

# Transcript of the Testimony of Cody Irwin

Date: August 25, 2010

Case:

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### STATEMENT UNDER OATH

OF

CODY IRWIN

taken pursuant to Notice by Alicia R. Brant, a Court Reporter and Notary Public in and for the State of West Virginia, at the National Mine Health and Safety Academy, 1301 Airport Road, Room C-137, Beaver, West Virginia, on Wednesday, August 25, 2010, beginning at 9:16 a.m.

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2	
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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	
3	MS. FERGUSON:
4	My name is Dana Ferguson. Today is
5	August 25th, 2010. I'm with the Office of the
6	Solicitor, U.S. Department of Labor. With me is Erik
7	Sherer, an accident investigator with the Mine Safety
8	and Health Administration, an agency of the United
9	States Department of Labor. Also present are several
10	people from the State of West Virginia. I would ask
11	that they state their appearance for the record at
12	this time.
13	MR. FARLEY:
14	I'm Terry Farley with the West Virginia
15	Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training.
16	MR. KOERBER:
17	And I'm Barry Koerber, Assistant Attorney
18	General assigned to represent the West Virginia Office
19	of Miners' Health, Safety and Training.
20	MS. MONFORTON:
21	And I'm Celeste Monforton with the
22	Governor's independent team.
23	MS. FERGUSON:
24	There are also several members of the
25	investigation team present in the room, but Mr.

	Page 7
1	Sherer, Mr. Farley and Ms. Monforton will be doing the
2	questioning today. If you'll swear the witness,
3	please?
4	
5	CODY IRWIN, HAVING FIRST BEEN DULY SWORN, TESTIFIED AS
б	FOLLOWS:
7	
8	ATTORNEY FERGUSON:
9	Barry?
10	ATTORNEY KOERBER:
11	Sir, would you please state your full
12	name for the record and spell your last name?
13	A. Cody Nicholas Irvin, I-R-V-I-N.
14	ATTORNEY KOERBER:
15	And would you state your address and
16	telephone number?
17	A. (b) (7)(C)
18	ATTORNEY KOERBER:
19	And what city are you in?
20	A. (b) (7)(C)
21	ATTORNEY KOERBER:
22	Do you have an attorney or other personal
23	representative that you're expecting to appear you
24	today?
25	A. No.

	Page 8
1	ATTORNEY KOERBER:
2	Are you appearing here today as a result
3	of receiving a subpoena?
4	A. Yes.
5	ATTORNEY KOERBER:
6	And this is a copy of that subpoena.
7	Feel free to take a peak at it. And I'd like that to
8	be marked as Exhibit One.
9	(Exhibit C. Irvin One Marked for
10	identification.)
11	ATTORNEY KOERBER:
12	And this is the copy of the green card,
13	showing that a (b)(7)(C) signed for it on
14	8/23/10. I'd like that to be Exhibit Two.
15	(Exhibit C. Irvin Two marked for
16	identification.)
17	ATTORNEY KOERBER:
18	Sir, the statute that authorizes the
19	director to subpoena individuals to interviews such as
20	this also requires the director to offer to each
21	witness subpoenaed a \$40 per day witness fee and
22	roundtrip mileage from your home to here and back, so
23	long as you drove in your personal vehicle, at the
24	rate of 15 cents a mile plus reimbursement for any
25	tolls that you might have passed. In order to receive

	Page
1	that money, I have to two forms filled out, one of
2	which is an IRS form W-9, which is requesting your
3	Social Security number, because the \$40 witness fee is
4	considered income and you would receive a 1099
5	miscellaneous at some later time in the year.
6	In order to receive that money, I'll need
7	you to feel those forms out at the end of the
8	interview, or if you choose, you can decline the
9	money. And whatever your choice is, you need to make
10	it on the record now.
11	A. I'll decline it.
12	ATTORNEY KOERBER:
13	Okay. Thank you, sir. Okay.
14	ATTORNEY FERGUSON:
15	Mr. Irvin, all members of the Mine Safety
16	and Health Accident Investigation Team and all members
17	of the State of West Virginia Accident Investigation
18	Team participating in the investigation of the Upper
19	Big Branch Mine explosion shall keep confidential all
20	information that is gathered from each witness who
21	provides a statement until the witness statements are
22	officially released.
23	MSHA and the State of West Virginia shall
24	keep this information confidential so that other
25	ongoing enforcement activities are not prejudiced or
1	

Page 10 1 jeopardized by a premature release of information. 2 This confidentiality requirement shall not preclude 3 investigation team members from sharing information with each other or with other law enforcement 4 officials. 5 Government investigators and specialists 6 7 have been assigned to investigate the conditions, 8 events and circumstances surrounding the fatalities that occurred at the Upper Big Branch Mine-South on 9 10 April 5th, 2010. The investigation is being conducted 11 pursuant to Section 103(a) of the Federal Mine Safety 12 and Health Act and the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training. We appreciate your 13 assistance in this investigation. 14 Your identity and the content of this 15 conversation will be made public at the conclusion of 16 17 the interview process and may be included in the public report of the accident, unless you request your 18 19 identity to remain confidential or your information 20 would otherwise jeopardize a potential criminal 21 investigation. If you request to keep your identity 22 confidential, we will do so to the extent permitted by 23 law. 24 That means if a judge orders us to reveal

25 your name or if another law requires us to reveal your

1 name or if we need to reveal your name for other law 2 enforcement purposes, we may do so. Also, there may be a need to use the information you provide to us or 3 other information we may ask you to provide in the 4 future in other investigations into and hearings about 5 6 the explosion. Do you understand or have any 7 questions? A. I understand. 8 ATTORNEY FERGUSON: 9 10 After the investigation is complete, MSHA 11 will issue a public report detailing the nature and cause of the fatalities in hopes that greater 12 awareness about the causes of accidents can reduce 13 their occurrence in the future. Information obtained 14 through witness interviews is frequently used in these 15 reports. Since we will be interviewing other 16 17 individuals, we request that you not discuss your testimony with any person aside from a personal 18 19 representative or attorney. 20 A court reporter will record your 21 interview. Please speak loudly and clearly. If you do not understand a question, please ask that it be 22 rephrased. Please answer each questions as fully as 23 24 you can, including any information you have learned 25 from someone else. And I would tell you, too, to

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1	answer verbally yes or no. If you shake your head or
2	say uh-huh or uh-uh, it doesn't come across in the
3	transcript. So if you could remember to do that,
4	that's helpful.
5	I would like to thank you in advance for
6	your appearance. We appreciate your assistance in the
7	investigation. Your cooperation is critical in making
8	the nation's mines safer.
9	After we have finished asking questions,
10	you'll have an opportunity to make a statement or
11	provide us with any additional information you believe
12	to be important. If at any time after the interview
13	you recall additional information you might believe to
14	be useful, please contact Norman Page at the telephone
15	number provided in the letter to you this morning. Do
16	you have any questions before we get started?
17	A. No, ma'am.
18	ATTORNEY FERGUSON:
19	Terry?
20	MR. FARLEY:
21	Mr. Irvin, before we begin, one little
22	bit of housekeeping. I'd like to inform you that the
23	West Virginia Coal Mine Health and Safety Regulations
24	also provide protection against potential
25	discrimination for participating in these type

	Page 13
1	interviews. I'd like to pass along some contact
2	information for the West Virginia Board of Appeals.
3	It's a body that hears complaints from miners
4	concerning discrimination.
5	Should have any problems as a result of
б	participating in these interviews, you should contact
7	the Board immediately. Now, I would advise you that
8	should you have a problem, you need to file a claim
9	within 30 days from when it occurs.
10	A. Okay.
11	MR. FARLEY:
12	All right? All right.
13	A. So this means if I couldn't go to work last night
14	because I had to be here? What if I got in trouble
15	for that?
16	MR. FARLEY:
17	Could be. That could be discrimination.
18	A. All right.
19	MR. FARLEY:
20	I think we could investigate that.
21	A. Okay.
22	MR. FARLEY:
23	Did someone suggest that you need to be
24	at work and forget the interview?
25	A. Oh, no.

1	MR. FARLEY:
2	Okay.
3	A. But just in case we do
4	MR. FARLEY:
5	Okay. Well, I doubt if they will, but if
6	they do, you just Okay.
7	ATTORNEY FERGUSON:
8	Anything else? Okay. Erik?
9	MR. SHERER:
10	Actually, Terry's
11	ATTORNEY FERGUSON:
12	Oh, Terry. Okay.
13	EXAMINATION
14	BY MR. FARLEY:
15	Q. Mr. Irvin, how long have you been a coal miner?
16	What's your experience?
17	A. Three years now.
18	Q. Okay. Is that all with Massey?
19	A. Yeah.
20	Q. Okay. When did you start at UBB?
21	A. I started there first three years ago.
22	Q. Okay. You ever work anywhere else other than UBB?
23	A. No.
24	Q. Okay. Where are you working now?
25	A. Hunter Peerless

	I	Page	15
1	Q. Okay.		
2	A at Elk Run.		
3	Q. When did you go to Hunter Peerless?		
4	A. Two weeks after the explosion.		
5	Q. Okay, all right. All right. What was your norma	1	
б	work location at the UBB as of April 5th of this year	r?	
7	A. I worked throughout the whole mine.		
8	Q. Okay. What was your job?		
9	A. It was just working on the belts.		
10	Q. Okay.		
11	A. A little bit of everything, general labor.		
12	Q. Okay. Now, were you a belt examiner or a fire		
13	boss?		
14	A. No, not a fire boss.		
15	Q. Just you just?		
16	A. Just a belt man.		
17	Q. Belt man. You took care of what needed to be		
18	taken care of?		
19	A. Yeah.		
20	Q. Okay. So you didn't make any required		
21	examinations?		
22	A. No.		
23	Q. Okay. I got you. Which belts did you usually		
24	take care of?		
25	A. Usually all of them.		

	Page
1	Q. Okay.
2	A. Except for the section belts. We didn't take care
3	of the section belts.
4	Q. Okay, all right. Well, did you work on April 5th?
5	A. No, because there was a if I can remember,
6	there was a three-day weekend.
7	Q. Uh-huh (yes).
8	A. Was it Easter?
9	Q. Uh-huh (yes).
10	A. So I didn't work the night before, because I was
11	in a bed and I got a phone call about what had
12	happened.
13	Q. Okay. And what shift did you actually work on?
14	A. It was hot owl?
15	Q. Okay. Was that consistent? You didn't rotate?
16	A. No.
17	Q. How long had you been on the midnight?
18	A. It was about over a year when that happened.
19	Q. Okay. Now, if you were off on April the 5th, what
20	was the last shift you worked at UBB?
21	A. Was April 5th on a Monday?
22	Q. Yes, sir.
23	A. Probably it was either a Thursday night or a
24	Friday night, the night before.
25	Q. Okay. How many days when were you scheduled

1	to return to work?
2	A. Monday night.
3	Q. Okay. So if you got a three-day weekend, you
4	probably you were off Saturday, Sunday and Monday?
5	A. Yes. Yeah, right.
6	Q. Okay.
7	A. That'd been Friday night, Saturday night and
8	Sunday night.
9	Q. Okay. Now, on your last shift, probably Thursday
10	night before the explosion, where in the mines are you
11	working?
12	A. I'm just trying to remember. I can't remember
13	what we did. That's so far back now.
14	Q. Okay. Now, do you think it might've been in the
15	northern part of the mine or the southern part of the
16	mine?
17	A. It was in the northern part of the mine. I know
18	that.
19	Q. Okay. Was it some work on the belts someplace?
20	A. Yeah. Pretty much guarantee you.
21	Q. Okay. And you said earlier you didn't take care
22	of section belts;
23	A. No.
24	Q right? But could it have been the longwall
25	belt?

	Page 18
1	A. It could've been the longwall belt. We took care
2	of that regularly.
3	Q. Okay. Now, what were your regular duties taking
4	care of the belts?
5	A. You have to make splices on it, change all the
6	rollers and rob the Mother Drive.
7	Q. Okay. Now, did you ever work around the Mother
8	Drive construction site where the 22 Headgate belt
9	dumps onto Seven North?
10	A. Yeah.
11	Q. Okay. When were you last in that area?
12	A. It wasn't long before the explosion, just If
13	we was there, it was making a splice.
14	Q. Would that have been a few days or?
15	A. Yeah, probably just a few days before.
16	Q. Okay.
17	A. Of course we only made one splice on Seven North
18	and it was a while back.
19	Q. Okay. Now, did you do anything else in the area
20	of the Mother Drive over there?
21	A. No.
22	Q. Okay. Did you ever do any rock dusting on the
23	belts?
24	A. Yeah, we rock dusted the belt. Even if you run
25	out of things to do, you always pick up a bag of rock

# ~

	Page 19
1	dust and throw it around, you know.
2	Q. Okay. Now, if you don't remember exactly where
3	you were on your last shift at UBB,
4	A. Yeah.
5	Q what about the last week? What stands out in
6	your mind about the last week you worked?
7	A. I know we probably robbed the Mother Drive,
8	because we did that at least once a week.
9	Q. Okay. Now, do you mean the Mother Drive for the
10	longwall?
11	A. Yeah.
12	Q. Okay. Now, what did you do there?
13	A. You robbed it. It's when you take when the
14	longwall advances you have to take the belt out.
15	Q. Okay. All right.
16	A. That's what we did, took 1,000 foot of belt out of
17	the longwall.
18	Q. Okay. Do you recall the last time you did that?
19	A. No, but I can tell you it was done. It was done
20	at least once a week.
21	Q. Okay. So is it likely that you did it the week
22	before the explosion?
23	A. Yeah, it's likely.
24	Q. Okay. All right. Now, how often did you travel
25	any of the belts from one end to the other? How long

	Page 20
1	did you walk from end of these belts to the other?
2	A. Well, I hardly ever walked from one end of the
3	belt to another. Just go to wherever you was working.
4	Q. Okay. Now, the last time you saw the longwall
5	belt or the last time you were at the Mother Drive
б	area, was the rock what was the quality of the
7	rock dust?
8	A. It was pretty thick dusting, you know.
9	Q. Okay. Do you recall seeing trickle dusters?
10	A. Oh, there's trickle dusters everywhere.
11	Q. Okay. When you say everywhere?
12	A. There is at every belt head.
13	Q. Every belt head?
14	A. At that level, and the Mother Drive is considered
15	a belt head.
16	Q. Okay. Did they all work? Did they all function
17	properly, that you know?
18	A. Yeah, they all worked, because I would go through
19	and I would check to make sure they work.
20	Q. Okay. Now, who was your immediate supervisor?
21	A. Immediate is Lacey Cox.
22	Q. Okay. Now, was he a foreman or crew leader or
23	what?
24	A. A crew leader.
25	Q. Okay. Do you know if he was an hourly worker or

	Page 21
1	if he or salary?
2	A. He was hourly.
3	Q. I guess you were an hourly worker?
4	A. Yeah.
5	Q. Okay. Who else worked as part of your crew?
6	A. Dave McFalls and Duane Rusten.
7	Q. Okay. All of you worked on belts?
8	A. Yeah.
9	Q. Okay.
10	A. Yes.
11	Q. When you did rock dusting on these belts, you ever
12	do any machine dusting or did you always do it by
13	hand?
14	A. Like, machine dusting, we Sometime
15	Well, I had that job for using the pod duster.
16	Q. Okay. When did you have that job?
17	A. It was back in November.
18	Q. Okay. We heard that there might've been problems
19	with the pod duster.
20	A. Yeah, the pod duster, they had it sent off and
21	worked on. When we come back, it was all right. But
22	the wheels fell off of it.
23	Q. Really?
24	A. And only one side of it would dust, but we told
25	them about it and they had it fixed.
1	

Page 22 Q. Okay. And when did they have it fixed? 1 2 A. It was to or three days after we told them it was 3 --- because I got in trouble because I went down there and it was rigged. And I put the jack underneath it 4 5 and put it back on track, and my buddy told me to stop jacking because the wheels were still on the ground. 6 7 I took it outside and I parked it. I said, I ain't 8 doing nothing with it. 9 Q. How'd you take it outside with the wheels off of 10 it? 11 A. Well, I put the wheels on and we screwed the nut 12 underneath to keep it from ---. So I parked it outside so Roger could work on it. 13 Q. Okay. Now, do you remember ---? Can you give me 14 an approximate time when this was? 15 A. No, not an approximate time. I know it was before 16 17 Thanksgiving, though. Q. Okay. Now, do you recall about when you got the 18 19 thing back, if you ever did? 20 A. I got off of that job ---21 Q. Why? 22 A. --- so I can't ---. It was too much stress for 23 me. 24 Q. I can see why. 25 A. Oh, yeah.

	Page 23
1	Q. We just we had heard stories about the pod
2	A. Well,
3	Q duster and it wasn't
4	A it would break a lot, too.
5	Q. The stories were that it wasn't very effective.
6	A. No. And I didn't want to wreck it with the wheels
7	flying off of it. I'd be there all night and day.
8	Q. Okay. Now, if you could get it from one place to
9	the other, how was it in terms of actually spraying
10	rock dust?
11	A. If you know how to use it right, it did good. It
12	was like painting.
13	Q. If you know how to use it right. Was there some
14	particular trick to it?
15	A. No, you just had to twist all the knobs right.
16	And sometimes you could turn the air up too high or
17	have your dust up too high, and it'd clog the hose up
18	and you'd have to beat on it, but
19	Q. It was kind of an art, then?
20	A. Yeah. You have to have it just right.
21	Q. Okay. Who worked with you on the pod duster?
22	A. His name was Scott Romine.
23	Q. Okay.
24	MR. SHERER:
25	Give us a minute here.
1	

1 OFF RECORD DISCUSSION

2 ATTORNEY FERGUSON:

3 Back on the record.

4 A. Get back on the subject here, guys.

5 BY MR. FARLEY:

Q. Okay. I know I asked you earlier what you did the
last shift you worked at UBB, and you didn't quite
remember. And also not too much there what you recall
about the last week. Now, after this interview, if
anything kind of comes back to you on it, give us a
call.

12 A. All right.

Q. We appreciate that very much, because, you know, what we're looking at is we're looking for little signs, little clues as to what that we could put together to have a picture of what might've happened here. And anything that you experienced during the last shift or the last few days that you worked might be very helpful, even though it might seem

20 insignificant to you.

21 A. Yeah.

Q. So anything --- you know, if you recall anything that was unusual or you saw anything strange, smelled something unusual or experienced something just way out --- out of the ordinary, you know, if it comes

1 back to you, give us a call.

2 A. All right.

Q. Now, along that line, if you worked in the belts
in the northern part of the mines, did you ever
experience any burning sensation in your eyes?
A. Oh, never, no.
Q. Okay. Now, did you ever smell anything unusual

8 like a kerosene type smell or a petroleum type smell?
9 A. Usually the only thing we'd smell is rubber, you
10 know, burning, but we'd just go tram the belt and you
11 wouldn't smell it anymore.

Q. Okay. All right. Now, I know you've indicated you might have been on the longwall belt within the last week prior to the explosion. Can you recall which direction the air was traveling on the longwall belt?

17 A. I can't recall.

Q. Okay. Was the velocity on the air on the longwallbelt strong?

A. Oh, yeah, there was quite a bit of airflow.

21 Q. Okay. All right. Was it consistently strong?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. Now, whenever you traveled around the
northern part of the mine, were you familiar with some
doors that were constructed near the mouth of the

	Page 26
1	longwall in the track entry that had part of a side
2	partition left out?
3	A. No. Well, 78 Break had doors, and then once you
4	went down towards the mouth of the longwall, it had
5	doors.
6	Q. Okay. Well, that's what I'm saying. In the mouth
7	of the longwall here.
8	A. Okay.
9	Q. Now, we think the last set of doors as you
10	approach the longwall were they built in such a
11	manner as to where you had a door and then you had a
12	side partition where some of the rocks were left out?
13	A. No.
14	Q. Do you remember that?
15	A. No.
16	Q. Okay. Now
17	A. As far as I can remember there was two doors
18	there, and they was
19	Q. Okay.
20	A fine.
21	Q. That's fine. No problem.
22	MR. FARLEY:
23	Okay.
24	EXAMINATION
25	BY MR. SHERER:

	Page 27
1	Q. When you were using the pod duster, did you take
2	the hoses over into the intakes and returns?
3	A. No.
4	Q. Okay. How long did you run that pod duster?
5	A. Probably a month.
б	Q. All right.
7	A. I couldn't stand it anymore.
8	Q. Okay. Did you primarily use the dust coming out
9	of the pod duster itself, or did you use the hoses to
10	dust with?
11	A. We'd use the hoses.
12	MR. SHERER:
13	Okay, okay. Thank you.
14	MS. MONFORTON:
15	I don't have any questions.
16	BY MR. SHERER:
17	Q. One additional question, Mr. Irvin. If you didn't
18	use the pod duster to get to the intakes or the
19	returns, did you ever use anything else, like a scoop
20	mounted duster or?
21	A. They'd use flinger dusters.
22	Q. Okay. Do you know who did that?
23	A. I have no idea who done that.
24	MR. SHERER:
25	Okay. Thank you.

LUGC 20	Page	28
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1	MR. FARLEY:
2	Couple of things here.
3	RE-EXAMINATION
4	BY MR. FARLEY:
5	Q. Did any member of your crew carry a methane
6	detector?
7	A. Yeah, Lacey always carried a methane detector.
8	Q. Okay. Do you recall if Lacey ever detected any
9	methane while you were working with him on the
10	midnight shift?
11	A. As long as I worked there, I've never heard of no
12	large amounts of methane.
13	Q. Did you hear of any amounts of methane?
14	A. Very small.
15	Q. Now, give me a give me a number?
16	A. Can't remember that, either, but I remember one
17	time they said they found gas, but it wasn't they
18	got rid of it. It was just nothing.
19	Q. Now, where was that?
20	A. Probably on One section.
21	Q. Okay. You ever hear Lacey's detector alarm go off
22	at any time while you were there?
23	A. No.
24	RE-EXAMINATION
25	BY MR. SHERER:

- Q. Mr. Irvin, what do you think happened with this
   explosion?
- 3 A. What caused it?

4 Q. Uh-huh (yes).

A. I don't really have any idea what caused it. 5 Could've been anything, methane buildup, a arc from a 6 7 pump, run into old works. Where did the explosion 8 take place? Do y'all know? Did it happen at the headqate or at the --- where the shearer was? 9 10 Q. Actually the explosion took place in two main 11 The area around this crossover in the areas. 12 headqates of the two development sections, on up into this area around the Glory Hole was a main area that 13 The other was the tailgate of the longwall 14 exploded. 15 out into these rooms at the end of the panel. A. Yeah, because I used to do some work --- I used to 16 work at the Glory Hole back when it was running. 17 Q. Now, you ever run into any methane up around the 18 19 Glory Hole? A. No. 20 21 MR. SHERER: 22 Okay. Thank you. ATTORNEY FERGUSON: 23 Mr. Irwin, on behalf of MSHA and the 24

25 Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training we want

	Page 30
1	to thank you for appearing and answering questions
2	today. Your cooperation is very important to the
3	investigation as we work to determine the cause of
4	this accident.
5	We request that you not discuss your
6	testimony with any person aside from a personal
7	representative or attorney. After questioning other
8	witnesses, we may call you if we have any follow-up
9	questions.
10	If at any time you have additional
11	information regarding the accident that you would like
12	to provide to us, please contact us at the information
13	provided to you. If you wish, you may now go back
14	over any answer you have given and you may also make a
15	statement that you would like to make at this time.
16	A. I have nothing to say, I guess.
17	ATTORNEY FERGUSON:
18	Okay. Thank you very much.
19	A. Thank you.
20	* * * * * * *
21	STATEMENT UNDER OATH CONCLUDED AT 9:45 A.M.
22	* * * * * * *
23	
24	
25	

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1	STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA )
2	)
3	
4	CERTIFICATE
5	I, Alicia R. Brant, a Notary Public in and
6	for the State of West Virginia, do hereby certify:
7	That the witness whose testimony appears in
8	the foregoing deposition, was duly sworn by me on said
9	date and that the transcribed deposition of said
10	witness is a true record of the testimony given by
11	said witness;
12	That the proceeding is herein recorded fully
13	and accurately;
14	That I am neither attorney nor counsel for,
15	nor related to any of the parties to the action in
16	which these depositions were taken, and further that I
17	am not a relative of any attorney or counsel employed
18	by the parties hereto, or financially interested in
19	this action.
20	Real-eggr.z
21	To a training to
22	$h \cdot \partial \partial \cdot $
23	Alicia R. Brant
24	
25	