



**Survival Factors Attachment- Follow-up witness interviews**

**Biloxi, Mississippi**

**HWY17MH010**

(3 pages)

07-31-17

Start time: 10:40 a.m.

End time: 10:48 a.m.

Telephonic interview of witness: Mr. Paul T. Benton

Conducted by Investigator Sheryl Harley-NTSB

Mr. Benton advised that he arrived at the crash site after the collision. The Fire Department had not arrived and it was some time before first responders arrived on the scene. He was on the northside of the tracks. The train blocked any view of the southside of the tracks. Upon his arrival, an employee of the Hammett Auto Repair shop was already on the scene. Hammett Auto Repair is located on the northside of the track on the corner adjacent to the crash site. Mr. Benton did not see the employee arrive but speculated that he would have walked since the shop was located on the corner and there would be no reason to drive. Mr. Benton advised that his attention was drawn to the victims lying on the ground (on the northside) alongside the train and the one victim that was lying underneath the train.

Mr. Benton advised that he didn't know the gentleman that drove up to the side of the motorcoach and could not confirm that he was one and the same as the individual that entered the motorcoach. Mr. Benton advised that he did not enter the motorcoach. He read that a young black male subject was interviewed regarding the collision. He reported that he had entered the motorcoach to assist the victims. Mr. Benton advised that the article appeared in the Biloxi Sun Herald. The topic of the article was the "reunion" of the passengers scheduled to take place in Biloxi.

Mr. Benton did not have any information pertaining to additional witnesses.

Date: 07-31-17

Start time: 11:07 a.m.

End time: 11:16 a.m.

Telephonic interview of witness: Richard (Rick) Knight

Conducted by Investigator Sheryl Harley-NTSB

Mr. Knight reported that he and his friend "Walt" were walking back to the hotel where they left their wives gambling. Mr. Knight advised that he and his friend had been walking northbound and the train had come from the west. Mr. Knight and his friend were approximately one block away from the railroad crossing when the collision occurred. Mr. Knight advised that he saw the collision but his friend "Walt" had not. Walt had been speaking to Mr. Knight and had turned towards him and was not looking at the tracks. Mr. Knight advised that because of the impact with the train, the motorcoach front end had been lifted-up approximately 5 feet off the ground and the bus moved 10-12 feet (eastward) before coming to a stop. He advised that the rear-end of the motorcoach dragged the entire distance. Mr. Knight advised that the force of the collision caused several of the passenger side windows to breakout.

Mr. Knight advised that as he approached the bus, he saw a gentleman pull up in a car. The gentleman then climbed through one of the broken windows to gain access to the interior of the motorcoach. Mr. Knight advised that as he walked towards the front door of the motorcoach, he saw a leg sticking out from underneath the bus. It wasn't until he got closer that he realized that it was only "a leg" and "nothing more".

Mr. Knight entered the motorcoach. The driver was still seated behind the wheel and appeared dazed. Mr. Knight advised that the train impacted the motorcoach approximately 3 rows behind the driver and access to the rear of the bus was hampered by the impact damage. Mr. Knight could see that two individuals (civilians) were on the bus near the impact area assisting the victims. He was unable to get any further back from the front of the motorcoach. Mr. Knight advised that he exited the motorcoach to see if there were any victims outside that he could assist. One victim, a woman, was lying under the train screaming. Another man (civilian) was with her. Mr. Knight commented that another victim was located outside of the train. He noted that there were "only pieces".

***(Mr. Knight was asked about the rear door and the response of the emergency services)***

Mr. Knight advised that it was 30-40 seconds or perhaps a minute before the fire department arrived. He did not see anyone try to get in the rear door of the motorcoach before the arrival of the fire department. Mr. Knight advised that he had not tried to use the rear door and walked passed it on his way to the front of the bus. Once the police arrived, they cordoned off the area. From that location, Mr. Knight no longer had a view of the rear of the bus and could not determine if anyone was utilizing the rear door.

***(Mr. Knight was asked about additional witnesses and his friend, Walt)***

Mr. Knight advised that Walt had a "squeamish stomach" and didn't get within a hundred feet of the motorcoach.