

Paul Pugh
No date
by Williams

STATEMENT OF:PAUL PUGH.

BY MR. JOHNSTONE:

Q You are Mr. Paul Pugh?

A Yes, sir.

Q Tell us anything you want to tell us.

A Tell you anything? I am going to tell you just exactly what I know, and that's all. I happened to be the Top Sergeant at No. 3 Camp, and during that gentleman's absence (indicating party referred to), Captain Davis, I was in charge of the Camp. That is, he happened to be away; the veteran's team was in Miami playing base ball. Sunday I heard something about a storm, so I thought it was my duty to go to headquarters and find out in regards to this storm, and I went up and seen this man Sheldon, Assistant Director, along about between the hour of five and six.

Q Sunday?

A Yes, sir. I think that was the 2nd or the 1st.

Q The First.

A The first? All right. Mr. Sheldon and I talked a while, and finally he called up Mr. Ghent and got in contact with Mr. Ghent over in Jacksonville, and from what I could make out of the conversation over the telephone, Mr. Ghent must have told the man not to take any chances, because Mr. Sheldon said there was nothing serious and nothing to be alarmed at, and if there was

212

-3-

Pugh
talks to
Sheldon

that he would get in touch with Mr. Chent, who is the Director, or was the Director of the camps at that time.

Q Yes, sir..

A So then he called up Mr. Gaddis, of the Florida East Coast, in regards to how long it would take to get a train down here, and he told me at that time that Mr. Gaddis, or whatever it is, said three hours. So we sat there, and he took me over to the map, and showed me where the storm was, and how fast it was traveling, and that there was nothing to worry about; and I asked him if he would be in the office any time that night; I would like to come back again and see if there was any further information on it, and he told me he would be there practically all night, or someone would, and I went back, I imagine it was around nine o'clock, and I found Mr. Sheldon, his wife and Mr. Hardaker playing 500-rummy. I asked him if he had heard any more about the storm, and he said nothing, only there was nothing to be worried about. So I stood there and watched them play a little rummy a while, and I told him if he heard anything I would like to know, because there was a bunch of boys down there I would like to look out for. So Monday morning, after the regular routine after we got up, I had to go down to the supply to get some provisions we were short on. If I remember right, I think it was bread and limes. So, on the way back, I imaging it was about ten o'clock, again I stepped in to see Mr. Sheldon, and Mr. Sheldon told me again there was nothing to be worried about; and he took me over to the chart and showed me where

FEC
Says
3 hrs.

Playing
rummy
Sunday
night

Goat for
supplies
Monday

he had it tacked off, and that the storm in thirteen hours since I had been there the night before, had only advanced 50 miles, from the time I had been down there.

Q That was Monday morning?

A Yes, sir; and he said there was nothing to worry about.

Q Which direction was it going?

A North and west, I think the gentleman said. The storm area was east of Cuba, if I recall right what he told me. So I went on back, anyway. He told me to go back and tell the boys there was nothing to worry about. So I went back, and I think it was about 2:30 Captain Davis there came back from Miami, and Mr. Sain, Mr. C. G. Sain --

Q Well, Captain Davis said he received the orders to move around 1:30.

A I beg your pardon?

Q Captain Davis said he received orders to move around 1:30; he must have been in the camp at that time.

A It was around two o'clock, wasn't it, Bert? (Addressing another veteran). I can't give you the correct time, but I went back and sounded the siren, and called all the boys in and told them what to expect, and what to do, and get everything in readiness, that we were going to get out of there, and there was going to be a train in there at 5:00 or 5:30; so that was that. The train never come. But the following night I spent with Colonel Ed Sheeran on the Panama, wasn't it, Pete?

PETE CAPPALJOHN: No, the "Sarasota".

214

-5-

Orders
to
move

A The "Sarasota"; all right. And Mr. Sheeran informed me that he had informed -- who was it?

CAPPAJOHN: Mr. Sheldon.

A Mr. Sheldon; on Sunday, that if he didn't get those men out of there, there would be a lot of lives lost, and from the indications that it was going to be the worst storm they had ever had on the keys, and there would be a lot of lives lost.

Q We have his statement, and he hasn't told us anything like that.

A Well, then he has misrepresented things to us.

Q No; I don't think so; I wouldn't say that. He didn't say in his statement that he had told Sheldon to get the men off the keys.

A Well then he certainly misrepresented things to us.

Q I wouldn't charge him with any misrepresentations of fact. He didn't say anything about Sheldon. He said he was familiar with storms.

A Well, here's something else. He said that he had advised him on Sunday to get those men out of there; that he had put so many years in, about thirty, down on the keys, that he knew what to expect, and he even went so far as to say that Sheldon wouldn't have ordered that train when he did, which was three o'clock, Monday afternoon, if it hadn't been for himself. Isn't that right? (Addressing some of other men standing by).

MR. KORDELL: Yes.

A He said he went up looking for him, and he was

215

-6-

parked in front of the Matecumbe Hotel.

Q At three o'clock?

A Yes, sir.

Q Did you know it was a fact that Mr. Sheldon ordered a train at 1:30?

A No, sir; I did not.

MR. KORDELL: That doesn't make any difference; let Mr. Pugh tell his story.

A I am just telling you my own story.

MR. JOHNSTONE: I want all the facts.

MR. KORDELL: It doesn't make any difference what other people's statements are; get his statement.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Do you want to make a statement?

MR. KORDELL: No; never mind me.

MR. PUGH: That's all I know, Mr. Johnstone; and all I know is in regards to what Mr. Sheeran told us Tuesday night on the "Sarasota". We put the night in over there with Mr. Sheeran.

Q Tuesday night?

A Yes, sir; and that's just about the words he used, that he even went down there Monday afternoon and said something in regards to getting the men out of there, and he met Sheldon downstairs, and Mr. Sheldon taken him upstairs, and he said "Does it really look very serious?" and Sheeran said that he said that it did; and he said that he sat right down, and he didn't know the exact time, and he sat right down and ordered the cars.

(At this point there was an argument between the

216

on-looking veterans; one of them wanted to know "why he had been prompted to tell him on Sunday to go up and get shaved, and that they were going out", and another veteran answered that "that was Monday; and that he (Pugh) sounded the siren, and the train was due in".)

MR. PUGH: I don't know whether the train was ordered at one o'clock, but I saw a statement in the paper that the train wasn't ordered until 3:10.

Q Now, old Top, there has been a terrible calamity down there, and let me ask you this; did you see the weather reports yourself?

A Sir?

Q Did you see the weather reports?

A The barometer?

Q No. I mean these advisories that came from the Weather Bureau.

A No, sir; I did not.

Q About the storm?

A No, sir; I was taking Mr. Sheldon's word.

Q All you knew about it was what Mr. Sheldon told you?

A Yes, sir.

Q Now you had the impression that Captain Sheeran told you that he had advised Mr. Sheldon - -

A I heard that, yes, sir.

Q To move the men out?

217

A Yes, sir.

Q Now, when did Captain Sheeran say he had given that advice to Mr. Sheldon?

A Well, he said that he notified -- it wasn't Sheldon that he told Sunday, because Mr. Sheldon didn't get over from Key West Sunday, I don't believe, until about three o'clock, if I remember right.

Q That's right.

A But if I have the right parties, they were Mr. Outler and Mr. Pattison that he informed; but I am sure Mr. Sheeran told me that if it hadn't been for him the train wouldn't have been ordered Monday until three o'clock.

Q He did?

A Yes, sir; in the presence of Mr. Cappajohn, and ~~other~~ ^{Mr. Sheeran} men, and a man by the name of Cooper.

MR. KORDELL: Yes; he is down on the keys now.

Q And I understand you are under the impression Captain Sheeran said that he advised Sheldon along about three o'clock on Monday to order the train?

A Yes, sir; Mr. Johnstone, I only took his word for that. And if he didn't, he lied to us.

Q I wouldn't say that; I think Captain Sheeran is a truthful man.

A The man told me he had put in thirty years down on the keys, and which I know he helped on this Florida East Coast railroad down here, and he ought to be familiar with weather conditions in

regards to a storm; don't you think?

Q Yes, sir. Now let me ask you this, if it is a fact that this train was ordered out at 1:30, about the time you fellows got notice to evacuate -- and that is when you did get notice to evacuate?

A Well, it was about two o'clock, Mr. Johnstone.

Q That was prior to the time when Sheeran said he had advised Sheldon to get the train?

A It sure is. That must make a liar out of Sheeran, or whatever his name is.

Q I don't think anybody is lying; I think it is a little --

A Conflicting?

Q One man talks from one point of view, and another from another point of view. You fellows have been through a terrible experience, and it is pretty hard to remember a half an hour or so difference.

A No; it isn't hard for me to remember. You know, my comprehension is pretty good, and if a man tells me if it hadn't been for him it wouldn't have been ordered until three o'clock, then the train wasn't ordered until three o'clock or Sheeran is a liar.

Q That is a large statement.

A No that isn't.

Q Suppose I should tell you that the record of the Florida East Coast Railroad and the records of the camp show the

train was ordered at 1:30, would you believe that?

MR. KORDELL: No; because the records don't show that.

MR. PUGH: Mr. Johnstone, if you would show me that, I would believe it, yes, sir; I actually would.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Well, that's a fact, old man.

A It is?

MR. JOHNSTONE: Yes, sir.

A All right; Sheeran lied to us.

Q No; Sheeran just got mixed up on the time.

MR. KORDELL: How is it the train didn't get out until 4:20?

MR. JOHNSTONE: That is an interesting thing; I would be glad to tell you.

MR. PUGH: A railroader is subject to call any time; he knows how many times he is out, and he is subject to call at that time, and one hour from the time a man gets a call he is supposed to be going on most railroads; I don't know how long it is in the south. You couldn't steam up a coal engine in an hour.

Q How long would it take to steam it up here?

A I should judge forty-five minutes --- between forty-five minutes and an hour, or maybe an hour and a half.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Now, the Florida East Coast railroad train was ordered out between 1:30 and 2:00 o'clock; the orders reached here from St. Augustine at about 2:15; it was labor day, and there was about half the crew off for half a day in the yard; they started firing up the engine, and it did take that long to

fire it up; they had to collect the crews, and it took about an hour to get the crew together, and they had to collect the cars together.

MR. PUGH: A. Don't you imagine they were collecting this crew while they were steaming up the train?

MR. JOHNSTONE: Probably so, but the train left at 4:20, and on the way down it got delayed by a slip; and then a cable was over the road which delayed it another hour and a half, and that accounted for the delay; it was just a series of enforced and unforeseen delays.

MR. PUGH: Just an Act of God, I suppose!

MR. JOHNSTONE: You can say what you please about it.

MR. PUGH: Well, everybody is entitled to their own opinion.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Is there anything else you would like to say about it?

MR. PUGH: Not a thing.

* * * * *

STATEMENT OF:

HARRY CUSHMAN.

EXAMINATION BY MR. JOHNSTONE:

Q What is your name?

A Harry Cushman.

Q What have you to say?

A Why is it that the ferry wouldn't take any more passengers after Saturday?

4 221

Q Is it a fact that the ferry boat was tied up after Saturday?

MR. CUSHMAN: No; Sunday afternoon; it ran its return trip from Key West Sunday.

MR. PUGH: It was tied up Sunday afternoon.

MR. KORDELL: You said "When are you going to Key West".

MR. CUSHMAN: Yes; and you said you couldn't go because the ferry isn't going to make any more trips.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Sunday afternoon?

MR. CUSHMAN: Yes, sir.

MR. JOHNSTONE: It is a fact that Mr. Sheldon came out of Key West on that ferry, arriving at Matecumbe about three o'clock Sunday afternoon, so it is not a fact the ferry boat was tied up Saturday.

MR. KORDELL: No, sir; it ran Sunday.

MR. PUGH: You didn't see it go to Key West Sunday.

MR. KORDELL: No; it was Saturday; it came back Sunday and stayed tied at the slip.

MR. PUGH: Now, Mr. Johnstone, don't think I'm trying to lay the blame on anybody, but I do feel like if there is anybody responsible, they should pay for it.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Well, do you think there is anybody responsible?

MR. PUGH: Well, according to your statement, there isn't.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Well, I would like to have you fellows know the whole facts about this business; there is nothing anybody wants to conceal. I am sure you regret the loss of your comrades; we all do; and it is a terrible calamity. If it will make any of you fellows feel any better, I would be glad to and I will send copies of the records to you of when the train was ordered. I can't get the original records, but I can have copies made; I can't ask them to give up the records; wouldn't certified copies be all right, of their records?

MR. PUGH: Ordering this train had to go clear to St. Augustine?

MR. JOHNSTONE: Oh, yes.

MR. PUGH: It couldn't be ordered directly out of here?

MR. JOHNSTONE: No; but that's just a matter of a telephone conversation.

MR. PUGH: I realize that. Well, what I was basing most of my opinion on was the word of Colonel Sheeran; this other stuff I know to be a fact; that's facts.

A VETERAN (Name not known or given): Why did Sheeran have his tug boat men start towing in his machinery at six o'clock on Sunday Morning?

MR. PUGH: I imagine on account of a storm.

MR. JOHNSTONE: What did Mr. Sheeran do at five o'clock on Sunday morning?

MR. PUGH: It was six o'clock -- a quarter of six when his men started getting down there on that Sunday morning.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Sunday morning?

MR. PUGH: Yes, sir; and they were taking all the machinery that he had out in the bay and putting it back in the storm channel they had built for protection.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Who did that? Mr. Sheeran?

MR. CUSHMAN: Yes, sir.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Do you mean his heavy equipment, and so on?

MR. CUSHMAN: Yes; like his dredges and sand sucker.

MR. JOHNSTONE: They were putting it in a protective cove?

MR. CUSHMAN: Yes, sir.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Well, now, Sheeran at that time was on his way from Key West to the islands -- no -- Shelden; Oh, Captain Sheeran, you mean.

MR. CUSHMAN: Yes; he was Superintendent of Construction down there for the Overseas Highway.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Captain Sheeran says he protected his equipment against gales and high winds, in his statement. He was concerned about the possibility of a hurricane.

MR. CUSHMAN: Sir?

MR. JOHNSTONE: Sheeran was concerned about the possibility of a hurricane.

MR. PUGH: I imagine so; the man ought to be familiar with it; he helped build the railroad in 1906, you know, and he lost many a life down there, and he said he was talking from experience.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Did he leave the islands?

MR. PUGH: No, sir; he stayed right there.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Did his men leave?

MR. PUGH: I will say the majority of them did; didn't they, Pete?

MR. CAPPAJOHN: No; they all stuck.

MR. KORDELL: He made his son come back. His son came back and pulled the stuff in.

MR. CAPPAJOHN: Yes; well, the son came down to help when it was half towed in.

MR. PUGH: Didn't his son go out of there?

MR. KORDELL: He went out Friday afternoon.

MR. PUGH: Who was that that stopped over there in the house when me and you and Mr. Davis was in there, and was on the way to Miami, and I tried to ^{get Mr. Sain} go along with them?

MR. SAIN: Mr. Fred Alexander, Mr. Duncan's secretary; he left. He just came down and then he took the waiter along. Mr. Sheeran's son came to my house; he was to come down and take me back.

MR. JOHNSTONE: What is your name, old man?

MR. SAIN: G. C. Sain.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Go ahead now.

MR. SAIN: Well, I rode in with Captain Sheeran's son, Lester, who operates one of the heavy machines out on the Bay.

MR. JOHNSTONE: You rode in to what? Miami?

MR. SAIN: Yes, sir; to my home. He was to pick me up Tuesday morning, as Monday was Labor Day, at five o'clock, to return to camp.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Yes, sir; and when was that?

MR. SAIN: Friday afternoon.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Friday afternoon?

MR. SAIN: Yes, sir.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Then he didn't come out on account of the storm; he came out on account of the holiday, didn't he?

MR. SAIN: He came out on account of the holiday. Then he told me if something pops up and Papa calls me,--I will be back Tuesday morning, but if he calls me back ahead of that I'll come by the house and notify you; and he came back, but I won't be able to give you -- I don't remember what time he came to my house, headed back for the camp; he pulled me out of bed early in the morning to answer the door.

MR. JOHNSTONE: What day was that?

MR. SAIN: I think it was Sunday morning. I hadn't even gotten out of bed for my paper; it was Sunday morning; and he said "If I get back tonight or tomorrow, why then I will come by the house and let you know so you can know

I am going to take you back Tuesday morning". I didn't see him any more. At Eleven o'clock Monday I received a call from Mr. King at my home phone, who is Superintendent of Transportation for the F. E. R. A. down there, asking me for Mr. Davis' hotel address. I asked him what he wanted and I would get intouch with Mr. Davis in a very few minutes if he wanted me to, and he said "I want you people to get back here as quick as possible", and I said "All right, hang up, I'm going", and I immediately called Mr. Davis' hotel; I knew where he was; and I called for him, and thirty minutes later Mr. Davis and I were headed back at a good rapid speed.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Monday?

MR. SAIN: Yes, sir. We left my house approximately at 11:30 and we made a hard drive, and the car was in good condition, and we arrived at Mr. King's place at the filling station and little restaurant beyond the Matecumbe Hotel, and Mr. Davis had handed him papers regarding the train, and I didn't read them, and that's as much as I can say.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Did Captain Sheeran tell you why he didn't get off the keys?

MR. SAIN: I would like to tell you something about that. Mr. Duncan's secretary came by, and Mr. Sheeran came along; I begged him to leave the keys. He said "No, sir; I stay with my equipment", and he said "I can't go", and he said "When you get in on the train, call my house;

call my house and say I will take care of myself, but I have to stay".

MR. JOHNSTONE: He felt it his duty to stay there?

MR. SAIN: Yes, sir. And in fact, I felt it was my duty to go back down and help get the men out.

MR. JOHNSTONE: Do any of you other gentlemen want to say anything?

THE NURSE: The man with the plaster across his nose was Kordell.

MR. PUGH: Yes; he was from Camp 5. I don't know any statement is necessary. All I was basing my opinion on, Mr. Johnstone, was what Mr. Sheeran told in the presence of Pete Ceppajohn, Cooper and myself, that if it hadn't been for him the train wouldn't have been ordered even at three o'clock; that's what I'm basing my opinion on. This other stuff I told you about Mr. Sheldon, there was nothing reflected in that on anybody, only he showed me on Monday morning at ten o'clock that the storm in thirteen hours had advanced only 50 miles towards the coast. I am not trying to lay the blame on anybody.

MR. JOHNSTONE: I know you are not; we just want to get the facts.

MR. PUGH: I told you the facts just as I know them.

MR. JOHNSTONE: And I understand that if it is a

fact that this train was ordered out at 1:30, your impression of this whole business would be different?

MR. PUGH: Sir:

MR. JOHNSTONE: If it is a fact that this train was ordered out at 1:30, I understand your impression of this whole business would be different?

A MR. PUGH: Why certainly. Naturally. Why wouldn't it? Then I would be almost led to believe that the railroad was in fault.

MR. JOHNSTONE: All right; I will see that you get the data about when the train was ordered and when it left.

(Thereupon, Mr. Pugh and the others gathered around having no further statements to make , the inquiry was moved to another part of the hospital, excepting for the following statement requested to be included in this record):

MR. CUSHMAN: I want your record to show there that the service of every kind in this hospital is the best of any hospital that anyone was ever in, so far as treatment, nurses, doctors and everything combined is concerned. There is no complaint at all on the hospital; it can't be beat.

(This statement was corroborated by a group of seven or eight others gathered about, and at their added request is here set forth).

(MR. KARL H. KORDELL commenced a conversation with Mr. Johnstone, and when asked what his

name was, he wanted to know what difference it made what his name was; Mr. Johnstone replied that he claimed the privilege of knowing the name of the person addressing him; whereupon Mr. Kordell disclosed his name; Mr. Johnstone then asked Mr. Kordell if he wanted to make a statement for the record, to which Mr. Kordell replied: "You God damn right I want to make a statement for the record"; whereupon Mr. Kordell, Mr. Johnstone, Mr. Apt and the Reporter moved off to another part of the hospital where the following statement was taken from Mr. Kordell.

STATEMENT OF:

KARL H. KORDELL.

EXAMINATION BY MR. JOHNSTONE:

Q You are Mr. Karl Kordell?

A Karl H. Kordell; that's right. This is the statement I want to make. That at no time was there any telephone ever put in the Camp No. 5. There was no possible chance of any telephonic communication from other camps to and from No. 5. That I left Camp No. 5 at three o'clock in the afternoon, Monday afternoon, and at that time the information that we had at camp was to this effect, that there was no danger whatsoever of any storm striking there, that we would have some high winds probably reaching 38 or 40 miles an hour, but that the hurricane would not strike any--

wheres near the coast, but would go around Key West.

Q That time was that?

A That was at three o'clock in the afternoon before I left Camp No. 5 and went to No. 3.

Q What day was that?

A Monday afternoon.

MR. JOHNSTONE: All right; now, if you want to ask me any questions, all right.

MR. KORDELL: No, sir; but that's my statement there; now, that's facts.

MR. JOHNSTONE: That's all right; we are very glad to get it.

MR. KORDELL: I happen to know some facts I have gathered since then, that Mr. Robinson was in the mess shack and telling the fellows to take everything easy, when the shack went off and took him and everyone else with it.

MR. JOHNSTONE: All right; anything else?

MR. KORDELL: No; that's all.

* * * * *

The foregoing transcript of the statement made by me is true and correct.

Paul Doyle

-23-