

Paul Pugh
Sept. 10, 1935
by Farmer

Jackson Memorial Hospital
Miami, Florida
September 10, 1935

PAUL (BLACKIE) PUGH made the following responses under oath to questions propounded by H. W. Farmer, Investigator, in the investigation entitled "Re Hurricane, Florida."

1. Q. State your full name, age, and place of residence.
A. Paul Pugh, forty, New Eagle, Pennsylvania.
2. Q. Are you an ex-service man?
A. I am
3. Q. What organization are you in?
A. I was with Battery 134 Field Artillery.
4. Q. Do you have a claim with the Veterans Administration?
A. No sir
5. Q. Are you connected with any service organization?
A. Commander Overseas Bridge Post No. 3270 V.F.W. Lower Matecumbe, Florida. I was top sergeant of No. 3 Company at Lower Matecumbe, Florida
6. Q. Tell me in your own words about your experiences during the hurricane.

A. On Saturday, August 31st, I was left in charge of Company No. 3, owing to the absence of Captain Davis. Sunday I heard of a storm and took it upon myself to see Mr Sheldon at headquarters, the Matecumbe Hotel. (He is assistant director in charge of the camps on the Florida keys.) I asked him as to the danger of the storm. He informed me there was nothing to be alarmed at and while I was there he got in contact with Mr F.B. Ghent at Jacksonville, Florida, who is director of all the Veterans Camps in Florida. From what I could make out of the conversation, Mr Sheldon let it be known that there was no danger on the keys but that if any danger did arise he would get in contact with him (Mr Ghent) at once. Then Mr Sheldon called up the Florida East Coast man, Mr. This man must have informed Mr Sheldon and Mr Sheldon informed me that he could have a train there within three hours notice, or between the hours of 5 and 6 o'clock. Then on my departure I asked Mr Sheldon if he would be in any more that evening and he advised me

Pugh to
Sheldon
Monday
brought Pugh
5:00 PM
P. 2:00 PM

A.

(Cont.) that he or someone would be there practically all night.

Pugh back
from
9 P.M.

Sees Sheldon
10-11 a.m.
Monday

Called
assembly
at noon

Sharan
tells Pugh
he was
Cutler
Patterson?
Patterson?

I went back again in the neighborhood of 9 o'clock and found Mr. Sheldon, his wife, Captain Hardaker, and his wife playing Five Hundred Runny. I was advised once more that there was no danger, of a storm hitting the keys.

Again on Monday morning, after going through the usual routine, I went to the supply house as we were short of supplies. Monday being a holiday there was no one at the supply so I stopped once more to see Mr. Sheldon in regard to the storm. This was about 10 or 11 o'clock Monday morning, September 2. Mr. Sheldon told me there was no danger and took me to the map or chart and showed me just where the storm lay and how far it had advanced toward the keys in the last fourteen hours, and at the rate of speed it was travelling, there would be no danger within forty-eight hours. I went back to my company and notified the boys of the same.

About the hour of 12 Captain B. E. Davis, civilian time keeper C. G. Sain returned from Miami and had been notified at headquarters that the storm was heading this way and that there was a train due in at 5:30 to bring us out. I, being top sargent, blew the siren, called the men together, told them to pack up what belongings they had, get in readiness to leave on the said train - which never arrived.

The following evening, Tuesday September 3, I went to the dredge Sarasota and was talking to Col. Ed Sheeran in regard to the storm and he told me in the presence of Arthur Mewshaw, Peter Cappijan, Mr. Cooper and myself, that as early as Sunday morning he had asked Mr. Cutler who was work director and Mr. Patterson who was engineer for the F E R A to try and get these men off of the keys as there was all indications of a very bad storm and if they were not moved, there would be a lot of lives lost, and also stated that the train would not have been ordered Monday when it was (which was near the hour of 3 o'clock) if it hadn't have been for him. As early as Sunday morning Mr. Sheeran had all his floating equipment moved around into what he had built as a storm channel and used precautions to tie up the Key West Ferry at 3 o'clock Sunday afternoon - not allowing it to make a return trip to Key West.

There also was enough motor transportation at our camp to take every single man out of camp on trucks. To be

A. (Cont.) exact there were three stake bodies that would hold forty men apiece, three dump trucks that would hold seventeen, and an ambulance that would hold at least sixteen. They were regularly in use around camp to go to all games, shows, and what not.

7. Q. Do you have any idea why that transportation was not used?

A. I do not, Sir.

8. Q. Do you know whether or not anyone suggested the use of that transportation?

A. I could not say.

9. Q. Where was Mr. Sheldon during the early part of the storm?

A. I don't know.

10. Q. When did you first see Mr. Sheldon at the camp?

A. Mr. Sheldon does not come to the camps. He stays at headquarters, which are at the Matecumbe Hotel about eight miles from our camp. I first saw him Sunday evening between 5 and 6 o'clock and the next time I imagine was between 8 and 9 o'clock. I also told Mr. Sheldon I would like a little extra time as I had a few fellows I was interested in and he told me I would have plenty of notice.

11. Q. Did Mr. Sheldon stay at the hotel during the entire storm?

A. I couldn't say as to that but I do know that he used enough precaution to send his wife out.

12. Q. When did she leave the keys?

A. On Monday afternoon at 2 o'clock I think it was or 1:20.

13. Q. Did the train ever reach where you were?

A. No sir. It never did. It never even got as far as #5 camp.

14. Q. Do you know who ordered the train when it was ordered?

A. No sir, I do not -- only what I read in the papers.

15. Q. Will you name for me any veterans that you know are dead either from seeing them killed or seeing their bodies?

A. Charles Cherry
 Z. Zavish - from some place in Virginia
 A little fellow by the name of Louis Delameter
 George Ducott
 Michael Merrick
 Burt Allsbaugh
 McKennon
 Ralph Blanford from Coney Island
 Jones
 A second man by the name of Jones
 Kreitzburg
 Jakeman from Norfolk, Va.
 Ackerman
 George Carr

I stood there and identified about 37 at the time but that is all I can remember except-

McCoy
 Staude
 French

16. Q. Do you know any fellows who left camp before the blow who might be listed as missing now?

A. Kerns
 Tiller
 C. W. Brown
 Thomas Nash
 Tom Early
 Richard Murphy
 Elmer Darty

Mr. Pugh, being recalled, testified further as follows:

17. Q. You understand in giving further testimony you are testifying under oath?

A. Yes, sir, I do that

18. Q. Was there any restrictions on the veterans leaving the camps down there far as you know, any time?

A. No, sir.

19. Q. Did you contact anyone about getting trains to carry the veterans out?

19. A. No sir, I didn't.
20. Q. Just preceeding the hurricane, or at any other time had the veterans been told they must not leave camp or force would be used if they left, as for example, a guard being thrown around the camp?
- A. No sir.
21. Q. Were you acquainted with Captain Robertson?
- A. Yes sir.
22. Q. Were you acquainted with conditions in his camp?
- A. Yes, only by hearsay.
23. Q. *Robertson #5?*
thru #5?
from You did not know of your own knowledge he had or had not told the veterans they should not leave and he would use force to prevent them?
- A. No sir, I do not. Never heard of such a thing.
24. Q. At what time did Capt. Davis leave your company and leave you in charge?
- A. To be exact that is going to cause a little thinking back; I believe it was on Saturday, whatever date that was, previous to the storm. I think August 31st if I am not mistaken.
25. Q. The best you recollect Capt. Davis left on the afternoon of August 31st?
- A. Yes.
26. Q. When was he to return?
- A. There was no specified time.
27. Q. When did you understand he would be back?
- A. When the ball players were supposed to return on Tuesday morning for work.
28. Q. In your other testimony I believe you stated that you went to see Mr. Sheldon Sunday afternoon?
- A. Between the hours of 5 and 6 was the first time.
29. Q. How far was he located from your headquarters?
- A. I imagine in the neighborhood of eight miles.
30. Q. How did you get down there?
A. By truck, pick-up rather.

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31. Q. Why did you go to see Sheldon?

A. I had heard about the storm.

32. Q. Were you beginning to get uneasy yourself that there might be a storm and danger approaching?

A. When I knew Sheldon had been ordered back from Key West, I knew the ferry was tied up and not going to make the return trip to Key West; someone was using precaution and thought I should too and help these boys; that was what I was therefor.

33. Q. Was there apprehension in your camp that danger might be approaching?

A. No sir. Some of the boys a little bit worried and a little talking.

34. Q. But you and the boys were a little worried?

A. Naturally. You would not call it worried; we were trying to use a little precaution.

35. Q. You were apprehensive?

A. To a certain extent, yes.

36. Q. What information did you receive about storms before you went to see Sheeran?

A. I know on the morning of Sunday, Sept. 1st at about 6 o'clock, if I am not mistaken, that Sheeran had his men come down and move all his equipment back to a storm channel, such as dredges, sand suckers, cement mixers, and apparatus like that, and the ferry being tied up and they had sent for Sheldon; that is the only warnings we had.

37. Q. You did not receive any weather reports?

A. No sir.

38. Q. No information coming from headquarters to you about storm probabilities?

A. No sir.

39. Q. When you went to see Mr. Sheldon the first time, he talked to Mr. Ghent in Jacksonville?

A. Yes sir.

40. Q. Did you hear what he said to him?

A. I heard him make the remark "no danger as yet, if any danger did arise he would get in touch with him."

41. Q. About what time did this conversation take place?

A. Between 5 and 6 o'clock. I believe the telephone records would show that pretty plain. Sunday, Sept. 1st.

42. Q. Was there telephone connection between your camp and Sheldon?

A. Not direct, no sir.

43. Q. Was any arrangement made as to how he would notify you or what instructions he would give to you in case there was danger?

A. No sir.

44. Q. Was Mr. Sheldon in charge of No. 3 camp?

A. Yes sir.

45. Q. You were looking to him for instruction and advice?

A. Correct.

46. Q. You were not entirely satisfied with your visit at 5 o'clock and you went back to see him again?

Not Satisfied after 1st visit

A. Yes.

47. Q. Did you go back to find out about the storm or what?

A.

Drinks take longer to round up.

I told him I would like advance notice on account of being pay-day and some of the boys inclined to drink a little on pay-day, it would take a little time to round them up. Would not want to leave them if an hour would prevent. I wanted a little time on that account and he said he would give me plenty of time in case anything developed.

48. Q. Did you feel you would get sufficient time or were you still a little apprehensive?

Confidence A.

I had confidence in the man, to be honest with you. The man had a responsible job and I felt like he was capable of handling it.

in Sheldon

49. Q. Anything further develop after your second visit to Sheldon on Sunday night until the following day?
- A. No sir, until the following day, Sept. 2nd.
50. Q. What did you do on the following day? I believe you stated in your other testimony you went to see him about ten o'clock the following morning?
- Stopped during extend
A. Yes, along about that time I was headed for the supply house to get some provisions and thought that would be a good chance to stop.
51. Q. You did not receive any additional information that a storm was approaching and there were no indications it might be near at hand?
- A. No sir.
52. Q. What time were you advised the train had been ordered?
- A. Neighborhood of two o'clock. I could not say exactly. I am sure that it was after two.
53. Q. What were the conditions at that time?
- A. If I remember right, not much wind. I am sure there was no rain at that time. A little wind if I recall right, but not much; not enough to indicate a storm.
54. Q. At what time did the wind start blowing so as to make you think a hurricane was at hand?
- A. I imagine between the hour of four and five o'clock.
55. Q. I believe you said in your other testimony you had ample motor transportation to have taken the men away?
- A. Yes sir, I did.
56. Q. At four o'clock conditions were becoming alarming?
- A. Yes, still expecting that train that never arrived. My dear friend, if ever we were advised we were going to be put on the spot like that, the man don't live that could have kept those trucks from us. I will state that plain.
57. Q. Was anything said about using motor transportation in case the train did not arrive?
- Could've used trucks but trusted train would arrive.
A. No sir, there was not.

58. Q. Could motor transportation have been used?

A. It had been used for everything else.

59. Q. Did you have drivers?

A. Yes sir.

60. Q. Are you positive there were men that could have driven those fellows out?

A. Yes sir, I am very positive.

61. Q. The statement has been made that motor transportation could not be used because the drivers were all drunk.

Sober drivers available
62. A. That is wrong; I don't care who gave that statement or where it came from, from what source. It is wrong.

63. Q. Granting that the regular drivers were drunk, anybody available for driving the motor vehicles? Were there other men?

A. Nine out of ten could have drove one of those trucks and only been too glad to.

64. Q. Can you drive?

A. Yes sir, I can.

65. Q. In your other testimony you stated that Col. Sheeran told you in the presence of others and he spoke to Mr. Cutler and Mr. Patterson Sunday and told them they should get the men off the Keys; that is correct, is it?

A. Yes sir.

Sheeran
66. Q. You are positive he made that statement?

A. Yes sir, I am positive. I would swear my life away on that statement.

67. Q. Describe fully any and all injuries you received in this hurricane.

A. Wrenched back, sprained ankle, very badly bruised leg, so bad that they had to operate on it, my left leg.

68. Q. Any lacerations?

A. One, just a small one on the leg.

68. Q. You are an ex-service man?

A. Yes.

69. Q. Have you a claim with the Veterans' Administration?

A. No sir, I have not. Never had.

70. Q. Mr. Tugh, you are requested to tell any additional facts you may know about this matter which you have not related. The record is open for you to make any additional statement you have not already made.

A. I have nothing to add. The only thing I know is that statement this boy from No. 5 made, I heard a boy from my company, F. B. White, he was over at St. Petersburg and he says that he was at the Rustic Inn-- I imagine not over a quarter of a mile from headquarters down in the direction of our camps--three o'clock. Supt. Robertson from No. 5 picked him up there and taken him and several others from No. 5 on town to No. 5 to notify them that a storm was due and a train coming; that was at three o'clock. Other than that I don't know; that is hearsay. The other is facts I know of; and I don't go much by hearsay.

71. Q. At what time did the storm subside sufficiently for people to come from the mainland of Florida to render aid to the veterans, to the victims of the storm?

A. A plane got down there, a private plane, coast guard plane, and circled the place I imagine about 8 or 9 o'clock Wednesday morning but the first plane that came to bring us help - can't just recall the time it was but I tell you what help it brought and the remark I made at the time. It brought down two doctors; one of them had a grip and in the grip was one bottle of alcohol, a pint or half pint bottle and a bunch of cotton and I said, "Why in hell didn't you bring a camera?" Postell had a place on his back that was bad and they walked away and looked around, looked the storm over, looked at the bodies and what the storm had done. When they came back, I said, "Why didn't you bring your camera?" and they said, "Why?" and I said, "You didn't bring anything else; just sight-seeing" and he said, "We didn't know where we were going". I said, "You had a pretty good idea".

72. Q. Do you know who these two doctors were?

A. No sir; if I knew, I sure would tell you.

73. Q. What time did they arrive there?

A. I imagine must have been about ten o'clock.

865

1st doctors
unprepared

74. Q. Wednesday?
A. Yes sir.
75. Q. Would it have been possible to come from the mainland of Florida to the keys where you people were the day before?
A. My not being acquainted with the seas, winds and conditions would rather not make any statement.
76. Q. Do you think the seas were too rough for motor boats to go through Tuesday?
A. I would rather not say.
77. Q. Well, we want your opinion. Would like the benefit of your opinion.
A. I realize that. But I am not in a position to answer that question. I would say it was not, inland. Inland water, it would have been possible to get out of there Tuesday.
78. Q. Do you think it could have reached your people on Tuesday?
A. Yes.
79. Q. Morning or afternoon?
A. We were all expecting it, even down as far as Sheerans.
80. Q. *Negligence*
Sending aid? Then you do think there was some carelessness and negligence in not getting to your veterans earlier?
A. All indications point that way; yes sir.
81. Q. What about the natives; were you acquainted with any of the natives?
A. No sir, only Bradford.
82. Q. Do you know if any of them or their families left that area before the hurricane?
A. No sir, I was not up far enough to find out. I could not see. But I do know Sheldon used enough precaution to get his wife out of there in ample time.
83. Q. *News papers*
daily Were any newspapers received in the camp regularly?
A. Yes sir.

84. Q.

Anything been said about the hurricane in the newspapers before it occurred?

A.

I could not answer I am sure.

85. Q.

Is it your opinion someone is guilty of carelessness or negligence in not getting these men evacuated before the hurricane struck?

A.

Yes sir; put that down in big letters.

86. Q.

Do you feel there was sufficient warning and indication of approaching hurricane which would cause any prudent man to take steps to get these men out of there before steps were taken?

A.

Yes sir; from information that Sheeran says he had about it and put out, that would have been enough for me. A man with his experience, that knows what he does, I would have got all the men out.

87. Q.

If you had been in charge of activities, with the information you had about the approaching hurricane, at what time would you have taken steps to evacuate the men?

A.

Sunday afternoon.

I, PAUL PUGH, DO SOLEMNLY SWEAR that the statements made herein in response to questions propounded by H. W. Farmer, Investigator, have been read by me and they are true and correct, (except such corrections as may appear herein) to the best of my knowledge and belief, so help me GOD.

Paul Pugh

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO before me, H. W. Farmer, an Investigator of the Veterans' Administration, *Sept 16, 1935*

H. W. Farmer
H. W. FARMER, INVESTIGATOR.

I, Paul Pugh, being duly sworn this 27 day of September, 1935 at the Jackson Memorial Hospital, Miami, Dade County, State of Florida, depose and say:

That my address is Lovell, Wyoming. I am the identical Paul Pugh who previously testified before H. W. Farmer in the investigation relative to the hurricane on September 2, 1935.

To my knowledge there was only the one man who had one arm off ~~him~~ and who was a member of FERA Camp 3 on the Florida Keys. That man was the water boy. I am not positive of his name but I think it was Laughter.

From the list of missing from Camp 3 I have been asked to name whom I knew to be in the camp at the time of the storm:

I saw C. Guzowski there that evening before the storm and so know that he was in camp when the storm hit.

H. E. Hawkins was there at the time. I saw him there at the camp that afternoon. I can not recall just where in camp but he was there after the announcement was made that the train would be there to take us out.

G. A. Jones was there in camp that afternoon and I saw him there. G. A. Jones was the man who had several periods of service, including service in the French Foreign Legion and he had decorations from the French Government. I am pretty sure that his home was in Washington, D. C. There were two Jones in Camp 3. I saw them both there the afternoon of the hurricane. ~~I think that it was G. A. Jones who had the decoration from the French Government, but I am not sure.~~

C. E. Lee, - Charlie Lee -, I saw him there that afternoon and know he was in the camp at the time the hurricane hit. He was from West Virginia, some place around Grafton or Buchanan. I was with him in a camp out in Idaho and knew him well.

Dave McAllister was in the camp that afternoon and I saw him there.

E. J. Myers was there at the time of the storm. E. J. Myers, Dave McAllister and I were all a member of the same VFW post. I was top sergeant in camp and knew them well. It was raining like h--- and Myers was coming up between the shacks with his stuff all rolled up in blankets. I told him to take it back to the shack and keep it dry until the train got there.

W. M. Phillips was a boy from Oklahoma. He worked in the potato room. He was in camp at the time of the storm. I saw him in the mess hall at the beginning of the storm.

W. H. Turner, from Nashville, Tenn. was there. Right after I gave the alarm he made the remark to me that he wished he had gotten into Miami to see his sister. He was supposed to come to Miami on Saturday to see his folks and did not come. On September 2, 1925 he was in camp and drinking some but I would not say that he was drunk.

Roy Barnes - I am positive he was in camp. He was in the mess hall with us. He was from Painsville, Ohio.

Jim McClain - "tall McClain - a tall man" - was there in the mess hall.

J. J. Lewis left camp and went home about the middle August. His home was in New York some place.

Scales left on Saturday, pay day.

J. W. Janison also, left on Saturday, pay day. His mother was very sick over in Pennsylvania.

Stocklager (EE) was absolutely there in camp. I saw him when I called all the men there together.

Leo McDonald, I saw him there just before the storm.

D. D. Perry was the just before the storm. His quarters were in shack 7-D and he was in his shack when I went down through the files just before the storm.

This winter my address will likely be box 118, New Eagle, Pa.

I have read the foregoing statement and I solemnly swear that it is a true statement.

Paul Fugh

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 27 day of September, 1935.

Wm. H. Schrey