

Marrried to Loretta Irene Butters (?)
 daughter of Fern & Ed Butters;
 father of Olin Perdue (Jr?)

Olin Perdue
 Spt. 25, 1935
 by Kennamer & Farmer

McAllister Hotel,
 Miami, Florida
 September 25, 1935.

OLIN PERDUE made the following responses under oath to questions propounded by D. W. Kennamer and H. W. Farmer, Investigators, in the investigation entitled "Re Hurricane, Florida."

1. Q. Please state your name and home address.

A. Olin Perdue. Dade Motor Service, Flagler Street & 10th Ave. Miami, Florida.

2. Q. Are you an ex-service man?

A. No.

3. Q. Were you employed by the FERA prior and during the hurricane that visited the Keys, September 2, 1935?

A. Yes.

4. Q. How long had you been employed?

A. About six months.

5. Q. What was your position?

A. Night watchman, Grocery Warehouse.

6. Q. Were you there during the hurricane?

A. Yes.

7. Q. Were you there continuously from Friday, August 30th through September 2nd?

A. Yes Sir.

8. Q. Just relate what you know about the matter during that time.

A. I heard all the weather reports in the office from Saturday, all Sunday and all up to the last minute. I was there with Mr.

9. A. Sheldon when he came back from Key West and helping Mr. Cutler. I stayed right with them all day Sunday, heard all the weather reports that came in from the Pan American and weather bureau. I don't see how they could place anyone for negligence because I have been through several storms down there. Due to the fact that natives knew more about the storms than anyone in that Department and think that would be sufficient evidence that there was no blame on anyone's part.

*Pan Am
weather
reports*

9. Q. When did you first learn or hear a storm was forming in the Atlantic?

A. Possibly Thursday.

10. Q. You had read about it and knew about it Thursday?

A. Yes Sir.

11. Q. Do you know whether any of the officials had heard or read anything about it?

A. Yes. I think they started talking with the weather bureau Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

12. Q. Did you hear Mr. Sheldon at any time say anything about the storm prior to his leaving for Key West Saturday?

A. He did Saturday.

13. Q. Do you think he knew there was a storm in the Atlantic before he left for Key West?

A. I am positive he should have known.

14. Q. You were positive you knew about it?

A. Yes.

15. Q. What time did Mr. Sheldon leave for Key West?

A. To the best of my recollection, he left at 11 o'clock Saturday.

16. Q. Were you at headquarters when he left?

A. Yes. I was in the hotel.

17. Q. Who else was around there?

A. The whole office force.

18. Q. Did Mr. Sheldon place anyone in charge?

A. Mr. Cutler is the next highest man under Sheldon. He automatically took over the duties.

19. Q. Was Mr. Cutler present when Mr. Sheldon left?

A. Yes.

20. Q. Did you hear Mr. Sheldon give Mr. Cutler any instructions?

A. No.

21. Q. Did Mr. Cutler stay at headquarters until Mr. Sheldon returned?

A. Yes.

22. Q. When did Mr. Sheldon return?

A. Got back Sunday about noon - it might have been later.

23. Q. What did Mr. Cutler do while Mr. Sheldon was gone?

A. He stayed in constant communication with the weather bureau, called Mr. Ghent and Mr. Sheldon, called Mr. Bow and asked their advice.

Cutler to Bow

24. Q. Who is Mr. Bow?

A. He is a civil engineer with the Overseas Bridge.

25. Q. Did he (Cutler) call the railroad?

A. Yes, he called the railroad and wanted to know how long it would take them to get a train ready to run; he told them to get the thing together as it was a possible chance they would need it. He told them that wasn't official orders, but to get the train together.

*Cutler gave
instructions for
train*

26. Q. Did he talk to Mr. Sheldon in Key West?

A. Sheldon had already gone; I don't think he talked to him.

27. Q. Did he talk to Mr. Ghent?

A. I understand he did. I didn't hear him talk to him.

28. Q. Did he talk to the railroad?

A. Yes.

29. Q. Why was he calling all these people?

A. Well, the storm had changed its course and they told us that morning there wasn't any chance of it coming up, but Mr. Cutler was alarmed over the situation and thought he had better get in touch with these parties to get authority.

30. Q. You told us there was no danger of the storm coming there from information received from weather reports. Did you read the weather reports?

A. Yes. I heard them over the phone.

31. Q. I will ask you to examine advisories sent out at 2:56 AM and 10 AM Sunday morning and state if you find anything in those advisories to the effect that there was no chance of the storm visiting the Keys.
- A. Well, it is no positive proof it would not cross the Keys, but they had told us there wouldn't be any danger.
32. Q. Did they tell you anything else that wasn't in those two advisories?
- A. I was there when Mr. Cutler dictated that 10 o'clock report and heard the thing then. He just talked to them man to man and asked their personal opinion, and they told him there was no danger.
33. Q. You didn't hear the call?
- A. No.
34. Q. You didn't talk to the weather bureau?
- A. No.
35. Q. You don't know of your own knowledge that any representative of the weather bureau told any official at any time there was no chance of any danger?
- A. No Sir. I didn't hear him say it.
36. Q. Does that advisory of 2:30 AM and 10 AM indicate the Keys might be in danger?
- A. I didn't hear the 2:30 AM; just heard it next morning. The 10 AM wasn't alarming to any of the natives.
37. Q. After Mr. Cutler got these weather reports, he became alarmed didn't he?
- A. Yes, he was alarmed from the previous reports.
- Cutler was alarmed*

38. Q. He thought some definite action should be taken to safeguard the lives of the men in case of emergency, didn't he?

A. Yes.

39. Q. He undertook to take some action, didn't he?

A. He was trying to get authority to handle the matter.

40. Q. He had been in connection with some natives, hadn't he?

A. Yes Sir. Quite a few natives had been in that morning.

41. Q. He had talked to Captain Sheeran, hadn't he?

A. Yes Sir.

42. Q. He is an old-timer in that section, isn't he?

A. Yes.

43. Q. He was acting to some extent on his advice, wasn't he?

A. To a certain extent, yes.

44. Q. Then there were people in that section that thought the keys were in danger?

A. Yes, because they were boarding up Saturday.

45. Q. You wouldn't board up if you thought there was no danger at all, would you?

A. At this time of year they all get ready for those storms.

46. Q. That is what the officials in charge of the camps should have been doing, isn't it?

A. They had made preparations for bracing the buildings in the camps and issued orders early in the morning to board up the shut-

A. ters.

47. Q. Didn't Mr. Cutler go forth and work out plans to get the men on the train, and what disposition they should make of them?

A. Yes Sir. They considered what equipment should be carried. They had that pretty well lined up.

48. Q. Was it pretty well known around headquarters that the men were drinking and not in good condition?

A. The reports from the camps were that the men were in pretty fair shape.

49. Q. Did Mr. Cutler take any steps to prevent them from drinking?

A. Yes Sir. He prevented the sale of beer.

50. Q. Did you remain at headquarters after Mr. Sheldon returned?

A. Yes Sir.

51. Q. What did Mr. Sheldon do when he came in?

A. He held steady communication with the weather department and called quite a few people - don't know who they were. All the time he was there Sunday afternoon, he talked to the weather bureau and Pan American.

52. Q. Did you talk to any other employees before Mr. Sheldon returned?

A. Yes.

53. Q. All together, were they apprehensive?

A. No, no one was particularly alarmed.

54. Q. Did you talk to Mr. Melcolm or Mr. Good?

A. Mr. Good is not a native of Florida and

A. don't think he would be in position to predict storms.

55. Q. Mr. Cutler is not a native of Florida is he?

A. No Sir, he isn't.

56. Q. How about Mr. Melcolm?

A. Mr. Melcolm has had quite a bit of experience in storms as he has been in the tropics for a number of years.

57. Q. *Melcolm is*
Good concerned Isn't it true that Mr. Good and Mr. Melcolm were at headquarters and were alarmed over the situation when Mr. Sheldon returned Sunday?

A. Yes. When he returned the barometer started falling. He called the weather bureau and they told him the 10 o'clock storm warning was about the same. Sheldon told them the barometer was falling fast, and they told him that the possibility was the storm was changing and turning that way. That was about 2 o'clock Sunday afternoon.

58. Q. Did he get in touch with the railroad Sunday afternoon?

A. No Sir.

59. Q. Were you at headquarters on Sunday afternoon?

A. Yes.

60. Q. Did you hear him call the railroad Sunday?

A. I don't recall, but Mr. Cutler did.

61. Q. Was Mr. Patterson at headquarters Sunday afternoon.

A. Yes Sir.

62. Q. Did you remain at headquarters all Sunday afternoon and Sunday night?

A. Yes Sir.

Patterson

63. Q. Do you know anything about Mr. Patterson going to the railroad station Sunday evening to make inquiry about the train?

A. I talked to him and he said he was down at the railroad.

64. Q. So far as you know, Mr. Sheldon did nothing about the train Sunday?

A. So far as I know, he didn't.

65. Q. Did he do anything else when he returned to camp Sunday?

A. He stayed pretty well in touch with the camp superintendents - talked to Davis and told him he had better come back. They didn't have anything definite to drive at.

66. Q. Did he reopen the canteens?

A. He told Hardacker he might as well reopen them.

67. Q. Did he reorder the reopening of the canteens?

A. I don't think he did.

68. Q. How late did you sit up Sunday night?

A. 11 o'clock.

69. Q. Were there any feasible indications that a storm might hit that area at any time Sunday?

A. No Sir.

70. Q. Was the weather conditions becoming worse or better?

A. Just raining - nothing unusual.

71. Q. Did you get any telephone calls Sunday night?

A. I didn't.

72. Q. You didn't talk to the weather bureau or anyone?

A. No.

73. Q. Did you hear anyone talk to the Weather Bureau after you went to bed?

A. No.

74. Q. What time did you get up?

A. 7 o'clock.

75. Q. What did you do ~~Sunday~~ Monday morning?

*Boarded up
Hotel Monday*
A. We worked around the Hotel boarding up the windows. It was raining and we stayed in practically all day.

76. Q. Did you interest yourself in weather reports and barometer readings?

A. Yes.

77. Q. What was the barometer doing Monday morning?

A. Monday morning the barometer was practically normal; it fell steady from 11 o'clock until the storm hit. I didn't sleep at the hotel, but slept at the Grocery storeroom.

78. Q. At what time did conditions become such as to leave you and the others with the belief that the Keys might be visited by a hurricane?

A. The barometer started falling and the clouds all indicated there would be quite

A. a disturbance about noon Monday.

79. Q. Was anything said about ordering the train Monday morning?

A. No Sir. They kept waiting for the weather reports.

80. Q. What were the men doing around headquarters?

A. Some of them were playing poker and sitting around listening for the phone.

81. Q. Who were playing poker?

A. Scotty, Jones and Mr. Sheldon had a few hands. Patterson was in it - that is, I recall.

82. Q. What kind and what limit were they playing?

A. Stud poker - penny ante.

83. Q. How long was the game in progress?

A. Three hours I guess - it started before dinner and soon after dinner they went up and played some more.

84. Q. Where did that game take place?

A. In Mr. Sheldon's office.

85. Q. Was Mr. Sheldon at headquarters all Monday morning?

A. Yes Sir.

86. Q. Did he get any telephone calls?

A. He almost constantly talked over the phone.

87. Q. Do you know if he got any calls from Key West?

A. Couldn't say positive.

Poker
Game

98. Q. Did you understand that Mr. Sheldon was to order the train or Mr. Ghent.

A. I understand that duties had not been given to anyone to order it officially.

99. Q. Then, so far as you know, no one at headquarters knew who had authority to order the train.

A. We knew Mr. Sheldon could order it, but he didn't want to order a train without the authority from Mr. Ghent.

100. Q. Did he call Mr. Ghent for the purpose of getting authority to order the train?

A. I understand that was the motive, and if he couldn't get authority to order the train, he was going to ask Mr. Ghent to order it - all he wanted was authority from Mr. Ghent to order.

101. Q. He couldn't get Mr. Ghent at the time, could he?

A. No.

102. Q. At what time did you people become alarmed and started to take definite action to get a train?

A. About 2 P.M.

103. Q. You also received a weather report about 1:30 P.M. didn't you?

A. About 1:30 or 2 P.M.

104. Q. Immediately after that weather report did Mr. Ghent get in touch with Mr. Sheldon?

A. I think so.

105. Q. That is, when Mr. Ghent answered his call?

A. Yes.

*Sheldon
Wanted
Ghent's OK*

88. Q. Do you recall Mr. Gilford talking to him?

A. Yes.

89. Q. At what time did he talk to Mr. Ghent?

A. As well as I recall, it was about noon.

90. Q. Do you recall if it was a few minutes before or after noon?

A. I can't say.

91. Q. Did he call Mr. Ghent?

A. As well as I remember he did.

92. Q. Did he call Mr. Ghent after talking to Mr. Gilford or just before?

A. I don't know.

93. Q. Did he say anything about his talk with Mr. Gilford?

A. No Sir.

94. Q. You don't know what was said? Did he say anything about Washington being concerned about the safety of the men?

A. No Sir.

95. Q. Were you present when he put in the call to Mr. Ghent?

A. Yes Sir.

96. Q. What was the purpose of calling Mr. Ghent?

A. To get his advice.

97. Q. Was he considering the advisability of ordering a train at that time?

A. Yes Sir.

106. Q. At that time, did you hear Mr. Sheldon talk to Mr. Ghent?

A. No sir, I couldn't say.

107. Q. You don't know what he said?

A. No.

108. Q. After talking to Mr. Ghent, did Mr. Sheldon talk to anyone else?

A. Yes, that is when he called the railroad first and ordered the train to get there as soon as possible and wanted to know how long it would be.

109. Q. Did you hear him talk to the railroad?

A. Yes.

110. Q. Did he tell the railroad the train was being ordered and for them to make arrangements to get it there as soon as possible?

A. Yes sir.

111. Q. He didn't tell them he was ordering the train, but told them it was being ordered - is that right?

A. Yes.

112. Q. Did he ask them how long it would take to get the train there?

A. They said the train would get there as soon as possible; would get there about 5 o'clock.

FEC
Says 5 p.m.

113. Q. Did he say that wouldn't be soon enough?

A. Get it there as soon as possible.

114. Q. At what time did the situation get bad?

A. It was about 6 o'clock; at 4 o'clock it was pretty bad, but only a gale then.

115. Q. Did he do anything to find out about the train then?

A. Yes, he phoned several times and kept in communication with people along the road.

116. Q. At what time did he tell you people at headquarters it would be for the railroad to get the train on its way?

A. I could not say definite about it. I would say it was 3:30.

117. Q. Didn't he tell you people at 3:30 that he had received information that the train was on the way?

A. Yes. I remember once he called and they said it was ready to leave then. That was in the neighborhood of 3:30.

118. Q. He didn't tell you the railroad said it was ready to leave then and he didn't tell you the railroad said the train had left?

A. No.

119. Q. Did he tell you at any time he talked to the railroad, and had been advised the train had just left?

A. I can't recall.

120. Q. Did they have any motor transportation in camp?

A. Yes, possibly a dozen trucks.

121. Q. How many men could have been taken away in motor trucks, using all motor transportation?

A. Imagine with all the transportation they had, they could have taken them all out. At 4 o'clock conditions were becoming rather serious - blowing a plenty good gale then. At 5:30 it was getting worse. It was pretty near hurricane force.

122. Q. At 5:30 you knew the train was late - that it had been delayed?

A. Yes.

123. Q. Was anything said about using motor transportation to get the people out?

A. No Sir.

124. Q. Was anything said at any time about taking motor transportation out to safeguard it?

A. No Sir. I know they made preparation to take out a few trucks to use up here to take out several individuals before the danger arrived?

125. Q. You do know the families of the officials were taken out?

A. Yes, I know Mrs. Sheldon and a carload of members of the Administration staff.

126. Q. Now after 5:30 P.M. what did you people do?

A. We went to the Islamorada depot, waiting for the train. The telegraph operator couldn't get any news of the train after it reached Homestead. They said they made Miami to Homestead in 29 minutes. That was the last news we had on the

*Miami - Homestead
29 minutes*

A. thing. Soon after that lines went out, depot broke up, and we got in a box car, and when the train rolled up, Mr. Sheldon and I got out and went over and got in the engine. Mr. Sheldon told the engineer who he was and he said "You are the man we are looking for." He asked for orders and he (Sheldon) told him to go as far south as he could go. We moved 100 yards and the train started breaking up.

Parole went to Sheldon to be motive

127. Q. Before you went to the engine you were in the box car for some time, weren't you?

A. Yes. We got out of it when the train came in.

128. Q. Did Mr. Sheldon talk to you when you were in the box car?

A. Yes.

129. Q. What did he say?

A. He was very much concerned over the safety of the men in the camps; kept watching for the train and hoping it would get there.

130. Q. Did he make any remarks to any of you that he had done all that he could?

Sheldon asks for suggestions
A. He asked if we had any suggestions to make as to what to do.

131. Q. Did all of you think he had done all he could have done?

A. Yes Sir.

132. Q. Did you talk to any trainmen?

A. Yes.

133. Q. Did they tell you why they had been delayed?

A. Yes, when they got up to the rock quarry, a boom had fallen off a derrick and fell on the train and it took about one hour to cut it out.

134. Q. Did they say it was a boom or a cable?

Marks from cable
A. I don't recall which it was. I know it fell on it because you could see it had on the engine cab.

135. Q. Did they tell you what time they left Miami?

A. No, I don't recall.

136. Q. Did they tell you they were delayed at Homestead, loading wire cable?

Loaded wire?
A. I know they loaded some wire cable for the American Telephone Company and a railroad motor car for the American Tel. Company.

137. Q. Did you receive any injury?

A. No Sir.

138. Q. Did you identify any of the dead?

A. No.

139. Q. Do you know the name of any Veteran who may have left the area before the storm, and may now be reported as missing?

A. No.

140. Q. At what time did aid come to you people?

A. I would say 9 o'clock Wednesday morning.

141. Q. Was that as early as weather conditions would have permitted aid to reach there?

A. Personally, I think boats could have run in the bay side without danger.

142. Q. Did the FERA officials come there first and render aid?

A. The FERA came down the highway and got to Snake Creek. The first aid I saw was private parties - doctors, etc. There was no organized aid by the FERA where I was.

143. Q. Was there at any time?

A. I never ran into any. First thing I ran into was the Coast Guard coming up towards Snake Creek.

144. Q. How did Mr. Sheldon occupy himself after he made his call for the train Monday?

A. He started in calling just everyone if they were all on the line at one time) just discussing plans of what they should do.

145. Q. Did he give any instructions within your hearing?

A. I heard him give camp superintendents instructions. He told them to go around and have the men catch the train - that it would be there at 5 o'clock and for every man to be ready to jump on the train without delay.

146. Q. In other words, he merely instructed them to feed them and the train was to pick them up.

A. Yes, he gave those instructions to all camp superintendents. I saw Davis after that and he said his men were ready, been fed and everything.

147. Q. Are you sure all the instructions he gave were to feed the men and have them ready for the train at 5:30?

A. Yes. That is all I heard him give.

148. Q. How did he occupy himself other than the telephone calls you mentioned?

A. Constantly on the telephone.

149. Q. Was that poker game in progress after he called the train?

A. No Sir.

150. Q. Did any of the men playing poker quit because they felt they were "fiddling while Rome burned?"

A. Yes.

151. Q. Did any of the men engaged in the game indicate it was not an appropriate time to play poker?

A. Not from a moral standpoint; there were other things to be done.

152. Q. Did Mr. Sheldon leave his headquarters at all Monday morning and go to each of the camps?

A. Yes.

153. Q. What time Monday did he leave?

A. Middle of the morning.

154. Q. How long was he gone?

A. Very short time.

155. Q. To which camp did he go?

A. I do not know.

Poker Game Continued

156. Q. Are there any other facts you have not related?

A. No.

157. Q. Is there anything else you would like to add to your statement?

A. I would like to say that everything was done possible and I think every man worked to the best of his ability.

158. Q. You mean everything was done after the danger was immediate, you don't mean that everything was done that a prudent man would have foreseen and done?

A. Yes.

159. Q. You think Mr. Cutler would have done differently if he had had authority?

A. It was playing hunches.

160. Q. If you are playing with human life, you don't play hunches, do you?

A. No Sir.

161. Q. The stakes were human life, wasn't it?

A. Yes Sir.

162. Q. They took chances didn't they that Mr. Cutler would not have taken?

A. Yes, they took more of a chance than he would have taken. Mr. Cutler was a very nervous type.

163. Q. You were there all the afternoon and heard Mr. Sheldon make every call he made?

A. Yes.

*Cutler
"very nervous
type"*

164. Q. Did you hear him give any instructions to remove the patients in the hospital?

A. I heard him ask the camp superintendent how many they had in the hospital, and he told him they had been dismissed for getting drunk.

165. Q. Did you hear they had all been dismissed for getting drunk?

A. Yes. I was there when he told him.

166. Q. Was it a face to face conversation, or over the telephone?

A. He was talking to the camp superintendent over in the office, Captain Hardacker. The ones around the office heard it.

167. Q. As a matter of fact there were patients in the hospital which were evacuated under Dr. Main's orders. How do you account for Mr. Hardacker's statement that they were dismissed for getting drunk?

A. That is what he said.

I, Olin Perdue, DO SOLEMNLY SWEAR that the statements made herein in response to questions propounded by D. W. Kennamer and H. W. Farmer, Investigators, have been read by me and they are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief, so help me GOD.

Olin P. Perdue

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO before me
and Investigator of the Veterans' Administration
this 28 day of September, 1935.

H. W. Farmer
Investigator.