

DCA-06-FR-004

**Norfolk Southern Rear-end Collision
Derailment**

Train No. 226 & Train No. 22R

Lincoln, AL

January 18, 2006

**Interview of Road Foreman of Engines
for NS's Alabama Division
(on Train No. 22R)**

36 pages, including cover sheet

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES

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Investigation of: *
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NORFOLK SOUTHERN REAR-END COLLISION *
LINCOLN, AL *
JANUARY 18, 2006 * Docket No.: DCA-06-FR-004
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Interview of: BOBBY STEVEN TIFTON

Comfort Inn
Lincoln, Alabama

Wednesday,
January 18, 2006

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to
notice.

BEFORE: RUSSELL GOBER

APPEARANCES:

RUSSELL GOBER, OPERATIONS GROUP CHAIRMAN
National Transportation Safety Board
DuPage County Airport
31 West 775 North Avenue
West Chicago, Illinois 60185
[REDACTED]

MR. MCAVOY
Federal Railroad Administration

MR. CAMPBELL

I N D E X

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2 MR. GOBER: Norfolk Southern derailment, January the
3 18th, 2006, Lincoln, Alabama. Derailment occurs about 4:17
4 p.m. at the siding at Coosa in Lincoln, Alabama.

5 (Off the record.)

6 (On the record.)

7 MR. GOBER: Would you tell me your name, please, sir?

8 MR. TIFTON: Bobby Steven Tifton.

9 (Off the record.)

10 (On the record.)

11 MR. GOBER: My name is Russell Gober. I'm with the
12 National Transportation Safety Board.

13 (Phone rings.)

14 (Off the record.)

15 (On the record.)

16 MR. GOBER: Okay, on the record. We're interviewing
17 Mr. Steve Tifton, Road Foreman of Engines out of Birmingham,
18 Alabama. We're here today to develop the facts, conditions and
19 circumstances surrounding a rear-end collision which occurred
20 at Coosa siding in Lincoln, Alabama, on January the 18th, 2006.

21 INTERVIEW OF BOBBY STEVEN TIFTON

22 BY MR. GOBER:

23 Q. Mr. Tifton, could you tell me your full name and your
24 address and phone number?

25 A. Yes, it's Bobby Steven Tifton, Norfolk Southern

1 Drive, 1400 Norfolk Southern Drive. The telephone is [REDACTED]

2 [REDACTED].

3 Q. Is this the number and address we can reach you by?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Okay. What is your job with the Norfolk Southern?

6 A. I'm a road foreman of engines.

7 Q. What does a road foreman of engines do?

8 A. I'm required to certify new engineers and recertify
9 existing engineers and monitor their training and their
10 performance.

11 Q. Okay. In that regard, are you required to know the
12 territory for the districts you're operating over?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. Okay. On the 18th, what were you doing that day?

15 A. I was monitoring the LET, Jeremy Cannon, on Train
16 22RA116.

17 Q. Okay. And in monitoring that train, what were you
18 going to do if you had made a full run yesterday?

19 A. I was just observing the way he handled his train
20 along with another locomotive engineer assigned to the job, and
21 pointing out any mistakes or changes that needed to be made and
22 answering any questions.

23 Q. Okay. The train went on duty where?

24 A. Birmingham, Alabama.

25 Q. At what time?

1 A. 1:35 p.m. -- Roughly around 2:00 p.m., I believe.

2 Q. All right, on the 18th you were on which train again,
3 now?

4 A. 22R.

5 Q. And 22R was destined from Birmingham to where?

6 A. Atlanta.

7 Q. -- regular run?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. Is it operated every day?

10 A. Yeah, almost every day, yes.

11 Q. Okay. How often as a road foreman do you ride this
12 train?

13 A. It's not every day. It's not very frequent that I
14 ride this 22R.

15 Q. Okay. So as a road foreman, what do your duties
16 require you to do? You train engineers and you observe them
17 operate, but how many trains do you ride -- how many trains
18 does the division have on it? Tell me a little bit about the
19 operation, and why are you a road foreman?

20 A. My requirements to my job was to ride at least two
21 trains per month. We usually run, I would say, 15 or more
22 through freight trains east and a west a day, you know, and
23 these jobs work in pool system, so you're not going to catch
24 the same person every day.

25 Q. It's on a first in and first out.

1 A. First in. That's the reason I do not -- you know, I
2 can't say I ride the 22R several times. I may ride it today
3 with this engineer and then catch another engineer that needs
4 to be ridden with down the road.

5 Q. Okay. But you were on the 22R yesterday. Is it a
6 through freight train?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay. You depart of Birmingham about 1:35, or went
9 on duty at 1:35, and you were in the siding at Coosa. How did
10 you know to go into the siding at Coosa and what were you doing
11 there?

12 A. The dispatcher had toned us up and said that she was
13 going to run 226 around us at Coosa or at Embry, and we would
14 be headed in for -- And we proceeded on, got an approach
15 signal at Riverside, come up to prepare to stop at Coosa, had
16 divergent approach, headed in and pulled up to Embry and
17 stopped.

18 Q. Okay. And I've got the milepost at Coosa as the
19 757.9. Is that --

20 A. That would be correct.

21 Q. Okay. Roughly how many miles is it from Birmingham
22 to Atlanta on the run that you would make?

23 A. Roughly 152, you know.

24 Q. Okay. And you go from which yard to what yard?

25 A. We go from Norris Yard in Birmingham, Alabama

1 to Amblin (ph.) Yard in Atlanta, Georgia.

2 Q. Okay. And crews go on duty in Birmingham and off
3 duty in Atlanta?

4 A. At Amblin Yard, yes, sir.

5 Q. Okay. As a road foreman, you don't -- as a road
6 foreman, do you have a regular assignment or do you just work
7 as you and your managers feel that you should work?

8 A. I have a regular assignment and it's from Birmingham
9 to Atlanta.

10 Q. Okay. You have a regular territory.

11 A. Exactly.

12 Q. The assignment would be hours. Days and jobs would
13 be based upon what you need to do or does somebody assign you
14 you're daily work?

15 A. No, nobody assigns me my daily work. It's put out by
16 what my job is and essentially -- assistant superintendent.

17 Q. In Birmingham?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. Okay. And do you have a designated amount or a
20 minimum number or a maximum you try to do?

21 A. No, sir.

22 Q. Is it based on quality?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay. Is quantity ever a question?

25 A. It never has been to me.

1 Q. Okay. Have you ever been asked about how you do your
2 efficiency checks?

3 A. No, sir.

4 Q. Okay. Do you usually go by yourself or do you have a
5 partner with you?

6 A. I would say greater than 50 percent of the time I
7 have a partner with me.

8 Q. And that's like another road foreman or a
9 trainmaster?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. Okay. What do you think the function of efficiency
12 testing is?

13 A. To pick out shortcomings in our system and -- or that
14 an employee may have in performing his duties, and then
15 informing him of what he's done wrong or what he's done right
16 at the same to improve --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- the work area.

19 Q. Okay. Steve, how long have you worked for Norfolk
20 Southern?

21 A. Twelve years.

22 Q. Okay. And what did you start out doing?

23 A. A brakeman.

24 Q. Okay. And how long have you been -- just go through
25 the chronology of your promotions.

1 A. Okay. I hired in as a brakeman. I worked that
2 roughly two years. Became a conductor under the -- our ACT
3 program started, then was promoted to engineer. In may of
4 this -- of last year was promoted to road foreman of engines.

5 Q. Okay. Is the road foreman of engines job a job that
6 a locomotive engineer generally aspires to become?

7 A. That would depend on the individual.

8 Q. Okay. Are there benefits to being a road foreman?

9 A. Just in doing the job.

10 Q. Okay. Do you enjoy your job?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Okay. The reason I asked, there are a lot of
13 different names for supervisors. The road foreman usually gets
14 to ride a lot of trains. Norfolk Southern is one of the ones
15 that allows you to actually ride the train instead of driving
16 your car. So how often do you work -- do you work seven days a
17 week? Do you work six, five? What's your normal schedule?

18 A. My normal schedule is five days a week and two off
19 days, but you know, lately it's been seven days a week. I'm
20 still on call those days, if needed.

21 Q. Okay. Just call -- are you usually needed?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Along the -- on the trip yesterday, did you do any
24 work between Birmingham and Coosa?

25 A. No, sir.

1 Q. Okay. What were you going to do after you cleared
2 Coosa?

3 A. Allow the 226 to go around us, then we would leave
4 Embry. It's at the other end of Coosa. And follow him on to
5 Amblin.

6 Q. Okay. Did you have any work to do in between Coosa
7 and Amblin?

8 A. No, sir, I can't remember fully that right now, but I
9 don't believe we did. I can't honestly --

10 Q. And what is your -- what does your train usually do?
11 Is it a --

12 A. It's usually a -- no, it's usually through freight
13 train. It goes straight from Birmingham --

14 Q. Do you ever make pickups and set-downs at auto
15 facilities?

16 A. At times, but that's not a regular have-to thing. I
17 mean it's not a big --

18 Q. Do you know whether you would've been required to
19 stop at the Honda plant on the 18th?

20 A. I can't remember, to be honest with you. We wouldn't
21 be required at that time.

22 Q. Okay. As the road foreman, do you normally kind of
23 get a little lineup of what you're going to do before you leave
24 Birmingham?

25 A. You get a job briefing and have the safety contacts.

1 You know, at a lot of times work changes in between, you know.

2 Q. Okay. As a supervisor, do you lead the job briefing
3 or just monitor what the --

4 A. I usually start the job briefing out and then step
5 aside and allow the crew to --

6 Q. Okay. As the road foreman, you would know if you
7 were going to switch at the Honda plant, wouldn't you?

8 A. Yes, if we were going to do it initially, I should've
9 known.

10 Q. Okay. But did you know whether you were going to it
11 yesterday?

12 A. I can't remember whether I did or not.

13 Q. Okay. And I can understand that. Okay. The train
14 that ran around you, ran around you for a purpose. Usually
15 that purpose is because you're going to be delayed or you're
16 going to have to some work. Do you know whether that was on
17 the schedule or not?

18 A. That train is one of our hotter trains and we were a
19 heavy load train. We were a little slower than most. And I
20 assume that they did not want him delayed any more is the
21 reason they ran him around us.

22 Q. Okay. So you didn't know if you had the work to do
23 or not?

24 A. I can't say that we didn't talk about it. There's
25 been so much that's happened between then and now, I would not

1 want to say that.

2 Q. All right. It really doesn't matter. Was your crew
3 performing their duties based upon what you thought they should
4 be doing from the time you went on duty at Birmingham until the
5 accident occurred?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Okay. Did you have any slow orders or any bulletins
8 or anything?

9 A. Yes, sir. I believe we had a 25 mile an hour -- I
10 can't remember -- 770 something. I can't remember. I have a
11 copy of --

12 Q. That's fine. If you're going to do work like setting
13 down and picking up, do you get a lineup from somebody that
14 tells you?

15 A. Yes. A lot times, if you're going to do work at -- a
16 lot of times at the auto plants, you might be told that you're
17 going to do some work, but until you get the Honda plant and
18 talk to the crews there and find out where you can set up,
19 where you're going to pick up and how many you're going to
20 pick, that changes very quickly.

21 Q. Okay. So to your memory, you had not been told that
22 you were going to stop at the Honda plant.

23 A. Right. I can't remember being told, but I don't want
24 to say that they didn't because so much -- they may have and I
25 just don't remember it.

1 Q. Okay. All right, I'm really not trying to make a
2 point to that. I just heard that you work the Honda plant, so
3 I wanted to --

4 A. Typically, you know, I should've known to be able to
5 answer your question and I apologize.

6 Q. So stress can cause you to forget and I'm sure that
7 you have entertained a little stress. Okay. What was your
8 first indication of a problem after you stopped at Coosa?

9 A. Our train went into emergency.

10 Q. Okay. Did you know how long your train was whenever
11 you arrived at Coosa?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Okay. Was it a question in your mind as to whether
14 or not you could fit in the siding?

15 A. No, sir.

16 Q. How did you make that entry to where you felt secure
17 about your position?

18 A. I knew the length of the train and I knew the length
19 of the siding. Too, this is TC territory, so you know, we
20 pulled in and we kept the train straight.

21 Q. How do you know whenever you're going to clear the
22 switch on the Coosa side?

23 A. Usually with a counter.

24 Q. Okay. Did you use your counter yesterday?

25 A. I did not set the counter yesterday.

1 Q. Okay. Do you know whether your engineer did or not?

2 A. I do not know for sure. I thought he did, but I did
3 not instruct him to set the counter.

4 Q. Okay. If he was going to stop there, he wouldn't
5 depend on you to tell him to do that, would he?

6 A. No.

7 Q. Okay. Whenever the train went into emergency, what
8 did you do then?

9 A. At that time, we tried to set the train back up with
10 the automatic, placing it, the automatic handle, in emergency
11 position and resetting it back up, the handle up and just
12 bringing to release the pressure back up and the brake did set
13 up. The pressure built up to 67 pounds on the rear with the MT
14 (ph.) still showing. We monitored it for a little while,
15 several minutes, and the flow meter started going up to stop,
16 you know, which indicates that you do have a problem when your
17 flow meter stops and won't go down any further. Then we
18 decided to go back there and check the --.

19 Q. Did you go back?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. What did you find?

22 A. The fire department was already on the scene, and
23 this was just in a few seconds.

24 Q. What fire department would that have been? Do you
25 know?

1 A. Lincoln.

2 Q. Do you know how they got notified?

3 A. No, sir, I do not.

4 Q. Okay. Did you have an occasion to see anybody on the
5 other train?

6 A. Yes, sir, I did.

7 Q. Okay. Tell me what you -- what you did? When you
8 walked back you saw the fire department. What was the first
9 thing you did?

10 A. I got into the ambulance with the crew and asked them
11 if they were all right. You know, it was my main concern. And
12 the second thing, I asked them if there was anything I needed
13 to know about their train. You know, the conductor, he was,
14 you know, talking and very respondent. And that was about it.
15 The engineer stated that I had a clear signal at Riverview --
16 Riverside. I'm sorry.

17 Q. And Riverside is the -- the intermediate signal
18 before
19 -- just before you would reach Coosa?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Roughly how far from Coosa is that?

22 A. I would say roughly two miles.

23 Q. Okay. On a clear signal at Riverside, the train that
24 was following you, what would he do if he got a clear signal?

25 A. He would proceed at authorized track speed.

1 Q. What is your authorized track speed at that point?

2 A. The authorized track speed is 50 mile an hour through
3 there.

4 Q. Okay. You got in the ambulance and talked to them.
5 What did you observe?

6 A. That they were cut and bruised up. They seemed
7 shocky (ph.), so I did not proceed to question any activities
8 of what had happened, because I didn't know their -- the
9 condition of their health.

10 Q. Okay. How long was it before they were able to
11 proceed towards the hospital?

12 A. No more than two minutes.

13 Q. Did you go with them?

14 A. No, sir.

15 Q. Okay. Was there any other NS management personnel
16 assigned to meet them at the hospital or anything?

17 A. Yes, sir, I'm sure that there were.

18 Q. Do you know whether -- do you know any of them that
19 went?

20 A. I believe Trainmaster Steve Smith may have went to
21 the hospital.

22 Q. Where is Mr. Smith out of?

23 A. Out of Birmingham.

24 Q. Okay. So how would he know that they had an
25 accident?

1 A. I'm sure that the chief's office notified him.
2 That's also his territory.

3 Q. Did you call back to -- to tell him, hey, you need to
4 call the dispatcher, we got a wreck here?

5 A. No, the dispatcher said, I've already been informed.
6 The small house is right beside this and I assumed that several
7 phone calls had been made instantaneously.

8 Q. Was there any fire when you got back there?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. What was on fire?

11 A. Locomotives were on fire and it looked like all the
12 racks -- as close as I could get, I could see auto racks on
13 fire.

14 Q. Okay. Was anybody on your train injured?

15 A. No, sir.

16 Q. Because I remember you didn't realize you'd even had
17 an accident.

18 A. No, sir, never even felt no impact at all.

19 Q. Okay. All right. Well, after the crew departed for
20 the hospital, what did you do after that?

21 A. Proceeded to get the crew of 22R out of the area.

22 Q. How did you do that?

23 A. Removed them with a vehicle up to the Lincoln Depot.

24 Q. Okay. How did you -- where did you get the vehicle?

25 A. The vehicle was my Intrepid. The conductor had

1 brought it from Leeds to Lincoln.

2 Q. Okay. So at the time of the accident, who was on the
3 train?

4 A. Myself, the LET, Jeremy Cannon, and Paul Vance the
5 engineer.

6 Q. Okay. Is it -- is it a normal practice for the
7 conductor to leave the train?

8 A. It's not a normal thing, but it's not unusual for it
9 to happen, I mean, you know, in certain situations where we
10 need to get moved quickly to clear some things to advance any
11 further ahead of us.

12 Q. Okay. Was he going to drive your vehicle to Atlanta?

13 A. No, sir, to Lincoln and leave it at Lincoln.

14 Q. Okay. Why would that be necessary?

15 A. When we departed Birmingham, a maintenance and weight
16 gentleman -- I believe it was maintenance and weight -- had
17 called us and said that we had a auto rack door open on our
18 train, a loaded auto rack door. We had the train stopped on
19 major crosses, through major crosses in the City of Leeds and
20 he was walking back and I told him -- I gave him the keys to my
21 car and I said to him, when we get this fixed and you inspect
22 the train, just bring my car on and we'll clear these crossings
23 and then you can meet me at Lincoln.

24 Q. Okay. And you had left your vehicle there --

25 A. At Leeds.

1 Q. -- until you rode a train back --

2 A. Exactly.

3 Q. -- to Leeds?

4 A. Exactly.

5 Q. And that's a normal --

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. -- type of thing that you would do? Okay. Well,
8 based on what you're telling me, and I'm not trying to put
9 words in your mouth, that you did this in order to be efficient
10 and to move the train faster and not delay traffic?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Okay. It wasn't that you were trying to advance your
13 automobile so that you have it whenever you --

14 A. No, sir.

15 Q. -- got to the other end? Okay. And that -- you
16 know, that's something that could happen.

17 A. Oh yes, sir.

18 Q. And the plan had not originated whenever you departed
19 Norris Yard.

20 A. No, sir.

21 Q. It just occurred because you had a delay.

22 A. A delay in the block, due to that, and I didn't want
23 the block the -- any longer than I had to.

24 Q. Okay. And Leeds is just out of the yard?

25 A. It's roughly 11 miles outside of Norris Yard.

1 Q. Well, how did he get back to Norris Yard to get your
2 car?

3 A. My car was at Leeds. That's where I normally catch
4 Vance --

5 Q. Okay. So you caught the train at Leeds.

6 A. Right, 11 miles outside of the yard. We do that due
7 to a lot of times trains get held up in the yard and --

8 Q. Okay, I understand. I was just thought that you
9 boarded the train at Norris Yard and rode out.

10 A. I met the crew at Norris Yard and had a job briefing,
11 then meet them at Leeds when they get out of the yard.

12 Q. Okay. Does the train dispatcher know that you're
13 doing this kind of a move?

14 A. Yes, sir, and the chief dispatcher was notified also.

15 Q. Okay. All right. So you were able to have your car
16 in a position after an emergency occurred to help to get the
17 crew out of the area, then.

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. So I'm having to assume that the conductor had
20 radio --

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. -- contact with you.

23 A. My radio -- my car is equipped with one of the large
24 engine radios and we were in contact constantly, you know, be
25 in contact constantly going up the road as he shadowed the

1 train.

2 Q. Okay. All right. Any other interesting operating
3 moves that you guys made?

4 A. None that I can think of.

5 Q. After you got to the depot at Lincoln, what did you
6 do?

7 A. I had the crew get out and stay at the Lincoln Depot,
8 instructed them with the fire burning and some of the smoke
9 coming that way. It was very big. I instructed them to stay
10 inside the depot and not be out wandering around in the yard.

11 Q. Roughly how far is that depot from where the accident
12 occurred?

13 A. About a mile and a half, two miles.

14 Q. To the east?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay. Okay, after that, what did you do?

17 A. I went back to the scene and tried to assess the
18 damage -- but could not get close enough because the chief, the
19 fire chief had evacuated the area and would not allow us to get
20 very close to it.

21 Q. Okay. Okay. What did you do after that?

22 A. I just continued to talk with the chief of police. A
23 helicopter had been called in, we were going to look at the
24 video as soon as they got down, and talked to my superiors
25 about what was going on and trying to give them an assessment

1 of the damage.

2 Q. Did you see the video after they got down?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. Okay. And what police department has that video?

5 A. The state police.

6 Q. Okay. Was it a good -- a good video?

7 A. No, they had continually, over and over last night,
8 do it because the flames blinded their camera. You couldn't
9 get any detail out of it much --

10 Q. Okay. Well, after that, what did you do then?

11 A. Just continued to stay on the scene to assist in
12 anything, and any information I could give or anything.

13 Q. Well, when were you finally released?

14 A. About three o'clock this morning.

15 Q. Okay. So you were on the scene until --

16 A. I was on the scene until about 2:00 and then was
17 taken to Talladega, Citizens Hospital I believe is the name of
18 it, and FRA drug tested.

19 Q. Okay. Do you suspect that there's anything to worry
20 about from the drug test?

21 A. Absolutely not.

22 Q. Okay. Do you use drugs or alcohol?

23 A. No, sir.

24 Q. Okay. Was your train crew tested at about the same
25 time?

1 A. They were tested earlier, like a hour a so earlier,
2 by Mr. Campbell, I believe, Sandy Campbell, Assistant Terminal
3 Superintendent, Norris Yard.

4 Q. Okay. Well, after your tests, were you released, and
5 what did you do?

6 A. Went home and went to bed.

7 Q. Okay. And about what time did you get home?

8 A. I'd say roughly around 4:00 this morning.

9 Q. Okay. Was there anything that you learned in this
10 that would be helpful to Norfolk Southern or any other railroad
11 that you could share with us?

12 A. Not now, until the investigation is complete, there's
13 no way of knowing what was wrong and what was right. I mean,
14 you know, I just have to wait and see. I can't see anything
15 that me or my crew did --

16 Q. As a road foreman, have you ever conducted a formal
17 investigation?

18 A. No, sir.

19 Q. As a road foreman, do you suspect you ever will?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Okay. As a person in a position to do that, do you
22 study the rules that would be involved and the practices that
23 would be involved in trying to determine, in your mind, what
24 you think happened?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. What do you think happened in this case?

2 A. I'm not really sure. It's -- it's -- there's no
3 reason why this should've happened.

4 Q. Well, tell me, if the signals were functioning as
5 they should, what should they have been?

6 A. If the signals were functioning at the switch, if
7 they were lined in on us at Coosa, the switch at Riverside
8 should've been a restricted.

9 Q. The signal at Riverside signal a restricted?

10 A. For 226.

11 Q. Okay. If you were going to go into the siding at
12 Coosa, which you did, what kind of signal would you have at --
13 at the first -- I'm trying say to say Pell City, yeah, at Pell
14 City?

15 A. You could have a clear at Pell City.

16 Q. If you were going to go into the siding --

17 A. You could have an approach at Riverside or you could
18 have an approach divergent, then you could come up Coosa.

19 Q. It just depends on how they got your --

20 A. How the --

21 Q. -- switches lined on the other end of Coosa, right?

22 A. Exactly.

23 Q. All right. If you got a stop signal at Coosa -- not
24 Coosa. If you got a stop sign at -- you named it a while
25 ago -- control signal at Embry and you're going in the siding,

1 what kind of signal would you have if you were going to stop in
2 the siding at Pell City?

3 A. Now, you're going west?

4 Q. Okay, you're going east.

5 A. I'm going east, yeah.

6 Q. All right. And you got a stop signal at Embry --

7 A. Okay.

8 Q. -- what kind of signal are you going to have, lining
9 you into the siding, at Pell City?

10 A. Again, I mean --

11 Q. Shouldn't you have an approach?

12 A. Not necessarily, because you're got an intermediate
13 there at Riverside that's going to govern, so you can have a
14 clear at Pell City --

15 Q. Okay. I know. I'm just trying to get you tell me.
16 All right. But the signal at Riverside is an automatic, so
17 it's going to operate by the system, this design, to tell it
18 what to do. Nobody's punching a button for it. Whatever
19 happens at Coosa and Embry governs what that intermediate is
20 going to do.

21 A. Exactly.

22 Q. So it may give you an approach or it could give you a
23 diversion approach or -- what did it give you?

24 A. It gave me an approach.

25 Q. Okay. And that approach is telling you to do what?

1 A. Be prepared to stop at Coosa.

2 Q. Okay. And under what speed would you operate on
3 approach?

4 A. A medium speed not exceeding 30 mile an hour.

5 Q. And why?

6 A. To prepare to stop at the signal.

7 Q. Okay. All right. And if the signal is already lined
8 whenever you get to Riverside, what's it going to tell you?

9 A. You mean at Coosa?

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. At Coosa, if the signal's already lined, it should
12 give me a divergent approach. It could still give me a stop,
13 depending on what the dispatcher has decided to do. I mean,
14 Riverside has already given me the indication that I'm running
15 on, so I have to assume in my mind that the most positive
16 signal I can have at Coosa is a stop. That's what I have to
17 keep in my mind.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. I can't anticipate for anything any better.

20 Q. So if you go by a -- if you're planning on that, then
21 you're going to be operating on a restricting up towards Coosa,
22 because you're looking out for a train or an obstruction or --

23 A. Well, if I've got a stop at Coosa, I've got to stop.
24 The only way I could go by that is with permission from the
25 dispatcher.

1 Q. All right. Whenever you got to Riverside, what kind
2 of signal did you have before you arrived at Coosa?

3 A. An approach.

4 Q. Okay. And then, whenever you got Coosa, what kind of
5 signal did you have?

6 A. Divergent approach.

7 Q. Okay. And how fast --

8 A. Twenty mile an hour.

9 Q. Okay. Is that the signal speed? Is that the --

10 A. It's actually 25, but all that written down, but I'm
11 not familiar with it. It's 25 through the terminal.

12 Q. Okay. What does a stop at Embry tell you?

13 A. To stop.

14 Q. Okay. Are there any intermediate signals in the
15 siding?

16 A. No, sir.

17 Q. So when you get that signal at Coosa, you know you
18 got to stop at Embry?

19 A. Yes, sir, I've got to be prepared to stop at the next
20 signal.

21 Q. And it could clear up before you got there --

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. -- and you wouldn't have to, but what was it when you
24 got there?

25 A. It was stop signal.

1 Q. Okay. All right. If you'd have been on the trailing
2 train and you were in the siding and stopped and for whatever
3 reason, you had not cleared the switch at Coosa, what kind of
4 signals would you expect to get?

5 A. How far back am I?

6 Q. Well, it doesn't matter. If you're approaching
7 Coosa, what are you going to have at Riverside and will you
8 have any effect at Pell City?

9 A. Yes, you could have. If I hadn't got to Pell City
10 yet and I had not cleared Coosa, I should've got an approach at
11 Pell City and a restricted at Riverside. That would've been
12 the most I could've got right there if I had not cleared Coosa.

13 Q. Okay, okay. So if you're hanging out on a single
14 track at Coosa, a train behind you is going to have an approach
15 at Pell City and a restricting at Riverside?

16 A. Exactly.

17 Q. Okay, I just wanted to make sure. As you approach
18 the signal at Coosa, how much site distance have you got of
19 that signal? Is it --

20 A. It's at a curve. It's a sweeping left-hand curve.
21 I'd say -- and I'm trying to give you the closest I can. I'd
22 say 20 cars.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Fifteen, twenty cars, something like that.

25 Q. An average 50-foot cars, it would be a hundred and

1 twenty -- okay. So you would come under the -- come in there
2 prepared to stop, knowing that you have -- and as a road
3 foreman, you're going to -- you're going to be cautious because
4 you know that the characteristics on the railroad are such that
5 you're not going to be able to see that signal after you pass
6 Riverside. So you don't know for sure what it's going to show
7 you, but if you don't have a clear, you're expecting the worse,
8 right?

9 A. Exactly.

10 Q. Okay. Would you teach your engineers that same --

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. -- thing? Okay. Did you know the crew on the train
13 that ran into the rear of your train?

14 A. I knew the engineer.

15 Q. Have you ever worked with him?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. How much experience has he got?

18 A. He's a 27-year veteran.

19 Q. Okay. So have you ridden with him or is it your job
20 to ride with him?

21 A. There's been several -- I've ridden several times
22 with him.

23 Q. Okay. So he's a qualified locomotive engineer out
24 of --

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 MR. GOBER: -- standards? Okay. Mr. McAvoy (ph.),
2 do you got any questions?

3 BY MR. MCAVOY:

4 Q. Yeah, I got a couple of them. Can you tell me how
5 long the siding is there?

6 A. It is 8750.

7 Q. 8750. Do you recall how long the train was?

8 A. 8277.

9 Q. Is there any way of operating the train all the way
10 down --

11 A. Yes, sir. There is a place up there that most trains
12 stop. You know, it's right back there. There's a sharp curve
13 right there at the signal and they stop back outside of that
14 curve just a little bit so they don't have to start right in
15 that curve with so much -- I'd say it's roughly 1200 feet back
16 from the signal.

17 Q. Okay. Another thing on this here. You said that
18 someone had claimed that you had a door open?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. You said that was an auto rack?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Who informed you of that?

23 A. It was a maintenance and weight guy that had the time
24 in between -- down the road had -- was watching our train and
25 the guy hollered over the radio.

1 Q. So you don't know who --

2 A. No, I don't specifically know.

3 Q. If it's an auto rack it's an end door that's open.

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Could it swing over to the side of the train?

6 A. Well, now he said it was an auto rack, but a
7 conductor went back there and he stopped and he fixed it and I
8 didn't ask him if it was an auto rack for sure or if it was a
9 container. You know, so I did not ask him specifically. He
10 said that he fixed it and --

11 Q. But if it was an auto rack or a container, in both
12 cases the doors would swing out and could -- on the track next
13 to you?

14 A. Yes, sir, and our cars were loaded, so we didn't want
15 to take a chance.

16 Q. I was wondering, the crew members on the train you
17 were on, were they in radio communication with the following
18 train?

19 A. As far as talking to them, I didn't hear them have
20 any conversations with anybody over the radio.

21 MR. MCAVOY: That's all I've got.

22 MR. GOBER: Okay. You have time to write a list.

23 Mr. Campbell (ph.), do you have any questions?

24 MR. CAMPBELL: No questions.

25 BY MR. GOBER:

1 Q. Okay. We have the number where we can reach you and
2 if we have any more questions, we will contact the NS and find
3 out how to get in touch with you and we'll call you. We
4 appreciate you being honest with us and candid with us.
5 Hopefully, we'll be able to use some of the information to help
6 us kind of solve this problem. But from what I gather, you
7 didn't have any radio communications at all with the train that
8 was following you.

9 A. No, I had no conversation with them and to my
10 knowledge, I didn't see the LET or the engineer go to the radio
11 or hear any communication between them.

12 Q. Okay. And when they hit you, they didn't call out on
13 the radio or anything?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Did you know whether or not your rear-end marking
16 device was functioning or not?

17 A. Yes, sir. After we set the train back up after we
18 went into emergency, we should 67 pounds on the rear and then
19 it went out just a few seconds. Maybe a minute or so after
20 that, it just went out.

21 Q. Okay. Prior to that, did you have any occasion to
22 know whether it was functioning properly or not?

23 A. Yes, sir, I always monitor the rear of my train from
24 the HOTD.

25 Q. What's HOTD mean?

1 A. It's head of train device.

2 MR. GOBER: Okay. All right, I don't have any
3 further questions, unless you do, Mr. McAvoy.

4 MR. MCAVOY: No.

5 MR. GOBER: Okay. The -- we got the conductor and
6 the student engineer and engineer out there waiting. Let's
7 talk to the conductor. Send him in whenever you go out. Okay.
8 All right. If the dispatcher is here, send the dispatcher in.

9 MR. TIFTON: Okay. I need to ask -- am I done for
10 today?

11 MR. GOBER: Yeah, I'm sure that we won't need you
12 anymore today. You might ask Sandy if he has any more use for
13 you.

14 MR. TIFTON: Are you through with me, sir?

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 1: You're free to go.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 2: I want to ask you one thing,
17 though. This is your current telephone number, 951-4735?

18 MR. TIFTON: Yes, sir.

19 MR. GOBER: That's his office number. Let's go off
20 the record here. Off the record.

21 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled
22 matter was concluded.)

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: Norfolk Southern Rear-End Collision
Lincoln, AL
January 18, 2006
Interview of Bobby Steven Tifton

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-06-FR-004

PLACE: Lincoln, AL

DATE: January 18, 2006

was held according to the record, and that this is the
original, complete, true and accurate transcript which has been
compared to the recording accomplished at the hearing.

David Martini
Transcriber