

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, STATE OF
FLORIDA, IN AND FOR MONROE COUNTY.

IN RE: INVESTIGATION BY ASSISTANT
STATE ATTORNEY RELATIVE TO MATTERS
ARISING FROM THE HURRICANE OF
SEPTEMBER 2, 1935

Testimony taken before J. Lancelot Lester, Assistant State Attorney of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of the State of Florida at his office, 413 Fleming Street, Key West, Florida, on September 9th, 1935.

Whereupon G. S. Kennedy having been served with a subpoena ad testificandum, appeared before J. Lancelot Lester, Assistant State Attorney aforesaid, and the said G. S. Kennedy was now duly sworn as a witness by the said Assistant State Attorney, and on examination by the said Assistant State Attorney, testified as follows:

Q. What is your name, age and occupation?

A. G. S. Kennedy; age, forty-seven; meteorologist, U. S. Weather Bureau, stationed at Key West, Florida.

Q. Are you the meteorologist in charge of the Weather Bureau at Key West, Florida?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Who else, if any one, is employed at the Weather Bureau at Key West, Florida, under you?

A. Three assistants are employed in the office -- Mr. Samuel M. Goldsmith, first assistant; Mr. Delance O. Martin, second assistant; and Mr. Leonard G. Pardue, Jr., third assistant.

Q. Are there any other employees at the Weather Bureau besides yourself and your three assistants just named?

A. No; no other commissioned employees; but a janitor is employed by the hour for cleaning purposes.

(G. S. KENNEDY)

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G. S. Kennedy
Sept. 9, 1935
by J. L. Lester

Q. Who was on duty at the Weather Bureau in Key West on August 31st, 1935?

A. Well, we were all on duty . . . just what time do you mean -- you see, we have our shifts. Throughout the storm we gave twenty-four hour service; someone was on duty all the time. I was on duty practically all the time from the morning of the 31st on through.

Q. On through to what?

A. On through until the morning of the 3rd of September.

Q. The other officials, though, were on duty during part of each of the several days just mentioned?

A. They were. Of course, they all had to be off at times to get something to eat and a little sleep occasionally. I know I didn't get much sleep and I don't think the others did.

Q. Commencing with August 31st, 1935, please state what the official weather reports at your office were for that date and for September 1st and September 2nd, 1935.

A. The following advisories and warnings were received from the Forecaster at Jacksonville beginning with that received at 1:02 P.M. August 31st, 1935.

Whereupon the witness exhibited a book to which he referred in the preceding answer.

Q. What is that book, Mr. Kennedy?

A. The official record book of the station.

Q. Do you have extra copies of the official weather reports for the period mentioned?

A. No, only the copies that are entered or pasted in the book, although most of the original teletype tape is still on hand from which said copies were made.

Whereupon all of the said official weather reports are now copied herein and are as follows:

(G. S. KENNEDY)

Q. When you received these several weather reports which we have just referred to, what publicity, if any, did you give to them?

A. All but the orders to hoist warnings were given immediately to the Naval Radio Station at Key West NAR and all, including the orders to hoist warnings, were distributed to shipping interests and other interested parties in Key West and vicinity.

Q. When you say interested parties, to whom do you refer?

A. To parties that have requested us to put their names on our advisory and storm warning list.

Q. What reports, warnings or weather advices did you give or convey by phone or otherwise to any one or more persons connected with the veterans work program on the Florida Keys?

A. Only one party was contacted who was connected with the veterans work program on the keys and that was Mr. R. W. Sheldon.

Q. How did you happen to contact him?

A. He called the office late Saturday night, August 31st, 1955, and said that he had come down on the ferry that evening to spend the week-end in Key West, and asked about the weather conditions as affecting the Florida Keys, saying that if the conditions looked bad he desired to return on the next morning's ferry. He was told at that time, that is, Saturday night, August 31st, conditions did not appear very alarming for that section but if conditions changed during the night we could call him at the hotel and let him know, and he said he would like to be called if there was any change for the worse during the night.

Q. Did this conversation take place in person between you, yourself, and Mr. Sheldon?

A. Yes, with myself, over the telephone.

Q. Did you have any further communication with Mr. Sheldon?

A. I did.

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*Sheldon talked to
Kennedy in Key West
Saturday night*

(G. S. KENNEDY)

Q. When?

A. At approximately five A.M. of the morning of September 1st, I called him, because after our intermediate observations at two A.M. conditions looked as though the storm might prove dangerous on the Florida Keys; so I advised him to take the early morning ferry and return.

*Keys
at
same*

Q. On what date was that you talked to him the second time?

A. Five A.M. on the morning of September 1st. This was the only contact as far as we know with anyone connected with the veterans. I might bring out that the veterans camp -- that the officials -- never requested they be advised from the Key West Weather Bureau office, and they were not on our storm warning list. The only party listed for storm warning information on the upper keys was the State Highway Project Headquarters at Lower Matecumbe.

Q. On each of the several days in question--August 31st to September 2nd, inclusive, 1935--what distribution did you make of storm information along the keys?

A. On September 1st the order to hoist northeast storm warnings was given to the lighthouses along the reef from American Shoals up to Carrysfort; that is, we gave it to Sombrero and asked him to repeat it to the other light-houses, as communication system was very poor and he was the only lighthouse we could get at that time, but he should have had no difficulty in repeating it to the other lighthouses, as they were all on the same cable line, as I understand. We gave the hurricane warning message to the lighthouse also on September 2nd. This advice was also given to the State Highway Project Headquarters at Lower Matecumbe and they were requested to take every precaution for a severe storm and secure their equipment.

*NE
storm
warning
up
as
lighthouses*

Q. Did the railroad office at Key West receive any advices on that day?

A. The railroad office received all of these advisories, and I have been informed by Mr. Costar that they were sent along the telegraph lines either

from Key West end or the Jacksonville end, that all of them were sent to their various telegraph offices on the keys.

Q. Does that apply to the advices on September 1st only?

A. All of the warnings and advisories were given to the railroad, and as far as I know, from what Mr. Costar says, these were sent all along the lines; in the case of the more important ones it was requested they be sent along the line.

Q. Who requested it?

A. I did.

Q. Does your foregoing answer apply to all of the advisories on September 1st only?

A. No; to all the advisories from August 31st to September 2nd inclusive.

Q. Did you give any publicity other than already stated by you to the weather reports of August 31st, September 1st and September 2nd, 1935?

A. There were so many phone calls and inquiries in person at the office that it seemed nearly every resident of Key West called us on the telephone or called in person at the office, and all were given the latest storm information and also told to take every precaution against a severe storm, so that by Sunday night, September 1st, the town was practically all boarded up and in readiness for a severe storm.

Key West ready for storm

Subscribed and sworn to before
me this 9th day of September, 1935.

Assistant State Attorney.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE ELEVENTH JUDICIAL
CIRCUIT, STATE OF FLORIDA, IN AND FOR MONROE COUNTY.

IN RE: INVESTIGATION BY ASSISTANT
STATE ATTORNEY RELATIVE TO MATTERS
ARISING FROM THE HURRICANE OF
SEPTEMBER 2, 1935.

Testimony taken before J. Lancelot Lester,
Assistant State Attorney of the Eleventh Judicial
Circuit of the State of Florida at his office,
413 Fleming Street, Key West, Florida, on
September 10th, 1935.

Whereupon G. S. Kennedy, having been served with a
subpoena ad testificandum, appeared before J. Lancelot Lester,
Assistant State Attorney aforesaid, and the said G. S. Kennedy
was now duly sworn as a witness by the said Assistant State
Attorney, and on examination by the said Assistant State
Attorney, testified as follows:

Q. Mr. Kennedy, you are the same G. S. Kennedy, meteor-
ologist, United States Weather Bureau, stationed at Key West,
Florida, in charge of the local weather bureau, who testified
before me yesterday, is that right?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Mr. Kennedy, can you state as nearly as you can recollect just what conversation you had with Mr. Sheldon at about five o'clock, Sunday morning, September 1st, 1935?

A. I told him that our two a.m. observations indicated the storm was coming farther south than we had expected and that it looked dangerous for his section and advised him to take the early morning ferry as it might be his last chance to get back.

*Looks
dangerous
on ferry*

Q. You had in mind the ferry might not be running by Monday morning?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Would anything short of winds of hurricane force stop the ferry from running?

A. I think gale winds would have prevented the ferry from running.

Q. Would the ferry have run when storm warnings were posted?

A. They told me that they would keep the ferry at Lower Matecumbe if storm warnings were up in this district because they had a safer place for the ferry at Lower Matecumbe than at Nona; that the ferry would not run back south from Matecumbe if storm warnings were up.

*L. Matecumbe
safer than
Nona*

Q. Did you mean to indicate to Mr. Sheldon that there was any immediate danger to the camps?

A. Yes. I intended to convey there was danger in that section. It was impossible to say just where the storm would strike and just how hard it would strike but being familiar

*There was
danger...*

with hurricanes + thought it would be advisable to take every precaution in advance and thought he should be on the ground as early as possible.

Q. You did not indicate to him that in your opinion the camps should be evacuated?

A. No, sir. Nothing was said about that matter.

Q. What weather changes had occurred between your telephone conversation with Mr. Sheldon at eleven o'clock, Saturday night, August 31st, and your call to him at about five o'clock, Sunday morning, September 1st, 1935?

A. Our eight p.m. observations of August 31st indicated that the storm might strike north of Miami and northeast storm warnings were ordered from Miami to Fort Pierce, but the two a.m. observations showed a greater pressure fall at Key West than at Miami and a lower pressure at Key West than at Miami, indicating the storm would strike south rather than north of Miami; therefore, + called Mr. Sheldon and advised him to get back.

Q. Now, subsequent to five o'clock on Sunday morning, September 1st, 1935, did your weather observations indicate that the storm was going to take the same course which was indicated at your two a.m. observations, or were there indications of a further change in the course of the storm?

A. The first observations following the two a.m. observation of September 1st indicated that the storm would likely pass even south of Key West and it was not until the afternoon of September 2nd that wind indications at Key West showed it was going to pass to the northward rather than the southward.

Q. Is there anything further you would like to add to your testimony already given, Mr. Kennedy?

A. I would like to say that all the advisories and warnings issued by the Forecaster in Jacksonville were as near correct as it would be possible to make them, with the reports at hand, and, as I have said before, there were no indications at Key West that the storm would strike to the northward on the Florida keys until mid-afternoon of September 2nd.

*No
indications
until
Sept. 2*

Q. When you say there were no indications that the storm would strike to the northward on the Florida keys, what period of time are you speaking with reference to?

A. From eight a.m. September 1st until mid-afternoon of September 2nd.

(Signed) G. S. Kennedy

Sworn and subscribed to
before me this 10th day of September, 1935.

Assistant State Attorney.

*Cecilia Kennedy
US Weather Bureau
Key West
(Duplicate)*

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, STATE OF FLORIDA, IN AND FOR MONROE COUNTY.

IN RE: INVESTIGATION BY ASSISTANT STATE ATTORNEY RELATIVE TO MATTERS ARISING FROM THE HURRICANE OF SEPTEMBER 2, 1935

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Q. What is your name, age and occupation?

A. G. S. Kennedy; age, forty-seven; meteorologist, U. S. Weather Bureau, stationed at Key West, Florida.

Q. Are you the meteorologist in charge of the Weather Bureau at Key West, Florida?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Who else, if any one, is employed at the Weather Bureau at Key West, Florida, under you?

A. Three assistants are employed in the office -- Mr. Samuel M. Goldsmith, first assistant; Mr. Delance O. Martin, second assistant; and Mr. Leonard G. Pardue, Jr., third assistant.

Q. Are there any other employees at the Weather Bureau besides yourself and your three assistants just named?

A. No; no other commissioned employees; but a janitor is employed by the hour for cleaning purposes.

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Q. Who was on duty at the Weather Bureau in Key West on August 31st, 1935?

A. Well, we were all on duty . . . just what time do you mean - - you see, we have our shifts. Throughout the storm we gave twenty-four hour service; someone was on duty all the time. I was on duty practically all the time from the morning of the 31st on through.

Q. On through to what?

A. On through until the morning of the 3rd of September.

Q. The other officials, though, were on duty during part of each of the several days just mentioned?

A. They were. Of course, they all had to be off at times to get something to eat and a little sleep occasionally. I know I didn't get much sleep and I don't think the others did.

Q. Commencing with August 31st, 1935, please state what the official weather reports at your office were for that date and for September 1st and September 2nd, 1935.

A. The following advisories and warnings were received from the Forecaster at Jacksonville beginning with that received at 1:02 P.M. August 31st, 1935.

Whereupon the witness exhibited a book to which he referred in the preceding answer.

Q. What is that book, Mr. Kennedy?

A. The official record book of the station.

Q. Do you have extra copies of the official weather reports for the period mentioned?

A. No, only the copies that are entered or pasted in the book, although most of the original teletype tape is still on hand from which said copies were made.

Whereupon all of the said official weather reports are now copied herein and are as follows:

(G. S. KENNEDY)

- Q. When you received these several weather reports which we have just referred to, what publicity, if any, did you give to them?
- A. All but the orders to hoist warnings were given immediately to the Naval Radio Station at Key West NAR and all, including the orders to hoist warnings, were distributed to shipping interests and other interested parties in Key West and vicinity.
- Q. When you say interested parties, to whom do you refer?
- A. To parties that have requested us to put their names on our advisory and storm warning list.
- Q. What reports, warnings or weather advices did you give or convey by phone or otherwise to any one or more persons connected with the veterans work program on the Florida Keys?
- A. Only one party was contacted who was connected with the veterans work program on the keys and that was Mr. R. W. Sheldon.
- Q. How did you happen to contact him?
- A. He called the office late Saturday night, August 31st, 1955, and said that he had come down on the ferry that evening to spend the week-end in Key West, and asked about the weather conditions as affecting the Florida Keys, saying that if the conditions looked bad he desired to return on the next morning's ferry. He was told at that time, that is, Saturday night, August 31st, conditions did not appear very alarming for that section but if conditions changed during the night we could call him at the hotel and let him know, and he said he would like to be called if there was any change for the worse during the night.
- Q. Did this conversation take place in person between you, yourself, and Mr. Sheldon?
- A. Yes, with myself, over the telephone.
- Q. Did you have any further communication with Mr. Sheldon?
- A. I did.

(G. S. KENNEDY)

Q. When?

A. At approximately five A.M. of the morning of September 1st, I called him, because after our intermediate observations at two A.M. conditions looked as though the storm might prove dangerous on the Florida Keys; so I advised him to take the early morning ferry and return.

Q. On what date was that you talked to him the second time?

A. Five A.M. on the morning of September 1st. This was the only contact as far as we know with anyone connected with the veterans. I might bring out that the veterans camp -- that the officials -- never requested they be advised from the Key West Weather Bureau office, and they were not on our storm warning list. The only party listed for storm warning information on the upper keys was the State Highway Project Headquarters at Lower Matecumbe.

Q. On each of the several days in question--August 31st to September 2nd, inclusive, 1935--what distribution did you make of storm information along the keys?

A. On September 1st the order to hoist northeast storm warnings was given to the lighthouses along the reef from American Shoals up to Carrysfort; that is, we gave it to Sombrero and asked him to repeat it to the other lighthouses, as communication system was very poor and he was the only lighthouse we could get at that time, but he should have had no difficulty in repeating it to the other lighthouses, as they were all on the same cable line, as I understand. We gave the hurricane warning message to the lighthouse also on September 2nd. This advice was also given to the State Highway Project Headquarters at Lower Matecumbe and they were requested to take every precaution for a severe storm and secure their equipment.

Q. Did the railroad office at Key West receive any advices on that day?

A. The railroad office received all of these advisories, and I have been informed by Mr. Costar that they were sent along the telegraph lines either

from Key West end or the Jacksonville end, that all of them were sent to their various telegraph offices on the keys.

Q. Does that apply to the advices on September 1st only?

A. All of the warnings and advisories were given to the railroad, and as far as I know, from what Mr. Costar says, these were sent all along the lines; in the case of the more important ones it was requested they be sent along the line.

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Q. Did you give any publicity other than already stated by you to the weather reports of August 31st, September 1st and September 2nd, 1935?

A. There were so many phone calls and inquiries in person at the office that it seemed nearly every resident of Key West called us on the telephone or called in person at the office, and all were given the latest storm information and also told to take every precaution against a severe storm, so that by Sunday night, September 1st, the town was practically all boarded up and in readiness for a severe storm.

Subscribed and sworn to before
me this 9th day of September, 1935.

Assistant State Attorney.

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Cerald Kennedy

9-10-35

Continuation of previous day's testimony

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE ELEVENTH JUDICIAL
CIRCUIT, STATE OF FLORIDA, IN AND FOR MONROE COUNTY.

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Q. Mr. Kennedy, you are the same G. S. Kennedy, meteor-
ologist, United States Weather Bureau, stationed at Key West,
Florida, in charge of the local weather bureau, who testified
before me yesterday, is that right?

A. Yes, sir.

(G. S. KENNEDY)

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- Q. Mr. Kennedy, can you state as nearly as you can recollect just what conversation you had with Mr. Sheldon at about five o'clock, Sunday morning, September 1st, 1935?
- A. I told him that our two a.m. observations indicated the storm was coming farther south than we had expected and that it looked dangerous for his section and advised him to take the early morning ferry as it might be his last chance to get back.
- Q. You had in mind the ferry might not be running by Monday morning?
- A. Yes, sir.
- Q. Would anything short of winds of hurricane force stop the ferry from running?
- A. I think gale winds would have prevented the ferry from running.
- Q. Would the ferry have run when storm warnings were posted?
- A. They told me that they would keep the ferry at Lower Matecumbe if storm warnings were up in this district because they had a safer place for the ferry at Lower Matecumbe than at N'onaime; that the ferry would not run back south from Matecumbe if storm warnings were up.
- Q. Did you mean to indicate to Mr. Sheldon that there was any immediate danger to the camps?
- A. Yes. I intended to convey there was danger in that section. It was impossible to say just where the storm would strike and just how hard it would strike but being familiar
- (1)
- (1) Intended to convey that there was danger. 157
- (2) 8 p.m. observations indicated storm might strike north of Miami. But 2 a.m. readings showed lower pressure in Key West than in Miami.
- (3) Thought it would go south of Key West.

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(G. S. KENNEDY)

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with hurricanes + thought it would be advisable to take every precaution in advance and thought he should be on the ground as early as possible.

Q. You did not indicate to him that in your opinion the camps should be evacuated?

A. No, sir. Nothing was said about that matter.

Q. What weather changes had occurred between your telephone conversation with Mr. Sheldon at eleven o'clock, Saturday night, August 31st, and your call to him at about five o'clock, Sunday morning, September 1st, 1935?

(2) A. Our eight p.m. observations of August 31st indicated that the storm might strike north of Miami and northeast storm warnings were ordered from Miami to Fort Pierce, but the two a.m. observations showed a greater pressure fall at Key West than at Miami and a lower pressure at Key West than at Miami, indicating the storm would strike south rather than north of Miami; therefore, + called Mr. Sheldon and advised him to get back.

Q. Now, subsequent to five o'clock on Sunday morning, September 1st, 1935, did your weather observations indicate that the storm was going to take the same course which was indicated at your two a.m. observations, or were there indications of a further change in the course of the storm?

(3) A. The first observations following the two a.m. observation of September 1st indicated that the storm would likely pass even south of Key West and it was not until the afternoon of September 2nd that wind indications at Key West showed it was going to pass to the northward rather than the southward.

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(G. S. KENNEDY)

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Q. Is there anything further you would like to add to your testimony already given, Mr. Kennedy?

A. I would like to say that all the advisories and warnings issued by the Forecaster in Jacksonville were as near correct as it would be possible to make them, with the reports at hand, and, as I have said before, there were no indications at Key West that the storm would strike to the northward on the Florida keys until mid-afternoon of September 2nd.

Q. When you say there were no indications that the storm would strike to the northward on the Florida keys, what period of time are you speaking with reference to?

A. From eight a.m. September 1st until mid-afternoon of September 2nd.

(Signed) G. S. Kennedy

Sworn and subscribed to
before me this 10th day of September, 1935.

Assistant State Attorney.

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