

DOCKET NO. SA-516

APPENDIX Q

**NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC**

**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT
NYANG MAJ. MICHAEL NOYES
JANUARY 11, 1997
(17 pages)**

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BEFORE THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20594

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IN THE MATTER OF TWA FLIGHT :
800; INTERVIEW OF: :
MAJ. MICHAEL NOYES. :
- - - - - X

TAPE TRANSCRIPTION

The above entitled matter came on for interview pursuant to notice before NORM WIEMEYER, NTSB Official, at the New York Air National Facilities in Westhampton Beach, New York, on January 11, 1997.

1 APPEARANCES:

2

3 NORM WIEMEYER

4 NTSB Official

5

6 TERRY STACEY

7 Trans World Airlines Representative

8

9 LOU BURNS

10 Air Line Pilots Association

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12 SCOTT METCALF

13 Federal Bureau of Investigation

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15 AL CLEMENS

16 Federal Aviation Administration

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I N D E X

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WITNESS:

MAJ. MICHAEL NOYES/Supervisor, Base Ops; New York
National Guard.

(Tape 2, Side B, second interview.)

(No exhibits were presented or accepted into evidence
at or as a result of this interview.)

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. Would you state your
3 full name and spell your last name for us, please, sir.

4 MR. NOYES: Michael Noyes, N-O-Y-E-S.

5 MR. WIEMEYER: And could you give us an
6 address? Your Guard address'll do if you'd rather not
7 give your home address. That's up to you.

8 MR. NOYES: It's 7 Cristman [phonetic sp.]
9 Avenue, in East Moriches, New York.

10 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. And, Mike, what was
11 your involvement in the events surrounding the loss of
12 TWA 800?

13 MR. NOYES: I was a supervisor flying that
14 night. I was sitting in the Base Operations;
15 monitoring the radio and just keeping a general listen-
16 out for the two aircraft that were flying from my unit.

17 And I had heard them on the radio discussing
18 seeing something. And they talked about bright lights
19 and fire. And that they were heading for an area south
20 of the island to take a look.

21 And at that time I started to take some phone
22 calls that were coming in asking us -- asking all kinds
23 of questions. Some -- Coast Guard Shinnecock called;
24 Coast Guard Moriches called; Southampton Town police
25 called -- all asking if I knew anything about some fire

1 and -- and bright lights.

2 Our aircraft, I guess -- I'm assuming just
3 from listening to their conversations -- approached the
4 crash area, and determined that there was something --
5 a -- the -- I heard them talking about mid-air
6 collision.

7 I called the helicopter back, because at the
8 time the helicopter only had a basic crew on board:
9 pilot, co-pilot and flight engineer. And they wouldn't
10 be able to prosecute any -- any rescues -- any
11 recoveries of personnel. And we had two para-rescue in
12 here that night.

13 And so I told the para-rescue men to start
14 getting ready in their -- in their wet gear. And I
15 called the helicopter back.

16 We also have a -- a special qualifications
17 for the pilots. And it -- it's night-water operations,
18 basically, using the night vision goggles. And the
19 aircraft commander who was flying at the time was not
20 qualified, and I was.

21 So, when they came back to the airfield we
22 put the two para-rescuemen on board. And the current
23 pilot, who is Fred Meyer, and myself swapped; I got in
24 as the pilot, and Fred got in the back seat as a
25 scanner to -- just to help search. And we went back

1 out and just started searching.

2 That's about it.

3 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. In your job here in the
4 office, what did you do? Director of Flying for that
5 night? Or --

6 MR. NOYES: Supervisor of Flying.

7 MR. WIEMEYER: Supervisor of Flying. Is a
8 running record kept of events that take place during
9 a --

10 MR. NOYES: Well, yes --

11 MR. WIEMEYER: -- training like that?

12 MR. NOYES: -- there is normally. However,
13 that night I was by myself and there was so much going
14 on that I -- I didn't have time to write down anything.

15 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. Are the communications
16 here recorded?

17 MR. NOYES: No.

18 MR. WIEMEYER: They're not. Okay. Okay.

19 Once you made the transition to the aircraft
20 and went back out there, what did you observe?

21 MR. NOYES: We just saw the fire slick,
22 obviously. There's a lot of black smoke. And
23 naturally the -- the existing wind that night was --
24 was taking that -- geez, as I remember, it was -- it
25 was pretty much to the southeast.

1 And we just started searching at about --
2 between 50 and 100 feet we just started searching for
3 -- for survivors. And all we saw was debris in the
4 water. So --

5 MR. WIEMEYER: You were using goggles at the
6 time?

7 MR. NOYES: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we don't search
8 without goggles.

9 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay.

10 MR. NOYES: The Coast Guard does; we don't.

11 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. Did you see any debris
12 that you found particularly noteworthy?

13 MR. NOYES: No. In fact, most of what I saw
14 I couldn't identify if I wanted to. It was just --
15 just chunks of stuff. I mean, from -- even from 50
16 feet we couldn't really tell whether it was a seat or a
17 piece of a panel, or a suitcase. Or -- it was hard to
18 tell.

19 We could identify -- we could identify some
20 bodies. But that was about it.

21 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. You didn't deploy your
22 swimmers, is that correct?

23 MR. NOYES: No. We would not deploy the
24 swimmers unless we had found someone that was obviously
25 alive.

1 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. I have no further
2 questions.

3 MR. BURNS: Mike, I'm Lou Burns, a 747
4 captain with TWA working for the Air Line Pilots
5 Association.

6 Do you have any idea -- have you heard your
7 helicopter guys talk about this flash of light? Seeing
8 something and then they went out to sea. Did you note
9 on the clock, or do you have any idea how -- what the
10 timing of it was between they said that they noticed
11 and before they reported on scene? How long it took
12 them to get out there?

13 MR. NOYES: You know, the -- actually looking
14 at the clock, no. But I -- I do know it was -- it was
15 rather quick. Because between the time that they said
16 they saw something -- and they were talking to each
17 other -- the helicopter was -- was in a pattern here.
18 And the 130 was in the Jaws train -- training area in
19 southeast. That -- they were talking to one another
20 and -- and between the time that they said it and the
21 time that the helicopter -- as I remember -- called, on
22 scene, first it was a very short period of time.

23 In fact, I was -- I remember thinking to
24 myself, my God, that's right off the coast. So --

25 MR. BURNS: Okay. Thank you, that's all I

1 have.

2 MR. CLEMENS: I'm Al Clemens, with the FAA.

3 Could you tell us how far the bodies were
4 from the fire that was out there.

5 MR. NOYES: Well, at the time I got -- I got
6 out there it was about 30 minutes after the -- after I
7 first heard them talking -- the crews talking about it
8 was some sort of a crash, or whatever.

9 And at that time they were about the closest
10 part of the -- the largest slick of debris we found was
11 about a half to three-quarters of a mile from the
12 closest edge of the fire. And then it extended for a
13 good half mile to a mile I -- closer to a mile beyond
14 that. It was --

15 MR. CLEMENS: In what direction?

16 MR. NOYES: To the southwest. It was -- it
17 was an elongated area of debris; the closest being
18 about half to three-quarters of a mile from the closest
19 area of the fire slick. And the largest -- the
20 farthest away section being about a mile beyond that.

21 MR. CLEMENS: Thank you.

22 MR. METCALF: Scott Metcalf, with the FBI. I
23 have no questions.

24 MR. STACEY: Mike, I'm Terry Stacey with TWA.
25 When you went in the helicopter you were the aircraft

1 commander at that time?

2 MR. NOYES: --

3 MR. STACEY: In the left or right seat?

4 MR. NOYES: Right seat.

5 MR. STACEY: Right seat. Did you assume the
6 flying duties?

7 MR. NOYES: Yes. I flew and the co-pilot
8 primarily searched and kept the communications with the
9 clerk -- or, Chris Baur used to be in the Coast Guard.
10 So, we were on-scene for I want to say about a half,
11 three-quarters of an hour before the first Coast Guard
12 boats got in there.

13 And as they started to come out and started
14 to get on-scene Chris did all the coordination with
15 them. He could kind of speak their -- their language.

16 MR. STACEY: Okay. The -- what kind of radar
17 equipment or threat advisor equipment or IR equipment
18 do you have on the helicopter?

19 MR. NOYES: We have APR-39s, which are radar
20 detectors for missiles, and so on. We don't normally
21 fly with it on -- if we do a normal transition.
22 However, if we're doing mission training I always turn
23 it on.

24 I don't know if they were using it that
25 night. It wasn't on when I got in the airplane.

1 We also have weather radar, which also
2 doubles as a search radar. We didn't use it that night
3 because the -- the fire was creating too much of a --
4 of a feedback. It just was -- it wasn't worth it.

5 MR. STACEY: What was the active runway here?

6 MR. NOYES: Well, I'm pretty sure it was 6 --
7 I mean, 2-4 that night.

8 MR. STACEY: 2 --

9 MR. NOYES: 'Cause as I remember the winds
10 that night were -- were pretty much out of the -- out
11 of the west/southwest.

12 And -- and 2-4 normally is the active, unless
13 the winds get up close to 10 knots and then they'll
14 change it -- just from -- 'cause there -- houses around
15 here.

16 MR. STACEY: Okay. When you completed the
17 mission you were then briefed by the FBI? Or --

18 MR. NOYES: I --

19 MR. STACEY: -- debriefed?

20 MR. NOYES: I wasn't. This was the first
21 time I've sat down with anybody through this -- this
22 whole ordeal. And I think it's -- it's primarily
23 'cause I didn't see anything. I mean, I just went out
24 and searched.

25 I didn't see anything. I didn't hear

1 anything. I was sitting in that room and I had the
2 weather channel on. So, I didn't -- like I say, I
3 didn't see or hear any of the actual explosion.

4 I'll -- anything I saw was after the fact.

5 MR. STACEY: As the Supervisor of Flying that
6 night did you take a debrief, or some kind of a debrief
7 -- to the best of your mind, though -- of the mission
8 that the other pilots flew: Meyer and Baur?

9 MR. NOYES: Before -- before this all
10 occurred?

11 MR. STACEY: No, before -- I'm talking about
12 the -- their part in it before you got on the
13 helicopter.

14 MR. NOYES: No, because what -- we didn't
15 shut down the airplane. When they came in we did an
16 engine running crew change. They never shut down. We
17 just got in it and went.

18 Our whole thought process was, we got to go
19 out and search for survivors. And --

20 MR. STACEY: Now, see --

21 MR. NOYES: -- by the time I got back in --
22 excuse me -- our whole command structure was here and -
23 - and Baur, Meyer and Richardson were -- and -- and the
24 two PJs, for that matter; 'cause they had been out on
25 the drop zone and seen something as well -- they

1 were -- they were caught up by -- by folks here for a
2 debrief of what they actually saw.

3 And, again, because all I had done really was
4 search, kind of wasn't involved in that. I don't -- if
5 that's -- I don't know if that's what you're looking
6 for.

7 MR. STACEY: Yeah, that answered the
8 question. Yes, thank you. That's all I have. If you
9 want --

10 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay.

11 MR. NOYES: Normally we would do that.
12 Normally we would debrief at that -- the first portion
13 of the flight. But just because of the scenario around
14 this particular flight it didn't happen.

15 MR. WIEMEYER: Mike, this is Norm Wiemeyer of
16 the Safety Board again. I have one follow-up question
17 I can think of right off hand.

18 In your command post or operations center
19 where you were working that night you have discreet
20 communications with your aircraft, is that correct?

21 MR. NOYES: Yes.

22 MR. WIEMEYER: Do you also monitor any other
23 frequencies?

24 MR. NOYES: No.

25 MR. WIEMEYER: So, you didn't hear anything

1 on the center frequency or --

2 MR. NOYES: No.

3 MR. WIEMEYER: -- the other frequencies that
4 the helicopter and the C-130 were working out there as
5 they worked there on the same portion?

6 MR. NOYES: No, not at all.

7 MR. WIEMEYER: Just whatever they reported
8 back to you?

9 MR. NOYES: Right. We -- the -- the 130 and
10 the helicopter were on our company frequency, 287.5.

11 We stayed on that frequency -- well, the C-
12 130 has two UHF radios. We only have one. Well, at
13 that time we only had one; now we have two.

14 We stayed on 287.5 for -- gee -- just about
15 the whole time actually. And if I remember right we
16 did all of our communications to the Coast Guard
17 through the C-130 because they had better
18 communications with them than we did.

19 MR. WIEMEYER: Did you hear any other
20 aircraft, other than your own aircraft, on the
21 frequency?

22 MR. NOYES: No, no I didn't. And I do
23 remember specific -- as we were flying out there and as
24 we were searching the area -- I mean, I remember
25 looking around. 'Cause with the goggles you can see --

1 I don't know if you've got any experience with the
2 night vision goggles, but depth perception is rather
3 poor. Everything looks real close.

4 So, I mean, even an airplane that's 30 miles
5 away looks like it's a factor to you. You have to
6 really scan around to kind of get an idea of how far
7 away it is.

8 And I remember looking at the area both on
9 the water far -- farther out away from where we were
10 searching and in the air, and thinking that it was
11 awful quiet. There was nothing around. I didn't see
12 any airplanes. I didn't see any boats. I didn't see
13 -- other than obviously what was coming out from the
14 shore.

15 But when I looked out into the ocean and saw
16 some -- the crash site I -- I didn't see anything.

17 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. That's all in good
18 time. Anybody else come up with any other follow-ups?

19 MR. CLEMENS: I think I have one now;
20 Clemens, from the FAA.

21 When you arrived on the scene did you see any
22 large pieces of wreckage still on the surface of the
23 water -- that were visible?

24 MR. NOYES: As far as the metal parts of the
25 airplane, no. Some of the -- some of the pieces of

1 debris that were obviously parts of the interior, yeah.
2 You know, that was -- that was floating. But I didn't
3 see, like, wind panels, or anything like that.

4 And that -- I don't know. Maybe that was in
5 the area of where the -- we had a very difficult time.
6 We -- in fact, at -- at one point we went INC because
7 we flew into the -- into the smoke cloud, and the
8 goggles pretty much shut down. And we had to climb and
9 get away from that -- just 'cause we'd gotten a little
10 bit too close, in that, we could search around the
11 edges of the -- when we went back out there initially
12 -- when I went out there initially, the first thing we
13 tried to do was -- there was a little disagreement
14 amongst us.

15 Chris wanted to find the large slick -- the
16 large debris slick that they had found right away.
17 Right -- at the same time I called them back they had
18 just found a large debris slick.

19 And he wanted to go find that again. And I
20 said, no, let's search around the perimeter of this --
21 of the -- of the fire first; thinking that if
22 anything -- anybody was close to that, they stood --
23 that they needed to be pulled out first.

24 So, we got a little bit too close to the --
25 to the smoke and had to get away. And I -- I saw

1 nothing there except fire. And then when we got --
2 when we finally did find the large slick of debris
3 again there were no -- I didn't see any big pieces of
4 the airplane.

5 I was not a primary -- I mean, my eyes were
6 outside as much as I could. But when you fly low
7 altitude on the goggles at night a lot of it is -- is
8 inside the airplane. It's just like low and slow
9 instruments, really. Give an occasional glance out the
10 side.

11 One of the guys in the back would call that
12 they had something -- a clock position -- then I would
13 come out and circle it to see if there's anything that
14 we could -- we could recover. And if it wasn't the
15 guys threw chem lights down to mark it in the back.

16 MR. CLEMENS: Thank you.

17 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. Thank you very much.

18 MR. NOYES: Thanks.

19 MR. WIEMEYER: Appreciate your help.

20 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded [no
21 time noted.])

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