

Anchorage, August 14, 1947
File: 010.27

COLONEL J. P. JOHNSON:

Attached, hereto, is a copy of investigation with Engineer W. A. Smith of Train No. 5, July 15, when they struck an Army vehicle at road crossing at Whitney, and also statement of Archie Peers, driver.

This investigation of driver of vehicle stopped at road crossing and then started across the track just as the engine reached the crossing.


J. T. CUNNINGHAM
SUPT. OF OPERATIONS

ATTACH:

Anchorage, Alaska
July 30, 1947
File 010.27

The following is statement from Mr. W. A. Smith, Engineer of Train No.5, Engine 1000 July 15, 1947 from Curry to Anchorage. This engine struck Army truck at road crossing at Whitney at 10:35 P.M. July 15, 1947.

Questions by Mr. J. T. Cunningham, answers by Mr. W. A. Smith:

Q: Mr. Smith, were you Engineer on Train No.5 from Curry to Anchorage July 15, 1947?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Did your train strike a truck at the road crossing at Whitney Station?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: What time did this occur?

A: 10:35 P.M.

Q: Describe weather conditions at that time.

A: It was clear.

Q: Was it getting dusk when the accident occurred?

A: No, sir, I would not say so.

Q: About what was your speed approaching this crossing?

A: Making 20-25 miles per hour. I applied the air brakes and then released them before coming to the crossing.

Q: Was your head light burning when approaching this crossing?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: If the weather was clear why did you have your head light burning?

A: For the reason that trucks fly across the crossing so I put it on so the drivers could see the engine approaching - just as a precaution.

Q: Did you sound your engine whistle when approaching this crossing?

A: I did.

Q: Did you carry the last blast of the whistle out until you had reached the crossing.

A: No, sir, I did not. I had kicked the air off.

Q: How far away were you when the last blast of the whistle was sounded?

A: About 25'.

Q: Was the engine bell ringing?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: What was your first knowledge of striking the truck?

A: Just as I got across the road crossing the Fireman said "plug her."

Q: Did you see the truck at any time?

A: I did not.

Q: The truck, then, approached the crossing on the left hand side?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: How far did you go after you struck the truck before you came to a full stop?

A: Seventy-five yards. I did not plug her, I made a service application. The Fireman told me to plug her the second time but I went into emergency.

Q: Did you know the occupants of the car?

A: No, sir.

Q: How many were there in the car?

A: I was told that there were two.

Q: Did you examine the truck or vehicle?

A: The right front tire was off the rear of the truck. I did not examine it.

Q: Did you notice whether the driver had his window up or down?

A: No, sir, I did not notice. The door was open when I saw it.

Q: The door on the driver's side?

A: Yes, sir. The Fireman talked with the driver of the truck and asked him - "you were stopped, why did you go ahead?" The driver of the truck said, "I do not know."

Q: Did you hear the Fireman say that to the driver of the truck?

A: Yes, sir. Mr. Welch was there, too, and the Brakeman was there.

Q: Who was the Fireman?

A: Mr. J. C. Calvert.

Q: You heard Fireman Calvert say to the driver "you were stopped, why did you go ahead?"

A: Yes, sir.

Q: And, you heard the driver of the truck say - "I do not know"?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Did you talk to the driver of the truck?

A: I asked him if he were hurt and he said that he was not. I did not see the truck until we stopped. I was looking out on the right side. I struck the truck with the grab iron on the left side.

Q: Mr. Smith, that is all.

Anchorage, Alaska
July 30, 1947
File 010.27

The following is statement from Mr. W. A. Smith, Engineer of Train No.5, Engine 1000 July 15, 1947 from Curry to Anchorage. This engine struck Army truck at road crossing at Whitney at 10:35 P.M. July 15, 1947.

Questions by Mr. J. T. Cunningham, answers by Mr. W. A. Smith:

- Q: Mr. Smith, were you Engineer on Train No.5 from Curry to Anchorage July 15, 1947?
A: Yes, sir.
- Q: Did your train strike a truck at the road crossing at Whitney Station?
A: Yes, sir.
- Q: What time did this occur?
A: 10:35 P.M.
- Q: Describe weather conditions at that time.
A: It was clear.
- Q: Was it getting dusk when the accident occurred?
A: No, sir, I would not say so.
- Q: About what was your speed approaching this crossing?
A: Making 20-25 miles per hour. I applied the air brakes and then released them before coming to the crossing.
- Q: Was your head light burning when approaching this crossing?
A: Yes, sir.
- Q: If the weather was clear why did you have your head light burning?
A: For the reason that trucks fly across the crossing so I put it on so the drivers could see the engine approaching - just as a precaution.
- Q: Did you sound your engine whistle when approaching this crossing?
A: I did.
- Q: Did you carry the last blast of the whistle out until you had reached the crossing.
A: No, sir, I did not. I had kicked the air off.
- Q: How far away were you when the last blast of the whistle was sounded?
A: About 25'.
- Q: Was the engine bell ringing?
A: Yes, sir.
- Q: What was your first knowledge of striking the truck?
A: Just as I got across the road crossing the fireman said "plug her."

Q: Did you see the truck at any time?

A: I did not.

Q: The truck, when, approached the crossing on the left hand side?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: How far did you go after you struck the truck before you came to a full stop?

A: Seventy-five yards. I did not plug her, I made a service application. The Fireman told me to plug her the second time but I went into emergency.

Q: Did you know the occupants of the car?

A: No, sir.

Q: How many were there in the car?

A: I was told that there were two.

Q: Did you examine the truck or vehicle?

A: The right front tire was off the rear of the truck. I did not examine it.

Q: Did you notice whether the driver had his window up or down?

A: No, sir, I did not notice. The door was open when I saw it.

Q: The door on the driver's side?

A: Yes, sir. The Fireman talked with the driver of the truck and asked him - "you were stopped, why did you go ahead?" The driver of the truck said, "I do not know."

Q: Did you hear the Fireman say that to the driver of the truck?

A: Yes, sir. Mr. Welch was there, too, and the Brakeman was there.

Q: Who was the Fireman?

A: Mr. J. C. Calvert.

Q: You heard Fireman Calvert say to the driver "you were stopped, why did you go ahead?"

A: Yes, sir.

Q: And, you heard the driver of the truck say - "I do not know?"

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Did you talk to the driver of the truck?

A: I asked him if he were hurt and he said that he was not. I did not see the truck until we stopped. I was looking out on the right side. I struck the truck with the grab iron on the left side.

Q: Mr. Smith, that is all.

Anchorage, Alaska
July 30, 1947
File 115.27

The following is statement from Mr. W. A. Smith, Engineer of Train No. 5, engine 1000 July 15, 1947 from Curry to Anchorage. This engine struck Curry truck at road crossing at Whitney at 10:35 P.M. July 15, 1947.

Questions by Mr. J. T. Guinnian, answers by Mr. W. A. Smith:

Q Mr. Smith, were you Engineer on Train No. 5 from Curry to Anchorage July 15, 1947?

A Yes, sir.

Q Did your train strike a truck at the road crossing at Whitney Station?

A Yes, sir.

Q What time did this occur?

A 10:35 P.M.

Q Describe weather conditions at that time.

A It was clear.

Q Was it getting dusk when the accident occurred?

A No, sir, I would not say so.

Q What was your speed approaching this crossing?

A About 25-30 miles per hour. I applied the air brakes and then released them before coming to the crossing.

Q Was your head light burning when approaching this crossing?

A Yes, sir.

Q If the weather was clear why did you have your head light burning?

A For the reason that trucks fly across the crossing so I put it on so the drivers could see the engine approaching - just as a precaution.

Q Did you sound your engine whistle when approaching this crossing?

A Yes.

Q Did you carry the last blast of the whistle out until you had reached the crossing.

A No, sir, I did not. I had kicked the air off.

Q How far away were you when the last blast of the whistle was sounded?

A About 20'.

Q Was the engine bell ringing?

A Yes, sir.

Q What was your first knowledge of striking the truck?

A Just as I got across the road crossing the fireman said "plug her."

Q Did you see the truck at any time?

A I did not.

Q The truck, then, approached the crossing on the left hand side?

A Yes, sir.

Q How far did you go after you struck the truck before you came to a full stop?

A Seventy-five yards. I did not plug her, I made a service application. The fireman told me to plug her the second time but I went into emergency.

Q Did you know the occupants of the car?

A No, sir.

Q How many were there in the car?

A I was told that there were two.

Q Did you examine the truck or vehicle?

A The right front tire was off the rear of the truck. I did not examine it.

Q Did you notice whether the driver had his window up or down?

A No, sir, I did not notice. The door was open when I saw it.

Q The door on the driver's side?

A Yes, sir. The fireman talked with the driver of the truck and asked him - "You were stopped, why did you go ahead?" The driver of the truck said, "I do not know."

Q Did you hear the fireman say that to the driver of the truck?

A Yes, sir. Dr. Welch was there, too, and the brakeman was there.

Q Who was the fireman?

A Mr. J. C. Calvert.

Q You heard fireman Calvert say to the driver "you were stopped, why did you go ahead?"

A Yes, sir.

Q And you heard the driver of the truck say - "I do not know"?

A Yes, sir.

Q Did you talk to the driver of the truck?

A I asked him if he were hurt and he said that he was not. I did not see the truck until we stopped. I was looking out on the right side. I struck the truck with the grab iron on the left side.

Q Yes, sir, that is all.

Anchorage, Alaska
August 4, 1947
File 010.27

The following is statement from Mr. J. C. Calvert, Fireman, Train No. 5, Engine 1000, July 15, 1947, from Curry to Anchorage. This engine struck Army truck at road crossing at Whitney at 10:35 P.M. July 15, 1947.

Questions by Mr. J. T. Cunningham, answers by Mr. J. C. Calvert:

Q: Mr. Calvert, were you Fireman on Train No. 5, Curry to Anchorage, July 15, 1947?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Did your train strike a truck at the road crossing at Whitney Station?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: What time did this occur?

A: 10:35 P.M.

Q: Describe weather condition at that time.

A: It was clear.

Q: What was the speed of your train when approaching the crossing?

A: About 15 miles perhour. We had just come through Whitney Station.

Q: Was the engine bell ringing at the time?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Was the whistle sounded for the crossing?

A: I believe it was - we whistled for the station.

Q: Were you riding on the lefthand side of the engine?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Did you see this truck approach the crossing?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: How faraway was the train from the crossing when you saw the driver of the truck approaching the crossing?

A: At least 100 yards. The truck pulled up to the crossing and stopped and then when he had almost reached the crossing the driver of the truck pulled up in front of us.

Q: When he came to a stop how far away was he?

A: About 300'.

Q: How many passengers in the truck?

A: Two.

Questions by Mr. J. T. Cunningham, answers by Mr. J. O. Calvert, (continued):

Q: Did you see the driver of the truck come to a full stop?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: How long did the truck stop before he started to go across the road crossing?

A: Well, he stopped long enough for us to almost reach the crossing.

Q: Was the head light burning on the engine?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Did you talk with the driver of the truck after the train came to a stop?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: What did you say to him?

A: I said - "you stopped and then pulled right in front of us." He said, "yes, I guess that is just what I did."

Q: Were the door windows up on both sides of the truck?

A: I do not know.

Q: Did you notice whether the windows were dirty or fogged up?

A: I didn't notice.

Q: Did the driver of the truck say why he pulled in front of the train.

A: No, sir, but evidently he did not look down the track because he could not have helped seeing us. The head light was on and the bell was ringing.

Q: Were you ringing the bell when going through Whitney Station?

A: Yes, sir. If the driver of the truck had looked in both directions he could have seen us.

Q: That is all.

Anchorage, Alaska
August 4, 1947
File 310.27

The following is statement from Mr. J. S. Salvert, Fireman, Train No. 5, engine 1000, July 15, 1947, from Curry to Anchorage. This engine struck Army truck at road crossing at Whitney at 10:35 P.M. July 15, 1947.

Questions by Mr. J. E. Cunningham, answers by Mr. J. S. Salvert:

Q: Mr. Salvert, were you Fireman on Train No. 5, Curry to Anchorage, July 15, 1947?
A: Yes, sir.

Q: Did your train strike a truck at the road crossing at Whitney Station?
A: Yes, sir.

Q: What time did this occur?
A: 10:35 P.M.

Q: Describe weather condition at that time.
A: It was clear.

Q: What was the speed of your train when approaching the crossing?
A: About 15 miles perhour. We had just come through Whitney Station.

Q: Was the engine bell ringing at the time?
A: Yes, sir.

Q: Was the whistle sounded for the crossing?
A: I believe it was - we whistled for the station.

Q: Were you riding on the left-hand side of the engine?
A: Yes, sir.

Q: Did you see this truck approach the crossing?
A: Yes, sir.

Q: How far away was the train from the crossing when you saw the driver of the truck approaching the crossing?
A: At least 100 yards. The truck pulled up to the crossing and stopped and then when he had almost reached the crossing the driver of the truck pulled up in front of us.

Q: When he came to a stop how far away was he?
A: About 30'.

Q: How many passengers in the truck?
A: Two.

Questions by Mr. J. T. Cunningham, answers by Mr. J. C. Galvert. (continued):

Q: Did you see the driver of the truck come to a full stop?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: How long did the truck stop before he started to go across the road crossing?

A: Well, it stopped long enough for us to almost reach the crossing.

Q: Was the head light burning on the engine?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Did you talk with the driver of the truck after the train came to a stop?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: What did you say to him?

A: I said - "you stopped and then pulled right in front of us." He said, "yes, I guess that is just what I did."

Q: Were the door windows up on both sides of the truck?

A: I do not know.

Q: Did you notice whether the windows were dirty or fogged up?

A: I didn't notice.

Q: Did the driver of the truck say why he pulled in front of the train.

A: No, sir, but evidently he did not look down the track because he could not have helped seeing us. The head light was on and the bell was ringing.

Q: Were you ringing the bell when going through Whitney Station?

A: Yes, sir. If the driver of the truck had looked in both directions he could have seen us.

Q: That is all.

Fort Richardson, Alaska - 16 July 1947

STATEMENT OF ARCHIE PEERS, CIVILIAN WAR DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE OF POST ENGINEER, FORT RICHARDSON, ALASKA, MALE, AGE 25, WITH ABOUT FIVE YEARS' DRIVING EXPERIENCE.

On 15 July 1947 at approximately 2230 hours while I was driving a Government $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton Dodge truck, the number of which I do not remember, I was involved in an accident which occurred in the following manner:

I was on night duty for Post Engineers and had gone out to SP-14 to take a night watchman and to bring back the man he replaced. As we approached the double set of railroad tracks at Whitney Crossing, I came to a complete stop, looked both ways, and heard no signal of any kind or any sound of an approaching train so I started up again and proceeded across the tracks. As I came onto the second set of tracks I was aware of lights coming from a right rear direction, but having been followed by another car I first thought the lights came from it. I had a choice either of stopping or of getting off the tracks as quickly as possible, and I took the latter course; however, the next thing I knew a train had struck the cab of my truck just behind the right door. It pushed us down the tracks about 150 yards, and all of this time I was trying to get the truck off the tracks and out of the path of the train but I had no control over the vehicle. It suddenly made a sharp left turn and stopped of its own accord on the other unoccupied railroad tracks. The train stopped shortly thereafter.

My passenger, Philip Byrtus, and I got out of the truck, and the train crew also got out. Both Byrtus and I were somewhat shaken up although neither of us seemed to be actually hurt. However I talked with Byrtus today and he stated that his rib was sore and that his right arm was swollen.

A major who was driving by (whose name I do not know) took Byrtus back to the Post and reported the accident to the Military Police, and I remained with the vehicle until they arrived. The MP's and Safety Director made an investigation and had sent for a photographer when I left. I filled out an accident report and turned it in to the Post Engineer Motor Pool. I did not notice the damage to the truck at the time since I was feeling dizzy.

The weather was fair but the atmosphere was smoky and murky, visibility

was below normal, but the road condition was good.

Neither Mr. Byrtus nor I had been drinking. I was on an official business trip and had a trip ticket.


I hold Motor Vehicle Operator's Permit #13185 which permits me to drive passenger cars and 1/4 to 2 1/2-ton trucks; the permit was issued 8 July 1946.

This is the first accident in which I have been involved.

I have carefully read the foregoing statement and it is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

/s/ Archie Peers
ARCHIE PEERS, WD CIV. EMPLOYEE OF
POST ENGR., FT. RICHARDSON, ALASKA

A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY


GEORGE A. BIERY
Captain, CMP
Claims Officer
Afs. Sv. Base