he didn't speak too much Spanish, and then he said
9 that we should remain seated, and if we wanted to go to the
10 bathroom, the last time he was going to let us go was in Temecula
11 -- go to the bathroom. Everything was fine. He was driving well;
12 everything good.

13 When we got back on the freeway, I made the sign of the cross
14 on myself and buckled up -- I did buckle up and that was it. We
15 arrived in Temecula. We got off the bus to go pee. It was
16 raining, and -- yeah, we got off. We all went in. He left to go
17 to the bathroom in Temecula at the gas station, and then a little
18 later, we got back on the freeway.

19 I crossed myself and yeah, it was fine. I sent a message to
20 my daughter Cindy; it was 10:21, right?

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

22 MS. INOCENTE: Yes. And I asked her if it was raining over
23 there, and she replied, a little. And I said, I love you all a
24 lot and to (indiscernible) Gloria.

25 At 10:29, that is when it happened. He, he was going fast.

1 He had the music loud; from the time we got on the bus at Baldwin
2 Park, he was playing loud music. Everything was doing well on the
3 street. When he got on the freeway at 10:29, when it happened --
4 he veered off, that's when he went suddenly like this. He kept
5 veering off and veering off like so, and then we were just like
6 this. And it started to overturn and then kept flipping over and
7 over.

8 And then -- what was I saying? I was just looking at people
9 -- I was buckled up; I was just looking at people flying all over,
10 things were flying all over and all -- I really think there were
11 more overturns. In mind, I think they were 4 or 3; I don't know.
12 Maybe there were more. But when it finally jumped the car where
13 it was found, nobody was there; I was the only one trapped in
14 there. In a tight corner, I don't know.

15 I saw that a person's leg had gone like this, and that was
16 the one that was stuck, the one they were trying to pull out with
17 an ax and all. I got unbuckled, and I was in a lot of panic. I
18 kept pulling myself. I was hanging, and when I unbuckled, I fell.
19 And I was dragging myself, and I kept holding on to avoid falling
20 all the way down.

21 And then, when I got up, I saw all the bodies there on the
22 grass. There was nobody, just the two people who were stuck in
23 there and just me. And I said, thank you, God. And I also told
24 my husband, thank you, because my husband passed away, too, six
25 months ago now. And I didn't want anything to happen to me,

1 because of my daughters. I was just looking at all the people
2 bleeding; a kid in serious condition; a lady -- I tried helping as
3 much as I could, but I was (indiscernible).

4 But he has to pay for what he did, because three innocent
5 people died, because of driving fast. He was driving fast. I
6 know how to drive; when it rains, you shouldn't drive fast. He is
7 responsible for those three people who died. I do want him to be
8 punished, because it was a trauma for all of us. And this little
9 child who was 5 to 7 years old -- I don't know how old -- he is
10 like this because of him.

11 And then before that -- sorry -- before that, he said, in
12 Temecula -- sorry I forgot -- he said, we have to go fast because
13 we are running late. Like that. And I know it was his fault. If
14 he had not been driving that fast -- because it was raining hard,
15 it was raining really hard.

16 I thank God for letting me live, I thank God that I was
17 careful, because I bent over curling like a snail shell, and I was
18 looking at all the people flying out the window. This is
19 traumatic for me, because I am unable to sleep. I keep asking my
20 daughters about the people I saw. I saw who was getting in, who
21 was getting out. I met a man, Pedro, when he got in the bus, and
22 I also met another man named Carlos -- and Javier, and a young
23 girl. I was sitting on the third row, and the young girl sat
24 behind me. Maybe she died, the girl who I've heard was 23 years
25 old; did she? Two older women and a young girl died, right?

1 MR. CASTANEDA: Yes.

2 MS. INOCENTE: And she was the only young person. Her and
3 the other young girl who was with the child were the youngest of
4 all. Everyone else -- we were all older ladies and older men.
5 That's all I can remember now. The rest, well --

6 BY MR. CASTANEDA:

7 Q. Okay, so you guys left from?

8 A. Baldwin Park. He arrived in El Monte and parked and went
9 into the office, and I went in. He had arrived from Baldwin Park.

10 Q. Have you used that company before?

11 A. Always, but never with this man; I've never been in the El
12 Monte buses with this guy. Always them.

13 Q. From Baldwin Park?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay, so the same company, but different driver?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And I had never had anything like this happen before. I
19 buckled up; the rest were not buckled up.

20 Q. And when you entered the bus, you said there were people
21 already inside.

22 A. Yes, already. And they -- from El Monte.

23 Q. El Monte?

24 A. Um-hmm.

25 Q. And when you entered, did you see any signs or warnings

1 telling you to buckle up your seat belts?

2 A. No, he did not even say that.

3 Q. Yes.

4 A. When he got in, he said what I mentioned: We're going to
5 make two stops; you can go pee in Temecula, and then I will not
6 stop again -- going into the freeway. As he was entering the
7 freeway, he said, I will not be able to make any more stops.

8 Q. Was that the only announcement he made?

9 A. No, he said it again in Temecula.

10 Q. Okay. He was -- he had to hurry up?

11 A. Yes, that and that everyone had to be seated -- we're running
12 late. That's it. And we stopped a last time in Temecula to go
13 pee.

14 Q. So he only made two announcements?

15 A. Yes, the first one when I got on the bus, and the second one
16 in Temecula. He said, sit down, I don't speak a lot of Spanish,
17 and we're running late. Supposedly, he had to be there at about
18 11:00 -- 11:00 and change, that's when he needed to be there, and
19 it happened at about 10:29.

20 Q. Okay, so you got in, you didn't see any sign stating that you
21 had to wear seat belts or that the bus had seat belts?

22 A. No.

23 Q. There was nothing?

24 A. I just got in and buckled up. That's it.

25 Q. How about the other times you have used this company? Have

1 you used the same bus or another bus but the same type?

2 A. I had never used that type of bus, never a white one.

3 Q. Okay, so --

4 A. (Indiscernible) it always had letters (indiscernible), like
5 the one from Baldwin Park.

6 Q. Was this bus smaller than what you had used? Or was it
7 bigger?

8 A. I really don't remember what the difference is. No reason to
9 lie. I don't know the difference.

10 Q. How many seats do you think the bus had?

11 A. Huh-uh, no. I'm just going to answer what I know, because I
12 do not like to tell lies.

13 Q. Perfect.

14 A. I don't know.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Because the other seats were already occupied, with -- the
17 ladies that got in at Baldwin Park, it was full. Because when I
18 got in, they were empty -- where I was sitting, on the driver's
19 side, the seats were empty. And on the other side -- to the left?
20 Where the door is, where you get in --

21 Q. Um-hmm.

22 A. Is that the right?

23 Q. The right, yes, the right.

24 A. On the right side, both seats were empty.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. They were empty. A young boy was on the other one. A young
2 boy was there alone. When we got in, those seats began to get
3 occupied. Those seats were -- where I was sitting -- because they
4 go, one, two, three -- I was there. Those were already occupied.
5 The ones over here, that's where the young girl was sitting and a
6 man named Javier.

7 Q. And where were you?

8 A. On the driver's side, where he was driving.

9 Q. How many rows back?

10 A. Three.

11 Q. And were you the only person on that seat?

12 A. Um-hmm.

13 Q. Because the seats fit two people?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay --

16 A. (Indiscernible).

17 Q. Oh, excuse me?

18 A. In front, there was a man and a lady.

19 Q. In front of you?

20 A. Um-hmm. The lady was alone, and then I was next; I was on the
21 third row. I was alone, and I was on the aisle side. I did not
22 sit on the window side.

23 Q. Okay, perfect. And you said that in front of you there was a
24 lady and a man?

25 A. Yes.

- 1 Q. In front of you?
- 2 A. Yes, there was a man and a lady; she was eating McDonald's.
- 3 Q. And who was on the window side? The man or the lady?
- 4 A. No, the lady who was eating McDonald's was on my side; she
5 was not on the window side.
- 6 Q. Okay.
- 7 A. She had all her stuff, bags and all, on the other seat.
- 8 Q. Okay.
- 9 A. And the other one, the man, was also sitting next to the
10 aisle, not next to the window.
- 11 Q. Okay, so he was in front of the lady?
- 12 A. Yes.
- 13 Q. On the seat in front?
- 14 A. Yes.
- 15 Q. Okay. (Indiscernible) --
- 16 A. And then there was another -- at the entrance --
- 17 Q. -- entrance?
- 18 A. Oh, sorry, then I was next. Then, later, a young girl came
19 in; she was wearing a yellow blouse -- I don't know if you want
20 details, but she was wearing --
- 21 Q. Yes.
- 22 A. I don't remember that young girl too well. I hope she didn't
23 die. She was young. She was wearing a pink blouse and dark
24 jeans. Now I do remember. She sat behind me. Then after, there
25 was a man who was wearing a blue shirt. His name is Javier; he

1 broke his foot. He was there with me at the hospital. And then
2 past that, I have no idea who else was there.

3 Q. What kind of shirt was he wearing?

4 A. It was, like, a blue sweater.

5 Q. A sweater?

6 A. Um-hmm, a blue one. That's all. I saw those people from my
7 side.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. On the other side, there was a lady.

10 Q. Was she straight to your right?

11 A. A lady, I saw them. I was here, and here was the aisle, and
12 this is where the (indiscernible) goes in here.

13 Q. Yes.

14 A. A man was there, and then there was the lady, who is still in
15 here. I can't forget her; she was wearing a jacket -- she was
16 wearing a red jacket. And then a little later, I looked at that
17 lady again, and then from there -- when I mentioned that we made
18 the bathroom stop?

19 Q. Um-hmm.

20 A. She was by herself.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. That lady was by herself. Then after, there was a young
23 child who was wearing all black; he was a boy. And from there on,
24 I don't know anything. I just know who were the people travelling
25 there. And then when we made the bathroom stop and all. The man

1 sat next to -- because the lady moved to the window side -- the
2 lady wearing the red jacket, she moved to the window side.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Because a guy, a man sat there.

5 Q. With her?

6 A. With her, when we stopped in Temecula to go to the bathroom,
7 he sat there, and the lady looked at him like, why are you sitting
8 there? And I laughed to myself, and so he stayed there. He was
9 wearing glasses -- he was wearing dark glasses; he had a mustache
10 and long hair, that man, and he had a plaid shirt, like the ones
11 "cholos" wear. That's all I remember. I remember very well the
12 people sitting in front of me, because I was looking at them as
13 they were getting in.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. That's all I remember.

16 Q. Okay. Thanks a lot for the very important information. What
17 kind of belts did the bus have?

18 A. Well, the man named Javier told me that it only had -- here
19 -- he did. But I buckled up tight, I buckled up tight when we got
20 on the freeway (indiscernible).

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. When -- I had a cup of coffee -- I had bought a cup of coffee
23 before getting in the bus. So when we got on the freeway, I
24 buckled up tight, from here to here; that's why I think my neck is
25 like this. I buckled up tight, all the way from here to here. I

1 kept looking for it, and I couldn't find it, and then the young
2 guy that I told you about was staring at me, and he saw me when I
3 buckled up; he was wearing all black.

4 So I buckled up and crossed myself, and I did my prayer in my
5 mind, and that was it. But there were belts in front. I don't
6 know if there were any in the back, because Javier mentioned that
7 there weren't any. There were no belts in the back. There were
8 only the ones like so, lap belts, not shoulder belts.

9 Q. And do you remember if your seat belt came from the right to
10 your left or from your upper left to your lower right?

11 A. It was from here. I grabbed like so to run it across me like
12 this.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Because I was on the aisle side. I had to buckle up. I did
15 not take it off. No way I would take it off.

16 Q. And the seat you were sitting on --

17 A. The aisle.

18 Q. The aisle, okay.

19 A. I do want him to be punished. He caused a lot of bad things.
20 I feel -- I have that kid in my head, the lady. The boy was
21 covered with blood when I got out of there, because I was the only
22 one that was stuck in there, hanging. I do want him to -- I saw
23 the boy drenched in blood.

24 Q. And during the trip, from Temecula to the time of the
25 accident, how was the -- was it raining?

1 A. When we got on the freeway, it was already raining.

2 Q. It was already raining?

3 A. That is why I mentioned that I sent a message to my daughter,
4 and I asked her how hard was it raining there, and she told me
5 that it was just -- what? Sprinkling?

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible) sprinkling, mom.

7 MS. INOCENTE: Um-hmm, and on the freeway it was raining
8 harder, and drivers are driving -- with water on the mirrors. I
9 know how to drive, and I know he was driving fast and the music
10 loud.

11 BY MR. CASTANEDA:

12 Q. Yes. And how did you see -- was it raining hard or a little
13 bit? How did you see it?

14 A. Well, it was raining -- I mean, not like a lot of water,
15 right? But it was indeed raining, like, I think medium. You
16 couldn't see through my window. I had to wipe it with my hand.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Because you couldn't see through it. You couldn't see even
19 on the mirror when the man was driving.

20 Q. And you (indiscernible) your place?

21 A. (Indiscernible) I got (indiscernible), like so, to look.

22 Q. And did you look on the road in front?

23 A. Yes, but the accident had not happened yet. But, like, you
24 couldn't see too well. But the man was driving fast. In my
25 opinion, he was driving fast. Because when it rains, you have to

1 keep your distance and not drive fast, because you can slide or
2 something. And I think that -- no, I know. Not I think, I know
3 he was driving fast. Because I am not lying; God is my witness
4 that I am not lying.

5 Q. When you saw the road in front of you, did you see any cars
6 in front of the bus?

7 A. Not too close.

8 Q. Not too close?

9 A. No, because I took a look. No, they were not too close. I
10 don't know what that man did.

11 Q. Do you remember what lane was he driving on? From the left,
12 they are one, two, three, four.

13 A. I think we were in the middle one. I'm not sure; I'm not
14 sure if we were in the middle because we were not all the way this
15 way.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. If we would have been almost at the edge where we were about
18 to go off, then we would have fallen much deeper, but we were not
19 at the edge. Because there are four lanes or three? I'm not sure
20 on that freeway.

21 Q. I think there are four.

22 A. How many lanes were there?

23 Q. I actually don't know.

24 A. But you do understand what I'm trying to tell you, right?

25 Q. Yes.

1 A. If we would have been -- here is everything that happened,
2 and here is where he crashed. If we would had been close to
3 there, we would have fallen all the way down onto the other
4 freeway. But we didn't, so I think we were, like, in the middle.
5 Because it did take a while to get out that way. I think we were
6 in the middle; we were not close to that.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Because I did not see it too close to where the vehicle fell
9 off. Like I just mentioned to you, I took a look like this, and I
10 wiped my window, because you couldn't see anything. It was, like
11 -- how do you say when the windows are --

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Foggy.

13 MS. INOCENTE: Foggy, yes.

14 MR. CASTANEDA: Okay.

15 MS. INOCENTE: That's how my window was. And I did -- went
16 this on it with my finger, like so, to be able to see. And I saw
17 a car, but it could also be seen from his window.

18 BY MR. CASTANEDA:

19 Q. So were you awake when the accident happened?

20 A. Yes, I didn't fall asleep at all.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. I closed my eyes, but when we were walking, like so, on the
23 freeway -- because (indiscernible) in Pomona, because I was
24 praying.

25 Q. Okay, and you said the bus was going fast?

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. How fast do you think he was going?
- 3 A. I really can't tell you, but to me, it was fast.
- 4 Q. Okay.
- 5 A. I think it was too fast for driving in the rain.
- 6 Q. Do you remember if the bus was passing other cars on the
7 freeway, or were other cars passing the bus?
- 8 A. No, I didn't see anything like that.
- 9 Q. Okay.
- 10 A. No, because I was texting my daughter, so I wasn't paying
11 attention to that.
- 12 Q. Okay.
- 13 A. I really didn't. I don't want to say things that I don't
14 remember, and I do not want to make things up either.
- 15 Q. Okay. (Indiscernible) please.
- 16 A. I just have everything here in my mind.
- 17 Q. Okay. And when you got picked up -- when you got on the bus
18 in Baldwin Park, then you stopped in Pomona and Temecula, how was
19 he driving up to that point?
- 20 A. Fine, fine.
- 21 Q. He was driving fine?
- 22 A. Yes, fine. To me, it was fine.
- 23 Q. Okay.
- 24 A. When he got on, that is when -- not even fast; I didn't
25 complain, nothing. To me, it was fine.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. When he got on the freeway, when that happened, then I did
3 feel he was driving fast.

4 Q. Was that the only time that you thought he was driving too
5 fast?

6 A. Yes. That's when I got like so, and then I looked outside
7 like so, because he was driving fast.

8 Q. And it's that time he said that you have to sit down as --
9 that he was in a hurry?

10 A. No.

11 Q. The driver didn't tell you that --

12 A. No, he said that Temecula, when we stopped to go pee.

13 Q. Okay. Before you drove back onto the freeway?

14 A. Onto the freeway.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. We stopped in Temecula, and he said, let's go pee. Because
17 he was waiting for a lady -- for some people. We stopped there,
18 and he said, go to the gas station to go pee. There was a Denny's
19 there, but he said, don't go to the restaurant because they don't
20 want you there.

21 So we went. That's where he sent us, and that's when he said
22 -- he stood up right in the middle, next to me -- he even went
23 like that to me, because he was walking, and he said, we are
24 running late, so do not get up for anything. And that was it. He
25 drove up on to the freeway.

1 Q. Do you remember if anyone told the driver that he was
2 driving --

3 A. No. I wanted to say something, but it was stupid that I
4 ended up not saying anything.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. And then I looked out the window -- I wanted to say something
7 -- wanted to tell you that, but I didn't tell you because I didn't
8 say anything.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. I wanted to tell you that a little bit ago. I looked out the
11 window, and I went like this with my finger, but I didn't say
12 anything.

13 Q. And you didn't hear if anyone else said anything?

14 A. No.

15 Q. No?

16 A. No. When all that happened, and everyone was on the floor,
17 that's when the man said it -- he was driving fast. But that was
18 after the accident happened, when we were all there on the floor,
19 and I was talking to other people. I know he was driving fast.

20 Q. The driver told you that?

21 A. No, no, no. Other people.

22 Q. Other people.

23 A. Other people that were in the accident. And I said, he was
24 driving fast, and they all said, yes.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And then the man, Javier with the blue shirt, I told him,
2 hey, he was driving -- but then he said he did not remember
3 anything because he hit his head.

4 Q. Javier?

5 A. Um-hmm, the guy with the blue shirt. I -- to those people --
6 I do remember. I remember Pedro, I remember Rosa, I remember
7 Javier, and I remember Carlos.

8 Q. And the people who you were with -- you were able to see in
9 front of you -- those people in front of you, do you remember if
10 they were wearing their seatbelts?

11 A. No.

12 Q. No, they were not wearing them, or no, you don't know if they
13 were wearing them?

14 A. I didn't look.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. I didn't look, that's the truth. I did not look.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. So, when you were looking at the bus, you felt that it was --

19 Q. He lost control.

20 A. He lost control?

21 Q. Can you explain exactly what -- how?

22 A. It was like a yank, like that.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. And that's when it all went straight up there, and that's
25 when it all started. On the side, he lost control. He veered off

1 towards the grass, right? He lost control right there, and then
2 the vehicle went sideways, like, going up like so. I don't know
3 how to explain it. This is the vehicle, right?

4 Q. Um-hmm.

5 A. And the vehicle went like this and then like this. It stood
6 up on its side, and that's when it started flipping over and over
7 and over, and that's when we fell in there.

8 Q. When he lost control -- when you say he lost control --

9 A. He was still on the freeway.

10 Q. So you felt the bus going to the right side?

11 A. That way.

12 Q. And then to the left or not?

13 A. What do you mean? Tell me again.

14 Q. So the bus went -- it was just on the freeway, and then
15 suddenly, did he go to the right side only?

16 A. No, it was going like this.

17 Q. How many times did you feel that it went from side to side?

18 A. I really don't know. I truly don't know; it happened so
19 fast.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. But I do know that he lost control, and then it went like
22 this, and then it went up. Because we -- I went like this, and
23 that's when it started flipping over and over. That's all I
24 remember.

25 Q. Okay. So what do you think caused the accident?

1 A. That he was going at high speed, and he was playing loud
2 music.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. I think that was the reason why it happened. If he would've
5 been careful and not going fast. When it rains, it's slippery.

6 Q. Yes.

7 A. You lose control, because your tires start sliding. That's
8 what I think. I think that was a mistake he made. In my opinion,
9 he was being reckless.

10 Q. And did you happen to see if there were other cars next to
11 the bus?

12 A. No, I did not see any. I didn't see anything else.

13 Q. No?

14 A. No. That's all I can remember.

15 MR. CASTANEDA: Okay. Let me talk to her to see if she has
16 any questions.

17 MS. INOCENTE: Yes.

18 MR. CASTANEDA: Because I think she did not understand
19 anything. She does not speak Spanish. Let me see if she has any
20 questions, okay?

21 MS. INOCENTE: Yes.

22 MR. CASTANEDA: Do you have questions?

23 MS. HARLEY: Yeah, just so that I understand the positioning.

24 BY MS. HARLEY:

25 Q. She was in the third row, behind the driver, is that correct?

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. And was she on the window or the aisle?
- 3 A. I was in the -- not in the window. I was in the aisle.
- 4 Q. You were in the aisle. Okay. And who did you say was in
5 front of you?
- 6 A. It was a man and a woman.
- 7 Q. A man and a woman?
- 8 A. Yeah.
- 9 Q. And which one was on the aisle?
- 10 A. Huh?
- 11 Q. Which one was on the aisle? Who was sitting by the window?
- 12 A. Nobody.
- 13 Q. Nobody?
- 14 A. On my side, nobody.
- 15 Q. So the person sitting directly in front of you was a man?
- 16 A. Yes.
- 17 Q. And then, in front of him, there was a woman?
- 18 A. No, it was first the man, and then there was the woman, and
19 then it was me. And there was a (indiscernible).
- 20 Q. So it was a man, a woman, and you were in the third row?
- 21 A. Yes.
- 22 Q. And then, behind you?
- 23 A. It was a girl.
- 24 Q. A girl?
- 25 A. And then it was a man, wearing a blue sweater. She was

1 wearing dark jeans and a pink blouse.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. I remember.

4 Q. Okay, okay. Did you see that young lady after the crash?

5 A. No.

6 Q. And do you remember who was sitting behind the man?

7 A. What man?

8 Q. The man sitting behind you.

9 A. (Indiscernible) with the blue sweater?

10 Q. Yeah, and behind the man with the blue sweater?

11 A. No, I didn't -- I just remember those people.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Because I could see them

14 Q. Do you remember where the child was sitting?

15 A. Yeah, in the back.

16 Q. He was in the back?

17 A. Yes, he was in the back with that girl. I saw the girl.

18 MS. INOCENTE: How do you say, waving goodbye to her husband?

19 MR. CASTANEDA: Saying goodbye to -- she saw the young lady
20 saying goodbye to her husband.

21 MS. INOCENTE: Yeah, I saw a guy too.

22 BY MS. HARLEY:

23 Q. Do you remember if the little boy was sitting by the window
24 or was he on the --

25 A. No, no, no.

1 Q. Okay. So do you know on the opposite side of the bus -- so
2 from the other side of the aisle, the first row, do you remember
3 who was sitting there?

4 A. In my row?

5 MR. CASTANEDA: No, the --

6 MS. HARLEY: When you walk on the bus -- on the opposite
7 side.

8 MS. INOCENTE: The other side? It was a, it was a -- ay ay
9 ay. It was a lady wearing a -- no, she was sitting down. Ay ay
10 ay. Wait, wait. First, there was a man --

11 BY MR. CASTANEDA:

12 Q. The front seats were not occupied, right?

13 A. From mine no, no.

14 Q. No, no, no. In front.

15 A. Oh, in front there were people.

16 Q. There were people?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. The first seats?

19 A. Yes, from -- to the side, there were people.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. It was a man, right?

22 Q. Yes, but I have that the first seats were, were not occupied.
23 Nobody was there.

24 A. Actually, yes.

25 Q. Okay.

- 1 A. There was a man.
- 2 Q. Okay.
- 3 A. Then there was a lady and --
- 4 Q. Okay, so (indiscernible), that's all?
- 5 A. Yes, (indiscernible).
- 6 Q. The first one?
- 7 A. Yes. Here, I know there was a lady. When I got in the
8 bus -- oh, now you got me confused. There was a lady with a red
9 jacket --
- 10 Q. Yes.
- 11 A. She was there. She was there. In the second row?
- 12 Q. Um-hmm.
- 13 A. In the second row, that's where I think she was. And the
14 young guy who was wearing all black was behind her. She was by
15 herself. When we stopped in Temecula, that's when the other guy
16 sat next to her.
- 17 Q. Um-hmm.
- 18 A. In front, there was a guy? Did I tell you a guy --
- 19 Q. Yes.
- 20 A. -- or a girl? A guy, right?
- 21 Q. Yes.
- 22 A. In the first row, a guy, then the lady in red, and then from
23 there was the guy in black. He had been wearing a cap, but he
24 took it off. That's how it was. A guy, right?
- 25 Q. Yes.

1 A. Sitting in the first row, then from there, the lady in red
2 and then the young guy.

3 Q. Yes.

4 A. I just remembered, listen, in the first row I told you --

5 Q. Um-hmm.

6 A. There was the other one -- there was another man travelling.
7 He moved from there. He was the other driver; there were two
8 drivers.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. But this was the driver.

11 Q. Yes.

12 A. And then here, there was the man sitting. And he said -- he
13 told him, I'm going to the back to lay down. So went all the way
14 to the back, and that is when the other person sat there.

15 MR. CASTANEDA: Okay.

16 BY MS. HARLEY:

17 Q. Let's see. There was a female sitting -- a (indiscernible)
18 female behind her, pink blouse --

19 A. Behind me.

20 Q. -- dark jeans and then --

21 A. Javier is -- was the one with the blue sweater.

22 Q. Right. Javier.

23 A. I did not look that easy at all; from my side, I didn't look
24 at all.

25 Q. Okay, and was everybody on the aisle?

1 A. The lady in -- the one with the red jacket, red jacket --

2 Q. Um-hmm.

3 A. No.

4 Q. No?

5 A. No, she was in the window. And the guy all in black, he was
6 in the window. First, he was in the aisle, and then, when we
7 stopped in Temecula, he went to the window.

8 Q. Got you. All right. So, if I understand correctly, you were
9 wearing your seat belt?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. And did you see anybody else wearing a seatbelt?

12 A. Not in my line, I didn't see nothing. I didn't see in the
13 back, nobody wearing them.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Seatbelts.

16 Q. Okay. Did the driver make an announcement that people should
17 wear the seat belts on the bus?

18 A. No.

19 Q. After the crash, how did you get out of the bus?

20 A. I was like hanging up, and the car went like this; it was the
21 last --

22 MS. INOCENTE: -- overturn?

23 MR. CASTANEDA: Row, I think.

24 MS. INOCENTE: The last row, and I see -- and don't know if
25 it was a man -- I don't know, but I see a leg into my head, and

1 then crash, like this, crash like that. And I have a -- I saw a
2 body in my back, I saw -- and I was pulling my seat belt like
3 this, and I was like -- I was crying, and I was -- I remember I
4 have to --

5 BY MS. HARLEY:

6 Q. Buckle up?

7 A. I remember, because I was pulling the seatbelt and I said,
8 oh, my God, I have to pull it. And unlocked it, and when I
9 unlocked it, I fall in the (indiscernible), because it was like
10 this -- a little hole, and then I was grabbing the grass -- I was
11 holding the grass so that I can get out.

12 And that is when I saw the people there in the grass; I saw
13 the people on the floor, everybody on the floor, because I saw the
14 people were flying -- flew. Yeah, because I see, when it was
15 rolling, I saw the people -- I saw a lady was falling in the chair
16 like this.

17 It was bad. I cannot sleep all days, thinking about the
18 people. I know it's going to take long time. I wish and I hope
19 that, that guy gets punished, because he was driving faster. He
20 was listening to the music so loud. All those three innocent
21 people died. It was terrible; I just remember everything.

22 Q. So I just want to get this right: You got on at Baldwin? Is
23 that right?

24 A. Huh?

25 Q. You got on the bus at --

- 1 A. Baldwin Park.
- 2 Q. Baldwin Park, okay. Have you ever ridden that bus before?
- 3 A. That bus before, no.
- 4 Q. No?
- 5 A. But I was always -- not always, but I was with my sister. I
- 6 always get the bus from Baldwin Park. I never had an accident or
- 7 nothing.
- 8 Q. So you'd never seen that driver before?
- 9 A. No, never.
- 10 Q. Did you use the same company before?
- 11 A. Yeah, in Baldwin Park.
- 12 Q. Okay.
- 13 A. It's not the first time.
- 14 Q. So, Javier, is that a friend of yours or --
- 15 A. No.
- 16 Q. Who is he?
- 17 A. He was in the bus. Driver.
- 18 Q. He was the bus driver?
- 19 A. No, no, no. He was inside the bus.
- 20 Q. He was a passenger?
- 21 A. I knew him because he was in the hospital.
- 22 Q. Oh, okay.
- 23 A. He spoke English.
- 24 Q. Oh, okay. Got it. I got one more question. Let's see. So
- 25 were you watching the driver as he was driving down the road?

1 A. Like the first time, when I text my daughter at 10:21, yes, I
2 watched. Because I was telling my daughter, is it raining over
3 there? And she said, yes, a little -- sprinkling, no?

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Um-hmm.

5 MS. INOCENTE: And then I told her, I love you so much; take
6 care of Gloria. That's it, that's all I remember. Because at
7 10:29, that's when this happened.

8 BY MS. HARLEY:

9 Q. Okay, so when you checked your door, you saw the driver, was
10 he upright?

11 A. No, I didn't see him.

12 Q. You couldn't see him?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Okay. And you said it was raining a little bit. What was
15 the weather like, again? I just want to --

16 A. Like foggy, because I had to close the window. It was like
17 foggy, because I put my fingers to see outside. I couldn't see,
18 so I had to clean. Yeah, it was.

19 Q. Did you see the windshield -- the front windshield?

20 A. In the front?

21 Q. In the front.

22 A. Yeah, it was the same.

23 Q. It was the same as the one you --

24 A. Yeah, you couldn't see nothing.

25 Q. You couldn't see through?

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And my side.

4 Q. Okay. All right. And about what time did you get on the
5 bus?

6 A. I had to be there at 8:55.

7 Q. Okay. 8:55 is when the bus would pick you up?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Was the bus on time?

10 A. Um-hmm.

11 MS. HARLEY: All right. So I'm going to explain this, and
12 Hector, you'll probably have to translate it. So one thing that
13 we do --

14 MR. CASTANEDA: Can I just ask one more thing?

15 MS. HARLEY: Yeah.

16 BY MR. CASTANEDA:

17 Q. I have one more question regarding, what was the driver doing
18 leading up to the crash? Was he drinking? Was he eating
19 something?

20 A. First, somebody called him, and he answered the phone.
21 That's it. I'm thinking he was not drinking. I didn't see him; I
22 couldn't see him.

23 Q. When you say he answered the phone, how did he answer it?
24 Did he get the phone in his hand?

25 A. No, I couldn't see him. But he was talking, and he said,

1 call somebody. He said something like that.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. But no, no. I didn't see him because, you know, it is bigger
4 -- no, no, I couldn't see him.

5 Q. Okay, but at some point, he was talking to somebody?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. And this was from Temecula to the accident?

8 A. He was in the freeway when he answered it.

9 Q. Right. Right before the accident?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. Okay. And, when you arrived at Baldwin Park to get on the
12 bus, how was he acting? What was his demeanor?

13 A. Fine. I didn't see nothing out of hand. He was in the first
14 when I -- he was -- in Baldwin Park, like I told you, he stood in
15 the middle, and he said, okay, it's going to be a stop at Temecula
16 so you can go to the restroom, and you have to be sitting --
17 always be sitting. That's it; that's all he said. And then he
18 was driving -- and he started driving.

19 Q. So at no point did he seem like he was having a difficult
20 time communicating, let alone drive?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I didn't see nothing. That's all that he said. He said, I
24 don't speak Spanish. That's it.

25 Q. Okay. Now, regarding the bus, was there anything on the bus

1 that made you think there was something wrong with the bus?

2 A. Huh-uh.

3 Q. Nothing?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Okay. And you said you used buses -- the same company
6 before, and this bus was no different --

7 A. No, I never seen that guy; I never seen that bus. It was so
8 different. It was white.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. That's the thing I noticed. It was white. It was different
11 than the ones I have used.

12 BY MS. HARLEY:

13 Q. The one you always use, is it the same size bus? It was just
14 a different color?

15 A. A different color. I'm not sure if it was the same. It was
16 long -- no, huh-uh.

17 Q. Okay. When the people got on board the bus, the people got
18 on board after Baldwin Park? After you got on, was there another
19 stop?

20 A. Yeah, no -- oh. After?

21 Q. After you got on. So you got on the bus --

22 A. In Baldwin Park.

23 Q. In Baldwin Park, how many people were on the bus when you got
24 on?

25 A. I don't know.

1 Q. Was it full? Were there are only a few people, do you think?

2 A. Well, when I get into the bus, I -- so the (indiscernible).
3 I saw two that were empty; I saw the front, and there was that
4 lady who was eating McDonald's on the second row, and I sat on the
5 third. In the front, I just see the -- yeah, it was the guy; he
6 was there, the guy and a red jacket, the girl. When I get into
7 the bus, there were people there. There was that guy I told you,
8 in the blue sweater; he was there.

9 There were people. It was not too much, because I didn't see
10 a lot of people in the back. That's all I remember.

11 Q. Okay, and did the bus stop again after your pick-up?

12 A. Yeah, he stopped -- I think it was in Pomona. I think it was
13 in Pomona.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Because he said he was going to two stops. I think you said
16 two stops, that's it.

17 MS. HARLEY: Okay, let's see. I think that's it.

18 MR. CASTANEDA: So, when you -- I'm sorry.

19 MS. HARLEY: Yeah, go ahead.

20 MR. CASTANEDA: So, when you got on the bus, did you see
21 anything in the bus that would lead you to believe that there was
22 something --

23 MS. HARLEY: Something (indiscernible)?

24 MR. CASTANEDA: -- something wrong with it?

25 MS. INOCENTE: No, huh-uh.

1 MR. CASTANEDA: Okay.

2 MS. HARLEY: All right. I don't have anything else.

3 MR. CASTANEDA: I don't have anything else. Go ahead.

4 MS. HARLEY: So my agency, our job is to look at what
5 happened and find out if there was something unsafe and if there
6 is something that we could do to make sure it doesn't happen
7 again. That's what we do.

8 We also reach out to you. You are a victim, and we kind of
9 let you know what we are doing, and (indiscernible) our report.
10 We will also contact you. If you have any questions, you have my
11 phone number, and you can call me. Call me on my cell; I will
12 always answer that. I may not be in the office.

13 There was one other question I did want to ask you: Which
14 hospital did you go to?

15 (Loud coughing.)

16 MS. INOCENTE: Give him a glass of water, daughter.

17 MR. CASTANEDA: No, that's fine, fine.

18 BY MS. HARLEY:

19 Q. I just want to verify: You went to Temecula Valley Hospital,
20 is that correct?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. And what kind of injuries did they say you had?

23 A. Well, I have a bruise right here on my --

24 Q. You can just tell me, because I want to see them.

25 A. I have a bruise from right here to right here. My neck, I

1 cannot move my neck. I have bruises right here on my neck. I
2 have bruises right here on my --

3 (Loud coughing.)

4 MS. INOCENTE: Do you want some water?

5 MS. HARLEY: Oh, no. I'm fine.

6 MS. INOCENTE: My head hurts too much. I think I have bruises
7 -- and I have on my private thing. It hurts too much; I cannot
8 walk. I don't know what happened. Maybe I hit something, I don't
9 know. It hurts. I have a bump right here. I have a lot of -- how
10 do you say it?

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Scars.

12 MS. INOCENTE: Scars in my back, because she helped me take a
13 shower and I have -- how?

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Scratches.

15 MS. INOCENTE: Scratches on -- how do you say?

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Her bottom, her butt.

17 MS. INOCENTE: Like, like glasses, no?

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKEER: (Indiscernible), she wears
19 (indiscernible).

20 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

21 MS. INOCENTE: And in my hands a little, when I was pulling
22 the cross to stop the car -- how can I stop the car? I was just
23 holding the cross. That's it, and my neck.

24 I can't go to sleep because I think about everything that
25 happened, and I start crying. I get so nervous, and when they

1 talk to love for me, and I say, please quiet. I just want to be
2 sleeping so I cannot remember nothing.

3 MS. HARLEY: I understand. So one other thing that we can
4 try to help you do is to find someone to help you kind of walk you
5 through this. This is, is -- I understand this is something that
6 is terrible --

7 MS. INOCENTE: Yeah.

8 MS. HARLEY: -- terrible for you, and you really should
9 actually talk to someone, someone who can give you the kind of
10 help that you need to help you through this.

11 MS. INOCENTE: Yeah, because my husband passed away. Today
12 is going to be six months.

13 MS. HARLEY: I'm so sorry.

14 MS. INOCENTE: And we are not through with that. And this
15 happened and my -- if I was not wearing a seatbelt, I'd be worse
16 right now. Because every nurse, they told me, you are so lucky
17 you were wearing your seatbelt; if you were not wearing your
18 seatbelt, like Rosa, behind me -- I don't know, I don't know
19 nothing about the girls there. I knew them right now in the
20 ambulance, because I was with them, and I was asking, what is your
21 name?

22 Because in the ambulance inside they were taking us to, there
23 were two men and Rosa and me. And we were talking and we would
24 answer. Because that guy told me, can you help me? They don't
25 speak English. I knew a little bit. And then she was worse,

1 everything, her face. She has bumps right here on her chest. And
2 I said, God, thank you (indiscernible). Because she flew through
3 the window. And Pedro, he was so bad, Pedro.

4 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

5 MS. INOCENTE: That's the, the people who I was with
6 inside -- how do you say that?

7 MR. CASTANEDA: Inside.

8 MS. INOCENTE: Yeah, it was inside. They were taking us to
9 the hospital.

10 MS. HARLEY: Right.

11 MS. INOCENTE: So I was talking. We were praying, yeah.

12 MS. HARLEY: Do you know of anybody that was thrown out of
13 the bus?

14 MS. INOCENTE: Yes, there was a lot of people.

15 MS. HARLEY: Were just thrown around?

16 MS. INOCENTE: I just saw a lot of people were flying.

17 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right.

18 MS. INOCENTE: I don't know how many people were flying for
19 the window.

20 MS. HARLEY: Yeah.

21 MS. INOCENTE: But I see people (indiscernible). I know it
22 was two women died, that they were like -- how old are they? I
23 know it was, like, 23, one girl, huh?

24 MS. HARLEY: Um-hmm.

25 MS. INOCENTE: And the other one was?

1 MS. HARLEY: It was an older woman and -- two older women.

2 MS. INOCENTE: Yeah, I know. Oh, my God.

3 MS. HARLEY: Well, I appreciate you talking to us. Thank
4 you.

5 MS. INOCENTE: I wish (indiscernible), so he can punish that
6 guy. I think he was dead; he was not (indiscernible). He was not
7 supposed to drive faster.

8 MR. CASTANEDA: Okay, so this is going to conclude the
9 interview of Sandra Inocente. It is currently 11:25.

10 (Whereupon, at 11:25 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

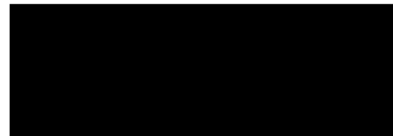
IN THE MATTER OF: CRASH OF A MEDIUM-SIZED BUS
NEAR PALA MESA, CALIFORNIA,
ON FEBRUARY 22, 2020
Interview of Sandra Inocente

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY20FH003

PLACE: La Puente, California

DATE: February 26, 2020

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been translated
and transcribed to the best of my skill and ability.



Zhann Henry Cifuentes
Translator/Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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CRASH OF A MEDIUM-SIZED BUS
NEAR PALA MESA, CALIFORNIA,
ON FEBRUARY 22, 2020

Accident No.: HWY20FH003

* * * * *

Interview of: HAYDEE ZUMAETA
Passenger



West Covina, California

Wednesday,
February 26, 2020

APPEARANCES:

HECTOR CASTANEDA, Investigator
California Highway Patrol

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

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I N T E R V I E W

(2:39 p.m.)

1
2
3 MR. CASTANEDA: It is February 22nd at approximately 1439
4 hours --

5 MS. HARLEY: 26th, February 26th.

6 MR. CASTANEDA: February 26th at approximately 1439 hours,
7 and we are at the home of Haydee Zumaeta.

8 MS. ZUMAETA: Zumaeta.

9 MR. CASTANEDA: Zumaeta. Present is myself, Officer
10 Castaneda, California Highway Patrol, 7 Division, MAIT. Also
11 present is --

12 MS. HARLEY: Sheryl Harley. I am with the National
13 Transportation Safety Board in Washington, DC.

14 MR. CASTANEDA: Okay.

INTERVIEW OF HAYDEE ZUMAETA

15
16 BY MR. CASTANEDA:

17 Q. So if you can start for what you remember about the accident.

18 A. Not much because I had my eyes closed, but I wasn't sleeping.
19 Just had my eyes closed.

20 Q. Can we start from where you got on the bus?

21 A. El Monte.

22 Q. El Monte. Okay. And do you remember what time you got on
23 the bus?

24 A. Eight. Eight in the morning.

25 Q. Eight in the morning. Okay.

1 A. And then from El Monte, he went to Baldwin Park, and then I
2 think to Pomona and Riverside. He was picking up people.

3 Q. Okay. And where were you -- where was this bus going to in
4 the final destination?

5 A. San Ysidro.

6 Q. Okay. Do you remember anything when you got on the bus,
7 talking to anybody?

8 A. No.

9 Q. And were you by yourself?

10 A. Yeah. I was by myself. I was in the middle of -- on the
11 right side.

12 Q. On the right side?

13 A. Um-hmm.

14 Q. Do you remember how many seats back from the front you were
15 on -- in?

16 A. No. I don't remember.

17 Q. You don't remember?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Do you remember who was around you?

20 A. I know there was like a guy. I think it was a
21 (indiscernible) another guy. No. I don't remember.

22 Q. No?

23 A. Huh-uh.

24 Q. Okay. You don't know what they were wearing?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Okay. So, when you got on the bus, did you talk to the
2 driver?

3 A. No.

4 Q. No.

5 A. No. He just say good morning, so we were seating and -- but
6 I didn't talk to him.

7 Q. Now, you had to purchase a ticket to get on the bus, correct?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Who verified your ticket to allow you to get on the bus?

10 A. The lady. When I bought the ticket, she just kept the paper.

11 Q. Okay. And then --

12 A. Because that morning I bought the ticket.

13 Q. Oh, you bought the ticket that morning?

14 A. Um-hmm.

15 Q. At the El Monte --

16 A. El Monte Station.

17 Q. El Monte Station.

18 A. Um-hmm.

19 Q. So were you waiting in line to get into the bus?

20 A. No. No.

21 Q. The lady just said, get in the bus?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And how did you know which bus to get on?

24 A. Because it (indiscernible). There was only one bus.

25 Q. There was only --

- 1 A. It's a small -- a very small -- it's a shopping center, but
2 it's very small. So I knew it was the bus.
- 3 Q. Okay. How many -- was this your first time using --
- 4 A. That I took the -- no.
- 5 Q. -- the company?
- 6 A. No. I think two or three times.
- 7 Q. Two or three times?
- 8 A. Um-hmm.
- 9 Q. Okay. Do you know if this was the same bus you used before?
- 10 A. No. Because the last time I remember that bus had curtains,
11 and this one didn't have curtains.
- 12 Q. It didn't have curtains?
- 13 A. No.
- 14 Q. What about the size of the bus?
- 15 A. This was smaller.
- 16 Q. This was smaller than the times you used it before?
- 17 A. Um-hmm.
- 18 Q. Okay. Anything else on the bus that you -- different than
19 the other time?
- 20 A. No.
- 21 Q. No.
- 22 A. About the same.
- 23 Q. So you went into the bus. The lady told you, you can go in
24 the bus?
- 25 A. Um-hmm.

- 1 Q. Was the door closed? Did the driver open the door?
- 2 A. No. The door was --
- 3 Q. The door was open.
- 4 A. -- open, um-hmm.
- 5 Q. Now, was the driver in the bus already?
- 6 A. No.
- 7 Q. No. Where was the driver? Where do you remember seeing him?
- 8 A. Was in the office.
- 9 Q. In the office.
- 10 A. Um-hmm.
- 11 Q. Okay. So, when you went into the bus, nobody from the
- 12 company, the driver or anybody, was in the bus?
- 13 A. No.
- 14 Q. No. So you go in the bus, and what did you do?
- 15 A. I just go and sit in the middle.
- 16 Q. In the middle?
- 17 A. Um-hmm.
- 18 Q. Somewhere in the middle?
- 19 A. Um-hmm.
- 20 Q. When you got on the bus, and even when you were sitting down,
- 21 did you see any signs or any notifications on the bus telling you,
- 22 you had to wear your seatbelt?
- 23 A. No. There were no seatbelts.
- 24 Q. There were no seatbelts?
- 25 A. No.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Because the seats are like this, just plain. There is
3 nothing. The only one that had a seatbelt was the driver.

4 Q. And how do you know that he was the only one that has --

5 A. Because there were no seatbelts.

6 Q. Did you see the seatbelt for the driver?

7 A. Yeah, I think he put the seatbelt. But I don't remember, but
8 I think he has.

9 Q. You think he did? Okay.

10 A. Um-hmm.

11 Q. Okay. But you don't know --

12 A. But there are no seatbelts for the public.

13 Q. So where you were sitting, there was no seatbelt?

14 A. No.

15 Q. And you did not see any seatbelts on any other seats?

16 A. No.

17 Q. No.

18 A. No.

19 Q. Now, on the previous buses that you have ridden on, no
20 seat --

21 A. No, didn't have seatbelt.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I think the buses don't have seatbelts because I ask a friend
24 because she always travels on Greyhounds, and she said there's no
25 seatbelts on Greyhounds either. I think on the bus they don't

1 have them.

2 Q. Okay. Did you look for a seatbelt or you just sat down
3 knowing that there was no seatbelts?

4 A. No. There was no seatbelts because if it's plain, you know,
5 that's not the seatbelt. Because it has to have like something
6 that you can put the belt in.

7 Q. The buckle?

8 A. The buckle.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So it was like this just.

11 Q. Okay. And nothing coming from -- hanging anywhere?

12 A. No.

13 Q. No. Okay. So you sit down somewhere in the middle?

14 A. Um-hmm.

15 Q. Were there other people in the bus already when you got in?

16 A. Yes, I think there were a few people in there. I don't know,
17 four or three.

18 Q. Do you remember where they were sitting at?

19 A. No, not -- because I didn't pay attention.

20 Q. You didn't pay attention?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I was just listening to my music, so no, I didn't pay
24 attention.

25 Q. You didn't pay attention?

- 1 A. No.
- 2 Q. But you saw something that looked like --
- 3 A. Yeah. No. I know there were some people, but I don't know
4 how many.
- 5 Q. Okay.
- 6 A. How many people.
- 7 Q. Could you tell if they were a male or female?
- 8 A. I think there was maybe that -- a lady and I think two guys.
- 9 Q. A lady and two guys. Okay. So you sat down, and you just
10 were listening to your music?
- 11 A. No. I sit down -- no. I was just listen to my music. I
12 don't worry, no. When I got in the bus, I was just sitting down.
- 13 Q. Sitting down. Okay.
- 14 A. Um-hmm.
- 15 Q. And from the time you were sitting down, what -- how long was
16 it before the driver got on the bus?
- 17 A. At 8:00.
- 18 Q. Eight?
- 19 A. Um-hmm.
- 20 Q. So what time --
- 21 A. The bus supposed to leave at 8:00.
- 22 Q. Right.
- 23 A. But they can let people to get before 8:00.
- 24 Q. Right. So, but you got on the bus. The driver was not in
25 the bus. He was in the office?

- 1 A. Um-hmm.
- 2 Q. So how long were you sitting down before he got in?
- 3 A. Maybe 5 minutes.
- 4 Q. Five minutes. Okay.
- 5 A. Seven minutes.
- 6 Q. Now, when you were purchasing your ticket, did they give you
7 any instructions?
- 8 A. No.
- 9 Q. No instructions whatsoever?
- 10 A. No.
- 11 Q. They just --
- 12 A. They just give you the ticket.
- 13 Q. Ticket.
- 14 A. Um-hmm.
- 15 Q. And then told you, that's the bus?
- 16 A. Uh-huh, that's it.
- 17 Q. Okay. Now, on your previous trips, have they ever given you
18 any instructions?
- 19 A. No. Not even --
- 20 Q. Not even while on the bus?
- 21 A. No. They didn't.
- 22 Q. Okay.
- 23 A. Oh, no, he just -- oh, the driver said --
- 24 Q. This time.
- 25 A. No. I think all the drivers, don't get up.

- 1 Q. Don't get up?
- 2 A. Uh-huh, don't get up, don't get up. That's all.
- 3 Q. So the driver comes into the bus 5 minutes later.
- 4 A. Uh-huh.
- 5 Q. What does he say to everybody?
- 6 A. Said good morning.
- 7 Q. He said good morning?
- 8 A. Yeah. We are going to leave and don't, don't get up. Stay
- 9 in your seat.
- 10 Q. He said, don't get up; stay in your seat?
- 11 A. Uh-huh.
- 12 Q. This driver?
- 13 A. Um-hmm.
- 14 Q. Okay. Did he say --
- 15 A. Nobody get up.
- 16 Q. Nobody.
- 17 A. No.
- 18 Q. Did he say anything else besides that?
- 19 A. If you have any information call the office -- if you need
- 20 some information call the office. What else did he say? Oh, we
- 21 are going to stop at Temecula if you need to go to the restroom.
- 22 Q. Okay.
- 23 A. That's all.
- 24 Q. Okay. Did he tell you his name?
- 25 A. I don't remember.

- 1 Q. Don't remember. Okay.
- 2 A. He's Asian.
- 3 Q. He's Asian?
- 4 A. Um-hmm.
- 5 Q. Okay.
- 6 A. No. I don't think he gave us his name.
- 7 Q. Okay. So he gets in the bus. Does it take him a long time
8 to get the bus ready to proceed on the trip?
- 9 A. Yeah. I think just talk like two or three minutes and then.
- 10 Q. Okay. Did you notice anything that he did? Did he do --
11 walk around the bus to check the bus?
- 12 A. No.
- 13 Q. No?
- 14 A. No.
- 15 Q. Did you notice anything wrong on the bus?
- 16 A. No.
- 17 Q. Nothing?
- 18 A. No. Because I wasn't paying any attention.
- 19 Q. Okay.
- 20 A. When he came, he was in the middle of the -- good morning.
21 Don't get up. And then, call the office for information; I don't
22 speak Spanish very well.
- 23 Q. Oh, he said that?
- 24 A. Um-hmm.
- 25 Q. Okay.

- 1 A. So call the office if you need any information.
- 2 Q. Okay. So at this point, you guys start driving, right?
- 3 A. Um-hmm.
- 4 Q. What was the weather like?
- 5 A. It was nice.
- 6 Q. It was nice?
- 7 A. Um-hmm.
- 8 Q. When you left El Monte?
- 9 A. Um-hmm.
- 10 Q. Okay. And what was -- did you ever see outside what were the
11 conditions?
- 12 A. No, I didn't see outside.
- 13 Q. You didn't see. Okay. So you guys leave the El Monte
14 Station.
- 15 A. At 8:00.
- 16 Q. At 8:00.
- 17 A. Um-hmm.
- 18 Q. Did you guys stop anywhere before you guys arrived to
19 Temecula?
- 20 A. In Baldwin Park.
- 21 Q. In Baldwin Park. Why did you guys stop at Baldwin Park?
- 22 A. To pick up more people.
- 23 Q. Okay. How long were you guys stopped there?
- 24 A. Maybe like 5 minutes.
- 25 Q. And is this another -- like, a shopping center in Baldwin

- 1 Park?
- 2 A. Yes. Saint Francis (indiscernible).
- 3 Q. Okay.
- 4 A. That's a very -- a small shopping center.
- 5 Q. How many more people got on the bus?
- 6 A. I don't know.
- 7 Q. You don't know?
- 8 A. No.
- 9 Q. But you do remember seeing people get on the bus?
- 10 A. Yes. Yes.
- 11 Q. Okay. And you don't remember whether male or female?
- 12 A. No.
- 13 Q. No.
- 14 A. Huh-uh.
- 15 Q. Did any of those people sit in front of you or behind you?
- 16 A. Maybe in front. I don't -- because I was, like, with my eyes
- 17 closed (indiscernible) in back, so I didn't pay attention. Was
- 18 just eyes closed.
- 19 Q. Okay. But nobody sat next to you?
- 20 A. No. Next to me, no.
- 21 Q. Okay. So you guys were there for 5 minutes, and then you
- 22 guys continued.
- 23 A. Um-hmm.
- 24 Q. Where did you --
- 25 A. I think -- I'm not sure because they usually stop at Pomona,

- 1 but I don't remember if he stopped at Pomona.
- 2 Q. Okay.
- 3 A. But I remember when he said, our next stop is Riverside, and
4 then Temecula, you can go to the restroom.
- 5 Q. Okay.
- 6 A. And that was the last stop, in Temecula to go to the
7 restroom.
- 8 Q. Okay. But you don't remember if you guys stopped in Pomona
9 or Riverside?
- 10 A. Yeah, Riverside I remember.
- 11 Q. You did stop?
- 12 A. I remember. Maybe we stopped Pomona too. I'm not sure.
- 13 Q. Okay. Possibly Pomona.
- 14 A. Riverside, yes, I remember.
- 15 Q. And why did you guys stop at Riverside?
- 16 A. Pick up people.
- 17 Q. And what about if you guys stopped at Pomona, what would be
18 the reason you guys stopped in Pomona?
- 19 A. Picking up people.
- 20 Q. Okay. So in Riverside, do you remember seeing people come in
21 the bus?
- 22 A. Yes.
- 23 Q. Do you remember --
- 24 A. I don't know.
- 25 Q. You don't remember?

1 A. No. I know they're -- because that's why he just stop
2 because he has to. Are supposed to pick it up people in Pomona
3 and Riverside.

4 Q. But you don't --

5 A. But I don't know --

6 (Simultaneous comments)

7 Q. -- how many or --

8 A. -- know how many. No.

9 Q. -- if they were male or female?

10 A. No, no.

11 Q. Do you remember seeing a little boy?

12 A. No.

13 Q. You don't remember seeing a little boy?

14 A. I only remember a lady that was using -- she was using a
15 cane.

16 Q. Using a cane?

17 A. Uh-huh.

18 Q. So an older lady?

19 A. Yeah. She was in El Monte Station; that's why I remember
20 her. And also I remember a guy in El Monte that was wearing, I
21 think some kind of blue or black t-shirt.

22 Q. T-shirt?

23 A. Um-hmm.

24 Q. But he was already in the bus?

25 A. No. Was in the office. I remember when he came into the

1 office. I think he bought his ticket there.

2 Q. And do you remember seeing him on the bus?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. And the lady and her cane?

5 A. And the lady with the cane, I see walking to the bus, but I
6 didn't see in the bus.

7 Q. Okay. Maybe, lady with the cane. Okay. So, and when you
8 guys stopped at Baldwin Park, maybe Pomona and Riverside, do you
9 remember the weather? What was the weather in those locations?

10 A. I think it was kind of -- it wasn't cloudy. Maybe a little
11 bit sunny.

12 Q. Okay. So from -- then you guys stopped in Temecula.

13 A. That was -- I think the accident was in Temecula.

14 Q. You guys stopped before the accident in Temecula --

15 A. No.

16 Q. -- to use the restroom?

17 A. Yes. Yes. Now I remember. Because he said all, like, 15
18 people went to the restroom.

19 Q. Okay. Do you remember him saying anything to everybody when
20 you guys stopped at Temecula for everybody to use the restroom?

21 A. No. I think he said this is -- if you want to use the
22 restroom, just this is our last stop. Next is in San Ysidro.

23 Q. Okay. Did you get off to use the restroom?

24 A. No.

25 Q. No?

- 1 A. Huh-uh.
- 2 Q. So, from El Monte to the accident, you didn't get off?
- 3 A. No.
- 4 Q. Okay. So, from El Monte to the -- Temecula for the restroom
5 stop, how was the driver driving?
- 6 A. I remember twice he said, oh, we are late; we are late.
- 7 Q. What time were you guys supposed to be in San Ysidro?
- 8 A. I don't know. (Indiscernible) get at 8:00, so I don't know
9 what time. Last time I got 11:30.
- 10 Q. 11:30.
- 11 A. So I think that's -- they were supposed to get there 11:30.
12 I don't know.
- 13 Q. Okay.
- 14 A. But he said twice, we are, we are late; we are late.
- 15 Q. Do you remember where you guys were at when he said, we are
16 late?
- 17 A. No, not -- no.
- 18 Q. Okay. So from you guys left El Monte to Temecula, used the
19 restroom, how would you say his driving was? How was he driving?
- 20 A. I don't know because I don't drive, so I don't know much
21 about driving.
- 22 Q. Okay. Do you remember looking outside the windows when you
23 guys were driving? And were you guys driving on the freeway?
- 24 A. Yeah. He takes the freeway.
- 25 Q. Okay.

1 A. He took the freeway and also the streets. But when we're in
2 Temecula maybe it was, like, start raining.

3 Q. Raining.

4 A. Was like a drizzle.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Not so hard.

7 Q. And you were looking where when you saw the drizzle?

8 A. I believe it was before getting Temecula or maybe Temecula.

9 Q. But when you saw the rain, were you looking at the front of
10 the windshield or the windows on the side of the bus?

11 A. No. I was looking at the side.

12 Q. Okay. And you saw the rain, the drizzle --

13 A. Um-hmm.

14 Q. -- on the side?

15 A. Um-hmm.

16 Q. Now, when you were looking on the side, did you happen to see
17 other cars around?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Do you remember seeing the bus passing cars or cars passing
20 the bus?

21 A. No. The bus was passing the cars.

22 Q. The bus was passing the cars?

23 A. Um-hmm.

24 Q. Do you remember how many cars that the bus passed?

25 A. No.

- 1 Q. But you do remember seeing the bus pass --
- 2 A. Yes. Yes.
- 3 Q. -- the cars?
- 4 A. Passing.
- 5 Q. Okay. How fast do you think he was driving?
- 6 A. I don't know. I have no idea.
- 7 Q. No idea. Okay.
- 8 A. Because since I don't drive, I don't -- I have no -- I don't
- 9 know much about cars.
- 10 Q. Okay. How would you --
- 11 A. But there were many passengers that they knew.
- 12 Q. They knew?
- 13 A. How many miles he was going.
- 14 Q. Okay.
- 15 A. That's what I heard, but I cannot say how many miles. I
- 16 heard some people say that he was driving very fast.
- 17 Q. Where did you hear this at?
- 18 A. While I was in Temecula at the emergency room.
- 19 Q. Okay. So after?
- 20 A. Yes.
- 21 Q. After the accident?
- 22 A. Uh-huh. There were, like, two passengers. They were males,
- 23 I think, and they -- he said he was driving very, very fast. But
- 24 I don't know how many miles.
- 25 Q. You don't know. Okay. But, so after -- you guys left

1 Temecula after you said 15 people used the restroom?

2 A. Yeah. That's what he said, whole lot of people.

3 Q. You guys went down the freeway, and you guys were heading to
4 San Ysidro. Do you remember how long it was from the time you
5 guys got on the freeway to the accident?

6 A. It wasn't that long.

7 Q. Wasn't that long?

8 A. Huh-uh.

9 Q. Do you remember seeing what happened in the accident?

10 A. I had my eyes -- I wasn't sleeping, but I had my eyes closed,
11 and I heard that people were screaming, so I -- when I look, what,
12 the next thing that I saw, I saw the bus going like this.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And then I don't know if I faint or not because the next I
15 was sitting on the floor. And I believe that I was by myself.
16 But, so I don't know if it was the shock or because there was,
17 like, a little of the bus -- there was, like, a little hole. So I
18 was able to get out of that hole.

19 Q. Did somebody open the compartment to make that hole or --

20 A. I think it was -- I don't know. I just saw there was a hole
21 sitting, so I just get out through the hole. And then somebody
22 came and carry me.

23 Q. So when you went to the hole, did you walk?

24 A. No. I just drag myself.

25 Q. Okay. On all four?

- 1 A. I saw that I wasn't able to walk.
- 2 Q. Okay.
- 3 A. I just -- because I was sitting on the floor. So that was
4 just a nightmare. So I'm --
- 5 Q. During the accident, when you heard the screaming, did you
6 feel anything?
- 7 A. No. I feel like I was in some other dimension.
- 8 Q. Like spinning?
- 9 A. No. Like it was going to be the end, that I was going to
10 die.
- 11 Q. Okay.
- 12 A. Um-hmm.
- 13 Q. But you don't remember the bus doing anything?
- 14 A. No.
- 15 Q. No. So you had your eyes closed. The bus was going
16 straight?
- 17 A. Um-hmm.
- 18 Q. Okay. And --
- 19 A. So when I opened my eyes, I saw the bus going like that.
- 20 Q. Did the bus roll over?
- 21 A. Um-hmm.
- 22 Q. Do you remember how many times?
- 23 A. I don't know.
- 24 Q. You don't know?
- 25 A. No. Because when you're in a panic you don't know.

- 1 Q. Okay. So you were on the floor --
- 2 A. Um-hmm.
- 3 Q. -- after the bus stopped --
- 4 A. Stopped.
- 5 Q. -- rolling?
- 6 A. Um-hmm.
- 7 Q. You saw an opening --
- 8 A. Um-hmm. So I just went and get out using that hole.
- 9 Q. So when you said you -- did you pull yourself?
- 10 A. No. I was sitting like this. I went like this.
- 11 Q. Okay.
- 12 MS. HARLEY: Scooting.
- 13 BY MR. CASTANEDA:
- 14 Q. Scooting?
- 15 A. Um-hmm.
- 16 Q. Using your legs to scoot and your arm to push yourself?
- 17 A. Yes.
- 18 Q. Okay. Towards the hole.
- 19 A. There is no way that you could, you know.
- 20 Q. Okay.
- 21 A. And also, I don't know why I saw that I wasn't able to walk
- 22 because, when I get out from the hole, I was just sitting. I
- 23 don't know. I don't know why I didn't get up until this guy came
- 24 back here to the --
- 25 Q. Do you know who this guy was?

- 1 A. No. He's African-American. He was tall.
- 2 Q. Okay. But he wasn't in the bus?
- 3 A. No. No.
- 4 Q. Okay.
- 5 A. There were so many people that came to help.
- 6 Q. Okay.
- 7 A. But they were not in the bus.
- 8 Q. And they were not emergency or firefighters or police?
- 9 A. No, no.
- 10 Q. It was just a person?
- 11 A. Angel.
- 12 Q. Okay. Did you hear any -- besides the screaming, did you
- 13 hear any of the passengers say anything to the driver?
- 14 A. No.
- 15 Q. No. What do you believe caused the accident?
- 16 A. I think because he was driving so fast and the weather
- 17 because it was slippery.
- 18 Q. But you said you don't know how fast he was going.
- 19 A. I don't know how fast, but -- he was going fast, but I don't
- 20 know how fast. I couldn't say how many miles because --
- 21 Q. But you felt that he was going fast?
- 22 A. Yes. He was going fast.
- 23 Q. Okay. And you said weather.
- 24 A. Um-hmm.
- 25 Q. What about the weather?

1 A. Because since it was raining, so the floor was slippery, so
2 if he was driving fast and the floor was slippery, that was the
3 reason that caused the accident.

4 Q. Okay. But you don't remember the bus -- you said the bus was
5 going straight, right?

6 A. Yeah. It was in the freeway. But then I think he look
7 (indiscernible) because, when I opened my eyes, he was going like
8 this, but it was in the freeway.

9 Q. Okay. Did you hear somebody tell you that the weather and
10 the -- he was going too fast that caused the accident?

11 A. No, because I don't know those people.

12 Q. You didn't hear that from nobody else?

13 A. No, because I don't know -- I went -- after the accident, we
14 were taken to different hospitals. So I don't know them.

15 Q. Okay. So, but you said that the bus was going straight, that
16 the weather was -- may have caused the accident. What makes you
17 say that though? I'm trying to --

18 A. Both, both.

19 Q. The weather and the speed?

20 A. The speed, um-hmm.

21 Q. But if the bus is going straight, what does the weather have
22 to do with causing the accident?

23 A. So it -- when it's -- so, if it's raining, it's -- the floor
24 is not slippery?

25 Q. No, no. I'm trying to get -- I'm trying to understand why

1 you think the weather caused the accident.

2 A. No. I don't believe the weather -- just the weather. He
3 caused the accident because he was driving so fast.

4 Q. Okay. Have you ever ridden with this driver before?

5 A. No.

6 Q. No. And the other times that you used the company, how was
7 the driving of the drivers?

8 A. Fine.

9 Q. They weren't driving fast?

10 A. No, I don't think so. They take their time.

11 Q. Okay. When you saw the driver, did he seem that he was fine
12 to drive?

13 A. I didn't pay so much attention to him.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. No. I don't know.

16 Q. Do you remember him doing anything? Was he eating? Was he
17 drinking something while he was driving? Remember anything that
18 he was doing while he was driving from the beginning?

19 A. No. I don't remember.

20 Q. You don't remember?

21 A. Huh-uh.

22 Q. Okay. Do you remember anything regarding the bus? Did you
23 hear any noises prior to the collision that may have -- anything
24 wrong with the bus?

25 A. No.

- 1 Q. That you know? Nothing?
- 2 A. Huh-uh.
- 3 MR. CASTANEDA: Do you have any questions?
- 4 BY MS. HARLEY:
- 5 Q. Were you sitting by the window or on the aisle?
- 6 A. I was sitting at that time, I think, by the window.
- 7 Q. You were sitting by the window?
- 8 A. Um-hmm.
- 9 Q. Okay. What were you wearing?
- 10 A. I was wearing black pants, a black jacket, and a coat.
- 11 Q. And a coat?
- 12 A. Um-hmm, a long coat.
- 13 Q. What color is that?
- 14 A. It was kind of -- what color -- not purple, dark red.
- 15 Q. Kind of like red a little bit?
- 16 A. But dark.
- 17 Q. You said it wasn't like purple, but it's --
- 18 A. Um-hmm.
- 19 Q. -- kind of sort of red?
- 20 A. Um-hmm, dark red.
- 21 Q. Okay. All right. And so, when you went to the hospital,
- 22 what did they say your injuries?
- 23 A. First they took me to Temecula.
- 24 Q. Okay.
- 25 A. And Temecula I was maybe 10, 9 hours, 8 hours. They give me

1 the x-rays, scan, and they said I have -- this side is broken. My
2 ribs. The nurse said that I have, like, three or four ribs
3 broken.

4 Q. Okay. Did you go to another hospital?

5 A. Yeah. From there they -- I was transferred to Island Valley
6 Medical Center. That's for the trauma.

7 Q. Oh, Inland Valley. Okay.

8 A. Medical Center.

9 Q. Okay. So you had the broken left clavicle, right up here at
10 your shoulder?

11 A. Shoulder.

12 Q. Um-hmm. And then --

13 A. I have pain up here --

14 Q. Yeah, and then the three or four ribs?

15 A. -- in my ribs. I have pain in the neck, on my head, and also
16 my -- here, and lacerations here, here, here.

17 Q. Do you know what you hit with your face, or you don't
18 remember?

19 A. No, I don't remember.

20 Q. Don't remember. Okay. When you were crawling out of the
21 hole, do you remember any other passengers with you?

22 A. Yeah, it's so strange. I don't remember anyone.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Maybe because I was in a panic. I don't remember any. I
25 thought I was the only one there.

- 1 Q. Okay. I just wanted to verify. The woman that you said you
2 saw with the cane at El Monte, you saw her walk to the bus, but
3 you didn't actually see her get on the bus or you don't remember?
- 4 A. No. She was walking behind me.
- 5 Q. She was behind you.
- 6 A. Um-hmm.
- 7 Q. Okay. All right. Outside of the fact that she had a cane,
8 could you tell me what she was wearing?
- 9 A. I think it was -- like, she was wearing, like, black sweater.
- 10 Q. Just a black sweater?
- 11 A. I don't remember if she was wearing a skirt or pants. I
12 don't remember.
- 13 Q. Okay. All right. Was this an older woman?
- 14 A. Yeah. Maybe like 60, 61.
- 15 Q. Okay. All right. And when you sat down, you don't remember
16 if the front of the bus was occupied by other people?
- 17 A. I know there were, but I don't know how many people were
18 in --
- 19 Q. Okay, but --
- 20 A. -- because these other people, they sit by themselves.
- 21 Q. They sit -- okay.
- 22 A. Because they were, like, in El Monte, I think, like, maybe
23 seven -- I -- seven or eight go back in the bus. So there were --
24 so -- a lot up front.
- 25 Q. Okay. So, when you went to the middle of the bus, the front

1 of the bus was -- had people, at least one person on a seat, and
2 that's why you went to the middle?

3 A. No, they were -- no, because I like to sit in the middle.

4 Q. You like --

5 A. Because they were empty rows in the front, but I don't like,
6 I don't like to sit in the front.

7 Q. Okay. All right. Do you remember seeing anybody on the bus
8 you've seen before?

9 A. No.

10 Q. No?

11 A. Huh-uh.

12 Q. Okay. When you've ridden with this company before, do you
13 remember any of the other drivers? No?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Okay. And outside of the other gentleman that you described,
16 the one with the black and blue T-shirt --

17 A. Um-hmm.

18 Q. -- is that the only other passenger that you remember?

19 A. Yeah, um-hmm, that's the only one.

20 Q. Okay.

21 MR. CASTANEDA: Were you -- I'm sorry.

22 BY MS. HARLEY:

23 Q. So I just wanted to -- and you said the driver said, oh, we
24 are late, and he said it twice?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And the last time you were on the bus, you said the bus
2 arrived at San Ysidro at around 11:30 in the morning?

3 A. Um-hmm.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. 11:30, 11:45.

6 Q. Okay. All right. And when people got on the bus, did they
7 bring their luggage on the bus and put it in the back of the bus
8 from inside the bus, or did they load it from the outside? Do you
9 remember?

10 A. No. Because there's a lot of people, they don't bring
11 luggage. Just -- I think they just go to Tijuana for one day.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. I don't know where they put the luggage.

14 Q. Okay. All right. And, when you use the bathroom on the bus,
15 the bus has to stop?

16 A. There is no bathroom on the bus.

17 Q. Oh, okay. So you use the bathroom at the station?

18 A. At Temecula.

19 Q. Okay. At Temecula. Okay. And, I'm sorry. How many times
20 before have you used this company?

21 A. Maybe three times.

22 MS. HARLEY: Okay. I think I'm --

23 BY MR. CASTANEDA: A couple more follow-ups.

24 Q. So you said you got off the bus at Temecula to use the
25 restroom?

- 1 A. No.
- 2 Q. You did not?
- 3 A. No.
- 4 Q. Okay. Were you -- how were you transported to the hospital?
- 5 A. The paramedics. I don't know if it was the paramedics.
- 6 Q. In ambulance or helicopter?
- 7 A. No. Ambulance.
- 8 Q. Ambulance. Were you by yourself as far as -- was there other
9 passengers with you?
- 10 A. No. I think -- no. There were three people with me. Two
11 people.
- 12 Q. Two other people with you?
- 13 A. Yeah.
- 14 Q. Do you remember if -- can you describe them?
- 15 A. No, I don't remember.
- 16 Q. You don't remember them?
- 17 A. No.
- 18 Q. Were they older, younger?
- 19 A. I didn't see their faces.
- 20 Q. You didn't see their faces. Okay.
- 21 MS. HARLEY: Males or females?
- 22 MS. ZUMAETA: They were able to walk.
- 23 MS. HARLEY: Okay.
- 24 BY MR. CASTANEDA:
- 25 Q. Do you remember if they were female or males?

1 A. I think there was a female and two guys.

2 Q. A female and two males. Okay. You don't remember their
3 clothing, what they were wearing?

4 A. Huh-uh, no.

5 MS. HARLEY: Okay. I think that's it.

6 MR. CASTANEDA: Okay. This is going to conclude the
7 interview. It is 1519 hours.

8 (Whereupon, at 3:19 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: CRASH OF A MEDIUM-SIZED BUS
NEAR PALA MESA, CALIFORNIA,
ON FEBRUARY 22, 2020
Interview of Haydee Zumaeta

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY20FH003

PLACE: West Covina, California

DATE: February 26, 2020

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Katherine Motley
Transcriber