



## **SURVIVAL FACTORS ATTACHMENT**

**Interviews**

**Mount Pleasant, PA**

**HWY20MH002**

(10 pages)

1. Motoroach Passenger Interviews at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC)  
Presbyterian Hospital on January 7, 2020

Attendees:

Cheng Ying Lian (translated by her husband)

Ivy Oneil (daughter spoke english)

Kenny Ou (husband who translated for

NTSB: Thomas Barth, Katherine Chisom

NTSB TDA Representative Chisom explained the NTSB investigation, provided information, and collected contact points for sending updates to the victims.

Investigator Barth asked about their dates of birth, which were 10/1/81 and 3/13/08. They were asked where they were seated in the bus, and responded that they were in row 15 or 16, on the passenger side, with the mother in aisle seat and the mother in the window seat. (It was later realized that they were responding to seat numbers rather than rows). They were asked if they noticed anything about the driver or his behavior. The mother responded that they do this trip often over the last 12 years due their work with a restaurant that they own, and were traveling from Columbus to NY city. The mother said that she was used to seeing another driver, but this one was new, which made her nervous because the other driver was good. She said that the driver had an I-pad, but did not see if he used it while driving because they were too far back to see the driver. She said that she felt like the driver was driving fast during the first parts of the trip, and the whole trip up to the point of the crash.

She was asked when she noticed that something was wrong. She responded that they stopped for gas about 15 minutes prior to the crash. She said that when they started driving after the stop, there was a very strong fuel smell in the bus, and that she got up, went forward to the driver, and told him about it, and that something should be done. She said that the driver responded that it was normal and there was nothing wrong. She said that she heard the driver make a phone call about switching drivers. She went back to her seat and was not asleep. She said that about 15 minutes after the stop, she felt the bus cornering fast, and then hit something. She was asked to elaborate but was unsure about what it was or what the bus was doing. She said that a couple seconds later the bus swerved very hard, and people started waking up and screaming. She was asked to describe this in more detail, to clarify if she felt the bus hit something at the start of the crash or if she was meaning the impact after the bus rolled, and if the people woke up before the bus rolled. She thought that the bus swerved left, then right – and could not articulate more detail about the swerving. She indicated that the bus hit something around the time of swerving (before the bus rolled and came to rest), and that the people woke up during the swerving.

The daughter was asked to describe the event. She was unable to provide more detail about the beginning and said she had been asleep, and was woken up by the swerving and her mother. She was not able to add detail to the swerving but knew that the bus rolled onto its right side. After the crash, her mother grabbed her and remembers having to walk over people to get out. They did not recall how they got out. The mother said she was having difficulty seeing because she had glass and cuts on her face, and her hair was in her eyes. Her daughter helped her through the bus. She smelled glass and were

concerned about an explosion, so wanted to get away from the bus. There were others moving away from the bus, they followed them out and waited. People were making phone calls, and she called her husband. The husband noted that he got the call about 4 am.

The daughter further described that she had been sleeping and woke up to people screaming and the bus tumbling, and then found herself laying in glass. She said that she hit her head, and had small cuts and abrasions on both hands and arms, some small cuts on her back, and a deeper cut on her left ankle. She said that when they got out of the bus it was crowded.

They said that ambulances arrived and they were put in an ambulance with two other women. The mother was put on a gurney and the daughter sat. They did not know the other women or anyone else on the bus. One of the other women had a cut on her face and on her foot. They were first taken to another hospital. The daughter was treated at the other hospital and then when with her mother when she was transferred to his one. They said that they had filled out paperwork for the daughter at the other hospital.

They were asked if there was anything important that was not asked, or if they had any questions. There was a conversation about retrieving personal belongings. The mother expressed concern about bus safety, including drivers and the need to have relief drivers, and seat belts on the buses. They also expressed concern about the impact this crash is having on their lives and the lives of those involved, and that there needs to be ways in which the bus company is responsible and takes care of the victims. The husband provided his contact information.

## 2. Hospital Staff Interviews at Forbes Hospital on January 7, 2020

Attendees:

Met with Mark Rubino, President

Krista Bragg, Chief Operating Officer

NTSB: Thomas Barth, Katherine Chisom

The notes from the meeting are as follows. They indicated that Forbes received 11 victims directly from the scene. They were notified at about 4 am from the Medcom system, they will help me obtain medcom information. They were told that there was a multi-casualty bus crash, but did not have information about how many victims to expect. They noted that they were speaking to someone from Mutual Aid Ambulance Service named Gary, and when I asked if he was the EMS coordinator on scene (who was named Scott), they said, no, he was not at the scene. They said that Gary did a good job. They noted that normally the IC would indicate an approximate casualty count, but it did not occur in this case. They only knew when patients were on their way from medcom and from the phone app PerfectServe. (Investigator Barth took a photos of the phone scree with the notifications from the app.)

They called in an extra surgeon and the night staff stayed on, they were well staffed. They normally have 1 surgeon on duty, they called in a backup, and then an another came in. Later that same day, around 7:30 am, there was another car crash involving a fatality and emergency patient. So for the day, they had the 11 from the scene, 2 others from the fatal crash that had occurred later in the morning and 1

that was already in the ER. So the ED treated 14 that morning. They have 4 designated ER bays on the acute side, 8 overflow chairs in the middle in an overflow area, and then rooms on the non-acute side.

They spoke about their system based on on the PA trauma system foundation, and will provide further information. Mike Traneli is a very capable ED chief (check if this is the correct person).

Speaking again about the reporting from the scene, they said, for example, that they did not understand why Frick was getting 30 patients, which they heard from a driver, and were not sure they could handle that many. They did not transfer any patients out from their facility. They said that they will typically get the more critical patients from crashes on the turnpike that must be ground transported, as they are on the edge of Pittsburgh and ground transporting seriously wounded in the level 1 trauma centers in Pittsburgh would take a lot longer. They are a level 2 but have good capability for a level 2.

They spoke about the EMS in the area. Most are municipal private companies. The hospital has a pre-hospital service with 2 paramedic vehicles, but was not involved in this crash because it was too far away. They became accredited for trauma 6 years ago and have implemented a comprehensive program that is used as a model for others. Their Chief trauma surgeon is from the military and very capable. They are part of the Allegheny Health Network. They brought in a psychiatrist which was very helpful and they had set up a program 2 months ago to collect clothing and funds for helping victims of large incidents. This was very helpful, as many of the victims were contaminated with diesel fuel. They will send information about the program.

They spoke about their training and drills. They participated in a large drill in April of 2019, and will provide information. They were asked if Red Cross participated in the assistance. They responded that Red Cross offered pshychological help, but they responded that it was not needed. The bus company contacted them and asked about the driver (which they were not able to provide). He then sent a bus which was intended to provide transportation for victims to complete the trip if they wanted. None of the patients accepted the offer.

### 3. Motorcoach Passenger Interviews at Forbes Hospital on January 7, 2020

Attendees:

Mohigul Ablakulova (mother)

Shokhruz Hodjiev (son)

NTSB: Thomas Barth, Katherine Chisom

Forbes Hospital January 7, 2020

NTSB TDA Representative Chisom explained the NTSB investigation, provided information, and collected contact points for sending updates to the victims. Investigator Barth asked where they were seated on the motorcoach. They indicated that they were 2 rows in front of the last row on the passenger side (in front of the bathroom). The mother was at the aisle seat and the son at the window. They were asked to describe when they realized something was wrong. The mother was sleeping and son was awake. They felt the driver had been driving fast and speeding during parts of the trip. The son said that the motorcoach swerved a few times, left and right, and then rolled over. They were asked if they could

describe the swerving in detail and he responded that he thought it went left, right, then left and right again before rolling. After it stopped he asked if his mom was OK. She was injured, with a shoulder fracture, jaw fracture and other injuries. He was not as injured because he hugged the seatback in front of him. He had bruises on the right hand, right elbow, and back. He helped her get out the roof hatch at the back of the bus. He was asked to describe their evacuation in more detail. He said that they were about 6 people out of the hatch before them. He helped his mom get out of the hatch and there were people outside the bus helping people get to the ground. The hatch was small so it was hard to get to the ground, but easier to get up to the hatch on the inside. He guessed about half the people on the bus went out the hatch and the other half went out the front. He was asked how the hatch was opened and said he saw a man kickout the hatch.

They were asked if they have used this bus company before and if they've had this driver. They said that they use it about 4 or 5 times a year and that they've had this driver twice before. They were asked if they noticed anything about the driver and responded that he drove fast, but nothing specific. They were asked when they first realized something was wrong. They said it was raining or snowing. They said that the crash occurred not long after a gas stop. There was a fuel smell in the bus after the stop, and thought that the stop occurred at around 1:30 or 2 am. They said that the motorcoach did not hit any other cars, that there was nothing in front of it on the road. The bus rolled over and about 4 or 5 seconds later there was big impact. There was smoke coming out the bus and they were afraid of explosion. They walked down the road with other people, using the mom's phone as a flashlight. The son lost his phone. They were put in an ambulance with 2 other people. They were sitting and there was a woman with a head injury sitting and another with an injury on her backside laying down. They were transported to the hospital.

Attendees:

Quanjay Ellis

NTSB: Thomas Barth, Katherine Chisom

Forbes Hospital January 7, 2020

(brother of Anthony Ellis, who was in hospital and unable to speak)

He had been transported to Frick and then came to this hospital, where his brother was. He was asked where he and his brother were seated, and stated that they were right behind the driver, with his brother in the window seat and he was in the aisle seat. He was asked if he noted anything about the driver. He said that the driver's head slumped toward the left as the bus swerved to the left, and then the driver woke up and the bus took a wild swing to the right and the bus rolled. He was asked to describe this in more detail, but didn't recall much more than what he said.

He was asked to describe what happened after this, including the crash and his exit from the bus. He said that the bus rolled over and he exited out the front. He was asked to describe the crash and the exit in more detail, including how they got out and how many came out of this exit. He said he was about the second person out of the front of the bus, with another man going out in front of him. After getting outside, he went back to look for his brother, but responders approached and told him to move away from the bus. He didn't recall any difficulty getting out, and didn't know how many came out the front. He went to wait with others and was put in an ambulance with 3 others. They went to Frick.

Attendees:

Julia Paluk

NTSB: Thomas Barth, Katherine Chisom

Forbes Hospital January 7, 2020

NTSB TDA Representative Chisom explained the NTSB investigation, provided information, and collected contact points for sending updates to the victims. Investigator Barth asked where she was seated on the motorcoach. She was in the row right in front of the bathroom, on the passenger side, at the window seat. A woman was sitting next to her. She said the bus was full. She was asked to describe what happened, when she realized something was wrong. She responded that they had stopped for gas, and a little while afterward, she felt the bus shake. There were no other cars on the road, and it crashed. She said that she was awake and reading when it happened. She was asked to describe the motion of the bus in more detail and said that it swerved to the curb and crashed. She was asked about details of the bus hitting the curb, and said she was referring to the curb on the right side of the roadway, and did not recall more detail.

After the crash, she was on the ground with a lot of glass. The woman who was seated next to her was not on top of her and there was also a lot of other stuff, luggage and things piled everywhere. She was asked to describe how she and other got out of the bus. She said that she saw a mother and a girl, about 9 years old, trying to get out of the hatch. Someone else opened the hatch and people, including her, went out of the hatch. She said that someone helped her through the hatch and guessed that she saw about 12 people go out of the hatch in front of her. She did not know how many total went out the hatch or other exits.

She had met a woman on the bus named Taylor, who helped her after she got out of the bus. She was asked where Taylor was seated and how Taylor got out. She said that Taylor was seated around the third row to middle of the bus on the left side. She thought that Taylor exited the front of the bus. She said they were very cold outside the bus and her feet were freezing because she'd lost her shoes. They waited for a paramedic, who eventually told them they could get into an ambulance. Taylor carried here to the ambulance because her feet were so cold. She didn't realize at first that she had a bad cut on her backside. In the ambulance was another patient on a stretcher. Then they told them that they needed to change ambulances, and moved them to another more immediate ambulance, with Julia on the stretcher and 3 other patients in the ambulance.

She said the bus felt hot and that it had a strong gas smell. She said that Taylor had complained about the smell of gas. She thought that she was on a Jaguar bus, which she normally takes. Her father explained that they buy tickets online and typically take the 9pm bus, but that they go to the stop at 9:30 and took the 10pm bus instead. Her father was surprised to read that the bus had a different name on it. Investigator Barth took a photo of the electronic ticket, which the father displayed on his phone. They said that they use this bus about 4 to 6 times each year.

The father explained that they have also driven this route before and that the trip takes about 9 hours. The bus gets there in 8 hours and so they know that they drive fast. He also uses the Life360 app which provided GPS tracking of his daughter. He has data from when she started the trip until her phone

battery died at 2:45 am. He showed investigator Barth some of the data, and that the peak speed shown for this trip indicated 80 mph. He provided his contact information and was told that another investigator will contact him in order to obtain this data.

Attendees:

Joan Coulibay (mother)

Nataki Baker (daughter)

NTSB: Thomas Barth, Katherine Chisom

Forbes Hospital January 7, 2020

NTSB TDA Representative Chisom explained the NTSB investigation, provided information, and collected contact points for sending updates to the victims. Investigator Barth asked where they were seated on the motorcoach. They said they were in seats 29 and 30, with mom on the aisle and the daughter at the window. They were asked about the driver and said that they see him occasionally, and take this bus about 2 or 3 times a year for the last 6 or 7 years. They said that the last time they saw this driver was at Easter. They were asked to describe when they noticed things going wrong. They said that after the gas stop, there was a strong gas smell and the mother complained about the smell to the driver. About 15 minutes after the gas stop, the daughter was asleep and was woken up by the crash. She felt a big impact and was thrown to the side. She hit her head. She looked around for her mom and found her on the floor with other people and stuff piled on top of her. She helped her mom get out of an opening in the bus, did not recall details. She said that people were talking after the crash that the driver had fallen asleep.

The mother said that she recognized the driver and thought it was OK since he'd driven before. She was concerned that the roads were bad. She said that once the road got wet, he did seem to slow down. She did not see the relief driver and explained her concerns about there was not a couple of relief drivers on these buses to take over when one driver gets tired. She felt they drove for too long before stopping for fuel. She also said that the driver should have announced, at the stop, how long the stop would be. But he said nothing. He just stopped the bus and got off. Everyone else then just got off and she was wondering why it was not more organized. She didn't recall much about the crash, and after getting outside, they called 911. The daughter asked a paramedic from the first ambulance they saw to take them to the hospital because her mother was badly injured. But this ambulance was on the wrong side of the highway and could not take people. They were taken to another ambulance on the other side of the freeway. They put her mother on a gurney and lifter her across, while she climbed over the divider.

January 23, 2020

Phone interview with T. Favors, attorney Doug Winston also present

He was asked if he noticed anything about the driver. He said that the driver had an attitude, for example, he saw the driver yell at a father about where his kids were seated on the bus. He was asked where he was seated and if he could see the driver. He said that he was seated in the middle of the bus, on the driver side, in the window seat, next to another man. He could a little bit of the driver's head. He said that before falling asleep, it seemed the driver was changing lanes a lot, driving fast, and switching lanes fast. He fell asleep and was woken up by the crash. He was asked to describe this in more detail. He said that he felt the bus hit something, which woke him up, then it started spinning and hit something

else, and then hit something again and the bus rolled over. He was holding onto the seatback, which helped not fall directly to the ground when the bus rolled over. He was kind of tangled up in the seats when the bus stopped. He was asked about how much time there was between hits, and said they came in succession, one right after the other. He was asked if the bus was hit after rolling, and he didn't think so, he thought it rolled towards the end. He said everybody fell to the side, he lost his shoes, glasses, and phone. He was asked about his shoes and said that he was wearing Nike tennis shoes, not tied, sort of loose but not super loose. The guy that was seated next to him found his phone and gave it to him. People said that the bus was smoking so, everyone started to panic and try to get out. He tried to call his mom, but the phone died because it was out of batteries. He said that the phone chargers on the bus did not work – that the cord would just come out of the receptacle. He said that after the crash he asked about 20 people to use their phone before he could find one. He said that the people who's phone did work, and were able to call police, were on the line with the police. He was asked about how he got out. He said that he saw a woman try to open the roof hatch, but she could not do it, and then an older woman came up and was able to open it easily. He said that about 5 kids went out first, helped by others, and then about 6 women went out, then he went out the hatch. He said that some people were getting help. He said his back hurt and that made it a little hard for him, but he was able to get out without help. He was asked about other exits, and didn't notice any other way people were getting out. He said that his seat was forward of the hatch, and went back a little way to get to it. After getting out, lots of people were standing around in the cold and in lots of fuel. They were standing around and then the ambulances and FD arrived. People went up and waited at an ambulance truck and they gave them tags. His was green. He had to wait about 30-40 minutes before he was transported. He sat in the ambulance, there was a teenage girl on a stretcher and 2 other kids in the ambulance with him. They went to Forbes hospital. He described his injuries as 3 fractures of his spine on his back, lower right side. He also had cuts on his toe and fingers. He said it was his right toe and fingers on the left hand. He was asked if there was anything else important and if he had any questions. There was not. He was asked about his personal belongings and the attorney indicated that he has sent a letter to the bus company attorney, but they have not heard anything back yet.

Attendees:

Alexa (Lexie) Humble

January 29, 2020 Phone interview with Thomas Barth (NTSB)

She was provided brief information about the NTSB investigation and asked if she had any questions about the investigation or contact points. She said no, and that her attorney has been in contact with all those needed. She was asked for her date of birth and provided it. She was asked if she recalled anything about the driver or his behavior before or during the crash. She said that earlier in the trip, when the bus was in the city, it seemed that he was switching lanes a lot, but said that everybody drives different. She did not recall anything about him during the crash.

She was asked where she was seated and said that she was on the passenger side, about 5 or 6 rows back, and in the aisle seat. She was seated next to an African American woman who was about her own age, but did not know her. She was asked when she first noticed something wrong. She said that at the time of the crash, she was awake and watching a show on her phone. She felt the bus do something strange, not sure what, but she looked up and leaned into the aisle to look out the front window and see what was happening. She saw that the bus was not pointing forward, but at something on the left and



hit it – the barrier in the median. The bus was out of control and then hit an embankment and rolled over. She was asked to describe the motion of the bus in more detail, and just said it was out of control and not sure what direction it was going. She was asked if she was how the bus hit the embankment, and was not sure what happened, but thought it might have been the front of the bus that hit the embankment. She said her glasses fell off and was not able to see well. She did not recall how the bus rolled, but found herself entangled in seats on the right side of the bus, with a bunch of people that piled on top of her. She said that she had scrapes and abrasions on her back, bruises on her knees and thighs, which she thought might have come from hitting the armrest, bruises and cuts on her ankle and arms. She said it was mostly on the right side, but the big scratch on the middle of her back. She also had a black eye and has neck and back pain that remains today. She was asked what happened next and said that everything was dark, and maybe a few seconds later she felt something happen to the bus, and that it slid forward. She thought that this must have been the FedEx truck hitting it. She then felt a third hit, but it was small. She was asked to describe what happened next and said that everyone was freaking out and climbing over each other. She did not remember details of getting out, except for climbing over seats, and thinks she came out the front of the bus. She did not know how many other had come out the front, and did not see anyone using the rear hatch, but had heard that someone had kicked it open and people also got out that way. When she got out, she said everyone was covered in fuel and moving away from the bus. There were also people worse off than her, bleeding from the head or with cuts on their faces. People were trying to find each other and she let several people use her phone to make contacts. She said it took about 20 to 25 minutes for ambulances to arrive. She said that she waited about 35 to 45 minutes before being transported. She was given a yellow tag. They called out asking for people who were alone and she went in an ambulance with about 5 people. She was asked if she was seated and said that she and 4 others were seated, and there was a man on a stretcher, and she thought he had a broken arm. She was asked where she was taken and said that her ambulance was the first to get to Sommerset. She said they took Xrays and treated her, and then she waited for her parents to drive up and get her. The hospital was very helpful, as it gave them all breakfast and lunch, gave them scrubs and laundered their clothes, and gave them a room to wait. Her parents arrived and she left around 1 or 2pm.

Attendees:

Edilma Estupinan Cabrera

February 20, 2020 Phone interview with Thomas Barth (NTSB)

In Spanish, translated by her lawyer, Alex Durst

She declined to be recorded for the interview. She was asked to provide her name and DOB, which she did. In speaking with the lawyer after the interview and checking the victim list, it became apparent that she was listed as Edlima Cabrera and that the preliminary NTSB list had her DOB incorrect by 3 days. She was asked where she was seated in the bus, and responded that she was about mid-way back, on the left side, seated at the window, with a young woman next to her. She also noted that the mother of the girl who died was seated in the row in front of her, with a boy next to her at the window, the mother at the aisle, and then two girls. The girl who died was in the aisle seat and had a stuffed animal. She noted that she (the interview victim), had a pink neck pillow with her. She was asked about the source of this knowledge, and responded that she had spoken to the mother and the kids earlier in the trip. After the crash, the mother was frantic because she could not locate her daughter. The whole experience was

very traumatic and she still suffers effects from it. She noted that the mother and the two other children, the boy and girl, were all taken to the hospital in the same ambulance. The hospital was Excelsior Frick. She was asked to describe her injuries. She suffered an impact to the right side of her head and injuries to her right ear, which she attributed to hitting the window of the overturned bus. She also suffered a left arm fracture, which she attributed to an effort to arrest her fall. She was asked to describe when she first noticed something wrong, and what occurred during the crash. She said that she was sleeping at the time and was woken up when she felt a big impact. She did not remember getting out of the bus, but figured that she must have gone out the front of the bus. She did not recall how anyone else exited. She said that outside the bus, everyone was traumatized. She felt like someone had poured a bucket of water on her, but realized it was fuel. She said that the mother and the boy and girl were off the bus before her, because when she got out, they were already there. She was asked about what happened when she got out and if she received a triage tag. The investigator had to describe what a triage tag was, and she did not recall anything about triage. She was asked if she recalled anything about the driver. She responded that she had taken the outgoing trip, and that they had 2 drivers that would switch off. On this return trip, there was only 1 driver, and this worried her. She didn't understand why there was no second driver. She was asked if she's used this bus route before and said no, this was her first time. She said that it was a long time to the rest break, and they only took 1, she was not sure where. She saw the bus driver sitting at the rest stop smoking a cigarette. She said that she was not sure, but it seemed the driver was driving too fast, because she did not notice any other cars passing the bus. She didn't notice much about the trip because she was dozing off to sleep.