

DOCKET NO. SA-516

APPENDIX 11

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, DC

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT  
DUANE ANDRE THOMAS  
NOVEMBER 19, 1996  
(21 pages)

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BEFORE THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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In the Matter of:                   :  
TWA FLIGHT 800                    :  
INTERVIEW OF                       :  
DUANE ANDRE THOMAS               :  
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The above-entitled matter came on for interview, pursuant to Notice, before NORM WIEMEYER, NTSB Official, at JFK International Airport, Jamaica, NY, on Tuesday, November 19, 1996 at 12:30 p.m.

## 1 APPEARANCES:

2 TERRY STACEY, TWA

3 LU LIEBER, FBI

4 STEPHEN KLAPACH, FAA

5 CHARLES HALE, IAM

6 KEVIN LONGWELL, BOEING

7 DENNIS SANTIAGO, IAM

8 LOU BURNS, AIRLINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION

9 RICH KARNIEWICZ, FBI

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INTERVIEWEE

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DUANE ANDRE THOMAS

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E X H I B I T S

IDENTIFIED

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None

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## 1 PROCEEDINGS

2 MR. WIEMEYER: Would you give us your full name and  
3 spell your last name for us, please?

4 MR. THOMAS: Okay. Duane Andre Thomas. The last  
5 name is T-H-O-M-A-S.

6 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. And what is your current  
7 address?

8 MR. THOMAS: 106-14 226th Street -- New York 11411.

9 MR. WIEMEYER: And your telephone number?

10 MR. THOMAS: -- -5787.

11 MR. WIEMEYER: And by whom are you employed?

12 MR. THOMAS: Ogden Fueling.

13 MR. WIEMEYER: How long have you worked for them?

14 MR. THOMAS: Over two years, about two years and  
15 three months.

16 MR. WIEMEYER: And what do you do for them? You're a  
17 fueler.

18 MR. THOMAS: Yes.

19 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. Were you working -- the night  
20 that --

21 MR. THOMAS: Yes, I was working.

22 MR. WIEMEYER: You're the one who fueled the  
23 airplane.

24 MR. THOMAS: Um-hum.

25 MR. WIEMEYER: Would you just relate to us your

1 recollections of that event of fueling that airplane?

2 MR. THOMAS: Well, the most that happened, happened  
3 -- the panel shut down, and I spoke to the mechanic and he  
4 called up another mechanic and they went out -- the landing  
5 gear -- the front wheel --

6 MR. WIEMEYER: Do you know some sort of document that  
7 you use on your field airplane -- a piece of paper that tells  
8 you how much to put where?

9 MR. THOMAS: Yes, um-hum.

10 MR. WIEMEYER: Do you recall any of the figures from  
11 what you -- in that plane?

12 MR. THOMAS: In the plane?

13 MR. WIEMEYER: Yes.

14 Would you recognize a fuel slip if you saw it?

15 MR. THOMAS: Yes.

16 (Whereupon, the document was shown to the witness.)

17 MR. WIEMEYER: Can you tell if that's the actual --  
18 used or is that -- do you just recognize that that's one of the  
19 fuel slips? So that's the sheet paper that you filled out?

20 MR. THOMAS: Yes, um-hum.

21 MR. WIEMEYER: At any time during that refueling, did  
22 any of the TWA people request any changes in the fuel load to  
23 you?

24 MR. THOMAS: No -- they change it, they give us a new  
25 sheet of paper. Every time they change it -- If up it or down

1 it -- give us a new sheet of paper.

2 MR. WIEMEYER: Well, hypothetically, what would be  
3 your reaction if somebody came to you and said, "Hey, I want  
4 you to put X amount in this tank, rather than what is on -- "

5 MR. THOMAS: On this sheet?

6 MR. WIEMEYER: " -- the sheet"?

7 MR. THOMAS: Well, the only person who really tell  
8 you that is the captain -- mechanic couldn't come through and  
9 tell you -- unless -- then he could tell you put X amount in  
10 one tank because you want to test a tank or something, but,  
11 otherwise -- listen to the captain --

12 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. Did you have any contact with  
13 any of the crew members on board the airplane?

14 MR. THOMAS: No.

15 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. Did you have any -- other than  
16 what you've described -- did you have any other events that you  
17 recall -- fueling that airplane?

18 MR. THOMAS: That was about it.

19 MR. WIEMEYER: Did you have any conversation, other  
20 than the one that you related, with any of the mechanics?

21 MR. THOMAS: with what?

22 MR. WIEMEYER: Any of the mechanics, the TWA  
23 mechanics?

24 MR. THOMAS: If I had a conversation --

25 MR. WIEMEYER: Yes. Did you talk to any of the

1 mechanics other than about --

2 MR. THOMAS: No, the most I told them that the panel  
3 wasn't working and that I needed the panel to come back on to  
4 finish fueling the plane, and I said, "Do what you have to do,"  
5 and the panel came back on -- broke off. Because they  
6 explained to me that the panel gave some sort of trouble,  
7 because where the panel broke down, he said this is the one --  
8 somebody said, "This is the one that give the trouble with the  
9 panel." So they went in and they did what they had to do and  
10 just came back out on the field --

11 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. Did you notice any fuel  
12 dripping from anyplace?

13 MR. THOMAS: No.

14 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. Had you ever run across that,  
15 where you had fuel dripping from an airplane while you were  
16 fueling it?

17 MR. THOMAS: No.

18 MR. WIEMEYER: If that did occur, what would be your  
19 action?

20 MR. THOMAS: You'd have to call -- the mechanic.

21 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay.

22 MR. STACEY: I'm Terry Stacey, 747 Captain with TWA.  
23 Do you recall approximately what time you finished  
24 fueling or would that be noted --

25 MR. THOMAS: Well, you'd probably have to ask the



1 supervisor. I believe it was after seven -- after seven, I  
2 think --

3 MR. STACEY: Did you have any contact with your  
4 supervisor during the fueling?

5 MR. THOMAS: Yes, I called him over -- called him --  
6 the panel --

7 MR. STACEY: Okay. And did the entire panel shut  
8 down --

9 MR. THOMAS: Yes.

10 MR. STACEY: The whole thing shut down.

11 MR. THOMAS: The whole thing.

12 MR. STACEY: That airplane was accepting fuel  
13 normally in the tanks --

14 MR. THOMAS: Yes, uh-huh.

15 MR. STACEY: -- and then it just stopped.

16 Do you recall if any of the tanks had already reached  
17 their destinated level --

18 MR. THOMAS: No, none of them had reached it yet, but  
19 he explained to me that one tank -- I guess if you filled it  
20 over a certain amount it would shut down the panel. So I guess  
21 that's what happened. It shut it down in that way.

22 MR. STACEY: Do you know what tank --

23 MR. THOMAS: I don't remember what tank he told me.

24 MR. STACEY: So it's a common occurrence?

25 MR. THOMAS: I don't know. That's what he told me,

1 so I just remember what he said.

2 MR. STACEY: Now I mean -- excuse me -- when you're  
3 fueling other airplanes for other carriers, 747s, that's  
4 something you run into occasionally?

5 MR. THOMAS: No, that was the first time.

6 MR. STACEY: Okay. Okay. Thanks. No further  
7 questions.

8 MS. LIEBER: Lu Lieber with the FBI.

9 Which gate over at TWA do you frequently fill the  
10 aircrafts at?

11 MR. THOMAS: One gate?

12 MS. LIEBER: Right.

13 MR. THOMAS: It's just from any gate. We don't have  
14 special gates.

15 MS. LIEBER: Okay. So they dispatch you over to a  
16 specific gate.

17 MR. THOMAS: Um-hum.

18 MS. LIEBER: Okay. Have you ever had problems  
19 fueling any aircraft at any of the TWA gates in that area?

20 MR. THOMAS: What do you mean by "problems"?

21 "Problems" in what way?

22 MS. LIEBER: Well, accepting fuel.

23 MR. THOMAS: Yes -- more than one time the plane  
24 won't accept the fuel or sometime it's just the panel -- maybe  
25 a magnet -- Sometimes you just have to play with the gauges --

1 the gauge to open the door and they come back on. Sometime you  
2 have to call a mechanic and they gotta put it together -- you  
3 know -- to put it back on, occasionally.

4 MS. LIEBER: Are there any gates that you are aware  
5 of that say they're -- during the fueling process the aircraft  
6 does not accept fuel? Any specific gates?

7 MR. THOMAS: No.

8 MS. LIEBER: Do you recall ever refueling this  
9 aircraft, 17119, prior to July 17th?

10 MR. THOMAS: I don't know. As I said, we'll fuel --  
11 You're fueling sometimes four to five jobs in a day.

12 MS. LIEBER: Um-hum.

13 MR. THOMAS: So you don't really know -- you don't  
14 take notes of what you do for a week.

15 MS. LIEBER: Okay. Thank you very much.

16 MR. KLAPACH: Steve Klapach from the FAA. I have  
17 none.

18 MR. HALE: Charlie Hale with the IAM.

19 That particular day on aircraft 17119, did you notice  
20 anything peculiar, looking at the aircraft, in the fueling  
21 panel area?

22 MR. THOMAS: In the fueling panel?

23 MR. HALE: Not in the panel per se, but on the  
24 aircraft in that area?

25 MR. THOMAS: You know that thing for the hydraulic,

1 the -- panel?

2 MR. HALE: Um-hum.

3 MR. THOMAS: I think it didn't have any, and that was  
4 about it.

5 MR. HALE: That's the only thing that was really out  
6 of the ordinary?

7 MR. THOMAS: Yes, that was the only thing out of the  
8 ordinary.

9 MR. HALE: All right. You didn't by chance notice if  
10 they were loading any baggage in the aft-cargo compartment?

11 MR. THOMAS: In the aft-cargo?

12 MR. HALE: Yes.

13 MR. THOMAS: What is the aft-cargo?

14 MR. HALE: The aft-cargo, in the back of the plane.  
15 Yes, where they're putting baggage in.

16 MR. THOMAS: I don't recall. They probably were. I  
17 don't recall.

18 MR. HALE: And what fuel load or at what time span  
19 during the fueling did the panel shut down?

20 MR. THOMAS: Around -- 20 minutes into the fueling it  
21 shut down, because nearly as I started to fuel, the panel just  
22 went black.

23 MR. HALE: Okay. Thank you very much.

24 MR. LONGWELL: Kevin Longwell of Boeing.

25 Twenty minutes into the fueling. At this point load,

1 would you expect the tanks to have filled up?

2 MR. THOMAS: Filled up? No, because I think -- I  
3 just think no tank -- first, when the tank starts to shut down  
4 is probably -- between 45 minutes 'til let's say an hour, even  
5 for the outer tanks, before they start shutting down, at least  
6 45 minutes to an hour.

7 MR. LONGWELL: What pressure do you normally fuel at?

8 MR. THOMAS: What pressure? Forty.

9 MR. LONGWELL: Do you recall if that was the pressure  
10 you fueled 119 at?

11 MR. THOMAS: -- the pressure of fuel --

12 MR. LONGWELL: Did you fuel 119, that night of the  
13 17th, at 40 psi?

14 MR. THOMAS: Yes. See, when all the gauges is open,  
15 you don't really have no pressure, so sometime it's harder for  
16 the pressure gauge to reach up to 40. So when you start  
17 shutting down tanks, that's when we start worrying about  
18 pressure.

19 MR. LONGWELL: But do you ever physically change the  
20 pressure on the --

21 MR. THOMAS: Mostly have it about -- when you open  
22 and close it -- shut down, close the pressure --

23 MR. LONGWELL: No further questions.

24 MR. BURNS: Lou Burns, Airline Pilots Association,  
25 and I have no questions.

1 MR. STACEY: -- a followup question.

2 When you go to fuel an aircraft, do you identify the  
3 ones you're going to fuel by date or how do you do that?

4 MR. THOMAS: By --

5 MR. STACEY: When you hook up and you're going to  
6 fuel all the main tanks, for example, and so then you open all  
7 the valves for all the tanks to set fuel, is that correct?

8 MR. THOMAS: Yes.

9 MR. STACEY: Did you observe the gauges, which -- is  
10 one fill-up --

11 MR. THOMAS: -- the left side fill up before the  
12 right side of the tank.

13 MR. STACEY: That makes sense.

14 But any specific tank on the left side --

15 MR. THOMAS: First?

16 MR. STACEY: Yes.

17 MR. THOMAS: The last outer tank, the small one --

18 MR. STACEY: Um-hum.

19 MR. THOMAS: That's the one -- normally fills up  
20 first.

21 MR. STACEY: But let's say you're going to put 20 --  
22 let's say you're going to put 70,000 pounds of fuel in number 3  
23 main --

24 MR. THOMAS: Um-hum.

25 MR. STACEY: -- 26 in the number 2, and in the

1 reserve would be -- 3,300 or 3,400 pounds. You observe the  
2 fuel panel, what relationship would the larger tanks have to  
3 fall in reference to the reserve tank?

4 MR. THOMAS: What does the larger tanks have to do  
5 with the reserve tanks?

6 MR. STACEY: What relationship would they have in the  
7 -- in other words, would they kind of come up together or would  
8 the end boards come up real high and then the -- I just never  
9 observed it. I guess what I'm asking if -- Let me ask it  
10 another way. If you park into the left side of the airplane,  
11 you're filling and you fill up all the tanks, which tank would  
12 you observe normally to shut off first?

13 MR. THOMAS: What tank?

14 MR. STACEY: Yes.

15 MR. THOMAS: The left reserve.

16 MR. STACEY: Left reserve.

17 MR. THOMAS: Um-hum.

18 MR. STACEY: And at that point, have you ever noticed  
19 as to how close to full the main would be? Would it continue a  
20 long time?

21 MR. THOMAS: I would say the left reserve shut off --  
22 probably -- whatever you start at anyway -- probably about 20,  
23 and the main is probably -- something around 30 --

24 MR. STACEY: All right. So what normally occurs,  
25 then, the out-board reserve tank would automatically shut off,

1 is that correct?

2 MR. THOMAS: Well, you can have it automatically shut  
3 off, but sometime that -- a spill. So you shut it off before  
4 sometimes your destination -- or sometime it shut off by  
5 itself.

6 MR. STACEY: Okay. What's your normal procedure in  
7 stopping the fuel to the reserve tank?

8 MR. THOMAS: To reserve? Well, I would say if it  
9 shut off before -- 34, you shut off before, you have -- shut  
10 off at 33, so you -- shut it down. But let's say you sometime  
11 you go 34, I want to go to 35, so you shut it down before it  
12 reaches 35, so you don't -- you're not -- the fuel.

13 MR. STACEY: Okay. So you're just sitting there  
14 watching the gauges and you just -- you want and you can shut  
15 it down --

16 Do you recall that night if the reserves -- when you  
17 resumed fueling -- You resumed fueling, do you recall whether  
18 you had to physically shut down the reserves or if you shut  
19 down --

20 MR. THOMAS: I don't remember.

21 MR. STACEY: When a mechanic went in the E&E  
22 compartment and did whatever he had to do, did he have any  
23 conversation with you as to fueling then or --

24 MR. THOMAS: No, he just -- Well, they just asked,  
25 "Did it come back on?" whatever, and then you just start



1 fueling again whenever it come back on.

2 MR. STACEY: Okay. Once he's done something in the  
3 E&E compartment, would you anticipate that that would -- that  
4 you'd have to have more diligence in fueling the airplane or -

5 MR. THOMAS: Well, you watch it -- you know what I  
6 mean -- closer than usual, just in case it shut down again.

7 MR. STACEY: In case it shut down again?

8 MR. THOMAS: Yes, I mean, just in case the same thing  
9 happened again.

10 MR. STACEY: Okay. Would you expect once he went in  
11 the E&E compartment and did what he had to do, would you expect  
12 the tanks to shut off when they got full?

13 MR. THOMAS: Shut off by themselves?

14 MR. STACEY: Yes.

15 MR. THOMAS: I guess so because they have -- I think  
16 they said the plane was designed with a thing that cut off the  
17 switches, cut off the tanks before -- when it reach a  
18 destination, but I figured that for him to start the panel that  
19 only have to do with -- you know what I mean -- stopping --  
20 Let's say you go to 34 -- Let me try to explain this. They  
21 have a safety mechanism, I think, in the plane that's supposed  
22 to stop it from giving a spill, right?

23 MR. STACEY: Correct.

24 MR. THOMAS: Okay. For him to go in the landing  
25 gear, I don't really think that has nothing to do with that

1 safety mechanism that's supposed to stop the fuel from spilling  
2 or anything.

3 MR. STACEY: Okay. That was my question. Thank you.

4 So you would still anticipate that that would work  
5 after what he had done.

6 MR. THOMAS: Yes.

7 MR. STACEY: You had no knowledge of it otherwise,  
8 and you don't recall whether or not you had to -- Obviously,  
9 two and three and -- two and three -- one, two, three and four  
10 -- you had to shut off normally -- because they weren't full.

11 MR. THOMAS: Yes.

12 MR. STACEY: And the reserves, you don't recall.

13 MR. THOMAS: Reserves, I don't remember.

14 MR. STACEY: Okay.

15 MR. THOMAS: Most of the time the reserves shut off  
16 by themselves --

17 MR. STACEY: Do you recall what the reserves were  
18 reading before they shut off?

19 MR. THOMAS: No.

20 MR. STACEY: Thank you.

21 MR. WIEMEYER: Any other questions?

22 MR. HALE: In the reserve tanks there were no special  
23 instructions regarding the reserve tanks and the filling of  
24 them?

25 MR. THOMAS: No special instructions?

1 MR HALE: Um-hum.

2 MR. THOMAS: As I said, he mentioned something about  
3 some tank being, I guess, semi off balance, so I guess when it  
4 reached a certain point of balance it would shut down the  
5 panel, and I said nobody -- I mean -- told me about that part,  
6 so, as I say, when he -- about the panel, the most I did was  
7 just to fuel it.

8 MR. HALE: So after that it fueled normally and there  
9 was no problem.

10 MR. THOMAS: It fueled okay and everything. Nothing  
11 happened after that.

12 MR. HALE: Okay. Thank you.

13 MR. STACEY: Once the fueling shut off and you  
14 resumed fueling again, was there any change made to the  
15 distribution in the fuel load from the --

16 MR. THOMAS: You mean if they upped the fuel?

17 MR. STACEY: Or changed it, yes, or changed the  
18 distribution.

19 MR. THOMAS: You mean changed where the fuel is  
20 supposed to go? No --

21 MR. STACEY: To your knowledge, what is on that M-180  
22 is what you put in the tanks.

23 MR. THOMAS: That's what I put in the tanks.

24 MR. STACEY: Thank you.

25 MR. WIEMEYER: In that regard, for the record, I

1 would like it known that Mr. Thomas did identify the fueling  
2 slip as his handwriting and his initials, is that correct, sir?

3 MR. THOMAS: Uh-huh.

4 MR. WIEMEYER: And that -- as part of the Operations  
5 Group Report.

6 Anybody have anything else for Mr. Thomas?

7 (No response.)

8 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

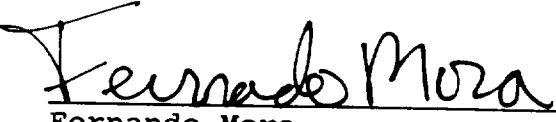
This is to certify that the attached proceedings before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: TWA FLIGHT 800, INTERVIEW OF DUANE ANDRE  
THOMAS

PLACE: Jamaica, New York

DATE: November 19, 1996

were held according to the record, and that this is the  
original, complete, true and accurate transcript which has  
been compared to the recording accomplished at the hearing.

  
Fernando Mora  
Official Reporter

DYANE A. THOMAS

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