

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

-----*
In the Matter of: *
* Docket No.
DERAILMENT AND SUBSEQUENT * DCA-05-MR-009
COLLISION OF TWO METROLINK *
COMMUTER TRAINS IN *
GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA *
-----*

Wednesday,
January 26, 2005

INTERVIEW OF: CHARLES WRIGHT

PRESENT: MIKE FLANAGAN

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 MR. FLANAGAN: It is January 26, 2005, 1:57
3 p.m. We are interviewing Charles Wright, who was the
4 engineer on Train 901.

5 I just want to confirm for the record that I
6 have your permission to tape record our interview.

7 MR. WRIGHT: Correct.

8 MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. And accompanying Mr.
9 Wright is Ralph Poplar who is his representative.

10 Let me start with just a general question,
11 let you tell me basically what happened from your
12 standpoint.

13 MR. WRIGHT: Okay. We, it was a normal
14 morning, nothing out of the exception. No exceptions.
15 We pulled into Glendale Station, left Glendale, and as
16 we left Glendale, the 100, train 100, Lucas' train,
17 they called and said, I don't the exact words, but are
18 you guys out of Glendale, and I said, yes, we are, it
19 is okay, come in. Those are not the exact words, but,
20 and then I came around the corner and I had a green
21 signal at CP curve, I called the signal, and everything
22 was still fine, and then I saw Bruce's train, I don't
23 know exactly when I first saw it, and still fine and
24 then I saw sparks coming out from underneath his cab
25 car. And about a second or two after that, his cab car

1 *appeared to, I thought it was, had picked the switch or*
2 *something, and thinking afterwards, at the moment I*
3 *don't know what I was thinking, but it looked it had*
4 *picked the switch and got into the, what we call*
5 *Glendale slide spurt, it made like right turn. And I*
6 *put my train in emergency and they passed us, and it*
7 *felt a little bit of a rumble, and then I felt a huge*
8 *jolt and then we stopped and called the dispatcher,*
9 *called the emergency transmission and went from there.*

10 *MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. Any problems with your*
11 *equipment that morning or everything was --*

12 *MR. WRIGHT: No, .*

13 *MR. FLANAGAN: -- seemed normal.*

14 *MR. WRIGHT: Yeah.*

15 *MR. FLANAGAN: Visibility good?*

16 *MR. WRIGHT: Yes.*

17 *MR. FLANAGAN: What was the weather like?*

18 *MR. WRIGHT: It was slightly raining. It was*
19 *just kind of a drizzle rain.*

20 *MR. FLANAGAN: Okay.*

21 *MR. WRIGHT: It wasn't enough to have the*
22 *windshield wipers on. As we left the depot, I think I*
23 *tested them out a few times but it was more just like*
24 *of a drizzle.*

25 *MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. Do you know about what*

1 *speed you were going when this happened?*

2 *MR. WRIGHT: Well, the speed usually at that*
3 *point, coming out of Glendale, from a stop, I am*
4 *guessing would be around, between 40 and 50.*

5 *MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. And the track speed*
6 *there?*

7 *MR. WRIGHT: Seventy nine.*

8 *MR. FLANAGAN: Seventy nine track speed.*

9 *Did it seem pretty quick by the time, what*
10 *happened after the collision, kind of walk us through*
11 *that?*

12 *MR. WRIGHT: After we got stopped?*

13 *MR. FLANAGAN: After you got stopped.*

14 *MR. WRIGHT: I called the dispatcher, put out*
15 *an emergency call, don't know, I can't remember what I*
16 *told him, but I told them that this is a biggie,*
17 *something seems serious here. And then I tried to call*
18 *my conductor, called him a number of times, no answer.*
19 *And I am not sure if I tried to call, I think I tried*
20 *to cal Bruce and Reggie's train but I don't know for*
21 *sure. And there was no answer from anybody. And so,*
22 *I kind of guided myself in and I went back and tried to*
23 *find Tom. And that is when I saw everything, really saw*
24 *what had happened.*

25 *MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. And in, I am trying to*

1 *recall now, some of your equipment was actually on the*
2 *side, is that correct?*

3 *MR. WRIGHT: Yes. The cars -- apparently,*
4 *because our cab --*

5 *MR. FLANAGAN: Did you get into that car?*

6 *MR. WRIGHT: No, we tried to get in, I wasn't*
7 *able to get inside. We were hollering into for Tom and*
8 *there were people inside and they were saying, Tom, is*
9 *there a Tom in there, and there was no answer. And*
10 *then there was a guy who had managed to come out the*
11 *top and I asked him if the conductor was in this car,*
12 *do you know, and they weren't sure, and said there was*
13 *a guy laying there and it sounded like him. And I had*
14 *my flashlight, and I tossed my flashlight and he said*
15 *he is not moving and I said, is he breathing or can you*
16 *tell, and he wasn't really sure.*

17 *MR. FLANAGAN: Yes.*

18 *MR. WRIGHT: It didn't look good, though. And*
19 *I wasn't sure at that point if it was him or not.*

20 *MR. FLANAGAN: Yes.*

21 *MR. WRIGHT: And then I don't know the time*
22 *frame, I was kind of in daze and walked back up to the*
23 *engine. It seemed like it had been awhile, but how*
24 *long, because there was no -- And then, so I went back*
25 *in the engine and called again the dispatcher and said,*

1 I don't know, is anyone coming, you know, and is anyone
2 on their way or, or, you know.

3 MR. FLANAGAN: Yes.

4 MR. WRIGHT: And they said there was. I don't
5 remember the words exactly.

6 MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. And when emergency
7 response personnel did arrive, did you have any
8 interactions with them?

9 MR. WRIGHT: Well, the first people I saw were
10 the, the Glendale Police, I guess, they had blue suits
11 on. And I, you know, I said can you guys see in here,
12 we were back at the cab car by then, you know, can you
13 see light or can you look and we got that door propped
14 up a little bit, and they were --

15 MR. FLANAGAN: Is that car on your train?

16 MR. WRIGHT: The --

17 MR. FLANAGAN: Which is the trailing car.

18 MR. WRIGHT: The trailing car. And the first,
19 I think it was a fireman that went into the car. They
20 were able to, the door was, it was laying on the side
21 of door to get it open like this, it was laying, so
22 they pushed it open, and they lowered them and that was
23 the last I saw them.

24 MR. FLANAGAN: And then were you injured in
25 any way?

1 MR. WRIGHT: I didn't feel injured, no. I
2 just, you know, I don't feel.

3 MR. FLANAGAN: That is good.

4 MR. WRIGHT: But, I don't feel anything.

5 MR. FLANAGAN: Glad to hear it.

6 MR. WRIGHT: Okay.

7 MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. Did you see the car at
8 all that they struck?

9 MR. WRIGHT: No, I didn't, in fact, I didn't
10 know they had struck a car. I didn't until later on.
11 I just saw the spark.

12 MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. I think that is all I
13 have got. Let me go around the room and maybe I can
14 ask whoever is going to ask a question from the
15 different parties, if you could come up here so that
16 you are on the tape and identify yourself. From
17 Metrolink, did you want --

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

19 MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. Just in closing, how long
20 have you been an engineer and how long for Metrolink?

21 MR. WRIGHT: Been an engineer, was promoted in
22 1980, and I came over with Amtrak in November '87, or
23 was it '86, '86. And then worked back and forth between
24 Metrolink and Amtrak.

25 MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. And is this your regular

1 *run that you were on this morning?*

2 *MR. WRIGHT: Yes.*

3 *MR. FLANAGAN: How long have you been on that*
4 *regular run?*

5 *MR. WRIGHT: About a year and a half.*

6 *MR. FLANAGAN: Okay.*

7 *MR. WRIGHT: Yes.*

8 *MR. FLANAGAN: And let's see, and what time*
9 *did you go on duty?*

10 *MR. WRIGHT: Four, twenty-five.*

11 *MR. FLANAGAN: Four, twenty-five a.m. And*
12 *when did you go off duty the day before?*

13 *MR. WRIGHT: Oh, usually at 2:40 p.m.*

14 *MR. FLANAGAN: Two forty is your regular --*

15 *MR. WRIGHT: Time out.*

16 *MR. FLANAGAN: And that is your regular.*
17 *Okay. I think that is all I have.*

18 *Is there anything you would like to add?*

19 *MR. WRIGHT: No.*

20 *MR. PHELPS: I have one question.*

21 *MR. FLANAGAN: Sure.*

22 *MR. PHELPS: Chuck, this is Richard Phelps,*
23 *Amtrak, Southwest Division.*

24 *When you saw the train 100, which was -- had*
25 *the cab car, did it seem to be out of position in*

1 relationship to the train, had it started to --

2 MR. WRIGHT: When I first saw it, I just saw
3 the spark, that is what caught my eye. It didn't look,
4 I couldn't tell at that point, and then we were trying
5 to figure out earlier, how many seconds it was, maybe
6 two or three, if that and I am not even sure about
7 that, but, it looked like it had taken a right, in
8 other words, in the direction it was going, like it had
9 turned right, like it was going into that siding, you
10 know. Does that make sense?

11 MR. PHELPS: It was kind of like it was angled
12 to right, like it had taken a turn out.

13 MR. WRIGHT: Yes. And I am not positive it
14 came back about the time we passed, it was about the
15 time that I noticed it was not on the track or at
16 least, you know, in that sideway position.

17 MR. PHELPS: And then you heard the rumbling
18 sound and felt the jolt.

19 MR. WRIGHT: Yes. I felt, I felt, I am not
20 even sure if it had hit us or it was just the
21 buffering, but I did feel the, there was one big jolt,
22 one big and then I knew they had hit us then, at least
23 that is what I thought it was, and then I, but it
24 looked like, you know.

25 MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. Anything else to add?

1 MR. WRIGHT: No.

2 MR. FLANAGAN: Okay. Thanks very much. We
3 appreciate your time. I will turn this off.

4 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)