

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

In the Matter of:

*TRAIN ACCIDENT IN
GRANITEVILLE, S.C.*

INTERVIEW OF BENJAMIN AIKEN

*Friday,
January 7, 2005*

Augusta, GA

PRESENT: RUSSELL GOBER, NTSB

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. GOBER: We are interviewing Benjamin Aiken in Augusta, Georgia on the 7th of January, 2005.

Okay. We are on the record at 8:40 p.m.

And Benjamin, we are here today trying to develop facts, conditions and circumstances the best that you can tell us about the accident that occurred at Avondale Mills on the morning of the sixth. And we just want to know basically what you guys were doing on the evening before on your local freight that went on duty at Aiken.

So, if you would tell me your name and address.

MR. AIKEN: My name is Benjamin F. Aiken, Jr. I reside in Columbia, South Carolina, [REDACTED]

MR. GOBER: Okay. Benjamin, what is your normal assignment that you work?

MR. AIKEN: I work the locomotive engineer extra board in Columbia, South Carolina.

MR. GOBER: Okay. Out of that what territories do you work?

MR. AIKEN: The extra board covers runs between Columbia and Augusta, Columbia and Spartanburg, Columbia to Atlanta, Columbia to Lynnwood, North

1 *Carolina. We cover the Rock Hill area, Aiken area,*
2 *Newberry area -- Park area.*

3 *MR. GOBER: All right. How, are you a*
4 *certified locomotive engineer?*

5 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, I am.*

6 *MR. GOBER: Okay. To be certified, how do you*
7 *pass the physical characteristics on that much*
8 *territory?*

9 *MR. AIKEN: You have to be qualified by the*
10 *company road foreman to be able to operate a locomotive*
11 *by the company standards on all territories.*

12 *MR. GOBER: Okay. Are you qualified and*
13 *certified on all of those territories?*

14 *MR. AIKEN: All except between Spartanburg and*
15 *Atlanta, Georgia.*

16 *MR. GOBER: Okay. And you are certified on*
17 *this territory at Aiken.*

18 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, I am.*

19 *MR. GOBER: Graniteville.*

20 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.*

21 *MR. GOBER: Okay. When did you last ride with*
22 *a road foreman over this territory?*

23 *MR. AIKEN: It was 2004. We had a road test*
24 *office car special that I operated locomotive with the*
25 *road foreman, Mr. Carter at that time, Bill Carter rode*

1 with me.

2 MR. GOBER: Okay.

3 MR. AIKEN: In that operation.

4 MR. GOBER: When did you take your last
5 operating rules exam?

6 MR. AIKEN: February of last year, 2004,
7 somewhere in there.

8 MR. GOBER: Okay. Are you scheduled to take
9 them again any time soon?

10 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir. Sometime within the
11 next month or so -- the best user schedule for rules
12 exam to be taken.

13 MR. GOBER: Okay. Do you pass your rules
14 examinations on the first try?

15 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

16 MR. GOBER: Okay. Do you what the average
17 score is for passing?

18 MR. AIKEN: Are you talking about myself or --

19 MR. GOBER: Yes. What the carrier requires and
20 what do you usually get.

21 MR. AIKEN: I usually average somewhere around
22 90. What the carrier requires I believe is at least an
23 85.

24 MR. GOBER: Eighty five.

25 MR. AIKEN: Yes, I am not real sure.

1 MR. GOBER: Okay. But, you passed, right?

2 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

3 MR. GOBER: Okay. This is non signal territory
4 out here on this.

5 MR. AIKEN: Yes, it is.

6 MR. GOBER: Okay. So, whether or not you are
7 color blind, it wouldn't matter so much as far as
8 operating this territory, but, have you taken a
9 physical to pass your locomotive engineer's
10 certification?

11 MR. AIKEN: Yes, I have. I took it, I think it
12 was in August of 2004.

13 MR. GOBER: Okay. And I think you said you
14 passed it and you were certified.

15 MR. AIKEN: Yes, I am.

16 MR. GOBER: Okay. On the morning before this
17 accident occurred, before you went on duty at Aiken,
18 what was the last job you worked before you came to
19 Aiken and then how did you get to Aiken?

20 MR. AIKEN: The last job that I worked before
21 I came to Aiken was Train 119.

22 MR. GOBER: Where does that work out of? From
23 where to where?

24 MR. AIKEN: Out of Augusta, Georgia, out of
25 Augusta to Columbia. It is the same train that

1 *collided with our train.*

2 *MR. GOBER: Okay. Did you make the full round*
3 *trip on it?*

4 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, I did.*

5 *MR. GOBER: Okay. And then you were called to*
6 *work the local at --*

7 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir, I was called.*

8 *MR. GOBER: Did you, did you, were you fully*
9 *rested when you were called to take this local job?*

10 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.*

11 *MR. GOBER: Okay. We understood that they had*
12 *to wait a couple of hours. The job went on duty at*
13 *seven, and it was 8:32 before you could go out.*

14 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.*

15 *MR. GOBER: And why was that?*

16 *MR. AIKEN: Well, because my rest wasn't up in*
17 *Columbia until 10:32. (Inaudible)*

18 *MR. GOBER: Okay. So how much rest did you*
19 *have before you, did you get your rest at Aiken or did*
20 *you get your rest at Columbia and then drive down? How*
21 *did you get here?*

22 *MR. AIKEN: I drove from home.*

23 *MR. GOBER: After you, after your rest was up.*
24 *And then they allow you X number of hours for deadhead*
25 *time or what?*

1 MR. AIKEN: I was rested in Columbia at 10:32
2 p.m., they called me on duty to deadhead to be in Aiken
3 at 12:32 a.m. but, you usually just take the call and
4 stay at home and drive the next morning and that is
5 what I did.

6 MR. GOBER: Okay. I don't have a problem with
7 that. I am not arguing with it. It is just that I
8 don't understand exactly how many hours sleep you got
9 and then when did you wake up and how did you get --

10 MR. AIKEN: Well, I was in bed when they
11 called me, and I just stayed in bed at 10:32, and I got
12 up the next morning around six, got dressed and I left
13 my house around 7:15, 7:30, somewhere in that area and
14 came.

15 MR. GOBER: Okay. Was your deadhead time
16 counted as time on duty?

17 MR. AIKEN: I don't know, the way I understand
18 it, when you are given the time, and if you are off
19 duty at the time, and your off duty time starts at the
20 time you show -- my rest time. That is the way I
21 understand it and at 8:32 I was suppose to be at work.

22 MR. GOBER: Okay. So, you had eight hours
23 rest.

24 MR. AIKEN: Yes, I did.

25 MR. GOBER: And then you got here at 8:32 and

1 went on duty.

2 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

3 MR. GOBER: Okay. Is everybody happy with
4 that? Okay.

5 You went on duty at Aiken at 8:32, and then
6 what did you all do after that?

7 MR. AIKEN: Well, we had a job briefing. When
8 I walked in the building, the conductor gave me the
9 track warrant. We had a job briefing, he told me that
10 he wanted me to bring the locomotive out of the house
11 track and we were going to run around the, and go in
12 the industrial lead to work (Inaudible) that is where
13 we were going to go.

14 MR. GOBER: Okay. You don't have to go through
15 every track that you all worked. But, you went on
16 duty, you worked the local freight at Aiken, worked
17 local area at Aiken and then you all went down towards
18 Graniteville and then give me just a basic rundown,
19 just an overview, not a car by car.

20 MR. AIKEN: Okay. We went down to one, the SA
21 main line, we did some switching there. We went to
22 Bath, we did some switching at Bath. Came back to and
23 did some more switching. Went to the Bridgestone
24 Firestone, did work on the Bridgestone Firestone and
25 came back to, put on cars, came back to the main line

1 and we went back to the Mills in Graniteville. And
2 once we got, were on the way down to the Mills, the
3 conductor told us what he wanted to do and told me what
4 he wanted me to stop and let him down so that he could
5 go and open the gates and the switches -- and he told
6 the brakeman what he wanted him to do, switches, and do
7 the work. And I let him down at the, we call it the
8 church, it is by the -- I pulled up to the switches, it
9 is like -- let the brakeman down, go by and then --
10 necessary by the -- we backed into the crossing, and by
11 the crossing, I picked him up -- the other crossings
12 and then to switch and went back into the plant,
13 coupled to some more cars. We stopped short, we did a
14 safety stop and we coupled to the cars, went out, set
15 those cars on the luke hole sheet, set back in and set
16 back through the area, did another safety stop, spotted
17 the cars, and came out, and at that time we were trying
18 to put the train away so that we could secure it, and I
19 pulled over to the switch and back into the old coal
20 shoot, everything wouldn't fit. So, they said, well,
21 let's just put everything on the lead. So, I went out,
22 shoved back on the lead. They made a, everything was
23 stopped (Inaudible) secured the train, secured the
24 locomotive and I waited until they came up. The
25 brakeman came up first and he got his equipment, and

1 the ice cooler off the engine, went down and got off.
2 At that time I was still waiting for the conductor to
3 come up and get his stuff off the locomotive. I was,
4 you know, trying to make sure everything was secured.
5 I was locking the back door and I was waiting until he
6 got up there so I could shut the engine down and pull
7 all the breakers and switches and stuff. I just was
8 standing there waiting on him to come in. And he came
9 in and got his stuff. I waited until he got off and I
10 remember checking the back door again, shut the
11 locomotive down, pulled all the breakers. I remember
12 my little lunch bag that I had, I hadn't quite picked
13 it up, so, I picked it up, got my stuff off and I came
14 out the door and the conductor was standing there. He
15 asked me did I need help getting my little brief, I
16 said, no, I don't need -- locked it and put my stuff in
17 the back of the taxi cab, got in the middle seat, the
18 passenger side.

19 MR. GOBER: The scenario is basically what
20 both the other gentlemen told us, but, I want to kind
21 of go through it a little bit to make sure I am clear
22 of exactly what happened. The conductor stopped the
23 train and got off at the little church and walked back
24 into the mill.

25 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

1 MR. GOBER: All right. Then your brakeman got
2 off the engine at the switch on the main track.

3 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

4 MR. GOBER: And you all had 12 cars, so you
5 pulled by and then were you in a position to see what
6 he did at the switch?

7 MR. AIKEN: No, sir.

8 MR. GOBER: Okay. So by not seeing what he
9 did, did you see how he unlocked the lock to line the
10 switch to go in?

11 MR. AIKEN: (Inaudible)

12 MR. GOBER: All right. That is a good
13 question. The way the locomotive was configured, which
14 side of the track was the switch on from you?

15 MR. AIKEN: It was on the right hand side and
16 I was sitting on the left hand side of the locomotive.

17 MR. GOBER: So, the conductor, the brakeman
18 would get off on your side, wait until you pulled back,
19 and line the switch.

20 MR. AIKEN: He would get off when I pulled up
21 to the switch, to stop, he would get off on the side
22 the switch was on.

23 MR. GOBER: Okay. So he stops you by radio.

24 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

25 MR. GOBER: All right. So you don't see him at

1 *all after he gets off.*

2 *MR. AIKEN: No, sir.*

3 *MR. GOBER: Okay. From what the conductor and*
4 *the brakeman tells us, the conductor was down in the*
5 *track sliding the gates and switches and that kind of*
6 *stuff. And then the brakeman rides on the point down,*
7 *couples up to two Cosit soda cars at the very end of*
8 *the track on the lead, and then they pull out and set*
9 *out two and then shove back and spot two at the rear.*

10 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.*

11 *MR. GOBER: And then you never pulled the*
12 *entire train out on the main track after that point.*
13 *You made a couple of switches, setting out cars, and*
14 *they shoved down the lead. And all of that time, what*
15 *we could gather from the brakeman, is that he was*
16 *making the cuts and all and the conductor was doing,*
17 *the brakeman was doing the switches, the conductor was*
18 *making the cuts so that they could set off, clear up*
19 *everything at the gates. We could not find in talking*
20 *to either one of them that the conductor ever rode back*
21 *out to the switch on the main track for any reason*
22 *while you all were working. Once they made their spot,*
23 *set the cars into the track to clear the main track, so*
24 *you could tie up, both of them walked up to the*
25 *locomotive and got their gear off and you all got in*

1 *the cab, in the taxi cab and they left. And from the*
2 *locomotive would you have been in a position to see*
3 *either one of the crew members go up and line the main*
4 *track switch back?*

5 *MR. AIKEN: Not where I was sitting. I*
6 *couldn't see the main line switch the way the track is*
7 *configured, because there is a curve.*

8 *MR. GOBER: Okay.*

9 *MR. AIKEN: I couldn't see it and even when I*
10 *think about it, the locomotive, itself, the way it was*
11 *built, I would have to stand up and I was concerned*
12 *with securing the locomotive because at that time*
13 *everybody had their job to do.*

14 *MR. GOBER: I understand that. And basically,*
15 *what we are saying is, repeating what they told us,*
16 *once they got through securing the cars and you were*
17 *securing the locomotive, they came up got their gear*
18 *off the locomotive and then everybody got in the cab*
19 *and left. So we aren't able to show where anybody ever*
20 *went back to the main track switch to line that switch*
21 *back.*

22 *MR. AIKEN: I could not see either one of*
23 *them. When they came up and got their stuff off --*

24 *MR. GOBER: So you don't know whether they did*
25 *or not.*

1 MR. AIKEN: No, sir.

2 MR. GOBER: Or you just couldn't see what they
3 were doing?

4 MR. AIKEN: I couldn't see them and I didn't
5 know what they were doing. I know the brakeman came in
6 first and got his equipment, got off the locomotive.
7 The conductor came up and got his equipment, he got off
8 the locomotive.

9 MR. GOBER: And both of them told us they got
10 in the cab as soon as they did that.

11 MR. AIKEN: And I got off the locomotive, and
12 the conductor was standing there at the bottom of the
13 step. Whether he walked up to the switches, I don't
14 know. The brakeman, when he got off, he walked up to
15 the switch, I don't know. I was standing there facing
16 the --

17 MR. GOBER: Okay. You did not see them walk up
18 to the switch.

19 MR. AIKEN: No, sir, I didn't.

20 MR. GOBER: Okay. If they did, you don't have
21 any knowledge.

22 MR. AIKEN: No, sir.

23 MR. GOBER: Okay. Rick, do you have any
24 questions?

25 MR. NOVELL: I want to come back to this, what

1 *happened on, standard questions here --*

2 *MR. GOBER: You are going to have to talk*
3 *louder.*

4 *MR. NOVELL: When you went to bed and -- so if*
5 *you can get that --*

6 *MR. AIKEN: You want me to write --*

7 *MR. NOVELL: (Inaudible)*

8 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, I do.*

9 *MR. NOVELL: What is your -- send to me --*
10 *(Pause.)*

11 *MR. NOVELL: Let's see, anything in the last*
12 *year or so, Benjamin, that my have been a preoccupation*
13 *or distraction for you, for example, a recent death in*
14 *the family, maybe not so good medical news on a family*
15 *member, anything that might have prevented or been a*
16 *distraction or preoccupation that you took on the job*
17 *with you? Something that might have played in your*
18 *mind.*

19 *MR. AIKEN: The only problem I had the runs.*

20 *MR. NOVELL: Okay. All right. Okay.*

21 *MR. AIKEN: I mean, that is honest.*

22 *MR. NOVELL: That is okay. No, no, that is*
23 *fine. That is okay.*

24 *MR. GOBER: Did you have diarrhea?*

25 *MR. AIKEN: Yes.*

1 MR. GOBER: Okay.

2 MR. NOVELL: Okay. Anything that might have
3 been playing on your mind, okay, and I will ask the
4 same question, if you had any knowledge that was of
5 your crew member, anything that they may have mentioned
6 that, gee, my mom just died or a goldfish, whatever,
7 anything that might have been a preoccupation or
8 distraction.

9 MR. AIKEN: Not that I remember.

10 MR. NOVELL: Okay. So nothing there for them
11 that might have been a problem.

12 Any problems with your equipment that day, on
13 the day of the accident, you know, any radio problems
14 or --

15 MR. AIKEN: -- radio problems, shut down a
16 couple of times --

17 MR. NOVELL: Okay. Visibility, any issues with
18 your visibility, weather, those kinds of things?

19 MR. AIKEN: No, sir.

20 MR. NOVELL: Questions on your health, how is
21 your overall health, good, bad?

22 MR. AIKEN: Good.

23 MR. NOVELL: Your last physical was, you told
24 Mr. Gober, I am sorry, I don't have that here.

25 MR. AIKEN:

1 MR. AIKEN: August of 2004.

2 MR. NOVELL: August, okay. This is a Part 240
3 physical required for, under FRA?

4 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

5 MR. NOVELL: Okay. Do you get a personal
6 physical from your personal doctor at any point?

7 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

8 MR. NOVELL: And when was that one last?

9 MR. AIKEN: The same month.

10 MR. NOVELL: So you had two in August?

11 MR. AIKEN: Yes, I had one about a week before
12 the other one.

13 MR. NOVELL: Okay. Who is your personal
14 doctor?

15 MR. AIKEN: Dr. William --

16 MR. NOVELL: Where is he located?

17 MR. AIKEN: Columbia, South Carolina --

18 MR. NOVELL: (Inaudible)

19 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

20 MR. NOVELL: Not that I need to contact him,
21 just routine.

22 Any problems with hearing?

23 MR. AIKEN: I was recently --

24 MR. NOVELL: Tested.

25 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

1 MR. NOVELL: Was it apparently something that
2 didn't prevent you from performing your duties,
3 correct?

4 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

5 MR. NOVELL: Vision, I see you have got
6 glasses, do you wear reading glasses or --

7 MR. AIKEN: Reading glasses.

8 MR. NOVELL: Normal contacts or prescription
9 glasses.

10 MR. AIKEN: These are prescription --

11 MR. NOVELL: Okay. -- on the day of the
12 accident.

13 MR. AIKEN: I have to --

14 MR. NOVELL: Medication, are there any
15 medications you are on, prescriptions or over the
16 counter?

17 MR. AIKEN: No.

18 MR. NOVELL: Any kind of vitamins,
19 supplements.

20 MR. AIKEN: (Inaudible) Vitamin.

21 MR. NOVELL: Okay.

22 MR. AIKEN: No, sir.

23 MR. NOVELL: (Inaudible) vitamin.

24 Any alcohol or illegal drug use prior to this
25 accident?

1 MR. AIKEN: No, sir.

2 MR. NOVELL: And after this accident, were you
3 required to submit to the FRA Post Accident Testing?
4 You were not tested blood or urine, is that correct?

5 MR. AIKEN: No.

6 MR. NOVELL: It is a standard procedure. Come
7 under some kind of regulations. -- on work load here.
8 Can you kind of, how long have you been on this job?

9 MR. AIKEN: On this, that day was the first
10 day that I worked at the -- on railroad or --

11 MR. NOVELL: Well, let's just do this, even
12 though it was only one day, what was your impression of
13 the work load, was it a real busy job, was it okay, was
14 it real slack? Just kind of what was your impressions
15 after one day?

16 MR. AIKEN: (Inaudible) no, I wouldn't say
17 that.

18 MR. NOVELL: How did you get interested in the
19 Railroad, how did you get interested?

20 MR. AIKEN: (Inaudible) CSX Railroad and -- I
21 mean, I thought it was the only railroad in the world,
22 so.

23 MR. NOVELL: What, the CSX?

24 MR. AIKEN: Yes.

25 MR. NOVELL: Oh, okay.

1 MR. AIKEN: But, I saw the ad in the paper and
2 realized they made a good living working the railroad
3 and I decided that I would try it.

4 MR. NOVELL: Okay. What is your hire date,
5 again, I am sorry?

6 MR. AIKEN: I will have to look.

7 MR. NOVELL: Okay. Seventy-nine?

8 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

9 MR. NOVELL: And you have been a locomotive
10 engineer since when?

11 MR. AIKEN: I have to think --

12 MR. NOVELL: About 3 September, before Labor
13 Day --

14 MR. AIKEN: My conductor seniority --

15 MR. NOVELL: No, that is fine.

16 MR. AIKEN: (Inaudible) September 12, 1990.

17 MR. NOVELL: That is all the human performance
18 type questions I have. I have a few for this accident
19 here, and I will be done.

20 It was dark about that time?

21 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

22 MR. NOVELL: Okay. Was there, did you get a
23 sense that that you had to hurry up and get things done
24 when you arrived at Avondale, was there a sense of
25 urgency to get things done before the hours of law?

1 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir. About, I guess, four
2 o'clock, when we realized that we were going to be
3 pressed for time.

4 MR. NOVELL: Who brought that up, that you
5 might run out?

6 MR. AIKEN: Nobody brought it up, I just
7 realized with the work load and in the job briefings,
8 the amount of work that we had to do. (Inaudible)

9 MR. NOVELL: Okay. Where you eventually did
10 tie up, in fact.

11 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

12 MR. NOVELL: Okay. It was your first day, I
13 understand that, I am just trying to ask the questions
14 here based on the one day of working that job. Was
15 there, when you got up to, what time did you get to
16 Avondale?

17 MR. AIKEN: Approximately 6:05.

18 MR. NOVELL: (Inaudible) -- cars got to clear,
19 brakeman lines you into the industry.

20 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

21 MR. NOVELL: And then did you ever pull back
22 out at any point on the main?

23 MR. AIKEN: No, sir. I got close to it, but I
24 never got out on it.

25 MR. NOVELL: So you were back and forth, back

1 *and forth in there.*

2 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.*

3 *MR. NOVELL: And then at that point, at some*
4 *point you got close to seven o'clock.*

5 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir. (Inaudible) 7:45.*

6 *MR. NOVELL: What time, 6:45?*

7 *MR. AIKEN: Six forty five, excuse me, 6:45.*

8 *MR. NOVELL: Okay. So you had about 15 minutes*
9 *there.*

10 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.*

11 *MR. NOVELL: Do you recall any discussion*
12 *either with your brakeman or engineer, either by radio*
13 *or in person about the switch?*

14 *MR. AIKEN: No, I don't -- I don't recall.*

15 *MR. GOBER: During the normal switching*
16 *movements, did you hear their radio traffic?*

17 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.*

18 *MR. GOBER: So you would have heard it if they*
19 *had talked about the switch --*

20 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.*

21 *MR. NOVELL: Do you pay attention to that*
22 *necessarily or, the conversation between those two?*

23 *MR. AIKEN: I have to pay attention*
24 *(Inaudible)*

25 *MR. NOVELL: Okay. All right. Any other radio*

1 *traffic going on that evening?*

2 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir. (Inaudible)*

3 *MR. NOVELL: Was it people stepping on one*
4 *other radio?*

5 *MR. AIKEN: I don't recall.*

6 *MR. NOVELL: To your knowledge, was the*
7 *brakeman and the conductor required to have any type of*
8 *a job brief with respect to switches?*

9 *MR. AIKEN: (Inaudible)*

10 *MR. NOVELL: Happened earlier that day,*
11 *between those two?*

12 *MR. AIKEN: Throughout the day?*

13 *MR. NOVELL: Yes.*

14 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.*

15 *MR. NOVELL: Is there any reason why you know*
16 *that they didn't do it here, in Avondale?*

17 *MR. AIKEN: It could have been they were in a*
18 *hurry.*

19 *MR. GOBER: One thing that I was asking and I*
20 *couldn't, how long was the lead in the Avondale Mills,*
21 *when you went in with 12 cars and then you coupled on*
22 *to two was your engine all the way in off of the main*
23 *then?*

24 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.*

25 *MR. GOBER: Okay. How far back in the track*

1 were you on the main?

2 MR. AIKEN: Ah, I was to the lead, let's see.

3 I was at the platform with the plant, in the plant
4 where we were spotting the cars and we had -- 12 car
5 plus four more, so 14 car length and the position I was
6 in, you want to know exactly where I --

7 MR. GOBER: Well, just, how far off from the
8 main track switch whenever you were coupled with the
9 full set of 14?

10 MR. AIKEN: I would say --

11 (Change of tape.)

12 MR. GOBER: Continuing the interview on tape
13 number two with Locomotive Engineer Benjamin Aiken.

14 Thank you, Benjamin, for being patient with
15 me. We are back on the record.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

17 (Inaudible)

18 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible)

20 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible)

22 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible)

24 MR. AIKEN: -- line the switch and walked back
25 to the crossing. (Inaudible) from what I understand.

1 *Stopped at the road crossing -- leading into the --*

2 *UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. (Inaudible)*

3 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.*

4 *UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible)*

5 *MR. AIKEN: The conductor talked with us as we*
6 *were coming into Graniteville. He had already told me*
7 *one time before, but, he came back with the main line,*
8 *based on lead what we were going to do. And then as we*
9 *came into Graniteville, he refreshed me and told me*
10 *again what we were going to do, wants me stop here, and*
11 *let me down and told Mike, I am going to go and line*
12 *the switches. And --*

13 *UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible)*

14 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, that is what I remember that*
15 *happened at that time.*

16 *UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible) was clear*
17 *out on the main?*

18 *MR. AIKEN: I understood that, not only from*
19 *him telling me, but because of the time we had left. I*
20 *knew we wasn't going to --*

21 *UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. (Inaudible)*

22 *MR. AIKEN: To my knowledge, I -- I didn't see*
23 *them, but I think they had them on the ground with*
24 *them.*

25 *UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible)*

1 MR. AIKEN: -- up in the car (Inaudible)

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible)

3 MR. AIKEN: We got a job briefing from the
4 conductor pertaining to the Mills, that he told -- and
5 I heard that.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. I thought you had
7 said earlier that they had been doing that throughout
8 the day, particularly with and including the switches,
9 who was going to do what, is that true?

10 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But, I thought you said
12 that maybe because of the time running out, that didn't
13 happen in terms of the switches here at Avondale, is
14 that true or not?

15 MR. AIKEN: I don't understand what you are
16 saying.

17 MR. GOBER: Hold just a minute.

18 (Pause.)

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible)

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mike, you lined the
22 switch back?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Of the local.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes. Throughout the

1 *day.*

2 *MR. AIKEN: I recall -- he said, Mike, you get*
3 *the switch, I will make the cut. That is what I heard*
4 *throughout the day, that is what I heard at Avondale.*

5 *UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.*

6 *MR. AIKEN: I am getting down here, and, I am*
7 *getting down here for -- Mike, you switch, you bring*
8 *the train.*

9 *UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That is what I am*
10 *asking.*

11 *MR. AIKEN: Okay.*

12 *UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And basically, that is*
13 *consistent with what you heard at Avondale?*

14 *MR. AIKEN: True.*

15 *UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.*

16 *MR. GOBER: Do you have any questions?*

17 *UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, sir.*

18 *Benjamin, what type of unit do you have at*
19 *Avondale?*

20 *MR. AIKEN: I had a 4622, it is an EMB*
21 *locomotive.*

22 *UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: EMB locomotive.*
23 *Southern style locomotive?*

24 *MR. AIKEN: It is a low -- I guess it --*

25 *UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But, you are operating*

1 on the opposite side from the normal locomotive.

2 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So, being -- opposite
4 way of this curve, the switch are going to be on the
5 right.

6 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In other words, where
8 you would have positioned to see out.

9 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And you, probably
11 wouldn't be on the side where the fellows were doing
12 the work, either, would you?

13 MR. AIKEN: No, sir.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The fellows would be
15 doing the work on the opposite side of where you are
16 at, so you couldn't really keep a tab on them.

17 MR. AIKEN: I couldn't see them.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And you stated that
19 when you got in the van, you got on the passenger side
20 of the van.

21 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In the middle seat.

23 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So that would be the
25 side away from the switch.

1 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: When the van left.

3 MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

5 MR. GOBER: Do you have any questions?

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, sir.

7 MR. GOBER: Dan, you got anything?

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

9 MR. GOBER: Okay.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just want to, you
11 secured your train there --

12 MR. GOBER: Were you called to go to work the
13 next day at all?

14 MR. AIKEN: No, sir. I was called and told I
15 was taking out of service pending the investigation.

16 MR. GOBER: Okay. Do you have any comments or
17 statements you would like to make about what you think
18 happened in this case?

19 MR. AIKEN: I don't know what happened.

20 MR. GOBER: Okay. Based on the configuration
21 of the track, you were in the off side of it and you
22 couldn't see what the guys were doing, but, as an end
23 result, we know that the switch never got lined back.
24 It was lining like for the siding. The lock was in the
25 switch in the position for it to be lined and the lock

1 *for the siding. For that, if somebody would have had*
2 *to lock the switch, true, the brakeman had locked it*
3 *whenever you entered into it, to the plant to work.*

4 *MR. AIKEN: That is the normal procedure,*
5 *whenever you line up a switch that has a lock in it,*
6 *you are suppose to line it and lock it, if it has a*
7 *lock.*

8 *MR. GOBER: And that is for protecting the*
9 *switch to make sure somebody else doesn't line it while*
10 *you are in there working.*

11 *MR. AIKEN: It is standard operation*
12 *procedure.*

13 *MR. GOBER: Okay. And you didn't see them go*
14 *back and reline it, you don't know whether they did or*
15 *not, but, because the train ran in there on top of it,*
16 *ran into the equipment that you left, there was no*
17 *other movements out there after you guys got off duty.*
18 *Do you believe that, I asked you that. You already told*
19 *me you don't know.*

20 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.*

21 *MR. GOBER: We know that the switch was lined*
22 *and locked for the siding, for Avondale Mills. We know*
23 *that a train came in there and ran on top of it. And*
24 *you guys were the last ones to work the track. Do you*
25 *know whether or not the crew relined the track in*

1 *accordance with your rules before they tied up their*
2 *track warrants?*

3 *MR. AIKEN: I -(Inaudible) -- I believe in all*
4 *my heart, that they did that. (Inaudible)*

5 *MR. GOBER: And according to the Norfolk*
6 *Southern rules for switches, they are required to*
7 *restore it before you would leave that area, is that*
8 *correct?*

9 *MR. AIKEN: Yes, sir.*

10 *MR. GOBER: Okay. I have no further questions.*
11 *Anybody have any follow up? Okay. It is now 9:35,*
12 *9:25, and we will go off the record now.*

13 *(Whereupon, the interview was concluded at*
14 *9:25 p.m.)*