

BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

In re:)
))
ALASKAN AIRLINES)

Hilton Hotel
One Hegenberger
Oakland, California

Wednesday,
February 16, 2000

INTERVIEW OF RON AZBELL

The above-entitled matter convened pursuant to
notice at 1:48 o'clock p.m.

EXECUTIVE COURT REPORTERS, INC.

1320 Fenwick Lane, Suite 702
Silver Springs, Maryland 20910
(301) 565-00646

APPEARANCES:

On behalf of National Transportation Safety Board:

FRANK MC GILL,
National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Aviation Safety
Aviation Engineering Division
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W.
Washington, DC 20594

On behalf of the Federal Bureau of Investigation:

KRISTEN VON KLEINSMID
Special Agent
Federal Bureau of Investigation
11000 Wilshire Boulevard
Suite 1700
Los Angeles, California 90025

On behalf of Alaskan Airlines:

Captain David B. Crawley, M.D.
Pilot

On behalf of Boeing:

Michael B. Lasley
3855 Lakewood Boulevard
Long Beach, California 90846

On behalf of the Federal Aviation Administration:

Dean Hamilton
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Seattle Flight Standards District Office
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Renton, Seattle 98055

On behalf of the Witness:

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I N D E X

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1 WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2000

1:48 O'CLOCK P.M.

2 P R O C E E D I N G S

3 MR. MC GILL: Ron, do you want to spell your name,
4 just to make sure that we've got your last name right here
5 on this?

6 MR. AZBELL: A-z-b-e-l-l.

7 MR. MC GILL: Okay. And how long have you been
8 with --

9 MR. AZBELL: Alaska?

10 MR. MC GILL: -- Alaskan Airlines?

11 MR. AZBELL: A little less than four and a half
12 years.

13 MR. MC GILL: Four and a half years. As of right
14 now?

15 MR. AZBELL: As of right now.

16 MR. MC GILL: Okay.

17 MR. AZBELL: October will be five years.

18 MR. MC GILL: October, five years. And how long
19 have you been an A&P?

20 MR. AZBELL: About six years now.

21 MR. MC GILL: Where did you work prior to Alaska?

22 MR. AZBELL: United Express and prior to that at
23 Dine Air (phonetic) in Phoenix.

24 MR. MC GILL: You were an A&P at Dine Air?

25 MR. AZBELL: Right.

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1 MR. MC GILL: Okay. And all of the time you've
2 spent right here at Oakland?

3 MR. AZBELL: Right.

4 MR. MC GILL: What kind of training do you
5 normally get when you're hired in?

6 MR. AZBELL: In Oakland?

7 MR. MC GILL: Yeah.

8 MR. AZBELL: Hands-on training. They put you with
9 an experienced mechanic or a lead to work with you.

10 MR. MC GILL: Do you ever -- have they -- do they
11 ever go somewhere else or is all the training is right here?

12 MR. AZBELL: No, we've been sent to different
13 schools.

14 MR. MC GILL: Different schools?

15 MR. AZBELL: Right. As soon as you come in,
16 before you're even put on an aircraft, you go through a two-
17 week -- up in Oakland, we do an MD-80 class for two weeks.

18 MR. MC GILL: Okay.

19 MR. AZBELL: I think there's another week of
20 paperwork class and CHP -- you know.

21 MR. MC GILL: Okay. Well, we were -- to start
22 back here a little bit, we were trying to better understand
23 this check that was performed on the airplane, and then the
24 non-routine that was generated off of that, the actions and

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1 so forth.

2 What was your role in how that was performed?

3 MR. AZBELL: I performed the second check.

4 MR. MC GILL: And who created that task for you?

5 How was that done?

6 MR. AZBELL: How was I put on the second?

7 MR. MC GILL: Yes.

8 MR. AZBELL: Well, I start my shift. We have a
9 meeting in the morning and the leads hand-out the work
10 cards. And I was handed that -- the one, that one there,
11 and told to perform the end play and free play check on the
12 jack screw.

13 MR. MC GILL: And who is the lead that you work --

14 MR. AZBELL: Ron Hensel was my lead that day.

15 MR. LASLEY: Did you actually perform the check or
16 just read the indicators, the dial indicators?

17 MR. AZBELL: No, I -- they weren't on. I set the
18 whole thing up myself.

19 MR. LASLEY: Was anybody else working with you?

20 MR. AZBELL: Ron Hensel and Mike Minnette.

21 MR. MC GILL: Mike Minnette?

22 MR. AZBELL: That was the inspector.

23 MR. MC GILL: Oh, that was the inspector, okay.

24 DR. CRAWLEY: I notice you're an inspector now.

25 Were you --

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1 MR. AZBELL: No, I was a mechanic at the time.

2 DR. CRAWLEY: Okay. What's your inspector
3 seniority date?

4 MR. AZBELL: It's December -- I think December
5 10th of '97.

6 MS. VON KLEINSMID: Was that a promotion? I mean
7 is that a better-paying job? Why did you leave mechanic to
8 do inspections?

9 MR. AZBELL: My father was an inspector in a
10 different airline. It's something that I've been interested
11 in. It's less strenuous work.

12 MS. VON KLEINSMID: Mechanic or inspector?

13 MR. AZBELL: Inspector.

14 MS. VON KLEINSMID: Is harder than --

15 MR. AZBELL: No, less strenuous.

16 MS. VON KLEINSMID: You're talking about less
17 strenuous, okay.

18 MR. AZBELL: More mental.

19 MS. VON KLEINSMID: Okay.

20 MR. MC GILL: When you did this did you know that
21 the aircraft was -- the first measurements were at 40
22 thousandths?

23 MR. AZBELL: Yes, it was written on the card.

24 MR. MC GILL: Okay. And -- but all you know is
25 that somebody gives you a task at that time as a mechanic to

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1 go back out and recheck it?

2 MR. AZBELL: Exactly.

3 MR. MC GILL: Okay. And you went back out and ran
4 it five times, is that correct?

5 MR. AZBELL: That's correct.

6 MR. MC GILL: And were all five of them at 33?

7 MR. AZBELL: Within a thousandths of it.

8 MR. MC GILL: Within a thousandths.

9 MR. LASLEY: So it could have ranged from 32 to
10 34?

11 MR. AZBELL: Correct.

12 DR. CRAWLEY: Do you know if the Acme nut or the
13 -- any part of the stabilizer actuator assembly was
14 lubricated between the first and second checks? Between the
15 time it was checked by -- initially on inspection and
16 then --

17 MR. AZBELL: The time that I did it?

18 DR. CRAWLEY: Yes.

19 MR. AZBELL: No, I don't know that.

20 DR. CRAWLEY: Would that be important to know? Do
21 you have any idea?

22 MR. AZBELL: I don't have no idea. I can't
23 remember if it was. I mean, that was a long time ago. If
24 it was covered with grease, I don't remember that detail.
25 But, no, I don't.

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1 MR. SEYER: How many times have you done these
2 checks?

3 MR. AZBELL: A few times, not a lot.

4 MR. SEYER: Two times? Five times? Ten times?

5 MR. AZBELL: Maybe three.

6 MR. SEYER: As an inspector or as a mechanic?

7 MR. AZBELL: As a mechanic.

8 MR. SEYER: So you've never performed one of these
9 checks as an inspector?

10 MR. AZBELL: As an inspector? No, I haven't.

11 MR. MC GILL: Your skill is also 3? Well,
12 whatever your nomenclature is.

13 MR. AZBELL: Right.

14 MR. MC GILL: You're a 3.

15 DR. CRAWLEY: When they get somebody to recheck
16 something because for some reason they didn't believe the
17 first measurement, wouldn't -- don't they normally get
18 somebody with -- whose more experienced than the first
19 person to do it?

20 MR. AZBELL: I don't know.

21 DR. CRAWLEY: You don't know why it was assigned
22 to you?

23 MS. VON KLEINSMID: How many times had you
24 performed that check prior to September of '97? You hired
25 in, when, October of '96?

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1 MR. AZBELL: Like I said, I can't remember every
2 time that I've done it. It's not a lot of times. It's not
3 a check that's done, you know, often. I haven't worked
4 there that long, but a few times.

5 MS. VON KLEINSMID: You're saying, though, that
6 you had performed the check prior to being asked to do the
7 check on this Mig 4 card?

8 MR. AZBELL: Yes, I have.

9 MS. VON KLEINSMID: At least once?

10 MR. AZBELL: Yes, I have.

11 MR. MC GILL: Was Ron Hensel up there with you on
12 the stand?

13 MR. AZBELL: Yes, he was.

14 MR. MC GILL: Okay. So he was looking and you
15 were actually kind of doing it and he's observing you?

16 MR. AZBELL: He's there with me.

17 MR. HAMILTON: Hensel was the lead, right?

18 MR. AZBELL: Right.

19 MR. MC GILL: Was there an inspector there, too?

20 MR. AZBELL: Yes, there was.

21 MR. MC GILL: Who was the inspector?

22 MR. AZBELL: Mike Minnette.

23 MR. MC GILL: So the three of you were up there,
24 looking at the check?

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1 MR. AZBELL: Right.

2 MR. HAMILTON: So who was doing the cockpit?

3 MR. AZBELL: I can't remember that. That was --

4 MR. SEYER: Normally if you're going to go back
5 and recheck something, would it seem likely that you would
6 go back and talk to the person who originally wrote it up,
7 the other inspector, this No. 71, Angelito Bautista? Did
8 you ever go back and talk to him about this before you went
9 up and evaluated?

10 MR. AZBELL: I didn't -- I wouldn't have.

11 MR. SEYER: Probably your lead might have?

12 MR. AZBELL: Maybe -- they may. My job is just to
13 perform the check a second time.

14 DR. ESTRIN: Do you know if there was an actuator
15 assembly available -- immediately available to replace it
16 with?

17 MR. AZBELL: No, I don't know.

18 DR. CRAWLEY: You probably wouldn't know if it was
19 available unless you had to order a part or get a part.

20 MR. AZBELL: Right. I wouldn't know that.

21 DR. CRAWLEY: Okay.

22 MR. SEYER: Does it seem odd that they're making a
23 decision whether to replace this jack screw or not two days
24 before it's pushed out of the barn?

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1 MR. AZBELL: No, it doesn't. I think it's less
2 than a day to change the jack screw, so I don't see how that
3 would affect anything.

4 DR. CRAWLEY: If you had gotten a measurement of
5 34 thousandths instead of 33 thousandths, would there be any
6 difference in what would happen after that?

7 MR. AZBELL: No, there wouldn't.

8 DR. CRAWLEY: You weren't aware that at 34 that
9 you'd have to have 1,000-hour inspections on the actuator
10 assembly?

11 MR. AZBELL: No, that's not on the work card.
12 It's not in the maintenance manual.

13 MS. VON KLEINSMID: So you don't recall -- or did
14 anyone say anything to you when they handed this Meg 4 --
15 when your supervisor handed this card to you, work card to
16 you, he didn't say -- do you recall any additional verbiage
17 that he gave you?

18 MR. AZBELL: No, I don't. I just vaguely remember
19 doing the job itself. It's been a long time. I don't
20 remember any details of conversation that I would have had
21 with him.

22 MS. VON KLEINSMID: And you didn't --

23 MR. MC GILL: Did you work yesterday?

24 MR. AZBELL: Yes, I did.

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1 MR. MC GILL: What airplane did you work on
2 yesterday?

3 MR. AZBELL: Yesterday? 944.

4 MR. MC GILL: I was just curious, trying to find
5 someone that worked on --

6 MR. AZBELL: 973 that's in there now?

7 MR. MC GILL: Yeah.

8 MR. AZBELL: No, that was -- I believe that was --

9 MR. MC GILL: They took a jack screw out, I guess.

10 MR. AZBELL: Right.

11 MS. VON KLEINSMID: So you didn't have any
12 communication with Hensel who's up there as to why he wanted
13 that replacement and perform EO? He didn't talk about that?

14 MR. AZBELL: I'm sure I did. I just don't
15 remember it.

16 MS. VON KLEINSMID: You don't remember what that
17 communication was?

18 MR. AZBELL: Right.

19 MR. LASLEY: Would it be normal to change out the
20 jack screw if it was at 40 thousandths play?

21 MR. AZBELL: Would it be normal?

22 MR. LASLEY: Yeah.

23 MR. AZBELL: No, 40 thousandths is still within
24 limit, per the maintenance manual.

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1 DR. CRAWLEY: So why were they rechecking it if it
2 was within limits? Did that question come up in your mind?

3 MR. AZBELL: I may have asked it, but I don't
4 remember if I did or not. I mean I just do the job that
5 they give me to do. I wouldn't question why I was doing it,
6 I'd just follow the manual and perform the check.

7 DR. CRAWLEY: Well, the questions I asked you was
8 about the grease, and the reason I asked you about
9 lubrication is because on these airplanes since this
10 accident that we've been rechecking, we find that with each
11 measurement, the measurements get a little bigger and a
12 little bigger and a little bigger, because the grease is
13 squeezed out. But you didn't experience that --

14 MR. AZBELL: No, I didn't.

15 DR. CRAWLEY: -- or haven't experienced that?

16 MR. AZBELL: If that happened, you wouldn't -- the
17 check wouldn't be valid. Each measurement has to be within
18 a thousandths.

19 DR. CRAWLEY: Yeah, to get it to that point to
20 where it is staying stable.

21 MR. AZBELL: Everyone is stable.

22 DR. CRAWLEY: So you would keep doing it until you
23 get to that point?

24 MR. AZBELL: Correct.

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1 DR. CRAWLEY: And yours started out right?

2 MR. AZBELL: Right.

3 DR. CRAWLEY: Like that.

4 MR. SEYER: Are you aware that the lubrication
5 card was completed between the original check and the time
6 that you checked it?

7 MR. AZBELL: No, I'm not.

8 DR. CRAWLEY: You didn't do that lubrication?

9 MR. AZBELL: I may have, but I don't remember if I
10 did or not.

11 DR. CRAWLEY: It wasn't done at the same time as
12 the check, though, right? At the same time that you did --

13 MR. AZBELL: They weren't lubing it while I was
14 doing the check, no.

15 DR. CRAWLEY: Okay.

16 MR. AZBELL: And, like I say, I wouldn't be able
17 to tell you if it was done before, prior to.

18 MR. LASLEY: Is there kind of a set number of
19 times that you would do this check? You know, some number
20 that might -- that "several" might mean in the procedure?

21 MR. AZBELL: Well, "several," three, four. So you
22 know that you're getting an even reading, I guess.

23 MR. LASLEY: So it could be as little as three and
24 as many as however many it takes.

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1 MR. AZBELL: As many as you feel comfortable, but
2 at least several, to me, would mean at least three.

3 MS. VON KLEINSMID: But you said you weren't
4 getting any variation to begin with?

5 MR. AZBELL: Right.

6 MS. VON KLEINSMID: So did you feel necessary to
7 do it five times?

8 MR. AZBELL: I guess I did.

9 MS. VON KLEINSMID: Did anyone tell you to do it
10 five times?

11 MR. AZBELL: No, but it's -- once you have it set
12 up, it's -- five times is a matter of five minutes.

13 MS. VON KLEINSMID: Okay.

14 MR. AZBELL: It's not a long check. You loosen a
15 bolt, you torque it, you loosen it, torque it. That's how
16 often it takes per check.

17 MS. VON KLEINSMID: And on prior, like you said,
18 you did a couple at least before this one. So did you
19 recall having variations on those aircraft that you checked?

20 MR. AZBELL: No, I wouldn't remember that.

21 MS. VON KLEINSMID: So it doesn't float around a
22 lot? I mean you could get one reading and then get another
23 reading that's completely different.

24 MR. AZBELL: If that happened --

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1 MS. VON KLEINSMID: Has that ever happened to you?
2 Do you remember that?

3 MR. AZBELL: I don't remember that ever happening.
4 At least not on that particular check. I mean those things
5 have happened with dial indicators. If your indicator is
6 not tight, whatever it's mounted to -- but I don't remember
7 that happening on this check.

8 DR. CRAWLEY: When you -- you filled out this part
9 of it down here?

10 MR. AZBELL: That's right.

11 DR. CRAWLEY: The results of your check. So
12 that's your writing --

13 MR. AZBELL: My writing.

14 DR. CRAWLEY: -- and then you signed down there?

15 MR. AZBELL: My signature.

16 DR. CRAWLEY: And up here it says "replace nut and
17 perform EO." And that is crossed out. And I guess this is
18 Hansen (sic) right here --

19 MR. AZBELL: Hansel.

20 DR. CRAWLEY: Hansel?

21 MR. AZBELL: Ron Hansel.

22 DR. CRAWLEY: Hansel that crossed that out. Was
23 there any discussion about that, replacement of that?

24 MR. AZBELL: There might have been.

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1 MR. MC GILL: But you don't recall?

2 MR. AZBELL: I don't recall.

3 MR. MC GILL: Was there any discussion with Ross
4 Bellefore that made this initial re-evaluation request?

5 MR. AZBELL: Not with me.

6 MR. MC GILL: Well, I don't really have any more
7 questions.

8 MS. VON KLEINSMID: Is there pressure at Oakland
9 to get planes out? Do you feel any pressure to complete a
10 lot of tasks and to hurry through things?

11 MR. AZBELL: No, I don't.

12 MS. VON KLEINSMID: So no pressure from any of
13 your supervisors?

14 MR. AZBELL: Just to do your job.

15 MS. VON KLEINSMID: Right. You never signed off
16 on any job that you hadn't completed 100 percent?

17 MR. AZBELL: No, of course not.

18 MS. VON KLEINSMID: You're not aware of that ever
19 occurring?

20 MR. AZBELL: Not that I know of.

21 MS. VON KLEINSMID: Okay.

22 MR. HAMILTON: When you're out working on a job,
23 say the tail of this, are you talking to the inspectors and
24 your lead? There's three of you up in the tail. Are you
25 talking to yourselves about the readings, et cetera?

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1 MR. AZBELL: Yeah, we would be. I mean, the
2 inspector would be communicating. He'd be there watching
3 one of you.

4 MR. HAMILTON: Because you're doing the job --

5 MR. AZBELL: We're doing the job. He's watching
6 what I'm doing.

7 MR. HAMILTON: So would you ask him -- you'd say,
8 "I see this at 33 thousandths," or whatever, and you'd say,
9 "Is that what you see, too?"

10 MR. AZBELL: Right. "Do you see that?" "Yes."
11 "Okay. Will you loosen it, torque it." "What do you read
12 it as?" "Thirty-three. What do you read it as?" "Thirty-
13 three."

14 MR. HAMILTON: Okay.

15 MR. AZBELL: Okay, another time. And I'd ask him
16 how many times he wanted me to torque it, do it again.

17 MR. SEYER: On the bottom of the task card, the
18 shaded area here, this is basically all maintenance
19 inspection items completed. The lead would sign these --
20 this off and date it when all the items are complete on the
21 work card. Is that the way it usually works?

22 MR. AZBELL: I would assume. I've never signed --
23 I've never dealt with the grey area down there. That's a
24 lead or production control area. It's never pertained to
25 any jobs that I've had.

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1 MR. SEYER: My question is could this work card be
2 -- it could have been completed on a previous date prior to
3 9/29?

4 MR. AZBELL: Yes.

5 MR. SEYER: And you signed off this portion, at
6 least the shaded portion, was signed off a day or two later,
7 after the card was completed?

8 MR. AZBELL: That could have been.

9 MR. MC GILL: We don't have any more questions?
10 If not, I appreciate very much you taking the time to come
11 in here.

12 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

13 ---o0o---