



Survival Factors Attachment:

Witness Interviews

Crozet, Va.

HWY18MH005

(86 pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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AMTRAK/TRUCK ACCIDENT *

CROZET, VIRGINIA * Accident No.: HWY18MH005

JANUARY 31, 2018 *

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Interview of: MARK MEYERS

Thursday,
March 29, 2018

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Highway Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MS. HARLEY: All right. So, it is Thursday, March the 29th,
3 2018. It's 10:05 a.m. I am with Mr. Mark Meyers, a passenger on
4 Amtrak 923 at the time of the crash in Crozet, Virginia. We are
5 located at 119 D Street, Northeast. I am Sheryl Harley. I'm an
6 investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board.

7 And just for the record, again, my job is to look at the
8 circumstances of the crash, and look at it in terms of
9 survivability, how it occurred, how people were injured, how
10 people died, and if there's something that we can suggest, or some
11 kind of recommendation we can make to prevent it from occurring,
12 or at least mitigate the severity of the injuries.

INTERVIEW OF MARK MEYERS

13
14 BY MS. HARLEY:

15 Q. So, that said, kind of take me through the events of the day.
16 I guess what I want to know is number one, date, time and location
17 you got on the train. And I know at the time of the crash you
18 were in the locomotive. Is that correct?

19 A. Yes. That's correct.

20 Q. Okay. And how long were you in the locomotive? So, I guess,
21 start from the very beginning.

22 A. Okay.

23 Q. Where you feel comfortable.

24 A. Okay. The, we boarded the train on, on Union Station in
25 Washington, D.C. Time frame, I, I can't specifically remember,

1 but --

2 Q. Not important.

3 A. [REDACTED]

4 [REDACTED] So, I hopped
5 in at the beginning of the trip, and was there and, for the
6 duration, until the crash.

7 Q. Okay. Was the locomotive crew at Union Station the same crew
8 that was at the crash scene?

9 A. No. We had stopped at -- I can't recall the name of the
10 town, but we had stopped before, shortly before the crash to
11 switch out the crew.

12 Q. It was an all-new crew, then?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. All right. Do you remember how many people were in
15 the cab with you at the time of the crash?

16 A. It was myself and three others?

17 Q. Can you identify those individuals?

18 A. I don't recall names.

19 Q. Do you know --

20 A. But, I --

21 Q. -- what they were doing?

22 A. There was, two of them were at the controls, if you will.
23 And one of them was standing behind the seats with me. I'm not
24 sure their exact positions, or --

25 Q. Okay. Where were you standing in the cab?

1 A. I was in the -- as you were looking out the front of the cab,
2 I was to the right behind the, the seat.

3 Q. Were you at the door that leads to the actual engine to the
4 locomotive? Is that where you were standing?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Just in front of that door.

8 Q. Okay. Question. Who duct taped the door? Was that door
9 duct taped for this trip?

10 A. You know, I don't even recall noticing that it was duct
11 taped.

12 Q. Okay. And the reason I ask is because it was duct taped when
13 it got to the rail yard.

14 A. Okay.

15 Q. Doesn't necessarily mean it was duct taped. But I was just
16 wondering if it was duct taped for the trip for some reason.

17 A. Okay.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. No. I remember somebody going, making a couple trips into
20 that door.

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. So, yeah, it couldn't have been duct taped shut --

23 Q. Oh.

24 A. -- now that you mentioned it, because, yeah, I remember
25 somebody going in and out, like, maybe twice.

1 Q. Okay. All right. So, start me from -- okay, let's start
2 from after you changed out the crew. Do you know how long you
3 stopped to change out the crew?

4 A. Wasn't very long. If I had to guess, maybe ten minutes at
5 most.

6 Q. Did the departing crew give the oncoming crew any special
7 instructions that you know of?

8 A. Not that I know of.

9 Q. Okay. So, from there, take me through what happened to the
10 time of the crash.

11 A. When the new crew got on, you know, they assumed their
12 positions in the locomotive. And we just, we departed that
13 station. And, I mean, it was, it was actually a really nice day
14 out. So, I know the, there was no bad weather or anything. I
15 know there, because of my, where I was standing in the locomotive,
16 I could see the controls, and it was my first time riding in a
17 locomotive, so I kind of thought it was neat. So, I was trying to
18 check everything out that I could and everything. And I noticed
19 they were paying, like, close attention to the speed. And it was,
20 I, I don't recall the speed limit, but I was noticing the signs
21 along the track, and I know they were, like, right on, as far as
22 the speed goes. They were constantly monitoring it, as well as
23 other functions. I -- the two in the seats were talking back and
24 forth. I'm sure, conductor lingo, but, and they were on the --
25 the one gentleman was on the radio quite frequently, like, I'm

1 assuming, like, when they were passing set points or something.

2 Q. So, if you were looking out of the cab, and you were off to
3 the right, which one was on the radio? The one in front of you,
4 or the one on the other side?

5 A. The one on the other side.

6 Q. Okay. Okay.

7 A. And the one directly in front of me was monitoring the, like,
8 the speed, and he was the one making the adjustments with the
9 instrumentation, so --

10 Q. All right. So, when were they first alerted that there was a
11 problem, there was a truck on the track?

12 A. I remember we were coming around a blind curve, it was wooded
13 on both sides. And as soon as we could see -- really, as soon as
14 we could see the intersection coming around that curve, we saw the
15 truck moving across, and then it just -- it kind of stopped with
16 the back end of the truck still hanging over the tracks. And
17 that's when the, the gentleman that was in front of me started
18 blowing the horn of the locomotive, and made the, you know, made
19 the comment that, you know, we're going to, you know, we're going
20 to impact, we're going to hit that truck, they're not moving. And
21 I want to say he reached forward, and maybe hit the brakes. But
22 I, I don't recall. I was trying to get on my radio with my crew
23 in the, in the passenger cars to tell them that we were going to
24 possibly impact, and --

25 Q. Out of curiosity, were you able to notify anybody in the back

1 that it was going to happen?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. [REDACTED]

5 [REDACTED] From what I've
6 heard, nobody heard me say anything. So, I'm assuming I didn't
7 get on there fast enough.

8 Q. Okay. So, the train crew was alerted themselves. No one
9 actually told them that there was a problem?

10 A. Right.

11 Q. Okay. Okay. And you said that when you first saw the truck,
12 it was moving across?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Could you see the crossing gates? Could you see the crossing
15 itself?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Okay. So, you could not see if there were lights, or if the
18 gates were down?

19 A. No. Not from where I was standing.

20 Q. Okay. When you saw the truck, to be clear, there was no one
21 riding on the outside of the truck?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Okay. So, talk to me about the, the timing of the crew. The
24 crew saw the truck, and then tell me about their actions. What
25 exactly did they say? What exactly did they do?

1 A. The immediately started blowing the horn. And I just
2 remember the gentleman that was in front of me that was operating
3 the controls, like I said, I'm pretty sure he reached to hit the
4 brakes. After he blew the horn a few times, and then he said the,
5 something to the effect that we're, we're going to crash, or we're
6 going to hit. I, honestly, I don't remember what the gentleman in
7 the other seat did, because I was watching, watching the truck,
8 and trying to get on my radio, and trying to brace myself. So --

9 Q. How many seconds do you think that you saw the truck, from
10 the time you saw the truck to the time of impact?

11 A. It, honestly, it couldn't have been more than ten seconds.
12 It, it was a very short window. It happened very fast.

13 Q. After the impact, what happened?

14 A. After the impact, we, I mean, the train, it was, obviously,
15 slowing down quite rapidly. I mean, I remember a lot of dust in
16 the, the cab. I remember the, let's see, it was the gentleman
17 standing next to me, I know he fell. He had a, a small scrape or
18 something on his face or head. I'm not sure about the other two,
19 if they fell out of their seats or not. Then we, I mean, we
20 collected ourselves, and then went -- once the train was
21 completely stopped, we got out, we exited the engine. The three
22 crew that were in the engine sat down in the, the grass area next
23 to the engine. And then I started checking with my crew to see if
24 there was any injuries, or, you know, what was going in the cars
25 behind.

1 Q. Okay. Did you fall during this?

2 A. No, I did not.

3 Q. Okay. Okay. Were you injured at all?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Okay. When you exited the train, did you go out the door
6 that's in the locomotive? Or did you go through the train to exit
7 out?

8 A. In the locomotive.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. The one in the locomotive.

11 Q. Okay. All right. So, the crew immediately exit? Or did
12 they call in?

13 A. I do remember, I remember one of them, I can't recall who,
14 but I remember one of them making notification on the radio that
15 they had made an impact. I can't recall what specifically said,
16 if he gave, you know, the location or what not. But I do remember
17 him on the radio.

18 Q. Okay. The -- just going back to the truck that was going
19 across the track, did you get some sense as to the reason he just
20 stopped?

21 A. No. And that's, you know, one of the things that I was
22 questioning from the beginning. I don't know if there was traffic
23 ahead of him, because from where, from the, the curve that we were
24 traveling around, like I said, it was a blind curve, and you
25 couldn't really see the intersection that well. So, I don't know

1 if there was traffic stopped in front of him, because it's not
2 like he stopped, you know, dead center of the track, like it was
3 purposeful. It was like he was trying to get across, but then
4 stopped short of it, with, like I said, with just the back end of
5 the truck hanging out. Yeah. And then, you know, once we made
6 impact, I don't recall other traffic in the area. If there was
7 other traffic, they had gone by the time we had exited the
8 locomotive and --

9 Q. Okay. After the impact, did you see any of the other crew,
10 Amtrak crew at all?

11 A. I don't recall.

12 Q. Okay. Okay. So, you really didn't have any interaction with
13 anybody else outside of the locomotive crew?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Okay. So, out of curiosity, you saying that you were kind of
16 watching the engineer as he was at the control, do you know the
17 speed of the train?

18 A. I, I honestly don't remember. Like I said, the entire trip,
19 they had really been, like, spot on as far as the posted signs
20 that I kept noticing on the side of the track, and as far as what
21 the instruments were on.

22 Q. Okay. Can you estimate how long it took for the first
23 responders to get there?

24 A. I know they were there really fast. You know, I couldn't
25 even say, because after I got off the locomotive, I was trying to

1 get on my police radio to find out, you know, like I said, if
2 there was any injuries in the cars behind, and, you know, try to
3 get organized, our, our unit organized. And then by the time I
4 had worked my way back to the accident scene, there were several
5 EMS on the scene already, several police units on the scene
6 already. So, I know they were, they were fast to respond.

7 Q. One of the questions is that was there someone, did anyone
8 responsible for the train talk to the first responders when they
9 first arrived, specifically about people, passengers inside the
10 train being injured? Do you know?

11 A. Not that I'm aware of.

12 Q. Okay. Did, after this, did you have any contact with any of
13 the personnel that were in the truck that was hit by the train?

14 A. No. By the time I had made my way up to the, the point of
15 impact they were just covering the deceased individual up with a
16 cloth. And then other first responders were working on the, the
17 injured individual, so --

18 Q. Did you by any chance see the driver at that time?

19 A. I'm not sure who was driving or anything. I --

20 Q. Okay. So, your sense of the, let me put it to you this way.
21 If you had to describe the actions of the Amtrak crew that's in
22 the locomotive, and the operation, and their response to all this,
23 how would you describe it?

24 A. I would say that they, they definitely acted -- from my
25 perspective, anyways, definitely acted appropriately. I really

1 don't -- you know, I'm not aware of their training, or the
2 capabilities of the, the locomotive, or anything, but to me, they
3 couldn't have responded any better to avoid the accident. Seemed
4 like they did what they could given the circumstances.

5 Q. One thing that you did say, I wanted to get back to you. You
6 said that the train decelerated rapidly after the impact. Did you
7 get a sense if that was the brakes, or was just simply because it
8 was dragging the truck that it slowed itself down?

9 A. Honestly, initially I thought it was, either we were dragging
10 something, or, you know, I really wasn't 100 percent sure. But
11 then, after I got off the locomotive, I noticed one, at least one
12 of the axle sets were, had derailed. But the other ones were
13 still on the track, so, then I assumed that that's why it came to
14 a stop so quickly.

15 Q. Out of curiosity, has anyone from either Amtrak, Buckingham
16 Branch or CSX spoken to you?

17 A. No, they have not.

18 Q. What was the guy that was standing next to you doing just
19 before the crash and during all of this? Was he interacting with
20 the crew at all?

21 A. No. I, minus the occasional small talk, I mean, there was
22 no, like, major interactions. Really, I think he's, I don't know
23 if he was eating breakfast, or, like, I know he was, he had a cup
24 of coffee with him. But, I mean, yeah, minus just some small
25 talk, I don't think there was, like, really any interactions. And

1 I know he wasn't really doing anything with equipment or anything,
2 so --

3 Q. When you got off the train, could you see the crossing at
4 that particular point?

5 A. Yes. I could.

6 Q. Do you remember if the gates were down, and the, or the
7 lights were flashing or anything?

8 A. I don't recall.

9 Q. Out of curiosity, have you ever been on a train through that
10 area at all?

11 A. No, I haven't.

12 Q. So, I guess we'll wrap it up by saying is there anything you
13 think I should have asked you, and I failed to ask you about this?

14 A. No. I think we covered everything. You know, I tried to
15 give you, like, everything I could remember of the morning, and,
16 you know, most specifically the moments leading up to the impact
17 and after impact, so --

18 Q. So, what I always tell people is you think of something later
19 on, please feel free to give me a call on my cell phone. That's
20 basically a 24-hour number. Again, thank you very much. I
21 appreciate it. So, ultimately what we're looking at is the truck,
22 the train crew, the reaction and the timing, and if there was
23 anything that could have avoided this.

24 A. Sure.

25 Q. And that's ultimately what I'm, what we're looking at.

1 A. Okay.

2 Q. So, all right.

3 A. Really, the one thing, I don't know if it's of any relevance
4 is that where I was standing, there was, like, a metal grab
5 handle --

6 Q. Um-hum.

7 A. -- next to me, and that's what I held onto --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- at the point of impact, so --

10 Q. Well, at least kept you upright.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Great. Okay. And, again, thank you very much. I certainly
13 appreciate you taking the time to talk to me.

14 MS. HARLEY: And, I guess we can end this. It's 10:26.

15 MR. MEYERS: Okay.

16 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Cool.

17 (Whereupon, at 10:26 a.m., the interview 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: AMTRAK/TRUCK CRASH


JANUARY 31, 2018
Interview of Mark Meyers

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY18MH005

PLACE: 119 D Street Northeast
Washington, District of Columbia 20001

DATE: March 29, 2018

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Karen Coen Brooks
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

COLLISION OF AMTRAK SPECIAL TRAIN *

P0923 31 AT THE HIGHWAY-RAIL GRADE * Accident No.: HWY18MH005

CROSSING AT LANETOWN ROAD IN *

CROZET, VIRGINIA, JANUARY 31, 2018 *

* * * * *

Interview of: JEFFREY THOMPSON

Via Telephone

Monday,
February 5, 2018

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Highway Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

(4:27 p.m.)

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3 MS. HARLEY: Time is now 4:27 p.m. on Monday, February the
4 5th. Recalling Mr. Jeffrey Thompson, [REDACTED] Mr. Thompson,
5 can you hear me?

6 MR. THOMPSON: Yes, ma'am.

7 MS. HARLEY: Hi, how are you? I'm sorry, I missed your call.
8 I didn't get to the phone in time.

9 MR. THOMPSON: No, that's okay. Can I, can I actually just
10 call you right back on my landline just so it'll make sure keep a
11 good connection?

12 MS. HARLEY: That'll work, not a problem.

13 MR. THOMPSON: I'll call you right now. I'll call you right
14 now, okay.

15 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

16 MR. THOMPSON: Thanks. Bye.

17 MS. HARLEY: Number from Mr. Thompson, [REDACTED] Yes,
18 sir.

19 MR. THOMPSON: Yeah, so sorry about that.

20 MS. HARLEY: No, no, not a problem. So, I understand that
21 you already provided a statement to the Albemarle County,
22 Albemarle County Police Department, but --

23 MR. THOMPSON: That's correct.

24 MS. HARLEY: -- you had some information for us.

25 MR. THOMPSON: Well, I just wanted to make sure -- I saw that

1 the NTSB had been, you know, asking for witness -- you know,
2 anybody who had witnessed it to see it, and I know they mentioned
3 a number of people and I didn't remember speaking to anybody from
4 NTSB. So, I just wanted to make sure that you guys had access to,
5 you know, my statement and/or, you know, got a chance to get
6 information from me. So, you know, however I can be of
7 assistance.

8 MS. HARLEY: Well, I appreciate you contacting us.

9 INTERVIEW OF JEFFREY THOMPSON

10 BY MS. HARLEY:

11 Q. If you don't mind, if you could kind of walk me through it
12 again about that day and what you observed.

13 A. Yeah, sure, that's fine. Yeah, so it was, you know,
14 Wednesday, January 31 and it was, you know, right around 11:15 in
15 the morning and I had turned onto Lanetown Road off of Mint
16 Springs Road, Mint Springs Road. And the train crossing is very,
17 you know, shortly thereafter ahead of me.

18 And so, as I came up on the train crossing I -- you know, the
19 impressions that I remember was just that I saw a truck and it was
20 stopped, it was on the train tracks, you know, so perpendicular to
21 the tracks, you know, in the direction of the road.

22 Q. Um-hum.

23 A. And then, you know, at the same time I'm sort of realizing,
24 you know, there's a truck there and that the gates were down,
25 right? So, it was on the tracks and that the gates were down and

1 the red light on my side was blinking, right? So, when I saw
2 that, my brain sort of went to, you know, the truck is in there
3 and the gates are down, that means a train's coming.

4 So, you know, and I'm sure it was just within seconds or
5 whatever, right? I realized, you know, there's a train coming. I
6 looked to my left, you know, so I looked to my east, looked to the
7 east and saw that the train was coming and realized it was, you
8 know, it was coming at, you know, at speed and that it was not
9 going to be able to stop.

10 So, at that point, you know, I looked back towards the truck
11 and -- can you hang on just one second?

12 Q. Yes, sir.

13 A. Sorry. Sorry about that.

14 Q. No problem.

15 A. So, and I had looked back and the truck, you know, really
16 hadn't moved, it was still there. And so, at that point I'm just,
17 you know, the train's going to hit the truck. It hits the truck.
18 The truck was pointed, you know, from I guess -- you know, it was
19 heading south or southwest, whatever the road orientation is. So,
20 I was -- it was headed in the same direction as I was heading,
21 only I was behind it, right?

22 Q. Um-hum.

23 A. I was probably maybe 30 feet away from the crossing when it
24 happened when they, when they collided. You know, the truck was
25 launched off the -- off of the spot in the road and broke apart.

1 The train kept going. You know, it pretty much stayed on the rail
2 that's, you know, fortunately that, you know, it stayed on the
3 rail. And it probably -- you know, it had -- it ends up stopping,
4 I don't know, a few car lengths from the crossing, the tail end of
5 the train.

6 So, when the train kept -- when it came to a halt, I got out
7 of my car, I ran towards the truck, I saw two men. I assumed that
8 they were ejected, you know, off of or out of the vehicle, out of
9 the garbage truck. So, two of them were on the ground, you know,
10 maybe, I don't know, some tens of feet away, and they both
11 appeared unconscious and, you know, pretty gravely injured. They
12 were not moving.

13 Then I saw a third man in the cab. He was slumped forward.
14 He also appeared unconscious and hurt. At that point, I tried to
15 call 911 and I looked on my phone, so it was 11 -- I looked back
16 at my phone, it was 11:17 a.m. when I called 911. I was the only
17 -- at least to my recollection, I was the only person there at the
18 time that they struck each other.

19 And so, I called the 911 operator, reported that I had
20 witnessed the train collide with the truck and I notified them of
21 the three injured men. Then I took, you know, a minute or two to
22 go towards the train to try to alert people on the train. So, I
23 was using sort of hand signals to just say I had called 911 and
24 that help would be on its way. And I didn't know if anybody would
25 be injured on the train, but it seemed like people were sort of

1 okay from the, you know, heads I saw looking out the windows.

2 So then, I went back towards the garbage truck at that point,
3 and that was probably maybe just a minute or two I was sort of
4 communicating with the train, people on the train. And when I
5 went back, the man who was in the cab had actually I guess
6 revived and had gotten out of the cab. I didn't see him get out
7 of the cab, but, you know, he was in the cab and then he was not.
8 And he was sort of walking very slowly, you know, outside of the
9 truck on the other side of the truck closer to the track.

10 And at that time, a second person had arrived on the scene
11 and was -- you know, went up to the man and tried to aid him. It
12 seemed like it was about three to five minutes after the collision
13 before anybody exited the train. At that point, some people
14 started coming off of the train. [REDACTED]

15 [REDACTED] maybe some
16 Amtrak employees and perhaps some other people who had some
17 medical training.

18 And so, I was trying my best to relay, you know, information
19 about the three men that I had seen injured, and so that I could
20 get them the best information I could about what I had seen and
21 their condition to aid them in helping. And so, I gave that
22 information and then I think sort of around that same time a local
23 EMT ambulance had shown up.

24 I don't know if it was exactly the same time, but a little
25 bit after and alerted them to the man who was conscious and up,

1 you know, along with the two people who were down who seemed to be
2 getting help from, you know, some people from the train with, you
3 know, skills to be able to help them.

4 So, that's really my best recollection. And I had made
5 notes, you know, shortly after the accident so I could best, you
6 know, relay the information as I had seen it.

7 Q. Okay. So, I'm going to kind of go back through to make sure
8 I understand.

9 A. Sure.

10 Q. All right? So, you came from Mint Springs Road and then
11 turned onto Lanetown?

12 A. Correct. I turned right onto Lanetown off of Mint Springs.
13 I had been at Mint Springs Park that morning hiking, so.

14 Q. Okay. And when you approached the crossing, the truck was
15 already stopped on the tracks?

16 A. Right. Yeah, so I didn't see it enter at all. All I know is
17 the first impression that I can remember was that the train was --
18 or that the truck was actually literally sort of on the tracks,
19 right, and that the gates were down.

20 Q. Okay. All right. The -- and just to, just to be clear. To
21 your knowledge, all the men were actually inside the cab. There
22 wasn't anyone that was actually on the back step of the truck.

23 A. Yeah. So, I do not recall seeing any of the men. Now, the
24 cab was on the far side of the truck, so I couldn't see into the
25 cab.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. And I certainly couldn't see the sort of far side of the
3 truck, but I don't recall viewing any of the men.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And so, that was sort of where I had felt like they may have
6 all -- that the two men might have been ejected from, you know,
7 inside the truck, but again, I couldn't be sure.

8 Q. So, when you saw the truck, did it look like the truck was
9 trying to back up, go forward, or was it just literally just
10 stopped?

11 A. No, it really didn't really materially move while I was
12 looking at it.

13 Q. Okay. And you were actually -- you and the truck were
14 actually going in the same direction and you were approximately 30
15 feet behind.

16 A. Yeah. And so, it was, you know -- as I said, my first sight
17 or impression of it was it was on the track. I was obviously
18 coming from that intersection turning right onto Lanetown, and as
19 I drove up I stopped because, you know, I see the truck there, I
20 see the gates down, and so I habit -- I just, you know, stopped.

21 And that was probably about 30 feet away from the truck and
22 the train -- where the train tracks crossed the road or the --
23 where they cross the road. But it was, it was headed in the same
24 direction of travel, right?

25 Q. Um-hum. So, how long do you think from the time that you

1 observe the train -- I'm sorry, observe the truck on the track to
2 the actual impact, approximately?

3 A. I mean, I would say somewhere between five and ten seconds.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. I mean, I couldn't, I couldn't be 100 percent sure, but that
6 would be my best guess.

7 Q. That's fine. I'm just asking for approximate. I understand
8 you weren't staring at a watch at the time.

9 A. Right, right.

10 Q. So, at that particular point you see the train impact the
11 truck. Could you tell exactly where on the truck the train had
12 hit it?

13 A. I mean, it looked like it hit it fairly, you know, dead on.
14 I mean, it didn't feel like it was necessarily, you know -- I
15 mean, it felt like it was pretty centered.

16 Q. okay. So, after the impact, could you see the truck at that
17 particular point or was the train obscuring your view of the truck
18 after it was hit?

19 A. Yeah. After it was hit, the train obscured my view of it
20 until it completely passed because the cab was sort of down --
21 there's -- there was a little bit of a bank on the south side of
22 the track.

23 Q. Um-hum.

24 A. And so, it was down below a little bit. And then the
25 carriage, I guess, of the, of the garbage truck had, you know,

1 traveled some distance down and away as well.

2 Q. Okay. Can you describe -- describe your car for me. What
3 color is your car?

4 A. I think it's like called stone or something, but it's really
5 sort of -- the best I could say is sort of like a light metallic
6 brown/gray kind of color.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. It's -- yeah.

9 Q. All right. Okay. So, at that particular point, after the
10 collision, the train is now stopped, you get out of your vehicle,
11 you cross over the tracks. Is that correct?

12 A. Yes, ma'am.

13 Q. Okay. And then, that's when you see the two gentlemen lying
14 on the ground.

15 A. Right.

16 Q. Was the passenger door open or closed?

17 A. The passenger door -- I'm trying to think of the orientation
18 of the cab. I think it was the passenger door that was on the
19 south side, so away from the track, and it was open.

20 Q. Okay. So, and you also said that at that particular point
21 the two gentlemen were unconscious and unresponsive on the ground.
22 And you said that the driver looked like he was also unconscious
23 behind the wheel?

24 A. Well, I wouldn't say that he was the driver. I don't know if
25 he was the driver or not. All I know was that there was a man in

1 the cab slumped over. And he was actually more towards the
2 passenger side.

3 Q. Oh, okay. So, he was like laying across the seats towards
4 the passenger side?

5 A. It was almost like if you imagine if you're just sitting in a
6 regular seat but like you had fallen asleep and just sort of
7 slumped forward.

8 Q. Okay. All right. Was there anything that -- of particular
9 note about that gentleman? Could you see was he -- did he have a
10 beard or was there something unusual about what he was wearing
11 that struck you as far as --

12 A. No.

13 Q. -- being able to identify him?

14 A. I'm not sure.

15 Q. Okay. That's fine. So then, at that particular point you
16 then -- you called 911. After you called 911, you then approached
17 the train. You were there for a minute or two. Did anybody from
18 the train actually speak with you?

19 A. Yes. I spoke to a number of people. I couldn't, I couldn't
20 necessarily tell you all the people I spoke to. I can tell you
21 three, I can tell you three people specifically that I did speak
22 to.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. So, let me just -- the first person I spoke to, let's say, at
25 length was -- other than, you know, just sort of responders, me

1 trying to give, you know, information of what I saw but more like
2 a statement.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. So, I gave a statement to [REDACTED]
5 [REDACTED]
6 [REDACTED]

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. The second person I spoke to -- let me see. [REDACTED]
9 [REDACTED]
10 [REDACTED]
11 [REDACTED]

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And then, I spoke -- I can't remember which one because they
14 didn't have cards, but -- and I didn't have something to write it
15 down with at the time, but I did speak to an Albemarle County
16 police officer.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And gave a verbal statement. Subsequently, I gave a written
19 statement to an Officer Delong (ph.), and I gave it to him the
20 next day I believe.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And then, I am -- I do -- I wrote down one other person I
23 talked to. So, there was an Amtrak -- he identified himself as
24 David Torres, T-O-R-R-E-S, and he identified himself as an Amtrak
25 Train Master.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. So, those were the four people that I know I spoke to and
3 tried to recount --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- you know, details of what occurred. You know, obviously,
6 I also spoke, you know, spoke to some first responders and I know
7 some of the -- I probably spoke to maybe a congress person or two
8 who I know were physicians. I mean, I couldn't tell you who they
9 were. And some, you know, EMT and maybe some other, some other
10 police people that were, you know, in sort of -- like I said, in
11 the sort of black police tactical kind of gear.

12 Q. Got you. So, let me ask you a question. Do you, do you
13 frequent that area?

14 A. I have been -- for the past maybe six weeks to two months,
15 I've been trying to go on hikes every day over there, so I am --
16 I've gone there frequently over that period.

17 Q. So, you frequently use that crossing?

18 A. I have gone through that crossing quite a number of times in
19 that -- in the last two months, yes.

20 Q. Okay. Have you ever noted anything unusual with the crossing
21 as far as, for example, the gates not working or the lights not
22 working?

23 A. No, I have not witnessed that personally.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. I know I had seen some reporting about that, but me

1 personally I had not seen that.

2 Q. Okay. Is it -- would it be correct to say that from your
3 position prior to the crash you had a clear view of the
4 approaching train?

5 A. So, in the last seconds I did, but you can't see very far
6 down from where I -- eastbound down the track from where the train
7 was coming. You can't see it until it gets very close.

8 Q. All right.

9 A. There's trees, brush in the way.

10 Q. All right. Did the train sound its horn before approaching
11 the crossing?

12 A. I believe that I heard it once or twice. I'm sure that I
13 heard it. I couldn't -- I'm not 100 percent sure whether I heard
14 it once or twice, but I know I heard it.

15 Q. Okay. So, you said that after the other gentleman exited the
16 truck, a second person arrived on the scene. Do you know who that
17 person was?

18 A. He -- at some point I got his name being -- his name was
19 Chris and he said he lived in a house I think on the same side as
20 the track maybe -- I think he said four houses down, so away from
21 the crossing.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. That's the best information I could give you. And he also
24 indicated to me that he had seen the train maybe at another -- you
25 know, on an earlier part of Railroad Avenue and maybe had been

1 sort of tracking near it, but he was not there at the time of the
2 crash, or at least that's what he indicated to me.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And he certainly did not arrive until, you know, those -- you
5 know, certainly a few minutes after as I was attending to people.

6 Q. All right.

7 A. Or, you know, or -- not attending to people, but -- you know.

8 Q. I understand.

9 A. Understand the situation.

10 Q. Okay. Did the -- the gentleman that actually eventually got
11 out of the cab of the truck, did you ever -- did you have a chance
12 to actually speak to him or hear him talk?

13 A. I did not. The first person who was with that gentleman was
14 this person, Chris.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And I think he and then the local EMT ambulance were probably
17 -- I think they were the first person to attend to that guy.

18 Q. Okay. All right. And at no time did the other two gentlemen
19 actually speak or move?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Not while I was viewing them.

23 Q. Okay. All right. Is there anything you think I should have
24 asked you and I didn't ask you or do you have anything else you
25 want to add in regards to this?

1 A. Yeah. I think the only thing I could say maybe is, at least
2 as best I remember, it seemed that the, you know, the garbage
3 truck was like, like I said, sort of just centered over the rails.
4 And it also just seemed oriented, you know, sort of straight with
5 the road.

6 Q. Um-hum.

7 A. So, it wasn't, you know, crooked per se in any way, it was
8 just sort of, you know, over the track and straight ahead, as best
9 I could see.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. But besides that, no, I think, you know, that's the best
12 witness I could provide to what I saw.

13 Q. Well, we certainly do appreciate all the help. What I always
14 tell people is if you think of something else later on, please
15 feel free to give me a call back. Even if you think it's small
16 and insignificant, I'd rather you tell me and you'll never -- you
17 never can tell what information you can come up with.

18 [REDACTED]
19 [REDACTED]
20 [REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q. All right. Okay. All right. And again, this gentleman, Chris, who told you that he lives approximately four houses away from the crossing, was the next person to arrive on the scene.

A. Yeah. I think the -- the only two people who arrived on the scene that I, you know, saw or got a name from was this gentleman, Chris. And then there was another lady, I think her name -- because I think she ended up doing a statement for the, for the county police, the Albemarle County police. I seem to remember her telling them her name was Lynn Holmstead (ph.). And she was a -- and she had said she was a nurse.

Q. Okay.

A. And that she lived in the neighborhood that was to the south, so it wasn't on the track side but on the other side of that road

--

Q. All right.

1 A. -- a few houses away. She had said she heard the crash and
2 came up. But I didn't necessarily see her doing anything, but I
3 know she was probably, she was probably near the second -- you
4 know, the -- besides Chris and myself, but, you know, another
5 early arrival of the few arrivals I saw from, you know, people
6 hearing and coming up because --

7 Q. Do you actually remember seeing her when she arrived?

8 A. I can't say that I really have a lot of recollection around
9 that. I just know that I was definitely by myself for a few
10 minutes, and then I remember Chris with that guy who had gotten
11 out of the, you know, who had gotten out of the cab because I was
12 just shocked he had gotten out of the cab, I couldn't believe it.

13 Q. What kind of injuries did he have?

14 A. Well, like I said, he was, you know, at least initially, not
15 -- he did not appear to be conscious. He was motionless in the
16 cab. I think there was some bleeding maybe up towards his head.
17 Other than that, I couldn't, I couldn't tell you for sure.

18 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right. Okay. Well, again, Mr.
19 Thompson, thank you very, very much for helping us out in this
20 investigation.

21 MR. THOMPSON: Sure, sure.

22 MS. HARLEY: And certainly, the NTSB being a public agency,
23 what we do is once we finish our investigation we actually publish
24 our findings on a public website. You will, you will not be
25 mentioned. Normally we just say that a witness said kind of --

1 that kind of situation.

2 MR. THOMPSON: Sure.

3 MS. HARLEY: But if you're at all interested in the outcome
4 of our investigation, you can certainly find it on the Internet,
5 so.

6 MR. THOMPSON: Okay.

7 MS. HARLEY: But it'll probably take -- it will definitely
8 take months for us to sort all of this out. So, again, thank you
9 very much, sir. I know I've taken up a lot of your time.

10 MR. THOMPSON: No, that's quite all right. And, you know, it
11 just looked to me like a very sad accident and I'm, you know, so
12 sad for the people who got killed and hurt, but I was also, you
13 know, really just glad that the train didn't derail any more than,
14 you know, I guess ultimately the engine derailing because I'm sure
15 it could have been a lot worse, so.

16 MS. HARLEY: Yes, sir.

17 MR. THOMPSON: But, all right.

18 MS. HARLEY: All right.

19 MR. THOMPSON: Well, thank you so much. Thank you very much,
20 Ms. Harley. I appreciate your work.

21 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right, sir. Thank you.

22 MR. THOMPSON: Okay. Bye.

23 MS. HARLEY: Bye-bye. Interview concluded 5:00 p.m.

24 (Whereupon, at 5:00 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

25

CERTIFICATE

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


IN THE MATTER OF: COLLISION OF AMTRAK SPECIAL TRAIN
 P0923 31 AT THE HIGHWAY-RAIL GRADE
 CROSSING AT LANETOWN ROAD IN
 CROZET, VIRGINIA, JANUARY 31, 2018
 Interview of Jeffrey Thompson

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY18MH005

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

DATE: February 5, 2018

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.


Charlene Brown
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

COLLISION OF AMTRAK SPECIAL TRAIN *

P0923 31 AT THE HIGHWAY-RAIL GRADE * Accident No.: HWY18MH005

CROSSING AT LANETOWN ROAD IN *

CROZET, VIRGINIA, JANUARY 31, 2018 *

* * * * *

Interview of: BENNY LAYNE

Via Telephone

Tuesday,
February 13, 2018

APPEARANCE:

SHERYL HARLEY, Highway Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

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I N T E R V I E W

(3:23 p.m.)

1 MS. HARLEY: Okay. Mr. Layne, can you hear me?

2 MR. LAYNE: Yeah, I can.

3 MS. HARLEY: Okay, all right, thank you very much, sir, for
4 calling back.

INTERVIEW OF BENNY LAYNE

5 BY MS. HARLEY:

6 Q. I talked to your brother, Robert, and I understand that you
7 have some information about that crossing?

8 A. I really don't have nothing to say about it no.

9 Q. No?

10 A. I don't have, (indiscernible). I did not, don't know what
11 happened. I ain't got a clue.

12 Q. Oh, no, no. I'm not talking about the accident. One of your
13 neighbors said that on Monday, the gates were down and you told
14 her that there was something wrong with the gate and you went
15 around the gate.

16 A. I told them I have seen them not, I have never seen them not
17 come down with something's coming. But I have seen them down most
18 of the time within, you know, it don't take long, the railroad,
19 I've seen them down, you know, not going up. But the railroad
20 always over there are pretty quick to fix it.

21 Q. They're always pretty quick to fix it?

22 A. Yes, ma'am, and you've, once in a while you see somebody up
23

1 there, they working on it.

2 Q. Oh, so the crash occurred on Wednesday. On Monday, did they
3 have a problem with the gates?

4 A. Yeah, I'm really not 100 percent for sure, so I couldn't say.

5 Q. Okay. Did you by any chance speak to a woman in a car who
6 was stopped and -- at the gate -- and you tell her, and on Monday
7 and asked, and told her that there was something wrong with the
8 gates and told her to go around? Do you remember that?

9 A. Not really. I'm remember a day or two they wouldn't -- one
10 or two days before that they wasn't working quite right and, but
11 they was there with -- you know, later on it wasn't that long they
12 was already fixing it. Like I said, I've seen them a few times do
13 that, not many times, but I have seen them down but I haven't
14 never seen them not come down.

15 Q. Okay. Do you remember the last time where the gates were
16 down, and they were down and there wasn't a train coming?

17 A. Well, to be honest with you, I mean, I'm not going to sit
18 here and lie, but, I think it was a day or two before that. I
19 don't know if it was one day or two days.

20 I thought, I mean, I think they was down either they had
21 (indiscernible) but I'm pretty sure, I think they was down a day
22 or two before that. But they was here in the matter of time, like
23 you said, they're usually here pretty quick to fix it.

24 Q. Oh, okay, so they came out that day. Do you remember if that
25 was in the morning or the afternoon?

1 A. You know, I don't have a clue. I don't have a clue, I don't
2 know if was early, or late, middle day, I just never paid much
3 attention to it when it does it.

4 Q. Okay, all right, so do you know how long the gates had been
5 doing that where they come down, the railroad has to come out and
6 fix them?

7 A. I really don't.

8 Q. No? Have you ever called the railroad to let them know that
9 the gates were down?

10 A. No, I haven't, I really haven't.

11 Q. No? How --

12 A. I don't know how they'd know but usually someone up there are
13 pretty quick, he knows. I don't know how they'd know it. I just,
14 I don't know when they do it or how they do it. Someone must
15 because they're usually, you know, pretty quick to fixing it,
16 because you see them down and it isn't that later you see, you
17 know, a truck out there.

18 Q. Oh, okay, and so, you think that the last time was a couple
19 of days before, is that correct?

20 A. Yes, ma'am.

21 Q. Okay, all right, and are you aware of any of the neighbors
22 that had problems with the, with that crossing?

23 A. Well, the same thing I've seen, I reckon, you know, if it did
24 it. You know, other people around here got to see it too, not
25 only me. I know other people that said it. I wasn't the only one.

1 Q. So when the gates actually go down and how long do they go
2 down and then eventually just kind of go back up on their own, or
3 do they go down and stay down?

4 A. You know, I mean, I guess they go down and stay down, as far
5 as I know. I don't know. I presume down and then I see somebody
6 up there, you know, so I really couldn't tell you. Usually
7 someone is up there fixing, you know, I never paid any attention,
8 seemed to go back up, I never.

9 I just know I seen them stay down, nothing coming, I mean,
10 that day and then the first thing you know you see a railroad man
11 up there.

12 Q. Okay, all right, so, but the railroad is usually pretty quick
13 about going out and fixing it?

14 A. Oh, yeah, like I said, I mean, within if I don't see, you
15 know, I don't know how they'd know so quick but they're usually up
16 there quick.

17 Q. Okay, so how many times in a month would you say that this
18 happens and the railroad has to go out?

19 A. I haven't even saying it happened once a month. I don't
20 think it happened once a month or not because I haven't, you know,
21 they've been up there probably, it isn't a once a month or nothing
22 like, and I don't think nothing like that.

23 I knew I'd be, you know, I'll be saying wrong, something
24 isn't working right as to once a month, you know? And that'd be
25 right bad if it was once a month. And I don't think it's no once

1 a month or nothing like that.

2 Q. Okay, how long have you lived in the area?

3 A. I've been here 25 years.

4 Q. Twenty-five years, good for you. So in that 25 years, how
5 long do you, how many times do you think you've personally have
6 seen those gates go down like that?

7 A. I really don't know. I never paid no attention, it isn't
8 many. I know that there'd been one, you know, but there's --
9 yeah, I really couldn't tell you. I wouldn't want to guess. I
10 really wouldn't guess.

11 But like I said, you talk about, I'm pretty sure, I don't
12 think it's no once a month or nothing like that. If I do, I'd
13 remember it, I mean, I'd remember that pretty easy. I don't think
14 it's not once a month or nothing.

15 Q. Do you see a lot of people driving around those gates?

16 A. No, I have seen, you know, sat there and sat there, you know,
17 I have seen, yes. Not a whole lot because you haven't, I haven't,
18 no, nothing, no, I haven't hardly never seen nobody hardly go
19 through, no, not that I can think of. Not when they weren't, you
20 know.

21 Q. Okay, does that ever happen two days in a row or is it
22 usually like once and then --

23 A. No, I never seen it, I mean, I never seen it. No, I never
24 seen it, no, it was like there was really no days in a row because
25 I haven't seen it.

1 Q. Okay. In that area, what types of trains usually goes
2 through?

3 A. It goes the Amtraks and the other ones. The Amtraks and,
4 I'll be honest, them Amtrak, excuse me, I mean, it isn't the, they
5 said it's 60, I mean, I heard, almost 60 miles an hour. And I
6 mean by the time, when my kids were growing up, man, but it scared
7 me when I hear one time by the time I got up there it was gone.

8 I mean, with us here, I don't mind the regular train but them
9 Amtraks go so fast, scares you. I mean, my kid's 37-years-old and
10 it don't worry me much now but when they was little, I'd be
11 sitting in here and if I'd hear it coming, by the time I run up in
12 the yard they up there and the train's gone. I mean, that train's
13 fast, you know.

14 Q. Do you get a lot of freight trains through there?

15 A. Oh, yeah. Yeah, they're not that fast, they long but they
16 not fast.

17 Q. Yeah, right, so normally you get freight trains and every
18 once in a while the Amtraks?

19 A. Well, the Amtrak's no problem. The Amtraks go through about
20 every day. Well, she said Wednesdays and Fridays. She kind of
21 goes through Wednesdays and Fridays, I didn't know anything
22 (indiscernible) but when they go, they moving.

23 The other ones don't bother me, just the Amtrak, which, now
24 since they did this they've been moving slow. I mean, that's the
25 way I wished it went all the time.

1 Q. So is there anything you think I should have asked you and I
2 forgot to ask you about this?

3 A. No, that's all I know, like I said, I just tell the truth.
4 That's all I knew and like I said, you know, I mean, I haven't
5 seen them many time and that time they was but they usually up
6 there real quick, but like I told them, I haven't never seen them
7 not come down when a train coming. I Think people haven't heard
8 of them not coming down or nothing like that, I don't know, they,
9 that's about all I could tell you.

10 Q. Well, thank you for calling me back. I wanted to speak to
11 someone that lived in the area that can give me some idea --

12 A Well, see I was sitting in here. I heard it when it
13 happened.

14 Q. Oh, you did?

15 A. I was at -- huh?

16 Q. You heard it?

17 A. Oh, yeah, I was sitting here eating a biscuit and a bacon
18 sandwich and I seen the Amtrak stop and I didn't pay no attention
19 to it. I said, you know, I said, "(Indiscernible), the darn
20 engine done blew." That's all I thought. And about five minutes
21 later, I wanted to, I seen people running down the road. I didn't
22 even go look when I heard it. I'm so used to it, you know, I
23 thought it was an engine blew.

24 Because I was sitting there, I could see the train stopping.
25 No, I didn't see nothing in front of it. I seen the spot where it

1 went by my window and I sat in it five to ten minutes before I
2 even went up there. And then after I seen people running on the
3 road, I looked up there and saw all of it. But, I sort of, if you
4 believe it or not, like at right now I'm so I don't even hear them
5 going through. You know, I'm not that far from it. I don't even
6 hear them when they go through at night. I guess 47 years, I got
7 used to them, you know?

8 And then when I first came over, I can remember I jump up,
9 thought they was running through the house and, I mean, now I
10 don't even hear them. Yes, ma'am.

11 Q. So did you talk to anybody from the train crew or the truck
12 driver that day?

13 A. The train crew or the truck driver?

14 Q. Yeah, the day of the crash?

15 A. No, I didn't even know, I never talked to no truck driver or
16 nothing. Oh, what truck driver? (Indiscernible)?

17 Q. The trash truck that got hit.

18 A. No, I didn't even know, they told me there was three. They
19 said he was out running around. I thought it was two, someone
20 said, no, someone said the driver was, is doing good.
21 That's what I've been hearing.

22 Q. Yeah, that's correct. Yeah, he's alive.

23 A. Yeah, I heard he was doing good. See, I never seen him,
24 someone, I seen the two, I didn't have no idea it was three until
25 someone told me it was three. Yeah, they said he was doing good

1 but I just don't, I haven't got a clue what happened. I don't
2 have, I don't even have a clue. I don't, I mean, that was heck of
3 a truck and, you know, I got a feeling like they said, he knows
4 what happened. If he tell the truth, he knows. He knows it.

5 I think he should know what happened. He should know what
6 happened if tell he knows, but I don't see how it could happen,
7 you know? I don't see how something like that could happen in a
8 way myself. I don't know, don't halfway make sense to me. It
9 don't halfway make sense to me but I know I guess he should know
10 what happened.

11 Q. Yeah, did you call 9-1-1?

12 A. No, like I said, no, I seen people running down the road. [REDACTED]

13 [REDACTED]

14 [REDACTED] I didn't go up, probably a good eight
15 or ten minutes after I heard the noise but I just seen all the
16 people going on the road and looking through the scene, all rest
17 up in the field.

18 I didn't have no idea what just happened I'm so used to
19 hearing them because I don't, you know, I might have seen them a
20 couple of times, engines don't stop down the hill, you know, over
21 20 something years. Just got so used to it, so, I didn't pay no
22 attention to it. Didn't pay a bit of attention to it, just, but
23 like I said, I did tell them it was a day or two -- I don't know
24 if it was the day before or a day before. It was within two days,
25 I know they was down and no train, and then I seen the railroad

1 men up there (indiscernible) later.

2 That's all I can say, nothing (indiscernible) I just, that's
3 all like I, that's all I know about any of it. And I know I'm not
4 the only one that said, you know, when people asked, there's other
5 people that's saying that.

6 Q. Right, you're right. So the railroad men that you saw, is
7 that from the Buckingham Branch or did you see someone from CSX?

8 A. I think most of them I seen Buckingham Branch.

9 Q. It was Buckingham Branch?

10 A. Yeah. I think about all of them I seen Buckingham Branch.

11 Q. And you saw them, after you saw the gates come down that day?
12 You actually saw them come out that same day?

13 A. Oh, yeah, I'm pretty sure. I'm pretty sure. I reckon it be
14 them. I thought I seen a truck over there. (indiscernible), you
15 know, I wasn't paying no attention. Usually if I was seeing the
16 other, now I can't say I did or didn't. I can't 100% say that.
17 Because all I know they was down and I know I have seen them,
18 well, all the other times that's what, I mean, I didn't pay no
19 attention. I just knew, I know they was working later on.

20 So I took it that they came after, I mean, I thought I seen
21 them but maybe I didn't. I don't know. I'd rather thought, I
22 just knowed they was down and, I mean I know they stayed down a
23 little bit a while. I don't know how long, I just left, went on
24 down the road and left.

25 Q. Did you have to go around the, did you drive around the gate

1 when it was down?

2 A. I don't want to answer that. I'm not going to lie to you, I
3 did.

4 Q. You did? Okay, that's fine.

5 A. I mean, no use lying.

6 Q. That's fine, you did, no there's no problem.

7 A. I mean, I haven't doing it no more. I'm not, I'm going to be
8 honest with you, I won't do it no more. I've got it up to where
9 I'm to be honest, there's a couple cars, I got up there and
10 started, and I mean, I'm not doing it no more but I motioned a
11 couple of them around.

12 Isn't no use me lying about it. I mean, I learned my lesson
13 after that, I'm going the other way, but, I mean, I did, I told
14 you earlier I did, but there's no use lying. I did motion, I
15 motioned three or four cars around it. But that's my last time
16 doing that after seeing what happened here, but, I've been quite
17 honest, I did. And, but I, but I don't lie.

18 Q. Okay, well, again, thank you very much, we're just trying to
19 take a look and see if there's something else that needs to be
20 fixed as far as the crash was concerned. And one of the issues
21 was that some of your neighbors were complaining or concerned
22 about the gate and that was just the only thing I wanted to talk
23 to you about.

24 A. Well, I predict it could happen anywhere, I mean, that could
25 happen anywhere. I mean, I know that isn't the only place that

1 done it because see they hadn't even been there that long and that
2 could happen anywhere. But like I told them, I have never seen
3 them not come down.

4 Q. You said they didn't have in that long?

5 A. How many years? I don't know how many years they put them
6 out there. Hasn't that many years, hasn't been that many years.
7 They wasn't here when I came here. Maybe, I mean, well, it could
8 have been, how many years has it been? Five years? Four? I
9 don't know but it hasn't been that many years (indiscernible)
10 before. There wasn't, I mean, I don't know how many years. But
11 to be honest with you, I reckon, I don't want the other places
12 have seen it, just like I seen that here before.

13 You don't hear, you know, I've been (indiscernible) problem
14 with them. I mean, these just not like said, they haven't, I
15 mean, like I said, I know no where's near even once a month,
16 nothing like that, you know? It might be twice a year, because I
17 don't know. Once a year, twice a year, I don't know, but I know
18 if it, now if it be happening every month I'd recognize that. I
19 don't see something like that, but, where you located at now? I
20 seen that phone number.

21 Q. Yeah, I'm located in Washington, D.C.

22 A. Washington, D.C.?

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. It was people from Washington here that day.

25 Q. Yeah, we all came down.

1 A. Oh, you did?

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. Were you aren't today. One of the reporters, did you see my
4 brother Cay (phonetic) up in the field?

5 Q. Yes.

6 A. One of the reporters, you aren't the one that came up there
7 and asked me what the name of my goat is, are you?

8 Q. No, that wasn't me.

9 A. No, I'm joking with you. But there's some reporters came up
10 to me and wanted to know what the name of my goat was. That
11 tickled me. You know, I hate to say it (indiscernible).

12 Q. What?

13 A. I didn't meet a single person that of everybody that wrote,
14 everybody was as nice as can be.

15 Q. Well, that's good.

16 A. Usually I have to tell everybody I've met, but, you know how
17 many people there was, but it was the nicest bunch of people, you
18 know, I mean everybody, reporters, police, everybody. Everybody
19 was nice as can be. I had to say that.

20 Q. Well, that's good. I'm glad of that, so.

21 A. Everybody was just as nice as can be up there, all of them.

22 Q. I certainly do appreciate your talking to me, sir.

23 A. Well, she told me you called up on and I told her I really
24 didn't want to get involved with it, but like I told her, I could
25 do is tell the truth. I always do.

1 Q. Like I said, this was about making it safe and if there's
2 something that we can do to make it safer, that's what we want to
3 do.

4 A. Well, I don't, the only thing, you in with the Safety Board
5 and all?

6 Q. Yes.

7 A. Well, the only thing I seen, see, I mean, I don't know, I
8 said we'll wait and see, but see they put the box on the other
9 side of the road now, and so when you're going towards, you got to
10 see it yourself to come here. But what I'm scared is going to
11 happen and I don't know, not that anything will work, but I
12 believe, see, you can't see towards Crozet?

13 Q. Yeah?

14 A. And if you pull up there and stop and the next person don't
15 stop, they're going to ram you in the back. They put the box up,
16 everybody -- I've had several people come by here and complain to
17 me about that. I mean, you have to come in and see it yourself.

18 When you're going from my house to Crozet, you really can't
19 see towards Crozet if you don't, if the arms is down you're fine,
20 but if you get up there and stop, I've seen, one he was asking,
21 most of them get up there and stopping now. And I'm scared. I
22 think sooner or later somebody's going to run, you know, one's
23 going to stop and one isn't going to stop.

24 Q. I understand.

25 A. So I told my wife, I come back from Crozet and go across it,

1 but I think I'm going to stop going across it this way because of
2 that.

3 Q. Oh, I see.

4 A. Because, the boxes make the road, you can't see towards
5 Crozet. You can't see 10 feet. And you notice cars now, a lot of
6 them the fence is up but they're getting up there and stopping.

7 And so one, don't stop, then they'll run into it. But you had
8 to see it, you know. You have to come here and see it. I'm, you
9 hope it don't but I say that's, there's a good chance happening.

10 Q. Well, you know, at that crossing there's a big blue sign
11 right there that is the number to the railroad. You can always
12 call them and ask them about it.

13 A. Well, I've told the people, I don't know what I'm doing, but
14 I've told them whenever they was working on it. I told them. I
15 said, "You know, you knock that place (phonetic) down." I told
16 them I've got a place they can put the dirt if they do it. And
17 they said they'd tell them, you know?

18 Q. Right.

19 A. He said even if one, one of them told me, he said he was
20 wondering why, you know, people is stopping there instead of going
21 there. They should stop going that way. And I'm like you, I want
22 it as safe as I can have it.

23 That's the way I am, I mean, I would feel better if you could
24 see down it. See you coming back, you can see up toward B.Good
25 (ph.) but when you look toward Crozet, you can't see nowhere. You

1 get, you both got to stop. I mean going to Crozet.

2 And I wish, but I told them I said, "You know, unless you all
3 have got dirt, I've got a place up behind the house you all can
4 dump all the dirt you want." And not get (indiscernible) so
5 people can see down through there. (Indiscernible) You know, you
6 all don't want that it's not, I mean, but I'm as good some people
7 get up there and they're going to think and instead of going,
8 they're going to a stop. And if someone's right up on them,
9 there's going to be a person thought they hit them in the back,
10 we'll wait and see what I'm, I have to quit saying something.

11 Q. Well, one of the things we can do is we can ask the railroad
12 to take a look at it and see if maybe they can knock that hill
13 down a little bit so you --

14 A. See, what I'm saying is some peoples in this area, I mean,
15 you know more about the safety (phonetic) than I do. You know, if
16 you were in this area again, it'd be good to just drive by there
17 and see what I'm talking about.

18 Q. Okay, I certainly will do that. I think --

19 A. And they're putting all these railroad ties, I see them up
20 there all day. They need to put all them railroad ties up to
21 through there. I mean, they've got a pile of them put in.

22 Q. They're working on the tracks now?

23 A. They've been working on it every day. They've been working
24 on it every day. I think they got their work cut out. I think
25 where that thing came off the track?

1 Q. Yeah?

2 A. Say they cut some of the ties up. Look like they got, I
3 don't know, 100, 150, 200 ties up to where they've been working on
4 every day since it happened. And I think a train's coming because
5 he's got his flares up. I think a train's coming now. But anyhow,
6 yeah, I just want to call back.

7 MS. HARLEY: All right, well, thank you very, very much for
8 calling me back. I certainly do appreciate that.

9 MR. LAYNE: Well, you're welcome.

10 MS. HARLEY: All right, sir, you have a good evening.

11 MR. LAYNE: You too, ma'am.

12 MS. HARLEY: Bye-bye.

13 MR. HARLEY: Bye.

14 MS. HARLEY: Okay, call ended at 3:48 p.m., that was
15 Mr. Layne, and Mr. Layne called from [REDACTED]

16 (Whereupon, at 3:48 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached telephone call from witness Mr. Benny Layne to Ms. Sheryl Harley of the NTSB

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

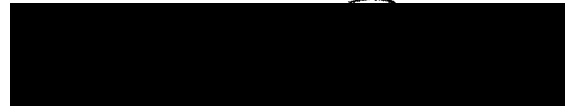
IN THE MATTER OF: COLLISION OF AMTRAK SPECIAL TRAIN
P0923 31 AT THE HIGHWAY-RAIL GRADE
CROSSING AT LANETOWN ROAD IN
CROZET, VIRGINIA, JANUARY 31, 2018
Interview of Benny Layne

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY18MH005

PLACE: Via Telephone

DATE: February 13, 2018

was held according to the record, and that this is the original, complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed to the best of my skill and ability.



Romona Phillips
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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COLLISION OF AMTRAK SPECIAL TRAIN
P0923 31 AT THE HIGHWAY-RAIL GRADE
CROSSING AT LANETOWN ROAD IN
CROZET, VIRGINIA, JANUARY 31, 2018

Accident No.: HWY18MH005

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Interview of: VICKIE GRESGE and
THOMAS GRESGE



Crozet, Virginia

Thursday,
February 1, 2018

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Highway Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E XITEMPAGE

Interview of Vickie Gresge and Thomas Gresge:

By Ms. Harley

5

I N T E R V I E W

(5:01 p.m.)

1
2
3 MS. HARLEY: All right. So it is Thursday, February 1st, and
4 it's 5:01 p.m. And I'm in the home of Mrs. Vickie Gresge?

5 MRS. GRESGE: Yep.

6 MS. HARLEY: Can you spell it for me to make sure --

7 MRS. GRESGE: Sure.

8 MS. HARLEY: -- at least I spell it right.

9 MRS. GRESGE: G-R-E-S-G-E.

10 MS. HARLEY: G-E, okay. And Thomas, you were also out there?

11 MR. GRESGE: Yeah.

12 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right, great. And this is 6061 Gala?

13 MS. GRESGE: That's right.

14 MS. HARLEY: Okay. All right. Is that a road or a --

15 MS. GRESGE: Court.

16 MS. HARLEY: Court. Gala Court. Okay. So, real quick, so
17 part of my job is that I look at what happened and I'm supposed to
18 figure out if there's some way to either prevent it, make it more
19 survivable, or lessen the severity of what happened. And one of
20 the things that we do is we talk to the witnesses who saw it, who
21 saw what was going on, who sees maybe problems and other
22 situations that maybe the law enforcement and the fire department
23 that are too close to the situation to see.

24 Also, one of the things we ask you about is, you live near
25 this crossing, do you have any issues with the crossing, have you

1 ever had any problems with the railroad, that kind of situation.
2 We're looking at is this a troublesome crossing, is there a
3 problem with this crossing, is there a problem with people
4 constantly not paying attention to the lights or to the gates, do
5 the trains come around too fast. And then ultimately we want to
6 talk to you and your neighbor, if you've had any contact with
7 either the people that were on the train or the gentlemen that
8 were in the truck.

9 INTERVIEW OF VICKIE GRESGE

10 BY MS. HARLEY:

11 Q. So, I guess what, how we'll start this is, is that why don't
12 you tell me what happened. How did you become involved in this?

13 A. I was sitting there and he was sitting on the couch because
14 he was home from school sick. And we heard the explosion, I
15 guess, that wasn't an explosion but the, a loud noise. And then
16 we both looked up and we saw the train going past and a bunch of,
17 it looked like gravel flying around. And I thought, in my mind, I
18 thought they must have had like big rocks on the track or
19 something that they hit, that maybe some kid put some rocks up
20 there. That's what I was thinking and all the chickens were
21 running. And then we went outside to see closer and we realized
22 that the truck had been hit because it was on this side of the
23 tracks. And so we went outside and I had my phone in my hand so I
24 dialed 9-1-1 and, what happened after that -- I think I left out
25 the gate and trudged through the weeds and went out towards the

1 car. And there was a lady sitting at the corner there, right at
2 the corner of this road right here --

3 MR. GRESGE: Orchard.

4 MS. GRESGE: Orchard.

5 BY MS. HARLEY:

6 Q. Is that Orchard?

7 A. Do you remember what kind of car she had?

8 MR. GRESGE: I don't know what it is.

9 MS. GRESGE: I picture a maroon --

10 MR. GRESGE: I don't even know if there was a person there.
11 I didn't see her.

12 MS. GRESGE: Anyhow, she rolled down her window as I was
13 running up, and I said we need to get some help, we need to get
14 some help, these people are hurt. And she just stared at me
15 blankly. And I ran up and so she, I think she saw it. And I
16 recognized her but I couldn't tell you who she was because I only
17 recognized just from driving passed her.

18 BY MS. HARLEY:

19 Q. So, she's kind of local you think?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. I've seen her before just in another, you know, passing her
23 in a car.

24 Q. Got it.

25 A. And then I got close and as soon as I was about ten feet away

1 I saw how mangled they were and I thought I don't have any medical
2 experience I can't help them, so I came back to get, to check at
3 that house because she's a nurse. And I knocked on the door and
4 her daughter answered and I said, is your mom here? And she said,
5 she didn't -- and I said, there's people hurt, we need to get
6 help. And she ran out the door with me and came -- now, I don't
7 know if she's a nurse or not.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. She didn't end up doing much except standing back with us and
10 then she left. But she might be. And then my neighbor here, when
11 I came back to get her, I told him, he was sitting in the back
12 yard, and I said go get Lynn (ph.) and she wasn't home but she
13 pulled up in her car right at the same minute. She was picking up
14 her baby from a neighbor. And she saw it and ran over.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And she helped try to give CPR for awhile. There was several
17 of them helping, taking turns. And I also know that my, our
18 neighbor who heard it and came out of her house, she's a minister,
19 and she ran closer to the scene thinking that maybe she could
20 help. She was out there with them a long time. She stayed with
21 the body for awhile and prayed for awhile.

22 Q. Did you happen to see the third gentleman in the, in the
23 truck?

24 A. You know, a police officer was asking me that, I, and I said,
25 I'm not sure if it's just a memory from people telling me or I

1 actually saw it. I do think I saw a person walking in a jacket
2 like that but it could have also been a first responder, like a
3 reflector jacket like they wear. So, I don't know. I think I
4 made it up in my mind later that I did see him, after we were all
5 talking because someone said he was walking and he looked like he
6 was obviously in better shape than the other two.

7 Q. Okay. And what's Lynn's last name?

8 A. Oldsman? Do you know how to spell it?

9 MR. GRESGE: Ohmstead.

10 MS. GRESGE: Oh, Ohmstead?

11 MR. GRESGE: Do you have your phone?

12 MS. GRESGE: Well, I know, but it might, I put that contact
13 in, like incorrect. It is --

14 BY MS. HARLEY:

15 Q. So, tell me about living here and the trains.

16 A. Quite honestly someone said, I don't know if they blew their
17 horn or not, and I wouldn't have noticed because I think by this
18 time occasionally I'll hear it but usually I don't even, it
19 doesn't register with me.

20 MR. GRESGE: I heard it.

21 MS. GRESGE: I didn't even think about the train until I
22 heard the, it hit.

23 BY MS. HARLEY:

24 Q. Did you see the gate or the light?

25 A. Well, that's the thing. When I finally noticed the gate was

1 down but that was a good half an hour after the accident. I asked
2 Thomas if he knew if he thought the gate was down, and he says, he
3 does think it was down.

4 MR. GRESGE: But that gate does tend to not work sometimes.
5 Like sometimes it goes down on its own, nothing happens and
6 sometimes the lights just go off or something like that. So, I,
7 that's the only, that's the only time I realize when it's not
8 working, but that's what I see sometimes.

9 MS. HARLEY: Does that happen a lot with that gate?

10 MR. GRESGE: Not a lot, like, once every two months but it's
11 usually not working for like a week. They finally fixed that.

12 MS. GRESGE: Oh, it's doing goofy stuff like going down?

13 MR. GRESGE: Yeah.

14 MS. GRESGE: You know, that's not when they're working on it?

15 MR. GRESGE: No. There's nobody there.

16 MS. GRESGE: Our neighbor who lives in that house, has been
17 hanging out there quite a bit, the bearded guy. He says that he
18 and his buddies have had to go around it. I had it down where
19 there's no train coming but I chickened out and went all the way
20 around.

21 BY MS. HARLEY:

22 Q. Okay. So, your other neighbor, do you know what his name is?
23 That also had an issue with the gate?

24 A. Do you know his name?

25 MR. GRESGE: I don't.

1 MS. GRESGE: What are his, do you know his grandkids names,
2 maybe they (indiscernible)?

3 MR. GRESGE: The two, I only know their first names.

4 MS. GRESGE: I should know.

5 BY MS. HARLEY:

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. But they told me a long time ago and I'm terrible with names
8 and I've been too embarrassed to ask them again.

9 Q. Okay. Okay. On this section of track, are the trains, are
10 they normally the fast passenger trains or are they a combination
11 of that and the slower trains.

12 A. I think it's, okay, I think it's to my, of my knowledge, I
13 think it's one afternoon Amtrak at around, I don't even know what
14 time, around 2:00, and then rest are all freight trains.

15 Q. Okay. How many trains a day do you think pass by here, just
16 on an average of --

17 A. A 24-hour period?

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. I hear like three in the middle of the night when I do hear
20 them. And if I were to guess, it would have to be a guess.

21 Q. Okay. Absolutely only a guess.

22 A. Five including the Amtrak.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. So eight all the way around.

25 Q. Okay.

1 INTERVIEW OF THOMAS GRESGE

2 BY MS. HARLEY:

3 Q. So, Thomas, what do you remember about all of this?

4 A. I don't, I don't remember seeing it, I just remember seeing
5 the big back trash thing fly off and all the trash, that's all I
6 really saw. And I just heard the loud boom and that's really all
7 I saw.8 Q. So, you heard the boom and then when you looked out you saw
9 the trash flying?10 A. Well, I was just starting to look up to go get something from
11 the kitchen then I heard the boom, and I just caught the glimpse
12 in my eye, and I just sort of saw it.

13 Q. Okay. So, you just saw something moving and --

14 A. Yeah, but I know it was trash --

15 Q. Okay, got it.

16 MS. GRESGE: Do we know which way it was traveling?

17 MR. GRESGE: This way.

18 MS. GRESGE: You think it was traveling this way? That's
19 what I thought too, but now I'm just --20 MR. GRESGE: Yeah because -- whenever, wherever the train
21 started to stop, and it was still going.22 MS. GRESGE: Oh the train was going this way but the trash
23 truck, was it coming over the tracks towards us or going that way?

24 MR. GRESGE: Probably going.

25 MS. GRESGE: See, I don't know.

1 MR. GRESGE: Well, I'm pretty sure it's our trash and we
2 already (indiscernible) trash, so it was probably still going that
3 way across.

4 INTERVIEW OF VICKIE GRESGE

5 BY MS. HARLEY:

6 Q. Did the trash truck actually come by and collect trash from
7 you?

8 A. They did but that was earlier and then I saw the trash men in
9 the other neighborhood because I took my dog for a run. And then
10 I don't know where they went after that. But they exited another
11 road.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And I know that when I came home from our run, I pulled our
14 garbage can up to the house and then I had time to take a shower
15 and sit at my desk and start working.

16 Q. When, did you ever see the guys on the truck as they were
17 collecting trash?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. Was there anyone on the back of the truck when they
20 were collecting trash?

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. Okay. How many people did you see on the back of the truck?

23 A. I saw two guys behind the truck. They were lifting two cans
24 at the same time but I don't know if there was a third one.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. He could have been in the truck though driving. Usually the
2 driver, usually it's two of them, the driver gets out and helps
3 and then the driver gets back in and the other guy hops on the
4 back. But they definitely usually, or they usually have someone
5 hanging on the back.

6 MR. GRESGE: I think two people were in the cab and one
7 person on the back, just the other person gets back in the cab.

8 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So, when do you get your trash picked up,
9 may I ask?

10 MS. GRESGE: Wednesday, usually mid morning.

11 MR. GRESGE: Nine.

12 MS. GRESGE: No. It's not that early, usually around 10:30.
13 But I know they do our, we have a business on Jarmans Gap and they
14 do, I think it's the same guys, it could be different guys, but I
15 think it's the same guys do it on Wednesday as well.

16 BY MS. HARLEY:

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. So, they must be going all over the place.

19 Q. All right. Did you have any contact with any of the
20 passengers on the train?

21 MR. GRESGE: Uh-uh.

22 BY MS. HARLEY:

23 Q. No, okay.

24 A. I do know that they came, several of them came out to come
25 help. They were dressed up in suits and it looked like they might

1 have been doctors or something.

2 Q. Okay, okay. So, from the time that you heard the boom, you
3 called 9-1-1 to the time that the fire department or someone
4 arrived, do you have a sense of how long that was?

5 A. So, the boom happened and it was probably 30 seconds later
6 when we called 9-1-1, right?

7 MR. GRESGE: I think it was like 15, you came up, right, like
8 were, you ran right there in the corner of the wall, and you
9 already dialed.

10 MS. GRESGE: Well, I started dialing out in the yard, so it
11 was about
12 10-15 seconds.

13 MR. GRESGE: Yeah.

14 MS. GRESGE: And then I ran over there, got close and saw
15 that they needed some medical help, ran back to my neighbors over
16 here, which probably took another minute or so, and then we came
17 back. So, probably, by then there were other people helping
18 already. Four minutes maybe.

19 BY MS. HARLEY:

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Four or five minutes.

22 Q. All right.

23 A. Pretty fast. And the strange thing was there were
24 helicopters --

25 MR. GRESGE: I think they were already there.

1 MS. GRESGE: -- already there before the EMTs were there.
2 Two helicopters.

3 MR. GRESGE: I saw helicopters before the crash.

4 MS. GRESGE: Which I'm assuming they were part of the
5 security for the train.

6 MR. GRESGE: Yeah. They were there before the crash even
7 happened, because I heard them.

8 MS. GRESGE: Oh, they were?

9 MR. GRESGE: Yeah.

10 MS. GRESGE: Really?

11 MR. GRESGE: Yeah.

12 BY MS. HARLEY:

13 Q. Okay. Before this one, this incident, do you, can you, can
14 you tell me when the last time there had been a problem where it,
15 has there ever been another crash at this, at this crossing that
16 you know of?

17 A. Not that I'm aware of.

18 MR. GRESGE: Since I have been living here, I haven't seen
19 one.

20 MS. GRESGE: I know that a person who was walking on the
21 train track got hit by the train, a couple years ago.

22 MR. GRESGE: That was over at Star Hill.

23 MS. GRESGE: That was, yeah, that was over by Star Hill.

24 BY MS. HARLEY:

25 Q. Okay. Let's see, all right. So, we're not really quite sure

1 what Lynn's last name is.

2 MR. GRESGE: Pretty sure it's Ohmstead.

3 BY MS. HARLEY:

4 Q. Ohmstead, okay. Do you have some sense of when you made your
5 9-1-1, was the call captured on your phone?

6 A. Yeah, I guess it is. Was it the 31st, no today's the --

7 Q. Today's the first.

8 A. Today's the first, so it was the 31st --

9 Q. 31st.

10 A. I guess it's not on my phone but I made it from this phone.

11 Q. Well, every once in awhile, that's not unusual, I was just
12 wondering. Every once in awhile 9-1-1 does not actually get
13 captured on your phone.

14 A. Okay.

15 Q. So, you make the call and it will disappear.

16 A. Although they know, because that officer called me today and
17 said you were the first 9-1-1 call-in.

18 Q. Yeah. It will capture on the police side but for whatever
19 reason phones don't store it.

20 A. Weird.

21 Q. Yeah. So, some phones do that and people say, I know I
22 called 9-1-1 and --

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. -- sure enough, it's just not on their phone. So, that's not
25 unusual. I was just wondering if yours happened to store it. And

1 I don't know why that happens with certain phones. Okay, so you
2 really don't, you've had some periodic experiences where, for
3 whatever reason, the gates go down but you really haven't had any
4 issue, per se, with this crossing here?

5 A. I haven't personally, except for that one time that I ended
6 up going back through town to come the other way just because it
7 was down and it wasn't going to come up.

8 Q. Okay. Do you know how long ago that was?

9 A. Maybe two years ago.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. What, but our neighbor across the street, he complained, he
12 said it happens quite a bit.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Because he's going back and forth with his trucks.

15 Q. The one where the, where the chickens are?

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Yeah, he's been in his golf course, cart, all day driving
19 around. I don't know, he's not out there anymore.

20 Q. Has anyone, to your knowledge, ever made a complaint to the
21 railroad about the gate problem or --

22 A. Not to my knowledge.

23 Q. -- or to the police department or anything?

24 A. Not to my knowledge.

25 Q. Okay. Do you have some sense of the speed the train was

1 going when you saw it?

2 A. Ninety miles an hour?

3 MR. GRESGE: When I saw it, it was already starting to stop.

4 MS. GRESGE: Yeah, you're right. But that's how, it seems
5 like they go really fast. And I honestly don't know how to guess.

6 BY MS. HARLEY:

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. But if I saw a car going that fast -- no, less than that,
9 60 miles an hour?

10 MR. GRESGE: I didn't see it because it's across the street.

11 MS. GRESGE: But I mean, oh excuse me, when it crashed. It
12 was, it slowed down really fast. Gosh, no but all that, remember
13 all the rocks were flying, so it was going pretty fast.

14 MR. GRESGE: I didn't see if it was going fast but --

15 MS. GRESGE: I feel like --

16 MR. GRESGE: Right when I stopped where I saw it, it was
17 almost stopped. It stopped pretty fast.

18 BY MS. HARLEY:

19 Q. Okay. Outside of your neighbor, Lynn, was there anyone that
20 was there at the scene that you spoke to that you think may have
21 some additional information about this?

22 A. Yeah, Nick across the street, although I see that they're
23 probably all gone.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Because their cars, two of their cars are gone. Right

1 straight across the street.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Nick Karr, K-A-R-R.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. He went up further and spent some more time right around the
6 immediate area.

7 Q. When you say, immediate area, where the truck was or where
8 the train was?

9 A. Where the truck and the two men were.

10 Q. Okay. Was there anything you think that I should have asked
11 you and I failed to ask you about this event?

12 A. No. I think we've covered it.

13 MS. HARLEY: Okay. So, one of the things that I say to
14 people, hang on one second, I'm hoping I can find a spare business
15 card, I've been giving them out. I ask people to, if in the next
16 couple of days they're thinking about this and they think they,
17 you remember something else, please feel free to give me a call on
18 my cell phone.

19 MS. GRESGE: All right.

20 MS. HARLEY: It's a 24-hour number. And just say, you know
21 what, I remembered this and this may not be important. Also,
22 please feel free to give the number to anyone you talk to that may
23 have some additional information, I'm, that's perfect. I like to,
24 people to kind of word of mouth so that we can deal with this.

25 So, ultimately what happens in these kind of situations and I

1 don't know whether they're going to do like a public forum or a
2 public hearing. A forum is where we invite basically the people
3 around the area together to understand what's going on in the
4 investigation, what we, basically what we know, and ultimately
5 where we plan to go and what questions we still have. A public
6 hearing is one where people actually testify. For example,
7 representatives of the railroad, the train crew, or any of the,
8 any of the witnesses, any of the passengers on the train, that
9 kind of situation.

10 I don't know what they're going to be doing but what we
11 always tell people -- what I always tell people is that everything
12 that we do we are required by law to let you know. So, how we
13 notify the world what we're doing is we have a website, which is
14 basically NTSB.gov. You go on that website and we put everything
15 on the web.

16 So, you'll be notified of hearings that way, you can read the
17 preliminary report there. Ultimately, you'll be able to read the
18 full investigation. If you have any questions, it'll also kind of
19 direct you to where you can kind of forward your questions or if
20 you want to talk to someone. Certainly, we do that.

21 Again, if you happen to think of anything, even any small
22 detail, please feel free to give me a call. Okay?

23 MS. GRESGE: Yeah, I wish you could get hold of that lady
24 because I feel like, I feel like she saw it, that's why she was so
25 shell-shocked. And, but I didn't see her later on. I didn't even

1 think to ask her what she saw.

2 MS. HARLEY: Well, hopefully she called 9-1-1 like you, so
3 maybe we've got something. And you think she's in the
4 neighborhood. If you happen to see her just give her my name --

5 MS. GRESGE: Oh, I will.

6 MS. HARLEY: And just ask her just to give us a call. I
7 don't need to come to anybody's house. I, we can do it by phone
8 if she's, if she's worried about privacy. I just happened to be
9 walking around the neighborhood today.

10 MS. GRESGE: I just saw Lynn leave, so I'm sorry about that.

11 MS. HARLEY: Oh that's okay, I can come back, that's fine.
12 We'll be here for, at least until next week, so you will probably
13 see me again, sorry. Tom, you got any questions for me?

14 MR. GRESGE: No.

15 MS. HARLEY: No? Okay. So, just to kind of let you know
16 what we do, we're an independent government agency. We
17 investigate all transportation accidents, which is airplanes,
18 boats, trains, some highway crashes. And one of the things that
19 we look at, especially with something like this is that there are
20 a lot of residential neighborhoods around these railroad tracks
21 and people have to cross over those tracks just to get along, get
22 on with their daily lives. And we want to make sure that it's
23 safe to do so. And if there's some issues or some problems, and
24 especially if people feel it's not being addressed, then that's
25 what we try to kind of recommend and push regulation.

1 We can't -- we are not regulators, we are not enforcers, but
2 what we do is we recommend to people that maybe you need to change
3 things, maybe you need to have someone inspect those gates, you
4 know, once a week, once a month, whatever, to make sure they're
5 operating correctly.

6 Okay. So, thank you very much for your time. I certainly do
7 appreciate all of your help. And again, thank you very much for
8 calling 9-1-1. I understand that their response was phenomenal as
9 far as getting out there, so.

10 MS. GRESGE: Yeah, it really was.

11 MS. HARLEY: All right, thank you. So it is 5:28 p.m.

12 (Whereupon, at 5:38 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

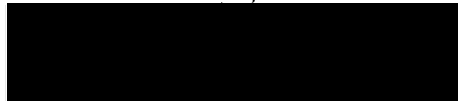
IN THE MATTER OF: COLLISION OF AMTRAK SPECIAL TRAIN
 P0923 31 AT THE HIGHWAY-RAIL GRADE
 CROSSING AT LANETOWN ROAD IN
 CROZET, VIRGINIA, JANUARY 31, 2018
 Interview of Vickie Gresge and
 Thomas Gresge

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY18MH005

PLACE: Crozet, Virginia

DATE: February 1, 2018

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Joni Hodge
Transcriber

Telephonic interview with Ms. Heather Rowlingson



Date: February 6, 2018

Time start: 11:28 a.m.

Time end: 11:49 a.m.

Mrs. Rowlingson advised that she heard about the collision from her father. She had been very upset ever since because she felt that she was partially responsible because she failed to notify the proper authorities about the crossing gate malfunctioning in the days leading up to the crash. Mrs. Rowlingson advised that she hadn't been at home when the crash occurred. Later that (Wednesday) evening, she was at a local restaurant, the Tea House, with her husband when she overheard a group of firefighters talking about the crash. She advised that she approached the group, out of guilt, and after speaking briefly to them, was convinced to tell her story to someone in authority. She exchanged her information with a firefighter she came to know as Andy (no last name) and waited for someone to contact her to talk about her information.

Mrs. Rowlingson advised that on Monday morning (two days before the collision), she arrived at the crossing and found the gate arms down. She advised that this could have been between 8-9:00 a.m. or 8:30 and 9:30 a.m. She advised that she wasn't exactly sure of the time. She was sitting there waiting for the gate arms to go back up when she observed a gentleman who lived off the dirt road, adjacent to the tracks; come out of his residence and get into his pick-up truck. (the gentleman lived at Merry Mount Farm) The gentleman drove around the gate arms and stopped his truck along side Mrs. Rowlingson's Jeep. The gentleman advised her that "they had been down all morning" (referring to the gate arms) and told her to just go around them. Mrs. Rowlingson advised that she did just that, driving around the lowered gate arms.

On Tuesday, Mrs. Rowlingson advised that she arrived at the crossing and found the gate arms lowered once again though no trains were coming. She drove around the gate arms again. Mrs. Rowlingson advised that this was unusual because she had never experienced the gate arms malfunctioning two days in a row or having re-occurrence of the malfunction so close together. This had struck her as odd and she reported that she contemplated calling the authorities about it. She advised that she ultimately did nothing.

Mrs. Rowlingson advised that she lived in the area for approximately 17 years. During that period, she observed the crossing gate malfunction 5 or 6 times. The "ghost train" incidents were not frequent. The incidents tended to be ignored in the neighborhood and to her knowledge, rarely reported. The incidents were very sporadic and before Tuesday, had not occurred twice in such a short span of time. To her recollection, the gate arms would drop but would always go back up after a period. Though she did recall one incident where the gate arms came down but did not go back up. This was rarer still. Mrs.

Rowlingson advised that she has seen railroad employees working on the “box” at that location at various times. Though she hadn’t seen the workers that week. During an earlier incident, Mrs. Rowlingson had called 911 to report the problem with the crossing gate arms. She was told that “they” (911) did not handle those type of complaints but would (according to the call taker) pass the information along to the proper authorities. Mrs. Rowlingson advised that she never received a call back from anyone providing any follow up to her complaint. She advised that this wasn’t unusual for the county. After speaking to the firefighters at the restaurant, Mrs. Rowlingson decided to make another report. This time she contacted the Albemarle County Emergency Services. The call taker reportedly told Ms. Rowlingson that “yes, they were aware of it”.

Mrs. Rowlingson identified the gentleman in the pick up as her neighbor Mr. Layne. Mr. Layne is a member of her church and through the church had aided less fortunate individuals. She also advised that Mr. Layne was part owner in a business called “Layne Bros Furniture” on Route 340 in Waynesboro. There were several other family businesses as well. She remembered that Denny Layne also ran an auction business.

Mrs. Rowlingson reported that her local pastor, Ms. Sara Evonne Cho, was on the scene. She advised that Mrs. Cho may be able to provide more information.