

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN RE: :

THE ACCIDENT INVOLVING : NTSB Accident No.

AMTRAK TRAIN #89 AND A : DCA16FR007

BACKHOE IN CHESTER, :

PENNSYLVANIA ON :

APRIL 3, 2016 :

INTERVIEW OF: Damien Robinson

Tuesday,
April 5, 2016

Chester, Pennsylvania

BEFORE

STEPHEN M. JENNER, NTSB
DONALD HILL, BLET
WILLIAM BATES, SMART
JONATHAN HINES, AMTRAK
GARY WHITE, FRA
MELVIN WICHELMANN, BLET
ANDREW CIUBA, SMART
DAVID NICHOLS, AMTRAK
JIM GEE, FRA
RYAN FRIGO, NTSB

This transcript was produced from audio provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 12:17 p.m.

3 MR. JENNER: Good afternoon. Today is April
4 5th, 2016. My name is Stephen Jenner. I'm with the
5 National Transportation Safety Board.

6 We are currently in Chester, Pennsylvania,
7 investigating the Amtrak accident that occurred on
8 April 3rd, 2016 in Chester.

9 We are here to interview crew members of the
10 Amtrak train, and will be talking to Mr. Damien
11 Robinson, who is an assistant conductor with Amtrak.

12 Before we begin, we'll go around the room
13 and everyone will introduce themselves, and please give
14 the spelling of your name and say who you're with, and
15 again, I'm Stephen Jenner, S-T-E-P-H-E-N, J-E-N-N-E-R,
16 with the NTSB, and we'll go around to my right.

17 MR. HILL: Donald Hill, D-O-N-A-L-D, H-I-L-
18 L, with the BLET Safety Task Force.

19 MR. BATES: William Bates, W-I-L-L-I-A-M, B-
20 A-T-E-S. SMART National Transportation Safety Team.

21 MR. HINES: Jonathan Hines, H-I-N-E-S,
22 Amtrak.

23 MR. WHITE: Gary White, FRA. That is G-A-R-
24 Y, W-H-I-T-E.

25 MR. WICHELMANN: Melvin Wichelmann, M---E-L-

1 V-I-N, W-I-C-H-E-L-L-M-A-N-N, BLET Safety Task Force.

2 MR. CIUBA: Andrew Ciuba, that is A-N-D-R-E-
3 W, C-I-U-B-A, SMART Transportation Division Local
4 Chairman, Local 1370 in New York.

5 MR. NICHOLS: David Nichols, D-A-V-I-D, N-I-
6 C-H-O-L-S, Chief Transportation Officer for Amtrak.

7 MR. GEE: Jim Gee, FRA. Inspector. J-I-M,
8 G-E-E.

9 MR. FRIGO: Ryan Frigo, F-R-I-G-O.
10 Investigator in Charge, NTSB.

11 MR. JENNER: Okay, and Mr. Robinson?

12 MR. ROBINSON: Damien Robinson, R-O-B-I-N-S-
13 O-N. I'm an assistant conductor for Amtrak.

14 MR. JENNER: Great, thank you very much, and
15 let me mention that the time now is 12:17 p.m.

16 First of all, thank you for being here. We
17 appreciate you coming out and talking to us. I
18 understand that you were -- on the day of the accident,
19 you were on this train, serving as an assistant
20 conductor.

21 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

22 MR. JENNER: Okay, what we'll have you do is
23 tell your story, and if you can just start off your
24 day, when and where you went on duty and people you
25 talked to, and just take us through the rest of the

1 trip.

2 MR. ROBINSON: Okay, as far as I remember, I
3 remember coming into Penn Station, I believe 10 minutes
4 before sign up. I forgot what time the sign up was.
5 Signed up. Went into the crew room, the crew briefing
6 room. Saw my conductor sitting there, and he was
7 eating at the time.

8 We did the briefing. Shortly after
9 everybody started to come in, we did the briefing. I
10 continued to get ready for the job. I was given the
11 safety -- the safety awareness check and all of this.

12 We go down to the train. I make
13 announcements. Before I go to the train, I grab me two
14 donuts. Go down to the train. Train is already there.
15 He tells me where I go. I go to the front. He has me
16 doing the first three cars.

17 The first three cars were for passengers
18 going from New York to Washington, D.C., and then the
19 rest of the cars were for the longer routes, because
20 the train was going to Savannah, Georgia that time.

21 So, out of New York, I make the initial
22 announcement. I let the people know where we're going,
23 what stops we're going to make, the café, and I also
24 tell them about the safety pamphlets we have in the
25 back of the seats, in the seat backs on front of them.

1 We get to New York, I do the same thing. We
2 get to the airport. I believe we went to the airport.
3 I'm not sure. I don't remember all the stops.

4 All I remember is after Phillie, I made
5 another initial announcement, because we got a group --
6 we had a total of like -- I think it was 83 passengers
7 getting on, and only six got off.

8 So, I made another initial announcement, and
9 once I finished the announcement, I started the first
10 car I was in, which is the quiet car, which is the
11 first car behind the engine, and as I'm doing my lift,
12 I turn to notice the engineer is sounding the horn, for
13 a really long time, and I don't know why.

14 Then I felt him brake really hard, and then
15 I braced myself, and as he's braking, he's still on the
16 horn, and again, he brakes again even harder. I guess
17 he threw the train in emergency.

18 As I'm looking towards the front of the
19 train, I see the engine goes up a little bit and come
20 right back down. I was like, that's not good, in my
21 head.

22 Then two loud booms. The first boom,
23 something flew from the window. I dodged it. The
24 second boom, something came inside the car.

25 When it came inside the car, I immediately

1 dropped down to the floor, grabbing two women with me
2 on both sides, pushing their heads down towards the
3 floor, so they won't have nothing in their eyes or
4 anything that could hurt them.

5 As I get up, I see people running to exit
6 the train. I immediately find my walkie-talkie, call
7 emergency. Said, "Emergency, emergency, emergency." I
8 don't have it to know where we're at, because I only
9 been with the company for like six months.

10 So, I called my conductor. I tell him what
11 the -- my situation, what's going on with my situation,
12 with the people being hurt and people getting off the
13 train, and he tells me immediately to have the people
14 that got off the train, to get back on the train.

15 I go help the people that's getting off the
16 train. As I'm helping, as I go to the door, to look
17 and see the people that's getting off, it's one lady,
18 she's stuck getting off, climbing down.

19 I help her off. I open up the hatch. I
20 have everybody come back. There is one lady who would
21 not come back on the train. She thinks there's a bomb.
22 I didn't -- I'm telling her to trust me, get back on
23 the train. She's looking at me in my eyes saying,
24 "Okay," but she would not move.

25 So, the people would not move towards the

1 back. I had to get on the train, yell to the
2 passengers, "We're all scared. You can't be scared
3 right now. We have to move towards the back. Please
4 stay calm. Everything is okay, just walk towards the
5 back. Please stay calm. Leave your luggage. Just
6 walk to the back."

7 As they're walking, some people are crying.
8 Some people are scared. Some people want to call --
9 they're calling the cops at this time. Everything is
10 moving so fast.

11 So, as I'm walking through the back, I see
12 passengers with children. They're scared. They don't
13 know what to do. Some kids were still sleep.

14 So, as I get the people to move back, I walk
15 back towards the first car. At this time, I have a lady
16 on the left of side of me. She's bleeding from her
17 head in two spots, and I have a guy who is stuck
18 inside, who is pinned inside the chair that was behind
19 the lady that was struck in the head.

20 I look in the front, I have an older female
21 who is sitting on the ground like this, she has two
22 grandkids with her, and they were sitting in front of
23 her. I seen her seat was moved over to the left. My
24 initial thought, the grandkids got hurt too. So, I
25 tried to get through, but I couldn't.

1 At this time, a doctor was on the front of
2 the train. I did some research and I found her name.
3 The lady -- I can't pronounce it. LALITA TRILICON
4 {phonetic}. She's a doctor in Maryland.

5 She -- she told me that she was a physician
6 and she wants to help. Not can she help, she wants to
7 help. So, I said, "Okay, go ahead."

8 I get back on the radio. I ask Mike what's
9 up with -- like, what to do next, because I didn't know
10 what to do next.

11 I have -- there is a piece of glass on a
12 passenger. The whole window is on a passenger. I take
13 that whole glass and I move it to an empty chair. She
14 goes towards the back, and from then, it was just a lot
15 of ruckus and chaos.

16 We had one guy on the train who was doing
17 PC's. He called CTEC. He was calling CTEC. He was
18 helping the lady with the two gashes on her head. I
19 don't know his name. Forgot to ask him his name.

20 He also helped me move the passenger that
21 was stuck in the front -- that was stuck in the front.
22 He helped me open the door. He opened the front door
23 for them to come down on the train, to come around on
24 our side and we -- that's how we got the people that
25 were stuck in the front, to come towards the back.

1 Everything else is pretty much -- after we
2 helped the people come around, that's when I seen fire
3 fighters, seen on Amtrak police guy come up. He was
4 asking the fire fighters how can they get in, with the
5 trucks and what not.

6 Everything else, I guess I remember with
7 more questions -- with questions. I don't --

8 MR. JENNER: Okay, great. Thank you. That
9 was good detail. We'll have some follow up questions.
10 Do you want a break at this point?

11 MR. ROBINSON: Keep going.

12 MR. JENNER: Okay, great. Okay, this is
13 Stephen Jenner.

14 How long do you think it took for emergency
15 responders to show up?

16 MR. ROBINSON: It had to be all of five or
17 ten minutes. It maybe was quicker than that, I'm not
18 sure.

19 MR. JENNER: Okay.

20 MR. ROBINSON: I wasn't timing.

21 MR. JENNER: Did you have any interaction
22 directly with the fire fighters or police --

23 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

24 MR. JENNER: -- and can you describe your
25 conversations with them?

1 MR. ROBINSON: Okay, when they got on the
2 train, the first car, I was -- I wasn't even on first
3 car when I saw them. I told them where the injured
4 were, the severely injured were, and I got on the
5 train, I opened the hatch up for them, so they could
6 get on and assess the damage.

7 The one gentleman that had the -- his arm
8 that was pinned in, every time he moved his arm, blood
9 would squirt out.

10 Now, he also was sitting -- he was pinned.
11 He couldn't move. He had a piece of sharp metal that
12 was ripped from the side of the train that was holding
13 the electrical wire. By this time, it's like piece of
14 metal, and it's shaped like a knife, towards his
15 stomach. It didn't go in, but it was right there, and
16 he's making a joke out of it saying, "This could have
17 been a whole lot worse," but you got to -- I was shaken
18 up from it.

19 MR. JENNER: Okay, were there -- what do you
20 know about the public announcement, public address
21 system? Were there any announcements made?

22 MR. ROBINSON: The public -- I went to go
23 make an announcement.

24 MR. JENNER: Okay.

25 MR. ROBINSON: My conductor told me to go

1 make an announcement. I went to the first announcement
2 stand I seen, and it was out, it was coming out. It
3 was off and out. There was no way for me to make an
4 announcement.

5 MR. JENNER: So, it was non-functioning?

6 MR. ROBINSON: It was not working. It was
7 not going to work at all. So, we had to go through
8 each car and let each -- let each car know, which we
9 did, and as I'm walking through the cars, the
10 passengers in the first car was yelling, "Thank you so
11 much. Thank you. Thank you." I'm just saying, "It's
12 okay. Just relax. Calm down. We're going to get
13 through this. Let's not panic. Let's keep going.
14 We're doing fine right now, so let's keep it going.
15 We're going to help everybody that's hurt, and then
16 we're going to help you guys," and we was going
17 through.

18 I went all the way to the back. At this
19 time, I was told to pass out water. So, I went and got
20 a couple cases of water and started passing them out.
21 Then they started telling us, they're going to start
22 letting people off.

23 MR. JENNER: Okay, how was your -- were you
24 able to communicate with the conductor efficiently?

25 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

1 MR. JENNER: Were there any problems?

2 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, I was able to use the
3 radio, the walkie-talkie and talk to him. I seen him
4 mostly in the front of the -- where the engineer was,
5 because he was worried about the engineer, and when I -
6 - I didn't get him the radio, I would go down there and
7 ask him, because we were so close to each other, then
8 if I wouldn't see him, I would call him on the radio,
9 ask him what to do next.

10 MR. JENNER: Okay.

11 MR. ROBINSON: But mostly likely some of the
12 -- the first responders, the fire fighters would tell
13 me how to go about helping the passengers and stuff
14 like that.

15 MR. JENNER: Okay, we haven't talked to the
16 conductor yet, but what was the explanation for getting
17 people back on the train?

18 MR. ROBINSON: Because the tracks were still
19 live.

20 MR. JENNER: I see, okay.

21 MR. ROBINSON: Even though he said there
22 were -- I didn't see people on -- we was on track
23 three. I didn't see people near track two. He said
24 they were near the freight yard. I didn't see that
25 because I had people on track one.

1 So, I had to go get the people -- it was
2 about eight people on track one side, and that lady did
3 not want to get on, and people did not want to move to
4 the back. So, she didn't -- she wasn't in the gauge of
5 the track, so I left her. She said, "I'm going to get
6 on." So, I took her word. She didn't stay on the
7 gauge.

8 So, I got on and told everybody move towards
9 the back. When I came back, she wasn't there. She was
10 on the train.

11 MR. JENNER: Okay, you describe people as
12 being, you know, upset.

13 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

14 MR. JENNER: And scared, crying and scared.

15 MR. ROBINSON: It was more women, more women
16 that was like crying, calling family members like, "Oh
17 my God, we crashed," and they were more likely scared.

18 One lady, the lady that did not want to get
19 on the train, she thought it was a bomb. She thought
20 it was a terrorist attack. I don't know why, but that's
21 what she thought.

22 MR. JENNER: Right, okay. How cooperative
23 were people? Were they following instructions?

24 MR. ROBINSON: They were very cooperative.
25 They were very cooperative. They moved towards the

1 back. I went through the train a couple times and I
2 got to -- got to one car and one lady stopped me, she
3 said, "I don't want to be this person, but I left my
4 camera, and I went back to go get it and it's not
5 there," and I looked at her like, "I don't know what
6 you doing. Don't know what to do right now."

7 MR. JENNER: Yes.

8 MR. ROBINSON: Let's focus on this. You've
9 alive, so you can get a camera again, some other time.

10 MR. JENNER: Yes.

11 MR. ROBINSON: But I don't know about the
12 camera right now. We just got to keep doing this.
13 Don't worry about your luggage. We'll get your luggage
14 to you. Everything will be handled accordingly. You'll
15 get to where you're going, but for right now, we just
16 need you to worry about staying here, staying warm,
17 that's it.

18 MR. JENNER: Okay, can you just walk us
19 through the -- until the passengers were evacuated and
20 some of them go by ambulance to the hospital?

21 MR. ROBINSON: I was the last one to get to
22 an ambulance, because I was helping everybody off.

23 I was with the fire fighters at one door. We
24 started evacuating people. They were bringing their
25 luggage and everything.

1 So, me and the flag, we were with two fire
2 fighters. They were carrying the passengers off. We
3 would grab their bags, we'll move them over to the
4 side, and then we help the passengers off towards their
5 bags and they'll go walk towards the church, where the
6 rest of the train -- the passengers.

7 That was -- the first three cars were pretty
8 much empty because we moved everybody back. So.

9 MR. JENNER: Okay, what were the typical
10 injuries that you saw from -- were the worst injuries
11 in the first car?

12 MR. ROBINSON: Worst injuries was in the
13 first car. With the older -- the older gentleman and
14 the young lady who the -- who the doctor was helping
15 more so.

16 She -- it was an Asian guy up there too. He
17 had bottles of water, and he was passing it to her.
18 They already had the first aide kit before I even got
19 there. They the first aide kit and she was telling
20 people to put pressure to the wounds of him -- of the
21 lady, then she went over to the gentleman who had the
22 arm issue.

23 She wrapped and he moved -- we moved them
24 because they was getting too cold there, and the fire
25 fighters told us to move them. So, we move them a

1 couple seats back.

2 MR. JENNER: And did you get a view of
3 people, like in the second car, in terms of their
4 injuries? What extent?

5 MR. ROBINSON: More -- lot of people said
6 they hit their head and they jerked -- they hurt their
7 neck, but that's to be expected. Lot of people saying,
8 "Oh, my neck hurt. My back hurt." I don't know how
9 you hurt your back sitting down, but.

10 MR. JENNER: And the third car, what type of
11 injuries?

12 MR. ROBINSON: The third car, I don't
13 remember the third car.

14 MR. JENNER: Don't remember, okay. Great,
15 that's good detail. Appreciate that.

16 That's the questions I have for right now.
17 What I'm going to do -- do you want a break or
18 anything?

19 MR. ROBINSON: I'm good.

20 MR. JENNER: We'll keep on going, okay. I'm
21 going to send it to my right, who is going to introduce
22 himself and maybe have some follow up questions.

23 MR. HILL: Don Hill, H-I-L-L, BLET Safety
24 Task Force. Sound like you did an outstanding job,
25 man, and I want to commend you.

1 MR. ROBINSON: Thank you.

2 MR. HILL: Sound like a little hero there,
3 seriously, good job.

4 MR. ROBINSON: I'm no hero, but thank you.

5 MR. HILL: I really don't have much in form
6 -- in terms of questions with regard to what -- what
7 happened with this event.

8 I just wanted to ask, are you a regular or
9 extra guy?

10 MR. ROBINSON: Extra.

11 MR. HILL: And are you based out of New
12 York?

13 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, sir.

14 MR. HILL: What was your last time -- what's
15 your regularly scheduled day off?

16 MR. ROBINSON: Wednesday, but I was changing
17 it to Sunday. Changing it to Sunday.

18 MR. HILL: What was your off duty time
19 Saturday?

20 MR. ROBINSON: I didn't go out, didn't go to
21 work on Saturday.

22 MR. HILL: Okay, when did you hire with
23 Amtrak?

24 MR. ROBINSON: I started the class July
25 13th. Marked up October 12th, I think it was.

1 MR. HILL: Okay, that's all I have. Thanks.
2 Good job, again.

3 MR. ROBINSON: Thank you.

4 MR. HILL: Okay.

5 MR. JENNER: Thank you.

6 MR. BATES: William Bates, B-A-T-E-S. SMART
7 Safety Team.

8 Damien, also, thank you for a good job for
9 this unfortunate incident.

10 During the time, were you able to talk to
11 the flag man during this time to --

12 MR. ROBINSON: At the time I didn't -- he
13 was in the back, in the rear. I know nothing that
14 happened back there. So, I just called the conductor
15 to make sure what to do.

16 MR. BATES: Could you talk to the --

17 MR. ROBINSON: I could to the crew.

18 MR. BATES: Could you talk to --

19 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, I could talk to the
20 crew.

21 MR. BATES: So, the radios worked?

22 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, the radios were working
23 fine. It was the PA system and the radio from the
24 engineer. He couldn't talk on his, because his is
25 done.

1 MR. BATES: Okay, do you remember -- you
2 talked about, you made announcements about the customer
3 safety information, packages in the back of the seat.
4 Did that really help you during this procedure?

5 MR. ROBINSON: No, because they didn't take
6 the time to look at it.

7 MR. BATES: Okay.

8 MR. ROBINSON: I tell them. They don't want
9 to listen. So.

10 MR. BATES: Did you understand the
11 procedures?

12 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, I understand.

13 MR. BATES: In training, did it help you a
14 lot?

15 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, if something happens in
16 one car and you don't leave the train, because the
17 safest place is the train still, because we still have
18 that track -- you don't have the other track. So, just
19 walk away from -- like, go away from the problem, which
20 is understandable.

21 MR. BATES: Okay, thank you. That's all the
22 questions I have.

23 MR. JENNER: All right.

24 MR. HINES: Jonathan Hines, Amtrak. I want
25 to thank you again for coming in.

1 I heard you mention there was an employee
2 qualified from --

3 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

4 MR. HINES: -- is that correct?

5 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

6 MR. HINES: Did you by chance, get that
7 employee's name?

8 MR. ROBINSON: No, I didn't, but I did scan
9 his badge.

10 MR. HINES: Okay, and where was he located
11 when --

12 MR. ROBINSON: I don't know where he was
13 located, but he was going to Baltimore.

14 MR. HINES: Okay, was he --

15 MR. ROBINSON: He has paperwork and I signed
16 it.

17 MR. HINES: Okay.

18 MR. ROBINSON: He was saying, "I'm
19 qualifying for PC's. Can you sign this?" I said, "I'm
20 not qualified on PC's. You sure you want me to sign
21 it? You don't want the conductor to sign it," and he's
22 like, "It's cool. Anybody of the crew can sign it,"
23 so, I signed it for him.

24 MR. HINES: Okay, that's all.

25 MR. WHITE: Gary White, FRA. Outstanding

1 job there, Mr. Robinson.

2 MR. ROBINSON: Thank you.

3 MR. WHITE: Should be more like you.

4 MR. ROBINSON: Thank you.

5 MR. WHITE: First question I have. You
6 mentioned three passengers in particular, the one male
7 passenger who had his arm pinned, female passenger that
8 you pulled the window pane off of, and the older lady
9 that was on the floor, am I correct?

10 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

11 MR. WHITE: Were there any other passengers
12 that jumped out at you, as far as the level of their
13 injuries or anything of that nature?

14 MR. ROBINSON: No.

15 MR. WHITE: So, there was --

16 MR. ROBINSON: It was the older -- the
17 grandma with the two kids. She hit her head, she said,
18 and she hurt her back. The lady that had the two
19 gashes on her head that was bleeding profusely, and
20 then the one older gentleman who -- it was four of
21 them. They was going to watch the cherry blossoms down
22 in D.C., and he took the window seat, and his arm -- he
23 had -- it was just like a hole, and every time he moved
24 his arm, blood would squirt out.

25 MR. WHITE: Okay.

1 MR. ROBINSON: So, and it was like two rows
2 -- a female that jumped up and put something on it, and
3 held it there, while he held his arm up.

4 MR. WHITE: Okay.

5 MR. ROBINSON: That was it. That's all like
6 the real serious injuries. Everybody else was, "Oh, I
7 hurt my head. It hit my back."

8 MR. WHITE: Bruises and bumps?

9 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, yes.

10 MR. WHITE: Okay, all right. Manually, you
11 went through all the cars. Just your two cars or did
12 you go through the entire --

13 MR. ROBINSON: I went through the entire
14 train.

15 MR. WHITE: Okay, and you made basically the
16 same announcement?

17 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

18 MR. WHITE: Stay calm, please don't run out
19 in the middle of the tracks.

20 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, they asked me what are
21 we going to do next, then I told them, I'm only been
22 here for six months. I don't know what is going to
23 happen next. The other thing, the best thing for us to
24 do is just to wait and see what -- to do what we're
25 told.

1 MR. WHITE: Okay.

2 MR. ROBINSON: So, that's the best thing for
3 us to do right now, is to wait and do what we're told.

4 MR. WHITE: All right. Your first two cars
5 were evacuated of most people except --

6 MR. ROBINSON: The first three.

7 MR. WHITE: First three?

8 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

9 MR. WHITE: Okay.

10 MR. ROBINSON: People were so scared, they
11 ran towards the back.

12 MR. WHITE: Okay.

13 MR. ROBINSON: And then they were standing
14 up. I wanted -- I was going to ask the conductor if we
15 could use the third car, because the window was out in
16 the third car too. I didn't think they wanted to use
17 that one because of the window being out.

18 So, I was going to ask him can we use the
19 third car for people to sit down, because they were
20 standing up, and I knew they were shaken up. But by
21 the time I got to him, something else happened and took
22 my mind off of it.

23 MR. WHITE: Okay, were there any passengers
24 with disabilities onboard? Do you know? I mean
25 wheelchairs? ADA passengers of that nature?

1 MR. ROBINSON: Probably in long haul
2 section.

3 MR. WHITE: Long haul?

4 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, but none in my section.

5 MR. WHITE: Okay, you didn't have any
6 opportunity to use emergency tools, did you?

7 MR. ROBINSON: No, the doctor, she grabbed
8 it automatically.

9 MR. WHITE: First aide kit and all that?

10 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

11 MR. WHITE: Okay, all right. That's all I
12 have for you. Good job.

13 MR. ROBINSON: Thank you.

14 MR. GEE: The only question I have --

15 MR. JENNER: Mr. Gee.

16 MR. GEE: Jim Gee, FRA. G-E-E. I thank you
17 again for being so courageous, even though everybody
18 was scared.

19 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, I was -- I told them,
20 "You're scared. I'm scared."

21 MR. GEE: Yes.

22 MR. ROBINSON: We can't have commotion. We
23 have to calm down. That's the only -- we can be
24 scared, but we can't be panicking. That's what makes
25 it worse, if we panic. So, let's calm down together,

1 and let's just do what we're told and we'll get through
2 this so fast, and so, yes.

3 MR. GEE: Thank you very much. Damien,
4 thinking what you went through, because you really
5 explain it very well here, looking back and you've just
6 been six months?

7 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

8 MR. GEE: Okay, in your training, what part
9 of your training seems to stick out in your mind, that
10 helped you with this situation? What do you think
11 helped you react in the way you did?

12 MR. ROBINSON: I was -- I spent 10 years in
13 the Navy. So, since I was 18, I probably was, you
14 know, designed to do that, you know.

15 So, right after high school, I went into the
16 Navy and that's the main thing.

17 INTERVIEWER: Along with attention to
18 detail.

19 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

20 INTERVIEWER: Yes.

21 MR. ROBINSON: So, when it goes down,
22 there's no need to panic. Just stay calm and
23 everything will be -- you'll see everything better. No
24 need to panic when you're in a bad situation like that.

25 MR. GEE: Okay, thank you.

1 MR. FRIGO: Ryan Frigo. Damien, again,
2 thank you for all the information you've provided us so
3 far. Extremely informative. Thank you.

4 Do you recall when you were at 30th Street,
5 any radio communication from the dispatcher to the
6 conductor?

7 MR. ROBINSON: No. That's -- I listened to
8 those -- to -- because I'm still learning. So, I would
9 like to know the locations. I'm trying to learn the
10 locations. Pretty soon, I'm about to come up for block
11 training and got to up for conductor too, so I want to
12 get a head start.

13 MR. FRIGO: Okay.

14 MR. ROBINSON: So, I listen. I didn't hear
15 nothing about a foreman having control of such and
16 such, a track was out of line -- out of service or
17 anything, nothing like -- nothing of that nature. I
18 didn't hear nothing.

19 MR. FRIGO: In the -- can you just clarify,
20 after leaving 30th Street, if you heard anything on the
21 radio?

22 MR. ROBINSON: I didn't hear nothing. I
23 didn't hear nothing.

24 MR. FRIGO: Okay, and do you -- can you
25 recall after the accident had occurred, can you

1 describe -- was there baggage also that was scattered
2 throughout that first coach?

3 MR. ROBINSON: No, I didn't see no baggage.
4 Everything -- it was just -- the top of it is leaning
5 down. There's a hole, that's it.

6 MR. FRIGO: Okay.

7 MR. ROBINSON: If there is a bag or two
8 down, they must have moved them. The passengers must
9 have moved them. That's all I seen, was the -- the
10 baggage rack hanging, the hole, three or four rows of
11 chairs pushed over and facing everybody else.

12 MR. FRIGO: And can you also recall what the
13 luggage rack looked at -- looked like in the second and
14 third car, as well?

15 MR. ROBINSON: They were fine.

16 MR. FRIGO: Okay.

17 MR. ROBINSON: Far as my understanding, I
18 didn't really look at the luggage rack. They were fine
19 to me.

20 MR. FRIGO: So, you don't recall any
21 scattering of any luggage or baggage --

22 MR. ROBINSON: No.

23 MR. FRIGO: -- in the second or third car?

24 MR. ROBINSON: No. The only luggage that
25 was scattered was the people taking their luggage and

1 going.

2 MR. FRIGO: Okay, thank you.

3 MR. JENNER: Okay, thank you. This is Steve
4 Jenner again.

5 I wanted to ask you about the lighting. Was
6 there -- is there emergency lighting?

7 MR. ROBINSON: At that time everything went
8 -- the whole power went out and the emergency lighting
9 -- I don't even remember that it -- if it came on or
10 not, because there was sunlight up. That's why we were
11 still able to see anything.

12 MR. JENNER: So, the sunlight provided --

13 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

14 MR. JENNER: Did that provide adequate
15 lighting --

16 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

17 MR. JENNER: -- for what you needed to do?

18 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

19 MR. JENNER: Okay, did you -- was there a
20 time or now, or in past, that there were glow sticks?
21 Anything like that?

22 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, I seen glow sticks.

23 MR. JENNER: Are they available on this
24 train?

25 MR. ROBINSON: I didn't look.

1 MR. JENNER: Okay.

2 MR. ROBINSON: I don't remember. I don't
3 remember. I don't recall looking, seeing them, but I do
4 have flare in my bag and stuff like that.

5 MR. JENNER: Okay, good. I want to change
6 pace on you a bit. I just wanted to go through your
7 work experience, and we heard before, out of high
8 school, you went to the Navy and for 10 years, and is
9 that -- after that, is that when you started working in
10 the railroad industry?

11 MR. ROBINSON: No, after that I was in the -
12 - so, four years active, six years reserve, and in
13 between the six years reserve, I went from a camp
14 counselor to a beer vendor, working the super bowl, to
15 electronics department at Walmart.

16 MR. JENNER: Okay, and when did you enter
17 the railroad industry?

18 MR. ROBINSON: I was at Walmart for a year
19 and a half. In between the -- the last half of the
20 year, I was going up out of Walmart to Amtrak.

21 MR. JENNER: Okay, what year was that?

22 MR. ROBINSON: Last year.

23 MR. JENNER: Two-thousand-fifteen and a
24 month about?

25 MR. ROBINSON: Couple -- well, they kept me

1 on while I was in training for Amtrak. So, I left
2 Walmart, October when I marked up.

3 MR. JENNER: October 2015?

4 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

5 MR. JENNER: When you started training?

6 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, they gave me a leave of
7 absence at Walmart.

8 MR. JENNER: Okay.

9 MR. ROBINSON: I spent the two months in
10 Wilmington, did the training and then I did the whole
11 posting and everything, and when I marked up, that's
12 when I quit at Walmart.

13 MR. JENNER: Okay, are you a qualified -- is
14 it right to say qualified conductor?

15 MR. ROBINSON: No, I'm not a qualified
16 conductor.

17 MR. JENNER: Okay, so, your title is
18 assistant conductor?

19 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

20 MR. JENNER: Okay, okay, and how long have
21 you been in that capacity, assistant conductor?

22 MR. ROBINSON: Since I came out of Amtrak
23 training.

24 MR. JENNER: And that was?

25 MR. ROBINSON: Was September 4th.

1 MR. JENNER: September 4th, 2015. I'm sorry,
2 I got the dates --

3 MR. ROBINSON: And then I marked up. So,
4 training started July 13th.

5 MR. JENNER: That's July 13th of 2015 --

6 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

7 MR. JENNER: -- you started training?

8 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

9 MR. JENNER: Okay.

10 MR. ROBINSON: Graduated training class
11 September 4th.

12 MR. JENNER: All right.

13 MR. ROBINSON: Posted for a month.

14 MR. JENNER: What is that word?

15 MR. ROBINSON: Posted?

16 MR. JENNER: Posted?

17 MR. ROBINSON: That's where you train with
18 the other conductors. You actually do the job that you
19 were trained to do.

20 MR. JENNER: Okay, so it's like an OJT?

21 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

22 MR. JENNER: Okay.

23 MR. ROBINSON: OJT for a month, and then I
24 marked up, October 12th, I believe.

25 MR. JENNER: Okay, and have you been working

1 this territory ever since?

2 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

3 MR. JENNER: Okay.

4 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

5 MR. JENNER: Okay, how did you -- what did
6 you think of the training from Amtrak?

7 MR. ROBINSON: It was okay. It was good.
8 It was nothing wrong with it.

9 MR. JENNER: Right. Did you feel prepared
10 for this type of scenario?

11 MR. ROBINSON: I don't -- I'm never prepared
12 for an accident. Never. Nobody is ever prepared for
13 an accident.

14 MR. JENNER: Right.

15 MR. ROBINSON: You can't prepare for
16 something that you don't know is going to happen.

17 MR. JENNER: Well --

18 MR. ROBINSON: That's how I look at it. So,
19 when it happened, the only thing I can do is assess the
20 situation at that time, and then act accordingly.

21 MR. JENNER: Right. But I understand
22 they'll discuss about procedures --

23 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, the procedures --

24 MR. JENNER: -- that you need to go through
25 and equipment --

1 MR. ROBINSON: Procedures is --

2 MR. JENNER: -- that's available to you.

3 MR. ROBINSON: The procedures and the
4 equipment, we have the ADA -- the AD inside the café.
5 We got glow sticks and flares and all this inside the
6 electrical box of every car. So, the emergency -- the
7 safety -- the first aide kits are there also.

8 So, we have the -- there are things put in
9 place for us, and at the time, like, you just got to
10 remember to use them.

11 MR. JENNER: Okay.

12 MR. ROBINSON: But I didn't get to it first.
13 The doctor did. So.

14 MR. JENNER: Right. Okay, okay. Very good.
15 Were you injured in this event?

16 MR. ROBINSON: After everything calmed down,
17 my back started to lock up and my knees started to show
18 pain. Like, I started to feel pain in my knee.

19 Went to the -- to the ambulance and they
20 rushed me off to the hospital.

21 MR. JENNER: Okay.

22 MR. ROBINSON: Did x-rays and --

23 MR. JENNER: What did the results show?

24 MR. ROBINSON: No broken bones. I knew
25 that.

1 MR. JENNER: Okay, were you asked to give
2 specimens for toxicology?

3 MR. ROBINSON: I thought that -- the
4 hospital they took me at, I thought would be doing a
5 pee test, was that. So, I gave them urine at that
6 hospital, Taylor Hospital in Ridley Park, Pennsylvania.
7 I didn't know I had to give blood also.

8 MR. JENNER: Right.

9 MR. ROBINSON: So, I did that yesterday.

10 MR. JENNER: Okay, what time yesterday?

11 MR. ROBINSON: That is -- it was around the
12 afternoon time, like early morning, afternoon, like
13 11:00 or 11:30 or 12:00.

14 MR. JENNER: Okay, and where was that?

15 MR. ROBINSON: MED RITE in New York.

16 MR. JENNER: So, no one had asked you to
17 give blood when you were at the hospital?

18 MR. ROBINSON: No, no, they didn't ask me to
19 give blood.

20 MR. JENNER: Okay, before the incident, how
21 was your overall health before?

22 MR. ROBINSON: I was fine.

23 MR. JENNER: Okay.

24 MR. ROBINSON: I was planning on playing
25 basket ball.

1 MR. JENNER: Okay.

2 MR. ROBINSON: Wanted to play basketball.
3 That's what I was planning, when I got off of work, go
4 play basketball, but I won't be doing that for a while.

5 MR. JENNER: Right. Yes, just in advance,
6 we have a physician who likes -- would just like a
7 little information about your medical past. So, I'm
8 going to ask some of those questions.

9 Do you have any chronic conditions?

10 MR. ROBINSON: No.

11 MR. JENNER: Do you have any sleep disorders
12 that you know of?

13 MR. ROBINSON: Nothing.

14 MR. JENNER: I don't see you wearing
15 glasses. Do you wear contacts?

16 MR. ROBINSON: No.

17 MR. JENNER: Okay, you have a physical
18 before you started working?

19 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

20 MR. JENNER: Everything check out okay?

21 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, they told me I needed
22 glasses. I got the glasses for the job and --

23 MR. JENNER: Okay, so, no medical concerns?

24 MR. ROBINSON: No.

25 MR. JENNER: And can you just walk me

1 through your schedule for the last few days?

2 So, this incident happened Sunday.

3 MR. ROBINSON: Okay, Sunday was the
4 accident.

5 MR. JENNER: Right.

6 MR. ROBINSON: Saturday, I didn't go
7 nowhere. Stayed in the house.

8 MR. JENNER: You were off duty?

9 MR. ROBINSON: No, I wasn't. Well, I was
10 waiting.

11 MR. JENNER: Okay.

12 MR. ROBINSON: There were eight jobs. I was
13 number nine.

14 MR. JENNER: I see, so, you didn't work?

15 MR. ROBINSON: Yes, I didn't work.

16 MR. JENNER: Okay, you didn't get the call,
17 okay.

18 MR. ROBINSON: And Friday, I was working in
19 the yard.

20 MR. JENNER: From when to when?

21 MR. ROBINSON: From 3:00 to I believe 11:00.

22 MR. JENNER: About 11:00 p.m.?

23 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

24 MR. JENNER: Okay, and after Friday, you
25 went home. How long does it take to get home?

1 MR. ROBINSON: Maybe 15 or 20 minutes.

2 MR. JENNER: You're close?

3 MR. ROBINSON: I live in Newark.

4 MR. JENNER: Okay, so, you woke up the next
5 morning about what time Saturday?

6 MR. ROBINSON: My daughter woke up about
7 7:30 or 8:00. I gave her the phone. That was it. So,
8 I'd say 8:30 I was up.

9 MR. JENNER: Okay.

10 MR. ROBINSON: Because I couldn't go back to
11 sleep.

12 MR. JENNER: And spent the day at home?

13 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

14 MR. JENNER: Okay, what time did you get up
15 Sunday?

16 MR. ROBINSON: Some time. I don't remember.
17 I don't remember the time.

18 MR. JENNER: Okay.

19 MR. ROBINSON: Five-twenty-five a.m., so I
20 woke up at -- they called me at three -- no, at two --
21 they called me at 2:20. So, at 3:45, I woke up. Woke
22 up, took a shower. Laid back down, and I left the
23 house at 4:15.

24 MR. JENNER: And how did you feel when you
25 went on duty?

1 MR. ROBINSON: I was fine.

2 MR. JENNER: Okay.

3 MR. ROBINSON: Ready to go, like I'm always.
4 Wasn't expecting --

5 INTERVIEWER: A young man.

6 MR. ROBINSON: I was ready to go.

7 MR. JENNER: Right, okay, thank you for
8 that. That's all I have. Let me look around the table
9 for any follow up questions. No? Mr. Gee has a
10 question.

11 MR. GEE: Jim Gee. Just one question is,
12 what time did you show off duty Sunday?

13 MR. ROBINSON: Show off duty?

14 MR. GEE: Yes, do you remember?

15 MR. ROBINSON: I don't know. That stuff, I
16 don't know.

17 MR. GEE: Okay.

18 MR. ROBINSON: Because I don't know what to
19 do -- I don't know what to do, like marking -- like
20 what were the steps of me marking for like -- like, do
21 I mark off? Am I marked off? How do I mark up and
22 when do I start work and all this?

23 I was being told that I was getting -- I
24 would get a call from a train master, saying that I can
25 go ahead and mark up.

1 MR. GEE: Thank you.

2 INTERVIEWER: I have no further questions.

3 MR. JENNER: Great. I'm going to ask you
4 one more question, and based on your experience and
5 training, what we're interested in is, you have
6 experience that a lot of people don't have at this
7 point, for good or bad.

8 Do you think there is any type of training
9 or equipment or anything that would have helped you in
10 this event?

11 MR. ROBINSON: I don't -- I don't know.
12 It's kind of hard to answer that, being that like
13 accidents are going to happen. There is no way to
14 like, prevent them. You can't prepare for an accident,
15 that's just me.

16 I don't know, how do you prepare for
17 something that you don't know is going to happen, how
18 it's going to happen, and everything. So.

19 MR. JENNER: Okay.

20 MR. ROBINSON: I don't know.

21 MR. JENNER: And I guess to -- I'll prompt
22 you by saying, do you wish were better lighting or more
23 emergency aide kits or something else to help the
24 passengers, to help you help the passengers?

25 MR. ROBINSON: There could be more first

1 aide kits in each car, instead of just one. There
2 could be more. Like maybe two or three, but there is -
3 - like, that could be it. Like, there is nothing else.

4 MR. JENNER: Okay. Anything that you can
5 help -- that you think can help in our investigation of
6 this?

7 MR. ROBINSON: If you all want to talk to
8 this lady.

9 MR. JENNER: All right.

10 INTERVIEWER: We've got her number.

11 MR. ROBINSON: Tell her I said thank you for
12 the help.

13 INTERVIEWER: Definitely.

14 MR. ROBINSON: I'll send some flowers to her
15 office or something.

16 MR. JENNER: Great. Well, with that in
17 mind, I want to thank you very much for showing up and
18 telling us about your experience, and we appreciate you
19 being here and helping out.

20 It's 1:00, and we're going to let you go.

21 Thank you.

22 (Whereupon, at 1:00 p.m., the interview was
23 concluded.)

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Accident Involving Amtrak Train #89 and a
Backhoe
NTSB Accident No. DCA16FR007
Interview of: Damien Robinson

DATE: 04-05-16

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 41 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



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