

DCA-06-FR-004

**Norfolk Southern Rear-end Collision
Derailment**

Train No. 226 & Train No. 22R

Lincoln, AL

January 18, 2006

**Interview (1/21/06) of Conductor of
Train No. 226**

23 pages, including cover

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

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

Telephone Interview of: MONTE QUINN

Norris Yard
Birmingham, Alabama

Saturday,
January 21, 2006

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to
notice.

BEFORE: RUSSELL GOBER

APPEARANCES:

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

TOM MCAVOY
Federal Railroad Administration

CURTIS WALL
United Transportation Union

SANDY CAMPBELL

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Monte Quinn, Conductor Train 226:	
By Mr. Gober	5
By Mr. Wall	14
By Mr. McAvoy	15
By Mr. Campbell	15
By Mr. Gober	15

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

MR. GOBER: Saturday, January 21st, 2006.

Dispatching center, Birmingham, Alabama.

(Off the record.)

(On the record.)

MR. GOBER: Okay. January 21st, 2006, Norris Yard.
We're going to talk with Conductor Monte Quinn that was on the
accident train on January the 18th, 2006.

MR. WALL: First of all, we'll get to you. How are
you doing this morning, buddy?

MR. QUINN: Slow at first.

MR. WALL: Slow. I know what you mean. Well, I'm
glad you're home.

MR. QUINN: I am too.

MR. WALL: Yeah. I'm glad you're okay. I'm sitting
here with the NTSB, FRA, and the Norfolk Southern man, Sandy,
and a BLE representative. We've got a few questions we need to
ask you and we will be recording it, but --

MR. QUINN: Okay.

MR. WALL: -- just relax and I'll turn you over here
to Russ, and he's with the National Transportation Safety
Board, Monte.

MR. QUINN: Okay.

MR. WALL: Okay, buddy, here we go.

MR. GOBER: Good morning. My name is Russell Gober.

1 MR. QUINN: Hello, Mr. Gober.

2 MR. GOBER: Do you feel like talking with us?

3 MR. QUINN: Yes, sir, I can talk with you.

4 MR. GOBER: Okay. We do appreciate that. I want you
5 to relax and realize that we're just trying to find out factual
6 information and you can just tell us what you can remember and
7 don't be stressed by it.

8 MR. QUINN: All right.

9 INTERVIEW OF MONTE QUINN

10 BY MR. GOBER:

11 Q. We won't -- we won't hold you on the line too long.
12 I've forgotten how long they told me how long you'd been
13 working for the railroad, so if you would just tell me what
14 your position was and how long have you been with the railroad?

15 A. I started with the railroad in April of this past
16 year and I'm a conductor.

17 Q. Okay. Have you been working this Birmingham to
18 Atlanta run very long?

19 A. Yes, sir, I was placed on the east end when I was
20 hired and -- out there and that's where my current assignment
21 is.

22 Q. Okay. Do you feel like you're familiar with the
23 physical characteristics of the line, at least between Norris
24 Yard and Coosa?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Okay. What were the -- what was the weather
2 conditions like the other day before the accident occurred?

3 A. It was clear.

4 Q. Okay. Do you got any idea about what the temperature
5 might've been?

6 A. I'd say between 55 and 60 degrees.

7 Q. Okay. Prior to the accident, had you all used the
8 radio any?

9 A. No, sir, not nothing but the call signals we were
10 making, that's all, you know.

11 Q. Okay. Were you aware that the 22R was ahead of you?

12 A. Yes, sir, I heard the dispatcher tell -- tell 22R
13 that she was going to head them in at Coosa and let us run
14 around them, you know.

15 Q. Okay. So you knew you were going to pass them there?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. Okay. What time did you all go on duty?

18 A. I believe it was 1:15.

19 Q. Okay. And about what time did you get out of the
20 yard?

21 A. I think around 2:30.

22 Q. Okay. Did you have any delays on the route?

23 A. No, sir, other than just following -- you know,
24 following trains, you know.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Approach board, you know.

2 Q. All right. Did you have any -- could you hear the
3 22R on the radio at all prior to the accident?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Okay. Did you know that they had already headed in?

6 A. Yes, sir, I heard them call a divergent approach at
7 Coosa.

8 Q. Okay. Where were you located on the -- on your
9 locomotive?

10 A. I was sitting in the second seat on, you know, the
11 other side.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And the conductor trainee was in front of me.

14 Q. Okay. We talked to the locomotive engineer yesterday
15 and he told us that somebody went out and smoked a cigarette,
16 and I don't know you guys so I don't know who did. Do you know
17 whether anybody had a smoke?

18 A. Yes, sir, the conductor trainee did. He stepped out
19 behind the engineer and along that side.

20 Q. Okay. And where were you all located whenever that
21 occurred?

22 A. That was before we got to the signal at Riverside.

23 Q. Okay. All right. Can you tell me what kind of
24 signal that you had at Holt (ph.)?

25 A. An approach.

1 Q. Okay. And then, if you would, just tell me how fast
2 you were going and what you all did from Holt until the
3 accident occurred?

4 A. Okay. We -- we were just following the signal
5 indications, you know.

6 Q. All right. Well, tell me what the signals were as
7 you go along.

8 A. An approach.

9 Q. Okay, at Holt.

10 A. Holt, yes, sir.

11 Q. And then, how fast were you going and then what
12 happened?

13 A. We were going, you know, authorized speed on an
14 approach board. And I can't recall the specific number because
15 the kind of engine we was on, the 7100, and the speed odometer
16 was over -- you know, located over close to the engineer.

17 Q. Okay. So -- but as a conductor, do you have a
18 feeling for how fast you might've --

19 A. -- There about, yes, sir.

20 Q. About how slow did you get?

21 A. I'd say about 25, 30 miles an hour at the most.

22 Q. Okay. All right. Well, just keep telling me the
23 story until the accident happened?

24 A. Okay. Well, like I say, we was on approach and we
25 had come through Pell City on approach, and we had got to

1 Riverside and the signal was clear, and we left Riverside and
2 come around -- you know, come across the bridge and come around
3 the turn and pulled into Coosa. When we come around the
4 corner, I could see the train. I was in the clear. And I had
5 looked up at the signal and I seen a green signal, you know.
6 And at about that time, the engineer said, oh my god, the
7 switch is open and we run in -- you know, they had us lined in
8 behind 22R. The only thing I had time to think was jump down
9 on the floorboard, you know, and just hold on and pray, you
10 know, and we ran into the back of them.

11 Q. Okay. I'm not familiar with the -- the signal type
12 posts that you have out there. You said you had a green
13 signal. What kind of a aspect did you have? Was it green over
14 red or what?

15 A. Yes, sir, if I remember correctly, it was a green
16 over red. I really didn't have a whole lot of time to think
17 about it because I was scared to death, you know, because I
18 knew we were going to run into the back of that train. But I
19 did remember seeing a green signal.

20 Q. Okay. The -- about how fast do you think you all
21 were going then?

22 A. There at Coosa?

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. Yes, sir. I'd probably say between 45 and 50.

25 Q. All right. Do you know whether the engineer put your

1 train into emergency?

2 A. Yes, sir, I know he did, because as soon as he -- as
3 soon as we realized the switch was open, he shot the brakes in.

4 Q. Okay. How far is it from Riverside to Coosa?

5 A. I'd say a mile, three-quarters of a mile, maybe.

6 Q. Okay. And what kind of signal did you say you had
7 Riverside?

8 A. A clear signal.

9 Q. And what kind of aspects would that --

10 A. A green.

11 Q. Is it just green or green over red or what?

12 A. Green over red.

13 Q. Okay. Did you all call those signals out on the
14 radio?

15 A. Yes, sir, we did.

16 Q. About how fast do you think might've been going from
17 there towards Coosa?

18 A. I don't know. The engineer was, you know, notching
19 up, you know, because we had a clear signal. We was running
20 probably 45 to 50, you know, after we -- approaching because,
21 you know, it takes a while to build up a little bit of speed
22 when you leave a signal like that, you know, because we were
23 expecting another approach or a stop indication at one.

24 Q. Okay. Do you wear safety glasses on NS?

25 A. Yes, sir, I sure do.

1 Q. Did you have them on before the accident?

2 A. Yes, sir, I did.

3 Q. I understand there's some new kind that might have
4 sunglasses in them. Did anybody have them on?

5 A. Tinted or --

6 Q. Yeah, tinted ones.

7 A. I didn't have tinted lens on. I had the regular, the
8 UVX regular wrap-around.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Clear lenses.

11 Q. Can you remember whether your other crew members had
12 on safety glasses?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. Do you know whether they had on any --

15 A. Clear glasses.

16 Q. They were all clear?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Okay. Have you experienced any -- any unusual signal
19 activity on that run at any time before?

20 A. Yes, sir, I have, just a couple of weeks ago with two
21 different engineers. Not at that location. A little bit
22 further down the track, but at Legers (ph.), a few miles on
23 down from where that's at; approach again, you know. We had
24 gotten an approach board at Legers. You come off a hill, you
25 know, there it is. And before we had got down to the bottom of

1 the hill, we had stopped and we had seen the signal drop, you
2 know, two or three times, and we had stopped and wasn't going
3 to move until we heard from the dispatcher. We had called the
4 dispatcher, you know, and asked -- well, asked him what was
5 going on with the signals, you know, and they was having some
6 kind of problems with them. And we sat there probably 25 or 30
7 minutes, and my engineer was Paul Thackery. You can ask him
8 about it, too. He will remember it.

9 Q. Do you remember what day that was?

10 A. No, sir, not exactly. I can't recall it right now,
11 but I mean, it's been just like three weeks ago, like I say.

12 Q. Okay. And his name was what again?

13 A. Paul Thackery.

14 Q. Spell his last name.

15 A. T-h-a-c-k-e-r-y.

16 Q. Okay -- the train number?

17 A. No, sir, I don't.

18 Q. What was the name of that place you had the signal
19 irregularity?

20 A. That was at Anderson.

21 Q. Anderson.

22 A. Yes, sir. And the signal before that that we got the
23 approach board was at Legers.

24 Q. -- the main track, right?

25 A. Yes, sir, that's right. It was on the main line.

1 Q. Okay. So I can understand a little bit, what kind of
2 signal did you have and what happened?

3 A. Okay. Well, you know, when we came through Legers we
4 had an approach. We was prepared to stop coming down. There's
5 a long turnout like the one down the hill, you know. And the
6 engineer, you know, was prepared to stop and when we come
7 around the corner there, it was a red board and we stopped like
8 we were supposed to, you know. We sat there for a minute and
9 then a clear popped up, then it went red again. And the same
10 scenario about two or three times. You know, that never would
11 hold, you know, a specific signal.

12 Q. Okay. And how long was it before you finally got it
13 to set right?

14 A. Probably about 35 minutes. We sat there for about 35
15 minutes while the dispatcher was trying to get things
16 straightened out.

17 Q. Is there any -- do you have any paperwork that shows
18 that?

19 A. No, sir. I did. I had later wrote down on some
20 paperwork that I keep with my end-of-trip forms. But after I
21 put everything in the computer, you know, I discard it.

22 Q. Okay. Is there a computer record of that?

23 A. Yes, sir, there might be. I think we went on the log
24 that day and I wasn't able to put the delays in. You would
25 have to check and see because, you know, I can't remember that

1 far back, after what I've been through, you know.

2 Q. Yeah, I understand. Okay. Mr. Wall is going to ask
3 you some questions.

4 BY MR. WALL:

5 Q. Hey, Monte, this is Curtis Wall again. I understand
6 you said you had a clear signal at Riverside?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. That was -- you had an approach then to clear?

9 A. Right.

10 Q. Was there any discussion between you and the trainee
11 about this clear signal and what it meant?

12 A. Yes, sir, I was -- I always -- when we have a trainee
13 or something like that, we talk about the signals and
14 territory. We're not asking what kind of signal it was, you
15 know, just to quiz him and see if he knew what was going on,
16 and he said it was a clear signal. You know, he verified what
17 me and the engineer had seen.

18 Q. Okay. And that was the signal prior to the rear-end
19 collision?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Okay. And you had an approach at Holt and at Pell
22 City.

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. Okay. And then, when you got the clear at Riverside,
25 you all picked up speed and then you went around a curve and

1 you saw a clear at Coosa and you were lined in to the siding?

2 A. Yes, sir, that's correct?

3 MR. WALL: Okay.

4 MR. GOBER: BLE, do you have any questions?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, the BLE doesn't.

6 MR. GOBER: FRA, do you have any?

7 BY MR. MCAVOY:

8 Q. Yeah, this is Tom McAvoy, FRA. I was wondering, all
9 the signals that you observed from Holt up to the Coosa
10 derailment, did you say that you transmitted the aspect of
11 those signals over the radio?

12 A. Yes, sir, that's correct, we called all the signals.

13 Q. On the radio?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 MR. MCAVOY: Okay, that's all I had.

16 BY MR. CAMPBELL:

17 Q. -- Sandy, Monte. Who was calling signals, you or the
18 engineer?

19 A. The engineer was calling the signals.

20 Q. The engineer was calling the signals.

21 A. Yes, sir. My handset I had was broke --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. -- and he was calling them. Usually, I call them,
24 but you know, that day my handset wasn't working.

25 BY MR. GOBER:

1 Q. Monte, do you have any comments you'd like to make
2 just from what you think might have gone wrong here?

3 A. You want my interpretation of what I think went
4 wrong, Mr. Campbell, is that what you're asking me?

5 MR. CAMPBELL: That's Mr. Gober.

6 MR. QUINN: I mean, Mr. Gober?

7 MR. GOBER: Yeah.

8 MR. QUINN: Yes, sir, I think there was some kind of
9 signal failure. My own personal opinion.

10 BY MR. GOBER:

11 Q. Okay. Do you have any -- has anybody ever mentioned
12 any problem out there, to you, at that location?

13 A. No, sir.

14 Q. Have you ever had any problem at that location?

15 A. Not at that location, no, sir.

16 Q. Okay. All right. Monte, we're going to need to have
17 a face-to-face interview in a couple weeks or so, and we'll
18 need to set that up with you later and we'll be in touch with
19 you're -- with the railroad and your labor representatives to
20 make sure that we got everything set. But do you have a cell
21 phone number that we could reach you by?

22 A. Yes, sir, I sure do. It's area code 05 --

23 Q. Hang on. Wait a second. I'm not going to record
24 that, because I don't want it on the record.

25 (Off the record.)

1 (On the record.)

2 BY MR. GOBER:

3 Q. Okay. Whenever you all went in to the siding, the
4 engineer told us that you told him you could see the switch
5 line and you went into the siding and you had a collision.
6 What happened after that?

7 A. The next thing I remember, I jumped down to the
8 floorboard and you know, braced myself against the headboard of
9 the cab. And the next thing I heard was metal crashing and we
10 went to rolling, flipping and tumbling, you know. It finally
11 come to a stop and I don't -- you know, time gets distorted in
12 something like that and I can't say how long it took to stop or
13 whatever, but it was, you know, just awful.

14 Q. Can you remember how your locomotive was sitting
15 whenever you did stop?

16 A. Yes, sir, I believe it was sitting over on its side.

17 Q. Okay. Was it --

18 A. The engineer' side being up, the engineer's window.

19 Q. Would it have been sticking up in the air at about a
20 45 degree angle?

21 A. Yes, sir, I believe it was.

22 Q. Okay. Did you all talk to the dispatcher after that?

23 A. Not until we got off the train. The engine was
24 burning and on fire, and we were just trying get away from it
25 before it, you know, exploded. But I did talk to her after we

1 had got and got in the clear.

2 Q. Okay. Do you remember what you all talked about?

3 A. Yes, sir. I think maybe Aaron talked to her first.
4 I'm the only that still had my cell phone attached to me. And
5 Aaron had called her and told her what was going on, and then I
6 had called her and she asked me what was going on and how we
7 were, you know, and if we needed any kind of assistance. And I
8 believe -- I guess the people there that lived, you know, right
9 up from that crossing right there, then called the police and
10 fire department, because the police and fire department was
11 there in just minutes, you know, and then medical services
12 showed up briefly right after them.

13 Q. That's great. Did you see any fire back in the
14 train? I know that the locomotive caught on fire, but was
15 there any other fire on the train?

16 A. Well, the only fire I remember was on the locomotive,
17 and we were just trying to get out before we got burnt up, you
18 know, and trying to get away from it. And there was a real
19 bad, thick hedgerow right there, you know, and we were just
20 trying to get through it and get away from it.

21 Q. Did you all have to help you -- your assistant
22 conductor?

23 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir, his ankle was broke and we had
24 to help him out.

25 Q. Okay. Did you have any difficulty getting off the

1 locomotive?

2 A. Yes, sir, it was kind of high, you know, and sitting
3 at an angle, if I remember correctly, and it took us a few --
4 you know, a little bit just to get off of it.

5 Q. Okay. Which -- did you have the short hood forward?

6 A. Yes, sir. Was it the kind that had the window pane
7 all the way across the front of the nose, and could you see out
8 all the way across?

9 A. Yes, sir, it had panes in between it, but it was a
10 big, wide glass. I mean, you could see out of it.

11 Q. Okay. You could see the signals very well?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Okay. Did you think there was anything unusual going
14 on prior to coming around the curve there at Coosa?

15 A. No, sir. You know, I've never experienced nothing
16 like this and you know, we just run on the signal indication.
17 And when we got that clear, you know, you automatically assume
18 the train ahead of you is in the clear, you know. The next
19 thing I know, we come around and the switch is open and we run
20 into the back of 22R.

21 Q. Okay. Okay. And tell me how many -- the name of
22 your train and how many cars you had, if you remember?

23 A. Well, I was on 226. It's a big train and I believe I
24 had something like 25 or 30 cars. It wasn't very long. I
25 think around 4600 feet.

1 Q. Okay. Did you have any Hazmat on there that you know
2 of?

3 A. Yes, sir, I had some sodium cyanide. I had two cars,
4 I believe.

5 Q. Did you tell anybody about that after --

6 A. Yes, sir, I did. As soon as we got up to the house
7 and we got -- kind of got together, you know, I guess he was
8 with the fire department or with the Emergency Management
9 Agency or something, but he had asked me if we had any kind of
10 Hazmat cars and I told him, you know, that I knew there was
11 some sodium cyanide.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. It was -- excuse me.

14 Q. Were you aware of whether or not you had any of those
15 Hazmat cars ruptured or punctured or falling open?

16 A. No, sir, I cannot tell you that. I don't know if
17 they were ruptured. I know everything was a mess. I mean --

18 Q. Have you seen the pictures of the accident on TV?

19 A. No, sir, I seen the picture in the paper. That's all
20 I wanted to see.

21 MR. GOBER: Okay. Well, if you saw that, you've seen
22 a big train wreck. Okay. We're all amazed that you guys
23 survived this thing and that's -- thank goodness for that. And
24 we appreciate you talking with us. Does anyone have any
25 questions?

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, I don't have any.

2 MR. GOBER: No further questions. So we'll let you
3 go and you can expect to hear from the Safety Board, either
4 directly or through the labor union or the railroad, within the
5 next couple of weeks.

6 MR. QUINN: Okay.

7 MR. GOBER: Thank you, sir.

8 MR. QUINN: Yes, sir.

9 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled
10 matter was concluded.)

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

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
Telephone Interview of Monte Quinn

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-06-FR-004

PLACE: Birmingham, AL

DATE: January 21, 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