

DCA-06-FR-004

**Norfolk Southern Rear-end Collision
Derailment**

Train No. 226 & Train No. 22R

Lincoln, AL

January 18, 2006

**Interview (1/20/06) of Engineer of
Train No. 226**

**12 pages, including cover & errata
sheets**

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: AARON SMITH

Citizens Baptist Medical Center
Talladega, Alabama

Friday,
January 20, 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]

I N D E X

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P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 MR. GOBER: It's January the 20th, 2006, Talladega
3 Citizens Baptist Medical Center. We're going to interview the
4 locomotive engineer that was on the train involved in that
5 collision at Coosa siding on the Norfolk Southern Railway on
6 January the 18th, 2006.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mr. Gober's going to tape --

8 MR. SMITH: Okay. First of all, I would like to tell
9 you all that I'm on medication.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We understand.

11 MR. SMITH: Right off the bat, I don't see hope -- but I
12 know at Pell City we had an approach --

INTERVIEW OF AARON SMITH

13
14 BY MR. GOBER:

15 Q. Did you slow down on approach?

16 A. Yes, sir. After the approach board, we -- I got them
17 down real good as we went over the mud hole, and we came down so
18 good that, coming around approaching Riverside, Cook (ph.) got up
19 and stepped out behind. And I asked the conductor, I said,
20 where's he going? He said, he's going to smoke a cigarette -- He
21 could've just cracked the window. But I ain't got them down that
22 slow that he felt comfortable enough that he could get up and
23 smoke a cigarette. And I came on around and I got them down even
24 lower because he was outside, you know. I came around approaching
25 Riverside. I was probably running about five miles an hour and

1 the first -- Monte and I. Monte and I called the signal clear.
2 And about that time, I was creeping along, waiting on Cook to come
3 on the inside because I was approaching the crossing. I didn't
4 want to blow the whistle. But by that time, he came in the cab
5 and I started going across and we asked him what the signal was.
6 He said -- across the cross, I'm going across it. And I
7 distinctly remember, because of the speed I was running, looking
8 at the signal as I went to knock it down, looking up at it. It's
9 still clear. I said still clear and at that time, I called it
10 over the radio.

11 Q. What kind of aspect did you have, you know, green or red
12 or -- Was it a two-aspect signal or just a single? An aspect is
13 a light.

14 A. Green on red.

15 Q. Green on red.

16 A. At that time, I called it over the radio. This is train
17 226 -- Riverside -- between there and Coosa Bridge, I reckon I
18 got up to about 50 miles an hour. I was going to cut it until I
19 hit the bridge, maybe 76.

20 Q. -- clear at Coosa?

21 A. Yes, sir. And I saw what was happening -- I told the
22 crew -- You all hold on. I got to line it in the siding, on top
23 of this train. You all hold on.

24 Q. Could you tell us how far in the track the rear car was
25 -- approach that crossing? How far in the track?

1 A. I know he was clear of the main track. He was clear of
2 the main -- side, but exactly how close --

3 Q. Anything after that? I mean, what happened after the
4 collision?

5 A. After the collision, we held on and -- well, tumbling,
6 glass and steel. I remember a stinging blow to the head and
7 chest, and tossing. We needed to ask -- I was surprised that we
8 still conscious. You know, we were all conscious and what I
9 asked, I said, is everybody all right? By that time, Monte was
10 asking the same thing, is everybody all right? We were all all
11 right and we and that's when I said, well, we need to get out of
12 here. I said -- and smoke was coming in and I said, we need to
13 get out. And Cook made a statement about his ankle or something.
14 And we snuck out of the engine. I don't know how we would -- but
15 I think we would jump because I remember stepping on some branches
16 and we finally had to jump, you know, to get --

17 Q. Did you have short --

18 A. Short --

19 Q. Okay. Did you have -- at Coosa, did you have a window
20 all the way across it?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. So you had to get -- Tell us what you know about any
23 conversations with the train dispatcher or anything like that?
24 Did you -- any phone calls or anything after that?

25 A. -- we called the dispatcher. I want to say we called

1 the dispatcher. He called the dispatcher. Whoever -- I don't
2 know -- That's what I assumed, because when we came out through
3 the bushes, I knew a road was there and when we came out through
4 the bushes --

5 Q. The train was in the clear. Did you feel like the rear
6 of the train was far enough in the siding --

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. -- fire? You said you smelled smoke when you were on
9 the engine -- Where was that?

10 A. I couldn't guess.

11 Q. -- the trainee -- Did you all get medical treatment
12 pretty quickly?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. I just wanted to make sure that you were on the --

15 A. -- got the signal --

16 Q. -- side --

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. You put the train in emergency?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. Okay -- before you hit?

21 A. It all happened so fast. We were really traveling so
22 fast.

23 MR. GOBER: We understand. We appreciate --

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- telephone number. Oftentimes,
25 if a question comes up that we're not aware of --

1 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled matter
2 was concluded.)

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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 Aaron Smith

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-06-FR-004

PLACE: Talladega, AL

DATE: January 20, 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



I, Aaron Smith Jr., have read the foregoing pages of a copy of my testimony given in the case of the collision/derailment of NS Train Nos. 226A117 & 22RA116 on January 18, 2006, at about 4:17 p.m. (CST) in Lincoln, AL, and these pages constitute a true and accurate transcription of same with the exception of the following amendments, additions, deletions or corrections:

<u>PAGE NO:</u>	<u>LINE NO:</u>	<u>CHANGE AND REASON FOR CHANGE</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>Holt instead of Hope</u>
<u>4 4</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>HAD instead of AIN'T</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>so instead of that</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>Slower, instead of lower</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>At instead of the</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>He said clear single instead of He said Across</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>over instead of on</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>226 Clear single Riverside instead of 226 Riverside</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>when instead of until</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>to 70 or 6 throttle instead of 76</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>no instead of yes yes</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>They got us lined in to the sidings instead of I got to line it in the siding</u>

Under penalties of perjury, I declare that I have read my statements and that it is true and correct subject to any changes in the form or substance entered here.

Date: Feb 23, 2006

Witness: [Signature]



I, Aaron Smith Jr., have read the foregoing pages of a copy of my testimony given in the case of the collision/derailment of NS Train Nos. 226A117 & 22RA116 on January 18, 2006, at about 4:17 p.m. (CST) in Lincoln, AL, and these pages constitute a true and accurate transcription of same with the exception of the following amendments, additions, deletions or corrections:

<u>PAGE NO:</u>	<u>LINE NO:</u>	<u>CHANGE AND REASON FOR CHANGE</u>
<u>6</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>Would Get Down instead of Would</u>
<u>6</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>Get Down instead of Down Get</u>
<u>6</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>Short^{Hood} instead of Short</u>
<u>7</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>Could instead of couldn't</u>

Under penalties of perjury, I declare that I have read my statements and that it is true and correct subject to any changes in the form or substance entered here.

Date: Feb 23, 2006

Witness: [Signature]